



# UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

*The Impact of Strategic Investments in  
JAG-SD on South Dakota's Future*

**JOBs FOR AMERICA'S GRADUATES - SOUTH DAKOTA**  
2025 - 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN SUPPLEMENT

# BARRIERS TO BRIGHT FUTURES

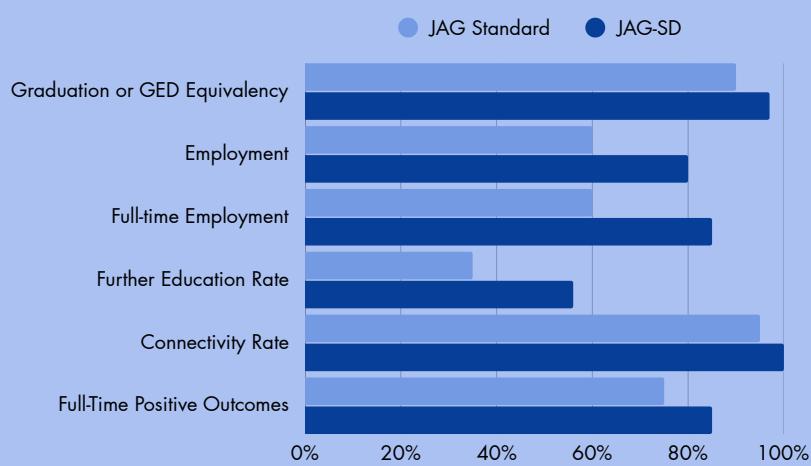
*Bottom line: Investing in JAG-SD pays*

Students who leave school before earning a diploma face smaller lifetime earnings and higher risks of reliance on public benefits or involvement with the justice system. For a state like South Dakota, those costs add up. The Institute for Education Sciences states, "Relative to individuals who complete high school, **the average high school dropout costs the economy approximately \$272,000** over his or her lifetime in terms of lower tax contributions, higher reliance on Medicaid and Medicare, higher rates of criminal activity, and higher reliance on welfare" ("Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States", 2017).

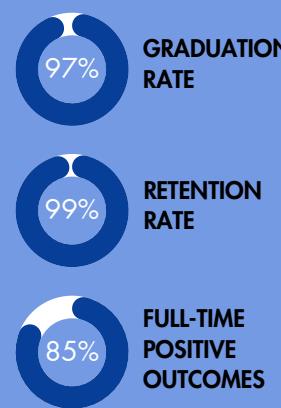
Across the state, Jobs for America's Graduates South Dakota (JAG-SD) is combating these figures. It's helping students facing significant barriers stay in school, graduate, go to college, get good jobs, and build strong futures. In order to sustain and scale this proven impact, we need continued and expanded support to sustain and expand services and the **approval of philanthropic partnerships** that would allow us to grow and diversify our funding streams. The results speak for themselves: 97% of JAG-SD students graduate high school (compared with South Dakota's statewide average of 84%) and 90% achieve full-time positive outcomes (defined as secure employment, postsecondary enrollment, or military service), reflecting not only individual success but long-term benefits for South Dakota's economy and workforce. This 97% graduation rate is all the more impressive as students with demographics similar to our JAG students have a rate well below the state average.

JAG-SD currently serves just over 600 students. With the increased investment we detail in this report, that number could grow to nearly 2000 (almost 3% of secondary students) and hopefully lay the foundation for us to one day expand the program's impact to the tens of thousands of South Dakota students who would benefit from the model. **JAG works.** It changes outcomes, builds talent, and pays dividends for communities and the economy. On behalf of all of us, let's make sure every young person in South Dakota has access to reaching their full potential. **Let's invest in JAG-SD.**

