Nearly half of the US workforce –

53M+

American workers – do not earn a living wage.

Stuck in low-wage jobs, these talented workers have few opportunities to build a better life for themselves and their families.

The American Dream is broken.

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With an economy that's most volatile for those in low-paying jobs, our country's promise and future prosperity depend on building a **new path** for Americans to move from low-wage jobs into upwardly mobile careers.

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Meet Yves

- Yves is **25 years old**; he graduated from high school and enrolled in college, but dropped out when the cost became prohibitive

- He's earning **$24K annually** with no benefits working as a full-time van driver, and previously earned $17K annually working in demolition construction

- He has **~$25K in student debt**, with no degree to show for it

Yves' Current Options

☒ **College**
- Too expensive, too long
- Tried that already

☒ **Bootcamps & Nonprofits**
- Can't do while working full-time
- Too expensive in costs and/or lost wages

☒ **Online Courses**
- Don't know what to take
- Hard to complete alone

☒ **Promotion**
- No way to advance in current role
- Only step up: drive a bigger van

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What Yves needs is a **learning program** that is...

☑ **Focused on in-demand careers**

Employer validated & aligned to a career path

☑ **Fast**

Produces results in months, not years

☑ **Flexible and supported**

Can be completed while working full-time, but with significant support

☑ **Financed based on success**

Low-cost, repayment due only when in a better career

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We envision a world in which anyone can advance their life based on merit, not money.

Merit America provides a path from low-wage work to skilled careers, with programs that are fast, flexible, and focused on what employers need most; and that can be completed while participants manage work and family.

A fast, flexible program **built for working adults**

In-Demand Careers

We partner with major employers and use labor market data to understand the specific skills required for in-demand roles, with a focus on high-growth roles.

Supported Learning

We operate learning programs aligned to those roles that teach technical and professional skills, through a mix of **online learning, coaching, and peer support** - creating an effective, accessible, and scalable model.

Adult Learners

We recruit talented low-income adults who can't participate in full-time training, but have potential to succeed in our program and the careers that follow.

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Validated impact & *wage gains*

9,275
Learners served between 2018 and 2023.

80%
Program completion rate, compared to the current average six-year completion rate for community colleges of 42%.

$24,000
Average annual wage increase across all alumni, 3 or more months post-program, from an average pre-program salary of $26k.
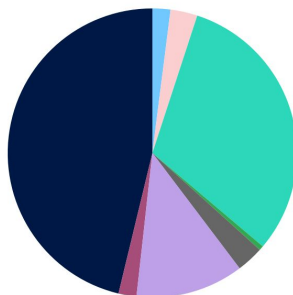
Dr. Ben Castleman, UVA

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Our Learners

come from across all 50 states and Washington, D.C., and identify as:

Race

- American Indian or Alaska Native, 2%
- Asian, 3%
- Black or African American, 31%
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 1%
- Other, 3%
- Two Or More Races, 12%
- Unknown, 2%
- White, European and SWANA (South West Asian/North African), 46%

Includes learners who identify as Hispanic, which is tracked as an ethnicity rather than a race.
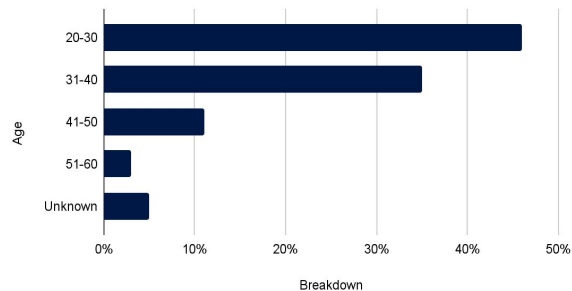
Gender

- Female, 47%
- Nonbinary or other, 13%
- Male, 40%

% of Learners identifying as Hispanic
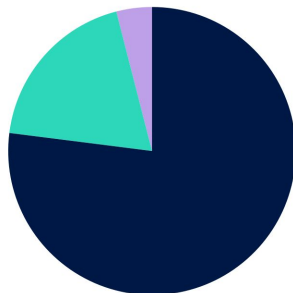
- Not Hispanic, 77%
- Hispanic, 19%
- Unknown, 4%

Age

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Sustainable Financial Model

We sustain our rapid growth through a **diverse mix of funding sources**: learner financing, reskilling partnerships with employers and governments, and catalytic philanthropy.

