

News Release



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COMMISSIONERS BEGIN NEW INITIATIVE TO PREPARE LOW-INCOME WORKERS FOR MIDDLE-CLASS CAREERS

The Franklin County Board of Commissioners are kicking off a new initiative to help under-served Franklin County residents gain the skills and experience they need to transition into middle-class careers. Like many employers around the country, the county has struggled to fill all its open positions in recent years while residents work but lack the resources to jump into well-paid careers.

The county's new program is called Franklin County Futures and partners with local nonprofits with proven success to help residents bridge that divide.

The program follows the model of the commissioners' groundbreaking Building Futures and Driving Futures programs. In addition, Franklin County Futures will partner with the Columbus Urban League and staff from Creating Central Ohio Futures (CCOHF) like those previous programs.

"It's a difficult hiring landscape right now," said Board of Commissioners President Erica C. Crawley. "But at the same time, there are lots of Franklin County residents who are looking for better careers but just need access to opportunities to move into the middle class. County Futures is a win-win for our residents, as it strengthens the county workforce while also ensuring that more of our neighbors and their families are thriving."

Building Futures and Driving Futures provide participants with soft skills training to prepare them for professional jobs, then training more specific to the construction or driving industries. Throughout the program, the commissioners' Job and Family Services agency provide the students with wraparound support to help address any barriers they may be experiencing. The first programs began in 2018, and many graduates now work in careers earning between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per year.

"Our workforce is the county's greatest asset," said Commissioner John O'Grady. "The people who work here are both our neighbors and the backbone of county government. They provide services that are critical to our 1.3 million residents. Franklin County Futures will create a pipeline for great new team members to join our workforce and for struggling neighbors to join the middle class."

Franklin County Futures will follow the established model of supporting the participants with the help they need to succeed now while also providing them with training for the future. It's a partnership with the Columbus Urban League that will identify a diverse group of talented job seekers who may be a good fit for careers in county government. The students will then have several weeks of general workplace training followed by several weeks of training more specific to jobs that are available with the county

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will work alongside Job and Family Services and other county agencies to provide support to them throughout and graduates from the program will be fast-tracked into the county's hiring processes. In addition, county employees can also use these support services to overcome any barriers they may encounter or need.

"Diversity is one of our community's greatest strengths, and County Futures will help ensure that the county workplace truly reflects our county residents," said Commissioner Kevin L. Boyce. "And when you can help somebody transition from relying on county services to working for their neighbors, the benefits are greater than the sum of their parts, both for our new employees and county taxpayers."

County Futures is a free program offered to Franklin County residents eighteen years or older. Program participants will receive career-readiness training in financial literacy, basic computer skills, and leadership and professional development. The program will also make case managers available to assist participants with removing barriers to employment. The Franklin County Board of Commissioners funds the program, and the Franklin County Department of Jobs and Family Services administers it.

The funding was approved by the commissioners on July 7 and will support 100 participants in the new program. Visit [CCOHF.org/county](https://cco.org/county) to learn more about Franklin County Futures.

Residents interested in county jobs can go to the Teamsters Local 284, 555 E. Rich St. Columbus, Ohio, 43215 on August 6, between 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. A Franklin County, Human Resources representative will be there and able to conduct interviews for open county positions. Creating Central Ohio's Futures will also offer job readiness assistance on-site.

"The upcoming County Futures Career Fair is an excellent way to expedite the process of putting individuals on a pathway to high-demand Franklin County careers. Participants will receive one-on-one time with a county representative to discuss careers in good jobs with Franklin County," said Mark Fluharty, President of CCOHF.

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