## OUTCOME COMPARISON NATIONALLY



## IMPACT ON STUDENTS



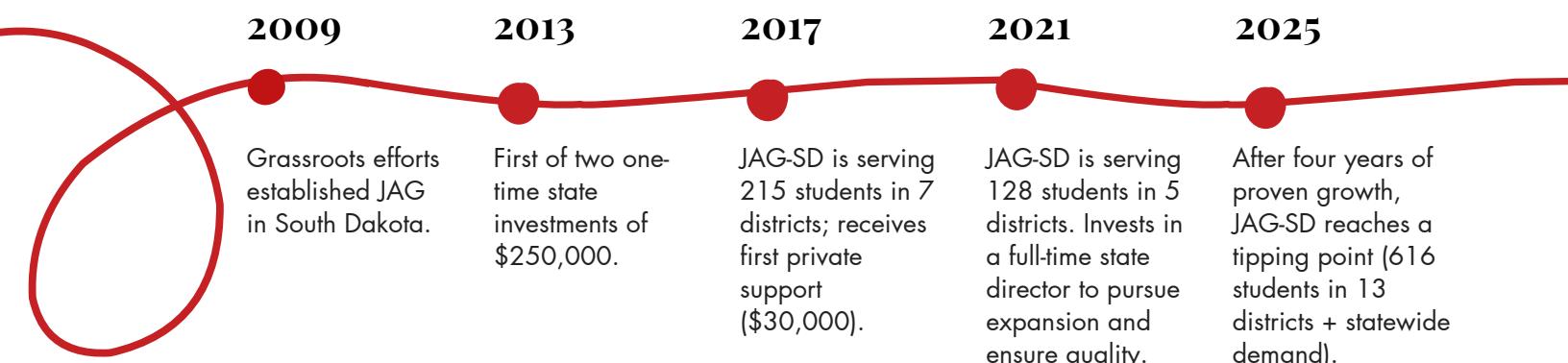
## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*A tradition of providing returns on public and private investments*

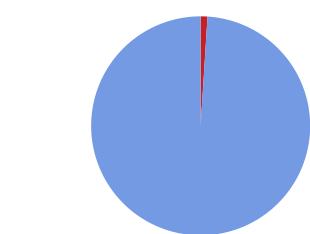
The JAG-SD program, piloted in the 2009-10 school year at Wagner Community School and Andes Central High School, quickly became a dedicated vehicle for helping students develop academic, leadership, and workplace competences grounded in employer-driven standards. Over the years the model has proven its impact (boosting graduation rates, attendance, job placement and further education paths), earning the trust of students, schools and employers alike. Statewide stakeholders have affirmed that not only is the program needed across South Dakota, **but it must be delivered with fidelity to its high-quality standards if it is to maintain its effectiveness.**

## A HISTORY OF SMART, SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

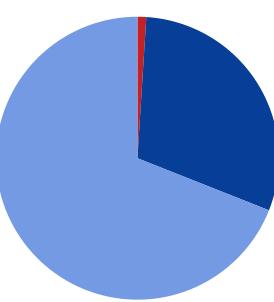
*Key milestones in JAG-SD's scaling journey*



