StriveTogether®

Every child. Cradle to career.

Cradle-to-Career Outcomes Playbook: Employment

Contents

Table of Contents **2**

Acknowledgments **4**

Authors 4

Introduction **5**

Essential Questions for Employment **7**

The Case for Employment **9**

About the Employment Playbook **10**

The Education-to-Workforce Framework and supporting research 10

About the playbook structure 10

Essential questions: areas to focus 11

Indicators: metrics to track 11

Practices and policies: actions to take 11

How to use this playbook 12

Successful Launch into Rewarding Work **13**

Are young people gaining access to quality jobs, characterized by strong earnings, labor market security and quality working environment? 13

Are young people earning salaries that lead to economic mobility, economic security and that allow them to build wealth? 36

Do young workers have access to ongoing career skills development (e.g., on-the-job training) to obtain new skills and meet evolving labor market demands? 56

High-Quality Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training **62**

Are students completing credentials of value after high school that set them up for success in the workforce? 62

Are there quality pathways for young people who pursue career training that lead to employment in quality jobs? 87

Do students attend postsecondary institutions that provide adequate financial aid and that are adequately funded to offer a quality educational experience? 108

Do students have access to adequate support to enable them to succeed academically and in the workforce? 121

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Support Networks that Build Social Capital 140

Do young people have strong, supportive relationships with colleagues, supervisors, mentors and other influential, experienced people? 140

Do young people have access to paid, relevant internships and apprenticeships? 146

Do young people have educators, supervisors and colleagues of diverse representation? 156

Local Workforce Systems 165

Are workforce intermediaries working to bring together partners in the workforce system to develop and coordinate workforce strategies, policies and provide funding and capacity to support a cohesive, aligned workforce system? 165

Are local workforce systems coordinating with regional education and training partners (e.g., education providers, training providers, community-based organizations) to help young people acquire career skills and credentials, find apprenticeships, jobs and access supportive services? 186

Are local workforce systems engaging employers and industry groups to address local talent needs (e.g., hiring and training workers, helping develop and deliver career and technical education, providing resources for workforce development activities)? 197

Are employers creating the conditions for employee success and career advancement, improving job access and job quality? 215

Experiences and Neighborhood Conditions 219

Do K-12 systems make sufficient contributions to academic growth for students?. 219

Do young people live in well-resourced neighborhoods? 223

Do young people have access to public support (i.e., health care access, nutrition programs, economic support, etc.)?. 233

Do young people live in communities with local governments that are attentive to the needs of all community members and with residents who are engaged in collective decision making? 249

Bibliography 252

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Introduction

When young people secure a quality job — one that pays a living wage, offers benefits, builds skills and provides purpose — they unlock opportunity for themselves, their families and their communities. A good job does more than start a paycheck; it starts a trajectory. Upwardly mobile work accelerates skill development, boosts earnings and wealth-building, stabilizes housing and health through employer benefits and strengthens a young person's sense of agency, persistence and identity. These gains compound over time, expanding career options and supporting long-term stability and thriving.

For young people from low-income households, first-generation families and Black and Latine communities, meaningful employment is especially transformative. It narrows opportunity gaps, reduces vulnerability to economic shocks and sets more stable expectations for education, work and long-term planning — benefits that extend to children through reduced stress and greater household stability. And communities gain as well: employers fill critical roles, productivity and tax bases grow and civic participation increases. Helping young people access and advance in quality employment ultimately strengthens families, communities and the broader economy.

This playbook is designed to equip educators, community leaders and policymakers with the strategies and insights needed to help young people secure meaningful jobs and advance toward long-term economic mobility.

To do this effectively, community leaders need evidence-based insights on what helps young people secure meaningful, well-paying employment — but accessing that information can be difficult. Too often, leaders spend valuable time searching for research when they could be focused on driving solutions with their communities. Consider three real examples:

- An organization is expanding its student success initiatives and needs a clear understanding of the key factors that help students secure a supportive first job.
- A cross-sector group of educators, employers and community leaders is convening to identify concrete, evidence-based strategies to help students transition into the workforce after obtaining degrees.
- A city planning group working to boost local employment is meeting with business leaders and needs compelling research on how to improve the local pipeline of workers for high-demand jobs.

This playbook is a practical guide to research and best practices for improving employment rates. It equips community leaders with the tools to identify opportunities, co-design effective strategies with their communities and build support for collective action — ensuring more young people finish what their degrees and move confidently into adulthood.

The playbook is organized around 18 essential questions that help communities understand their starting point and identify potential focus areas. Each question aligns to research-based topics that support employment rates and offers a menu of possible indicators to track, as well as practices and policies to implement. These indicators, practices and policies have been compiled from a variety of frameworks with sources indicated in parenthesis.

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Example

Here's one example:

Essential Question *Areas to focus*	**Indicators** *Metrics to track*	**Practices and Policies** *Actions to take*
Are young people gaining access to quality jobs, characterized by strong earnings, labor market security and quality working environments?	Share of adults ages 25 to 54 who are employed. This is a common metric for measuring employment levels among prime-age workers, also known as the employment-to-population ratio (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).	Supporting residents in accessing and completing postsecondary education (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative). Helping parents access high-quality and affordable child care (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).

This guide is not intended to serve as a checklist. Rather, communities should use the essential questions to explore options and choose what works for them.

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Essential Questions for Employment

Successful launch into rewarding work. Launching into rewarding work means young people secure quality jobs with fair pay, stability and growth opportunities that lead to lasting economic mobility.	
1	Are young people gaining access to quality jobs, characterized by strong earnings, labor market security and quality working environment?
2	Are young people earning salaries that lead to economic mobility, economic security and that allow them to build wealth?
3	Do young workers have access to ongoing career skills development (e.g., on-the-job training) to obtain new skills and meet evolving labor market demands?
High-quality postsecondary education and workforce training. These systems provide affordable, well-supported pathways to credentials of value that lead to quality jobs and long-term career success.	
4	Are students completing credentials of value that set them up for success in the workforce?
5	Are there quality pathways for young people who pursue career training that lead to employment in quality jobs?
6	Do students attend postsecondary institutions that provide adequate financial aid and that are adequately funded to offer a quality educational experience?
7	Do students have access to adequate support to enable them to succeed academically and in the workforce?
Support networks that build social capital. Connected support networks ensure young people have diverse, caring mentors and professional connections — and access to meaningful work experiences — that open doors to opportunity and career growth.	
8	Do young people have strong, supportive relationships with colleagues, supervisors, mentors and other influential, experienced people?
9	Do young people have access to paid, relevant internships and apprenticeships?
10	Do young people have educators, supervisors and colleagues of diverse representation?

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Local workforce systems. Well-aligned systems prepare people for employment, support workers who are trying to advance in their careers and create a skilled workforce to support local industry.	
11	Are workforce intermediaries working to bring together partners in the workforce system to develop and coordinate workforce strategies, policies and provide funding and capacity to support a cohesive, aligned workforce system?
12	Are local workforce systems coordinating with regional education and training partners (e.g., education providers, training providers, community-based organizations) to help young people acquire career skills and credentials, find apprenticeships, jobs and access supportive services?
13	Are local workforce systems engaging employers and industry groups to address local talent needs (e.g., hiring and training workers, helping develop and deliver career and technical education, providing resources for workforce development activities)?
14	Are employers creating the conditions for employee success and career advancement, improving job access and job quality?
Experiences and neighborhood conditions. People who live in well-resourced neighborhoods, where families have access to public support — such as healthcare, nutrition programs and economic assistance — are more likely to thrive academically and professionally.	
15	Do K-12 systems make sufficient contributions to ensuring students are college and career ready?
16	Do young people live in well-resourced neighborhoods?
17	Do young people have access to public support (i.e., health care access, nutrition programs, economic support, etc.)?
18	Do young people live in communities with local governments that are attentive to the needs of all community members and with residents who are engaged in collective decision making?

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The Case for Employment

Landing a quality job — one that pays a living wage, offers benefits, builds skills and provides purpose — is the catalyst that turns young people's potential into mobility. Employment with real advancement pathways doesn't just start a paycheck; it starts a trajectory.

For individuals, upwardly mobile, meaningful work boosts earnings and wealth-building, stabilizes housing and health through benefits and accelerates skill growth that leads to promotions and higher lifetime income. It also strengthens purpose, confidence and persistence — fuel for continued learning and career advancement.

For young people from low-income households, first-generation, Black and Latine communities, quality employment can be life-changing: it narrows opportunity gaps, reduces exposure to economic shocks and sets the stage for intergenerational mobility as children benefit from greater household stability and expectations for education and work.

Communities gain too. When more young adults hold good jobs, local spending and tax bases grow, employers fill critical roles and productivity rises. Reliance on public benefits declines, crime rates and chronic stress fall and civic participation increases — strengthening social cohesion and local leadership.

Helping young people secure upwardly mobile, meaningful employment delivers broad returns: stronger families, more resilient communities and a more dynamic economy. Quality jobs are not just endpoints of education; they are engines of opportunity.

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About the Employment Playbook

StriveTogether's Cradle-to-Career Playbook: Employment synthesizes leading research, indicators and evidence-based practices to advance pathways to economic mobility — expanding access to quality jobs that pay a living wage, provide stability and create opportunities for long-term wealth-building. While the playbook builds on existing frameworks that are valuable in their own right, it does not replace them. Instead, it serves as a comprehensive tool that guides you to resources in areas where deeper exploration is needed.

Communities can use the 18 essential questions to navigate to topics relevant to their specific needs, interests and goals.

The Education-to-Workforce Framework and supporting research

Mathematica's Education-to-Workforce Framework is the inspiration behind the playbook's organization and content. StriveTogether's Cradle-to-Career Playbook: Employment includes all of the applicable research, content and aligned essential questions included in the Education-to-Workforce Framework. It is also organized in a similar way. The playbook supplements the Education-to-Workforce Framework by incorporating research on early childhood reading development, strategies for improving high school graduation rates, the need for career pathways that match local labor market needs and more. 56% (42 out of 75) of the indicators, practices and policies included in the Employment Playbook come from the Education-to-Workforce Framework.

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About the playbook structure

The playbook is organized around 18 essential questions that help communities understand their starting point and identify potential focus areas. Each question offers a menu of possible practices and policies to implement, as well as key indicators to track.

Essential questions: areas to focus

The 18 essential questions help communities ask and answer questions that help them identify areas where co-designed solutions can improve employment options for young people. The content of each question provides starting points for designing and collaborating on solutions. Inspired by and aligned with the Education-to-Workforce Framework, these questions are clear, offer various entry points for communities and provide an organizing structure for elaboration.

The playbook includes close to 1,000 indicators, policies and practices, though implementing all of them is neither necessary nor intended. Each community has its own unique assets, needs and resources. StriveTogether's Cradle-to-Career Playbook: Employment helps communities identify key metrics to track, pinpoint effective strategies and determine where to start, enabling them to steadily improve postsecondary completion rates for all learners over time.

Indicators: metrics to track

Contributing indicators help communities see what it looks like when employment rates improve for learners across a community. Contributing indicators are valuable because research shows they influence outcomes in a positive direction and are measured at the individual learner level (e.g., percentage of students graduating college with a degree). They can help communities establish student-centered priorities and provide information earlier than outcome data is available, allowing communities to know if an initiative is working and to support continuous improvement of multiple initiatives.

Systems indicators help communities track the supports that influence outcomes at the system level, such as district, city, county or state efforts. These indicators are crucial because they allow communities to monitor the system, identify gaps and address them proactively. Measured at the family, caregiver or geographic level, systems indicators reflect institutional actions and their impact. For example, the percentage of eligible families with access to a library within walking distance is a key system indicator that reveals how well resources are distributed.

Practices and policies: actions to take

Practices and policies describe what can be done at every level of the system. Practices are evidence-based efforts, like college advising programs, that create strong conditions for results. Policies are laws, regulations, procedures, administrative actions or incentives of governments or other institutions. Communities may see a policy listed that is currently not enacted in their district, city or state, offering an opportunity to align on advocacy efforts. Federal policies are listed to create awareness so communities can leverage or utilize them to support state and local efforts.

Scaling a solution often has a lifecycle that starts with a local practice that is proven effective, scaled locally (e.g., scaled from a classroom to a district,

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then to another district) and then used to inform the creation of a state-level policy that provides access to funding for further scaling.

This approach is outlined within the StriveTogether Theory of Action™. This playbook categorizes strategies into a practice or policy. But, a practice can turn into a policy over time, or a policy can initiate a practice if it comes first. Lines begin to blur as scale takes over.

Not every contributing indicator has an identified systems indicator, practice or policy. That may be a result of limited research available or identified to date. Indicators, practices and policies can help answer multiple essential questions, but for simplicity, we've grouped each indicator with one essential question. To help communities choose the most relevant indicators for their context, each indicator is presented as it appears in its original source. This allows communities to understand the specific nuances that may be important to them. However, this approach means the language of indicators may vary, some may be duplicated across different sources and language choices may need to change based on local preferences.

This resource aims to be an encyclopedia of evidence-based indicators and implementation strategies that can be used with community groups, referenced during annual planning and leveraged to prioritize initiatives as needed. Its purpose is to help you and your community understand possible levers at every level — learner, neighborhood, school, district, city and state — to improve employment rates.

How to use this playbook

How this playbook is used will be different for each organization or community, depending on their planning process, goals and priorities. The playbook might be shared with a community working group in its entirety, referenced internally as a way to brainstorm potential solutions to discuss with others or leveraged in various other ways. After reading it, leaders can ask: How do we want to use this with our community?

This resource does not replace the voice and perspective of community members, who often know the solutions that will work best in their communities. Instead, consider this playbook a resource that community members can also access to support the co-designing of solutions and to inform your planning. For support on engaging with your community, visit StriveTogether's Results-Based Facilitation 101 course, available for free on the Training Hub.

This playbook offers several practical uses for community organizations. It can be used to onboard new staff or introduce organizations to cradle-to-career work. It helps explore aligned practices and policies, guiding the selection of working group topics and potential solutions. Communities can share the entire playbook with working groups or community members to support exploration and implementation. Additionally, it serves as a valuable resource during internal reviews for annual goal-setting and planning. Finally, this playbook can be used alongside other StriveTogether resources for a more comprehensive approach. If you are interested in diving deeper into the research supporting the indicators, visit the citations included throughout the playbook. The appendix also includes an annotated bibliography.

Due to the limited research on place-based partnerships, StriveTogether's Cradle-to-Career Playbook: Employment highlights initiatives and examples from StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network members making clear progress on their employment outcomes, illustrating what has worked for them.

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Successful Launch into Rewarding Work

When young people launch into quality jobs with fair pay, strong conditions and stability, they gain the foundation for economic mobility and wealth-building. These roles provide immediate security while opening pathways for advancement through ongoing skills development, setting the stage for lifelong opportunity and prosperity.

1 Are young people gaining access to quality jobs, characterized by strong earnings, labor market security and quality working environment?

Why this matters

For historically marginalized young people, access to high-quality jobs — with living wages, benefits, predictable schedules and safe, respectful working conditions — is a primary engine of economic mobility. Early labor-market security reduces churn and income volatility, enabling saving, credit-building and investments in education or housing, while clear opportunities for advancement and ongoing skill development raise earnings over time. Because quality jobs can counteract barriers rooted in discrimination and unequal access to networks, they help close racial and gender wealth gaps — strengthening families, employers and local economies.

Unemployment (or lack of desired employment) scars earnings and well-being long after the spell ends. A job loss is linked to an immediate 33% drop in earnings and up to a 15% loss six years later (Couch and Placzek 2010), with lifetime losses of about 20% that can persist for as long as 20 years; when reemployed, workers are more likely to be

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in part-time roles with less authority, autonomy and benefits (Brand 2015). Beyond reduced earnings, unemployment is associated with poorer psychological and physical health and diminished social and family participation: displaced workers report higher depression and anxiety and losses in self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-esteem, morale, life satisfaction, social support and sense of control (Brand 2015); unemployed people have significantly lower psychological health than the employed (Wanberg 2010); and unemployment is linked to increased physical disability, cardiovascular disease, hospitalization and use of medical services (Brand 2015). These shocks reverberate through families, raising the risk of disruption and harming children's well-being — including lower self-esteem and greater odds of grade repetition, dropout and suspension or expulsion (Brand 2015) (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

In this playbook, "quality jobs" means roles that pay a living wage, include benefits, offer predictable and flexible scheduling, ensure safety and respect and provide clear pathways for advancement and ongoing skill development. Helping young people secure — and helping employers create — these jobs is essential for economic mobility.

Job Quality: Employment is central to well-being, while unemployment or precarious work causes distress. As policymakers pursue job creation, they must also weigh job quality, since well-being depends not just on how many jobs exist but how good they are. Pair quantity strategies — such as infrastructure, small-business financing and place-based development — with quality practices like living-wage and benefit standards, predictable scheduling and safety enforcement, anti-discrimination protections and robust training pathways (apprenticeships, sector partnerships and alignment with postsecondary/CTE). High-quality work improves individual and household welfare and boosts participation, productivity and overall economic performance — so growth strategies should measure and promote both job quantity and quality (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).

Living wage: Jobs with higher earnings typically come with benefits (paid time off, health and retirement plans) and more stable employment, which supports mobility (Boushey 2008). Parents' wages and steady work shape children's health and development — higher-earning parents' children fare better — while low income exacerbates poor health, family conflict and social isolation (Ruhm 2000; Kahneman and Deaton 2010). Living wages also strengthen psychological well-being and job satisfaction, fostering a sense of empowerment rather than subordination (Alkire 2007; Carr, McAuliffe, and MacLachlan 2014). Raising the minimum wage is associated with improved birth outcomes, likely via more prenatal care and less prenatal smoking (Wehby, Dave, and Kaestner 2018). Living-wage laws raise earnings and benefits and expand full-time work (Brenner and Luce 2005). Boston's ordinance, as an example, improved job quality and household finances (e.g., health insurance, paid leave, retirement benefits, training; reduced debt, bank account openings, ability to take classes/vacations), even if most workers still felt it helped them avoid falling behind rather than achieve security (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Employment in a quality job

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Share of adults ages 25 to 54 who are employed. This is a common metric for measuring employment levels among prime-age workers, also known as the employment-to-population ratio (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Percent of college graduates who secure a quality first job. The career accelerator

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fellowship Braven defines a strong first job as one that requires a bachelor's degree and is full-time, and also includes some combination of promotion pathways, employee benefits and a market-competitive starting salary (Braven).

- Percent of college graduates who were employed overall or enrolled in graduate school within six months of college graduation, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, family income and first-generation college student status (Braven).
- Mean salary of employed program participants in their first 6 months after college graduation compared to the national average. For example, Braven fellows in the college graduating class of 2024 were earning a mean salary of $51,656, exceeding the national average by over $9,100 (Braven).
- Mean salary of full-time employed program participants in their first 6 months after college graduation compared to the national average. For example, Braven fellows in the college graduating class of 2024 who were employed full-time were earning a mean salary of $57,570, exceeding the national average by over $7,900 (Braven).
- Percent of recent college graduates who are in roles aligned with their long term career interests (Braven).
- Percent of recent college graduates who are in jobs with employer-provided benefits (Braven).
- Braven, a career-accelerating fellowship, empowers promising college students on their paths toward quality economic opportunities through a semester-long, cohort-based course — developed with input from our higher education partners and faculty — and support that extends beyond the course, continuing through six months after college graduation. In their core higher education model, students complete the course for credit (Braven).
- According to the Colorado Workforce Development Council, a good job allows for workers, at minimum, to meet basic needs by providing: Wages that provide predictable income that covers basic living expenses and allows for wealth building; Benefits that facilitate a healthy, stable life; A schedule that enables workers to balance the other demands of life; Working conditions offer an environment that promotes physical, emotional and psychological safety and wellness; Employers establish transparent growth opportunities to advance along a career pathway and increase pay; Sense of belonging in an inclusive environment where individuals are accepted and connected to one another (CWDC, Job Quality)
- Job quality – New jobs and job separations: Percentage of people who reported applying for a new job, starting a new job, leaving a job voluntarily or being laid off (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Job quality – Percentage of people who move to a new job and say that it is better than the last job they had (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Employment and gig work: Reasons for not working among prime-age adults disaggregated by gender (e.g., health limitations or disability; caregiving for an elderly, disabled or sick adult; family and personal obligations beside caregiving; could not find work; childcare; would lose access to government benefits; school or training; retired) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Employment and gig work: Share of people doing gig activities disaggregated by age group, race/ethnicity, gender, parental status (e.g., being parents of younger children); student or non-student status (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Employment and gig work: Share of people agreeing to selected statements about gig work (e.g., "I am my own boss doing it," "It lets me work flexible hours," "I wish the pay was more consistent," "It gives me work-life balance," "Without it, I would have trouble making

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ends meet." "I wish I got benefits, like health insurance, from doing it" (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).

- Employment and gig work: Types of gig activities (e.g., selling or renting items, offering short-term rentals, performing short-term tasks) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Underemployment rates of college graduates one year after graduation and 10 years after graduation. (Note: "Underemployment" refers to the experience of four-year college graduates who are employed in jobs that don't typically require a bachelor's degree.) In spite of a historically tight labor market, the underemployment of college graduates remains stubbornly high. Overall, 52% of graduates are underemployed a year after graduation. Even a decade after graduation, 45% of graduates are underemployed (Burning Glass, Talent Disrupted).
- Probability of college-level employment 10 years after graduation based on the first job after college. Graduates who start out in a college-level job rarely slide into underemployment, as the vast majority of them (79%) remain in a college-level occupation five years after graduation. Of those employed in college-level occupation five years after graduating, 86% were still in a college-level job 10 years out. On the other hand, 73% of graduates who start out underemployed remain so 10 years after completing college, making them at that point about 3.5 times more likely to be underemployed compared with those who start out in a college-level job (Burning Glass, Talent Disrupted).
- Earnings premium of college graduates over high school graduates and median annual earnings by educational attainment for recent college graduates with a terminal bachelor's degree. A recent graduate employed in a college-level job typically earns about 88% more than a high school diploma holder, while an underemployed graduate typically earns only about 25% more than someone with no education beyond high school. This leaves underemployed graduates on weaker financial footing as they start their careers, especially those with substantial student loan debt (Burning Glass, Talent Disrupted).
- Occupational employment outcomes by degree field. Graduates with degrees that involve a substantial amount of quantitative reasoning, such as computer science, engineering, mathematics or math-intensive business fields (e.g., finance, accounting), experience the lowest underemployment rates (i.e., less than 37%), especially right out of college. Underemployment rates also are low for those who study education or health programs (e.g., nursing). Graduates with degrees in public safety and security, recreation and wellness studies, or general business fields (e.g., marketing) tend to face much higher levels of underemployment (i.e., 57% or higher) (Burning Glass, Talent Disrupted).
- Underemployment rate by internship participation and institutional selectivity and type. College-level employment rates are higher for those who complete an internship. There is a strong connection between internships and college-level employment after graduation. Controlling for factors such as gender, race/ethnicity and institutional characteristics, the odds of underemployment for graduates who had at least one internship are 48.5% lower than those who had no internships and the benefits associated with completing an internship are relatively strong across degree fields (Burning Glass, Talent Disrupted).
- Institution type, race/ethnicity, gender and geography matter with respect to post-graduation employment outcomes, but typically not as much as college major or internships. Graduates of more selective institutions are less likely to experience underemployment than those who attended more inclusive (and typically less resourced) institutions. Black and

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Latine students are substantially more likely than students of other races and ethnicities to wind up underemployed, and men are more likely to be underemployed than women. Underemployment also varies substantially by state. While all of these differences are meaningful, none of them explains as much of the differences in underemployment rates as college major and internship completion (Burning Glass, Talent Disrupted).

System indicators

- Growth rate of occupations: Projected percent change of employment over the next ten years (Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- Occupations with most new jobs, the projected numeric change in employment of the next ten years (Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- Occupations projected to have the most openings each year, on average, disaggregated by required education level (i.e., no formal educational credential, high school diploma or the equivalent, postsecondary education but not a bachelor's degree, bachelor's degree, graduate degree) (Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- City complexity: The average complexity of all the industries with a high local presence in the city. More complex cities have higher per capita incomes and tend to grow faster (Brookings' Smart Growth Toolkit).
- Tradable industries: Industries with products or services that can be sold outside the city, which is key to sustained economic growth (Brookings' Smart Growth Toolkit).
- Priority industry: Priority industries have low local presence, a high share of good jobs and are tradable (Brookings' Smart Growth Toolkit).
- Job presence in the city: This metric identifies the importance of the occupation to the city, compared to its importance in the national economy (Brookings' Smart Growth Toolkit).
- Expected 5-year job growth: Five-year job growth projections based on the city's historical employment growth patterns (Brookings' Smart Growth Toolkit).
- Local industry complexity: More complex industries require a wide variety of local industry types. More complex industries promote economic growth but can take time to develop (Brookings' Smart Growth Toolkit).
- Good jobs: Jobs that pay above the local median wage and offer employer-provided healthcare benefits (Brookings' Smart Growth Toolkit).
- Strong leaders elevate good jobs by establishing trusting and inclusive work environments that support employees in developing new skills, advancing along career pathways and feeling connected to one another and the broader goals of the organization (CWDC, Job Quality)
- Employers offer continuous opportunities for personal growth, creativity and problem solving (CWDC, Job Quality)
- Employers practice open and transparent communication keeping employees informed and connected to broader organizational goals and decision makers (CWDC, Job Quality)
- Employers take worker voice and agency into account with key decisions and workers are recognized for their contributions to the organization (CWDC, Job Quality)
- Work is meaningful and provides a sense of satisfaction and purpose (CWDC, Job Quality)
- Companies and industries work collaboratively to create good jobs that meet basic needs and offer conditions that promote equity, inclusiveness and opportunities for career and economic mobility (CWDC, Job Quality)
- Community members and local stakeholders in economic development, workforce development, education and community organizations work collaboratively to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for their community by attracting and growing businesses that offer a variety of high-quality jobs (CWDC, Job Quality)

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- Community members and local stakeholders in economic development, workforce development, education and community organizations have coordinated policies and incentives that promote the creation and growth of good jobs (CWDC, Job Quality)
- Community members and local stakeholders in economic development, workforce development, education and community organizations have long-term attraction and retention plans that prioritize quality jobs (CWDC, Job Quality)
- Community members and local stakeholders in economic development, workforce development, education and community organizations have responsive education and training partners that collaborate to meet the evolving needs of learners, businesses and the economy (CWDC, Job Quality)

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Qualified applicants are actively recruited – especially those from underserved communities. Applicants are free from discrimination, including unequal treatment or application of selection criteria that are unrelated to job performance. Applicants are evaluated with relevant skills-based requirements. Unnecessary educational credentials and experience requirements are minimized (U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor, Good Job Principles).
- Creating workforce development programs that support workers in reskilling and upskilling, such as public-sector apprenticeships (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Strengthening and diversifying the local government workforce, including by investing in recruitment, training and retention (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Supporting residents in accessing and completing postsecondary education (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Helping parents access high-quality and affordable child care (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Supporting existing employers, particularly locally owned businesses, to grow and thrive (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Investing in job placement services and supports to help residents find stable jobs, including transitional and reentry support programs (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Investing in infrastructure and other amenities (e.g., roads, public transit, parks and schools), which both creates jobs and enhances longer-term employment opportunities for residents (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Partnering with large community-serving institutions, such as universities and hospitals, to funnel capital and resources toward improving local communities (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Supporting existing employers, particularly locally owned businesses, to grow and thrive. City leaders and planners play a critical role in improving access to markets, particularly with respect to the city's physical resources. For example, a city may work with local, regional and state planning resources to develop a transportation plan that addresses highway accessibility needs of businesses (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).

Policies

- Paid family leave: As of February 2025, thirteen states and the District of Columbia have enacted mandatory paid family leave policies. A study of California's paid family leave policy found improvements in parent-reported overall child health and suggestive improvements in maternal mental health status. Findings also suggest a reduction in asthma and a greater likelihood that parents feel they are coping well with the day-to-day demands of parenting (Effect of Paid Family Leave).

