

Jumpstart Automotive Training Center

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Jumpstart Automotive Training Center: Preparing DeKalb Youth for Careers in the Automotive Repair Industry Project

Summary

The Jumpstart Automotive Training Center (Jumpstart) respectfully requests \$25,000 to expand its tuition-free automotive training program for DeKalb County residents. This initiative will provide under-resourced young adults with technical training, wraparound support, and job placement assistance to prepare them for indemand careers in Georgia's automotive repair industry. At least eight DeKalb County youth will benefit directly in 2025–2026, with projected growth as Jumpstart relocates to a larger facility on Moreland Avenue near the DeKalb County line.

Challenges Students Face

The young adults Jumpstart serves often carry more than just a lack of work experience—they face real-life instability. Many are unemployed or under-employed when they apply, with limited access to reliable transportation, educational resources, or consistent housing. Some are experiencing homelessness or facing legal issues that can complicate their pathway to employment. These students often lack a support network and face additional barriers such as unresolved trauma.

Without targeted support, these challenges can prevent young people from engaging in training or securing stable employment. Jumpstart's holistic approach is designed to meet these needs head-on. In addition to hands-on automotive instruction, the program provides mentorship, daily meals, transportation assistance, emergency financial aid, and career readiness coaching. These wraparound services help students remain focused on their training and build a foundation for long-term success.

Organizational Overview

Jumpstart is the only nonprofit in metro-Atlanta dedicated exclusively to preparing young people ages 15–25 for careers as automotive technicians. The organization offers early exposure to the trade through its Introductory Training Program (ITP) for youth ages 15–17, while young adults ages 18–25 are eligible for workforce-focused programs that lead directly to employment. Those ages 18–25 who have no prior mechanical experience also begin with ITP to build foundational knowledge before advancing to the Entry-Level Technician Program.

Since its founding in 2014, Jumpstart has trained more than 300 students and placed the majority of employment program graduates in full-time jobs with leading automotive employers. In 2024, 37 students graduated from Jumpstart's three-tier training model — Introductory, Entry-Level Technician, and Advanced-Level Technician — which features hands-on instruction on real customer vehicles. Also in 2024, 86% of Entry-Level & Advanced-Level Technician Program graduates secured employment within three months of program completion.

Need and Opportunity

Automotive repair is a high-demand industry in Georgia, with the state projected to need nearly 24,000 technicians by 2028. The average annual wage for an automotive technician in Georgia is approximately \$59,510, with even higher earnings in metro Atlanta. Employers across the region consistently struggle to fill open roles, citing a shortage of skilled, workforce-ready candidates.

While the demand for technicians grows, many young adults in DeKalb County face systemic barriers that prevent them from accessing training and employment. Approximately 90% of Jumpstart students come from low- to moderate-income households, and 46% are unemployed at enrollment. Without targeted support and hands-on training, these young adults risk long-term disconnection from the labor force.

Scope of Work

Jumpstart's training model is built on practical, employer-aligned learning. Students progress through three training tiers based on skill level:

• The Introductory Training Program (ITP) is a 4-week, part-time course designed to spark interest in the trade

- The Entry-Level Program (ELT) 10-week, full-time course that prepares students for immediate employment in entry-level roles
- The Advanced-Level Training Program (ALT) is a 16-week intensive program for students with an emphasis on mid-level diagnostic and repair work

All training takes place in a live shop environment, where students work on real customer vehicles. This handson approach deepens technical skill, builds confidence, and simulates the pace and expectations of an actual repair facility. Students leave Jumpstart prepared to contribute from day one on the job. Importantly, customer repair revenue generates approximately 35% of Jumpstart's annual operating budget, helping sustain program delivery while reinforcing real-world experience for students.

Jumpstart also offers comprehensive wraparound support. Students receive daily meals, transportation assistance, and access to emergency financial aid for housing, utilities, and legal needs. Staff also support resume writing, interview prep, and job applications to ensure a successful transition into employment.

Hands-On Learning and Employer Partnerships

Repairing real customer vehicles is a key differentiator in Jumpstart's model. Students perform repairs under instructor supervision for members of the public who bring in their cars for service. This real-world responsibility teaches students how to diagnose issues accurately, manage time efficiently, and communicate effectively -- critical skills in a commercial setting.