Our Leadership

Our leadership has deep expertise and operational excellence in education-for-employment, and a proven track record in bringing innovative solutions to scale.

Connor Diemand-Yauman, Co-CEO

Former co-founder & CEO of Philanthropy University; Head of Coursera's B2B Business

Rebecca Taber Staehelin, Co-CEO

Former Coursera Director; Education Advisor to Governor Markell; McKinsey

Norman Atkins, Board Chair

Managing Partner, Together Education

Byron Auguste

CEO & Co-Founder, Opportunity@Work

Yin Lu

Partner, MCJ Collective

Becca Levin

Managing Director, Stanford Management Company

Naomi Bagdonas

Lecturer at Stanford's Graduate School of Business; Author

Ahmmad Brown

Co-Founder & Executive Director, Equity Based Dialogue for Inclusion

Everything we build is designed to scale. In 5 years, we've grown from 15 to 9,275 learners served, from $250K to $40M+ in annual funding, and from 2 founders to a talented 200+ person team.

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Over the next five years, we will...

Serve
25,000+
learners

Build a model that is
80%+
sustainable on earned revenue

Scale to reach
10K+
learners annually

Build public sector partnerships to reach
100,000+
learners annually and drive large-scale systems change

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DRIVING

$1,000,000,000

IN WAGE GAINS

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AND DELIVERING

$33 in social ROI

FOR EVERY $1 IN PHILANTHROPY
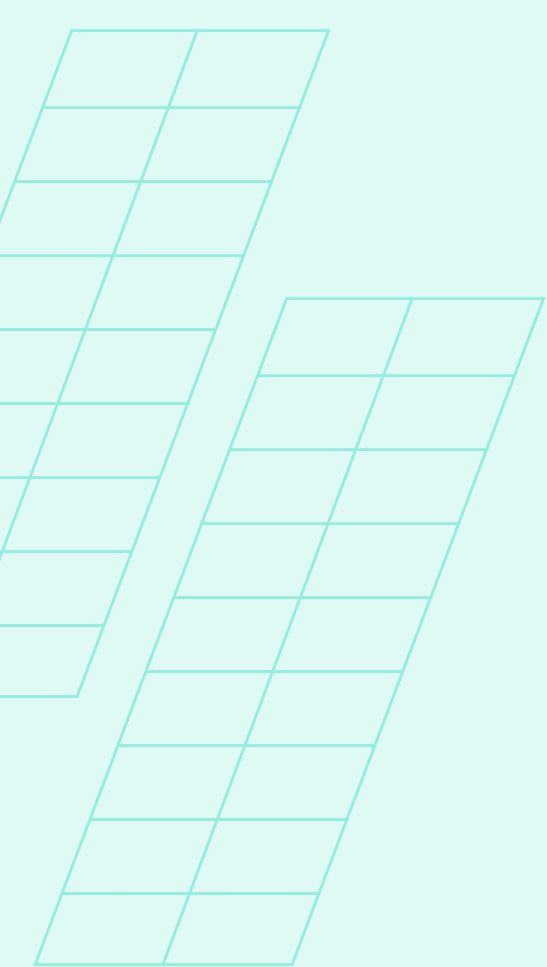
YVES' RESULTS

$28,000 Wage Gain

Yves secured a job as a Help Desk Technician, with full benefits and advancement opportunities.

See a 2-minute video of Yves' story →

"Merit America helped me change my life, with relentless support and dedication to my success. I used to have a job, but now I have a career."

Thank you!

