



CAMDEN COMMUNITY
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CAMDEN WORKS

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

Advancing Economic Mobility
& Workforce Opportunity
in Camden



BUILDING
PATHWAYS



CONNECTING
TALENT



DRIVING
ECONOMIC
MOBILITY

Partnering for a **stronger Camden**
and an **equitable future.**



CAMDEN WORKS



Annual Report (2025)

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Background

Camden Works was launched in October 2019 as a collaborative workforce initiative led by Camden Community Partnership (formerly Cooper’s Ferry Partnership) and supported by a coalition of corporate, philanthropic, and community-based partners. The initiative was made possible through the leadership and early investment of private-sector and philanthropic partners, including George E. Norcross, III, Chairman of the Cooper University Health Care Board of Trustees, and Susan Story, then-Chief Executive Officer of American Water. As the co-founders and initial donors, their financial contributions and guidance fueled the commitment to expanding economic opportunity in the City of Camden.

Managing Partners – including the NAACP New Jersey State Conference, Latin American Economic Development Association, Center for Family Services, Volunteers of America Delaware Valley, the Camden County Workforce Development Board, and Hopeworks – collaborated to establish and oversee the initiative, bringing extensive community expertise and service delivery capacity to the model.

The program was conceived in a pivotal moment for the City of Camden. While the city had begun to experience renewed investment and declining unemployment – reaching a 30-year low in 2019 – many residents remained disconnected from employment opportunities both within Camden and across the broader regional economy. At the same time, there was no centralized system to align workforce training, employer demand, and resident access. Employers faced challenges identifying local talent, while residents often lacked clear, coordinated pathways to available jobs.

Camden Works was designed to address this disconnect. Structured initially as a four-year, privately funded pilot initiative, the program aimed to streamline the connection between employers and Camden residents seeking employment. By working directly with employers, identifying workforce needs, and supporting residents in overcoming common barriers to employment, Camden Works sought to build pathways for residents to participate in the city’s economic growth.

From its inception, the initiative has championed a coordinated, partnership-driven approach – bringing together private-sector leaders, philanthropic partners, and community organizations to build a more responsive and aligned workforce ecosystem. Early investments from prominent corporate and institutional partners – such as Cooper University Health Care, American Water

Works Company, United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey, Wells Fargo, NFI Industries, Conner Strong & Buckelew, The Michaels Organization and The Philadelphia 76ers – were instrumental in establishing Camden Works as a scalable, model of cross-sector collaboration and shared commitment to inclusive economic growth. These early commitments demonstrated a powerful collective dedication to ensuring that Camden’s economic development is not only robust but also truly inclusive and accessible to all residents.

The program focused on placing Camden residents in full-time employment while prioritizing populations facing barriers to entering the workforce, including returning citizens, recent graduates, and displaced workers. Camden Works was not designed to replace existing hiring practices, but to strengthen and align them – serving as a central connector between job seekers, training providers, and employers.

Through case management, workforce-readiness support, and access to training and skill-development resources, Camden Works provided a holistic service to promote job placement and early retention. When launched, the initiative set a goal of supporting the hiring of 100 Camden residents annually. Since November 2019, Camden Works and its immediate partners have collectively supported the hiring of more than 1,700 Camden residents across a range of industries, both within the City of Camden and throughout the broader regional economy.

However, during implementation, a deeper and more complex challenge emerged. While improving access to employment is essential, job placement alone does not ensure long-term stability or upward mobility. Many residents continue to face structural barriers that extend beyond initial employment, while employers increasingly seek a workforce prepared not only for entry-level roles, but for growth within evolving industries.

In response, Camden Works has evolved from a job placement initiative into a broader strategy focused on economic mobility and long-term financial stability. Today, the initiative operates at the intersection of workforce development, employer demand, and economic inclusion—aligning residents with sector-based career pathways, strengthening workforce readiness, and supporting opportunities for wage progression and advancement.

