YouthForce NOLA Collaborative Offers New Pathways, Credentials and Hands-on Training for New Orleans Youth

**JPMorgan Chase & Co. New Skills for Youth Innovation Site creates opportunities for New Orleans youth to gain real-world skills and credentials of value**

**New Orleans, Louisiana** – In just a few short years, the number of New Orleans public school graduates earning statewide industry-recognized credentials in three leading industries — health sciences, digital media and technology, and skilled crafts—has increased fivefold. This is in large part due to the work by YouthForce NOLA, an education, business and civic collaborative that prepares New Orleans public school students to pursue high-wage, high-demand career pathways. A quarter of credentials earned in 2018 were intermediate or advanced credentials, allowing students to continue their education or enter directly into the workforce.

YouthForce NOLA has a four-pronged approach to building career pathways that result in a meaningful credential including: engaging employers to offer internships, career exploration opportunities, and curriculum development; providing technical assistance to schools to redesign their curriculum to be career-focused; increasing training provider capacity to supplement schools’ teaching; and engaging families and the community in the process to ensure buy in and an understanding of these opportunities. What began as a pilot with only two schools in 2015 will now see students from all 26 of New Orleans Public School open enrollment schools accessing career pathways programming in the 2019-20 school year.

“There are incredibly talented and inspired,” said Cate Swinburn, President and Co-Founder of YouthForce NOLA. “The entire YouthForce NOLA collaborative – including our twelve steering committee organizations, 150+ employer partners, 24 high school partners, eight training provider partners, and the broader community – has contributed to our students’ ever-growing skills, plans, and connections. We are so thankful for JPMorgan’s commitment to our youth, and to the city of New Orleans.”

YouthForce NOLA works with over 100 employers to expose students to different career pathways and provide work-based learning experiences through the YouthForce Internship (YFI) program. Participants in YFI have grown exponentially, and start with a 60-hour pre-training, which includes soft skills, job-seeking skills and industry exposure, followed by a 90-hour paid internship. Participation in these meaningful work experiences has grown from 18 students in 2015 to approximately 250 students in the summer of 2019. Nearly 90 percent of partners who participate in the internship program would recommend it to other employers.
“We know the surest way to expand access to opportunity is to equip people with the skills needed to compete for well-paying, in-demand jobs that are available today and tomorrow,” said Katie LeGardeur, Managing Director and Market Leader for JPMorgan Chase in New Orleans. “That’s why we are supporting communities around the world to design and implement innovative new approaches to career education that prepare young people to enter the workforce with the skills, experiences, and credentials they need to succeed in good careers in growing industries.”

YouthForce NOLA and its partners are also expanding the ways in which students can gain hands-on skills by investing in the newly launched New Orleans Career Center, a city-wide technical training hub. The New Orleans Career Center now provides students from over a dozen partner high schools with hands-on training in high-demand fields. Additional YouthForce technical training partner options include Operation Spark (software development), NOTEP (construction trades), NOVAC (creative/digital media), Gateway EMS (emergency services), and Spark Mindset (network security).

Family and community engagement also is central to the collaborative’s mission. With assistance from the Urban League of Louisiana and families themselves, YouthForce NOLA developed a toolkit and an aligned workshop focused on strategies for helping schools remove barriers for family engagement. Any school that wants to join the YouthForce NOLA network must include a family engagement plan, ensuring it is a key component of their program.

JPMorgan Chase & Co. New Skills for Youth initiative invested in YouthForce NOLA to expand and enhance the organization’s efforts to develop a pipeline of skilled workers for high-demand, high-wage careers. As the program grows, it will continue to focus on helping learners gain job-specific skills, work experience and soft skills.

Youthforce NOLA is a JPMorgan Chase & Co. New Skills for Youth Innovation Site aiming to improve career pathways for learners. This snapshot is part of a series documenting the progress of the local investments from across the globe that aim to identify and implement the most promising ideas in career education, with a special focus on communities with the greatest needs. Learn more about the innovations sites at https://careertech.org/resource/series/nsfy-innovation-sites.

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About YouthForce NOLA
YouthForce NOLA, an education, business, and civic collaborative that envisions an economically prosperous and equitable future for New Orleans public school students and prepares them for the successful pursuit of high-wage, high-demand career pathways. Follow YouthForce NOLA on Twitter (@YouthForceNOLA) and Instagram (@youthforce.nola). www.youthforcenola.org