



The New ERA Fund

Honoring Linda Saris

E – Education | R – Resources | A – Allies



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The New ERA Fund accelerates LEAP’s workforce development strategy by expanding Education, Resources, and Allies (“ERA”) for youth. It strengthens the regional talent pipeline and ensures young people—especially those facing systemic barriers—enter adulthood with the skills, experiences, education, and connections they need to launch meaningful careers.

Over the next decade, the Fund will help LEAP serve as a **regional backbone organization**, aligning schools, colleges, employers, and community partners so that youth experience coordinated, career-connected support from middle school through young adulthood.

This is the next era of opportunity—rooted in Linda Saris’s legacy and propelled by the collective power of community investment.



Join us in launching the New ERA Fund—a bold, long-term investment in the next generation. Your support directly fuels Education, Resources, and Allies for young people:

- **Education** that connects learning to real careers,
- **Resources** like paid work experiences and the ability to earn industry credentials and degrees, and
- **Allies**—employers, mentors, and trained adults—who open doors and walk alongside them.

By contributing to the New ERA Fund, you help LEAP build the local systems and partnerships that will, over the next 10 years, move our region toward a **best-in-class youth workforce ecosystem**.

Honor Linda's legacy by helping build a community where every young person has the allies, resources, and real-world educational experiences they need to succeed. Together, we can shape a stronger future for our youth and our region.



A Call to Action

The Problem

Massachusetts is at a crossroads with a shrinking workforce.

- By 2030, the state is projected to have about 180,000 fewer working-age adults—roughly 15,000 people a year leaving the workforce.
- Massachusetts needs to retrain about 40,000 workers every year—about ***ten times the current pace***—to keep up with changing labor market needs.

Incoming talent is unprepared—through no fault of their own.

- Too many young people finish high school and/or some college without clear guidance, real-world experience, or credentials that employers recognize.
- Only 47% of Gen Z felt they had enough information to choose their best post-high school plan, and fewer than 30% felt “very prepared” to pursue any path.

Shrinking
Workforce

+

Rapidly
Changing
Industries

+

Underprepared
Young Talent

=

Massive
Workforce
Crisis

The Solution



There's a proven blueprint—and a missing link.

Nationally, Jobs for the Future's (JFF) Pathways to Prosperity framework shows that young people thrive when they have:

- Consistent career navigation supports to help youth understand their interests and strengths starting in middle school
- Clear pathways that connect high school, post-secondary education, and work
- Real work-based learning and credentials that employers value
- Coordinated support from schools, employers, and community organizations

But locally, these pieces are still fragmented — there is no single “home base” connecting them for youth or employers.

LEAP is ready to fill that gap for Salem and Lynn, and beyond.

Our 10-Year Strategy: From Local Proof to Regional Scale

Over the next decade, the New ERA Fund will help LEAP:

1. **Deepen & Realign in Salem:** Use Salem's smaller scale to fully align LEAP's programs with school districts, city initiatives, and employer needs—embedding career pathways into the local system instead of patching gaps student by student.
2. **Build & Test in Lynn:** Apply and adapt the model in Lynn, a larger and more complex community, to learn what it takes to coordinate partners at scale while keeping supports personal for youth.
3. **Share & Scale the Model:** With proven results in Salem and Lynn, LEAP will be positioned to spread an evidence-informed youth workforce ecosystem across the North Shore and serve as a model for other regions.

From band-aids to system change: The New ERA Fund shifts LEAP's role from "fighting against" system gaps to realigning systems around young people and the careers our region needs.



The LEAP Solution

Building community partnerships to help young people build their skills and launch their futures



EDUCATION

- Align out-of-school with in-school to reinforce what students do
- Data sharing with school districts
- Expand exploration and opportunity beyond what schools can offer
- Contextualize learning by expanding career-connected project-based and work-based learning.



RESOURCES

- More paid work-based learning positions.
- Technology as a career navigation and data sharing tool.
- Access to industry-recognized credentials (e.g. OSHA-10, ServSafe, CPR)
- Staff certification in career counseling and out-of-school-time education.



ALLIES

- Strengthen employer network and workforce training partners
- Grow a pool of trained mentors and advisors
- Become the regional backbone to coordinate our allies so young people experience a coherent pathway, not isolated programs.

Projected Impact

By 2035, the New ERA Fund will enable LEAP to deliver the following outcomes each year:

- **1,000+ students** participating in coordinated career-connected and workforce development programs and opportunities
- **200+ paid work-based learning positions** for youth and young adults (e.g., sheltered employment, internships, “learn & earn” roles).
- **150+ industry-recognized credentials** awarded
- A growing majority of core participants leaving LEAP with at least one paid work-based learning experience, one credential, and a resourced and intentional post-secondary and career plan.

The bigger outcome: a stronger, more diverse local talent pipeline and increased economic mobility for young people on the North Shore—proof that a small, strong ecosystem can drive lasting system change.



The New ERA Fundraising Goal

\$1,000,000

Timeline: January 1 – December 31, 2026



Youth cannot navigate the workforce pipeline alone. They need doors opened, connections made, and champions who believe in their potential. By investing in the New ERA Fund, you join a coalition of community partners committed to building a stronger talent pipeline, a more equitable economy, and opportunities that last for generations.

Thank You



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