

Workforce Communities of Action

APPLICATION TO PARTICIPATE

Thank you for your interest in JFF's Workforce Communities of Action! We are thrilled you're here! Please read through the application carefully to ensure your organization is eligible to apply and that you have all content prepared to submit before you begin.

Your progress will NOT be saved if you choose to exit and return to the application form.

Applicants will be asked to identify their organization's current practices regarding the four future-focused behaviors below. Discussion among colleagues or partners is highly suggested to ensure your team puts forth informed and accurate responses. Be sure to review the list of application questions so you can prepare prior to beginning the application process.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS INCLUDE

- Local workforce development boards
- State workforce development boards
- Tribal workforce entities and US Territories

The application will explore your organization's current and future activities and priorities related to JFF's Future-Focused Behaviors, listed below. Please be sure you've read this guidance, which will familiarize you with these behaviors prior to beginning the application.

- OPPORTUNITY-ORIENTED
- DATA-OBSESSED
- HUMAN-CENTERED
- TECH-ENABLED

PROBLEM STATEMENT

This section provides an opportunity for JFF to learn more about a workforce challenge your organization is currently experiencing. This may be a localized or regional challenge or an interorganizational challenge. Please answer each question honestly and to the best of your ability knowing that wherever you are in this process is acceptable. (A "no" or "we haven't gotten there yet" answer will not count against your team). Our goal with Workforce Communities of Action (WCA) is to help you develop and define a problem statement and customized learning track based on your answers.

Please keep your responses to 1,000 characters or less.

1. In 2-3 sentences, describe a workforce challenge your region is facing. For example, local jobseekers' access to childcare, tracking employment status data, wraparound service delivery, etc.)

Ventura County, California, is facing a shortage of skilled workers in various industries, including healthcare, manufacturing, and technology. This shortage has created a demand for skilled workers and an opportunity for job seekers to upskill or reskill to meet the needs of these industries. Additionally, the lack of affordable housing has negatively affected the region, including displacement, homelessness, and difficulty attracting and retaining workers.

2. Describe the people affected by this challenge. Are specific groups disproportionately impacted? In what ways are these people directly or indirectly impacted?

The shortage of workers affects a broad range of people. Employers in various industries, such as healthcare, manufacturing, and technology, are impacted by the lack of skilled workers as they struggle to fill jobs and may be unable to meet the demand for their goods or services. This, in turn, can impact their ability to grow their businesses and contribute to the local economy.

Low-income individuals may lack the resources or access to training programs to acquire the skills necessary to fill available jobs. Similarly, certain minority groups, like English Language Learners, face barriers to employment due to systemic inequalities in education and workforce development. A shortage of workers can lead to slower economic growth, which can limit the availability of goods and services and potentially drive up prices. It may also make it harder for the county to attract and retain businesses, potentially leading to a decline in the quality of life for residents.

3. Describe the potential effects to your regional workforce or economy if this challenge is not addressed.

If the shortage of skilled workers in various industries in Ventura County, California, is not addressed, it could negatively affect the local workforce and economy. Companies may struggle to find qualified workers, leading to slower growth or even a decline in specific industries. This could decrease job opportunities and wages, making it harder for workers to support themselves and their families. Additionally, it could lead to a brain drain as skilled workers leave the area searching for better job opportunities, further exacerbating the shortage of skilled workers. Ultimately, failing to address the lack of skilled workers could hinder the economic competitiveness and development of Ventura County.

4. Do you feel you have collected or have access to adequate data to inform the challenge you are facing? If yes, describe the data set(s) that have informed exploration of this challenge. If not, what data do you need to fully understand your designated challenge?

Yes. By analyzing the below data, we can develop targeted strategies and programs to address the shortage of workers.

1. Employment data: This data can provide insights into the number of job vacancies and the skills required for those jobs.
2. Education and training data: This data can help to identify which skills are in demand and which training programs are available to prepare workers for in-demand jobs.
3. Demographic data: This data can help to identify which groups are disproportionately impacted by the shortage of workers and may need additional support to access training and employment opportunities.

4. Economic data: This data can provide insights into the impact of the shortage of workers on the local economy, such as the effect on businesses, wages, and tax revenue.

5. Workforce development data: This data can help identify the workforce development programs available and the resources available to help address the shortage of skilled workers.

