

**YOUNG  INVINCIBLES**

TELLING THE RIGHT STORIES:

**HOW NARRATIVES CAN SHIFT  
APPRENTICESHIP IN TEXAS**



# YOUNG INVINCIBLES

## WHO WE ARE

A national, nonprofit organization committed to elevating the voices of young adults in the political process, and expanding economic opportunity for 18–34 year-olds.

## CORE AREAS

- Healthcare
- Civic Engagement
- Higher Education
- Workforce Development





# **KASEY CORPUS**

*Southern Policy and Advocacy Manager  
Young Invincibles*

# THE APPRENTICESHIP LANDSCAPE IN TEXAS

# WHY THIS MATTERS

## TEXAS ECONOMIC GROWTH MEETS A SKILLS CRISIS



**Rapid Growth:** Texas has the fastest-growing economy in the U.S., adding over 300,000 jobs in the last year.

**The Problem:** Not all Texans benefit equally; women and people of color face persistent poverty and high unemployment rates.

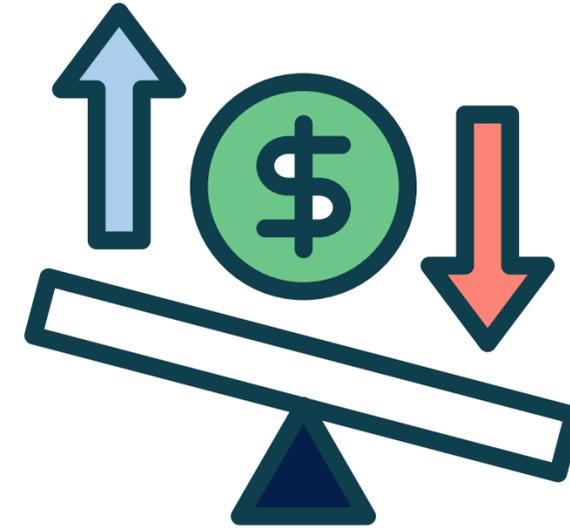
### The Skills Gap:

- **54% of jobs** require skills training beyond high school- **only 45%** of the workforce has the necessary skills.
- It is projected that **70% of jobs** in Texas will require a postsecondary credential, yet only about one-third of Texas high school graduates currently achieve such credentials.

**The Need:** We must create accessible, high-wage pathways that directly fill this demand.

# THE CHALLENGE

## *OUTDATED NARRATIVES & HIGH COSTS*



**Apprenticeship Underutilization:** Despite clear benefits, there are only 32,625 registered apprentices in Texas.

**College Cost vs. Value:** The rising cost of a four-year degree (average \$28,724/year including expenses) and high student debt are fueling widespread skepticism in higher education.

**The Perception Problem:** Apprenticeships are currently viewed through a narrow, outdated lens:

- Limited to "blue-collar" or manual labor trades.
- Framed as a "fallback" or "less prestigious" option compared to a four-year degree.

# OUR CALL TO ACTION

## NARRATIVE CHANGE

**Goal:** To transform the narrative around apprenticeships to increase access for young people, particularly women and young people of color.

Target Industries (High-Demand):

- Health Care
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Information Technology (IT)
- Community and Social Services

*“By shifting focus towards rethinking the way Texans talk about apprenticeships, we can begin to unlock the opportunities apprenticeship programs can provide for young adults.”*

**The Focus:** Reframing apprenticeships as modern, dynamic opportunities that offer critical skills and direct pathways to high-demand careers.

# RESEARCH & FINDINGS

# LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

*Media Audit, Messaging Audit, and In-depth Interviews*



**“High-paying jobs, no college degree required. In this tight labor market, the construction industry is struggling to fill high-paying jobs. The Houston Gulf Coast Building and Construction Trade Council is offering a free course to help people land paid apprenticeships for these jobs, which lets them ‘earn while they learn.’”** – [“FREE COURSE AVAILABLE TO LAND PAID APPRENTICESHIPS IN SKILLED TRADES,” FOX 26 HOUSTON, 01/13/23](#)

**“Apprenticeship programs are a dynamic game-changer reshaping our pursuit of thriving, livable-wage careers, as they skillfully train young people and adults in high-demand competencies, ushering Texans into fulfilling, well-paying jobs.”** – [“A WINNING FORMULA TO KEEP A STRONG TEXAS ECONOMY,” THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS, 1/17/24](#)



# LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

## CURRENT PUBLIC PERCEPTION

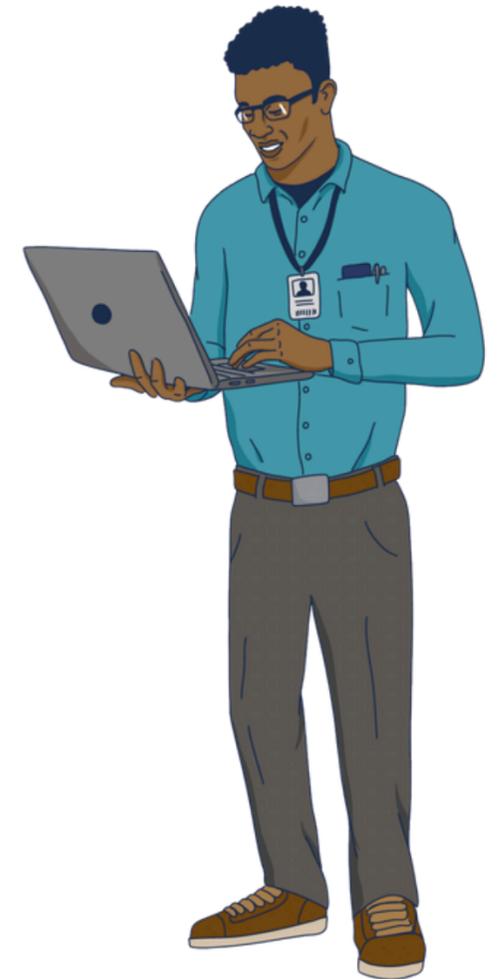
Seen as “backup” or  
“blue-collar only”

Messaging focuses on  
employers, not apprentices

Few real apprentice voices  
or stories

Limited representation:  
mostly men, trades imagery

Inconsistent language:  
earn-while-you-learn,  
work-based learning, apprenticeships



# MINDSET RESEARCH

## UNDERSTANDING THE MINDSET OF YOUNG ADULTS

### Definition #1

#### What is an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship is a type of training that helps people get ready for skilled jobs. In apprenticeship programs, individuals get paid while you work and learn on the job from experienced workers. Individuals also attend classes that relate to their job to learn even more. These programs usually take about one to five years to complete, following the rules set by the industry. Apprenticeships give individuals an education that is focused on practical skills, which can lead to well-paying jobs. Companies also use these programs to find and keep talented workers with high skills.

Source: [Texas Workforce Commission](#)

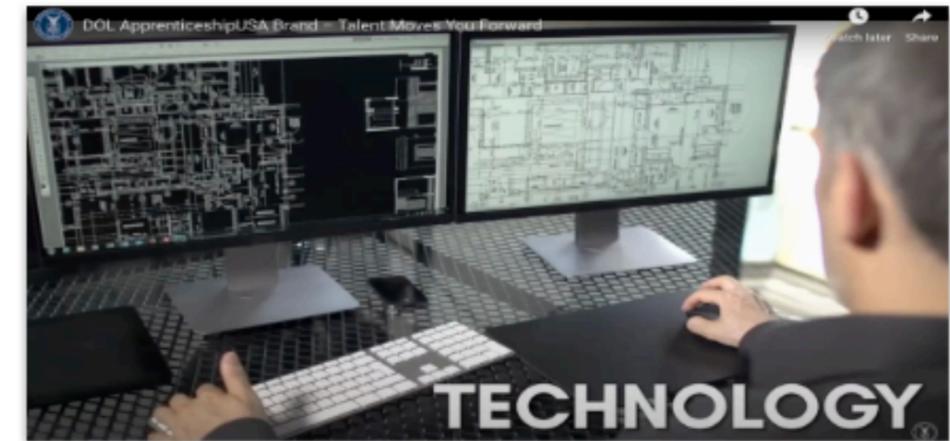
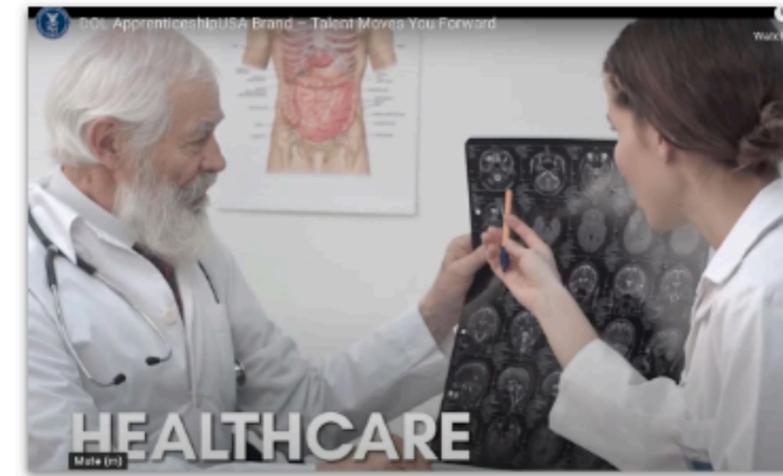
### Definition #2