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Indicators

Contributing indicators

- OECD Job Quality Measurement – Earnings Quality: Both earnings average levels and their distribution are considered due to their importance for individual and overall well-being. A large literature has indeed shown that: i) life satisfaction increases with the level of earnings, and this holds both across countries as well as between persons within countries ii) for a given level of average earnings, life satisfaction tends to be higher the more equal is its distribution. This reflects the existence of a saturation effect (life satisfaction rising at a decreasing rate as earnings rise) and the fact that people tend to display an intrinsic dislike of too high inequality in society (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).
- Pay: All workers are paid a stable and predictable living wage before overtime, tips and commissions. Workers' pay is fair, transparent and equitable. Workers' wages increase with increased skills and experience (U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor, Good Job Principles).
- Earnings quality – Average earnings. At an individual level, earnings can be measured in either gross or net terms (i.e. before or after deductions of employee taxes and social security contributions) and on an hourly, monthly or even annual basis. The OECD framework makes use of gross hourly wages. Hourly wages rather than monthly or annual earnings are chosen to abstract from differences in working time between workers that relate more to job quantity than job quality (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).
- Earnings quality disaggregated by gender, age and education level (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).
- Pay on an average job compared with the cost of living. This metric reflects the supply of jobs in a community that pay enough to meet the local cost of a family's basic needs (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- The self-sufficiency standard, developed by the Center for Women's Welfare at the University of Washington, defines the income a family must earn to meet basic yet adequate needs, which is tracked by the percentage of youth ages 25-34 who are self-sufficient.This measure is based on family composition, ages of children and geographic cost differences. It includes all major budget items working adults face. The basic minimum living costs calculated into the measure include costs of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care and miscellaneous items, as well as taxes and credits (StriveTogether Cradle-to-Career Outcomes Data Guide: Employment).
- Earnings: A living wage that provides full-time workers with the financial means to meet basic needs based on their local cost of living. This includes all compensation for work performed, including hourly wage or annual salary, commission, tips, bonus or profit share (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Earnings and worker well-being: Do worker earnings, in whatever format they take, contribute to worker well-being? Metrics include: Hourly rate/salary vs. living wage for local area, variance by demographics; Percentage of employed individuals with low pay (below living wage); Percentage of employed individuals above the poverty line for family of four; Percentage of employed individuals whose annual pay is <$10,000, $10,000-$20,000, $20,000-$30,000, >$30,000 or nominal monthly/hourly earnings of employed individuals by deciles (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)

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- Earnings distribution and fairness: Are earnings distributed across the organization's/intervention's workforce? What are the current and historical inequities? Is pay perceived as equitable for the work and fair as compared to others? How does pay compare to the industry? Metrics include: Demographic gaps in high-wage or low-wage occupations; Percentage of frontline workers' earnings required for basic needs; Percentage of full-time employed individuals on federal assistance; Average wage compared to industry (percentile for industry/occupation); Pay gap between subpopulation groups (e.g., women vs. men); Profit distribution by demographics for current year and historically; Bonus criteria for receipt and historical distribution by role and demographics (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)

Systems indicators

- Employment: Employment-to-population ratio for adults ages 25 to 54 (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Access to jobs paying a living wage: Ratio of pay on the average job to the cost of living (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Share of workers employed in jobs paying family-sustaining wages, disaggregated by race, educational attainment and industry category. A report by Georgetown University defines family-sustaining wages as at least $35,000 per year ($17 per hour for full-time jobs) for workers between the ages of 25 and 44 and at least $45,000 ($22 per hour) for workers between the ages of 45 and 64 (The Unequal Race for Good Jobs).
- The MIT Living Wage Calculator is a tool that helps individuals, communities, employers and others estimate the local wage rate that a full-time worker requires to cover the costs of their family's basic needs where they live. The calculator features geographically-specific costs for food, childcare, health care, housing, transportation, other basic needs – like clothing, personal care items and broadband, among others – and taxes at the county, metro and state levels for 12 different family types (MIT Living Wage Calculator).
- Salary growth: Comparing salary progression of returnship participants to peers over time shows whether the program enables financial growth parallel to career advancement. An upward salary trend signals positive long-term impact (Women Tech Network).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Leveraging public procurement processes to incentivize employers to pay living wages (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Increasing wages for local government workers (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Prioritizing job quality in addition to wages, such as by supporting employee-owned businesses, integrating job-quality requirements in local government contracts and recognizing "high road" employers that pay living wages and provide other elements of high-quality jobs, such as paid leave, workplace flexibility and stable scheduling (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Companies track and publish pay equity and employee ownership metrics to show progress over time and importance to the company (Wharton).
- Companies recognize and evaluate any tradeoffs between the competitive pressures of short-term demands, such as wage increases and hybrid work environments and long-term resilience (Wharton).
- University of Tulsa – CaneCareers Job Placement Guarantee (OK). Completers are guaranteed a job offer or grad-school acceptance within 6 months — or they get a free semester of TU graduate tuition. Students must finish the multi-year career curriculum, keep a 3.0 GPA and

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follow explicit application quotas and timelines (The University of Tulsa).

- Florida Southern College – Career Guarantee (FL). If a participant isn't employed or in grad school within 6 months, FSC provides loan-payment assistance (up to 3 months) or tuition for six graduate credits, on top of a structured four-year career-readiness plan (Florida Southern College).
- Identify significant institutions. Cities, large and small, can use publicly available data to identify anchor institutions that may not fit the traditional definition but serve important roles. They can also use this information to measure levels of engagement by those institutions in local hiring and procurement to identify potential areas of collaboration and improvement. For example, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis used mapping to identify anchor institutions along the Mississippi Delta. Using U.S. census data, researchers identified 14 anchor institutions based on the contributions of these organizations to the local economy relative to its size, and then examined areas of high poverty and unemployment located within or near the locations of these anchors.
- Partnering with "anchor institutions" (important local institutions like universities and health care systems that have significant geographic and/or market presence) to hire more local residents. A common metric for capturing an anchor institution's engagement is the proportion of its workforce comprised of local residents. Institutions can set local hiring goals but also identify barriers that area residents may face in obtaining or maintaining employment at local anchors, particularly transportation issues. As part of its HopkinsLocal initiative, Johns Hopkins University has pledged to make 40 percent of new hires in targeted employment categories from certain Baltimore zip codes identified as disadvantaged (ICIC).
- Partnering with "anchor institutions" to increase local procurement. Local institutions have enormous purchasing power for goods and service and using local suppliers is an important strategy for contributing to the local economy. This strategy can include efforts to purchase from local vendors, especially minority-owned or women-owned businesses and to examine contracting processes to identify any structural barriers that are preventing local vendors from successfully bidding on projects. Between 1996 and 2003, the University of Pennsylvania tripled the dollar amount of goods and services purchased from West Philadelphia businesses through their Economic Inclusion Initiative. Under their current plans, they continue to focus on local purchasing and aim to award 20 percent of all construction contracts to minority or women-owned businesses (ICIC).

Policies

- Increase the funding and enforcement powers of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which is responsible for enforcing civil rights laws and protecting workers from discrimination. Yet the EEOC is underfunded and faces frequent budget shortfalls and hiring freezes. This, along with a focus on investigating individual rather than systemic cases of employment discrimination that dates back to the 1980s, has blunted its efforts. If equal opportunity in employment is to become more than a "good idea," the agency charged with enforcing antidiscrimination practices must be fully funded to carry out its mandate (The Unequal Race for Good Jobs).
- Promote industry and professional efforts to increase diversity. Business leaders, industry and professional groups should take the lead in implementing and promoting diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, including in recruitment, hiring, promotions, mentoring and professional networking. While many large organizations already have some type of diversity effort, the most effective diversity initiatives are those

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that involve organizational authority structures and accountability, rather than just broad diversity or anti-bias training. In addition, large employers should be more transparent about diversity in their hiring, promotion and salary-setting practices and those who do so should be recognized for their efforts (The Unequal Race for Good Jobs).

- Grant tax incentives for employers to locate in underserved economic areas. Economic development programs are designed to ensure that residents of an area gain access to job opportunities, and that all residents have equal access to those opportunities regardless of their race or ethnicity (The Unequal Race for Good Jobs).
- Grant economic development incentives to companies that make diversity, equity and inclusion a key recruitment priority (The Unequal Race for Good Jobs).
- Invest in retraining of displaced workers. To address employment dislocation brought about by automation and other factors, federal and state governments should make substantial new investments in retraining displaced workers, including investments in adult education and career services. These investments should reach workers of all races and ethnicities without directing workers toward specific careers based on their race or ethnicity (The Unequal Race for Good Jobs).
- Reward colleges that enroll and graduate students from underserved populations. Policymakers should take steps to reward colleges that provide exceptional educational and career outcomes for students from traditionally underrepresented and underserved backgrounds. For example, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic-Serving Institutions that demonstrate success in preparing their students for good jobs deserve recognition and financial support (The Unequal Race for Good Jobs).
- Make work-based learning the norm (co-ops, internships, practicums). Long, credit-bearing co-ops integrate real work into the degree so students graduate with employer experience and offers in hand (e.g., Northeastern and Drexel; nearly half of Drexel co-op students who work full-time receive offers from a former co-op employer) (Northeastern University).
- Workforce Pell is the new federal policy that lets Pell Grants fund short-term, job-focused programs — not just traditional degrees. Beginning July 1, 2026 (the 2026–27 award year), Pell-eligible students can use aid for programs 8–15 weeks / 150–599 clock hours at accredited Title IV institutions (The Institute for College Access and Success).
- Policy makers can increase funding to colleges that successfully prepare students from traditionally underrepresented and underserved backgrounds, for example, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic-Serving Institutions that demonstrate success in preparing their students for good jobs (The Unequal Race for Good Jobs).
- Ensure that counselors are trained to provide high-quality, sustained personalized advising. High school and college advisors should receive the necessary training to provide all students with culturally competent counseling — advice customized to the individual student's needs — about the benefits of completing a college credential. This would include more comprehensive information about the funding support that exists to help students attend and complete postsecondary education programs. These counseling efforts would be substantially bolstered by transparency on completion rates and earnings outcomes by program of study. This increased transparency would support all students in deciding which postsecondary education and training options are best for them (The Unequal Race for Good Jobs).

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Access to jobs providing benefits

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Full-time and part-time workers are provided family-sustaining benefits that promote economic security and mobility. These include health insurance, a retirement plan, workers' compensation benefits, work-family benefits such as paid leave and caregiving support and others that may arise from engagement with workers. Workers are empowered and encouraged to use these benefits (U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor, Good Job Principles).
- Employer-sponsored health insurance, paid leave, employee education benefits, retirement plans, childcare subsidies or support and other benefits, including those that address barriers to work. This includes support accessing and maximizing benefits provided (e.g., financial wellness and career coaching) (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Benefits availability: Are benefits available through the organization/intervention responsive to employed individuals' needs in terms of type, availability and costs? Availability of benefits, by type (sick leave, health insurance, etc.) and any variance of plans by level; Percentage of benefit cost covered by employer vs. employed individual (premiums + deductible); Mean number of days of paid annual leave per year to which employed individuals are entitled; Average amount saved in retirement plan annually; Percentage of homeowners vs. renters, broken down by race, gender, or other demographics; Average commute time, broken down by race, gender, or other demographics; Percentage of employed individuals with caregiving needs; Percentage of employed individuals who are single parents; Average amount provided to cover continuing education costs; Percentage of match or employer contribution; Existence of safety net navigation services (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Benefits accessibility: Are most employed individuals able to take advantage of the existing benefits? What inequities are present, both current and over time (trends)? Percentage of employed individuals eligible for insurance, by role and demographics; Percentage of employed individuals who take advantage of benefits, by benefit, role and demographics; Affordability: cost ratio of benefits to salary received; Percentage of employed individuals entitled to paid annual leave, by level; Average number of days of paid annual leave used per employed individual during the a given year; Percentage of employed parents with children under compulsory school age who currently use child care; Ratio of housing costs, childcare and commute costs to income; Trends in types of leave if tracked (e.g. jury duty, bereavement, parental leave, sick leave, vacation); Percentage of employed individuals taking advantage of education funding in a given year; Increase in title or earnings upon completion of education, by role and demographics as well as trends over time; Average amount saved in retirement plan annually, by role and demographics as well as trends over time; Increase in overall net worth; Percentage of employed individuals eligible for unemployment insurance; Use (percentage or number) of navigation services (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Provide caregiving assistance (e.g., time off for appointments, an Employee Assistance

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Program, or care concierge access) to low-wage employees for looking after family members (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

- Provide a flexible sick time policy for personal sick time (e.g., low-wage employees allowed to take advances on sick leave that would be accrued in later months) (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Provide a flexible sick time policy for caring for a sick family member (e.g., low-wage employees permitted to stay home to take care of sick family member) (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Provide transportation assistance (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Provide tuition benefits (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).Provide employee stock options program or other employee ownership structure (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

Learning and development

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Learning and Development: Pre-employment training partnerships, onboarding, technical skill training, cross-training, mentoring and coaching, sponsorship, upskilling opportunities such as apprenticeship or targeted degree programs and structured promotion pathways (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Training and skill development: Are there clear, fair processes for staff development, rewards and promotions? Metrics include: Number of job related non-formal education and trainings provided in the past twelve months; Volume of job-related non-formal education and training per participant in the last twelve months (in days); Rate of successful completion of education and training, including industry recognized certifications; Percentage of employed persons whose job-related non-formal education and training has helped improve the way they work; Percentage utilization of learning and development tools; Percentage allocated to learning and development, allocation vs. amount spent; Percentage of employed persons whose job-related non-formal education and training has directly contributed to their advancement (title or role change); Increase in wages or benefits resulting from completion of training or education; Percentage of workers that persist beyond one year in the company, by role and demographics; Percentage of workers that advance from low wage to higher wage earning jobs, by role and demographics; Distribution of awards by role and demographics over last year (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Career path support: Are career paths in place for all roles? If so, are they clear and fair? Do employed individuals believe they can have a career at the company? Metrics include: Percentage of management comprised of population subgroups (e.g., women); Promotion rates by demographic and level; Percentage of frontline managers promoted from within; Average time to promotion by level and education; Percentage of employed persons who have received mentorship; Learning and development-related employee satisfaction trends by role or function and demographics (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Employers invest in mentorship, career pathways and learning and development. Some of the largest gaps between the perceptions of workers

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who move up and those who do not fall into three key areas: mentorship, career pathways and learning and development. Our research indicates that even incremental efforts in those three areas can help workers escape poverty-trap roles. Employers benefit by reducing the indirect costs associated with high turnover and raising the productivity of their workforce. In many instances, this requires little more than ensuring lowwage workers know of the existence of opportunities and that the programs' design reflects a clear understanding of their needs and personal circumstances (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

- Companies allocate funds for a multi-year program of making significant investments in training and professional development and measure the return on that investment through tracking the promotion of internal managers (Wharton).
- Companies inventory, anticipate and communicate corporate strategies for long-term investments in employees as part of a bigger company strategy (Wharton).
- Companies provide employees with high-quality training, meaningful interactions with and professional development feedback from managers and growth opportunities (Wharton).

Safety and security

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Safety and Security: Policies and practices to promote physical safety (precautions against disease or injury) as well as mental and emotional safety (e.g., training and clear policies for reporting, investigating and addressing harassment or discrimination). This also includes psychosocial safety and the level of role stressors employees experience (e.g., the extent to which employees feel safe to take risks, feel cared for by colleagues and are clear on what is expected, as well as the extent to which work tasks create ongoing conflict with other colleagues, teams or departments) (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Job Security and Working Conditions: Workers have a safe, healthy and accessible workplace, built on input from workers and their representatives. Workers have job security without arbitrary or discriminatory discipline or dismissal. They have adequate hours and predictable schedules. The use of electronic monitoring, data and algorithms is transparent, equitable and carefully deployed with input from workers. Workers are free from harassment, discrimination and retaliation at work. Workers are properly classified under applicable laws. Temporary or contractor labor solutions are minimized (U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor, Good Job Principles).
- Physical, mental and emotional safety: Do employed individuals feel safe at work? Do they know their rights? Do employed individuals feel that they can bring their whole self to the workplace? Do employed individuals feel that they can voice concerns to someone they trust? Metrics include: Percentage of employed persons who are exposed to physical health risk factors at work, by role, demographics and trends; Rate of fatal and nonfatal occupational injuries for employed persons, by role, demographics and trends; Percentage of persons who have been victims of physical, psychological or sexual violence in relation to their employment by role, demographics and trends; Number of safety incidents annually; Legal/compliance costs and trends; Rates of occupational diseases;

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Grievance/complaint severity and frequency trends related to physical safety; Percentage of employed persons who have been victims of discrimination at work, disaggregated by role/function and demographics; Percentage of employed persons who are exposed to mental well-being risk factors at work; Percentage of leave requests related to mental or emotional health, if tracked; Employee assistance program (or related support) usage rates; Existence of antidiscrimination, harassment and profiling policies as well as frequency of training; Grievance/complaint severity and frequency trends related to mental/emotional safety; Existence of supervisor training, frequency and percentage of compliance with completion (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)

- Structural job safety: Do employed individuals believe they will keep their job if they perform well — that they will not be laid off? Are employees correctly classified? Percentage of employed persons aged 18 years or over whose number of years of tenure at the current job or with the current employer is <1 year, 1 to less than 5 years, 5 to less than 10 years and (4) ≥10 years; Percentage of employed persons whose job is at risk due to strategy shift, downsizing, acquisition, etc. over next six months; Layoffs in the last five years and percentage of workforce they account for; Percentage of employed persons employed via a temporary employment agency or temporary contract; Percentage of employed persons without formal contracts or without pay slip (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Labor Market Security: The importance of labour market security for well-being has been investigated in several studies (Clark and Oswald, 1994; Postel-Vinay and Saint-Martin, 2005; Salvatori, 2010). Job security, notably, appears to be a major determinant of individual well-being. When workers are asked to state their preferences with respect to different aspects of work, as done in the European Social Survey (ESS) or the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), they rank job security consistently as the most important item in almost all countries for which data are available (Green, 2009; OECD, 2011a). The detrimental effect of labour market insecurity for individual well-being has also been demonstrated in several studies that relate perceptions of job security to well-being outcomes such as life satisfaction and health status (e.g. Green, 2011). Moreover, the effects of labour market insecurity may go well beyond the well-being of workers. Job insecurity may affect firms' profits by reducing worker retention rates, investment in firm-specific skills and productivity, as well as society at large by shaping people's political views, increasing social unrest, sapping consumer confidence and saving behaviour (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).
- Labor market security against the risk of unemployment is defined in terms of the expected earnings loss associated with unemployment. This loss depends on the risk of unemployment (i.e., the risk of becoming and staying unemployed) and the degree of mitigation against these losses provided by government transfers –unemployment benefits and social assistance– in the event of unemployment (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).
- Labor market security against unemployment – Unemployment risk. The risk of unemployment is computed by looking at the distribution of the length of ongoing unemployment spells at a given point in time. Data on unemployment duration are used to measure the monthly probability of becoming unemployed as well as the average expected duration of completed unemployment spells in months (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).
- Labor market security against unemployment – Unemployment insurance. Unemployment insurance captures the degree of loss absorption through government transfers on workers' exposure to unemployment risk. For OECD countries, it is possible to compute a measure

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of effective unemployment insurance capturing the accessibility of benefits and the generosity of unemployment compensation, while also taking into account the progressivity of the tax system. The effective unemployment insurance is thus defined as the product of the coverage of the unemployment insurance/assistance and replacement rates of public transfers received by the unemployed (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).

- Labor market security against unemployment disaggregated by gender, age and education level (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).
- Quality of working environment – Job Strain due to too many Job Demands (e.g., time pressure at work, physical health risk factors). Job strain due to *time pressure* could include working usually more than 50 hours per week, difficulty taking an hour or two off during working hours for personal or family matters, working at very high speed and to tight deadlines. Job strain due to *physical health risk factors* could include having to maintain tiring and painful positions, carrying or moving heavy loads, exposure to vibrations from hand tools and machinery, exposure to high noise, exposure to high or low temperatures (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).
- Experience of job strain disaggregated by gender, age and education level (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).

Opportunities for advancement within company or industry

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Skills and Career Advancement: Workers have equitable opportunities and tools to progress to future good jobs within their organizations or outside them. Workers have transparent promotion or advancement opportunities. Workers have access to quality employer- or labor-management-provided training and education (U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor, Good Job Principles).
- Promotion rates: Organizations should track the percentage of returnship participants who receive promotions within specific timeframes after program completion. This metric reflects how effectively the program prepares individuals for upward mobility and indicates long-term career advancement (Women Tech Network).
- Retention over years: Measuring how many alumni remain with the organization 1, 3, and 5 years post-program provides insight into long-term engagement and satisfaction. High retention rates suggest that the program supports sustainable career paths (Women Tech Network).
- Performance scores: Analyzing performance review ratings of returnship participants over several years helps assess ongoing contribution and skill development, reflecting sustained career progression and organizational impact (Women Tech Network).
- Employee outlook on advancement opportunities. For instance, the Harvard Business School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following statements: "My industry had many opportunities for me to move to a job with higher pay, skills and productivity," "My company had many opportunities for me to move to a job with higher pay, skills and productivity," "My industry does not have many opportunities for me to move to a job with higher pay, skills and productivity," "My company does not have many opportunities for me to move to a job with higher pay, skills and productivity," "My industry doesn't have many opportunities for low-wage employees to move to a job with

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higher pay, skills and productivity," "My company doesn't have many opportunities for low-wage employees to move to a job with higher pay, skills and productivity" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

- Quality of working environment – Job quality due to provision of sufficient Job Resources (e.g., work autonomy, learning opportunities, workplace relationships). *Work autonomy* and *learning opportunities* can include the ability to choose or change the order of tasks, the ability to choose or change methods of work, the opportunity to learn new things, opportunities to participate in employer-provided training or on-the-job training. Good workplace relationships involve environments in which workers feel "at home" at work and have very good friends at work (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).
- Additional themes that diminish the Quality of Work Environment include: physical risk factors, physical demands, work intensity, intimidation and discrimination at workplace, emotional demands and work stress, subjective job insecurity and unsocial work schedule (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).
- Additional themes that improve the Quality of Work Environment include: task discretion and autonomy, training and learning autonomy, training and learning opportunities, opportunity for career advancement, opportunity for self-realization, organizational participation and workplace voice, intrinsic rewards, good managerial practices, task clarity and performance feedback, social support and good relationships at work, work-life balance and flexibility of working hours (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Pre-employment: Describe career pathways on the company website (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Pre-employment: Describe career pathways in job postings (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Pre-employment: Describe career pathways in job interviews (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Employers make retention a cornerstone of strategy. Employers can always hire new workers on the spot market by offering marginally higher wages. But by accepting inordinate churn, employers create a cascade of indirect costs. Experienced workers are likely to be more valuable than new hires with the same skills, if they can be found. They have already overcome barriers to working at the company; they're familiar with the company's ways of doing business and already have demonstrated competence in performing their jobs; and they're typically eager to remain at their current place of work. Voluntarily leaving a position is generally not their preference — almost two-thirds of low-wage workers indicated a preference to remain with their current employer if opportunities for advancement were available (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Employers understand the external implications of upward mobility. The more employers cooperate to develop a growing talent pool, the more they can create a smooth, well-functioning supply chain for local talent. Such collaboration can take place within an industry or in a given geography. Companies like Disney, Amazon and Walmart — which hire at scale in low-wage positions — have begun innovating on building career pathways for their employees, both within and outside the company. They are forging partnerships with community colleges, identifying skills gaps in local communities and preparing their workers for better paying positions at other employers. Smaller companies are also recognizing that, rather than competing for talent across employers, there are economies of scale in collaborating on deepening the talent pool. Solutions that

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help workers overcome barriers to employment through skills training, providing remedies to challenges like access to transportation, or working with skills providers and educators at all levels to develop programs can improve the readiness of workers for available jobs (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

- Employers measure implementation rigorously. The last 20 years have seen a revolution in business analytics. Business intelligence systems provide executives and managers with near-real-time granular data on performance metrics of every variety. Comparatively few companies, however, utilize those capabilities to track the upward mobility of their low-wage workforce. The processes that will drive the creation of a more stable and productive workforce should be tracked with the same rigor as other mission-critical activities (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Employers create a diverse workforce, bottom up. In the U.S., women and people of color represent a disproportionate share of low-wage workers. Companies, meanwhile, are still struggling to find ways to deliver on the promise of diversity. Historical efforts to increase diversity, often through mechanisms associated with corporate social responsibility programs, have yielded little at scale. The process for building a diverse organization can be significantly advanced by building from the ground up. Low-wage workers constitute a pool of talent with skills and experience that are immediately available. In a labor market in which employers of every size are seeking to improve performance on diversity, equity and inclusion, "growing one's own" is far more likely to achieve desired results than playing the spot market (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Onboarding: Communicate upward mobility opportunities and pathways during onboarding (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Onboarding: Communicate expectations for soft skills required to move up (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Onboarding: Communicate expectations for technical skills (e.g., knowledge of certain equipment, systems, or tools) required to move up (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Onboarding: Communicate expectations for qualifications or credentials (e.g., a certain certificate or diploma) required to move up (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Pathways for Advancement: Create career pathways for low-wage employees (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Pathways for Advancement: Describe career pathways and skills progression on an ongoing basis in company communications (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Pathways for Advancement: Describe how total compensation (e.g., pay ranges and benefits) will change for the next role level in performance reviews (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Pathways for Advancement: Describe the skills, training, certifications and experience needed to get to the next role level in performance reviews (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Pathways for Advancement: Describe how to obtain the skills, training and certifications needed to get to the next role level in performance reviews (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Pathways for Advancement: Rewards (e.g., increase in wages, change in job title, or offer of a bonus) to low-wage employees for reaching milestones of skills, training, credentials, or experience (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Pathways for Advancement: Publicly recognize low-wage employees for reaching milestones

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of skills, training. credentials, or experience (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

- Pathways for Advancement: Communicate examples of worker success stories to current low-wage employees (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Pathways for Advancement: Provide opportunities for low-wage employees to interact with successful role models who progressed from the low-wage job (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

Flexible and sustainable scheduling

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Number of hours needed to work in order to attain a livable wage, given hourly rate. A single-mother with two children earning the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour needs to work 138 hours per week, nearly the equivalent of working 24 hours per day for 6 days, to earn a living wage (Living Wage for US).
- Schedule regularity and worker decision making: Share of workers who often or always choose what tasks to work on and how to complete tasks, disaggregated by education level (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Schedules: Employers provide a good faith estimate of an employee's schedule at the time of hire, employee input on work schedule, predictable hours, advanced notice of schedule changes and avoid or provide additional compensation for employees working between closing and opening shifts separated by fewer than 10 hours (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Schedule stability and flexibility: Do employed individuals in the organization/intervention get schedules sufficiently in advance to plan their lives? What is the frequency of changes after schedules are issued? What impact does that have on cost and employed individual morale? Metrics include: How many days/weeks in advance are employed individuals informed of their schedule? Percentage deviation between actual and planned hours/employed individual/week; Cost of overtime (by employed individual and overall); Percentage of employed individuals by shift (e.g., night, day); Percentage of employed individuals with a flexible work schedule, as well as breakdowns by role or function; Percentage of employed persons whose working arrangements offer the possibility to work at home, as well as breakdowns by role or function; Percentage of employed individuals who have more than one job, as well as breakdowns by role or function; Mean duration of commuting time between work and home (one way) (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Fair schedules: Are employed individuals receiving sufficient hours based on their desired employment status? Are there any unintended consequences or disparate impacts? What inequities are present, both current and over time (trends)? Percentage of employed individuals working (per week): <10 hours, 10-20 hours, 20-30 hours, 30-40 hours, >40 hours; Mean weekly hours usually worked per employed individual; Percentage of full-time employed individuals; Minimum guaranteed hours for part-timers; Percentage of employed persons usually working 41 hours or more per week; Percentage and frequency of employed individuals compensated when on call but not called in or sent home early from a scheduled shift (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)

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- Employee perception on their job's stability and flexibility in work schedule. For example, responses to the following survey questions: "I had enough autonomy (i.e., independence) at work," "I had a stable enough work schedule," "I had a flexible enough work schedule" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Provide adequate notice of upcoming shifts (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Provide stability in scheduling (e.g., consistent start time for shifts, consistent hours week-to-week and advance notice of working days) (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

Policies

- Twenty days paid leave: The reasons for taking leave vary enormously – for illness, vacation, the birth of a baby, to care for an elder. Richard Reeves and Isabel Sawhill of Brookings propose a broad rather than categorical entitlement, to 20 days per year of paid leave. This is less than many other countries but would at least establish a minimum floor. Some employers already provide this much paid leave in one form or another. But many do not – especially for their low-wage workers (Brookings, A New Contract with the Middle Class).
- Schooldays matching workdays: Richard Reeves and Isabel Sawhill of Brookings propose that the standard school day be shifted later to better align with most job schedules, and that after-school care be made universally available. After-school care would be universally available to students at public elementary and middle schools, enabling most parents to pick their children up from school around 5:30 or 6 in the evening; The federal or state government would provide grants to local education agencies that agreed to change their hours and provide an extended school day or school year; Participation in the extended hours would be optional for students and their families; To contain costs, families would pay on a sliding fee scale; School districts could decide how to use the additional hours, whether for additional instructional time or for extracurricular activities (Brookings, A New Contract with the Middle Class).
- For younger children, universal pre-k programs and subsidized child care should play a similar role [in supporting working parents]. State pre-k programs have expanded in recent decades, especially for four-year-olds, but many states limit access to poor children, or do not serve three-year-olds. To fill remaining child care gaps, and provide flexibility, we also recommend making the existing child care tax credit both more generous and completely refundable (Brookings, A New Contract with the Middle Class).

Environment and culture

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA): All workers have equal opportunity. Workers are respected, empowered, and treated fairly. DEIA is a core value and practiced norm in the workplace. Individuals from underserved communities do not face systemic barriers in the workplace. Underserved communities are persons adversely affected by persistent poverty, discrimination, or inequality, including Black, Indigenous, people of color; LGBTQ+ individuals; women; immigrants; veterans;

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military spouses; individuals with disabilities; individuals in rural communities; individuals without a college degree; individuals with or recovering from substance use disorder; and justice-involved individuals (U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor, Good Job Principles).