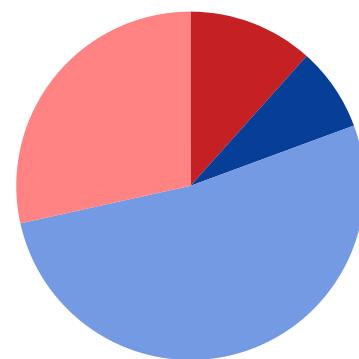
**Funding Mix**  
2009 - \$165k



**Funding Mix**  
2017 - \$395k



**Funding Mix**  
2025 - \$1.7M



 **DISTRICT INVESTMENT**

 **STATE GENERAL  
FUND INVESTMENT**

 **PRIVATE INVESTMENT**

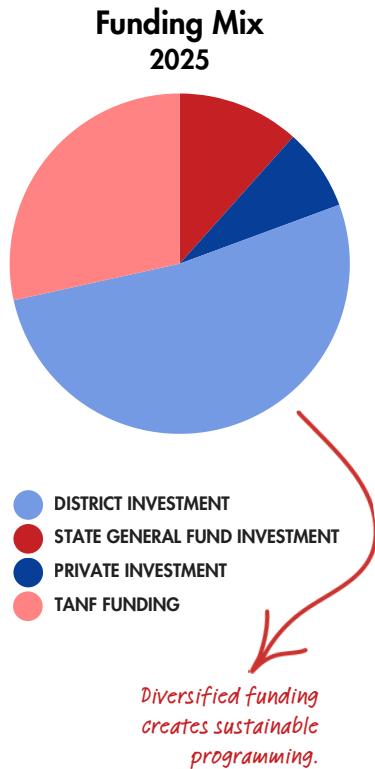
 **TANF FUNDING** 3

## CURRENT APPROACH

*Budgeting with an emphasis on quality*

Currently, JAG-South Dakota operates as a \$1.7 million program, supported through a blend of district, state, federal, and private funding sources. Of this amount, approximately \$873,000 is contributed by participating school districts, reflecting their shared investment in sustaining local JAG programs. Annual allocations to districts are supplemented by: \$130,000 in private investment (corporate and philanthropic partners), \$202,000 in state general fund investment, and \$495,000 from the state's TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) funding.

Dedicated state-level support is essential to maintaining fidelity to the JAG model and the strong outcomes South Dakota has achieved over the past 16 years. For every 10 programs, a state Program Manager ensures consistency, accountability, and relational support. Each local program depends on a full-time JAG Specialist to deliver individualized instruction, mentoring, employer engagement, and year-round follow-up support. Statewide infrastructure—including Program Managers, data systems, and professional development—ensures quality implementation. Together with statewide student supports such as leadership conferences, competitive events, and employer visits, these coordinated investments sustain the relationships and results that define the JAG Advantage.

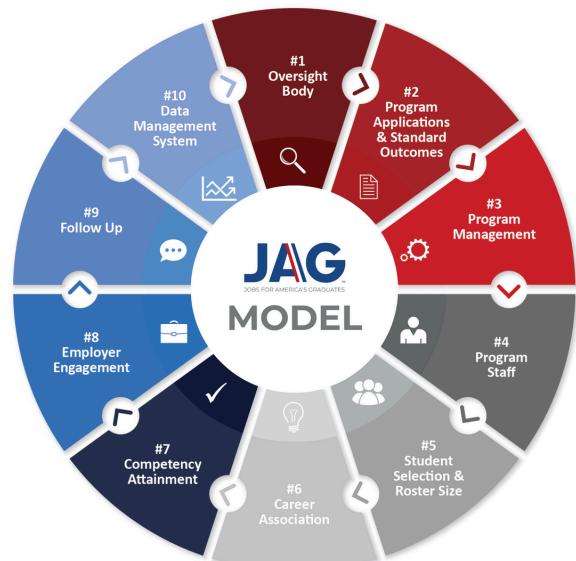


CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	COST PER PROGRAM
JAG Specialist	Ensures a certified full-time educator to provide instruction, mentoring, and data reporting.	\$98,500
Sustaining JAG Program Costs	Covers supplies, student activities, local events, and classroom materials.	\$25,000
Statewide Infrastructure	Facilitates program management and support, central data systems and reporting functions, fiscal oversight, learning and development for JAG Specialists, communications, and quality assurance.	\$13,000
Statewide Student Supports	Supports leadership development events and conferences, mentoring activities, and statewide student recognition and leadership opportunities.	\$9,000
<b>Total</b>	<i>Estimated Cost per Program (this amount should be adjusted for inflation annually)</i>	<b>≈ \$145,500</b>

