## Non-Profit Organization: Opportunity Junction



## 2018 Impact Grant Award: $108,000

## Project Title: Road Map to College & Career Program

## Focus Area: Education

## Description: In this project Opportunity Junction (OJ) planned to help East Contra Costa “high risk” youth (i.e. those aging out of foster care), aged 19 to 24, find a path to sustainable employment by earning an AA degree, learning a trade, or preparing for transfer to earn a BA/BS degree.

## Early on, OJ found the youth needed more personalized support and guidance to secure part-time jobs to support themselves as they pursued short-term education and training paths to employment. Therefore, OJ refocused their work with the same population by helping participants identify their strengths and barriers and establish personal career goals.

## Initially, career guidance was supported through a partnership with Los Medanos Community College. As the project refocused, it expanded to include enrolling participants in OJ’s well-established Job Training and

## Placement programs, and Technical Education (CTE) certificate programs at other community colleges.

**Results:** While initial goals focused on post-secondary education, the program adapted to participants’ needs by prioritizing rapid employment pathways and vocational credentials. This focus created a stronger, more

achievable model for long-term career advancement with impressive results:

* 92 participants enrolled in core employment programs
* 57 completed short-term training
* 70 were placed in employment that averaged 30 hours per week at hourly earnings from $1.00 to $2.00 above the area’s minimum wage.

Opportunity Junction was successful in securing post-grant funding to sustain the program. These sources

came from SNAP Employment and Training (via Fresh Success), Contra Costa County’s Employment

Training Panel, and Community Development Block Grants. Core foundation support continued through

funded grant proposals, allowing Road Map programming to be integrated into OJ’s broader career

development services.

## Quote/Testimony: A motivated youth with dreams of firefighting, Ben entered the program in 2019. He earned his EMT certification, worked as a non-emergency ambulance driver, and received targeted support throughout college. Despite COVID-19 delays, Ben earned his Fire Technology associate’s degree and is now working full-time as a Fire Aide while pursuing firefighter hiring opportunities.

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