- Empowerment and Representation: Workers can form and join unions. Workers can engage in protected, concerted activity without fear of retaliation. Workers contribute to decisions about their work, how it is performed and organizational direction (U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor, Good Job Principles).
- Organizational Culture: All workers belong, are valued, contribute meaningfully to the organization and are engaged and respected especially by leadership (U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor, Good Job Principles).
- Voice and Representation: Valuing and acting upon employee input and engagement through surveys, stay interviews, employee resource groups and meaningful task forces or improvement teams. This may also include open-book management, broad employee ownership (e.g., through employee stock ownership plans [ESOPs]), participatory management (co-operative), opportunities for workers to participate in collective action and productive relationships with organized labor. Overall metrics include: Demographic gaps in voice and representation; Increase/number of individuals with voice and representation (e.g., employee ownership, union participation) as a result of intervention (intervention may be an effort on the part of workforce entity or employer change); Increase/percentage of funds allocated to roles/programs/organizations with inclusive voice and representation as a result of intervention (intervention may be an effort on the part of workforce entity or employer change); Increase/percentage or number of individuals educated about the options for inclusive voice and representation (intervention may be an effort on the part of workforce entity or employer change); Variance in success outcomes (time to placement, wages, etc.) for individuals requiring, participating in or prioritizing voice and representation vs. those who do not (at various points in time); Voice- and representation-related employee satisfaction trends by role or function and demographics (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Formal representation: Are employees free to organize? Is union participation encouraged? Metrics include: Percentage of employed individuals covered by collective bargaining agreements; Percentage of employed individuals who are members of one or more trade unions; Wage and benefit trends by role; Trends in union jobs compared to local union membership benchmarks (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Employee voice: How is employee voice incorporated into decision-making processes? Do all individuals feel seen and heard? Metrics include: Employee retention rate; Voluntary turnover rate; First-year or 90-day turnover percentage; Frontline employed individual turnover; Cost of turnover annually; Frontline manager turnover rate; Absenteeism/callouts by role; Employed individual satisfaction survey or focus group results; Cost savings from frontline employed individual ideas/new efficient practices discovered and implemented; Participation rate in business resource groups (or related forums); Ratings on Glassdoor (and related crowdsourced platforms); Employee productivity rate, based on role or function (time to complete tasks, revenue generated, customer satisfaction increased) (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Employee engagement: Is leadership representative of the larger organization and the clients served? Metrics include: Number and percentage of participation in employee resource groups; Race, ethnicity and gender breakdown of leadership by totals and percent; Existence of inclusive policies and procedures (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)

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- Participatory management: Do options for employee ownership exist? Metrics include: Percentage of company stock owned by employee stock ownership plan; Size of company contribution to employee stock ownership plan; Stock return trends; Employee stock ownership plan voting rights; Participation rates in co-op leadership roles; Percentage/amount of wealth/profit transitioned to employed individuals post- employee-ownership transition; Grievance/complaint severity and frequency trends before and after employee ownership transition; Trends in hours and earnings pre-post transition (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Environment and Culture: Use of skills, proper tools and technology to be productive, connection with co-workers, level of input and autonomy and control in the performance of duties. This also includes the culture established, modeled and reinforced by an organization's leadership and management teams, as well as the qualities, management competencies and communication practices of individuals responsible for managing people and the quality of relationships employees have with direct supervisors. Overall metrics include: Demographic gaps in environment and cultural participation; Increase/number of individuals with understanding of environment and culture as a result of intervention (intervention may be an effort on the part of workforce entity or employer change); Increase/percentage of funds allocated to roles/programs/organizations making shifts in environment or culture as a result of intervention (intervention may be an effort on the part of workforce entity or employer change); Increase/percentage or number of individuals educated about inclusive environment and culture (intervention may be an effort on the part of workforce entity or employer change); Variance in success outcomes (time to placement, wages, etc.) for individuals requiring or prioritizing aspects of the environment or culture vs. those who do not (at various points in time) (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Use of skills: Do individuals feel that their skills are valued and applied? Is skill development encouraged and rewarded? Metrics include: Percentage of employed persons who have the opportunity to use their knowledge and skills in their current job; Mapping of existing skill sets against skill matrices; Frequency/number of recognitions or rewards for skill attainment annually; Trends from assessment tools and 360-degree feedback instruments that measure skills and abilities; Percentage utilization of coaching tools or resources (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Stability and autonomy: Do individuals have autonomy over their work and how it is performed? Metrics include: Percentage of employed persons whose work experience and job skills would be transferable to another job in the organization or the industry; Percentage of employed persons who are able to choose their methods of work, order of work and/or influence their pace of work; Percentage of employed persons who can influence decisions that affect their work (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Sense of connection: Does leadership foster an inclusive, collaborative culture? What are the results? Metrics include: Percentage of employed persons who have a good relationship with their supervisors; Percentage of employed persons who have a good relationship with their coworkers and colleagues as evidenced by participation in company events, business resource groups and collaborative projects; Participation rates in employer-sponsored events; Trends in morale measured through surveys; Environment- and culture-related employee satisfaction trends by role or function and demographics (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Personal alignment: Are the organization's/project's purpose, goals and strategic plan

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clearly defined? Do employed individuals understand how their role supports the organization's/ project's goals? Metrics include: Gauge of employed individuals' understanding of organization's purpose, goals and values through survey or focus group; Employed individual's feedback on organization's purpose goals and values through survey or focus group (Results For America, What is Job Quality?).

- Meaningfulness and mattering: Are individual values and goals considered in the development process? Percentage increase or decrease in an individual's sense that work matters as indicated by a variety of factors such as developing and becoming self, expressing full potential, unity with others, service to others, moral correctness, expressiveness and identification at work and work utility. Measure of cognitive (intellectual sense of how things are connected), affective (sense of importance or value) and motivational (sense of direction) aspects for an individual. Purpose- and meaning-related employee satisfaction trends by role or function and demographics (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)
- Purpose and Meaning: The extent jobseekers and workers feel work tasks are significant, interesting and challenging. This also includes how well a job, career path, specific employer or industry aligns with an individual's strengths, interests and values. Metrics include: Increase/ number of individuals with understanding of purpose and meaning as a result of intervention (intervention may be an effort on the part of workforce entity or employer change); Increase/percentage of funds allocated to roles/programs/organizations making shifts in purpose or meaning as a result of intervention (intervention may be an effort on the part of workforce entity or employer change); Increase/ percentage or number of individuals educated about importance of purpose and meaning (intervention may be an effort on the part of workforce entity or employer change); Variance in success outcomes (time to placement, wages, etc.) for individuals requiring or prioritizing aspects of meaningfulness or alignment vs. those who do not (at various points in time) (Results For America, What is Job Quality?)

System indicators

- OECD Job Quality Measurement – Quality of Working Environment: The quality of the working environment (QWE) captures non-economic aspects of employment. Having a quality job does not just mean receiving good salaries or having good career prospects, but also providing workers with a chance to fulfil their ambitions, to feel useful in society and build self-esteem, as work often represents their main recognised contribution to the community where they live. The quality of the working environment thus considers factors which make the working environment conducive to personal accomplishment; it includes the nature and content of the work performed, working-time arrangements, workplace relationships as well as opportunities for training. The quality of the working environment is an important driver of individual well-being and depends crucially on whether workers have autonomy in their job, are given learning opportunities and well-defined work objectives and also receive constructive feedback. Good relationships with colleagues are also important. When jobs and workplaces combine these factors, people are more apt to manage work pressure and difficult tasks; they also tend to be healthier, more satisfied with their job and more productive. But working conditions may also impinge negatively upon an individual's personal life (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).
- Quality of the working environment is measured by the incidence of job strain among employees, where job strain is defined as jobs where workers face more job demands than the number of resources they have at their disposal. Taking into account of data availability, two types of job demands are identified: i) time

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pressure which encompasses long working hours, high work intensity and working time inflexibility; and ii) physical health risk factors, such as dangerous work (i.e. being exposed to noise, vibrations, high and low temperature) and hard work (i.e. carrying and moving heavy loads, painful and tiring positions). Similarly, two types of job resources are considered, namely: i) work autonomy and learning opportunities which include workers' freedom to choose and change their work tasks and methods, as well as formal (i.e. training) and informal learning opportunities at work; and ii) workplace relationships which measure the extent to which good relations prevail among colleagues (Table 2). The composite job-strain index accounts for the buffering effect of job resources on the relationship between job demands and well-being at work; it refers to those jobs where the workers face one demand but have no resources, or face two demands but have one or no resource (OECD, Measuring and Assessing Job Quality).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Companies establish a strong purpose-driven corporate culture that employees can contribute to and benefit from (Wharton).
- Companies analyze the impact of a range of levers, including, but not limited to, wage and non-wage benefits, employee stock ownership, inclusion initiatives, health & safety measures, labour policies and lifestyle benefits throughout the organization over various periods of time (Wharton).
- Employers recognize low-wage employees as critical assets. Instead of perceiving low-wage workers as a cost, employers need to view such workers as assets. The skills, experience and implicit knowledge of low-wage workers are intangible assets of real value to companies (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Hiring: Relax English language fluency requirements (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Hiring: Practice skills-based (e.g., using skills and competencies as the requirements for the job rather than a degree or credential) job descriptions (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Hiring: Practice name-blind resume review (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Hiring: Work with trusted community organizations to recruit candidates (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Offboarding and Post-exit: Track why low-wage employees quit or take jobs with other employers (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Offboarding and Post-exit: Track which companies or industries your low-wage employees move to when they quit your company (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Offboarding and Post-exit: Ask low-wage employees leaving the company if they felt valued while in their job (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Offboarding and Post-exit: Hold exit interviews when low-wage employees leave (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Offboarding and Post-exit: (Employer survey only) Identify and track root causes of turnover for low-wage employees (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Offboarding and Post-exit: (Employer survey only) Create a plan to address root causes of turnover for low-wage employees (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

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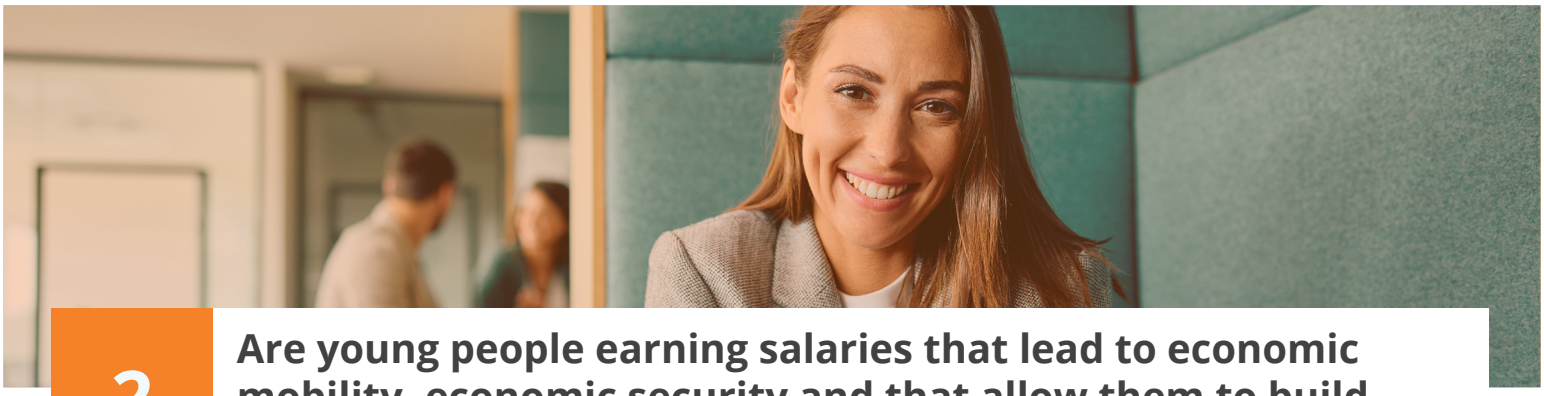

2 Are young people earning salaries that lead to economic mobility, economic security and that allow them to build wealth?

Why this matters

Earning salaries that support economic mobility gives young people the financial security to cover essentials, weather shocks and plan beyond the next paycheck. With sufficient income, they can build wealth — saving regularly, investing for retirement, purchasing homes and funding education — rather than relying on costly, short-term fixes. Adequate earnings also improve access to safe, affordable credit (and reduce reliance on predatory debt), widening opportunity and helping close economic inequality by enabling more people to participate in asset-building and upward mobility.

Economic inequality: Earning salaries that support economic mobility and financial security matters even more amid rising economic inequality since 1980 — driven by forces like technological change, globalization, declining unions and an eroded minimum wage. Such earnings enable wealth-building opportunities (regular saving, retirement investing, homeownership) and qualify young people for safe, affordable credit — reducing reliance on predatory debt. By helping workers clear the higher bar set by inequality, mobility-supporting wages counter the "Great Gatsby Curve" risk that inequality suppresses opportunity and help blunt related harms like diminished political voice, income segregation and slower growth (Pew Research).

Financial security: Having even a small amount of savings (between $250 to $749) reduces the likelihood of a family experiencing housing instability and low-income families with moderately sized savings (between $2,000 to $4,999) are more financially resilient (i.e., less likely to experience a hardship after an income disruption) than middle-income families with no savings (McKernan et al. 2016*). One in five adults in the US struggles to meet medical costs, but Black people continue to be hit the hardest. In a poll conducted by the National Public Radio, 24% of Black families said they have had difficulties paying for necessary prescription medications (Neighmond 2013). McKernan, Brown, and Kenney (2017) report that nearly one in three Black people, ages 18 to 64, have past-due medical bills. Beyond the immediate difficulties of paying them off, these bills can end up on people's credit report and lower their score, which can create barriers to securing a loan (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).

Wealth-building opportunities. Families with little or no wealth are highly vulnerable to shocks — leading to missed payments and greater reliance

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on public benefits (McKernan et al. 2016) — and limited resources correlate with poorer health (Woolf et al. 2015). Wealth offers advantages beyond earnings: it eases the work–leisure tradeoff, provides income when work stops, can be enjoyed without full consumption (e.g., homeownership with carrying costs), is often taxed more lightly than labor income and can be drawn down in crises; measuring wealth and tracing its intergenerational role in inequality pose challenges (Spilerman 2000). The racial wealth gap is large and widening: in 2022, white family wealth was about six times Black and Hispanic family wealth, up from roughly five times in 1983, with gaps growing across the life course (Brown et al. 2024). Higher wealth is linked to better health (Pollack et al. 2013; Schiller, Lucas, and Peregoy 2012; Woolf et al. 2015). Asset gaps appear early in homeownership: by age 30, far more white adults own homes than Hispanic adults and nearly twice as many as Black adults and in 2021 the homeownership rate was 44% for Black people versus 74% for white people (Stanford Center on Longevity 2018; US Census Bureau 2024). Together, these patterns underscore why building wealth is central to upward mobility (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).

Access to safe, affordable credit: Access to safe, affordable credit helps families cover short-term gaps and pursue long-term opportunities. Yet nearly one in five people lack a credit file and those with thin or subprime credit face the highest rates and the fewest options — limiting their ability to handle emergencies, save, start businesses or finance education and homeownership (Elliott & Lowitz, 2018). Low wealth compounds these barriers: individuals born in the early 1980s have an average net worth under $10,000, constraining down payments and mortgage burdens have grown most for less-educated and lower-income borrowers. At age 30, the mortgage-to-income ratio rose from 1.06 to 2.24 for those with less education and from 2.3 to 4.1 for the lowest income quartile when comparing cohorts born 1957–64 vs. 1980–84 (Stanford Center on Longevity, 2018). Access is also unequal by race and ethnicity: Black and Hispanic borrowers are more likely to be denied mortgages and when approved, to receive high-cost loans — a pattern persistent over four decades (Quillian, Lee, & Honoré, 2020). In 2015, denial rates were 27.4% (Black) and 19.2% (Hispanic) versus 10.9% (white) and 10.8% (Asian) (Desilver & Bialik, 2017).

Economic mobility *Key source: E-W Framework*

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Measures of economic mobility: *Absolute mobility* refers to any economic changes (often increases or decreases in income) at the individual or household level, adjusted for inflation. *Relative mobility* refers to how individuals or households move their position along an economic distribution. *Intragenerational mobility* describes changes in economic status over the course of an adult's working life (ages 25 to 64), i.e., within a generation. *Intergenerational mobility* compares an adult child's economic status to that of her or his parents, typically at or near the same age, i.e., across generations (Institute for Research on Poverty).
- Units of measurement: Some research compares income at the individual level, while other studies look at the household or family income, as larger households and families benefit from economies of scale with respect to living costs (Levine, 2012; Rose, 2018) and pool income among earners. Trends in mobility vary depending on the unit of measurement, so both are valuable to consider (Institute for Research on Poverty).
- Types of data (e.g., individual vs. aggregate data): While most mobility studies compare

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matched parent-child samples, some rely in part on aggregate data. For example, Aaronson and Mazumder (2008) estimate intergenerational elasticity by comparing an adult son's earnings to an estimate of his parents' household earnings, derived from aggregate state and year specific census data (Institute for Research on Poverty).

- Economic mobility indicators: Income, earnings, wealth, occupational status. (a) Income or earnings: Most studies measure economic mobility using income or earnings. In the mobility literature, researchers generally use the term "income" to refer to family or household income; and "earnings" to refer to individual earnings/income. The literature is inconsistent about the forms of income included in each; (b) Wealth: Although measures of wealth may be of interest, those data are rarely available (Winship, 2017) and the few studies that include wealth elasticity have findings similar to income elasticity (Killewald, Pfeffer, & Schachner, 2017). Most wealth mobility research uses the Panel Survey of Income Dynamics (PSID), which began asking about wealth only in 1984; (c) Occupational categories: Sociological research historically measured intergenerational mobility with occupational categories that correspond to differing levels of education and income. Large datasets with individual income data are only available for recent decades; historically, occupation data was much easier to obtain (Torche, 2013). Occupational rankings, however, are more subjective than income, and thus, changes in occupational mobility are harder to interpret (Winship, 2017) (Institute for Research on Poverty).
- Intergenerational mobility measurements: Rank-rank mobility, intergenerational elasticity, intergenerational correlation. (a) Rank-rank mobility: Rank-rank mobility metrics compare the relative positions of parents to their adult children at similar points in the life cycle (Venator & Reeves, 2015). The "rank" (position) of the parent is compared to the rank of the adult child at a time deemed to be equivalent. This allows researchers to make claims about changes in mobility at different points in the distribution, and in different directions (Bhattacharya & Mazumder, 2011; Corak, Lindquist, & Mazumder, 2014; Winship, 2017); (b) Intergenerational earnings elasticity: Much intergenerational mobility research — particularly international comparisons — measures mobility using persistence, or intergenerational earnings elasticity (IGE). IGE could also be understood as the rate of regression to mean income. IGE measures the extent to which economic differences between families persists across generations (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2008). It estimates the percentage of a child's income (as an adult) attributable to their family income during childhood. IGE does not, however, allow for differentiation between upward and downward mobility (Mazumder, 2015). IGE is typically considered a relative mobility metric (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, Saez, & Turner, 2014), but some argue it better describes absolute mobility (Winship, 2017); (c) Intergenerational correlation: Some research also uses intergenerational correlation (IGC), which measures positional mobility, i.e., the likelihood of moving positions in the income distribution relative to parental position at the same age. IGC and IGE patterns do not always align (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2008). IGC is similar to rank-rank mobility. IGC measures the correlation of parent and child incomes, whereas rank-rank mobility measures the correlation of parent and child income percentile ranks (Chetty et al. 2014). Some of the literature uses IGC and rank-rank mobility interchangeably (Mazumder, 2015) (Institute for Research on Poverty).
- Relevant income to measure (e.g., taxable income; pre-tax income; disposable cash income; unrealized capital assets and noncash transfers): Income distribution position and mobility estimates can vary depending on which type of income is measured. Taxable income (derivable from federal tax data)

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includes all income reported on tax returns and includes capital income but does not include some public benefit cash transfers, such as Social Security and unemployment compensation. Pre-tax income (derivable from the Census's Current Population Survey), alternatively, includes cash transfers but does not include capital gains. Disposable household money income adds cash transfers and adjusts for taxes and household size (Levine, 2012). Marginal tax rates and tax credits can have large effects on disposable income at the top and bottom of the distribution, respectively. For this reason, mobility estimates that exclude taxes may misrepresent people's economic realities. None of these measures reflect unrealized capital assets, such as home purchases, nor do they reflect noncash transfers, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits and housing subsidies (Institute for Research on Poverty).

- Age and timing of data sample (e.g., point-in-time vs. average income): Many people do not experience linear income growth throughout their adult life, which can make it challenging to determine the appropriate points of comparison to provide a meaningful measure of mobility. About 10 percent of U.S. households shift income quintiles every year due to life cycle effects (Larrimore, Mortenson, & Splinter, 2015) and income may look very different before and after having a child, particularly for women who are more likely to temporarily leave the labor force. The common solution is to measure income near age 40, when transitory fluctuations are less common and earnings trajectories are typically well established (Torche, 2013). For intergenerational comparisons, Mazumder and Acosta (2015) recommend using 10-year averages centered at age 42 (Institute for Research on Poverty).
- Demographics of the sampled population (e.g., include only U.S.-born individuals, working adults, or intergenerational mobility from fathers to sons only). A fair amount of mobility research examines mobility among only native-born U.S. citizens and does not disaggregate mobility trends by race. The research that does disaggregate generally only examines blacks and whites due to sample size limitations for other racial and ethnic groups. Mobility research frequently excludes Asian Americans and American Indians/Alaskan Natives due to small sample sizes, particularly in the PSID. Trends for Hispanic, Asian and Native Americans are discussed where available. Several studies exclude households making very low, zero, or negative income, particularly studies that use tax data, as people with extremely low and zero income who file tax returns are not considered representative of the zero income population, and people who report negative income typically experienced large capital losses, which typically signifies wealth (Chetty et al., 2014). Winship (2011), for example, excludes the bottom (and top) 2% of income observations from his analysis. However, excluding these individuals from analysis can bias results and overstate rates of mobility (Dynan, Elmendorf, & Sichel, 2012; Chetty et al., 2014; Mazumder, 2015). Finally, individual intergenerational earnings mobility estimates typically compare men, specifically fathers to sons, excluding women from analysis, as well as sons from single-mother households, which can bias estimates (Corak et al., 2014). While these studies may not generalize to women or to children from single-mother families, other research suggests that men and women experience similar rates of household intergenerational mobility, but that women's household mobility is more often attributable to their spouse or partner's earning mobility, whereas men's mobility is generally due to their own earnings (Chadwick & Solon, 2002). Further, increases in women's labor force participation over time complicate trends both at the individual level and at the household level (Institute for Research on Poverty).
- Measures of children's outcomes in adulthood (Credit and debt measures): Average credit score, debt delinquency, debt delinquency

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accounting for income, auto loan balance, mortgage balance, credit card balance, student loan balance (Opportunity Atlas).

- Measures of children's outcomes in adulthood (Income and employment measures): Household income at age 35, individual income (excluding spouse) at age 35, spouse's income at age 35, employment rate at age 35, hours worked per week at age 35 fraction in top 20% based on household income, fraction based on top 1% based on household income, fraction in top 20% based on individual income, fraction in top 1% based on individual income, hourly wage at age 35, household income for those staying in the same commuting zone, individual income for those staying in the same commuting zone, household income for US natives, household income for immigrants, individual income for US natives, individual income for immigrants (Opportunity Atlas).
- Measures of children's outcomes in adulthood (Other life events): Incarceration rate, teenage birth rate, fraction married at age 35, number of children, Percent staying in same commuting zone as adults, percent staying in same census tract as adults (Opportunity Atlas).
- Neighborhood characteristics to measure economic opportunity: median rent, job growth rate, median household income of residents, poverty rate, percent of college graduates, percent single parents, population density, density of jobs, fraction of residents with short work commutes, census response rate (as a social capital proxy), demographics by race and ethnicity (Opportunity Atlas).
- Percentage of individuals who reach the level of earnings needed to enter the fourth (60th to 80th percentile) income quintile in their state or above 1, 3, 5, 10, and 15 years after completing their highest degree or leaving education (high school or postsecondary) (EW Framework).
- Household income at 20th, 50th, and 80th percentiles. This metric captures the financial resources available to low-, middle-, and high-income households and the extent of income inequality in a community. Larger gaps between values for the three income groups indicate greater inequities (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Intergenerational mobility measurement - rank-rank mobility vs. intergenerational elasticity. Rank-rank mobility metrics compare the relative positions of parents to their adult children at similar points in the life cycle (Venator & Reeves, 2015). The "rank" (position) of the parent is compared to the rank of the adult child at a time deemed to be equivalent. This allows researchers to make claims about changes in mobility at different points in the distribution, and in different directions (Bhattacharya & Mazumder, 2011; Corak, Lindquist, & Mazumder, 2014; Winship, 2017) (Institute of Research on Poverty)
- Percent of college graduates who out-earn their parents at the same age in their first job out of college (Braven).
- Percentage of low-wage employees who moved out of poverty who stay in the industry or switch industries after five years (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Employee attitudes about upward mobility. For instance, the Harvard Business School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to report on the biggest contributors to their upward mobility. Responses included, "I was interested in moving up," "I wanted to take on the additional responsibility that would be required if I were to move up," "I believed moving up was possible," "My family and/or peers were supportive of me trying to move up," "I was not afraid to be rejected for a job application," "I did not worry that if I applied to a higher-level job and my application was not accepted there would be negative consequences for my job" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Employee attitudes about barriers to upward mobility. For instance, the Harvard Business

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School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to report on the biggest barriers to their upward mobility. Responses included, "I don't have any interest in moving up," "I don't want to take on the additional responsibility that would be required if I were to move up," "I don't believe moving up is possible," "My family and/or peers are not supportive of me trying to move up," "I do not want to be rejected for a promotion," "I worry if I apply to a higher-level job and my application is not accepted there will be negative consequences for my job" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

- Employee outlook on barriers to upward mobility for low-wage employees at their company. For instance, the Harvard Business School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to report on the biggest barriers to low-wage employees at their company. They are asked how strongly they disagree or agree with the following statements: "Low-wage employees don't have interest in moving up," "Low-wage employees don't want to take on the additional responsibility that would be required if they were to move up," "Low-wage employees don't believe moving up is possible," "Low-wage employees' family and/or peers are not supportive of them trying to move up," "Low-wage employees don't want to be rejected for a promotion," "Low-wage employees worry if they apply to a higher-level job and their application is not accepted there will be negative consequences for their job" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Overall financial well-being: Percentage of adults reporting feeling "better off" (or "worse off") financially compared to 12 months prior (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Intergenerational mobility: Likelihood of children from low-income families reaching the top 5 percent of income distribution, compared to children from high-income families. For example, a study by Tom Hertz at The Center for American Progress found that children from low-income families in the United States have only a 1 percent chance of reaching the top 5 percent of the income distribution, versus children of the rich who have about a 22 percent chance (Understanding Mobility in America).
- Intergenerational mobility: Likelihood of children from the middle quintile of parental income ending up in a lower (or higher) quintile than their parents. For example, a study by Tom Hertz at The Center for American Progress found that children born to the middle quintile of parental family income ($42,000 to $54,300) had about the same chance of ending up in a lower quintile than their parents (39.5 percent) as they did of moving to a higher quintile (36.5 percent). Their chances of attaining the top five percentiles of the income distribution were just 1.8 percent (Understanding Mobility in America).
- Year-to-year change or volatility in household income (Understanding Mobility in America).
- Share of households who experienced significant downward short-term mobility. For instance, the share of households who saw their incomes decline by $20,000 or more within a year-to-year time frame (Understanding Mobility in America).
- Employee perceptions about the connection between their personal circumstances and upward mobility. For instance, the Harvard Business School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to report on the biggest contributors to their upward mobility. Responses included, "I had reliable transportation to and from work," "I had reliable caregiving options for looking after family," "I felt comfortable asking my manager/supervisor for assistance when I had personal issues preventing me from moving up (e.g., lack of transportation, family caregiving issue)," "I could afford the upfront costs for actions I needed to take to move upward," "I had the time needed to get the training,

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certifications, and/or skills needed to move up," "I could stay in my job long enough to move up" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

System indicators

- Income inequality. Countries with greater inequality of incomes also tend to be countries in which countries with greater inequality of incomes also tend to be countries in which a greater fraction of economic advantage and disadvantage is passed on between greater fraction of economic advantage and disadvantage is passed on between parents and their children. Miles Corak, in his study "Income Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, and Intergenerational Mobility" measures income inequality as the Gini coefficient, using disposable household income for about 1985 as provided by the OECD (Miles Corak).
- Intergenerational economic mobility: Miles Corak, in his study "Income Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, and Intergenerational Mobility" measures intergenerational economic mobility as the elasticity between paternal earnings and a son's adult earnings, using data on a cohort of children born, roughly speaking, during the early to mid 1960s and measuring their adult outcomes in the mid to late 1990s. (Note that this study uses the earnings of fathers and sons to avoid the more complicated analyses needed to address the changing role of women in the labor force. It is not that studies of mothers, daughters, and the marriage market do not exist, only that father–son analyses are more common and permit a broader set of cross-country comparisons) (Miles Corak).
- College earnings premium. The earnings premium refers to the ratio of average earnings of men 25 to 34 years of age with a college degree to the average earnings of those with a high school diploma. This is measured as the average employment income in 2009 of men 25 to 34 years of age with a college degree relative to the average income of their counterparts with a high school diploma (Miles Corak).
- Middle class household income growth over time. Measured as the average cumulative growth in household income after transfers and taxes, disaggregated by quintile. A study by the Brookings Institute found the middle class has experienced much slower income growth than both the affluent (who have seen rising wages) and the poor (who have been helped by an expanded safety net). The household incomes in the middle 60 percent of the distribution have grown only about half as fast as those in the bottom and top 20 percent, once taxes and transfers are taken into account (Brookings, A New Contract with the Middle Class).
- Middle class wage growth over time. Wages are the main source of income for middle-class families – more so than for the affluent, who get some of their income from capital, or for the poor, who receive a much higher share of their income from government transfers. But wage growth in the middle and bottom of the earnings distribution has been sluggish in recent decades (Brookings, A New Contract with the Middle Class).
- Percentage of children earning more than their parents. A study by the Brookings Institute found the chances of a middle-class earner (in deciles four through seven of the distribution) moving up to the top fifth of the earnings ladder, over a 15-year period, has dropped by 20 percent since the early 1980s (Brookings, A New Contract with the Middle Class).
- Income inequality measured by household income as estimated in the Current Population Survey (CPS), a survey of households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in partnership with the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These estimates refer to gross (pretax) income and encompass most sources of income. A key omission is the value of in-kind services received from government sources. Because income taxes are progressive and in-kind services also serve to boost the economic wellbeing of (poorer) recipients, not accounting for these two factors

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could overstate the true gap in the financial resources of poorer and richer households (Pew Research).