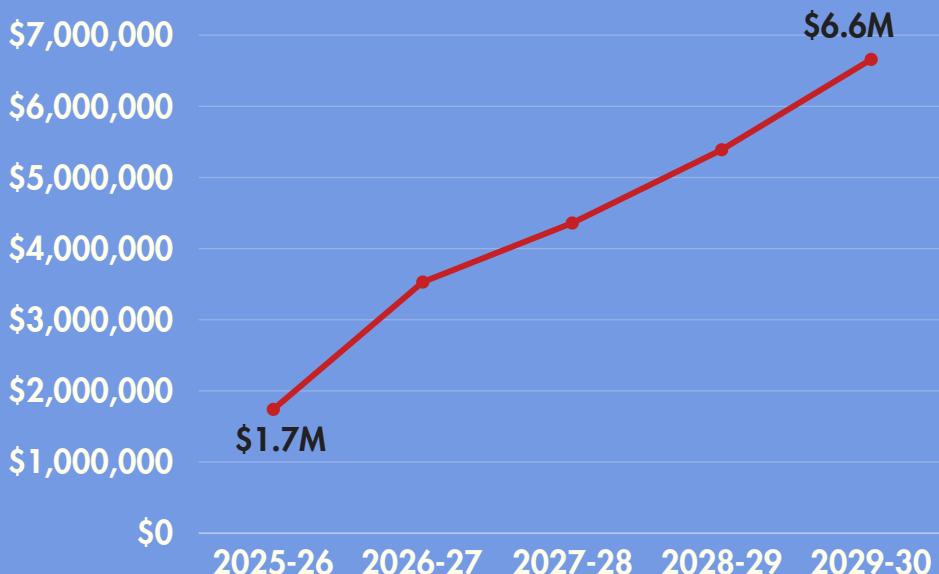
## FUTURE STATE: SCALING FOR IMPACT

*What investment in JAG-SD unlocks*

To reach nearly 1,900 South Dakota youth across more than 40 programs within the next five years, the JAG-SD program's budget will need to grow by almost four times, from approximately \$1.7 million to \$6.6 million. This growth reflects a deliberate investment in scaling with fidelity to JAG's proven program model and ensuring high-quality implementation across new districts. As illustrated in the data, both the number of students served (from 616 to 1,866) and programs offered (from 20 to 41) are projected to increase substantially, with annual growth rates of 10% and 20%, respectively.