5. Have you convened partners to discuss/inform or begin to address the challenge? [SELECT YES/NO]

No

RANKING BEHAVIORS

The Workforce Communities of Action experience has been designed to give participants the opportunity to explore their challenge through the lens of all four of the future-focused behaviors. To give us a sense of which behaviors you'd like to learn about and develop more fully as it relates to your identified challenge, please rank the behaviors below from top to bottom, with top being your highest priority and bottom being your lowest priority.

 1 OPPORTUNITY-ORIENTED

 3 DATA-OBSESSED

 4 HUMAN-CENTERED

 2 TECH-ENABLED

EXPLORING THE FUTURE-FOCUSED BEHAVIORS

This section includes a series of Likert scale questions, which ask applicants to identify the extent to which they agree with the statements being presented, and open-ended questions, which ask applicants to describe their aspirations for adopting these behaviors. Questions are grouped in blocks specific to each of the four behaviors. This section is intended to help us learn more about your organization's practices overall.

Unless instructed to do so within the question, do not answer specific to the challenge identified in the previous section.

PLEASE NOTE: The WCA experience is intended to support workforce boards' ability to build and expand these behaviors across their organizations. Therefore, disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with a statement will NOT impact selection for participation.

Please answer all questions honestly.

OPPORTUNITY-ORIENTED

Answer Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

- Our organization has a clear strategic plan and aligns fundraising and growth targets to support implementation of that plan.

Agree

- **Our organization has diversified its revenue sources beyond WIOA funding.**

Agree

- **Our organization has developed a clearly articulated plan for improving Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access (DEIA).**

Somewhat Agree

Please keep your responses to 1,000 characters or less.

6. Describe your organization's vision for the impact and influence you'd like to have in your community.

Our vision is that the Ventura County region has a high-quality, appropriately skilled workforce that is ready and able to support the evolving business needs of employers in a dynamic, competitive, global economic environment. We aim to align employers' needs with jobseekers' skills and aspirations while also providing support for underserved and underrepresented populations. We strive to promote economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve social equity in our community by providing access to training, education, and job opportunities. Our goal is to create a pipeline of skilled workers who can meet the evolving needs of the local labor market while ensuring that all residents have access to the resources and support they need to succeed. Ultimately, we seek to drive positive change in our community by improving the quality of life for all residents and creating a thriving economy that benefits everyone.

7. Describe a partnership or a relationship that you would like to develop within your region and why it presents an important opportunity to make an impact in your community.

We want to create a stronger relationship with our various chambers of commerce and city economic development partners. We need to partner with chambers of commerce and economic development organizations because these organizations have a solid connection to the local business community and can provide valuable insights into the skills and qualifications needed by employers. By working together, we can align our training programs with the needs of the local labor market and ensure that job seekers are prepared for in-demand jobs. Additionally, chambers of commerce and economic development organizations can help identify potential funding sources and connect workforce development programs with businesses looking for skilled workers. By leveraging the strengths and resources of these organizations, we can create a more comprehensive and effective strategy for addressing workforce development challenges and promoting economic growth in our community.

8. Referencing the challenge you've identified: Complex problems often require collaboration across multiple partners. What role do you see your organization playing in helping to solve the issue you've identified? Why do you think your WDB is uniquely positioned to play this role?

We can identify the skills employers need, develop strategies to address the skills gap and coordinate workforce development programs to train and place workers in in-demand jobs. We are uniquely positioned to play this role because we bring together various stakeholders, including employers, community organizations, and educational institutions, to collaborate on workforce development initiatives. We have a deep understanding of the local labor market, which enables us to identify emerging trends and develop targeted strategies to address workforce needs. Additionally, we have access to

funding and resources that can be used to support training programs and other initiatives that help to close the skills gap. By working closely with employers and other stakeholders, we can help to ensure that the workforce is prepared to meet the needs of the local economy and that job opportunities are available to workers in our area.

DATA-OBSESSED

Answer Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

- **There is strong awareness across my organization of the various datasets we utilize for decision-making.**

Somewhat Agree

- **My organization promotes a culture of data-driven decision-making.**

Agree

- **Our organization consistently explores new ways to utilize data for improved equity and access to services, such as disaggregating data or analyzing identity-based disparities.**

Agree

Please keep your responses to 1,000 characters or less.

9. Please describe the ways in which your organization recognizes the value of data beyond compliance and performance reporting.