- Income inequality measurements that take into account cash transfers and in-kind services. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) offers an alternative estimate of income inequality that accounts for federal taxes and a more comprehensive array of cash transfers and in-kind services than is possible with Current Population Survey data. The CBO finds that the Gini coefficient in the U.S. in 2016 ranged from 0.595, before accounting for any forms of taxes and transfers, to 0.423, after a full accounting of taxes and transfers. These estimates bracket the Census Bureau's estimate of 0.481 for the Gini coefficient in 2016. By either estimate, income inequality in the U.S. is found to have increased by about 20% from 1980 to 2016 (The Gini coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, or from perfect equality to complete inequality). Findings from other researchers show the same general rise in inequality over this period regardless of accounting for in-kind transfers (Pew Research).
- Measurements of inequality in consumption, which implicitly accounts for all forms and sources of incomes, taxes and transfers. Some estimates based on consumption show that inequality in the U.S. increased by less than implied by estimates based on income, but other estimates suggest the trends based on consumption and income are similar. Empirically, consumption can be harder to measure than income (Pew Research).
- Gaps in income between upper-income and middle- and lower-income households (Pew Research).
- Share of aggregate income held by upper-, middle- and lower-income households (Pew Research).
- Income growth for upper-, middle- and lower-income households. Average annual change in mean family income, by income quintile and for the top 5% (Pew Research).
- Median wealth of families. Other than income, the wealth of a family is a key indicator of its financial security. Wealth, or net worth, is the value of assets owned by a family, such as a home or a savings account, minus outstanding debt, such as a mortgage or student loan. Accumulated over time, wealth is a source of retirement income, protects against short-term economic shocks and provides security and social status for future generations.
- Wealth gap among upper-income families and middle- and lower-income families.
- Share of aggregate wealth held by upper-, middle- and lower-income households
- Wealth growth for upper-, middle- and lower-income households. Average annual change in median family wealth, by wealth quintile and for the top 5% (Pew Research).
- Income inequality: Ratio of income at the 90th percentile to income at the 10th percentile (90/10 ratio).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Focus on youth. Existing workforce policies typically target the current generation of working adults in areas or sectors with declining employment (e.g., job retraining or trade adjustment assistance programs). Our results suggest it may be equally important to invest in supporting the next generation of children in these communities through targeted job training and mentorship programs for youth and young adults, or investment in schools (Opportunity Insights).
- Target interventions at communities, not just neighborhoods. Most place-based efforts to improve economic mobility focus on neighborhoods as a whole. Our results show that social communities — defined by whom children interact with while they grow up — are a key unit at which change occurs. One approach to increasing opportunity is to increase

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connections between communities (e.g., through policies to reduce segregation or foster cross-class and race interaction in schools and neighborhoods). A complementary approach is to target childhood development programs to social communities with low levels of economic mobility (Opportunity Insights).

- Social capital in addition to financial and human capital. Most economic mobility policies provide financial capital (e.g., the Earned Income Tax Credit, Pell grants) or human capital (e.g., K-12 education). Our findings suggest that investing in social capital may be equally important. Consistent with this finding, evaluations of programs — from housing vouchers to job training to higher education — show that combining financial resources with social support and connections (e.g., housing navigators, connections to employers, or college counselors) has the greatest impacts. Targeting such programs to communities with limited opportunity has the potential to improve economic opportunity and narrow racial and socioeconomic disparities significantly (Opportunity Insights).
- Workforce upskilling policies for employers: Determine the Skills Necessary for Success Today. Begin by identifying the skills employees need to perform their current roles effectively. This requires a deep understanding of each role you hope to upskill. Consider the following: What duties does each position have? What business metrics or key performance indicators (KPIs) does the role impact, whether directly or indirectly? What would it look like for your employees to work five or 10 percent more efficiently? What specific skills could empower them to work more efficiently and drive that productivity boost? Keep in mind that critical competencies will differ across teams. Your accounting team may require finance and accounting skills to excel; the same isn't true for your marketing or business administration teams, which would prioritize marketing skills and business essentials, respectively (Harvard Business School Online).
- Workforce upskilling practices for employers: Identify Skills Necessary for Organizational Initiatives. Evaluating workforce skills based solely on current demands isn't enough; consider what they'll need to be successful over the next year, five years, or 10 years. Consider the following: What direction is your organization moving in? What new products or services do you want to launch? What new markets do you plan to enter? What new technologies or systems are you hoping to implement and what skills will be required on an organizational level to help you get there? (Harvard Business School Online).
- Workforce upskilling practices for employers: Document Employee Strengths and Weaknesses. Identify and celebrate areas of proficiency while also recognizing areas of weakness, which will ultimately form the basis of your upskilling program. Where weaknesses exist, prioritize them to guide your efforts. Start with what's essential to the job, followed by skills that aren't as necessary but could lead to significant productivity and efficiency gains. The lowest priority should be skills considered "nice to have" rather than essential (Harvard Business School Online).
- Workforce upskilling practices for employers: Design Your Employee Training and Development Program. The next and possibly most intensive step is implementing a training and development program to help your employees learn the missing skills. Your program's structure will depend on several factors, including your internal resources and expertise, the availability of external training materials and how much control you want over the learning experience (Harvard Business School Online).
- Workforce upskilling practices for employers: Incentivize Employees. If your organization already offers an upskilling program but struggles with completion rates, consider

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offering incentives to motivate employees. While career growth is a long-term upskilling benefit, offering more immediate rewards can boost engagement, establish goodwill and even encourage healthy competition among team members. Some potential incentives to consider include: Public recognition in a company announcement or during an all-staff meeting; Financial rewards, such as a bonus or raise, when upskilling goals are met; A promotion or title change once certain educational requirements are attained (Harvard Business School Online).

- Workforce upskilling practices for employers: Formalize the Upskilling Process. Instead of establishing your upskilling program as an optional component of corporate learning, consider integrating it into your existing systems and processes as a mandatory requirement. For instance, during annual performance reviews or when creating personal development plans, ask employees to choose a skill from your list as something they can focus on over the year. You might suggest a skill to benefit them and explain how your development program can support their progress. This approach has two key benefits: Accountability – It puts upskilling goals in writing, making it possible to evaluate employee progress toward mastering the skill; and Career alignment – It ties upskilling to career development, incentivizing completion (Harvard Business School Online).
- Workforce upskilling practices for employers: Make it Continuous. Think of upskilling not as a one-time initiative, but a continuous investment in your employees. Routinely evaluate employee proficiencies to identify where skill gaps exist and opportunities for additional training. Periodically evaluate them to determine their effectiveness. Are you seeing measurable progress? If not, don't hesitate to adjust. For example, organizations with an informal mentorship program might choose to move to a more structured learning experience (Harvard Business School Online).
- Skill-based hiring practices for employers: Aligning Job Duties With Skills. Create skills-based hiring crosswalks, both offline and within your applicant tracking system (ATS), to address your organization's evolving needs (SHRM Foundation).
- Skill-based hiring policies for employers: Expand Channels for Sourcing Candidates. Identify qualified talent through traditional and non-traditional sourcing channels via app-based tools. To expand the talent pool, employers need to become more creative in actively sourcing candidates, not just from traditional job boards (i.e., Indeed, LinkedIn, ZipRecruiter), but other talent pools (i.e., veterans, military spouses and caregivers, individuals age 60 or older, disabled workers, those with a criminal record and opportunity youth). Social media and other web-based resources can be powerful tools to locate untapped talent pools (SHRM Foundation).
- Skill-based hiring practices for employers: Assessing Hard & Soft Skills. Leverage tools for assessing hard and soft skills like computer literacy, writing competency, creativity and critical thinking (SHRM Foundation).
- Skill-based hiring practices for employers: Assessing Current Job Market Trends. Access current job market reports with industry-specific considerations and talent heatmaps within your geographical area (SHRM Foundation).
- Skill-based hiring practices for employers: Industry-Specific Employee Value Propositions. Create compelling employee value propositions for your organization to attract qualified candidates. The employee value proposition communicates the values and culture of the organization and takes the focus off salary as the sole reason for working there. It is a part of employer branding that can attract candidates that employers desire and keep workers engaged (SHRM Foundation).
- Skill-based hiring practices for employers: Formal Upskilling Programs. Design upskilling programs to fill in-demand roles with internal workers who demonstrate transferrable skills. 3 Identifying

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internal talent with transferrable skills and upskilling them to fill in-demand roles eliminates time and reduces employment costs. Upskilling has also been proven to improve retention, boost morale, increase customer satisfaction and attract new talent (SHRM Foundation).

- Skill-based hiring practices for employers: Differentiated Job Postings. Construct skills-based job descriptions that go beyond lists of functions and qualifications, while including only the skills required for the actual job. Be transparent within job postings about the hiring process (e.g., are assessments required?); the timeline for hiring decisions to be made; the wage (e.g., offering a range is a start, but sharing the minimum starting wage is better); whether or not candidates with criminal histories are eligible, etc. Encourage prospective employees to include referrals and recommendations when skills are not easily translated to job requirements in postings (SHRM Foundation).
- Skill-based hiring practices for employers: Interviewing Scorecard. Generate interview scorecards that objectively and quantitatively assess candidates for aptitude and fit. By using quantitative interview scorecards to evaluate candidates — and by comparing interview-based predictions with performance on the job — it's possible to boost your organization's return on human capital investment, reduce turnover and increase retention. Each interviewer scores the candidate on the same set of criteria and the hiring team can meet and compare scores objectively (SHRM Foundation).
- Skill-based hiring practices for employers: Compelling Employee Benefits. Create a powerful total rewards program that will attract the best talent and encourage them to stay and grow within your organization. Relevant benefits can include extended medical insurance, paid time off, profit sharing, learning and development strategies, retirement benefits and more. A well-constructed rewards program can contribute significantly to employee recruitment and retention (SHRM Foundation).
- Skill-based hiring practices for employers: Behavioral Interview Guide. Train HR professionals and hiring managers on behavioral interviewing to assess qualifications more effectively. A behavioral interview guide provides a structured process that helps interviewers avoid making decisions based solely on a gut feeling. It also helps less experienced interviewers avoid unlawful or biased questions, such as about age, marital status, disability, etc. When paired with another selection tool (i.e., personality assessments, cognitive tests), behavioral interviews can be a great way to evaluate candidates (SHRM Foundation).

Policies

- Richard Reeves and Isabel Sawhill of Brookings propose new pro-work contract with the middle class includes the following: A $12 per hour federal minimum wage floor, but with higher rates in many areas; Worker tax credits for the bottom half of wage earners, administered through an offset to their payroll taxes; Tax incentives for corporations to train their workers and share profits broadly; Labor law reform and workers' councils to strengthen employee engagement and bargaining power; Adequate fiscal and monetary stimulus to create and maintain full employment (Brookings, A New Contract with the Middle Class).
- Richard Reeves and Isabel Sawhill of Brookings propose eliminating income tax by raising the standard deduction for most middle-class families — specifically, any married couple making less than $100,000 a year or any single person making less than $50,000. This is an average tax cut of around $1,600 for middle-class families (Brookings, A New Contract with the Middle Class).
- State policies to increase the minimum wage. For example, states and localities are piloting solutions like policies that index the minimum wage to inflation. 13 states and the District of Columbia have policies that increase (or index) their state's minimum wage based on inflation.

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Most of those indexed increases are based on the August-to-August change in the Consumer Price Index (Jobs for the Future and Economic Policy Institute).

- Promoting pay transparency: A major shift is already brewing across U.S. workplaces, fueled in part by a recent wave of pay transparency laws popping up across the country. These laws require employers to provide information about salary ranges and the criteria that inform decisions about salary levels to both current employees and job candidates (Jobs for the Future).
- Promoting wage theft prevention regulations: Enacting or strengthening wage theft prevention laws is another way for states and localities to ensure that workers in their regional economies receive fair compensation. These laws set clear standards for what constitutes wage theft and call for monitoring of employer practices to ensure that jobs are properly classified and employers comply with overtime rules (Jobs for the Future).
- Earmarking funding for programs that build pathways to quality jobs. States and localities are increasingly tying their workforce investments to initiatives that promote job quality. Through skills development, sector partnerships, career pathways and work-based learning programs, these regions are maximizingtheir workforce investments — guided by strategy and measurement — to ensure that workers can not only survive but contribute back to a thriving economy where quality employers are the norm (Jobs for the Future).
- Work-based learning: In recent years, policies that advance apprenticeship and other work-based learning models have gained significant bipartisan support among state and local officials across the country. Strategies that have proved effective at building viable pathways to quality jobs include apprenticeship tax credits, college-sponsored apprenticeships and funding for wraparound supports. For example, in the state of Washington, the long-term care industry has been experiencing a workforce crisis, so the state's Training and Education Coordinating Board established a new nursing apprenticeship program that moves certified nursing assistants and home care aides along a pathway to becoming licensed practical nurses. It's one of the first Registered Apprenticeship programs in the state that specifically serves frontline caregivers in long-term care and creates supported pathways into nursing careers. (Jobs for the Future).
- Employer incentives: Other state and local governments have enacted targeted tax credit legislation, creating tangible incentives and supports for employers who provide quality jobs. These credits are often tied to specific commitments on the part of the employer, such as providing workers with clear pathways to career advancement and opportunities to build new skills (Jobs for the Future).
- Advancing equity and inclusion in the workforce: State and local policymakers are expanding access to quality jobs for members of populations that have long faced barriers to employment in three ways: supporting hiring efforts that give priority to local workers, advancing programs that open new career opportunities for people with criminal records and promoting skills-first hiring (Jobs for the Future).
- Place-based hiring initiatives: Often supported by tax breaks or rules requiring companies to hire local residents if they want to win government contracts, place-based hiring initiatives can stimulate local economies and ensure that residents are the first to benefit from new economic activity and government spending. For example, as part of a deal to spend $850 million in public funds on the construction of a new stadium for the NFL's Buffalo Bills franchise, New York state and Erie County officials worked with Bills officials to craft a community benefits agreement under which the team agreed to invest at least $3 million (indexed to the inflation rate) in the

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community in each year of the 30-year stadium lease. The team and stadium developers agreed to, among other things, adhere to living wage and prevailing wage standards in setting compensation levels for stadium construction contractors and future stadium employees. They also agreed to offer local companies, including "minority-owned" and women-owned businesses, opportunities to be part of the stadium construction project and ongoing operations and maintenance activities (Jobs for the Future).

- Fair-chance hiring initiatives: To give people with records of arrests or convictions access to pathways to quality jobs, many state and local governments are implementing fair chance hiring initiatives, which often start with passage of "Ban the Box" laws that prevent employers from asking people whether they have criminal histories on job applications. And some are eliminating regulations that prevent people from holding certain jobs if they have criminal records. For example in 2015, Georgia enacted legislation that limits public employers in the state from conducting criminal background checks on job applicants during the initial stages of the hiring process (Jobs for the Future).
- State and local officials are also exploring ways to craft policies that would encourage employers to forgo degree requirements and embrace skills-first hiring, meaning they'd evaluate candidates based on what they can do, not on their academic achievements. (Jobs for the Future).
- Enhancing work-life balance and well-being. Across the country, state and local policy measures that promote improvements in paid family and medical leave, the affordability of child care and access to mental health and well-being supports could play key roles in improving job quality by improving non-financial benefits (Jobs for the Future).
- Paid family and medical leave policies have become a focal point in many state and city-level efforts to enhance employee well-being. These policies generally mandate that employers provide a designated period of paid leave to employees for personal health needs, family care, or other qualifying reasons. These initiatives prioritize the health and work-life balance of employees, ensuring that they can address personal and family matters without facing financial hardships. For example, in 2023, Illinois became the third state in the nation and the first in the Midwest, to mandate paid time off to be used for any reason. The measure, which takes effect January 1, 2024, guarantees 40 hours of paid leave during a 12-month period. In California, the Paid Family Leave program entitles workers who contribute to the California State Disability Insurance fund to eight weeks of partial pay within a 12-month period when taking time off to care for family members (Jobs for the Future).
- Crafting policies that enable affordable child care solutions has long been a goal for many states and communities. These initiatives aim to alleviate the financial burden on families while ensuring that parents can participate fully in the workforce. Specific policy priorities vary, but many focus on providing funding subsidies, increasing the supply of child care "seats," and establishing public-private partnerships. Iowa has launched innovative policy initiatives to significantly expand access to child care. New funding led to the creation of nearly 11,000 new child care spots for the children of working parents. Philadelphia has a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights that, among other things, established a portable paid sick day program that includes provisions entitling domestic workers to use paid time off for mental health days (Jobs for the Future).
- Proposals for promoting employee mental health and well-being initiatives are gaining ground in policy discussions and such initiatives are becoming integral to state and regional workforce strategies. Of course, achieving this goal involves reshaping workplace cultures,

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and there isn't necessarily a straightforward way to craft policies that do that. Nonetheless, cities and states could help bolster and expedite employer initiatives supporting worker well-being by establishing benefits funds, incentive programs, recognition initiatives and more (Jobs for the Future).

- Extend basic protections to all workers. Workers in alternative arrangements need access to the same basic protections that full-time wage workers have, including eligibility for minimum wage and overtime protections, the right to collectively bargain, discrimination protection, unemployment and workers compensation, disability insurance and access to retirement plans (Mobility Partnership).
- Pilot and scale models for portable benefits. With the rise in contract work and people working for multiple employers, basic benefits that travel with workers will be a foundation for economic security (Mobility Partnership).
- Support a strong role for workers in shaping the future. Invest in organizations that advocate on behalf of workers, create alliances for underserved workers across sectors and strengthen platforms that allow workers to have a voice in improving working conditions (Mobility Partnership).
- Test wage subsidies for the most vulnerable. Pilot a subsidized jobs program that offers longer-term wage subsidies, job guarantees and skill development for those with serious barriers to obtaining and maintaining work. We also suggest examining whether a permanent subsidy program for lower-wage jobs could help disadvantaged workers (Mobility Partnership).
- Expand the earned income tax credit. Expand the value of the credit for all adults, especially adults not living with children; include younger workers; and raise the maximum age at which people can receive the credit from 65 to 67 in line with the scheduled change in the retirement age for full Social Security benefits (Mobility Partnership).
- Support a comprehensive strategy for improving jobs in the care sector. Jobs in some rapidly growing sectors, like care work, have low wages, less generous or no benefits, fewer legal protections and limited ways for workers to change their working environments. These sectors need to improve in the near term and develop a deeper strategy for rewarding and supporting the skills and experience of workers over their careers (Mobility Partnership).
- Many states and localities have raised their own minimum wages. While the federal minimum wage only applies to a small proportion of the workforce, updating it and ideally indexing it to inflation would improve job quality for a critical segment of low-wage workers and symbolize a renewed commitment to those earners across the entire nation. Many progressive states and cities have done more to set the minimum wage above the federal floor, but some movement also is evident in more conservative political contexts, with ballot measures passed in 2024 in Missouri and Alaska. More states need to take this step in lieu of changes at the federal level (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Wage theft — including minimum-wage violations, failure to pay for all hours worked and violations of overtime pay requirements — occurs routinely and is patently unfair. The misclassification of workers as independent contractors when they should be counted as employees also robs them of minimum-wage protections and overtime pay, as well as Unemployment Insurance and coverage by other labor laws. Enforcement could certainly be increased, and the financial penalties for violations also should be adjusted to motivate compliance and level the playing field for firms that follow the law (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Scheduling laws, often referred to as fair workweek, fair scheduling, or predictive scheduling laws, aim to shift employers' scheduling practices by requiring more stable schedules, advance notice of schedules, or

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commitments to minimum hours. These regulations are standard in many countries and could be expanded in the United States. An evaluation of Seattle's Secure Scheduling Ordinance, for example, finds that "eliminating schedule unpredictability would reduce the share of workers experiencing at least one material hardship by 45 percentage points (from 64% to 19%)." Additionally, that policy evaluation and a study of a stable-scheduling initiative at GAP Inc. stores find workers' well-being and sleep improved with more schedule stability. The GAP study also demonstrates benefits to the firm via reduced turnover among experienced employees and increased productivity (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).

- Passing paid leave laws also is an important priority for improving job quality for working families. Laws enacted in 13 states and Washington, DC demonstrate feasibility. Paid leave recognizes workers' legitimate needs and signals respect for workers and their families. Paid leave also supports economic security by keeping people employed and providing income replacement at a critical time. California's leave law, for example, nearly doubled access to pay during leaves, increasing benefits especially for low-income and less-educated workers and for men. New paid leave laws at the federal level would address these variations across states and help meet the needs of lower-income workers who are not as well-served by the federal unpaid family leave law and employer-provided benefits (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Facilitate opportunities for advancement and autonomy. Public policy can help expand collaborative training initiatives that engage multiple employers within a given industry. Such sectoral programs typically provide training for jobs in specific industries, such as health care, life sciences and technology, that have both good starting wages and promotion opportunities (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Rigorously evaluated programs, such as Project Quest and Year Up United, combine the training for these fields with soft-skills training, job-placement support and a variety of services, including transportation support and child care. Successful sectoral programs increase employment in high-wage jobs, but public investments and long-term commitments are needed to scale these programs. For instance, the Economic Development Administration within the U.S. Department of Commerce recently supported new communities of practice focused on specific industries' or regions' workforce development initiatives (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Policymakers also can also champion and incentivize employers who design work with autonomy and learning in mind. A long tradition of "high-performance work systems" research finds that the combination of certain practices, such as building autonomy, cross-training and other skills development and performance-based pay, can improve productivity, raise pay in some settings and also support workers' well-being (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Public procurement policies that incorporate job-quality data could encourage employers to design work in these ways. Additionally, local policymakers and community leaders can establish community benefit agreements with developers and new employers, encouraging job-quality standards, the hiring of local workers and more (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Support worker power and union organizing. Worker power, including collective bargaining by unions, can advance all the elements of job quality discussed here. To protect workers' rights to organize and pursue their own job-quality priorities, we need to strengthen the enforcement of existing laws and ideally update federal labor law as well (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Given how few U.S. workers are currently represented by unions and the limitations of current federal law, though, it is also important to pursue organizing innovations and state

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and local changes. One such innovation is the industry standard board, also known as a workforce standard board or sectoral co-regulation. These boards involve employers, state officials and worker representatives in certain industries. They give workers a formalized role in setting wage rates and benefits, often improving pay for those already above the minimum wage. Additionally, these boards can support the effective enforcement of labor laws, acting as partners to educate workers, employers, and the broader community. "Bargaining for the common good" is another strategic innovation in which unions and other local organizations develop integrated campaigns focused on community concerns, such as housing, climate, racial justice, schools, and also decent jobs. This approach may foster solidarity across people with different employment statuses, work experiences, and backgrounds and provide a path toward feeling respected and recognized both at work and in the larger community (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).

Economic security *Key source: E-W Framework*

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of individuals who reach median levels of wealth 10, 15, 20, and 30 years after completing their highest degree or leaving education (high school, workforce training, or postsecondary education (EW Framework).
- Ratio of the share of total home values owned by a racial or ethnic group to the share of households of the same group. This metric shows the degree of racial and ethnic disparity in housing wealth. The larger the difference between the two values, the greater the inequities (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Share of adults with debt in collections. People with overdue debt typically have few assets or negative wealth (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Income: Household income at 20th, 50th, and 80th percentiles (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Financial security: Share of households with debt in collections (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Overall financial well-being: Percent of adults reported doing okay financially or living comfortably financially over time, disaggregated by educational level, racial and ethnic group, age group, disability status, metropolitan status, and approximate neighborhood income levels (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Overall financial well-being: People's main financial challenges or concerns (e.g., inflation and prices, basic living expenses, housing, employment, retirement and savings) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Overall financial well-being: People's self assessment of their personal financial well-being, their local economy's well-being, and the national economy (by year) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Income and expenses – Family income: Reported amount of cash income from all sources that survey respondents and their spouse or partner received during the previous year.
- Income and expenses – Sources of income: Total level of yearly income disaggregated by labor income (i.e. wages, salaries, or self-employment) and non-labor income (i.e. interest, dividends, or rental income; Social Security; Pension; SSI, TANF, or cash assistance from a welfare program; unemployment income) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Income and expenses – Income variability:

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Percent of survey respondents saying their income varied from month to month and percent of survey respondents saying this variation causes financial hardship for their family (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).

- Income and expenses – Changes in income, spending, and prices: Survey respondents reporting increases (or decreases) in monthly income and spending from 12 months earlier (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Income and expenses – Changes in income, spending, and prices: Actions taken in response to higher prices in the prior 12 months (e.g., switching to cheaper products, using less or stopping using products, delaying a major purchase, reducing saving, increasing borrowing, working more, asking for a raise) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Income and expenses – Spending relative to income: Percentage of respondents saying they spent less than their income in the month prior to the survey (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Income and expenses – Bills and regular expenses: Percentage of adults reporting that they did not pay all their bills in full in the prior month, disaggregated by family income level, age, race/ethnicity, disability status, and parental status (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Income and expenses – Bills and regular expenses: Types of bills not paid in full in the prior month (e.g., water, gas, and electric bills; phone, internet, and cable bills; rent or mortgage; car payment; credit card) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Income and expenses – Food sufficiency: Percentage of respondents saying that members of their household sometimes or often did not have enough to eat in the prior month (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Income and expenses – Food sufficiency: Percentage of respondents saying that members of their household had enough to eat in the prior month, but not always the kinds of food they wanted to eat (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Income and expenses – Healthcare expenses: Percent of adults reporting going without some form of medical care in the past year because they could not afford it (e.g., dental care, seeing a doctor or specialist, prescription medicine, follow-up care, mental health care or counseling) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Savings and investments – Emergency savings: Percentage of respondents saying they could cover a hypothetical emergency expense of $400 by using cash or its equivalent (e.g., savings or a credit card paid off at the next statement) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Savings and investments – Emergency savings: Approach to covering a hypothetical $400 emergency expense other than with cash or its equivalent (e.g., putting it on a credit card and paying it off over time; borrowing from a friend or family member; selling something; using money from a bank loan or line of credit; using a payday loan, deposit advance, or overdraft; foregoing the expense altogether) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Savings and investments – Emergency savings: Largest emergency expense individuals could handle right now using only savings (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Savings and investments – Emergency savings: Percent of respondents reporting having savings sufficient to cover three months of expenses if they lost their primary source of income (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Savings and investments – Retirement savings: Percent of respondents having assets that are specifically designated for producing income in retirement. This can include tax-preferred retirement accounts and pensions (e.g.,

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employer-sponsored defined contribution plans such as 401(k)s, individual retirement accounts (IRA), Roth IRAs, defined benefit pension through an employer). It can also include other assets such as an owned home; savings or money market accounts or certificates of deposit; stocks, bonds, ETFs, or mutual funds held outside a retirement account; cash value in a life insurance policy; business or real estate (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).