As this work has matured, Camden Works is increasingly positioned to serve as the vehicle for implementing more comprehensive workforce strategies – integrating employer engagement, training alignment, and supportive services that help residents sustain employment and build economic stability over time. This includes strengthening connections to resources that support financial capability and long-term wealth building, ensuring that employment outcomes translate into lasting economic impact for individuals and families.

What began as a targeted workforce pilot has matured into a core component of Camden’s economic infrastructure – one that not only connects residents to jobs, but helps position them to participate in and benefit from the city’s continued economic growth. As Camden’s economy continues to evolve, Camden Works remains essential to ensuring opportunity is both accessible and sustainable for Camden residents.

Economic Climate

Camden’s economic landscape continues to evolve, shaped by significant public and private investment, the expansion of anchor institutions, and growing connections to the regional economy. While these developments signal meaningful progress, they also underscore a critical challenge: ensuring that Camden residents are positioned to access and benefit from this growth. Despite declining unemployment and increased job creation, disparities in workforce participation, educational attainment, and access to career pathways persist¹ – reinforcing the need for coordinated, place-based workforce strategies such as Camden Works.

Camden’s continued momentum is further reflected in a series of major public- and private-sector investments that are reshaping the city’s economic landscape. These include a \$95 million expansion by the Coriell Institute for Medical Research², expected to create approximately 150 new permanent jobs and 100 construction jobs³, as well as a \$250 million public sector investment by NJ Transit⁴ to redevelop the Walter Rand Transportation Center – strengthening Camden’s role as a critical regional transit hub and improving access to employment opportunities throughout the region. Complementing this investment is the proposed Glassboro-Camden Line⁵, which will further enhance regional connectivity and expand access to education, healthcare, and employment corridors across South Jersey.

Anchoring this growth is a transformational \$3 billion campus expansion by Cooper University Health Care⁶, reinforcing Camden’s position as a regional hub for healthcare and life sciences and generating significant employment opportunities across clinical, administrative, and support roles. Private sector investment is also accelerating, including an estimated \$500 million development of the Beacon Building⁷, which is expected to become the tallest commercial building in South Jersey, along with a \$500 million expansion by Virtua Health at Our Lady of Lourdes⁸, further strengthening Camden’s role within the regional healthcare ecosystem.

¹ Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. (2023). *Reinventing our communities: Inclusive growth and workforce participation*. <https://www.philadelphiafed.org>

² Coriell Institute for Medical Research. (2023). *Coriell announces \$95 million expansion to advance biomedical research in Camden*. [Press release]. <https://www.coriell.org>

³ Coriell Institute for Medical Research. (2023). *Expansion project overview and projected job creation*. [Press release]. <https://www.coriell.org>

⁴ NJ Transit. (2024). *Walter Rand Transportation Center redevelopment project overview*. <https://www.njtransit.com>

⁵ New Jersey Department of Transportation. (2024). *Glassboro-Camden Line project overview*. <https://www.nj.gov/transportation>

⁶ Cooper University Health Care. (2023). *Project Imagine: Transforming health care in Camden*. [Press release]. <https://www.cooperhealth.org>

⁷ New Jersey Economic Development Authority. (2024). *Beacon Building development project summary*. <https://www.njeda.gov>

⁸ Virtua Health. (2023). *Virtua Health announces \$500 million investment in Camden and South Jersey* [Press release]. <https://www.virtua.org>

Additional momentum includes renewed strategic focus by the South Jersey Port Corporation⁹ to expand access to employment and economic opportunity for Camden residents, as well as expansion by companies such as ResinTech Inc. and ActionPak Inc.¹⁰, which are adding more than 35,000 square feet of industrial space. These investments – along with ongoing infrastructure and roadway improvements – are expected to generate new employment opportunities across key sectors, including healthcare, construction, logistics, and professional services. As this growth continues, the need to align workforce development efforts with employer demand becomes increasingly urgent – ensuring that Camden residents are prepared to access, compete for, and succeed in the jobs being created.