### Growing Funding, Growing Impact



POTENTIAL  
PROGRAMS  
LAUNCHED

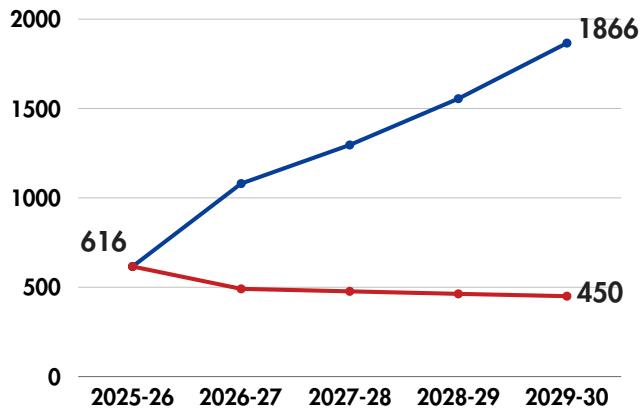
**41**

POTENTIAL  
STUDENTS  
SERVED

**1,866**

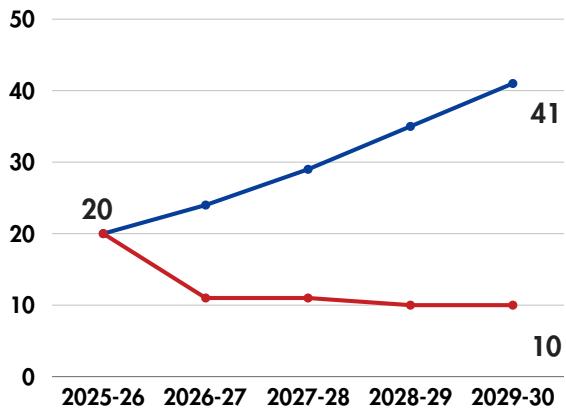
## Growth in Students Served

Total Middle and High School Population in South Dakota: 73,675



## Growth in Programs

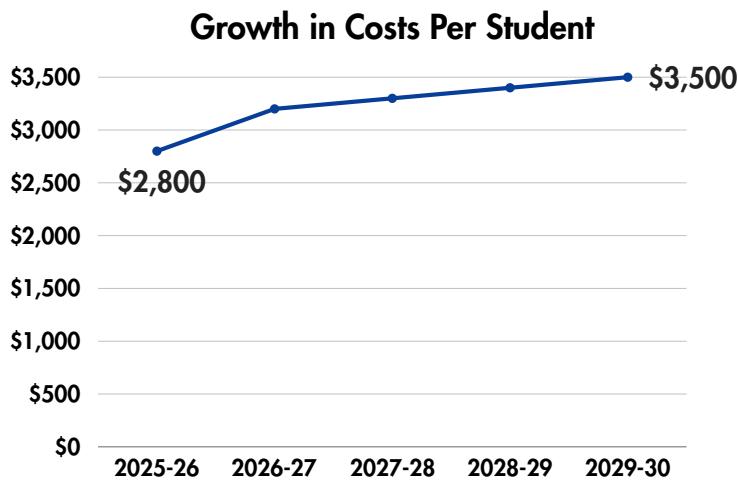
Total Middle and High Schools in South Dakota: 336



**LEGEND:** *Impact with increased investment*; *impact without increased investment and/or funding losses*.

### GROWTH IN PROGRAMS & STUDENTS SERVED

Over the next five years, JAG-SD is poised to expand from 20 to 41 programs, potentially serving nearly 1,900 South Dakota youth, a 10% annual increase in students and 20% annual increase in programs. This growth reflects the state's growing demand for high-quality, career-connected programming and JAG-SD's commitment to scaling access and impact statewide.



### GROWTH IN COSTS PER STUDENT

The cost per student increases modestly from about \$2,800 to \$3,500. These increases account for inflation and strategic investments in full-time JAG Specialists, program resources, and enhanced student experiences—ensuring that as JAG-SD grows, it maintains program fidelity and quality outcomes for every participant.

# REGIONAL LANDSCAPE

*The efforts our neighbors are making to deepen their talent development impact through leveraging the JAG model.*



## JAG-IOWA

*Scaling Through Strategic Reserves and Workforce Alignment*



Over the past five years, iJAG has transformed into one of the largest JAG affiliates in the nation. Serving more than 10,000 students across 200+ programs, iJAG demonstrates how strategic investment and diversified funding can fuel sustainable growth. Its model blends a state appropriation of nearly \$10 million with local district MOUs and private-sector support —an intentional 50/50 balance between public and private funds.

A key driver of iJAG's success has been its **disciplined use of expansion reserves to underwrite short-term growth costs while ensuring long-term self-sufficiency**. The program reinvests those reserves into new sites until district and philanthropic funding mature. Outcomes speak for themselves: a 98.4% graduation rate, dramatic reductions in chronic absenteeism, and over 66% of upper-grade students engaged in work-based learning experiences. By aligning its impact narrative with state workforce needs and employer partnerships, iJAG has positioned itself not just as a student support program but as a workforce solution.



## JAG-KANSAS

### *Building a Statewide Pipeline Through Braided Funding*

**JAG-K illustrates the power of bipartisan advocacy and data-driven funding.** Since 2013, the Kansas affiliate has scaled to 121 programs across 54 districts, supported by a robust funding model that blends TANF and state general fund appropriations with district program fees and philanthropy. With over 165 employees, JAG-K maintains one of the most comprehensive statewide youth support systems in the JAG network.