- Savings and investments – Retirement savings: Percent of respondents who view their retirement savings plan as being on track (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Savings and investments – Retirement savings: Percent of non-retirees who had a major unexpected medical expense or who experienced a layoff and had to borrow or cash out money from a retirement account, or who had to reduce regular retirement account contributions (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Banking and credit – Bank account ownership: Percent of adults who report being "unbanked," meaning neither they nor their spouse/partner have a checking, savings, or money market account (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Banking and credit – Overdraft fees: Percent of adults who report having to pay an overdraft fee in the prior 12 months (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Banking and credit – Nonbank check cashing and money orders: Percent of adults who used non-bank check cashing or money orders (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Banking and credit – Credit outcomes and perceptions: Percent of adults who feel confident their credit card application would be approved if they were to apply (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Banking and credit – Credit outcomes and perceptions: Percent of adults applying for credit, disaggregated by race (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Banking and credit – Credit outcomes and perceptions: Percent of credit applicants who were denied credit or approved for less credit than they requested, disaggregated by race (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Banking and credit – Credit cards: Rate of credit card ownership (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Banking and credit – Credit cards: Percent of credit card holders who carry credit card balances from month to month (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Banking and credit – Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) products: Percent of people who used BNPL products in the last year. Buy Now, Pay Later products provide consumers the option to pay for a purchase with a small number of equal payments (usually four), often without being charged interest. For example, someone purchasing a $100 item may be able to make one payment of $25 at the time of purchase, then make three additional monthly payments of $25 (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Banking and credit – Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) products: Reasons for using BNPL, including the following responses: wanting to spread out payments, convenience, avoiding interest charges, the only way I could afford it, did not want to use a credit card, wanted a fixed number of payments, only accepted payment method I had (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Banking and credit – Nonbank small dollar credit: Percent of adults who used a payday, pawn, auto title, or tax refund anticipation loan, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and disability status (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).

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- Banking and credit – Financial fraud and scams: Percent of adults who reported that they experienced financial fraud or scams involving their money (credit card-related and non-credit card-related) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).

System indicators

- The MIT Living Wage Calculator provides an alternative measure of basic needs than the federal poverty level. It is a market-based approach that draws upon geographically specific expenditure data related to a family's likely minimum food, childcare, health insurance, housing, transportation, and other basic necessities (e.g. clothing, personal care items, etc.) costs. The living wage draws on these cost elements and the rough effects of income and payroll taxes to determine the minimum employment earnings necessary to meet a family's basic needs while also maintaining self-sufficiency (MIT Living Wage Calculator).
- Wealth as a cumulative measure: Wealth is typically measured as net worth: the sum of the value of a household's assets, less the value of debts. Whereas income measures the flow of financial resources at a particular time, wealth is a cumulative stock that reflects years of prior circumstances and decisions (Wealth Inequality and Accumulation).
- Trends in wealth levels, including mean and median household wealth (Wealth Inequality and Accumulation).
- Measures of net worth inequality such as the Gini coefficient; the wealth share owned by the top 1%, top 5%, top 10% compared to the bottom 50%; the ratio of wealth owned by the 95th percentile compared to the 50th percentile (Wealth Inequality and Accumulation).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Establishing a local reparations program to make amends for historical harms and address the structural roots of ongoing wealth disparities (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Creating matched savings accounts for residents with low and moderate wealth.
- Investing in baby bonds and other child development accounts (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Providing local entrepreneurs and small-business owners with the supports they need to succeed, including capital and technical assistance (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Helping families with low and moderate incomes overcome barriers to homeownership, such as by providing down payment assistance (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Creating programs that allow renters to earn equity through their rent payments and share in the long-term appreciation of their homes (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Adopting community wealth-building strategies, such as establishing a public bank, supporting cooperatives and worker-owned businesses, implementing progressive procurement policies, and supporting community land trusts and other models of collective ownership (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Creating a local living-wage ordinance that requires employers to pay wages higher than the federal minimum wage (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Strengthening the social safety net and reducing obstacles to accessing public benefits, such as asset limits (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Providing direct cash transfers to residents, such as through guaranteed income programs (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Reforming government fines and fees, which disproportionately affect residents with low incomes and wealth (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Helping residents access financial services and build credit safely, including by regulating

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predatory lending practices, such as payday loans (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).

- Providing financial education and counseling services to residents (Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Strategies for Improving Public Benefits Access: (1) Treat Clients with Dignity and Humanity; (2) Engage Community Members, Organizations, and Advocates; (3) Conduct Intentional, Data-Driven Outreach; (4) Use Technology to Simplify Application and Recertification Processes; (5) Adopt Practical Phone Call Processes; (6) Reduce Program Application Siloes; (7) Revise Unnecessary and Burdensome Policies; (8) Streamline Renewals; (9) Expand Eligibility and Benefits; (10 Partner with Civic Tech and Others to Implement Strategies (Urban Institute, Strategies for Improving Public Benefits Access and Retention).

Policies

- Government transfer programs, including Aid to Families with Dependent Children/ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (AFDC/TANF) and Medicaid, may affect household wealth by reducing saving incentives, encouraging dissaving due to asset tests, or both, but evidence for these effects is mixed (Gruber & Yelowitz 1999, Hurst & Ziliak 2006, Sullivan 2006) (Wealth Inequality and Accumulation).
- Policies to increase savings incentives, such as matching contributions to savings accounts — which are sometimes contingent on using the savings for qualified expenditures such as purchasing a home, starting a business, or financing education — may also spur asset-building among low-income households. However, whether these programs affect net worth — or merely incentivize the build-up of specific asset components at the expense of others — is less clear, and these effects are small relative to the scope of US wealth inequality (Duflo et al. 2006, Grinstein-Weiss et al. 2014, Mills et al. 2008, Schreiner & Sherraden 2007) (Wealth Inequality and Accumulation).
- General Family Safety Net Policies: Reducing or eliminating work requirements, or defending against increased work requirements, for Medicaid, SNAP, housing, and TANF; Smoothing benefit cliffs so that a small increase in income doesn't mean families lose needed benefits; Removing or substantially increasing asset limits when determining eligibility for safety net programs; Connecting families to services via call centers, online service directories, community hubs in schools, community enrollment campaigns, etc. (The Alliance for Early Success).
- Expanding access to Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF). Policies include Changing requirements and benefits; Using TANF for direct cash assistance to families with low income; Eliminating exclusions and punitive behavioral policies; Eliminating Full-Family Sanctions; Work Requirement Exemption; Decoupling TANF from Child Support; Work Requirement Reductio; Exemption on Benefit Time Limit for Pregnant People; Time limit extensions during times of high unemployment; Monthly diaper subsidy for parents or other caregivers receiving TANF; Providing TANF benefits to recent immigrants (<5 years) (The Alliance for Early Success).
- Cash Assistance Policies, including: Universal Basic Income pilot programs; Baby Bonds or Child Trust Funds; Cash Assistance Policies designed for families (e.g., during pregnancy); Unemployment Insurance; Increasing Minimum Wage (The Alliance for Early Success).
- Tax policies that states can choose to put into place to support economic security for families with young children: State Child Tax Credits; State Earned Income Tax Credits; State Dependent Care Tax Credit; Tax Credit Outreach; Young Child Tax Exemption; Property Tax Cuts for Child Care Providers; Poverty Income Tax Exemption; Progressive Tax System; Grocery Tax Reforms (The Alliance for Early Success).
- Housing policies that states can choose to put into place to support economic security for families with young children: Establish automatic or streamlined eligibility for children

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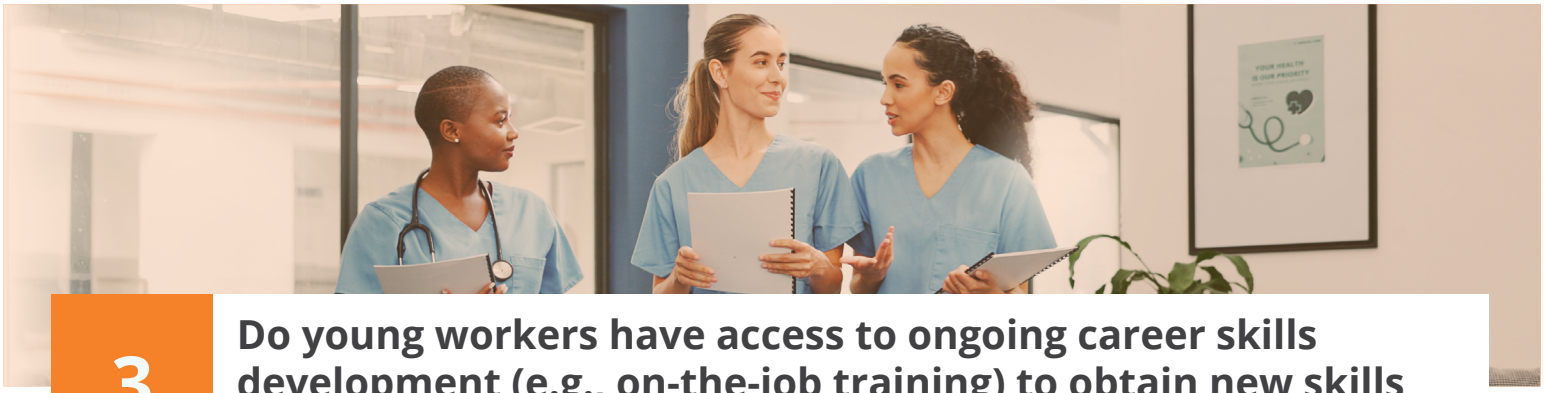
experiencing homelessness; Childcare subsidy exceptions during homelessness; Pre-K priority during homelessness; Rental assistance for low-income families; Policies to keep rents low; Housing-based food access; Proxy for income in determining rental assistance eligibility; Improving affordable housing supply through zoning and procedural changes; Improving affordable housing supply through tax credits to developers; Using ARPA dollars for housing assistance; Establishing tenant's rights (e.g., establishing eviction protections, expanding tenants' rights to purchase properties); Improving home financing options for first-time homeowners, first responders, teachers, and others (The Alliance for Early Success).

- Food security policies that states can choose to put into place to support economic security for families with young children: Establishing Universal School Meals programs, Protecting family eligibility for transitional food assistance; Adjusting SNAP income and asset limits; Modernizing SNAP technology and business practices; Waiving SNAP time limits for certain categories of recipients in areas where there are insufficient jobs; Removing restrictions/ requirements for people with prior drug-related felony convictions to access SNAP benefits; Protect SNAP recipients from skimming (via reimbursements); Increase WIC enrollment through targeted outreach; Remove child support cooperation requirements; Increase SNAP flexibility during a health pandemic or other emergencies (The Alliance for Early Success).
- Paid Family and Medical Leave policies that states can choose to put into place to support economic security for families with young children: Offering paid family leave for a minimum of six weeks with partial replacement of wages; Offering accrual of at least five paid sick days; Expanding Paid Family Leave and increasing wage replacement, particularly so that low-income workers are better able to afford to take advantage of paid family and medical leave (The Alliance for Early Success).



3 Do young workers have access to ongoing career skills development (e.g., on-the-job training) to obtain new skills and meet evolving labor market demands?

Why this matters

Ongoing career skills development matters because technology and industry needs change quickly, making today's skills age fast. Continuous upskilling helps young people move into higher-wage, more resilient jobs and pivot as roles evolve; it is especially powerful for historically marginalized youth, who otherwise face greater barriers to advancement. "Access" means more than a class — it includes regular career coaching tied to local labor-market data; paid, work-

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based learning with clear competency targets; stackable, industry-recognized credentials that build toward degrees; flexible, inclusive delivery with recognition of prior learning and wraparound supports; and strong employer partnerships for mentorship, curriculum input and hiring. When these elements are accessible and sustained, young people can keep pace with changing demand, translate learning into opportunity and advance toward family-sustaining careers.

Access to ongoing career skills development *Key source: E-W Framework*

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of employees who have access to on-the-job training or a professional learning and development plan directly from their employer (EW Framework).
- Percent of program participants who attain internships during college compared to national average. For example, Braven Fellows in the college graduating class of 2024 were 22 percentage points more likely to have at least one internship during their college experience compared to the national average (70% versus 48%) (Braven).
- College students secure quality internships, serving as critical proof points of experience that open professional doors. The highest quality internships share these characteristics: they are paid, they have a plan for what the intern is learning, they include relatively high skill tasks with supervision, and there is sufficient mentorship support (Braven).
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WOIA): Performance Indicator: Employment Rate after Exit – The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment, education, or training activities during the second and fourth quarters after exiting the program (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Performance Indicators and Measures) (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Performance Indicators and Measures).
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WOIA): Performance Indicator: Title I Youth Education and Employment Rate after Exit – The percentage of Title I Youth program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the second and fourth quarters after exiting the program (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Performance Indicators and Measures) (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Performance Indicators and Measures).
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WOIA): Performance Indicators and Measures: Median Earnings, 2nd quarter after exit – The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Performance Indicators and Measures).
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WOIA) Performance Indicators and Measures: Credential Attainment – The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program (Workforce Innovation

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and Opportunity Act Performance Indicators and Measures).

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WOIA) Performance Indicators and Measures: Measurable Skill Gains – The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following: (a) Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level; (b) Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; (c) Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards; (d) Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of OJT or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; or (e) Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Performance Indicators and Measures).
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WOIA) Performance Indicators and Measures: Effectiveness in Serving Employers – The percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit who were employed by the same employer in the second and the fourth quarters after exit (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Performance Indicators and Measures).

System indicators

- Percent of available jobs that are at the middle-skill level, requiring more than a high school diploma but not a four year degree (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- Percent of workers who are trained at the middle-skill level (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Fostering in-house talent. Corporate leaders increasingly recognize the value of upskilling to the business bottom line. Companies benefit from IET as a way to build incumbent workers' skills so that they can promote from within, in recognition of the loyalty and institutional knowledge of their existing employees. Investing in current workers can also reduce business costs related to employee turnover and onboarding of new hires (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- Building the talent pipeline. Integrated Education Training (IET) also helps businesses to strengthen the pipeline of new workers coming into their workplaces, making sure that people just entering the workforce are being trained with the skills most relevant to their business needs (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- Ensuring that public investments respond to current business needs. Businesses benefit when public workforce and adult education programs like Integrated Education Training (IET) are demand-driven – that is, responsive to the specific needs of local labor markets. Strong relationships with companies can help to ensure that IET models reflect the current needs of local businesses (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- Accelerated pathways to career advancement. IET allows workers to speed up their path to better employment and higher wages, by removing the need to finish a time-consuming foundational

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skills class before embarking on occupational training (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).

- Ability to acquire in-demand credentials. IET programs typically allow participants to earn both a secondary credential (if needed) and one or more postsecondary credentials. The latter often consist of industry-recognized credentials that are in demand by local employers, thus ensuring that workers are earning documents of value in the labor market (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- Increased cost effectiveness. Using adult education funds to support instructional time and materials, while drawing on CTE funds for classroom space and laboratory equipment, is a cost-effective solution to the question of how to pay for IET. Local communities' investment in high school CTE facilities and equipment is primarily a fixed cost that is not increased by allowing adult learners to access them in off-hours (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- Leveraging complementary expertise. Stakeholders in each of the adult education and CTE systems possess relationships and expertise that would be costly and time-consuming for the other partner to acquire. Alignment benefits both systems. For example, adult education providers have deep expertise in effective pedagogy for adult learners. In addition, they often have strong referral and recruitment networks and trusted relationships with community partners. CTE providers have established relationships with industry partners through their employer advisory groups, strong expertise in technical training, and access to the laboratory space and equipment needed for many CTE classes (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).

Policies

- State Policy Recommendations: Ensure full utilization of federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WOIA) and Perkins funds, and consider supplementing with state investments. States should ensure that they are making full use of available federal investments in adult education and CTE to increase alignment and coordination across systems. For example, to the extent permissible under the authorizing legislation, states may wish to encourage or require applicants for competitive funding to demonstrate greater alignment. Or states may consider how state leadership funds available under WIOA may be used to provide technical assistance or other support to local providers in establishing adult education/CTE partnerships. In addition, policymakers should consider making additional investments of state funds to incentivize close partnerships between adult education and CTE partners, including as part of larger state initiatives such as credential attainment goals or workforce development strategies. Finally, states can consider reconfiguring existing investments (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- State Policy Recommendations: Capitalize on federal policy mandates to bring together key state agency and institutional partners to develop a shared strategic vision. Both major pieces of federal legislation — WIOA and Perkins — require states to bring together an array of stakeholders to create plans for how their workforce and education strategies will be implemented. Congress has further facilitated alignment by ensuring that the WIOA and Perkins statutes cross-reference each other with regard to planning, and that the timing of states' required four-year plans is aligned across both laws. State policymakers should take advantage of these mandates to bring together the full range of relevant decision makers from across the workforce, postsecondary education, adult education and human services systems, and use the joint planning process to create a shared vision for addressing the needs of state residents, including adults with foundational skills gaps (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- State Policy Recommendations: Ensure that state Perkins plans incorporate career pathway design and thinking. The 2018 reauthorization

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of the Perkins Act incorporates the definition of career pathways that was first codified in 2014 under WIOA. This definition emphasizes the importance of pathways that enable adults to progressively build their skills, entering and exiting training programs at different points as they move in and out of the labor market. States should take advantage of the new Perkins language to encourage adult education, secondary and postsecondary CTE, and workforce partners to plan collaboratively about how both Perkins- and WIOA-funded activities can support career pathways. Such pathways should incorporate WIOA-mandated IET programs as well as apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).

- State Policy Recommendations: Explore opportunities for how TANF and SNAP E&T can support upskilling in collaboration with adult education and CTE partners. Both Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) programs provide opportunities for states to invest in skillbuilding for adults with foundational skills gaps. For example, TWC allocates almost $1 million in TANF funds annually across Texas to support adult education efforts, including IET. States should incorporate these partners into broader WIOA and Perkins Act planning processes, as appropriate, and consider how braiding funds from these sources can support IET and other effective models for helping adults to exit public benefits by moving into good, family supporting jobs (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- State Policy Recommendations: Provide state policy guidance and technical assistance to spark ideas while allowing flexibility for local innovation. As the Texas example shows, states can strike an effective balance between providing guidance that outlines potential implementation options, while also providing sufficient freedom to spur local creativity. TWC's supportive yet still relatively non-prescriptive approach — providing local partners with technical assistance and mentoring support, as well as the ability to experiment and iterate — provides [school district partners] with the freedom to design an effective IET model for their community (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- State Policy Recommendations: How adult education partners can pay for IET activities using sources in addition to WIOA Title II. A perennial question for adult education providers is how to finance the development and implementation of IET models. Well-designed IET collaborations can be very cost-effective. State agencies should issue policy guidance that provides specific, concrete examples of federal and state funding sources that can be used to support IET. Guidance should clearly affirm that relevant federal and state policies permit funding to be used in this way (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- State Policy Recommendations: How alignment between adult education and CTE can ensure demand-driven integrated education and training models. Demand-driven training responds to the specific needs of the local labor market. There are a variety of ways that training providers can gather input from businesses to ensure that their programs are reflective of local business needs, such as through employer advisory committees, curriculum review, industry instructors, and sector partnerships. CTE programs are already mandated by the Perkins Act to gather such input; states should encourage adult education providers to collaborate with their CTE partners to draw on these employer resources as appropriate to inform the development of IET models. Ideally, Perkins employer advisory groups should include local sector partnerships. Sector partnerships bring together multiple firms in the same industry, as well as education and training

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providers and other stakeholders, to address skill shortages and develop talent pipelines. The new Perkins law identifies sector partnerships as potential CTE partners at both the state and local level, and allows state leadership funds to be used to support them (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).

- State Policy Recommendations: How adult education providers can capitalize on opportunities to use K-12 facilities during off-hours to support adult learners and workers. School districts that have invested in CTE facilities and equipment for high school students can leverage those investments by making them available to adult learners during non-school hours. States should provide guidance to local partners that affirms the value of such arrangements, and offers a list of key considerations local providers can use in determining the appropriate use of space and equipment, contractual arrangements with teachers, and other factors (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- State Policy Recommendations: How adult education/CTE partnerships can help localities achieve broader goals regarding career pathways. States should consider how they can use technical assistance to help local adult education/CTE partnerships reinforce broader career pathways efforts and vice versa (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- Federal Policy Recommendations: Provide guidance on Perkins Act planning. The reauthorization of the Perkins Act in 2018 marked the first time that Congress required state CTE agencies funded under Perkins to include adult education agencies in their planning process. In addition, the timeline for Perkins planning has been adjusted to coincide with similar planning that states are required to conduct for WIOA. The Departments of Labor and Education should issue joint policy guidance that highlights opportunities for coordinated planning and encourages states to identify areas for shared investments and goal setting. Such guidance should also spell out states' new opportunities and obligations with regard to adult education partners and provide suggestions for how best to engage adult education partners in Perkins planning (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- Federal Policy Recommendations: Consider using WIOA Title II national leadership funds to support adult education/CTE collaboration. A key factor identified by the Socorro ISD adult education and CTE partners was the importance of having time to engage and build relationships with each other. The Department of Education should consider usingWIOA Title II national leadership funds to support similar opportunities that bring together adult education and CTE partners for peer learning and mutual engagement, perhaps using a policy academy model (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- Federal Policy Recommendations: Fund the Perkins Act at full authorized levels. When the Perkins Act was reauthorized in 2018, Congress established new authorized spending levels for the legislation. Going forward, annual appropriations should fund the legislation at its full authorized levels, enabling states and localities to carry out their Perkins-funded activities with the resources necessary to do so (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).
- Federal Policy Recommendations: Fund WIOA at full authorized levels. WIOA is one of the nation's foremost investments in adult education and workforce development. Yet frequent spending cuts over the past fifteen years have cut federal investment in WIOA by approximately 40 percent in current dollars. While Congress has recently begun to reverse this trend with modest increases in WIOA funding for the FY18 and FY19 budget cycles, future appropriations should fund WIOA at its full authorized levels (Bergson-Shilcock, Better Together).

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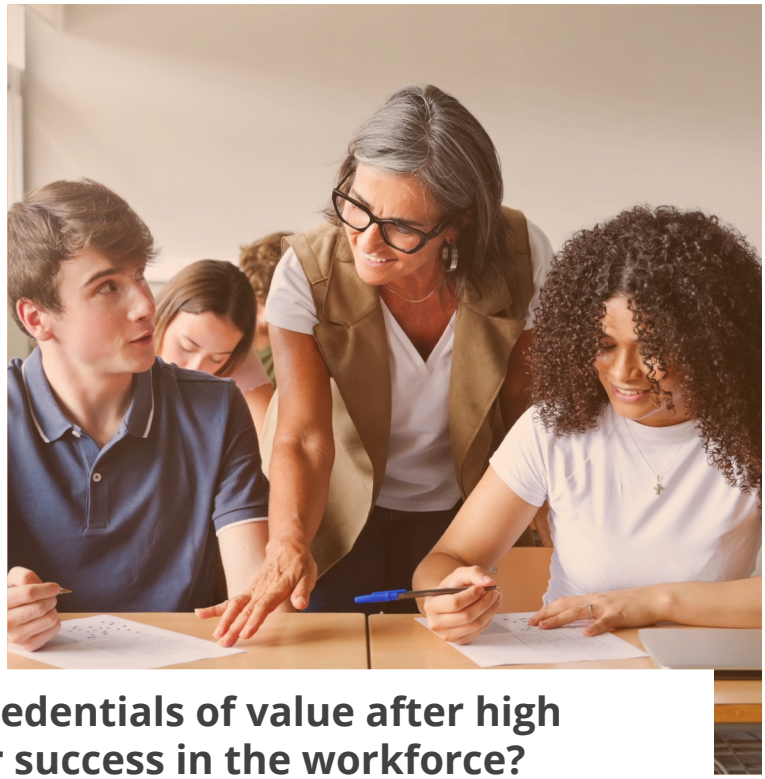
High-Quality Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training

High-quality postsecondary education and workforce training ensure that people can access jobs with living wages, stability and strong working conditions. This not only allows individuals to support themselves and build wealth but also strengthens communities and the broader economy. When more people are prepared for rewarding work, it creates pathways to opportunity and long-term prosperity for all.



4 **Are students completing credentials of value after high school that set them up for success in the workforce?**

Why this matters

Completing credentials of value after high school — degrees, certificates or certifications with clear learning outcomes that lead to meaningful employment and further learning — pays off in the labor market. Young people who complete such credentials earn more and face lower unemployment: U.S. data consistently show higher educational attainment is linked to higher earnings and lower jobless rates, while lifetime earnings rise markedly with each step up the credential ladder (e.g., associate and bachelor's degrees). What matters most is earning credentials with clear labor-market value: programs aligned to in-demand skills raise the odds of landing a good job and most of those jobs increasingly require postsecondary or "middle-skills" education. Building both education and skills — especially digital, data and customer-facing competencies — alongside the credential strengthens employability and wage growth, and targeted pathways can narrow opportunity gaps for historically marginalized youth.

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Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Six-year on-time college graduation rates of program participants compared to national average. For example, Braven Fellows, who typically join the career-accelerating program during their sophomore or junior year of college, are persisting and graduating at rates (92% 6-year graduation rate) that exceed the national average (72% 6-year graduation rate) (Braven).
- Degrees and Certificates Awarded. Annual number of certificates, associate degrees, bachelor's and graduate degrees awarded; disaggregated by age group, gender, race/ethnicity, Pell status (at any time), remedial status (at any time), transfer/first-time students and discipline. Measures how many undergraduate degrees and certificates the state's system of postsecondary education and its public colleges and universities are awarding annually, and to measure change over time (Complete to Compete).
- Graduation Rates. Number and percentage of entering undergraduate students who graduate from a degree or certificate program within 100%, 150% and 200% of program time. Disaggregated by degree/credential type, race/ethnicity, gender, age group, Pell status (at time of entry) and remedial status (at time of entry). Measures the rate at which students graduate from a public institution of higher education (Complete to Compete).
- College completion, disaggregated by key population metrics. Significantly increasing college completion will require closing the gaps in success rates for low-income and minority students, as well as ensuring the success of targeted subgroups such as adults, transfer students, part-time students and students who required remedial education. The metrics should also facilitate measuring progress on a state's specific postsecondary goals, such as increasing the number of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) or health fields. To understand and track improvement, outcome and progress metrics must be disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, income (Pell Grant recipients), age group, student attendance status, transfer versus native-to-the-institution students, degree type and discipline. States may also wish to flag within their data systems those students who graduated from high schools within the state ("in-state" students). For all of these metrics, the standard rule of nondisclosure of personally identifiable information applies. States and institutions should not publicly report disaggregated data that pertain to a sample size (N) of 10 or fewer students (Complete to Compete).
- Graduation rates for (a) first-time, full-time associate degree-seeking students; (b) first-time, part-time associate degree-seeking students; (c) Transfer at entry associate degree-seeking students; (d) first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students; (e) first-time, part-time bachelor's degree-seeking students; (f) transfer at entry bachelor's degree-seeking students; (g) first-time, full-time certificate-seeking students; (h) first-time, part-time certificate-seeking students (Complete to Compete).
- Transfer Rates (for community colleges only). Annual number and percentage of students who transfer from a two-year campus to a four-year campus by race/ethnicity, gender, age group, Pell status (at time of entry) and remedial status (at time of entry). Measures the proportion of students successfully transferring from two-year institutions of higher education to four-year institutions of higher education (Complete to Compete).

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- Time to degree. Average length of time in years a student takes to complete an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, or a certificate of one year or greater normal program time. Start with the degrees/certificates awarded in a specified year and determine how many total years and months elapsed from the first date of entry to the date of completion. Partial years should be expressed as a decimal. Average the number of years across students and report by degree type. Measures the average length of time in years and number of credits to complete a certificate or undergraduate degree by student entry status, race/ethnicity, gender, age groups, Pell status (at any time), remedial status (at any time) and discipline (Complete to Compete).
- Credits to degree. Average number of credits a student has accumulated when they earn an associate degree, a bachelor's degree or a certificate of one year or greater. Start with the degrees/certificates awarded in a specified year and determine the total number of credit hours each student completed since first enrolling. Average the number of credit hours across students and report by degree type. Measures the average length of time in years and number of credits to complete a certificate or undergraduate degree by student entry status, race/ethnicity, gender, age groups, Pell status (at any time), remedial status (at any time) and discipline (Complete to Compete).
- Enrollment in Remedial Education. Annual number and percentage of entering first-time undergraduate students who enroll in remedial math, English/reading or both math and English/reading courses; by race/ethnicity, gender, age groups, Pell status (at time of entry). Measures the proportion of undergraduate students who enroll in remedial coursework at public institutions of higher education (Complete to Compete).
- Success in Remedial Education. Annual number and percentage of entering first-time undergraduate students who complete remedial education courses in math, English/reading or both and complete a college-level course in the same subject; by race/ethnicity, gender, age groups, Pell status (at time of entry). Measures the proportion of undergraduate students who complete remedial education and go on to complete college-level coursework in the same subject within two academic years (Complete to Compete).
- Some College, No Credential (SCNC) population: U.S. adults who left higher education without receiving a postsecondary credential. Additional measurements for SCNC population: Re-enrollment after stopout, completion of a first credential and perseverance as indicated by continuing enrollment into a second academic year. Recent Stopouts consists of students who were newly identified as SCNC this year, having been stopped out (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center).
- Potential Completers: Students with at least two years of full-time equivalent enrollment in the last decade. Individuals in this group are called Potential Completers because the combination of credits accumulated and the relative recency of their prior enrollment makes them the most likely to be able to complete a degree or other credential (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center).
- Reasons for not starting or not finishing college. Survey responses include: (a) too expensive; (b) family responsibilities; (c) wanting to work; (d) simply not being interested in college; (e) not being admitted/low grades; (f) benefits of attending college were not worth the cost. Family responsibilities are the most common reason given for not completing a degree after starting college, cited by 38 percent of the respondents who dropped out as a reason for not continuing their education (Federal Reserve, Economic Well Being).
- Educational attainment of adults ages 25 and older, disaggregated by race and ethnicity. A 2022 report by the American Council on Education observed the levels of educational attainment

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continued to rise for all racial and ethnic groups, yet the gaps — such as those for non-White, non-Asian adults who were less likely to get a college degree — remained large. (Note, data sourced from U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey) (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).