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Appendix

American workers need programs designed for their advancement

Current options for American workers:

College
- Too expensive, too long

Bootcamps & Nonprofits
- Can't do while working full-time
- Too expensive in costs and/or lost wages

Online Courses
- Don't know what to take
- Hard to complete alone

American workers need a program that is:

Focused on in-demand careers
- Employer validated & aligned to a career path

Fast
- Produces results in months, not years

Flexible and supported
- Can be completed while working full-time, but with significant support

Financed based on success
- Low-cost, due only when in a better career

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America needs programs that work for working adults at scale

Impact for working adults

To work for working adults, programs must be:

- Low-cost
- Fast
- Flexible
- Supported
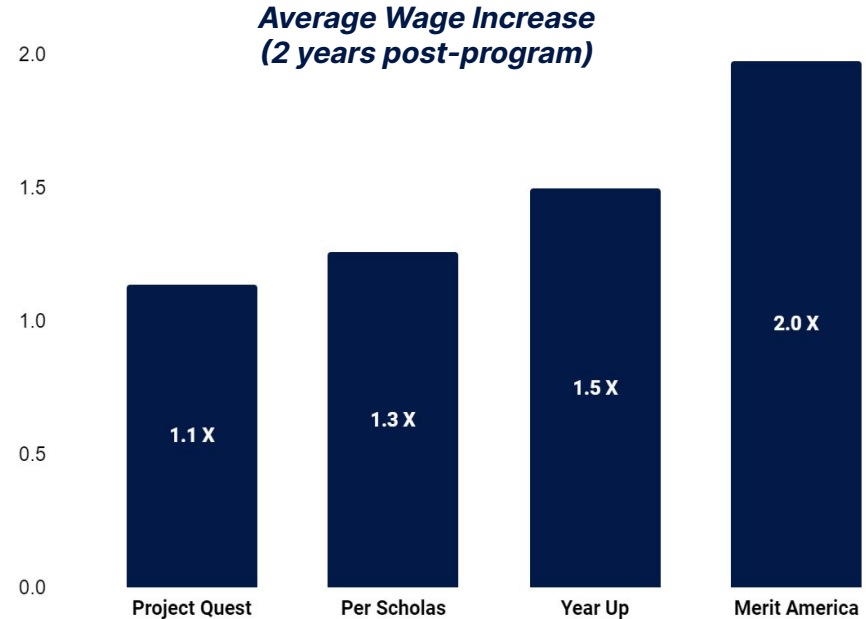- Able to consistently and significantly increase wages

At scale

To impact the 53M+ American workers in need of advancement programs must be structured to scale:

- Low-cost to serve one learner
- Sustainable revenue model
- Not dependent on philanthropy
- Able to grow fast and meet workers where they are

@

Merit America produces an *average wage gain of $24,000* within 3+ months of completion

Merit America's *average wage gain is 68% higher* per learner than other similar programs:

Average Wage Increase (2 years post-program)

	Value
Project Quest	1.1 X
Per Scholas	1.3 X
Year Up	1.5 X
Merit America	2.0 X

Merit America is poised to address the needs of learners and the market at scale

Financially sustainable for fast growth

- Merit America's cost to serve one learner is $9K less than similar programs, on average

- Merit America's earned revenue model limits dependence on philanthropy

Flexible & feasible for working learners

- Merit America's programs are designed to be completed while working full time

- Coaches support learners in managing their workload with a full-time job

Meets learners where they are

- Programs are fully online

- Merit America learners live across the country and have accepted new jobs in all 50 states

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Additional Learner Stories

Meet Toya

Information Technology Consultant at Intact Technology

$0
Pre-program Salary

$62,000
Post-program Salary

+$62,000
Wage Gain

Toya came to Merit America with a long career in the financial services industry. Despite being critical to her team's success, she wasn't satisfied with her career progress.

Toya had a passion for tech; she'd studied computer science at DePaul University but never finished her degree. She joined Merit America's IT Support program and dove back into the tech world. From system administration to cybersecurity, Toya built the skills to earn the Google IT Certificate.

Toya also found invaluable professional skills training with her coach and squad. She grew her network and landed a full-time IT Consultant position at Intact Technology, where she continues to work four years later.

"Merit America is invested in helping people succeed not only in their work life, but in life in general."

#WhyMeritMatters

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Meet Willie

Technical Support Technician at 3CLogic

$21,000
Pre-program Salary

$40,000
Post-program Salary

+$19,000
Wage Gain

Willie came to Merit America to turn his passion for tech into a career. He was working in a gym when he joined Merit America's IT Support program. At work, he was helping people become physically stronger, while in his free time, he was strengthening his professional & technical skills through Merit America. Balancing work and career training wasn't easy, but Willie's coach was there to provide extra push.