At the same time, key labor market indicators highlight persistent challenges. While unemployment in Camden has declined significantly from pandemic-era highs, it remains elevated to statewide benchmarks – approximately 8.8 percent compared to 5.4 percent statewide as of late 2025¹¹. Labor force participation also lags behind regional averages, reflecting ongoing barriers to workforce entry. Educational attainment remains a critical factor shaping employment outcomes, with approximately 69 percent of Camden residents age 25 and older holding a high school diploma or equivalent, and just over 10 percent holding a bachelor’s degree or higher¹². These disparities limit access to many in-demand roles and reinforce the need for workforce strategies that prioritize credential attainment, skills development, and career pathway alignment.

Camden’s workforce dynamics must also be understood within the context of the Greater Philadelphia regional labor market, where employers across healthcare, logistics, education, and professional services continue to experience demand for skilled talent¹³. While Camden’s proximity to major employment centers presents a significant advantage, access to these opportunities is not automatic. Transportation, awareness of job opportunities, and alignment between training programs and employer needs all influence whether residents are able to fully participate in the regional economy.

In addition to labor market conditions, many residents face structural barriers that impact their ability to secure and sustain employment. These include limited access to reliable transportation, childcare, digital connectivity, and career navigation resources¹⁴. At the same time, employers across key sectors report ongoing challenges in identifying and retaining qualified talent¹³ –

⁹ South Jersey Port Corporation. (2024). *Strategic plan and workforce development initiatives*. <https://www.southjerseyport.com>

¹⁰ ResinTech Inc. (2024). *Facility expansion announcement*. <https://www.resintech.com>
ActionPak Inc. (2024). *Operations expansion and facility growth*. <https://www.actionpakinc.com>

¹¹ New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. (2025). *Local area unemployment statistics: Camden City and State of New Jersey*. <https://www.nj.gov/labor>

¹² U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). *American Community Survey 5-year estimates: Educational attainment, Camden City, NJ*. <https://www.data.census.gov>

¹³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024). *Occupational outlook and regional employment projections: Greater Philadelphia region*. <https://www.bls.gov>

¹⁴ Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. (2022). *Workforce barriers and labor market participation in the Third District*. <https://www.philadelphiafed.org>

particularly for roles that offer opportunities for advancement but require specific skills or certifications. This disconnect between job availability and workforce readiness reinforces the need for coordinated, intermediary-driven solutions.

Together, these conditions present both a challenge and an opportunity. Camden is experiencing measurable economic growth, supported by significant institutional and private investment. However, without intentional alignment between workforce development systems and employer demand, many residents risk being left behind. Camden Works plays a critical role in bridging this gap – serving as a connector between residents, employers, and training providers, and ensuring the city’s economic momentum translates into meaningful, long-term opportunity for its residents.

Looking ahead, continued growth in healthcare, life sciences, infrastructure, and emerging sectors will further shape Camden’s economic trajectory. As these industries expand, the importance of preparing a workforce that is skilled, adaptable, and connected to opportunity will only increase. Camden Works is well-positioned to meet this moment – advancing strategies that not only connect residents to employment but also support long-term mobility and participation in a rapidly evolving regional economy.

Reinventing Our Communities: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

In March 2025, Camden formally completed the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia’s Reinventing Our Communities (ROC) Program¹⁵, a 14-month learning and capacity-building initiative designed to help communities strengthen local economies by addressing the root causes of economic immobility and advancing more coordinated, inclusive systems¹⁶. Camden was selected as one of just 11 communities nationwide to participate in the 2024 cohort.

Co-led by Camden Community Partnership and Rutgers University-Camden, Camden’s cohort convened a cross-sector group – including the City of Camden, Center for Family Services, Hopeworks, Saint Joseph’s Carpenters Society, and the Rowan University/Rutgers-Camden Board of Governors – to participate in workshops, peer exchanges, and technical assistance grounded in national best practices and systems-level approaches.