- Undergraduate Completions across award levels, by race and ethnicity. A 2022 report by the American Council on Education observed that while postsecondary completions increased for all racial and ethnic groups, some consistently experienced poorer outcomes than those of other groups. Regardless of the institution type at which they began, Black or African American students were less likely than their peers from other racial and ethnic groups to complete a degree or certificate (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Field of study for bachelor's degree recipients, by race and ethnicity. For instance, degrees organized as STEM fields, business, education, health care fields, social sciences, humanities, general studies and other applied fields. This report defines "other applied fields" as personal and consumer services; manufacturing, construction, repair and transportation; military technology and protective services; architecture; communications; public administration and human services; design and applied arts; law and legal studies; library sciences; and theology and religious vocations. (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Educational attainment: Percent of adults who have ever enrolled in an educational program after high school (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Educational attainment: Percent of adults who have received a bachelor's degree or more, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, age and highest education of any parent/guardian (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).

System indicators

- Access to colleges based on parental income. A study by Raj Chetty et al. found that access to colleges varies greatly by parent income. For example, children whose parents are in the top 1% of the income distribution are 77 times more likely to attend an Ivy League college than those whose parents are in the bottom income quintile (Mobility Report Cards).
- Earnings outcomes of college graduates, compared to their parent's income. A study by Raj Chetty et al. found children from low- and high-income families have similar earnings outcomes conditional on the college they attend, indicating that low-income students are not mismatched at selective colleges (Mobility Report Cards).
- Rates of upward mobility for college graduates. A study by Raj Chetty et al. found that rates of upward mobility – the fraction of students who come from families in the bottom income quintile and reach the top quintile – differ substantially across colleges because low-income access varies significantly across colleges with similar earnings outcomes. Rates of bottom-to-top quintile mobility are highest at certain mid-tier public universities, such as the City University of New York and California State colleges. Rates of upper-tail (bottom quintile to top 1%) mobility are highest at elite colleges, such as Ivy League universities (Mobility Report Cards).
- College acceptance rates and enrollment rates of students from low-income families. A study by Raj Chetty et al. found that the fraction of students from low-income families did not change substantially between 2000-2011 at elite private colleges, but fell sharply at colleges with the highest rates of bottom-to-top-quintile mobility (Mobility Report Cards).
- Institution-level Enrollment. Annual unduplicated number of students enrolled over a 12-month period at public institutions of higher education, disaggregated by attendance status at entry (full-time or part-time), race/ethnicity, gender, age and Pell recipient status at entry. Enrollment should be reported for each public institution, and aggregated by

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sector and by certificate-seeking, associate degree-seeking, bachelor's degree-seeking and undetermined or courses-only. Measures the number of students enrolling at public institutions of higher education and to measure changes in enrollment over time, overall and for specific subgroups (Complete to Compete).

- Completion Ratio. Annual ratio of undergraduate degrees and certificates (of at least one year in expected length) awarded per 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) undergraduate students at the state level, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender and degree type. Measures the proportion of certificates (of at least one year in expected length) and undergraduate degrees awarded relative to undergraduate student enrollment at public institutions of higher education (Complete to Compete).
- Market Penetration. Annual ratio of undergraduate degrees and certificates (of at least one year in program length) awarded relative to the state's population aged 18-24 years old with a high school diploma. Measures the proportion of certificates (of at least one year in program length) and undergraduate degrees awarded at public institutions of higher education relative to the young adult age cohort for a state (Complete to Compete).
- Completions per student: The number of completions divided by the number of FTE students (based on 12-month enrollment) in a given year expressed as completions per 100 FTE. Measures the twelve-month FTE undergraduate enrollment and undergraduate credentials (certificates, associate's, bachelor's) conferred in a given year. Disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, age, credential level, program of study (at exit), academic preparation (at any time), economic status (at any time), first-generation status, enrollment status (at entry), attendance status (at any time). Additional related metrics include: Change in number of completers; Change in FTE enrollment; Completion rates (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Learning outcomes assessments are used by institutions to demonstrate educational effectiveness transparently, effectively communicate program goals and outcomes to a variety of audiences and fulfill accreditation requirements. While not in use in federal data collections, learning outcomes data can be used by the institution and state to measure the quality of programs and institutions of higher education. For example, in 2012 and 2013, Massachusetts commissioned the Multi-State Collaborative for Leaning Outcomes Assessment to compare outcomes with other states in partnership with AAC&U and SHEEO. Using the VALUE Rubrics as a common language, colleges and universities in Massachusetts used several metrics to create composite indicators of student learning, including: pass rates on national licensure exams and mean scores on graduate entrance exams. States and institutions use these exams as evidence that college students accumulated knowledge and skills while enrolled. Precollege and post-college scores are examined to gauge quality of learning and inform curricular or instructional changes (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Graduate Education Rate: The number and percentage of bachelor's recipients enrolling in post baccalaureate or graduate programs in one, five, and 10 (optional) years of completion. Disaggregated by program of study (at exit),enrollment status, attendance intensity (at any time while enrolled), academic preparation (at any time while enrolled), economic status (Pell ever), race/ ethnicity, gender, age, first-generation status (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Other metrics related to Graduate Education Rate include: Relationship between undergraduate program of study and graduate program of study; Income, gender, or racial gaps in graduate education, especially STEM programs; Relationship between debt and graduate education enrollment or graduate program of study (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

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- Outcome Rates – Graduation rate: The percentage of students in a cohort who earn the credential sought at their initial institution, up to 200 percent of program length. Measures twelve-month incoming student cohorts by credential level sought, enrollment status, and attendance intensity at entry (e.g., FTFT, FTPT, TFT, TPT). Disaggregated by academic preparation, economic status (at entry), race/ethnicity, gender, age, first-generation status, and program of study (at entry). Should be captured at least at 100 percent, 150 percent, and 200 percent of program length, and should be reported in real-time, not retroactively (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Outcome Rates – Success rate (graduation rate + transfer rate): The percentage of students in a cohort who either graduate with the credential initially sought at the initial institution or transfer to a longer program at the initial or subsequent institution(s), up to 200 percent of program length. Measures twelve-month incoming student cohorts by credential level sought, enrollment status, and attendance intensity at entry (e.g., FTFT, FTPT, TFT, TPT). Disaggregated by academic preparation, economic status (at entry), race/ ethnicity, gender, age, first-generation status, and program of study (at entry). Should be captured at least at 100%, 150% and 200% of program length, and should be reported in real-time, not retroactively (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Outcome rates provide a more complete picture of how effectively students achieve their postsecondary objectives, highlight institution-level student success, and best reflect the information needed by students, policymakers and institutions to understand and improve student outcomes. Outcome rates are used in tandem with persistence and retention rates to explore student mobility and success in higher education even more fully (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Completers: The number of students who complete a credential in a given year. Measures all completers in a given year by credential level attained. Disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, age, academic preparation (at any time), economic status (at any time), first-generation status, program of study (at exit), and part-time (at any time) and transfer status. This completers metrics recommends counting the number of students who complete, as opposed to the number of credentials completed (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Other metrics related to completers: Cross tabulations of credentials awarded by key disaggregates (e.g., race and gender); Distribution of credentials awarded by program of study; Distribution of credential awarded to underrepresented populations; Credentials awarded to underrepresented populations in STEM; Time and credits to credential (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- The number and percentage of youth working full-time or attending school / college as their primary activity. Individuals not working full-time or attending school/ college as their primary activity are considered "Opportunity Youth" (The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth).
- Opportunity Youth Intensity Measure: This approach gives youth a weighted value equal to 1 if they are completely an opportunity youth and zero if they are fully employed or in full-time education. So, a person who is in college half-time (and not working) is counted as 0.5 of an opportunity youth; a person who works for three months of the year is counted at 0.75; and a person who does both these activities in the same year is counted as 0.25. This method captures the balancing of work and education, as well as measuring low engagement of youth; and it sheds more light on what opportunity youth might be able to do (The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth).
- Chronic Opportunity Youth: These individuals are most likely different from students who are intermittently out of school or unemployed. Chronic status may be triggered by involvement

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in juvenile crime and vice versa. We distinguish chronic opportunity youth as a subset of all opportunity youth: the former are likely to require different supports and policy interventions from those youth who are partially attached to the labor market or enrolled part-time in higher education (The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth).

- A high school's promotion power, that is, the school's impact on the long-term success of its students, as indicated by high school graduation, college or career readiness, college enrollment and persistence and success in the job market. Measures of promotion power aim to fairly compare schools serving different populations of students. The measures are based on statistical models developed by Mathematica that identify schools' contributions to students' long-term outcomes separately from other factors, such as prior achievement and demographic characteristics (Mathematica, The Promotion Power Impacts of Louisiana High Schools).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Institutions can compare graduate education rates with the mission of their programs to see if their credentials are in fact preparing students for their intended outcomes – either employment or further education. If graduate education rates are not consistent with expected student outcomes (i.e., the continuing education rate is low for a program that should be the foundation for graduate school education), then leadership can evaluate why student pathways are inconsistent with the institution's or program's goals. Because this metric is disaggregated by program of study, institutions also can evaluate the enrollment of specific populations of students into graduate programs, specifically for the STEM fields, and measure whether students enroll in a program similar to that of the undergraduate degree (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Institutions can use counts of completing students to demonstrate productivity and their institutional contribution to the workforce and society. Especially when disaggregating by demographic characteristics, top-performing institutions can make the case that they are contributing large numbers of underrepresented college graduates. Alternately, these data on completers could show that some institutions are producing very few graduates in certain fields (e.g., STEM) or from certain student groups (e.g., African Americans) or a cross between the two (e.g., African American STEM graduates). These results can trigger the college to investigate the cause for small numbers or gaps and evaluate whether their credential awarding patterns align with institutional goals and workforce needs. Students and policymakers can employ this metric to examine the types of students that succeed at a particular college, contributing to informed school selection and strategic policies that advance those institutions that serve all students well. For example, many states include the number of credentials awarded or students completing — particularly for underrepresented student groups — in their outcomes-based funding formulas (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- The Completions per Student metric is intended to show how effectively institutions turn credential-seekers into credential-holders. Some institutions use this metric to illustrate student progress toward graduation. For example, the University of Texas-El Paso uses a similar degree-production ratio that compares the total number of FTE undergraduates enrolled four years earlier with the total number of baccalaureate degrees awarded that year. These data can supplement the traditional IPEDS graduation rates by capturing completions regardless of whether the student began with a first-time, full-time status, although the more inclusive completion rates recommended as part of this framework can alleviate this issue. Policymakers can also use this

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metric, in conjunction with success rates, to determine how many credentials institutions award in relation to how many students they enroll. Some states, like Tennessee, include a similar completion per 100 FTEs metric in their outcomes-based funding models (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

- Learning outcomes: Public display of student learning goals, assessments and outcomes using the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment's (NILOA's) Transparency Framework. Institutions also should consider using Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) and the Association of American Colleges & Universities' (AAC&U's) Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Rubrics to develop, refine and measure mastery of learning outcomes. Disaggregated by credential level, economic status (Pell ever), race/ethnicity and academic preparation, program of study (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Learning outcomes strive to quantify what students learn through their credential program. States and institutions should use these rubrics and assessment tools to benchmark progress on student outcomes and to refine teaching and curriculum to improve student learning. Institutions can use these tools to understand where gaps in student learning exist, especially for specific student groups (e.g., low-income students and students of color), restructure and revise course structure and content and continuously improve student academic achievement (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Critically examine and refine how students connect with college by having recruitment, advising and academic departments ask these questions: How can we improve understanding among high school students about the credential program opportunities offered by the college? How can we motivate and guide students to prepare to enter a college-level program of study as soon as they graduate high school? Can we more effectively recruit students from adult basic skills, non-credit vocational and community-based education programs into college-level programs of study? (Get with the Program).
- Ideas for increasing the number of new students entering the college motivated and prepared to enter a college-level program of study: (a) Create marketing materials for use with prospective students showing the major program streams offered by the college, where each stream is designed to lead in terms of further education and (for CTE programs) career advancement and what students who want to enter a given stream need to do to succeed in it; (b) Partner with feeder high schools to provide orientation to college program options and requirements as well as early assessment of college readiness, beginning in the sophomore year; (c) Reorient dual or concurrent high school–college enrollment programs to encourage high school students to enter college-level programs, not just take college-level courses, while they are still in high school; (d) Build "bridge" programs that enable adult basic skills students to advance to college-level programs, especially in career–technical fields (Get with the Program).
- Questions that colleges' advising staff, in partnership with developmental education and academic departments, should be asking regarding students' entry into a program of study: What guidance and support can we provide to help students develop clear goals for college and careers and choose a program of study as soon as possible? What approaches to remedial instruction are most effective for preparing academically underprepared students to enter and succeed in a program of study? How can we help students who are attempting to enter a program of study pass the gatekeeper courses that often prevent students from getting on a program path? (Get with the Program).
- Ideas for increasing the rate and pace at which students enter a program of study: (a) Require all degree-seeking, first-time college students to develop a program completion plan; (b)

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Require all first-time college students to take a three-credit college success course (ideally in their first term) that exposes students to college program options and requirements, helps them develop a program completion plan tied to goals for further education and employment, and provides instruction in "college success skills," such as note taking, test taking and time management; (c) Customize remedial offerings for each major program stream (e.g., liberal arts, STEM, business, allied health, engineering technologies, etc.) with contextualized instruction to ensure that students are mastering the basic skills and knowledge that are essential for success in the given stream; (d) Require students who need remediation to take a prescribed set of courses that includes a college success course, customized remedial instruction and an introductory college-level survey course in a program area of interest (Get with the Program).

- Questions that academic departments, in consultation with student services staff, should be asking regarding student progress: Are we effectively tracking and advising program concentrators to ensure that they are making progress toward completion? Are our programs well structured so that students can complete them as quickly as possible? Are required courses offered when students need to take them? (Get with the Program).
- Ideas for accelerating rates of student progress and program completion: (a) Strongly recommend that all students declare a program of study within the first year and require them to keep up-to-date a program completion plan; (b) Improve instruction and integrate supports into coursework to help students pass gatekeeper courses in each program area; (c) Assign concentrators to program faculty advisors who will regularly meet with them to ensure that they are progressing according to their program plans; (d) Ensure that the courses required to complete each program are offered regularly and on a schedule convenient to students (Get with the Program).
- Questions that academic departments and top administrators should be asking regarding student completion: Are our academic program options and requirements clearly defined for students entering the college and for program majors? How are we assessing whether students are mastering the skills and knowledge that our programs seek to teach them? What can we learn from baccalaureate program faculty, employers and program alumni to ensure that our programs prepare students to succeed in further education and (with career–technical programs) advance in the labor market? (Get with the Program).
- Ideas for ensuring that programs of study are coherent and prepare for success in further education and (for CTE) employment: (a) Consolidate program offerings into a small number of program streams (such as liberal arts/transfer, business, allied health and nursing, engineering technology, education, consumer services, etc.), each with a limited set of clearly specified programs leading to credentials; (b) Clearly map out for each program a prescribed sequence of courses, limiting the number of elective courses; (c) Regularly communicate with faculty and administrators in partner baccalaureate programs to ensure that program curricula are aligned with transfer requirements; (d) Regularly communicate with employers to ensure that CTE programs are meeting labor market requirements; (e) Survey recent graduates for their suggestions for how the programs they completed could be improved (Get with the Program).
- Offer structured programs of study – Research in behavioral economics and other fields suggests that students perform better when offered a limited set of clearly defined program options that have well-structured or prescribed paths to completion (see Scott-Clayton, 2011) (Get with the Program).

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- Provide contextualized instruction – Evidence is promising for approaches to teaching basic skills in the context of instruction in content area subject matter (see Perin, 2011) (Get with the Program).
- Acceleration – Evidence suggests colleges may be able to increase the rate at which students needing remediation advance to college-level study through various approaches, including restructuring of courses using instructional technology and "mainstreaming" higher-level remedial students into college-level courses with added support (see Edgecombe, 2011) (Get with the Program).
- Integrated student supports – Community college students are more likely to benefit from student support services that are integrated into the educational experience and that help students (a) create social relationships, (b) clarify aspirations and enhance commitment, (c) develop college know-how, and (d) address conflicting demands of work, family, and college (see Karp, 2011) (Get with the Program).
- Strong, outcomes-oriented leadership. College leaders, including not only top administrators but also faculty leaders, deans and department chairs, need to agree on and communicate a clear and compelling vision for improving student outcomes and set ambitious goals that faculty and staff will want to work to achieve (Get with the Program).
- Broad-based engagement and supporting professional development. Obviously, substantial change in community college practice will not happen without the active support and involvement of faculty and student services staff. Therefore, college leaders need to empower faculty and staff from across divisions to address the questions outlined above; identify priority areas for improvement; and implement, evaluate and further improve changes to practice. Leaders also need to provide resources for professional development that strategically supports the efforts by faculty and staff in the redesign work. This reframes professional development as an activity that supports the collective involvement of faculty and staff in the redesign process rather than an activity that mainly supports professional growth of faculty and staff as individuals (Get with the Program).
- Evidence-based improvement. To the extent possible, decisions on how to improve practice should be supported by evidence. Colleges should assess the effectiveness of earlier efforts to improve student success. Moreover, any new innovations should be evaluated to ensure they are helping to improve student outcomes (Get with the Program).
- Attention to cost-effectiveness and productivity. Colleges should evaluate not just the effectiveness of innovations but also their costs. In general, the goal should be to increase organizational productivity — that is, to increase rates of student success and improve student learning outcomes without requiring net additional staff and monetary resources (Get with the Program).
- Re-engaging with the Some College, No Credential (SCNC) population has broad benefits for states, institutions and students. For states, seeing additional SCNC students earn credentials can help to increase the attainment levels of their workforces and make their economies more competitive. For institutions, SCNC students can help address enrollment shortfalls amid a shifting demographic landscape. Perhaps more importantly, helping SCNC students through completing their first credentials can advance institutional missions to drive social mobility for students of all backgrounds. For SCNC students, reengaging with higher education can mean reclaiming dreams and aspirations along with the chance to realize social and economic mobility by earning credentials that start or advance careers and boost earnings (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center).

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- States and institutions could look to the Potential Completer population to help reach their re-engagement and attainment goals in equitable ways. Hispanic, Black and Native students are well-represented in this group, which is almost twice as likely to complete credentials within two years of re-enrollment as their other SCNC peers. Potential Completers who earn credentials are also more likely to earn associate and bachelor's degrees than other SCNC re-enrollees (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center).

Industry-recognized credential

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of students enrolled in a credit or non-credit CTE program who earn at least one industry-recognized credential (Education to Workforce).
- Percentage of program participants who have completed at least one industry-recognized credential (Education to Workforce).
- Industry-recognized training is classroom or on-the-job training that aligns with employer hiring requirements or decisions. Training can culminate in the attainment of credentials — including certificates, certifications, degrees and licenses — which are desired or required job qualifications that are sometimes recognized by trade associations. Education and training providers may collaborate with or seek input from employers to develop industry-approved training programs that align with employers' needs. The resulting industry-approved credentials certify that individuals possess the necessary competencies identified by employers (Urban Institute).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Providing an Incentive to establish industry-recognized credential programs: Successful states encourage school districts to offer industry certification courses to students by creating a financial incentive tied to performance and/or by adopting these industry-recognized credentials into the school accountability rating system (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).
- Labor Market Alignment: States use labor market data from their workforce agencies and workforce development boards to identify the credentials most in-demand and focus their programs to meet those needs (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).
- Data Collection and Reporting: Data collection and reporting allows states to identify progress in certain credentialing areas, monitor and assess student interest and program quality and analyze the demographics of credential earners to ensure equal access (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).
- Employer Engagement: Employer engagement and communication helps inform which pathways and occupations are in demand and the education and training students need, leading schools and districts to better align offerings with labor market need (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).
- Interagency Collaboration and State Policy: Collaboration between state agencies and coordination of various state policies ensures these programs serve students and business well. Each stakeholder undertakes distinct aspects of the work in close collaboration with public and private sector partners (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).
- Statewide Communication: States must promote credential programs to schools, districts and the students to be served, as well

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as to their families. Every stakeholder must be a part of the communication strategy to inform students and parents of the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials and the benefits of doing so (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).

- Build stronger employer signaling analyses to identify the industry-recognized credentials that are valued by industry by using specific criteria, including the extent to which employers: (a) state in their job postings and advertisements which credentials are required or preferred for hiring; (b) use the credential as a factor in selecting candidates for interviews and/or in determining which candidates are chosen for a job; (c) offer higher wages for those who have earned the credential; and/or (d) use a common credential within the same industry, providing portability across employers (Education Strategy Group, Credential Currency).
- Identify which industry-recognized credentials count for credit toward postsecondary education and training, noting that credentials with the greatest postsecondary currency: (a) are transferrable for postsecondary course credit or credit hours in core program courses; (b) count toward hours in an aligned apprenticeship program at the postsecondary level; and/or (c) "stack" to allow students to progress to a more advanced industry credential within a specific field (e.g., machining levels 1, 2, and 3) or to a postsecondary certification, an associate degree, a bachelor's degree or beyond within a given field (Education Strategy Group, Credential Currency).
- Build a cross-sector priority industry-recognized credential list spanning the education and workforce systems that is backed by labor market data and has demonstrated postsecondary value, which includes: (a) designing and executing a systematic, evidence-based process across K-12, higher education, and workforce development that utilizes a balanced collection of primary and secondary sources, including both real-time and lagging labor market data, to decide which credentials fall above and below the line; (b) maintaining the identification process through annual or biennial reviews to update and validate the list over time to ensure it reflects changing workforce needs; and (c) undertaking longitudinal analyses that track credential holders into the marketplace to be certain that credentials identified as high value do in fact lead to greater employment outcomes for learners over time (Education Strategy Group, Credential Currency).
- States can take their high-value credential identification work a step further by developing new technology-based approaches to streamline employer signaling, establishing industry-recognized credentials that are the industry-accepted standard and building cross-state agreements to award postsecondary credit for both youth and adults seeking to upskill (Education Strategy Group, Credential Currency).
- Inspire and support students' high-value credential attainment to show the clear value proposition such credentials offer by: (a) communicating the workforce and higher education benefits of credentials of value; (b) removing financial and access barriers to earning high-value industry credentials; (c) enabling priority industry credentials to count for postsecondary credit or hours; and (d) making attainment of high-value industry credentials a graduation expectation (Education Strategy Group, Credential Currency).
- Spark school and district prioritization of high-value credential attainment, encouraging and rewarding them for offering more pathways that lead to credentials and increasing the number of students who earn them by: (a) providing funding for high-value industry credential attainment; (b) recognizing schools and districts for success and improvement; and (c) making high-value credential attainment count in accountability systems (Education Strategy Group, Credential Currency).

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- Recognize and emphasize the importance of high-value credentials statewide to communicate to the public that attainment of high-value industry-recognized credentials matters by: (a) leveraging the program of study approval process to ensure that career pathways are anchored in high-value credentials; and (b) publicly reporting high-value credential attainment for all students and schools (Education Strategy Group, Credential Currency).
- States can leverage additional opportunities to advance their work by counting high-value industry-recognized credentials in postsecondary attainment goals, leveraging online credential databases to capture and promote priority credentials and harnessing collective buying power by partnering with other states to lower credential price points (Education Strategy Group, Credential Currency).
- Set a new minimum data threshold for collection through one of two different approaches: (a) execute data-sharing agreements with each vendor offering a credential from the state's high-value list to receive student-level data on exam taking and passage rates by credential type; or (b) initiate secure data transfers of individual student credential certificates from schools and districts (Education Strategy Group, Credential Currency).
- Create a standardized reporting framework that allows for tracking high-value credentials tied to specific pathways and courses (Education Strategy Group, Credential Currency).
- Industry-based credential programs across the country: Delaware and Ohio integrate credentials into the school curriculum and career preparation activities like work-based learning opportunities and internships (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).
- Industry-based credential programs across the country: Delaware established its Delaware Pathways program in 2014 with 27 students in an advanced manufacturing pathway. The state saw a growing gap between the needs of employers and the skills students possessed as well as a gap in the number of black, Hispanic and low-income students who left high school with the skills to pursue higher education or a middle skill job. Today, there are 14 pathways serving over 9,000 students in fields such as finance, healthcare and information technology. In collaboration with business, secondary and postsecondary institutions and families, Delaware aims to enroll 20,000 students in pathways by 2020 (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).
- Industry-based credential programs across the country: In Ohio, students can earn industry-recognized credentials as one of 13 career fields with a choice of over 250 in-demand credentials. The program is included in one of three pathway options for high school graduation supported by the Ohio Department of Education. The program was developed in 2014 by a coalition of 15 school districts, Columbus State Community College, and various community and business partners in four industries – Information Technology, Logistics, Healthcare and Advanced Manufacturing. Students in any district can sign up for an industry-recognized credential course. Ohio includes the awarding of industry-recognized credentials as a measure of how well schools prepare students for life after high school on school report cards (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).
- Industry-based credential programs across the country: Florida, Wisconsin and Louisiana have implemented similar models, but have adopted incentives – bonus funding for schools and districts for each student who earns an industry certification – to dramatically increase the number of students earning high-value industry recognized credentials in high-wage, in-demand fields. As a result, these states see student demand and enrollment in the program increase year over year. Each state's incentive program was created by an act of the legislature and receives its funding through legislative

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appropriation (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).

- Industry-based credential programs across the country: Wisconsin's program was enacted by the state legislature in 2013 and capped funding at $3 million with incentives set at $1,000 per student. Funding is limited to $1,000 per pupil regardless of the number of approved credentials students earn. The program was oversubscribed in its first year and incentives were prorated at $882 per student. In 2018, the program budget increased to $3.5 million. Student demand for this program continues to grow. The incentive program is managed by the Department of Workforce Development (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).
- Industry-based credential programs across the country: Louisiana's program began in 2014 with 14,473 students who earned national or state industry based credentials. In 2017, over 41,000 high school students attained a credential. Louisiana distributes incentives through its Career Development Fund which is uncapped and currently stands at $12 million. The incentive rate is $241 per student, per credit for each student who enrolls in an industry-recognized credential course in a high demand pathway through the JumpStart career diploma pathway. For example, if students participate in a two-credit course and a two-credit internship, the school would receive $952 as an incentive. After four years of implementation and increasing student demand, 2018 was the first year in which industry recognized credential courses were a requirement for high school graduation. The program is run through the Louisiana Department of Education (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).
- Industry-based credential programs across the country: Florida's program is the oldest. It was enacted by the legislature in 2007 and is funded through the Florida Education Finance Program which funds the operation of schools. The program began with 803 students earning industry certifications. The initial cost of the incentive program was $550,000 for the 2007-2008 academic year. By 2015-2016, the state investment was $50 million as a result of rising student demand. Incentives ranged from $416-$832 per student in 2016-2017. During the 2017-2018 school year, 105,131 students earned over 120,000 industry-recognized credentials. Student enrollment in the program continues to rise each year. Florida has included industry certifications in high school grading formula since 2010 (Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education).

Workforce-ready education and skills (e.g., digital skills, communication skills, higher-order thinking skills)

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of individuals demonstrating proficiency on a performance assessment that measures digital skills required for workforce success, such as the Problem Solving in Technology-Rich Environments assessment within the Education & Skills Online assessment suite, which can be used by researchers and institutions to gather individual-level results based on Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Survey of Adult Skills (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies [PIAAC]) domains (EW Framework).
- The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+) or Success Skills Assessment (SSA+) for postsecondary students that measure critical thinking, problem solving and written communications (EW Framework).

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- The HEIghten Outcomes Assessment for Written Communication (EW Framework).
- Percentage of individuals demonstrating proficiency on a performance assessment, such as the National Work Readiness Credential Essential Soft Skills assessment (EW Framework).
- Employee perceptions about education and skills and their connection to upward mobility. For instance, the Harvard Business School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to report on the biggest contributors to their upward mobility. Responses included, "I had the English language fluency needed to move up," "I had the soft skills needed to move up," "I had the technical skills (i.e., knowledge of certain equipment, systems, or tools) needed to move up," "I had the literacy skills needed to move up I had the numeracy skills (i.e., the ability to understand and work with numbers) needed to move up," "I had a secondary diploma or a GED" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

Practices and Policies

Policies

- Richard Reeves and Isabel Sawhill of Brookings propose a model of Scholarships for Service in which anybody completing a year of full-time national service, either military or civilian would be entitled to two years of tuition-free education at any public higher education institution in their home state, including technical and vocational colleges, or at a government-subsidized apprenticeship with an employer (Brookings, A New Contract with the Middle Class).