Its growth has been strategic and responsive. Following an initial “hockey stick” expansion that strained infrastructure, the organization stabilized by limiting annual growth to 20 programs and strengthening management capacity. JAG-K’s Project 88 initiative with Kansas City Public Schools is a standout example: by expanding program coverage in high-need schools, the district achieved 100% graduation among JAG seniors and is on track to raise school-wide rates to 88%. Across the state, 98% of participants graduate, and nearly 90% enter employment, postsecondary education, or the military. Kansas’ success underscores that sustainable scaling depends as much on relationships and legislative credibility as on program design.



## JAG-KENTUCKY

### *Leveraging Cross-Agency Partnerships for Inclusive Growth*

**JAG KY provides a masterclass in partnership-driven scaling.** Over five years, it expanded from 61 to 132 programs, serving more than 8,000 students statewide. Its funding structure is remarkably diversified: in addition to a state budget line of \$1.6 million, the affiliate leverages Vocational Rehabilitation funding (up to \$4 million), Medicaid reimbursements exceeding \$1 million annually, and corporate philanthropy for program enrichment.

JAG KY’s unique integration of trauma-informed care and mental health services (enabled through Medicaid billing) has deepened its impact on student well-being and employability. The affiliate’s growth reflects intentional planning: each expansion cycle aligns staffing and training with program additions, ensuring that fidelity and quality remain high. With a 99% graduation rate and consistent 6-of-6 National Standards attainment, JAG KY stands as a model of how creative funding and cross-agency collaboration can expand access without compromising results.