Data beyond compliance and performance reporting provides insights into the effectiveness of our programs, the needs of the local labor market, and the impact of economic and social trends on their community. By collecting and analyzing data on job openings, wages, and industry trends, we can identify emerging opportunities and tailor training programs to meet the needs of local employers. We can also track the progress of job seekers and identify areas where additional support or training is needed.

Data can also help us measure the impact of their programs and identify areas where they can improve. By tracking outcomes such as employment rates, earnings, and job retention, we can determine which programs are most effective and adjust as needed. Additionally, data can help us identify disparities and inequities in the local labor market and develop strategies to address them.

10. What datasets do you currently have access to or utilize consistently? What datasets do you not have access to that would impact your ability to make informed decisions?

We currently utilize various data from Lightcast, Econovue, and Futureworks BI. Lightcast Developer is a web-based software product used to identify information on workforce availability, industry supply chain analysis, business expansion opportunities, business attraction, target region identification, skills gap analysis, equity gap analysis, and business retention risks. Econovue merges data visualization, interactive mapping, extensive filtering, and location-based prospect management tools to insightfully stimulate the

many ways Economic and Workforce Developers engage with the businesses that make a local economy strong. FutureWorks BI is a comprehensive, Software-as-a-Service, self-service Business Intelligence application that makes WIOA data easy to access and explore to inform Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program and policy decisions.

We do not have access to datasets around career pathways that are specific to Ventura County.

11. Please share how increased access to various datasets could improve your organization's ability to more equitably serve your community.

These datasets would allow job seekers, students, parents, and advisors to explore upwardly mobile careers and training pathways for top industries and companies in Ventura County. Many individuals select a career but are unsure of the pathway, resulting in unfinished training, unnecessary debt, and underemployment. Access to career pathway data can help people choose the best pathway for them, increasing their chances of success. This dataset would also provide information about local careers, job demand, diversity make-up, and top posting companies and industries in Ventura County. Finally, having this data would help youth and adults look at careers that pay well here in Ventura County.

HUMAN-CENTERED

Answer Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

- **The majority of employees within our organization are familiar with the basic concepts of human and/or customer centered design.**

Agree

- **Our organization consistently consults with partners and/or stakeholders (such as customers) throughout our community when developing new programs, products, or policies.**

Somewhat Agree

- **Our organization utilizes strategies beyond standardized customer experience surveys or suggestion boxes to center customer needs and gather insights and recommendations for more equitable and accessible service delivery and program improvements.**

Somewhat Agree

Please keep your responses to 1,000 characters or less.

12. Please share an example of how your organization has worked to eliminate barriers faced by the people you serve. (ex: lack of internet/computer access at home, transportation challenges, prior involvement with the criminal justice system, etc.)

Our programs provide a range of services and support for people with barriers to employment. This can include job training and skills development programs, career counseling and job placement services, assistance with transportation and child care, and access to resources for addressing housing, health care, and legal services. We also work with employers to promote workplace diversity and inclusion and create more opportunities for job seekers from underrepresented communities.

For example, two active programs serve youth and adults with disabilities. We partner with vocational rehabilitation as well as other organizations that focus on helping people with disabilities to provide wraparound services. In particular, these programs work with businesses to set up work experiences for people with disabilities so they can obtain the skills they need to be independent and competitive in the workplace.

13. Describe a service, program or support that your organization would like to offer your community but hasn't been able to provide. Explain the impact that implementing this service, program, or support would have in your community.

We want to explore the ability to be an ACT® Work Ready Community by implementing the ACT® WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate. The certificate is a portable, industry-recognized credential that identifies an individual's WorkKeys® skills in workplace documents, applied math, and graphic literacy skills.

By participating in ACT's® Work Ready Communities initiative, we could help:

- Businesses and industries know exactly what foundational skills they need for a productive workforce and to communicate their needs easily
- Individuals understand what skills are required by employers and how to prepare themselves for success
- Policymakers consistently measure the skills gap promptly at the national, State, and local levels
- Educators close the skills gap via tools integrated into career pathways with stackable industry-recognized credentials
- Economic developers use an on-demand reporting tool for marketing the quality of their workforce

14. Describe how your organization ensures that your outreach materials, processes, and programs are designed to engage and empower the people you serve for success.