Degree Completion for Opportunity Youth

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of young people classified as "Opportunity Youth" in a community, disaggregated by race, ethnicity and gender. Opportunity Youth are defined as young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not in school and not working. Opportunity youth often come from communities with higher levels of poverty or limited resources. Many of these young people have disabilities, experience with homelessness or have crossed paths with the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. Youth of color are also disproportionately represented in this group. While these teens are sometimes called "disconnected youth," the term "opportunity youth" is increasingly preferred, as this phrase is more positive and reflects the potential of these young people to become thriving adults if provided the right opportunities (Annie E. Casey, Who Are Opportunity Youth).
- Percentage of opportunity youth who have earned a high school diploma but no further education (Measure of America).
- Percentage of opportunity youth who receive public insurance (Measure of America).
- Percentage of opportunity youth who have children (Measure of America).
- Percentage of opportunity youth who live in poverty (Measure of America).
- Percentage of opportunity youth who have a disability. Includes cognitive difficulty, independent-living difficulty, self-care difficulty, hearing difficulty, vision difficulty and ambulatory difficulty (Measure of America).
- Percentage of opportunity youth who are uninsured (Measure of America).
- Percentage of opportunity youth ages 16 - 17 who are not living with parents
- Percentage of opportunity youth who are married (Measure of America).

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- Percentage of opportunity youth who are living in institutionalized group quarters
- Percentage of opportunity youth who have limited English proficiency (Measure of America).
- Percentage of opportunity youth ages 21 - 24 who have completed at least a bachelor's degree (Measure of America).
- Teachers in alternative schools report a high level of engagement and motivation from students in their classes (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Number of students in alternative high school settings taking and passing end-of-course exams, dual-enrollment courses and college entrance exams (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Students in alternative high school settings are applying college-readiness skills in their academic classes, including higher-level Questioning, Writing to Learn and Collaborative Group Work (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Percent of students in alternative high school settings applying to and being accepted to postsecondary education and training (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Percentage of students enrolling in postsecondary programs (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Percentage of students who are either in school or employed a year after graduation (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).

Systems indicators

- Percentage of Opportunity Youth who participate in youth-adult partnerships. Through the formation of youth–adult partnerships and mentoring, the paths of opportunity youth can be redeveloped by implementing supports and spaces where youth are able to showcase their strengths and potential (AIR, Expanding the Evidence Base for Reconnecting Opportunity Youth).
- Percentage of Opportunity Youth who are successfully reengaged in education or work. Reengagement involves staff, typically at a school or dropout recovery center, identifying young people who have stopped attending school and then reaching out to those students through letters and phone calls and by visiting students' homes. Staff establish a connection with young people to learn more about their interests and goals and then work to identify an appropriate placement (e.g., traditional high school, alternative educational setting, or high school equivalency program) to help them complete their high school degree and prepare for postsecondary opportunities or a career (AIR, Expanding the Evidence Base for Reconnecting Opportunity Youth).
- Percentage of Opportunity Youth who are engaged in paid opportunities for work-based learning. Through paid work-based learning opportunities, young people can gain crucial on-the-job experience and build important professional connections that support long-term job stability, all while receiving the financial compensation necessary to sustain their focus on professional learning (AIR, Expanding the Evidence Base for Reconnecting Opportunity Youth).
- Percentage of Opportunity Youth receiving wraparound services. Wraparound services may include childcare, mental health services, supplemental nutrition assistance, living stipends and transportation stipends. Providing wraparound services is a common strategy employed by comprehensive programs that serve opportunity youth and is part of a wholistic approach to mitigating the numerous barriers that opportunity youth face (AIR, Expanding the Evidence Base for Reconnecting Opportunity Youth).

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Practices and Policies

Practices

- Connecting opportunity youth with a coach or dedicated academic advisor to help prepare young adults for college and navigate college when they arrive (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Providing opportunity youth access to community-based programs designed to help students become familiar with the college campus, develop positive academic habits and develop general skills required to succeed in college (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Providing access to affordable, accessible high-quality early childhood education, especially in low-income communities, sets the stage for academic success and decreases disparities by income and race (Annie E. Casey, Who Are Opportunity Youth).
- Providing equitable access to high-quality K–12 education, including ensuring that schools in low-income areas have adequate resources, counselors and support services as well as positive environments and non-punitive discipline policies (Annie E. Casey, Who Are Opportunity Youth).
- Strengthening early-warning systems in schools and communities to identify youth who are struggling and to connect them with needed support, whether related to academics, disabilities, family issues, health care, mental health or other needs (Annie E. Casey, Who Are Opportunity Youth).
- Ensuring that flexible learning experiences are available and tailored to youth needs and offering strong support for the transition from high school to postsecondary pathways, especially in areas with higher rates of youth disconnection (Annie E. Casey, Who Are Opportunity Youth).
- Increasing access to youth development programs — such as mentoring, after-school and civic engagement — helps youth form relationships with supportive adults and meaningfully contribute to their community (Annie E. Casey, Who Are Opportunity Youth).
- Providing equitable access to high-quality employment opportunities, such as internships, apprenticeships and career and technical training programs.
- Creating targeted plans to address the unique needs of communities with high rates of opportunity youth (Annie E. Casey, Who Are Opportunity Youth).
- Jobs for the Future's Back on Track Postsecondary Success model lays out three overlapping phases: Enriched Preparation, Postsecondary Bridging and First Year Supports. Enriched preparation integrates high-quality college/career-ready instruction with strong academic and social supports. Postsecondary Bridging builds college/career-ready skills and provides informed transition counseling. First Year Supports offer appropriate supports to ensure postsecondary persistence and career success (JFF, Supporting Dropout Recovery Programs to Focus on Postsecondary Success).
- Opportunity Works was a three-year effort led by JFF with the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions (AFCS) to help opportunity youth — young people ages 16 to 24 not in school or meaningfully employed — access postsecondary and career pathways. Based on the Back on Track framework, seven cities undertook cross-sector collaborative approaches with diverse partners to provide supportive enhanced preparation and postsecondary/career bridging for eligible young people, with a particular focus on young men of color. A study by the Urban Institute found that Opportunity Works has a positive and significant impact on postsecondary persistence and completion for program participants in South King County. The magnitude of the impact is large: about 17% of Opportunity Works program participants in South King County were awarded a college degree or a non-degree credential in up to five

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years after program entry, compared with 2% of the comparison group. Most of the graduation effects are because of increases in non-degree credentials awarded to participants. But the Urban Institute also found suggestive evidence that Opportunity Works increases South King County program participants' likelihood of graduating with a two-year college degree (positive effects but imprecisely measured) (Urban Institute, Effects of the Back on Track Model on College Persistence and Completion).

- The Back on Track framework fosters the growth and scale of programs aimed at improving the postsecondary success of opportunity youth. Back on Track is characterized by three program phases: (a) Enriched preparation: recruits high school noncompleters ages 16 to 24 and provides them with the curriculum, support and coaching essential for educational success and career readiness, as well as support in completing a high school credential; (b) Postsecondary/career bridging: helps students bridge to college and/or careers. This phase caters to opportunity youth who already have or are very close to obtaining high school credentials and helps them build the skill set essential for postsecondary achievement; and (c) First-year support: provides support to students to gain the skills necessary to persist through their first year of college or career (Urban Institute, Effects of the Back on Track Model on College Persistence and Completion).
- Goodwill Excel, Austin: Excel is part of a charter network managed by Goodwill, Inc. catering both to older youth (18 to 26) and adults (26 to 50). It offers both diplomas and GEDs and has a flexible schedule to allow for its older clientele to work and/or take care of their families (JFF, Supporting Dropout Recovery Programs to Focus on Postsecondary Success).
- American YouthWorks/Youthbuild, Austin: American Youthworks is a nonprofit organization that offers a Youthbuild program, providing the opportunity for young adults in Austin to take control of their education through combining completion of a high school credential with attainment of skills and certifications in one of several industry areas, work experience in that area and preparation for and successful transition to postsecondary education and/or training. To support students in each of these areas, the school faculty includes professionals who come with expertise in a particular technical/occupational area, teachers who have been more traditionally trained to deliver instruction in traditional high school subject matter to help students prepare for the GED or meet the TSI requirements and prepare for college coursework and transition experts who teach courses such as Adult Life and Mental Toughness II to help smooth the path to college and/or workplaces (JFF, Supporting Dropout Recovery Programs to Focus on Postsecondary Success).
- Restore Education, San Antonio: Restore Education is unique among the five sites in promoting a high degree of individualization and in offering only a GED, with no diploma option. Most students spend the majority of their school hours working to prepare for the GED in one-on-one sessions with paid instructional staff and volunteer tutors from the community. The program also offers group English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, as well as classes to help students who want to prepare to meet the requirements for the TSI and workforce training classes (JFF, Supporting Dropout Recovery Programs to Focus on Postsecondary Success).
- Texans CAN Academy, Fort Worth: The Fort Worth CAN Academy is part of a statewide charter network of schools, all of which focus on serving at-risk students who were struggling academically and/or socially in their high schools and seeking an alternative to the traditional school system. The academy offers a halfday high school-level academic program, where students proceed from subject-area class to subject-area class, much as in a traditional high school. In the second half of the day, students

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participate in classes focused on attaining industry certifications and dual-enrollment classes that carry college credit (JFF, Supporting Dropout Recovery Programs to Focus on Postsecondary Success).

- College and Career Center, La Joya: The La Joya ISD College and Career Center is a district alternative program offering older students the opportunity to complete high school or earn a high school equivalency degree while also preparing for postsecondary education, careers and the military. A majority of the students are English learners, needing to build up their language skills simultaneously with preparing for postsecondary education and life. The center shares a building with the La Joya Early College High School and also serves as one of the campuses of South Texas College. Unusual hours accommodate a nontraditional population, many of whom attend part-time for a year or even less. Classes are offered in the mornings, afternoons, evenings and even on weekends for students who work and/or have child care responsibilities (JFF, Supporting Dropout Recovery Programs to Focus on Postsecondary Success).
- Portland YouthBuilders (PYB), a YouthBuild USA affiliate program, and its partner, Portland Community College, have collaborated to identify college-ready standards in mathematics, reading and writing and then modified program courses to embed these standards. Through extended instructional periods and interdisciplinary units of instruction with such high-interest themes as "social justice," PYB faculty introduces students to literary analysis and research skills essential to success in college. In math, PYB staff members are continuing to work with the college's faculty on mapping the curriculum to align with college preparation. The partners also track students' progress in postsecondary bridging programs to determine whether further adjustments are needed during the enriched preparation phase of the Back on Track model (JFF, Pathway to Recovery).
- West Brooklyn Community High School, a New York City Transfer School for over-aged and undercredited students, is a partnership between the NYC Department of Education and Good Shepherd Services. Three years ago, West Brooklyn initiated a College Culture Committee to focus on postsecondary awareness and planning across the school, and to assess how well its instructional strategies align with building college-ready skills and behaviors. As a result, staff saw the need for a more targeted focus on the development of high-level cognitive skills across all content areas. They developed a peer observation protocol that all teachers use to observe one another's classes and provide feedback on the use of college-ready instructional strategies. In addition, staff plan and facilitate college and postsecondary planning activities during advisories called Community Leaders (JFF, Pathway to Recovery).
- Improved Solutions for Urban Systems (ISUS), an affiliate of the National Youth Employment Coalition in Dayton Ohio, has created dropout recovery career and technical charter schools focused on in-demand careers — construction, advanced manufacturing, renewable energy and health care. Through an articulation agreement with Sinclair Community College, designated ISUS teachers can be certified as adjunct faculty to teach college-approved curricula leading to Associate's degrees in health care and other selected fields. To support this postsecondary bridging, ISUS has lengthened the school day and school year. Once enrolled at Sinclair, students can also earn nationally recognized "stackable" industry credentials, Associate's degrees and apprenticeships (JFF, Pathway to Recovery).
- New York City's College Access and Success initiative brings together the New York City College of Technology (City Tech), Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, Good Shepherd Services and the Youth Development Institute.

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Each month, Cypress Hills, Good Shepherd, and City Tech staff — including the Provost, the Dean of Curriculum and Instruction, academic advisors and case managers — meet to discuss the progress of students in the program. At the meetings staff review data about student courses and performance, as well as qualitative information about students' performance and lives. Discussions of individual students yield guidance on how to help each one, and staff members come to agreement on follow-up actions (JFF, Pathway to Recovery).

- In Massachusetts, a partnership with Massasoit Community College (MCC) has enabled YouthBuild Brockton to add a focus on college-ready instruction, as well as to offer a supported dual enrollment class, taught by an MCC instructor. Shepherded by Mark Showan, executive director of YouthBuild Brockton, and Amanda Huggon-Mauretti, special programs coordinator at MCC, the partnership's graduates are well prepared to succeed in the postsecondary bridging program the college runs for high school and GED graduates. MCC, like many community colleges, is enrolling a growing number of very underprepared young people who have to take developmental education courses before engaging in any college-level work. By establishing bridge programs and partnerships with organizations like YouthBuild, the college has gained a steady supply of motivated young adults who are better prepared for college, and many of them have continuing support from their sending programs. Among these supports, two YouthBuild staff check in on students regularly to help ensure they have what they need to succeed. The scale of the bridge program and continuing support make it possible for Huggon-Mauretti to oversee the bridge programming, act as YouthBuild's liaison at the college, and serve as the academic advisor to all YouthBuild students after they complete the bridge program and enroll in the college (JFF, Pathway to Recovery).
- In a region of Texas with large numbers of 18- to 26-year olds who are disconnected from school and work, the PharrSan Juan-Alamo Independent School District teamed up with South Texas College to create the College, Career, and Technology Academy (CCTA), a college-connected dropout recovery school. CCTA's slogan exemplifies the goal the academy is designed to achieve: "You didn't graduate from high school? Start college today!" For years, dropouts had shown up at South Texas College seeking to enroll and gain credentials, but entry required a high school diploma or GED. Thus, Dr. Shirley Reed, the founding president of the college, responded immediately when Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Superintendent Dr. Daniel King proposed a joint venture. Both knew a partnership was essential to creating a pathway through postsecondary for this large number of young people. Registration for college courses, facilitated by staff from both South Texas College and CCTA, occurs when students enroll at the academy. Even while completing high school requirements, students can select from among a limited number of "mini-mesters" — shortened dual enrollment courses that include career-oriented certificate courses offered at the college. They can also take a College Success course that helps them develop study skills, explore career interests and understand their options for high-payoff credentials. Dual enrollment courses are funded by the state, as specified in Texas legislation designed to improve college and career readiness (JFF, Pathway to Recovery).

Policies

- Improving Data: Opportunity youth need information about the education and labor market outcomes they can expect to achieve to help them learn about and choose the best institution and program of study. Policy should enable data systems that link students' education and workforce outcomes and then make that data available, understandable and

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accessible (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).

- Support Services: Policy should ensure alignment of financial aid with programs that offer child care, transportation, nutrition and other benefits for which opportunity youth are eligible. Opportunity youth also need guidance and counseling on choices both big — like selecting a college or choosing a career pathway — and small — like deciding what courses to take or how to get the textbooks they need. Policy should ensure that opportunity youth have the guidance they need before they enter higher education and once they enroll (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Flexible Financial Aid: Many opportunity youth support families, work while going to college, or have never completed high school. These students need flexible financial aid policies that make applying for financial aid simple, allow students to attend school all year, help them access Ability to Benefit, and recognize costs for students that go beyond tuition and books (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Guided Pathways: Policy should incentivize and enable the creation of guided pathways, a framework for redesigning institutions of higher education to improve students' experiences from entry through completion. Pathways provide students with clear "maps" to guide students through a program of study through a credential, combined with robust advising (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Accelerated Pathways: Rather than allowing opportunity youth to get stuck in unengaging remedial coursework, policy should help these students accelerate faster towards their higher education goals. This includes giving students credit for prior learning and experiences, advancing competency-based education models and promoting co-enrollment and dual enrollment models that allow students to move more quickly towards credentials (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Work-Based Learning: Work-based learning traditionally has been available to the most socially connected students, rather than those who have the most to gain from work experiences. Policy should expand access to high-quality, relevant work-based learning experiences for opportunity youth, including through pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships and work-study opportunities (JFF, Making Higher Education Policy Work for Opportunity Youth).
- Providing access to affordable, accessible high-quality early childhood education, especially in low-income communities, sets the stage for academic success and decreases disparities by income and race (Annie E. Casey, Who are Opportunity Youth).
- Providing equitable access to high-quality K–12 education, including ensuring that schools in low-income areas have adequate resources, counselors and support services as well as positive environments and non-punitive discipline policies (Annie E. Casey, Who are Opportunity Youth).
- Strengthening early-warning systems in schools and communities to identify youth who are struggling and to connect them with needed support, whether related to academics, disabilities, family issues, health care, mental health or other needs (Annie E. Casey, Who are Opportunity Youth).
- Ensuring that flexible learning experiences are available and tailored to youth needs and offering strong support for the transition from high school to postsecondary pathways, especially in areas with higher rates of youth disconnection (Annie E. Casey, Who are Opportunity Youth).
- Increasing access to youth development programs — such as mentoring, after-school and civic engagement — helps youth form relationships with supportive adults and meaningfully contribute to their community (Annie E. Casey, Who are Opportunity Youth).

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- Providing equitable access to high-quality employment opportunities, such as internships, apprenticeships and career and technical training programs (Annie E. Casey, Who are Opportunity Youth).
- Creating targeted plans to address the unique needs of communities with high rates of opportunity youth (Annie E. Casey, Who are Opportunity Youth).
- Invest in what works and spur innovation around successful models. Two opportunities to do so are the reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Workforce Investment Act (JFF, Pathway to Recovery).
- Simplify eligibility, reporting and blending of funds. To identify and serve disconnected youth in ways that support their postsecondary attainment, it is critical to align requirements around data, reporting, eligibility and uses of funds across federal, state and private funding streams and programs that touch this group of young people (JFF, Pathway to Recovery).
- Promote and codify improvements to education accountability systems. Accountability for graduation rates can spur and support districts and schools to focus on dropout prevention and recovery and ensure that such efforts prepare young people for postsecondary success (JFF, Pathway to Recovery).
- Place a high priority on encouraging state and local partnerships. Efforts to collectively develop, sustain and scale up what works for disconnected youth should include incentives for employers and educational institutions to collaborate on college and career pathways, including apprenticeships for off-track and out-of-school youth (JFF, Pathway to Recovery).
- Use the bully pulpit. Highlight programs, activities and partnerships that show promising results in helping disconnected youth succeed in postsecondary education (JFF, Pathway to Recovery).

Minimum economic return

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Minimum economic return: Individuals earn enough after completing their education to recover the costs of their investment. Measured as the percentage of individuals that earn at least as much as the median high school graduate in their state plus enough to recoup their total net price plus interest within 10 years of completing their highest degree or leaving education (high school, postsecondary education, or workforce training) (EW Framework).
- The Credential Value Index: The Burning Glass Institute built the Credential Value Index (CVI) to shed light on the real-world outcomes of virtually every certification in America, as well as more than 20,000 other non-degree credentials. The CVI draws on the career histories of millions of workers to show what actually happens after completing a program (Burning Glass Institute).
- Cost of Attendance: When considering students' cost of attendance in the context of the Postsecondary Value Framework, it is important to include their costs beyond tuition. To be successful in school, students need to be able to cover the costs of books, supplies, and transportation to and from class. Additionally, having sufficient resources for housing and food is crucial for allowing students to focus on their coursework without needing to work long hours to cover those expenses. Food and housing insecurity were barriers to student completion prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the pandemic has amplified these insecurities and put a spotlight on additional challenges, including lack of access to a household computer/laptop or reliable home internet

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connection. Institutions rely on the federal definition of COA to calculate student expenses, and COA data are reported publicly through The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to measure tuition and non-tuition costs for first-time, full-time (FTFT) degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates. However, federal guidelines do not currently require institutions to include some expenses that students must incur to be successful in college in their COA calculations, including living expenses for students living off-campus with family, health insurance and healthcare costs, internet costs and cell phone plan costs. Additional non-tuition expenses that students regularly incur also should be added to federal COA estimates. For instance, health insurance, healthcare costs, internet costs and cell phone plan expenses are critical elements of student budgets (Postsecondary Value Commission).

- Cost of Borrowing: The Postsecondary Value Framework incorporates the cost of borrowing because the postsecondary education system saddles too many students — especially Black, Latinx, Indigenous and underrepresented AAPI students and students from low-income backgrounds — with debt. Student loan fees already are counted through the statutory COA definition and consistent with prior models in the field, the framework applies interest over the course of 10 years to account for the additional cost of financing college through borrowing. Additional research is needed to determine a more precise methodology to estimate students' actual interest accumulation (Postsecondary Value Commission).
- Economic value: To measure how different institutions and programs return economic value to their students over time, the Postsecondary Value Framework uses a series of thresholds. The first four thresholds (0 through 3) measure individuals' earnings outcomes and the final two (4 and 5) measure wealth outcomes. The ultimate goal is for students to reach economic security and wealth parity, whereby a person has sufficient earnings and wealth to withstand life's economic shocks, and their race/ethnicity, income, or gender does not predict their ability to accumulate earnings or wealth. These thresholds are: (0) Minimum Economic Return: A student meets this threshold if they earn at least as much as a high school graduate plus enough to recoup their total net price plus interest within ten years; (1) Earnings Premium: A student meets this threshold if they reach at least median earnings in their field of study (or, if field of study data is unavailable, the median earnings for the institution's predominant degree type); (2) Earnings Parity: This threshold measures whether students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and women reach the median earnings of their systemically more advantaged peers (White students, high-income students, or men); (3) Economic Mobility: This threshold measures whether students reach the level of earnings needed to enter the fourth (60th to 80th percentile) income quintile, regardless of field of study; (4) Economic Security: While sufficient earnings can create a stable life, wealth is key to building the type of security needed to withstand life's financial shocks. This threshold therefore measures whether students reach median levels of wealth; (5) Wealth Parity: Mirroring the earnings parity threshold, this threshold measures whether students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and women reach the level of wealth attained by their more privileged White, high-income, or male peers (Postsecondary Value Commission).
- Earnings gains for degrees earned: A study by the Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment (CAPSEE) found that completing an associate degree yields strongly positive, persistent, and consistent earnings gains: studies show that completing an associate degree yields on average approximately $4,640–$7,160 per annum in extra earnings compared to entering college but not completing an award. For certificates, the evidence shows positive

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but modest returns and that these returns may fade out within a few years post-college. For non-completers, there is evidence that earning more credits is associated with higher earnings (CAPSEE, Labor Market Returns)

- Average debt held by students disaggregated by race and degree type (Education Data Initiative).
- Average monthly student loan payments disaggregated by race and degree type (Education Data Initiative).
- Student loan payment status (e.g., paid, current, behind) among borrowers, disaggregated by race (Education Data Initiative).
- Average cumulative amount borrowed by degree type, disaggregated by race (Education Data Initiative).

System indicators

- Workforce Outcomes – Employment rate: The percentage of former students with any reported annual earnings at one, five, and 10 years after exit from the institution. Disaggregated by credential level, completion status, program of study (at exit), economic status (Pell ever), race/ethnicity, gender, age, enrollment status, attendance intensity (at any time while enrolled), academic preparation (at any time while enrolled), first-generation status (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Workforce Outcomes – Median earnings: The median annual earnings of former students one, five, and 10 years after exit from the institution (excludes zeros). Disaggregated by credential level, completion status, program of study (at exit), economic status (Pell ever), race/ethnicity, gender, age, enrollment status, attendance intensity (at any time while enrolled), academic preparation (at any time while enrolled), first-generation status (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Workforce Outcomes – Earnings threshold: The percentage of former students earning more than the median high school graduate salary ($25,000 in 2014; includes zeros) at one, five, and 10 years after exit from the institution. The threshold should be updated annually using Current Population Survey data. Disaggregated by credential level, completion status, program of study (at exit), economic status (Pell ever), race/ethnicity, gender, age, enrollment status, attendance intensity (at any time while enrolled), academic preparation (at any time while enrolled), first-generation status (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Additional metrics related to workforce outcomes include: Percentiles for earnings (10th, 25th, 75th, and 90th); Pre- and post-college earnings; Relative wages (e.g., compared with local or regional wages) (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Distribution of Median Student Earnings Ten Years After Entry, by Institutional Type (Postsecondary Value Commission).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Post-college workforce outcome measures like earnings, employment, and earnings thresholds can be used by a variety of audiences. Students and families can use these data to learn about the potential earning power of their intended degree post-graduation, considering the expected value in relation to the major investment required to attend an institution of higher education (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

Policies

- In recent years, policymakers at both the state and federal levels have used workforce outcomes data for accountability and funding. For example, gainful employment incorporates student earnings — as it relates to debt — into its accountability framework (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Institutions can use post-college workforce outcomes data to be aware of their students' outcomes to revise program offerings, tailor prices and financial aid, and implement student supports like career services and increased work opportunities that make their students

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more prepared for the workforce. The primary reason many students pursue college is to improve their employment prospects. While students also gain other life skills in college that allow them to contribute to society in other non-financial ways, a baseline assumption for many students is that they will be prepared to earn a middle-class living. These metrics can be used individually or in tandem to explore post-college workforce outcomes for students (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

Enrollment in graduate education

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of bachelor's degree recipients enrolling in post-baccalaureate or graduate programs within one to five years of completion. Other time frames, such as within 10 years of completion, should also be reported for this measure. Graduate education represents one of many pathways to economic mobility and success along the pre-K-to-workforce continuum. Graduate degree holders earn substantially more during their lifetimes than people who hold only a bachelor's or high school degree and enrollment in a graduate program is a necessary first step before degree completion (EW Framework).
- Disaggregation of graduate program enrollment rates by race, ethnicity, and gender; also disaggregated by institution type and field of study. Among students who hold a bachelor's degree and pursue graduate school, disparities by race, ethnicity, and income emerge along institution type and field of study. For example, 24 percent of Black graduate students and 12 percent of Latino graduate students enroll in for-profit institutions, compared with 8 percent of White graduate students and 7 percent of Asian graduate students. Among students who enroll in doctoral programs, Black students (14 percent) and Latino students (18 percent) were less likely to pursue a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) degree than White students (27 percent) and Asian students (29 percent). These results underscore the importance of examining enrollment patterns by institutional sector and field (EW Framework).
- Higher education outcomes (e.g., 4-year and 2-year program completion rates) disaggregated by race, ethnicity and gender. Black and Latino students are underrepresented in graduate school relative to students from other racial and ethnic backgrounds, though research indicates that these disparities disappear when comparing only students with a bachelor's degree. This finding suggests that higher education indicators measured before graduate school enrollment are critical for addressing inequities in educational attainment (EW Framework).

System indicators

- Access to postsecondary longitudinal data systems: Because students can pursue graduation education in a different institution than where they completed an undergraduate degree, this measuring graduate program enrollment rates requires linking student data from multiple institutions. Currently, 35 state longitudinal data systems include data from postsecondary institutions. State longitudinal data systems sometimes draw on enrollment records from National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to track enrollment in institutions outside of the state. NSC enrollment data coverage is highest (almost 98 percent) for students in four-year colleges but varies by type of institution: for instance, NSC covers only 80 percent of students in four-year for-profit institutions, where students of color are more likely to enroll. In addition, 12 percent of enrollment records

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reported to NSC do not include information on whether the student is enrolled at the undergraduate, master's, or doctoral level. This area is also one in which data collection and sharing can be improved, both with the NSC and within states (EW Framework).

Graduate degree completion *Key source: E-W Framework*

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of graduate students completing a graduate degree within 150 percent of their current program's length. Other time frames, such as 100 percent and 200 percent of program length, should also be reported for this measure (EW Framework).

System indicators

- Access to postsecondary longitudinal data systems: Institutions regularly track and report certificate and degree completion for their students. State longitudinal data systems that incorporate the postsecondary sector include individual-level completion data from in-state institutions (making it possible to measure completion more broadly), but can only obtain completion data from other institutions through National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), which collects individual records provided by participating institutions. However, NSC's completion records are sometimes missing information on the type of degree earned, and 12 percent of enrollment records reported to NSC do not include information on whether the student was enrolled at the undergraduate, master's, or doctoral level (EW Framework).

5 Are there quality pathways for young people who pursue career training that lead to employment in quality jobs?

Why this matters

Career training that leads to quality jobs matters because the economy increasingly demands postsecondary education and verified skills — by 2031, about 72% of U.S. jobs will require some college or training beyond high school (Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce). Evidence from randomized evaluations shows that sector-based programs linking training to in-demand industries (e.g., Year Up, Per Scholas, Project QUEST) produce large and persistent earnings gains, confirming that aligned education-plus-skills pathways translate into better labor-market outcomes. Career pathways — sequenced education, credentials and work-based learning

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with wraparound supports — boost credential completion and employment in target sectors, especially when employers help shape curricula and offer work-based experiences. Strong college–employer partnerships make these pathways work at scale by aligning programs to real job demands and smoothing placement into "good jobs," which are increasingly concentrated among workers with postsecondary training.