The ROC experience reinforced that improving employment outcomes in Camden requires more than job placement; it requires stronger alignment between residents, training providers, and employers, paired with the wraparound supports that make career advancement possible – such as transportation, digital access, and other critical resources¹⁷. Just as importantly, ROC provided Camden leaders with a shared language, practical frameworks, and data-informed perspectives

¹⁵ Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. (2024). *Reinventing our communities (ROC) program overview and 2024 cohort selection*. <https://www.philadelphiafed.org>

¹⁶ Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. (2023). *Reinventing our communities: Program structure, learning framework, and capacity-building approach*. <https://philadelphiafed.org>

¹⁷ Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. (2022). *Workforce development, economic mobility, and the role of wraparound supports*. <https://www.philadelphiafed.org>

that are already strengthening the strategic direction of Camden Works – particularly in employer engagement, inclusive hiring practices, and coordinated collaboration across partners.

As Camden Works continues to grow as a citywide platform connecting residents to opportunity, ROC has served as a meaningful catalyst – accelerating Camden’s broader economic mobility efforts and positioning Camden’s partnership network to pursue deeper, more coordinated impact for residents and employers alike.

These system-level insights also reinforced the importance of addressing practical, day-to-day barriers that directly affect residents’ ability to access opportunity, get to work consistently, and sustain employment – particularly transportation.

Camden Loop

A core pillar of Camden Works’ mission is removing barriers that prevent Camden residents from securing and sustaining employment. One of the most persistent challenges identified through employer engagement and participant feedback is access to reliable, affordable transportation—particularly for first- and last-mile connections. To address this need, Camden Community Partnership, in partnership with Via Transportation and funded by the State of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, launched the Camden Loop in June 2023 as an on-demand micro-transit service designed to support workforce participation and access to essential services.

In 2025, the Camden Loop continued to demonstrate its value as a workforce-enabling investment. Work commuting remained the single most frequent trip purpose, with nearly half of riders identifying trips to and from employment as their primary use of the service. Major destinations included employment centers, schools, healthcare institutions, and regional transit hubs such as the Walter Rand Transportation Center and the Ferry Avenue PATCO Station – critical nodes that connect Camden residents to jobs throughout the region.

These patterns reinforce the Loop’s role as supportive infrastructure within the Camden Works ecosystem, helping residents maintain consistent attendance and access employment opportunities beyond walking distance or limited fixed-route transit schedules.

Since its launch, the Camden Loop has experienced sustained growth, with quarterly ride requests and completed trips more than doubling. By the end of 2025, nearly 20,000 rider accounts had been created, and the service consistently supported approximately 1,000 active riders per month – signaling strong adoption among Camden residents who rely on the service for daily mobility.

Camden Loop riders reflect the populations Camden Works is designed to serve. The majority of the riders identify as Black or African American or Hispanic/Latino, and more than half report annual household incomes below \$50,000. Many riders indicate frequent or near-daily use of the service, underscoring its importance for sustained workforce participation rather than occasional trips.

Key highlights and findings from the first two and one-half years of operation include:

- **Connections to employment and education:** 58% of riders use the Camden Loop to travel to work or school, reinforcing the service's role in supporting access to employment, job retention, and participation in training and education programs.
- **Connections to healthcare:** 18% of rides connect passengers to Cooper University Health Care facilities and other healthcare destinations.
- **Expanded access to regional job markets:** 71% of riders report increased access to jobs within a 30-minute travel time from Downtown Camden, improving connections to employment opportunities both within the city and across the region.
- **Encouraging public transit usage:** Major transit hubs, including the Walter Rand Transportation Center and the Ferry Avenue PATCO Station, remain the most frequently used pickup and drop-off locations, demonstrating the Loop's effectiveness in extending the reach of existing public transportation.
- **Serving residents with limited transportation options:** 89% of riders report not owning a personal vehicle, and 60% report annual household incomes below \$50,000, highlighting the Loop's importance for low- and moderate-income residents facing persistent transportation barriers.
- **High satisfaction:** Riders have given the service an average trip rating of 4.9 out of 5.

