



# EDUCATION LEADERS + YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

## Career-Connected Learning

### *Investing in Detroit's Future Talent*

As the future of work changes rapidly, it is reshaping the skills that young people need in order to meaningfully participate in the labor market and improve their long-term economic outcomes. In Detroit, there are many efforts currently underway—in schools and through youth organizations, employers, and other partners—with the goal of building the capacity of young people and preparing them for life after high school.

But while there is meaningful progress being made, young people still need early exposure, clear pathways into a wide range of industries, and consistent support to navigate their academic and early career journeys. Career-connected learning is central to bridging the gap between education and the workforce and ensuring that young people have real choices when it comes to their career pathways.

“Career-Connected Learning: Investing in Detroit’s Future Talent” examines how Detroit’s education, youth development, and workforce systems are aligned to connect young people to opportunity. By centering youth voice, the report explores bright spots, barriers, and opportunities across three core components of career-connected learning: career awareness and exploration, career guidance, and work-based learning.



## WHY YOUR ROLE MATTERS

*In-school and out-of-school experiences are foundational to connecting what students learn today and who they can become in the future.*

*Educators and youth organizations are uniquely positioned to empower youth.*

### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- 1 Not all career exposure activities are resonating with young people's actual interests.
- 2 Stakeholders support introducing career exploration activities in elementary and middle school.
- 3 Many young people are unfamiliar with terms like "high opportunity" and "high growth" when discussing careers.
- 4 Young people have interest in learning about the labor market to guide their decision-making.
- 5 Young people do not find online career planning tools very helpful.
- 6 Young people are choosing careers based on their interests and values.
- 7 College costs, advances in AI, and mental health are influencing young people's career decisions.
- 8 Young people seek more one-on-one career guidance from educators and mentors, and access to supports.
- 9 Young people want more exposure, preparation, and support to build their skills and access real-world opportunities.
- 10 Data on many work-based learning models, especially those in charter schools, are not publicly and centrally available.

### WHERE YOU CAN START

1. Integrate and scale career awareness and exposure activities in elementary and middle school.
2. Design experiences that are youth-relevant, interest-driven, and connected to real-world opportunities.
3. Share information on high-opportunity and high-impact career pathways and the regional labor market.
4. Offer structured career advising and one-on-one support, and encourage the intentional use of online tools.
5. Communicate with parents and equip them with relevant tools and information.
6. Establish peer-to-peer and alumni networks for high school students.
7. Expand and encourage academic pathways and programs that align to demand in the regional labor market.
8. Provide young people training and certifications to develop technical and soft skills, as well as general life skills.
9. Address logistical barriers that limit young people's participation in academic and out-of-school programs.
10. Strengthen partnerships across the ecosystem to increase young people's access to experiences and opportunities.