

Memorandum

To: Trustees of the Somerville Job Creation & Retention Trust (JCRT)

From: William Blackmer, Workforce Development Coordinator and Staff Liaison to the JCRT

RE: **FALL 2025 JCRT RFP RESPONSES AND SUBCOMMITTEE FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Date: October 10, 2025

A. BACKGROUND

On April 16th, the JCRT released an RFP seeking proposals that, “assist in the creation and maintenance of employment and career opportunities within and near the City of Somerville for the residents of the City of Somerville, and, to provide training and services that will enable residents to access job opportunities that will permit them to succeed and maintain adequate incomes so they can continue to afford living in the City of Somerville.” The total funding available in this RFP was \$1,000,000 and the cap for an individual proposal was \$200,000 or \$100,000 per year for a 2-year program.

B. PROPOSALS RECEIVED

The RFP resulted in 12 proposals:

Proposal Number	Lead Organization	Project Name	Funding Requested
2A	Asian American Civic Association (AACA)	<i>Workforce Development and Training</i>	\$100,000.00
2B	Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC)	<i>Somerville English for Language Learners</i>	\$100,000.00
2C	Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS)	<i>Development and Launch of a Workforce Development Program Tailored to Somerville Residents</i>	\$200,000.00
2D	Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW)	<i>Trauma-Informed and Resilient Somerville</i>	\$100,000.00
2E	Enroot	<i>Workforce Innovation & Social Enterprise Pilot</i>	\$200,000.00
2F	MassHire Metro North Workforce Board	<i>Pathways to STEM Careers</i>	\$200,000.00
2G	Per Scholas	<i>Workforce Development Through Technology Training</i>	\$50,000.00
2H	Somerville Arts Council (SAC)	<i>Nibble</i>	\$50,000.00
2J	Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences (SCALE)	<i>Contextualized ESOL with Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Training Program</i>	\$200,000.00
2K	Somerville Community Corporation (SCC)	<i>SCC Small Business Launchpad</i>	\$200,000.00
2L	Tech Goes Home	<i>Workforce Readiness for Somerville Housing Authority Residents</i>	\$50,414.00
2M	Women’s Money Matters	<i>EmpowerSomerville: Workforce & Economic Mobility Initiative</i>	\$200,000.00

Links to the full proposals have been shared with the Trust in advance of the October 27th meeting. Please see pages 3-5 for a table summarizing additional information from each proposal.

C. PROPOSAL REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION

First, proposals were reviewed and scored individually by subcommittee members Anika Van Eaton, Rachel Nadkarni, Silvana Dinka, and Tom Bent, with each member reading and scoring 6 proposals. The subcommittee then met with me to review and discuss all proposals. Ultimately, they recommended the following 8 proposals for funding. Votes on these proposals will be taken in the October 27th meeting.