As the Camden Loop has grown, the program has continued to evolve to ensure equitable access and long-term community benefit. The service now operates an eight-vehicle fleet, all fully ADA-compliant, and offers pre-paid gift cards to ensure participation by residents without access to traditional banking. Its impact is further reflected in expanding institutional partnerships, including Cooper University Health Care, which utilizes ride codes across multiple departments to support patient access to care.

Additional Statistics & Highlights Through December 2025

- **Rides Completed:** 135,000+ rides completed, reflecting sustained demand for the service and its growing role in helping Camden residents access employment, education, healthcare, and other essential destinations.
- **Accounts Established:** 20,000+ rider accounts created, representing approximately 28% of Camden's population and signaling broad community awareness and adoption of the service.
- **Scale & Reliability:** 27% ridership growth year-over-year, and 1,000 active riders per month, demonstrating both operational reliability and strong recurring use among residents.
- **Rider Value & Satisfaction:** 95% of riders say losing the Camden Loop would significantly impact their ability to travel, highlighting the service's importance for work and daily mobility
- **Connections to Transit Options:** Via reported approximately 50% of trips begin or end at fixed-route transit connections, extending the reach of NJ Transit and PATCO services.

Camden Works Job Board & Digital Employer Engagement

The Camden Works Job Board is a centralized resource published weekly by Camden Community Partnership, connecting Camden residents with employers hiring across the city and the broader Delaware Valley region. Each edition highlights current job openings from dozens of employers alongside workforce training opportunities, job fairs, youth and student internships, and scholarship programs – reducing fragmentation in job access and helping both employers and job seekers find timely, relevant connections.

The publication is distributed directly to Camden households and shared broadly with community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, nonprofit partners, and civic associations, ensuring wide and consistent access to workforce information. As of 2025, the job board reaches approximately 12,000 email accounts, reflecting continued growth and the steady expansion of Camden Works’ digital distribution network.

Camden Works’ social media platforms remain a key tool for amplifying employer opportunities and workforce resources, extending the reach of the Job Board and increasing engagement with residents. From January 1, 2025 through December 15, 2025, Camden Works’ Facebook platform demonstrated strong year-over-year growth:

- **Audience growth:** 1,412 new followers, bringing the total to 2,878, compared to 415 new followers added during the prior reporting period.
- **Visibility:** 1.1 million impressions, a significant increase from approximately 258,000 impressions reported in the previous year.
- **Reach:** Approximately 210,000 individuals reached, more than double the 95,100 reported previously.
- **Engagement:** More than 11,500 content interactions, up from approximately 4,900 interactions in the prior year.
- **Traffic to employer resources:** Approximately 6,000 link clicks, compared to 909 link clicks previously reported.

Together, the Camden Works Job Board and digital media platforms function as a scalable, cost-effective employer engagement and recruitment channel – expanding access to job opportunities for Camden residents while increasing employer visibility among local talent. The continued growth in reach, engagement, and referral traffic reflects Camden Works’ increasing effectiveness as a connector between employers and the city’s workforce, reinforcing its role as a centralized platform for workforce access and supporting inclusive economic growth in Camden. These digital tools not only expand awareness of job opportunities but also play a critical role in connecting residents to employers in real time – supporting application activity, interview pipelines, and ultimately, successful job placement outcomes.

Job Placements & Outcomes

As the City of Camden continues to experience economic growth and investment, Camden Works and its managing partners play a critical role in ensuring that residents are connected to meaningful employment opportunities that offer living wages and pathways to economic mobility. Through

coordinated efforts focused on workforce readiness, employer engagement, and barrier reduction, Camden Works supports residents in accessing, securing, and sustaining employment across a range of industries.