#### What is an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship is an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally-recognized credential.

- Paid job - Earn a competitive wage from day one
- Education - Gain knowledge from on-the-job learning and job-related classroom training
- Credentials - Earn a portable credential within your industry

Source: [apprenticeships.gov/careerseekers](https://www.apprenticeships.gov/careerseekers)



**“It’s a win-win. There are no cons to it. You get a paycheck. You get work experience. It’s not even up for debate. Just do it.”**

# MINDSET RESEARCH

## *Takeaways*

- Young adults define success beyond income: they value stability, happiness, and autonomy.
- Apprenticeships become more appealing when framed as empowering choices, not fallbacks.
- Misconceptions are easily corrected with clear, authentic storytelling.
- Peers are the most trusted messengers—more than employers or experts.

*“I always thought an apprenticeship was related to trade. I like how the video showed many fields I didn't imagine apprenticeship opportunities being in.”*

**–Black man, League City, TX, 18-24**

*“I want to be in a position where I'm comfortable. [...] Able to buy what I want to buy without stressing, having my own house, not paying rent, fully paid. Being in a comfortable position that I'm not too concerned about student debts and stuff like that.”*

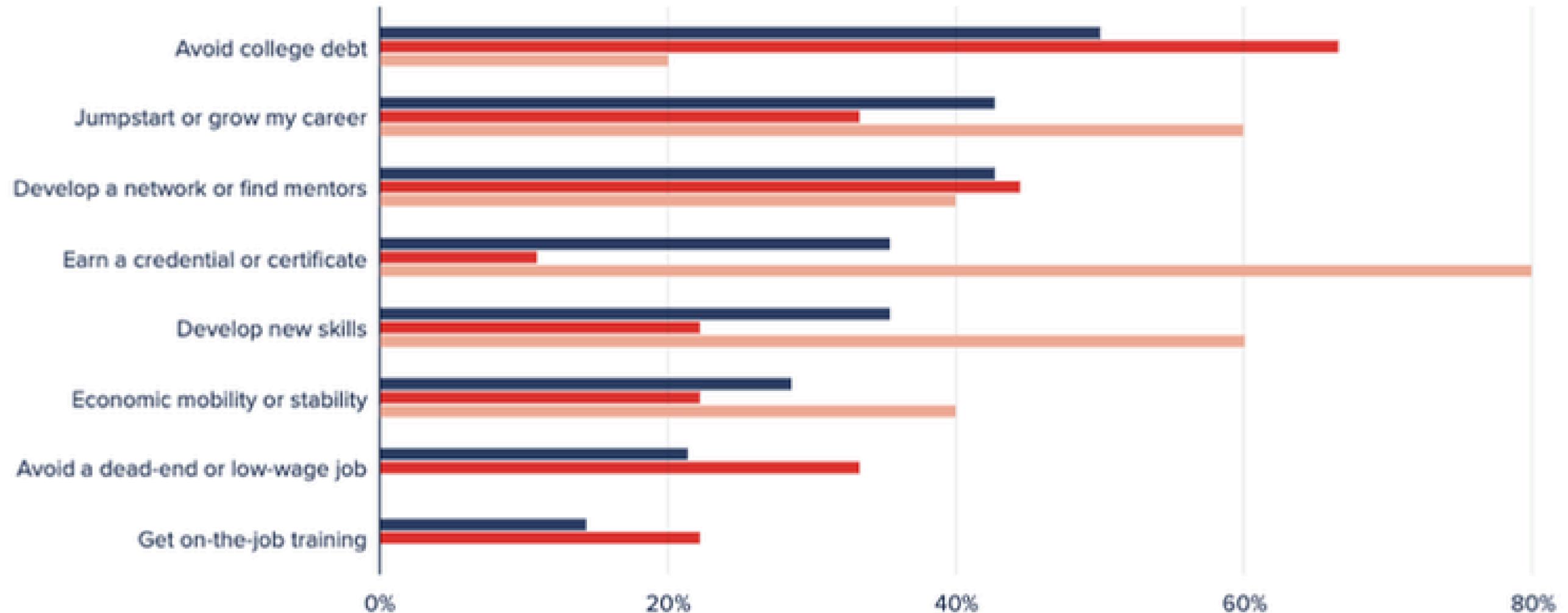
**–Black woman, McKinney, TX, 18-24**

# MINDSET RESEARCH

## *Focus groups with young adults*

### Top Reasons to Consider an Apprenticeship

● Overall ● Young Men ● Young Women



# PERSUASION RESEARCH

## Message testing through stories & surveys

### INVEST IN YOUR FUTURE

#### Jumpstart Your Career in Healthcare with an Apprenticeship

There is a growing demand for skilled workers in the healthcare field. Apprenticeships are an investment in yourself, offering an opportunity to learn directly from industry experts while giving you the support, skills, and experience needed to succeed in the healthcare industry.

- **Earn While You Learn:** Receive a competitive wage as you complete your training. Apprentices in Texas start at \$16 - \$22 per hour.
- **Hands-On Training and Mentorship:** Gain real-world experience by working alongside experienced professionals who guide and mentor you.
- **Certification and Credentials:** Earn industry-recognized certifications that boost your employability.