"I learned a lot of skills I was never taught. The coach meetings gave me the accountability I needed to succeed."

After the program, Willie landed a job at the intersection of his experience, new skills, and passion, administering solutions at a cloud-based software company. He uses the technical and professional skills he built through Merit America while leveraging the customer service skills he picked up in retail.

"I learned a lot of skills I was never taught. The coach meetings gave me the accountability I needed to succeed."

#WhyMeritMatters

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Meet Elizabeth

Software Engineer at JP Morgan Chase

$35,000
Pre-program Salary

$80,000
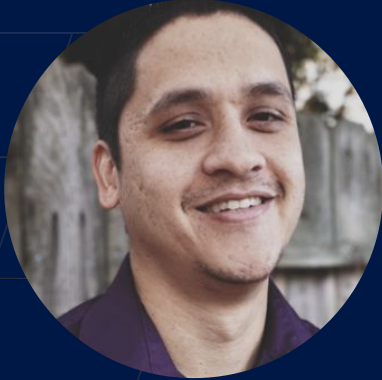**Post-program Salary**

+$45,000
Wage Gain

Elizabeth came to Merit America as an independent business owner, where she provided mortgage closing and mobile notary services in DFW. Owning her own business was no easy task; she was constantly working, while juggling school and parenting responsibilities.

With help from her professional and technical coaches, Elizabeth thrived in the Merit America program. The program was rigorous but it was flexible enough to fit in her busy life.

With a new skill set and support from her Merit America team, Elizabeth was ready to hit the job market. Within 9 months of starting her training, Elizabeth started her new career as a Software Engineer at JPMorgan Chase.

"I have always wanted to learn Java and had looked at options available at the community colleges. It was going to cost me more in finances and longer to finish had I pursued Java at a community college. I am therefore grateful for the opportunity offered by Merit America."

#WhyMeritMatters

Meet Rey

Marketing Specialist at Zennify

$30,833
Pre-program Salary

$55,000
Post-program Salary

+$24,167
Wage Gain

When the pandemic hit, Rey lost his job installing fireplaces in Sacramento, Calif., and he and his family had to move in with his grandparents. He had always been interested in technology, so he enrolled in the Google IT Support Certificate through Merit America. After completing the program in three months, he was hired as an apprentice at Zennify, a computer software company.

#WhyMeritMatters

"Merit America has changed so much for me that I couldn't be more grateful. For all my life, I've felt like I would never get out of the dead end that I was in."

Learn more about Rey's story here.

Meet Bruce

Engineering Apprentice at Molecula

$0
Pre-program Salary

$56,160
Post-program Salary

+$56,160
Wage Gain

Bruce was our first learner to be placed at Molecula as an Engineering Apprentice. Bruce impressed the Molecula team with this "servant leader" attitude and was able to pass an extremely difficult technical assessment as part of the interview process. Bruce will be making $27/hr as an apprentice. Prior to Merit America, he wasn't working, so this is an amazing opportunity for him to start his career in Software Engineering.

"Merit America has greatly improved my coding abilities, and my job prospects. Beyond this, my professional skills are much better, including searching for jobs!"

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Meet Brandon

Technology Solutions Coordinator at Equal Rights Center

$18,850
Pre-program Salary

$45,000
Post-program Salary

+$26,150
Wage Gain

Before Merit America, Brandon worked in restaurant service. In the past, Brandon had held technology roles and started studying IT in college. But he never finished his degree and companies weren't responding to his past experience.

He ended up working in restaurants and was consistently receiving strong praise for his work — but the field had limited opportunities for advancement.

Through Merit America's IT Support Learning Program, Brandon refreshed his tech acumen and leveraged the program's resources to master interviewing, resume, and cover letter skills.

In less than a month after the program ended, Brandon found a full-time tech role in a company that he believes in.

"I had difficulties translating my existing IT experience into new job offers. Merit America seemed like the perfect extra support I needed to begin my career."

#WhyMeritMatters

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