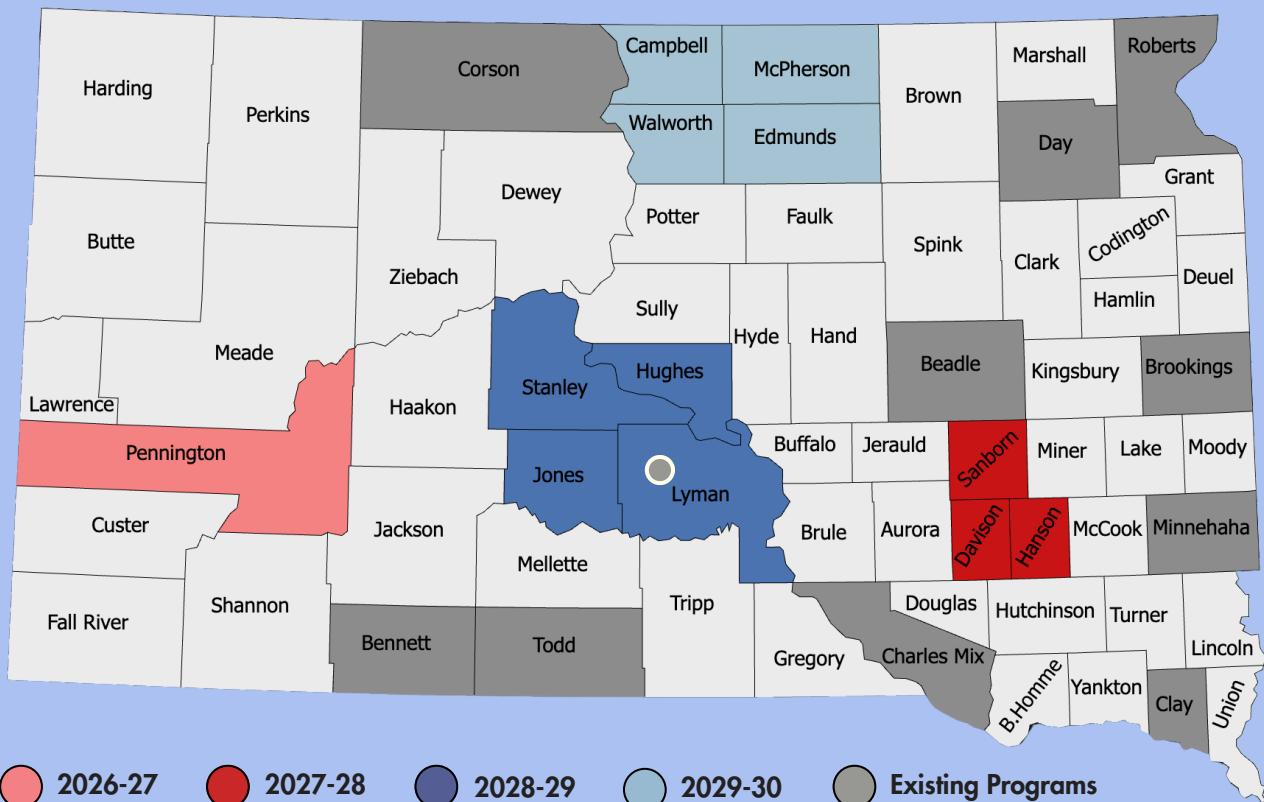


# STRATEGIES FOR SCALING: JAG AFFILIATES

	JAG SOUTH DAKOTA	JAG IOWA	JAG KANSAS	JAG KENTUCKY
<b>Students Served in SY 2025–26</b>	616 students across 20 programs	~10,200 students across 202 programs	~5,000 students across 121 programs	~8,000 students across 132 programs
<b>Current Annual Budget (Approx.)</b>	~\$1.7M	\$19.3M	\$12.6M	\$6.9M (not including district contributions)
<b>Program Structure</b>	Hosted within the South Dakota Department of Education	Independent 501(c)(3)	Independent 501(c)(3)	Independent 501(c)(3)
<b>Graduation Rate</b>	97%	98%	98%	99%
<b>Funding Sources</b>	Private/corporate philanthropy (\$130k) State appropriation (\$202k) TANF funds (\$495k) District MOUs (\$900k)	Private/corporate philanthropy (\$3.6M) State appropriation (\$9.9M) WIOA funds (\$260k) District MOUs (\$4.8M) Reserves strategically used for expansion (\$1.2M)	Private/corporate philanthropy (\$500k) State appropriation (\$5.5M) TANF funds (\$5.4M) District MOUs (\$1.7M)	Private/corporate philanthropy (\$250k) State appropriation (\$1.6M) Vocational Rehabilitation funds (\$4M) Medicaid billing (\$1M)