*"This apprenticeship allowed me to change my career while still making an income. I've gained practical skills, earned my CMA certification, and now have a clear path to a fulfilling career in healthcare."*  
—Brandon Harris, Apprentice

Ready to invest in your future? Visit our website to learn more.

### INVEST IN YOUR FUTURE

#### Jumpstart Your Career in Technology with an Apprenticeship

There is a growing demand for skilled workers in the technology field. Apprenticeships are an investment in yourself, offering an opportunity to learn directly from industry experts while giving you the support, skills, and experience needed to succeed in the technology industry.

- **Earn While You Learn:** Receive a competitive wage as you complete your training. Apprentices in Texas start at \$16 - \$22 per hour.
- **Hands-On Training and Mentorship:** Gain real-world experience by working alongside experienced professionals who guide and mentor you.
- **Certification and Credentials:** Earn industry-recognized certifications that boost your employability.



*"This apprenticeship allowed me to change my career while still making an income. I've gained practical skills, earned my CompTIA A+ certification, and now have a clear path to a fulfilling career in tech."*  
—Laura Rivera, Apprentice

Ready to invest in your future? Visit our website to learn more.

### INVEST IN YOUR FUTURE

#### Jumpstart Your Career in Advanced Manufacturing with an Apprenticeship

There is a growing demand for skilled workers in the advanced manufacturing field. Apprenticeships are an investment in yourself, offering an opportunity to learn directly from industry experts while giving you the support, skills, and experience needed to succeed in the advanced manufacturing industry.

- **Earn While You Learn:** Receive a competitive wage as you complete your training. Apprentices in Texas start at \$16 - \$22 per hour.
- **Hands-On Training and Mentorship:** Gain real-world experience by working alongside experienced professionals who guide and mentor you.
- **Certification and Credentials:** Earn industry-recognized certifications that boost your employability.



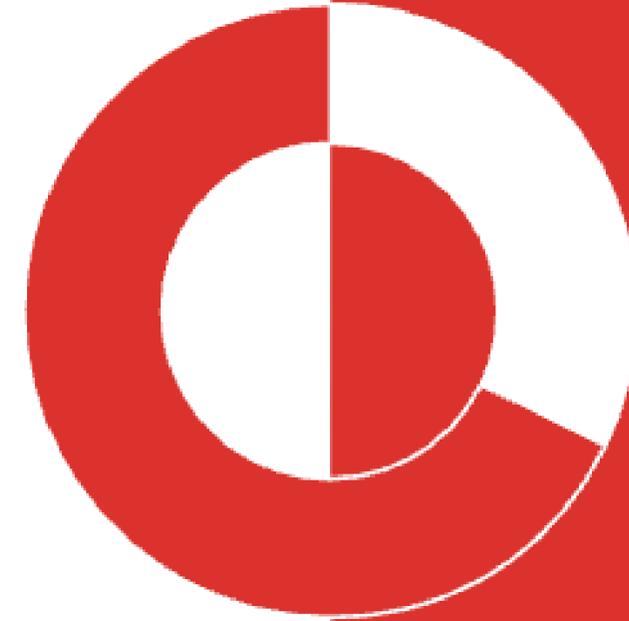
*"This apprenticeship allowed me to change my career while still making an income. I've gained practical skills, earned the engineering certification I needed, and now have a clear path to a fulfilling career in advanced manufacturing."*  
—Ashley Morris, Apprentice