The data presented below reflects the collective impact of Camden Works and its immediate partners – including Center for Family Services, Volunteers of America Delaware Valley, Hopeworks, the State Conference NAACP, the Latin American Economic Development Association (LAEDA), the Camden County Workforce Development Board, Camden Education Fund, City of Camden, Camden City School District, Camden County College, Saint Joseph’s Carpenters Society, and the Rowan University/Rutgers-Camden Board of Governors – in supporting Camden job seekers, including both adults and youth. While these figures do not represent all hiring activity across Camden and the broader region, they provide a meaningful snapshot of the outcomes achieved through the Camden Works network and its partner-driven approach. The metrics that follow represent activities for the calendar year 2025.

Workforce Pipeline and Reach

More than 750 residents registered for workforce support services through Camden Works and its partners in 2025, reflecting sustained demand for employment assistance, training, and career navigation resources. This pipeline represents a critical entry point for residents seeking to connect to employment opportunities and career pathways.

Job Placements

In 2025, 315 residents were hired or supported in securing employment through Camden Works and its immediate partners. These placements reflect coordinated efforts to align job seekers with available opportunities, while supporting employer hiring needs across multiple sectors.

Alignment with High-Demand Sectors

Job placements in 2025 were concentrated in key growth industries, including healthcare, skilled trades, government, and financial services. This alignment reflects Camden Works’ focus on connecting residents to sectors that offer stability, advancement opportunities, and long-term career potential.

Cumulative Impact

Since its launch in 2019, Camden Works and its partners have collectively supported the hiring of more than 1,675 Camden residents, demonstrating sustained impact and continued progress toward connecting residents with employment opportunities and long-term career potential.

Together, these outcomes demonstrate Camden Works’ effectiveness as a coordinated workforce intermediary – connecting residents to employment, aligning talent with employer demand, and supporting pathways to economic mobility. As Camden’s economy continues to grow, the ability to translate opportunity into measurable outcomes for residents remains central to the initiative’s mission and long-term success.

Summary

Camden, New Jersey, has experienced meaningful economic growth alongside continued improvements in public safety, education, and quality of life – supported by sustained investments in transportation, housing, parks, and open space. These investments are reshaping the city’s trajectory and strengthening the conditions that support long-term community well-being. Sustaining this progress, however, depends on ensuring that Camden residents are fully connected to the opportunities being created. Camden Works plays a central role in advancing this goal.

What began as a pilot program in October 2019 has evolved into a coordinated, citywide workforce platform – one that connects residents to employment, aligns talent with employer demand, and addresses the barriers that affect long-term economic mobility. Through a combination of partnership-driven service delivery, data-informed strategies, and targeted investments in access and infrastructure, Camden Works continues to strengthen its role as a critical connector within Camden’s growing economy.

This progress is made possible through the sustained collaboration of Camden Works’ managing partners. We extend our sincere appreciation to the NJ State Conference NAACP, Latin American Economic Development Association, the Camden County Workforce Development Board, Hopeworks, Center for Family Services, Volunteers of America Delaware Valley, the Rowan University/Rutgers-Camden Board of Governors, Saint Joseph’s Carpenter Society, Camden Education Fund, Camden County College, City of Camden, and the Camden City School District for their shared commitment to expanding opportunity and supporting Camden residents in achieving their career aspirations and long-term economic stability.

We are equally grateful to our funders, like the Philadelphia 76ers and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), whose philanthropy and continued investment make this work possible. Their leadership reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that Camden’s economic growth is inclusive and that residents can benefit from the city’s continued progress.

As Camden Works moves forward, the focus remains clear: deepen impact, strengthen alignment with employer demand, and expand pathways that support long-term economic mobility and wealth creation. The progress outlined in this report reflects meaningful momentum – but also underscores the importance of sustained investment and coordinated action.

Camden Works, together with initiatives such as the Camden Loop, represents a practical and scalable approach to connecting residents to opportunity – ensuring that growth translates into lasting, measurable outcomes for the people of Camden.

POWERED BY PARTNERS. FUELED BY OPPORTUNITY.

Camden Works is made possible through the generosity of our founding partners and the leadership of our managing partners. Together, we are building pathways to economic mobility and a stronger Camden.



FOUNDING PARTNERS



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