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2A	Asian American Civic Association (AACA)	<i>Workforce Development and Training</i>	\$100,000.00
2B	Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC)	<i>Somerville English for Language Learners</i>	\$100,000.00
2C	Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS)	<i>Development and Launch of a Workforce Development Program Tailored to Somerville Residents</i>	\$200,000.00
2F	MassHire Metro North Workforce Board	<i>Pathways to STEM Careers</i>	\$200,000.00
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Proposal Number	Lead Agency	Project Name	Program or Activity Design	Program Budget	Outcomes and Measures of Success
2A	Asian American Civic Association (AACA)	AACA Workforce Development and Training	BEEMS, Weatherization, and Careers in Banking & Finance serving 8 residents between (1/2026 - 12/2027)	\$100,000	AACA will enroll four Somerville residents per year across two years, serving a total of eight participants during the grant period. Our target is a 100% program completion and placement rate, reflecting the intensive wraparound support we provide. Participants in the BEEMS and Weatherization tracks will also earn their OSHA-10 certification, while Banking participants will complete entry-level training aligned with industry requirements. Beyond these quantitative outcomes, success will also be measured qualitatively through participant feedback on their skill growth, career confidence, and economic stability. To ensure accuracy and accountability, AACA employs Salesforce as our centralized data management system. Staff track enrollments, completions, credential attainment, and job placements in real time. Outcome verification includes direct communication with graduates and their employers to confirm job title, start date, wages, and benefits. Program staff meet regularly to review progress, address client needs, and resolve any barriers to success. We also emphasize long-term retention: a dedicated retention specialist follows up with every graduate for at least two years after placement, providing continued case management, career navigation, and referrals to resources as needed. This combination of quantitative tracking and qualitative engagement ensures that participants not only secure employment but also sustain career advancement and economic stability over time.
2B	Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC)	Somerville English for Language Learners	Semester-long ESOL classes for providing training for Somerville residents to obtain better paying jobs	\$100,000	The initiative will offer multiple levels and sections of ESOL courses to 100 Somerville residents at two locations and online, providing access to English language skill development. An estimated 75% of the 100 students will be retained to June 2026 and complete one ESOL level. The initiative will refer all students in the program to wrap-around services and provide stipends to remove barriers to completion in ESOL courses. All students will have access and the option to receive support services; we estimate that at least 50 % of students will access at least one support service at BHCC or CAAS. The initiative will provide ESOL courses with embedded, contextualized career development training to all student participants to improve their ability to access job opportunities. Local employers will benefit from upskilled employees who can take on increased responsibilities and benefit area businesses. At program completion, BHCC will make participants aware of BHCC's short-term certificate or degree programs to expand their career options.
2C	Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS)	Development and Launch of a Workforce Development Program Tailored to Somerville Residents	Program Design and Implementation of Organizational Workforce Development Offerings; resulting in the launch of a pilot program enrolling 30 residents and placing 20 residents in jobs.	\$200,000	Outcomes will be determined as part of program design to ensure evaluation is in line with intent and reality. CAAS anticipates measuring success through a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures, including: number of prospective participants, number who enroll, types of training participants receive, number of employment partners secured, number of participants who finish the program (including attendance tracking), number of participants who are placed into jobs, types of jobs they are placed into, participant and programmatic challenges and success factors, and pre-/post-evaluations of program quality, participant experience, and participant economic situation. Beyond the first two years, CAAS will track retention in the form of how many participants stay in the jobs they are placed in (and for howlong) as well as employer satisfaction. Another outcome anticipated from the project is capacity building for the community and sector. Tools, curriculum, results, and best practices will be published online for other organizations, service providers, institutions, and funders to adopt and learn from (including the network of twenty-two other community action agencies in Massachusetts). In addition, any employer partnerships developed will continue to be a resource to CAAS' service delivery ecosystem and referral network beyond the first two years of the project. Somerville as a microcosm of gentrification and employment challenges provides a unique testing ground to demonstrate how a tailored workforce development program can play a role in stabilizing the local economy and combatting displacement.
2D	Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW)	Trauma-Informed and Resilient Somerville (T&R Somerville)	Re-engage Somerville workforce development, adult education, and social service provider organizations that participated in Trauma-Informed and Resilient (T&R) Somerville training 2024-2025 (T&R Somerville 1.0) an additional two years of coaching to support developing and implementing a trauma-informed (TI) action plan for their organization. Build upon the trainings in year one and focus on implementing learnings into organizations to build a more trauma-informed, healing centered, resilience-building system—for customers, colleagues, and themselves	\$100,000	CSW will conduct a total of 3 focus groups: one at the onset of the project to set baseline, one at the end of year to do mid-project assessment and adjust as necessary, and a final focus group at end of year two to capture impact and progress. Data from the initial focus group will inform customizing the program and content to participants' needs. The final focus group will provide participants with a chance to reflect on the full project, its effectiveness and usefulness to the work, as well as any other feedback and suggestions. In addition, CSW will be coaching participants to develop TI Action Plans to plan out goals, activities, and timeline. Assessing progress in developing and meeting goals will also be tracked and reported. We will use key success measures such as the participants' knowledge growth, ability to apply, the information learned to their work, and confidence in implementing and sharing learnings with the team and organization. In addition, we will track and measure attendance at office hours, completion of an action plan, and progress towards action plan goals
2E	Enroot	Workforce Innovation & Social Enterprise Pilot	Paying job opportunities for immigrant youth; connects students to local Somerville organizations to provide bilingual, culturally fluent digital marketing services.	\$200,000	The success of this project will be measured using Tech Goes Home's (TGH) established evaluation model, which integrates quantitative and qualitative data collection to track progress across learners, instructors, and community partners. Quantitative outcomes will include enrollments, course completions, and certifications, as well as the number of learners who report increased digital literacy across TGH's four core competencies: (1) navigating devices and Wi-Fi, (2) using video conferencing tools, (3) creating and using email/Google tools, and (4) conducting effective internet searches. We will also measure medium- and long-term outcomes such as improved employment opportunities, higher educational attainment, increased access to healthcare and financial tools, and overall improvements in household well-being. Qualitative outcomes will be captured through open-ended survey items, interviews, and focus groups with learners, instructors, and partners. These will document changes in self-efficacy, connection to community, and satisfaction with the program, as well as highlight challenges and areas for improvement. Data collection and tracking methods will use TGH's existing evaluation infrastructure. Learners complete enrollment, mid-course, post-course, and annual surveys; instructors complete post-orientation and post-course surveys; and partners and fellows provide structured feedback annually. All survey data are collected electronically via FormAssembly and integrated into Salesforce dashboards, enabling real-time monitoring of progress. Additional methods include administrative data, case studies, observations, and instructor focus groups. Data are reviewed monthly for quality, analyzed using both descriptive and multivariate methods, and shared with program staff and partners to support continuous improvement. This mixed-method approach ensures the project not only tracks outputs such as enrollments and completions but also evaluates long-term impacts on digital equity, workforce participation, and overall community well-being.