Jumpstart graduates are highly sought after by employers because they are not only experienced, but graduate with multiple industry-recognized certifications that reflect their readiness for the field. Students earn value-added credentials such as Motor Vehicle Air Conditioning (MVAC) and a Hunter - Level 1 Wheel Alignment certification—stackable skills that enhance job placement and increase earning potential.

Jumpstart partners with a robust network of automotive employers, including Nalley/Asbury Automotive Dealerships, Hennessy Dealerships, EH Automotive, and Terry Cullen Chevrolet. Jumpstart maintains relationships with nearly all major dealerships across Metro Atlanta, creating a strong and growing pipeline of employment opportunities for graduates. These employers actively recruit Jumpstart graduates and collaborate with staff to align training with current workforce needs. Jumpstart maintains regular communication with hiring managers to ensure strong job matches and long-term success for students.

Student Success Stories

The impact of Jumpstart's program is best captured in the stories of its graduates:

Lanna was experiencing homelessness when she first enrolled in the Entry-Level Technician Program. After graduating, she became the first female technician hired at Marietta Toyota and now works at Hertz Fleet Services. "Jumpstart turned my life around," she said. "They took me in as family and cared for me like family, and that made all the difference."

Damon had spent nearly one-third of his life involved in the criminal justice system before joining Jumpstart. After completing the program, he launched his own mobile auto repair business, reconnected with his family, and created a legal path forward. His story is a powerful example of how technical training, combined with mentorship and opportunity, can break cycles of poverty and instability.

Proposed Use of Funds

This \$25,000 request will directly support DeKalb County participants in the following ways:

- Cover costs of tools, equipment, and vehicle repair parts
- Provide meals and transportation for daily attendance
- Fund emergency support services such as rent, utilities, and legal aid
- Support job placement and workforce readiness efforts

Budget Summary (Total Project Cost: \$120,000)

It costs roughly \$15,000 to train each student. Jumpstart plans to serve 8 DeKalb County students in 2025–2026.

- \$52,000 Tools, equipment, and vehicle repair parts
- \$32,000 Student transportation and meals
- \$24,000 Emergency support services (housing, legal, financial aid)
- \$12,000 Job readiness and career placement resources

The \$25,000 requested from DeKalb County will be used alongside funding from other philanthropic partners, corporate donors, and grantmakers who support workforce development and youth opportunity in metro Atlanta. These additional sources will cover the remaining costs to ensure that all DeKalb County students can participate in and complete the program successfully.

Timeline and Outcomes

The project will be launched in 2025. Although Jumpstart currently serves students from DeKalb County through its broader metro Atlanta programming, this partnership will initiate a targeted effort to recruit and support more DeKalb residents. Training for the first cohort will begin in 2025, with at least 8 students graduating by the end of 2026.

Jumpstart tracks attendance, certification completion, job placement, and long-term retention using Salesforce. Students also complete surveys to assess confidence and preparedness, ensuring accountability and continuous program improvement.

Deliverables

By the end of 2026, Jumpstart will graduate at least 8 youth and young adults from DeKalb County through its hands-on automotive training programs. All participants will receive wraparound support services—including meals, transportation assistance, and emergency financial aid, if needed—to support their successful completion of the program.

Key deliverables include:

- Graduation of at least 8 Dekalb County youth and young adults by the end of 2026
- Delivery of daily meals, transportation support, and emergency assistance for all enrolled participants
- Issuance of industry-recognized certifications such as MVAC (Motor Vehicle Air Conditioning) and Hunter-Level 1 Wheel Alignment
- Job placement within three months for approximately 85% of Entry-Level Technician (ELT) graduates and 100% of Advanced-Level Technician (ALT) graduates
- At least 95% of ELT and ALT students report that they feel well-prepared to enter the workforce
- Completion tracking for graduates of the Introductory Training Program (ITP)
- Ongoing data tracking and performance reporting to DeKalb County, including enrollment, training progress, certification outcomes, and employment results

Conclusion

Jumpstart's training program transforms lives through access to high-demand careers. With this \$25,000 investment, DeKalb County youth will gain the tools, experience, and support they need to succeed—not only as automotive technicians but as leaders in their families and communities. Jumpstart provides more than workforce training; it creates pathways to stability, purpose, and a better future for Georgia's next generation.

Sincerely,

Larry Witherspoon, Jr. Executive Director Jumpstart Automotive Training Center