



JFF'S VISION FOR AN

# Equitable Economic Recovery

In response to historic inequities that have only been exacerbated during times of crisis, JFF urges policymakers to think about COVID-19 recovery differently. This recovery must be equitable, with a vision that ensures systemic transformation, fosters community revitalization, and provides individuals from all backgrounds with career and educational opportunities, as well as the supports they need to succeed.

To realize that vision, JFF has created this policy framework for Equitable Economic Recovery, which includes a set of three policy pillars and four guiding principles that provide a road map for how the country can deliver on the promise of economic advancement for all. Now is not the time to focus on “getting back to normal”—back to systems and institutions that were failing far too many people. We need to leapfrog normal and aim for something better. Now is the time to reimagine how to move forward together to a more resilient, more prosperous, and more equitable future.

APRIL 2021

# Pillars of an Equitable Economic Recovery Policy Agenda

The three pillars of our policy framework embody the following objectives: helping people rebound and advance, revitalizing regional economies, and redesigning education and workforce development.

A piecemeal approach that addresses each of those objectives separately will not lead to equitable recovery. Policymakers must adopt a comprehensive and interconnected strategy that spans people, places, and systems to ensure that those who are most in need have access supports that enable them to drive toward economic advancement.

Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels can all embrace this agenda, and they can advance its objectives through both legislative and regulatory means.

Here's a closer look at each pillar, with a breakdown of the elements that policies crafted under the umbrella of that pillar should promote.





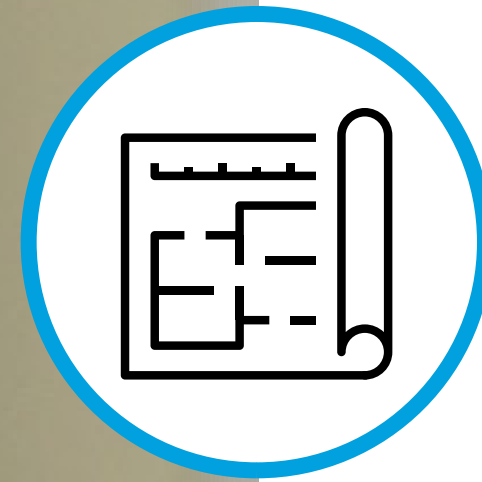
## 1. Helping People Rebound and Advance

- ▶ Rapid skill-building and credential attainment strategies that are aligned to in-demand career paths—especially those involving skills that will prove to be most valuable in the post-COVID labor market, with a focus on individuals hardest hit by the current crisis and those most at risk of being left behind in a recovery.
- ▶ Universal career navigation services that are tech-enabled, place-based, and advancement-driven, and are available to workers and learners in real time, so they can make informed decisions about employment and education pathways.
- ▶ Innovative financing options that enable workers and learners facing economic insecurity to pay for high-quality education and training, and thereby open up new opportunities for re-employment and strengthen their financial stability.
- ▶ Strong financial and social supports for individuals and families currently experiencing poverty or financial distress. Those supports should seamlessly integrate education, workforce development, and human and social services.



## 2. Revitalizing Regional Economies

- ▶ An inclusive approach to economic development that builds diversified and resilient regional economies through strategies that are intentionally designed to benefit vulnerable, disadvantaged communities and encourage investments in small businesses, entrepreneurs, and emerging industries.
- ▶ Efforts to encourage employers to create good jobs—meaning jobs that pay family-supporting wages and provide health insurance and other benefits. Employers also must adopt more equitable and inclusive talent practices and increase their investments in skills training and other educational initiatives that help employees gain the expertise they need to succeed in this changing economy.
- ▶ Regional sector strategies to strengthen talent pipelines, close skill gaps, and limit workforce shortages in industries and occupations critical to regional economic recovery and resilience.
- ▶ Job-generating investments focused on infrastructure projects, including broadband deployments, public health initiatives, transportation projects, and construction of affordable housing. States should also focus on supporting small businesses.



### 3. Redesigning Education and Workforce Development

- ▶ A skills-based education and employment infrastructure that embraces outcomes-focused innovation and recognizes people's skills—no matter where or how they acquired those skills—as the principal measure of how much they've learned, the credentials they're qualified to receive, and their ability to do a job.
- ▶ Accelerated and efficient pathways that provide all learners, especially members of underserved and underrepresented populations, with opportunities to acquire skills and credentials that are valued in the labor market.
- ▶ Integration of learning and work to provide people with real-world opportunities to apply the lessons learned in classroom settings, build professional networks, earn money while they learn, and get a head start on the road to a career.



## Guiding Design Principles for Policy Development

We also believe that, in order to be effective, a policy agenda created to advance an equitable economic recovery must incorporate design principles that promote the following goals:

- ▶ Drive upward mobility. Policy must be designed with a goal of supporting individuals' social mobility and economic advancement.
- ▶ Close equity gaps. Policy must acknowledge current and historic gaps in access to opportunity for individuals and communities and be intentionally designed to close those gaps.
- ▶ Build on what works, while catalyzing innovation. Policy must create incentives that encourage the expansion of evidence-based strategies with a track record of success, while also supporting promising innovations and new interventions, programs, and tools.
- ▶ Integrate and coordinate systems. Policy must support comprehensive approaches to address complex challenges and encourage stakeholders to work outside traditional silos to efficiently and effectively serve the needs of individuals and communities.



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