Ready to invest in your future? Visit our website to learn more.

# PERSUASION TESTING RESULTS

## *Message testing through stories & surveys*

- Stories that connect emotionally changed perception in a way that data alone couldn't
- Testimonials outperformed informational content
- Authentic visuals built trust
- Overly polished content reduced credibility
- "College isn't for everyone" narratives resonated deeply



66%

of survey respondents were more likely to consider an apprenticeship after reviewing the marketing materials.

# PERSUASION RESEARCH

## Message testing through stories & surveys

### Apprenticeship Definitions

	Initial	End	
"Apprenticeships train you for trade jobs like welder, electrician, and plumber."	22%	4%	↓
"Apprenticeships combine hands-on experience and education, leading to certifications and skilled employment in various fields—you earn while you learn."	54%	66%	↑
"Apprenticeships help you jumpstart, change, or advance your career through practical experience while being paid."	4%	18%	↑
"Apprenticeships are where you get to explore a career and get trained and mentored by expert in that field."	20%	12%	↓

### How compelling was the test content?



# KEY INSIGHTS

- **Values:** Success = financial stability plus happiness, freedom, and work-life balance.
- **Misperceptions:** Apprenticeships seen as trade-only; confusion with internships/fellowships.
- **Openness:** Misconceptions are easy to fix with simple, authentic information.
- **Motivations:** Avoiding student debt, gaining credentials, exploring careers.
- **Trusted Messengers:** Peers, parents, and relatable stories > formal marketing.

*"[What I liked about the testimonial is] it was [a] personal experience. It is always best to hear a success story. You can always give a person information, but until you actually have the "look I did this and you can too" it isn't as real."*

**–White woman, Texas, 25-29**



# REFRAMING EXAMPLE

## EXAMPLES:

**Before:**

“Apprenticeships fill skills gaps for employers.”



**After:**

“Apprenticeships help Texans build skills and careers that sustain themselves and their families.”

**Before:**

“Apprenticeships are a great option for those who can’t afford college.”



**After:**

“Apprenticeships are a great option for people who want to learn, earn, and have experience in growing industries.”

# **RECOMMENDATIONS: TELLING THE RIGHT STORIES**

# TELLING THE RIGHT STORIES

## REFRAMING THE VALUE PROPOSITION

### REFRAMING THE NARRATIVE



Position apprenticeships as career accelerators, not “alternatives.”

Normalize that college is one of many valid paths.

Focus on empowerment and opportunity, not deficit or “escape from poverty.”

# TELLING THE RIGHT STORIES

## REFRAMING THE VALUE PROPOSITION

### CENTER AUTHENTIC MESSENGERS

Use real apprentices!  
Their pride, challenges, and growth make the story credible.

Introduce the person first, then the program.

Balance emotional outcomes (confidence, purpose) with practical results (credentials, pay).

# TELLING THE RIGHT STORIES

## REFRAMING THE VALUE PROPOSITION

### DIVERSIFY REPRESENTATION

Spotlight women and people of color to demonstrate the breadth of opportunities beyond traditional stereotypes.

Use photography and video that reflect modern, inclusive workplaces.

Include non-trade industries (healthcare, IT, education) to show the diversity of opportunity.

# TELLING THE RIGHT STORIES

*REFRAMING THE VALUE PROPOSITION*

**TAILOR FOR YOUR AUDIENCE**

## **For Employers:**

Talent pipeline,  
retention, ROI, local  
workforce strength.

## **For Young Adults:**

Earn-while-you-  
learn, mentorship,  
flexibility, no debt.

**Avoid blending  
both in one  
message.**

# TELLING THE RIGHT STORIES

## REFRAMING THE VALUE PROPOSITION

### ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

Pair clear definitions and FAQs with relatable storytelling.

