

CareerBound: An Exciting New Initiative to Support Young Jobseekers

Research has shown us the “college or bust” mentality doesn't work for everyone.

A study conducted by the Baltimore Education Research Consortium showed that 26% of Baltimore City Public Schools’ class of 2009 were not connected to either education or the workforce the Fall after graduation. That same population was only making an average annual salary of \$11,000 six years after graduation. This illustrated the need for a career pipeline for students who wanted to enter the workforce after high school graduation into family-supporting wages.

To meet this need, Grads2Careers, a collaboration between Baltimore’s Promise, Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools), and the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED), along with various occupational skills training providers, was launched in 2018. Since then, G2C has fostered strong systemic partnerships, boosted wages, and provided free occupational skills training in high-growth industries to more than a thousand youth and young adults.

We are proud of this work—but much more needs to be done. Baltimore’s Promise has developed a plan for the exciting next phase of the G2C initiative, called CareerBound, and we believe it will create opportunities for thousands of young people, lead to stronger alignment of resources from multiple partners, and transform how we provide workforce services to youth and young adults in our city.

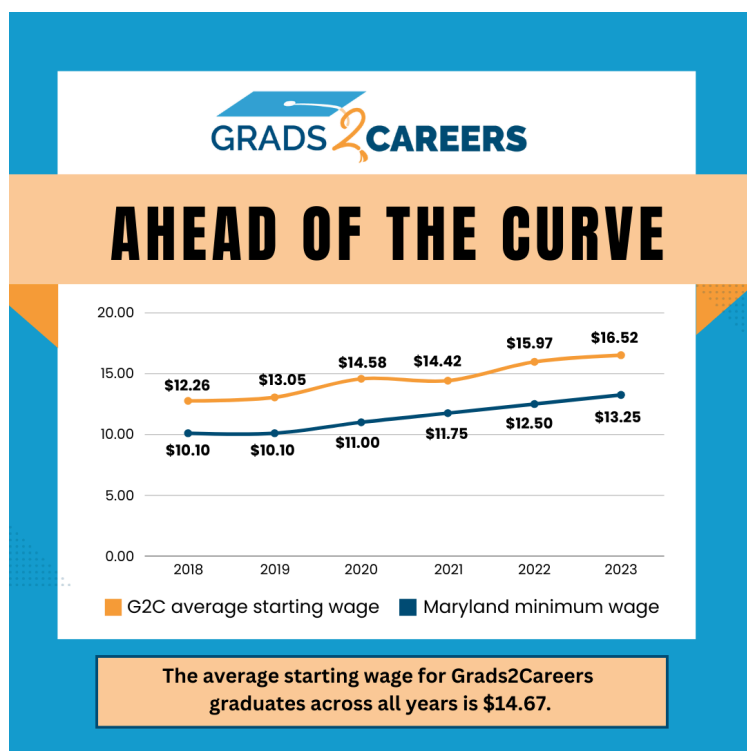
Ingredients of a Successful Model

Grads2Careers offers a holistic approach to help young people train and move into jobs with career opportunities. Key components of G2C:

- Free occupational skills training,
- Case management and wraparound supports, and
- Employment placement and retention services.

With this approach, G2C has achieved remarkable success:

- It has provided more than 1,000 training slots in high-growth sectors including healthcare, information technology, construction, biotechnology, early childhood education, logistics and distribution, and more.
- The median annual income of G2C completers is \$10,000 higher than that of comparable City Schools graduates six years after high school graduation.
- Initial average hourly wage for graduates placed in jobs, across all years, is \$14.67.
- Public funding for G2C has climbed significantly, an affirmation of its success.



In short, Grads2Careers is offering more Baltimore City youth and young adults a pathway to a career in a high-growth, high-wage industry. And it is strengthening the city's young adult workforce system by adopting best youth-serving practices, documenting lessons for improvement, and forging strong partnerships to spark broader citywide change.

Introducing CareerBound

Grads2Careers has helped strengthen the young adult workforce system in Baltimore, but [we know](#) that while some Baltimore City employers offer family-supporting careers, employers may overlook young candidates due to preconceived

biases. Recognizing both the opportunity and the need, we are working to launch the next, expanded phase of G2C – CareerBound – to serve more people and develop new service models, while continuing to build the city's infrastructure to support workforce programs for youth and young adults.

CareerBound will use a comprehensive approach, which is essential to foster the growth of young Baltimoreans looking to succeed in their careers. CareerBound's key components:

- In-school registered youth apprenticeships – an exciting new workforce strategy that dovetails with the ambitious goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the state's landmark educational reform,
- Cutting-edge Grads2Careers occupational skills training programs,
- Connecting G2C alumni with "stackable" training credentials to help them progress in the workplace and increase their wage potential – with an initial focus on healthcare, a rapidly growing field that offers a range of career tracks,
- Summer preparation academic acceleration programming to help young people advance academically – with a focus on literacy and math for rising ninth graders through post-graduation, and
- Coordinated resources, akin to the G2C framework, to reduce barriers and support youth and young adults as they navigate their educational and career preparation journeys. These will include assistance with mental health and wellness, health care, behavioral health care, child care, housing, transportation, and several others.

We have set ambitious but achievable goals for the initiative. We anticipate serving approximately 4,000 young people over the three-year cycle beginning January 2025: 1,500 in the ongoing G2C program; 150 participants earning stackable credentials; 1,550 participants in

registered youth apprenticeships; and 750 participants in earn-as-you-learn summer preparation academic acceleration programming.

Baltimore's Promise will continue to serve as the backbone partner for CareerBound – facilitating partnerships, providing funding to occupational skills training providers, overseeing data collection, management, and evaluation, and leading fundraising efforts. And we will continue to work hand-in-hand with our longstanding G2C partners – City Schools and MOED – as well as CareerWise, a well-regarded, national technical assistance provider. We will also partner with a range of employers, occupational skills training providers, Baltimore City Community College, organizations that provide various coordinated resources and support to young people, and, of course, youth and young adults looking to start careers.

By designing and offering a well-rounded package of services that encompass academic support, training, credentialing, and wraparound services, CareerBound is poised to be a major contributor in creating sustainable career pathways for youth and young adults in Baltimore City and as a model throughout Maryland.

Achieving the Vision

With committed investments from national funders like Bloomberg Philanthropies, and local investment from private funders, such as Abell Foundation, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, and The Annie E. Casey Foundation, we are able to begin this urgently needed initiative.

In addition, we have received public systems investments including \$1 million awarded to Baltimore's Promise from the Maryland State Department of Education to work in collaboration with Baltimore City Public Schools to help design and build the infrastructure for CareerBound's registered in-school youth apprenticeship ecosystem.

But we need even more funding to achieve this audacious vision and reach the scale needed to make the future brighter for Baltimore youth and young adults.

In addition, we are seeking the following to sustain our momentum:

- Education partners to promote opportunities and provide training and related instruction,
- Employers who will commit to hiring youth apprentices,
- Coordinated resource partners who will commit to providing services and support to youth in training and employment, and
- Advocacy partners to uplift policies supporting our youth.

CareerBound represents an important step forward for Baltimore's Promise, and we are confident we can turn our vision into reality with our partners. We believe the CareerBound initiative will improve the talent pipeline for the region while directly supporting thousands of young Baltimoreans to help our city reimagine how it serves our future leaders.

If you are interested in learning more about CareerBound, please contact Kate Wolfson at kate@baltimorespromise.org.