We are currently part of JFF's Workforce Transformation Corps. The opportunity utilizes a fellowship model to host and work with a "workforce transformation fellow" trained in human-centered design thinking. Our workforce transformation fellow collaborates with our staff members to identify current pain points, needs, and place-based considerations that inform a focused and strategic approach to more customer-centered people, programs, products, policies, and partnerships. For example, our fellow will work with our Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth program to rebrand it by creating a focus group with youth participants. Our fellow plans to have our youth participants rename and rebrand our program using their voices and experiences.

TECH-ENABLED

Answer Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

- **Our organization has enough skilled capacity to be able to adopt and integrate new types of technologies that support our programming.**

Agree

- **Our organization encourages exploration of new technologies that would benefit our programs and participants.**

Strongly Agree

- **Our organization understands the DEIA impacts of technology within our community and develops and/or adopts technology and tools that keep data secure and promote equitable access and outcomes for all.**

Agree

Please keep your responses to 1,000 characters or less.

15. In a few sentences, describe your organization's greatest challenge(s) in identifying and adopting new technologies?

Our limited funding capacity is the greatest challenge in identifying and adopting new technologies. Since we utilize Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding, we cannot purchase new technologies without getting approval from our State. The approval can take an extended period and is sometimes denied.

16. Briefly describe how your organization has approached testing, vetting, or piloting new technologies prior to adoption (if at all).

Before implementing Futureworks BI, we convened a committee to determine what our needs were around performance reporting. After that, we looked for different solutions that were on the market. Once we identified Futureworks BI as a potential system, we received a presentation and a trial account to pilot the technology. Since the technology met our needs, we moved forward with adoption.

17. Briefly describe how your organization is using technology to assess and/or address peoples' needs? Include any technologies you are currently exploring but have not yet adopted.

We are currently using Lightcast Developer to help address peoples' needs. Lightcast offers data on employed workers covered by unemployment insurance; employed workers not covered by unemployment insurance; self-employed workers; and extended proprietors who receive work-related income from a source other than their primary employment means. Lightcast curates a dataset of job postings scraped from over 45,000 websites, including company career sites, national and local job boards, and job posting aggregators. This data can help better understand the skills, education, and experience employers in our region require. Lightcast provides data on commuting. This data can be used to understand better what regions we are losing workers to and where our workforce lives. Lightcast also provides data on migration to better understand how our population is moving in and out of our region.

YOUR WORKFORCE COMMUNITIES OF ACTION TEAM

Below, please include information about your organization and contact details for one lead and secondary point of contact at your organization that will serve as the primary participants/accountability partners throughout the duration of the experience. Please note that there will be multiple opportunities to engage additional staff and external partners in service of exploring innovative ways to address your identified challenge.

NAME OF ORGANIZATION

Workforce Development Board of Ventura County / County of Ventura

CITY

Oxnard

STATE (Abbreviation), U.S. TERRITORY, or TRIBAL ENTITY

California

PLEASE SELECT THE OPTION THAT BEST DESCRIBES THE GEOGRAPHY YOUR ORGANIZATION SERVES

☐ Rural

☐ Suburban

☐ Urban

☐ Mix of Rural/Suburban

☐ Mix of Suburban/Urban

☐ Mix of Rural/Urban

☒ Mix of all three

☐ N/A

LEAD POINT OF CONTACT

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SECONDARY POINT OF CONTACT

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Title: Assistant Director

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Phone:

18. Have you already identified partner organizations that will participate in all or some of the WCA learning sessions if your team is selected?

[YES/NO]

[If yes, list partner organizations. If no, skip to next Q.]

Ventura County Community College District, Ventura College, Oxnard College, Moorpark College, Ventura County Office of Education, Ventura Adult and Continuing Education, Conejo Valley Adult Education, Fillmore Adult School, Moorpark Adult School, Santa Paula Adult School, Ojai Adult School, Simi Institute for Careers & Education, Oxnard Adult School, West Ventura County Business Alliance, Ventura Chamber of Commerce, Hueneme Chamber of Commerce, Moorpark Chamber of Commerce, Ojai Valley Chamber of Commerce, Santa Paula Chamber of Commerce, Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Collaborative, and more.

19. Do you plan to invite additional partners to participate in all or some of the WCA learning sessions if your team is selected?

[YES/NO]

[If yes, list partners organizations. If no, skip to CLOSE].

All

Thank you for applying for this exciting opportunity. We look forward to learning about your organization's priorities and challenges. We intend to announce selected participants by May 26th and will inform all participants of final outcomes regardless of selection status.

For any questions regarding your application submission, please reach out to Genna Petrolla at gpetrolla@jff.org.