

# Generation USA's Retail Career Advancement Program

## *Career Advancement Program Profile*

### CHALLENGE

- Recruiting

### SUCSESSES

- **71 percent** of employers indicated that graduates of the RCA program are their best-performing employees.
- **86 percent** said that RCA graduates are team players and eager to learn.
- **90 percent** of students are placed into a job within 180 days of graduating from the program.
- **83 percent** retained that job a year after placement.

Generation USA, founded by McKinsey & Company, is a nonprofit organization with a mission to move youth into self-sustaining careers and provide employers with the skilled workers they need. The Retail Career Advancement (RCA) program is an upskilling training program, developed by Generation USA, designed to help front-line retail workers in Dallas, Texas, and Jacksonville, Florida, advance in their field.

### CAREER ADVANCEMENT GOAL, STRATEGIES, AND STATUS

**Goal:** The RCA program aims to help youth in the retail industry, particularly disconnected youth, move into sustainable careers through a six-week training program.

**Strategies:** The program uses a cohort model and offers both in-person and online instruction, allowing students to do up to 60 percent of the curriculum online.

In the program, participants are trained in the behavioral and job skills needed to advance within retail. Support services include a career coach, a mentor who serves as a counselor, and a case manager who creates a plan for advancement with student and follows up with the student throughout the program and six months after completion.

**Status:** The RCA program began in 2016 and was initially funded by philanthropic organizations. As a part of its sustainability planning, Generation USA has diversified its funding, and employers and government have become funders.

### PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

The RCA program serves incumbent retail industry workers in Dallas, Texas, and Jacksonville, Florida. The program targets disconnected youth who are new to retail jobs. Most participants have completed some college, and almost all have a high school diploma. The program has graduated 317 participants to date.

### PARTNERS

The RCA program partners with retail employers who have a high need for training their frontline employees. It also recruits employers who may not have the immediate need to train frontline employees but recognize the potential return on investment for the firm by participating in the program.

Employers also support the program by helping to design the curriculum. RCA staff work with employers to study work processes by conducting on-site observations of shift supervisors and other high- and low-performing staff. They then work with the employers to embed the skills needed for the job into the program curriculum.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

**Challenge:** Recruitment is a major hurdle for the program. For example, employers may not want their employees to attend the training program during their scheduled shifts, which may dissuade them from partnering. Increased engagement with employers as a first step is a major lesson learned for the RCA program. Leaders believe that it is critical for training programs to identify employer “pain points” and frame how the program can successfully address them.

**Successes:** Employer feedback on surveys and outcomes data show the success of the program. Some 71 percent of employers indicated that graduates of the RCA program are their best-performing employees, and 86 percent said that RCA graduates are team players and eager to learn. After graduating the program, 90 percent of students are placed into a job within 180 days, and 83 percent retained that job a year after placement.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## ADDITIONAL READING

This profile provides detailed information on the career advancement programs highlighted in the brief, **“Fulfilling the Promise of Career Pathways: Strategies that Support Career Advancement,”** by Lauren Eyster and Semhar Gebrekristos, [urbn.is/2CAZnsC](http://urbn.is/2CAZnsC)