Proposal Number	Lead Agency	Project Name	Program or Activity Design	Program Budget	Outcomes and Measures of Success
2F	MassHire Metro North Workforce Board	Pathways to STEM Careers	Structured, paid internships for Somerville high school seniors (age 18+) in STEM industries, paired with robust job coaching and wraparound support.	\$200,000	We will track both quantitative and qualitative outcomes to assess the success of the internship placements. At least 15 Somerville youth enrolled each summer (2026 and 2027), with a minimum 90% completion rate of the 8-week, 20-hour/week internship program. At least 50% of participants will pursue further education, training, or employment in STEM pathways within 12 months of the internship. 10–12 STEM employers engaged as host sites, with at least 80% expressing willingness to continue offering internships in future cycles. Youth will complete reflection surveys and focus groups, providing insights into how the internship influenced their career interests, confidence, and readiness for the workforce. Host companies will provide feedback on the interns' preparedness, contributions, and growth, as well as the value of the program in supporting their future workforce pipeline.
2G	Per Scholas	Workforce Development Through Technology Training	Expand access to high-growth technology careers by providing tuition-free training in in-demand skills including Cybersecurity, IT Support, and Salesforce Administrator. Additive to technical instruction, we provide holistic support from Financial Coaches and MSW-credentialed Learner Support Managers, match graduates with employer partners ranging from Fortune 500 companies to startups, and offer two years of post-graduation upskilling, support, and professional development.	\$50,000	Enroll 10 learners into training during Year 1 of grant contract 8 learners will graduate (~85%). 6 graduates (80%) will obtain at least one industry-recognized credential (in relevant courses) 6 graduates (80%) will secure employment within remainder of contract, earning at least \$21/hour, and will retain that job for at least 30 days. We have rounded to account for the small numbers of the contract and the shortened timeframe for job attainment and retention. Learners who enroll during Q4 of Year 1 (2026) will graduate by Q1 of Year 2, and advance toward job attainment through Q1 2028, after the grant term concludes.
2H	Somerville Arts Council (Nibble)	Nibble	Entrepreneurship program that equips aspiring food business owners with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to move from concept to launch, Kitchen incubator that gives 2-3 participants a licensed commercial kitchen and restaurant space in which to test, refine, and grow their businesses in real time, and opportunities to vend at ten to twelve Somerville Arts Council festivals, forty-two Farmers' Markets, and numerous community events.	\$50,000	The proposed project period will run through 2027 in alignment with JCRT funding. The NEP eight-week training program will take place January–March of 2026 and 2027, with participants receiving intensive instruction and mentorship. For the remainder of the year, focus will shift to: Supporting new graduates as they test concepts at Nibble Kitchen and at vending events, Continuing mentorship for alumni from previous cohorts, and Coordinating opportunities across Somerville festivals, markets, and cultural events. In both 2026 and 2027, the NEP will directly serve approximately 8-15 entrepreneurs through the training program for a total of up to 30 entrepreneurs. Each year, 2-3 grads from each cohort will go on to have full 1-year residencies in the kitchen (4-6 total). Each year Nibble will facilitate up to 18 cooking classes and 12 Pop-Ups (some taking place in 4-8 week extended pop-up serieses) supporting multicultural exchange and teaching valuable culinary and project management skills. Beyond that, SAC will continue to provide mentoring, kitchen access, and vending opportunities to an active pool of about 30 graduates, ensuring continuity and longterm business sustainability. Collectively, this work is expected to generate new food-based ventures, reinforce existing businesses, and sustain dozens of jobs across the local food economy.
2J	Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences (SCALE)	Contextualized ESOL with Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Training Program	17-week evening program designed to prepare Somerville residents for entry-level CNA jobs. Enrolled learners are required to complete 125 hours of instruction; 100 hours of classroom instruction and 25 hours of clinical instruction. Instruction will cover nursing fundamentals, patient care, safety protocols, and healthcare communication, with English language instruction contextualized to healthcare content.	\$200,000	SCALE aims to enroll 48 adult learners into the Contextualized ESOL with CNA workforce training during the grant period. SCALE will track program success through enrollment, retention, certification, and employment outcomes. For each 17-week cohort, the program will establish the following objectives and benchmarks: Enroll 12 per cohort of Somerville residents, prioritizing English learners and underemployed adults. Maintain a minimum 85% attendance rate across the 17-week program. At least 80% of participants will demonstrate measurable improvement in English language proficiency, as assessed through standardized tools (e.g., BEST Plus, TABE CLAS-E). 90% of participants will successfully complete required classroom instruction and clinical hours in compliance with Department of Public Health standards. At least 75% of participants will sit for the Massachusetts CNA certification exam within 60 days of program completion. Of those testing, 70% or more will pass the state CNA certification exam on their first attempt. Within six months of completing the program, 60% of graduates will obtain employment in healthcare settings such as hospitals, rehabilitation centers, or assisted living facilities. Graduates will report increased confidence in navigating professional settings and pursuing further career pathways. Employers will report satisfaction with program graduates' preparedness, cultural responsiveness, and communication skills.
2K	Somerville Community Corporation (SCC)	SCC Small Business Launchpad	Nine-week curriculum equipping residents with the tools, skills, and networks to launch or formalize businesses.	\$200,000	Forty participants each year will join four nine-week cohorts, each with ten participants. Two cohorts will be delivered in English, one in Spanish, and one in Portuguese, with flexibility to adapt to Haitian Creole if demand requires. At least 70 are expected to complete the nine-week curriculum, graduating with a business plan, a pitch, and the confidence to move forward. Every graduate will also receive a laptop or stipend, ensuring they leave equipped to manage their business in a digital economy. Outcomes will be measured by more than attendance. Drafting a business plan, presenting at a Pitchfest, registering a business, or obtaining first clients will demonstrate progress against systemic barriers that have historically excluded entrepreneurs of color and immigrant residents. We expect at least half of graduates to launch or formalize their businesses within 6–12 months. Qualitative outcomes will also be tracked through surveys and follow-up at 30, 60, and 90 days, measuring shifts in confidence, financial literacy, and digital capacity. SCC's Salesforce database will capture and track this data with fields designed for entrepreneurial milestones. Ultimately, success will be measured by whether the program creates conditions for equitable entrepreneurship. Each business plan, each laptop placed in a graduate's hands, and each Pitchfest where participants claim their place as entrepreneurs will represent concrete steps toward dismantling inequity and strengthening Somerville's economy. Success will be found not only in businesses launched but in the moment a participant sees themselves, perhaps for the first time, as an entrepreneur with the right to succeed.
Proposal Number	Lead Agency	Project Name	Program or Activity Design	Program Budget	Outcomes and Measures of Success