# PLANNED POTENTIAL

Charting the course for half a decade of quality, sustainable growth



## STARTING POINT: 20 PROGRAMS

**2026-27: +5 PROGRAMS**  
\$727,500 INVESTMENT

**2027-28: +5 PROGRAMS**  
\$749,325 INVESTMENT

**2028-29: +5 PROGRAMS**  
\$771,800 INVESTMENT

**2029-30: +6 PROGRAMS**  
\$953,946 INVESTMENT

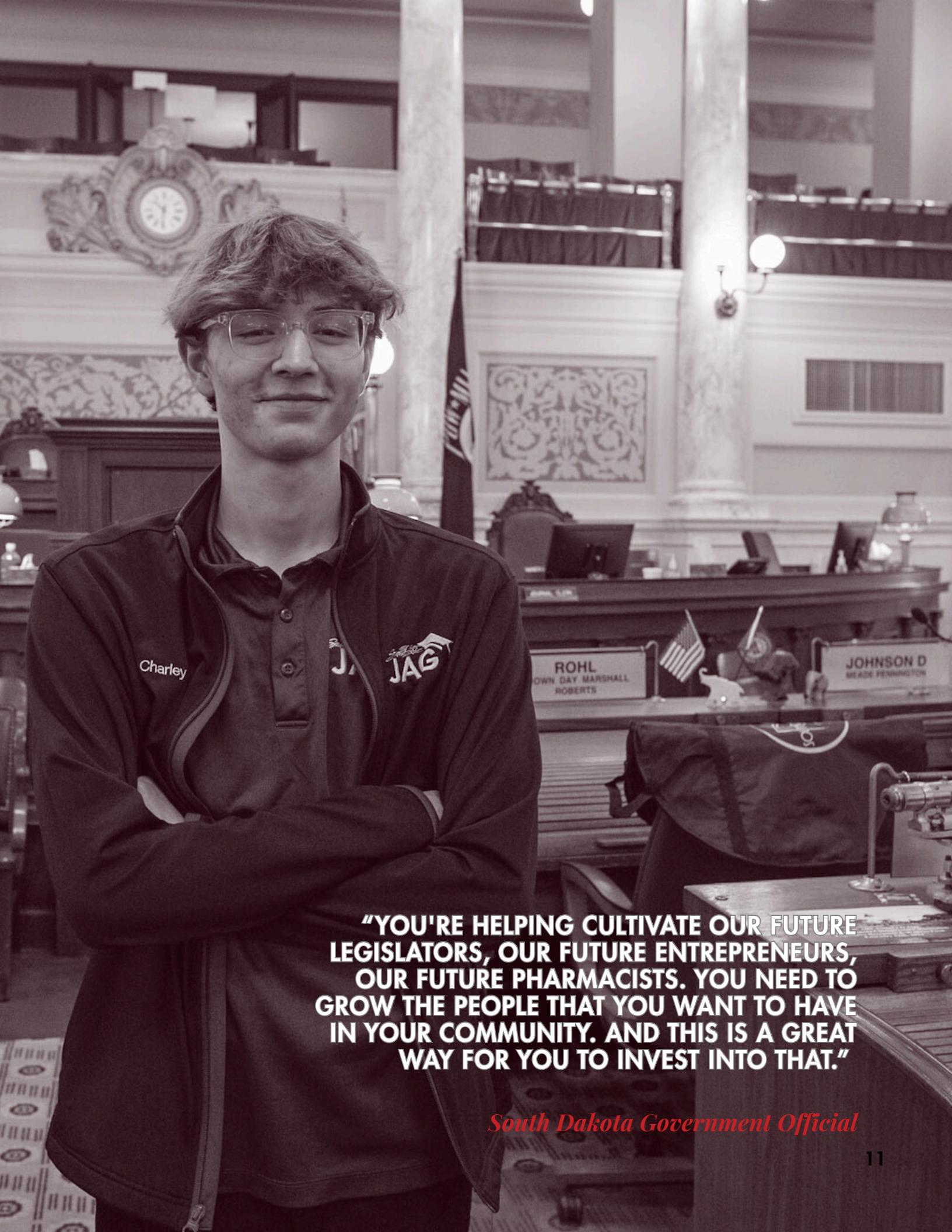
**41 PROGRAMS  
SERVING  
1866 STUDENTS**

Annual investments  
grow along with  
inflation.

JAG-SD is advancing a bold growth strategy to scale its reach by launching 21 new programs statewide over the course of the next five years. At the core of this plan is a commitment to fidelity and sustainability, ensuring each new and existing program delivers high-quality outcomes that reflect JAG's proven model. To achieve this, JAG-SD will focus on:

- Fully rostering all programs,
- Prioritizing high-need regions where education and workforce opportunities intersect, and
- Strengthening development strategies that unlock and invest new funding sources, such as establishing or partnering with a 501(c)(3).

*These partnerships will amplify JAG-SD's reach and impact, supporting a model that not only prepares more students for success but also strengthens South Dakota's communities and economy.*



**"YOU'RE HELPING CULTIVATE OUR FUTURE  
LEGISLATORS, OUR FUTURE ENTREPRENEURS,  
OUR FUTURE PHARMACISTS. YOU NEED TO  
GROW THE PEOPLE THAT YOU WANT TO HAVE  
IN YOUR COMMUNITY. AND THIS IS A GREAT  
WAY FOR YOU TO INVEST INTO THAT."**

*South Dakota Government Official*

## MISSION

*Empowering South Dakota's young people  
with the skills and support to succeed in  
education, employment, and life.*

# THANK YOU



*Strategies that work for everyone.*

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