Share specifics, like wages, duration, credentials, in plain language.

# TELLING THE RIGHT STORIES

*REFRAMING THE VALUE PROPOSITION*

## LEVERAGE TRUSTED CHANNELS

Counselors, career centers, and social media (TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts)

“Social proof”

Peer-led content and ambassador programs

# RESEARCH TO ACTION

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAKEHOLDERS

- **Adopt narrative standards:** Integrate inclusive language, authentic imagery, and real voices into communications.
- **Partner across systems:** Work with education, workforce, and industry partners align messaging.
- **Pilot a shared campaign:** Use tested story frameworks to co-launch awareness drives or events focused on specific regions or industries. (IT/Healthcare in Dallas)
- **Support amplification:** Share apprentice stories through organizational channels.

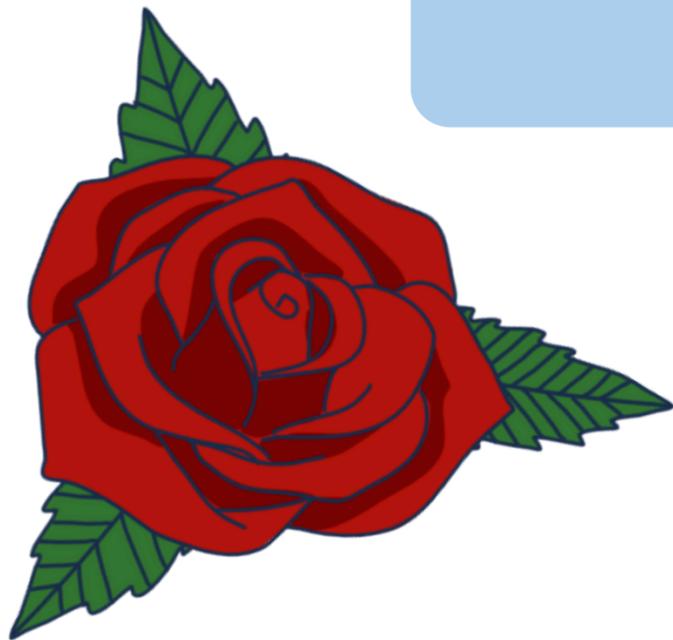
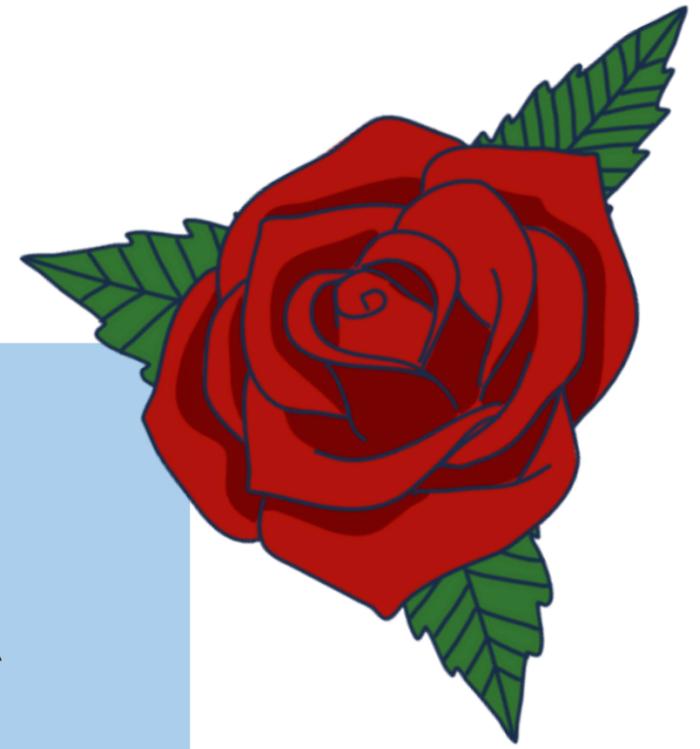


**WHEN WE CHANGE  
THE NARRATIVE,  
WE CHANGE WHO  
SEES THEMSELVES  
IN THE  
OPPORTUNITY.**



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
ATTENTION**

*ANY QUESTIONS?*



# LEARN MORE

**FULL REPORT**



**RECOMMENDATIONS  
2-PAGER**



**CONTACT  
KASEY.CORPUS@YOUNGINVINCIBLES.ORG**