2L	Tech Goes Home	Workforce Readiness for Somerville Housing Authority Residents	Community-based digital literacy and workforce development programming for two cohorts of SHA residents per year for two years (50-60 total). 15+ hours of digital skills training, preparing learners search and apply for jobs online, develop resumes, cover letters, and LinkedIn profiles, navigate industry-specific platforms, such as electronic health records (healthcare) or parent engagement apps (childcare), Manage personal finances online, Access city services, education, and telehealth.	\$50,414	The success of this project will be measured using Tech Goes Home's (TGH) established evaluation model, which integrates quantitative and qualitative data collection to track progress across learners, instructors, and community partners. Quantitative outcomes will include enrollments, course completions, and certifications, as well as the number of learners who report increased digital literacy across TGH's four core competencies: (1) navigating devices and Wi-Fi, (2) using video conferencing tools, (3) creating and using email/Google tools, and (4) conducting effective internet searches. We will also measure medium- and long-term outcomes such as improved employment opportunities, higher educational attainment, increased access to healthcare and financial tools, and overall improvements in household well-being.
2M	Women's Money Matters	EmpowerSomerville: Workforce & Economic Mobility Initiative	Integrated Financial Literacy, Employment, and Mobility Supports for 200 residents via WMM Economic Hub Mobility Hub and Core Programming	\$200,000	Participation & Engagement: Enrollment, attendance, and retention rates. Skills & Credentials: Completion of financial literacy courses and professional certifications. Employment & Economic Impact: Number of job placements, promotions, wage and savings increases, credit score increases, access to apprenticeships or adult education, and household income growth. Business Impact: Employer participation and implementation of improved workplace policies. Program Efficiency: Cost per participant and program completion ratios. Qualitative Outcomes: Participant Growth: Self-reported increases in financial knowledge, confidence, and career navigation skills. Career & Life Advancement: Success stories, overcoming barriers, and increased awareness of pathways. Community & Equity: Perceptions of equitable access to financial tools and workforce development, and strengthened connections to Somerville's economic ecosystem. Employer & Partner Feedback: Insights on workforce readiness and collaborative impact. Number and feedback regarding career coaching skills and hours provided via the hub.