Career pathways

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Employee perception of career pathways and their contribution to upward mobility. For instance, the Harvard Business School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to report on the biggest contributors to their upward mobility. Responses included, "I knew what training, certifications, and/or skills are needed to move up within my company," "I knew how to get the training, certifications, and/or skills needed to move up within my company," "I was aware of career pathways in my current area of work within my company," "I was aware of career pathways outside of my current area of work within my company," "I knew what I needed to do to move to a job with higher pay, skills and productivity within my company," "My company provided the training and/or certifications I need to move up within my company" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Employee perception of the lack of clearly structured career pathways. For instance, the Harvard Business School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to report on the biggest barriers to their upward mobility. Responses included, "I don't know what training, certifications, and/or skills are needed to move up within my company," "I don't know how to get the training, certifications, and/or skills needed to move up within my company," "I was not aware of career pathways in my current area of work within my company," "I was not aware of career pathways outside of my current area of work within my company," "I don't know what I need to do to move to a job with higher pay, skills and productivity within my company," "My company does not provide the training and/or certifications I need to move up within my company" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Employee outlook on barriers for low-wage employees at their company. For instance, the Harvard Business School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to report on the biggest barriers to low-wage employees at their company. They are asked how strongly they disagree or agree with the following statements: "Low-wage employees don't know what training, certifications, and/or skills are needed to move up within my company," "Low-wage employees don't know how to get the training, certifications, and/or skills needed to move up within my company," "Low-wage employees are not aware of career pathways in their current area of work (i.e., function or department) within my company," "Low-wage employees are not aware of career pathways outside their area of work (i.e., function or department) within my company," "Low-wage employees don't know what they need to do to move to a job with higher pay, skills and productivity within my company," "My company doesn't provide the training and/or certifications low-wage employees need to move up" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

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System indicators

- High-quality pathways for students: Pathways are the lens through which every student – regardless of their career goals or next steps after high school – views and shapes their educational experience to access the professional path of their choice.
- High-quality pathways for students: Every student graduates from high school on a purposeful path, having completed a high-quality work-based learning experience, earned college credits, and acquired a credential of value – giving them real momentum toward the future of their choosing.
- High-quality pathways for students: Students' credentials, credits, and skills move seamlessly through the system along with them, ensuring that all learning counts and reducing time to postsecondary attainment.
- High-quality pathways for students: All students are empowered with clear and comprehensive options, targeted support, and valuable connections that equip them to confidently steer toward their futures; these supports are built into the expectations of what school systems deliver.
- High-quality pathways for students: Employers are strategically leveraged to convey skill demands, supply work-based learning experiences, and help fortify pathways against shifts in the economy.
- High-quality pathways for students: State data and accountability systems are centered on the knowledge, skills, and experiences that matter most for longterm student success.

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Young workers have access to career pathways that lead to employment in quality jobs. A career pathway is a schematic or mapped series of manageable education and training steps toward industry-aligned skills, credentials, and career advancement. Each step is designed to prepare people for employment while providing a clear pathway to the next level of education and training within an industry. Pathways may also include necessary credentials and supportive services. Career pathway initiatives or approaches within a local workforce system engage multiple organizations and stakeholders to create a framework for advancement that is clear to employers and workers and eases transitions across different organizations and programs within the workforce system. Career pathways help trainees and training providers think about employment in terms of careers and advancement, not just as a single job. The idea is to give people in low-wage jobs or with few skills the opportunity to access better jobs and to help employers meet their needs for skilled workers (Urban Institute).
- Career pathway programs provide well-connected and transparent education, training, support services, and credentials within specific sectors or cross-sector occupations (often delivered via multiple linked and aligned programs) (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Career pathway programs provide multiple entry points that enable well-prepared students as well as targeted populations with limited education, skills, English, and work experiences to successfully enter the career pathway. Targeted populations served by career pathways may include adult education or other lower-skilled adult students; English language learners; offenders or ex-offenders; certain high school students; disconnected or "opportunity" youth; some former military personnel; un- or under-employed adults; or others. These entry points can include apprenticeships, the postsecondary system, military or civilian workplace, high school or CTE programs, or ABE, TANF, or workforce systems (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Career pathway programs provide multiple exit points at successively higher levels leading to self- or family-supporting employment and aligned with subsequent entry points. These

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exit points can include 2- or 4-year degrees, certificates, licenses, or industry credentials (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).

- Career pathway programs provide participant-focused education and training. Examp[les include: contextualized curriculum and instruction, redesigned and accelerated remedial education, GED-to-college bridge programs, integrated or concurrent education and training, learning communities, chunked or modularized curriculum and instruction, competency-based curriculum, self-paced instruction (may also be "guided" self-paced), technology-enabled, online, and/or hybrid instruction, education and training offered at times and places and in formats that work for the targetedpopulation — including non-semester-based schedules, block schedules, evening/weekend schedules, and employer-based education (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Career pathway programs provide consistent and non-duplicative assessments of participants' education, skills, and assets/needs (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Career pathway programs provide support services, including child care, transportation assistance, housing assistance, mental health and counseling, personal success skill development, such as reasoning, task flexibility, problem solving, planning, and execution skills, workplace skills, such as understanding workplace etiquette, working in teams, etc., academic advising and supports (academic advisors, tutoring, learning communities, etc.), digital literacy skills, leadership development for youthfocused pathways and programs, citizen development for some pathway programs for youth and immigrants (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Career pathway programs provide career exploration, coaching, and navigation assistance (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Career pathway programs provide employment services such as assistance with resume writing, mock interviews, job fairs, and assistance finding employment (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Career pathway programs provide work experiences including work simulations, job shadowing, on-the-job training, internships, and transitional jobs (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Quality Career Pathway Systems Commit to a Shared Vision and Strategy for industry sector-based career pathways for youth and adults and for building, scaling, and dynamically sustaining career pathway systems (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Quality Career Pathway Systems Engage Employers and Integrate Sector Strategy Principles to ensure multiple employers, business associations, and labor unions are partners in creating demand-driven career pathways. (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Quality Career Pathway Systems Collaborate to Make Resources Available by identifying, prioritizing, and leveraging resources for career pathway systems, partnerships, and programs (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Quality Career Pathway Systems Implement Supportive Policies for career pathway systems, pathways, and programs (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Quality Career Pathway Systems Use Data and Shared Measures to measure, demonstrate, and improve participant outcomes (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Quality Career Pathway SystemsImplement and Integrate Evidence-Based Practices and Processes (specifically for regional/local career pathway systems) (Alliance for Quality Career Pathways).
- Career awareness and exploration: High school students are given opportunities, starting in middle school, to explore their skills and interests in different career fields to help identify their professional aspirations (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).

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- Advising support: High school students receive ongoing advising to help them select pathway-aligned courses and learning experiences and stay on track for a successful career (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Alignment with in-demand, well-paying jobs: Pathways build student knowledge and skills aligned to current and emerging opportunities in high-wage, in-demand careers (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Engaging series of courses: Rigorous, market-driven academic and technical coursework builds upon prior knowledge to prepare students for the demands of college and the workforce (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Early college opportunities: Students have clear, embedded opportunities to earn a minimum of 9-12 pathway-aligned college credits through experiences like dual enrollment, dual credit, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or a combination thereof (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Work-based learning experiences: Students complete authentic and intensive pathway-aligned work-based learning through employer-designed challenges, internships, and youth apprenticeships with ongoing mentorship from industry professionals (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Credentials of value: Opportunities are embedded in pathways for students to earn certifications, certificates, and other credentials of value connected to their pathway that are valued by hiring managers and/or articulate for college credit (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Social capital: Students are given opportunities and support to make connections and build networks that open doors to employment (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Position and empower every student to graduate high school on a pathway to success, having completed a culminating work-based learning experience, earned college credit, and attained a credential of value aligned to their pathway (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Expand early career exploration starting in middle school, and rebuild advising in high school, to integrate career preparation and planning for postsecondary education and training (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Deploy powerful policy levers, especially high school graduation requirements, to center pathway experiences and accommodate student pivots as their interests mature and evolve (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Intentionally connect and rapidly scale pathway-aligned culminating experiences — including work-based learning, early college credit, and credentials of value — to ensure access for all students (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Carry forward students' credentials and skills from secondary through postsecondary and into the workforce, accelerating students' paths to valuable careers (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Design accelerated, stackable pathways that build toward advanced credentials and degrees to lift the ceiling on opportunity (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Build systems to codify and award credit for students' skills to place them at the most appropriate and advantageous point in their pathway (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Foster regional cooperation to align and coordinate pathways and ensure seamless progression, especially in rural communities (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Build student agency and ability to navigate career options, develop future-resilient skills, and leverage social capital to pursue a life of opportunity (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Build students' capacity to develop, expand, and activate professional networks that open

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doors to professional opportunities (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).

- Develop students' AI literacy and professional skills to build their resiliency and readiness for the future of work (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Recalibrate the role of employers to strategically harness their market intelligence and industry insights and enable them to more easily provide students with career-exposure and work-based learning experiences (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Leverage employers' industry point of view to validate labor market needs and identify the credentials and skills that drive hiring decisions (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Use employers' labor market understanding to fortify pathways against the risks of automation and emerging technology and give students a competitive advantage in the future workforce (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Increase employer commitment to work-based learning by lowering barriers to entry and demonstrating business value (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Redesign measures of high school success to focus more directly on postsecondary preparation and success after high school (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Retool state accountability and reporting to include work-based learning, early college credit, and credentials of value as measures of high school success (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).
- Devise the next generation of measures to better capture attainment of skills and incentivize the most valuable student experiences (Education Strategy Group, Forging Futures).

Policies

- Guided career pathways: Labor market informed pathways with expanded outreach, on-ramps and flexible learning models that provide integrated work and learning experiences so that people are earning while they are learning (Jobs for the Future).
- A career pathway approach offers one model for coordinating public and private resources around programs that connect target populations with supportive, progressive opportunities in growing occupations (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning).

School and Employer Partnerships

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of learners placed in jobs within their field of study, with employer partners (ACE UP, College & Employer Partnership Action Guide).
- Qualitative feedback from learners on how policy changes (e.g., flexible scheduling, improved onboarding) impact their ability to succeed in training or employment (ACE UP, College & Employer Partnership Action Guide).
- Total number of active partnerships with chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and workforce boards.
- Number of internships and job placements facilitated through industry summits and college-led events.

System indicators

- College programs are better aligned with industry needs, increasing student placement success (ACE UP, College & Employer Partnership Action Guide).
- A familiar platform that provides to discuss workforce needs for colleges and employers (ACE UP, College & Employer Partnership Action Guide).

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- Employers are more knowledgeable of equitable hiring and workplace practices that promote worker recruitment and retention (ACE UP, College & Employer Partnership Action Guide).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Optimizing Employer Partnerships: Optimizing employer partnerships for greater equity impact requires sustained, collaborative engagement. Colleges that strengthen relationships with equity-focused employers achieve benefits for both parties. Employer partners gain access to a more diverse and equipped talent pool, while colleges are better able to support students for broader success. Learners gain access to essential career-building resources and training, improving hiring and recruitment outcomes. This collaboration creates an ecosystem in which all parties — colleges, employers, and learners — win (ACE UP, College & Employer Partnership Action Guide).
- Address Workforce Equity with Advisory Boards: Colleges can optimize their employer partnerships by leveraging regular advisory board meetings and feedback from employer partners. This collaboration can foster responsive curriculum design and support equitable workforce practices (Scott et al., 2018). Multiple ACE-UP colleges are seeking to strengthen these interactions through strategic equity work with their advisory boards. Holding equity-focused discussions with advisory boards can identify and fix inequitable hiring and workplace policies. Maintaining open, two-way communication with employers via these boards allows colleges to assess whether employer training needs are being met. In turn, colleges can explore opportunities to expand career pathways for underemployed and incumbent workers which may better meet the needs of employer partners (ACE UP, College & Employer Partnership Action Guide).
- Helpful tools for addressing workforce equity with advisory boards: CTE Advisory Committee Meeting Toolkit: Provides a framework and resources for planning and conducting effective advisory committee meetings to strengthen collaboration between colleges and industry partners (ACE UP, College & Employer Partnership Action Guide).
- Establish Multiple, Regular Touchpoints with Employers Beyond Advisory Boards: Traditional advisory councils can be effective, but colleges can work with groups like chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and community workforce boards to broaden their employer pool. Structured, ongoing interactions with employers enable community colleges to better align their educational programs with workforce needs (Lerman, 2019). Some ACE-UP colleges are going further by working closely with local workforce leaders. For example, several colleges are holding meetings with CEOs, hiring managers, and HR leaders through industry roundtables and workforce groups. These partnerships help them understand hiring needs and trends, leading to solutions that benefit employers, students, and the community (ACE UP, College & Employer Partnership Action Guide).

CTE pathway concentration *Key source: E-W Framework*

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Of students who participate in career and technical education (CTE) coursework, the percentage that concentrate in an in-demand pathway, as defined by regional labor market data (EdStrategy, From Tails to Heads).
- Rate of completion of a career pathway program while in high school (Urban Institute, Robust and Equitable Measures to Identify Quality Schools).

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- Share of high school graduates earning a career readiness certificate by high school completion (Urban Institute, Robust and Equitable Measures to Identify Quality Schools).
- Share of high school graduates earning a military or workforce certification by high school completion (Urban Institute, Robust and Equitable Measures to Identify Quality Schools).
- Share of high school graduates possessing marketable trade skills by high school completion (Urban Institute, Robust and Equitable Measures to Identify Quality Schools).

System Indicators

- The High-Quality CTE Pathway Participation measure presents a particular challenge to define. Definitions of quality may take into account one or more of the following: (a) High-Skill: The pathway presents the opportunity for students to move beyond the high school program into an aligned postsecondary program in that field of study; (b) High-Wage: The median wages for the occupations that the pathway is preparing students for are at or exceed a living wage in the state; (c) In-Demand: The pathway leads to significant job openings now and into the future. A region or state can determine that through a combination of looking at volume of jobs regionally or statewide, annual openings, and growth projections. At the state level, this information should be considered relative to the state's size and economy (EdStrategy, From Tails to Heads).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- "High quality" goes beyond labor market alignment. Pathways should include access to early postsecondary credit in the field of study, work-based learning opportunities, industry credential opportunities where appropriate, and clear and direct links between academic and technical coursework. This combination of quality elements is arguably just as important as alignment to labor market. Whether a particular community considers these elements at the regional or state level should be guided by the mobility of their students. In places where students are highly mobile and likely to move, understanding migration patterns for students could help communities look beyond their own boundaries to identify what pathways best serve students as well as those that serve the local economy. In places where very few people leave the community/region, a much more localized look at the data makes sense (EdStrategy, From Tails to Heads).

Policies

- Kentucky has systematically analyzed labor market information to identify the top five priority industry sectors and specific fields within them that meet rigorous skill, demand, and wage thresholds. The state has brought together K-12 districts, postsecondary institutions, and employers to design career pathways that meet the needs of the identified industries. The Department of Education tracks district-by-district pathway offerings to examine alignment to the high-demand industry sectors. It also reviews the number of juniors and seniors concentrating in pathways leading to the top occupations in those high-demand pathways. Both measures are captured on a "heat map" and used to target assistance and bring transparency to the state's work. At the same time, as part of the program approval process, the Department of Education disallows local districts from using state or federal funds to support pathways that are not aligned with these priority industries and occupations. That policy has been key to phasing out pathways that lack labor market relevance (EdStrategy, From Tails to Heads).
- Tennessee has a statewide initiative to create alignment between K-12, postsecondary institutions, and employers for students to have clear and guided pathways to move seamlessly into the workforce. Alongside

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Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect, the Tennessee Pathways program directly supports the statewide attainment goal, Drive to 55. The program is structured around three key elements to support student success: high quality college and career advising, early postsecondary and work based learning opportunities in high school, and seamless vertical alignment as a result of effective partnerships. Regional coordinators are housed at institutions across the state to foster partnerships between high schools and local colleges and employers. Grounded in regional labor market information, 122 pathways at 74 high schools across the state have been certified. The state has begun to track enrollment in these pathways to examine how students fare beyond high school, as compared to students enrolled in career technical education pathways without the certification (EdStrategy, From Tails to Heads).

- South Carolina has incorporated pathway participation metrics into their state accountability system. Their school and district report cards capture data on pathway participation, course completion, credential attainment, the types of industry credentials earned by career cluster, and participation in dual enrollment as part of students' pathway coursework. By transparently reporting on pathway metrics, South Carolina has signaled the value of career readiness programs with students and families — and empowered them with information to guide their decision to enroll (EdStrategy, From Tails to Heads).

Access to in-demand CTE pathways

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- CTE Access: Number of CTE participants as calculated for the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V). State-specific calculations for a Perkins V CTE participant is defined in the law as an individual who completes not less than one course in a CTE program or program of study of an eligible recipient (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- CTE Access: Number of CTE participants as calculated for Perkins V enrolled in high-wage, in demand career pathways (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- Success within CTE Programs: Number of CTE concentrators as calculated for Perkins V. State-specific calculations for a Perkins V CTE concentrator is defined in the law as: (a) At the secondary school level, a student who is served by an eligible recipient and has completed at least two courses in a single CTE program or program of study; (b) At the postsecondary level, a student who is enrolled in an eligible recipient and has (i) earned at least 12 credits within a CTE program or program of study or (ii) completed such a program if the program encompasses fewer than 12 credits or the equivalent in total (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- Success within CTE Programs: Number of CTE concentrators as calculated for Perkins V enrolled in high-wage, in-demand career pathways (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- Success within CTE Programs: Number of CTE concentrators who have completed sustained work-based learning experiences such as internships, apprenticeships and/or clinicals (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- Success within CTE Programs: Number of CTE concentrators who have completed advanced coursework such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and/or dual or concurrent enrollment courses (secondary). State-specific calculations for the Perkins V postsecondary credit attainment indicator, which is defined in the law as the percentage of

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CTE concentrators graduating from high school having attained postsecondary credits in their CTE program or program of study through a dual or concurrent enrollment program or another credit transfer agreement (Achieving Inclusive CTE).

- Success within CTE Programs: Number of CTE concentrators that have completed higher-level coursework (postsecondary) (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- Success within CTE Programs: Number of CTE concentrators who have earned recognized postsecondary credentials such as industry certifications, postsecondary certificates and/or degrees. State-specific calculations for Perkins V credential attainment indicators are defined in the law as: (a) The percentage of CTE concentrators graduating from high school having attained a recognized postsecondary credential; and (b) The percentage of [postsecondary] CTE concentrators who receive a recognized postsecondary credential during participation in or within one year of program completion. State-specific calculations for the WIOA credential attainment indicator (D), which is defined as the percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- Student Participation in CTE: Average number of Carnegie credits and percentage distribution of total credits earned by public high school graduates, by course type and subject area (NCES, Career and Technical Education Statistics).
- Student Participation in CTE: percentage of public high school graduates who concentrated in a career and technical education (CTE) subject area, by CTE coursetaking pattern and CTE subject area (NCES, Career and Technical Education Statistics).
- Student Participation in CTE: percentage of public high school graduates who earned Carnegie credits in each career and technical education (CTE) subject area and, among those graduates, average number of credits earned and percentage who concentrated in each CTE subject area (NCES, Career and Technical Education Statistics).
- Student Participation in CTE: Average number of career and technical education (CTE) Carnegie credits and percentage distribution of total CTE credits public high school graduates earned, by grade level (NCES, Career and Technical Education Statistics).
- Student Participation in CTE: percentage distribution of public high school graduates with each career and technical education (CTE) coursetaking pattern, by selected student race/ethnicity categories and gender (NCES, Career and Technical Education Statistics).
- Public School Teachers of CTE: percentage of public school teachers of grades 9 through 12, by field of main teaching assignment and selected demographic and educational characteristics (NCES, Career and Technical Education Statistics).
- Public School Teachers of CTE: percentage of public and private elementary and secondary schools hiring for at least one open teaching position, and among schools with at least one opening schoolwide, percentage hiring in various subject-matter fields, by selected school characteristics (NCES, Career and Technical Education Statistics).

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- Public School Teachers of CTE: Among public and private elementary and secondary schools that were hiring for at least one open teaching position in a specific field, percentage that found it very difficult or were not able to fill the opening, by subject-matter field of opening and selected school characteristics (NCES, Career and Technical Education Statistics).
- CTE Coursetaking: percentage of public and private high school graduates who earned at least one Carnegie credit in selected career/technical education courses in high school, by selected student and school characteristics (NCES, Career and Technical Education Statistics).
- CTE Coursetaking: Number of 2013 public high school graduates and percentage ever enrolled in postsecondary education by June 2016 or June 2021, and selected postsecondary outcomes among 2013 public high school graduates ever enrolled in postsecondary education by June 2021, by high school career and technical education (CTE) concentrator status (NCES, Career and Technical Education Statistics).
- CTE Coursetaking: Among 2013 public high school graduates ever enrolled in postsecondary education by June 2021, percentage of high school career and technical education (CTE) concentrators who earned postsecondary degrees/certificates and whose highest postsecondary degree/certificate was in the same field or a different field as their high school CTE concentration, by field of CTE concentration during high school and highest postsecondary degree/certificate earned (NCES, Career and Technical Education Statistics).

System indicators

- Number and percentage of CTE program offerings considered "in demand." Recent studies of CTE offerings indicate that CTE programs are frequently misaligned with projected job openings in local regions. (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- CTE Alignment with the Labor Market: One study of CTE programs in high schools in West Virginia found that only about half of the state's CTE programs were aligned to at least one occupation in high demand among employers in the region (Assessing the Alignment between West Virginia's high school Career and Technical Education Programs and the Labor Market).
- CTE Post-Program Outcomes – Placement: Number of CTE concentrators placed in postsecondary education, advanced training or the workforce after completing a CTE program as calculated for Perkins V. State-specific calculations for Perkins V placement indicators are defined in the law as: (a) The percentage of CTE concentrators who, in the second quarter after exiting from secondary education, are in postsecondary education or advanced training, military service, or a service program under the National and Community Service Act; are volunteers in the Peace Corps; or are employed; (b) The percentage of [postsecondary] CTE concentrators who, during the second quarter after program completion, remain enrolled in postsecondary education; are in advanced training, military service, or a service program under the National and Community Service Act; are volunteers in the Peace Corps; or are placed or retained in employment (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- CTE Post-Program Outcomes – High-Wage, High-Demand (HWHD) Placement: Number of CTE concentrators who were enrolled in high-wage, in-demand career pathways and were placed in postsecondary education, advanced training or the workforce after completing a CTE program as calculated for Perkins V. State-specific calculations for WIOA employment rate and education and employment rate indicators (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- CTE Post-Program Outcomes – Wages: Number of CTE concentrators who, after completing a CTE program, earned at or above the state's definition of "high wage" (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- CTE Post-Program Outcomes – HWHD Wages: Number of CTE concentrators who, after completing a CTE program, earned at or above

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the state's definition of "high wage" and were enrolled in high-wage, in-demand career pathways (Achieving Inclusive CTE).

- Opportunity gaps: When analyzing opportunity gaps, state or local leaders look at the gap between the percentage of career pathways enrollees, CTE participants or CTE concentrators who are members of a particular learner group and the percentage of learners in the community who are members of that learner group (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- Performance gaps: When considering performance gaps, state or local leaders analyze the gap between the percentage of learners in a particular learner group who meet a performance target and the percentage of all learners who meet that performance target (Achieving Inclusive CTE).
- Number of CTE program areas available in high schools, and which program areas are most and least common statewide and by region (a cluster of neighboring counties with similar labor market characteristics) (Aligning career and technical education with high-wage and high-demand occupations in Tennessee).
- Percentage of high school graduates who graduated from schools with at least one available CTE program area, and how this varies by region (Aligning career and technical education with high-wage and high-demand occupations in Tennessee).
- Percentage of high school graduates who complete at least one CTE concentration (Aligning career and technical education with high-wage and high-demand occupations in Tennessee).
- Statewide and for each region, how many CTE concentrators would need to change program areas to match the distribution of workers in the labor market? For each program area, how does the percentage of high school graduates who completed a concentration compare with the percentage of workers employed in corresponding occupations? (Aligning career and technical education with high-wage and high-demand occupations in Tennessee).
- For each region, which CTE program areas correspond to projected low-, moderate-, and high-wage occupations? What percentage of projected jobs are in program areas that correspond to high- wage occupations? What is the percentage of CTE concentrators in these program areas? How do the median annual wages in occupations that correspond to each program area vary by education level? (Aligning career and technical education with high-wage and high-demand occupations in Tennessee).
- For each region, which CTE program areas correspond to projected low-, moderate-, and high-demand occupations? What percentage of projected jobs are in CTE program areas that correspond to high- demand occupations? What is the percentage of concentrators in these program areas? (Aligning career and technical education with high-wage and high-demand occupations in Tennessee).
- Career pathway system characteristics and design features, including these basic characteristics: (a) Primary target population (e.g., low-income adults, participants with limited English-language proficiency, disadvantaged youth); (b) Length of the pathway (e.g., less than one year, one to two years, or over two years in duration); (c) Industry focus (e.g., health care, manufacturing, construction); (d) Academic goals, the credential to which the career pathway program leads (e.g., certificate, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree); (e) Sources of funding (e.g., federal, state, or foundation funding) (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- Information on career pathway system design, including: (a) Sequence of education and training offerings: This includes the specific elements of the pathway instruction for a particular occupation or industry sector; (b) Skill assessments: This includes industry-approved technical skill assessments, based

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on industry standards, and state-developed or state-approved assessments, particularly where industry-approved standards do not exist; (c) Supportive services: This includes child care, transportation assistance, and tutoring; (d) Case management: Sometimes also referred to as proactive advising, this can assist participants in identifying their needs for supportive services, and it can help participants arrange for access to those services; (e) Employer involvement: This included efforts to encourage an active role for employers in pathway design and support and in the assessment of participant competencies (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).

- Career pathway participant characteristics, including: (a) percentage of low-income: Most of the pathway systems reviewed target lower-income adults and collect data on this characteristic; (b) Other characteristics: other participant characteristics that are relevant to targeting and assessing results (e.g., the percentage of participants requiring remediation, percentage with English language deficiency) (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- Career pathway implementation metrics, including: (a) Enrollment: the change in the number of participants enrolled in career pathway or bridge programs from one year to the next; (b) Pathway programs in use: Most include a measure of the change in the number of career pathway programs or bridge programs from year to year; (c) Funding level: the change in the amount or percentage of funding devoted to career pathways or bridge programs from year to year; (d) Number of participants who use various support services and other program features (e.g., case management, mentoring); (e) Number of employers engaged in pathway design and delivery; (f) Adherence to program design standards set by the state; (g) Market penetration (e.g., percentage of developmental education courses incorporated into a career pathway) (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- Transition metrics (following participants across education and training funding sources or settings). For example, career pathway initiatives in Minnesota, Washington, and Wisconsin have undertaken "pipeline" studies that examine the transitions of adult education, ESL, and developmental education participants from these settings into and through postsecondary programs (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- Interim education and training outcomes for participants, including: (a) Passing grades: The number and percentage of participants who obtain a passing grade in a bridge course or developmental education course in the pathway; (b) Skill gains: The number and percentage of participants who attain the intended reading, writing, or mathematics levels (or gains targets) based on comparison of pre and post-program assessment results. Metrics of this type are required for Adult Education and for WIA youth programs; (c) Postsecondary enrollment: The number and percentage of participants enrolling in one or more credit bearing postsecondary courses. This metric is similar to the skill-gains requirement for Adult Education and WIA youth programs, but those do not require entry into credit-bearing courses; (d) Academic course completion: The number and percentage of participants obtaining a passing grade in one or more college-level academic courses within a postsecondary program of study; (e) Postsecondary program retention: The number and percentage of participants returning for the second semester of a postsecondary program (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- Pathway education and training outcomes. Technical skill attainment is a required measure under Perkins postsecondary programs, as is receipt of an industry-recognized credential,

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certificate or diploma. Attainment of a degree or certificate is a required measure for WIA youth programs, as well as for WIA adult programs in states where the common measures have not been adopted. Outcomes measures can include: (a) Program completion: the number and percentage of participants completing a career pathway program; (b) Postsecondary program completion: the number and percentage of participants completing a postsecondary program and obtaining a credential; (c) Grade Point Average: the cumulative GPA of participants; (d) Apprenticeships: the number of participants completing a registered apprenticeship program. (Under WIA and Adult Education, entering an apprenticeship program also counts as entering employment.); (e) Short-term programs: the number of participants who complete a short-term vocational program; (f) Technical diploma: the number of participants who obtain a one-year or two-year technical diploma; (g) Associate's degree: the number of participants who obtain an Associate's degree in a vocational or academic transfer program; (h) Postsecondary program completion: the number of participants who complete at least one postsecondary program of any type (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).

- Labor market outcomes, including: (a) Employment: the number and percentage of postsecondary completers who obtain employment. This is a required measure for Adult Education, Perkins postsecondary programs, and WIA youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs; (b) Program-related employment: the number and percentage of postsecondary program completers who obtain employment in an industry or occupation related to the postsecondary program; (c) Employment retention: the number and percentage of postsecondary program completers who retain employment. This is a required measure for Adult Education, Perkins postsecondary programs, and WIA adult and dislocated worker programs; (d) Earnings gains: the average earnings gain for postsecondary program completers who obtain employment. Longer-term earnings gains at 18, 24, or 36 months. WIA adult and dislocated worker programs must report on average earnings for the second and third quarters following exit but not on earnings gains; (e) Full or part-time employment of graduates (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- A career pathway as a well-articulated sequence of quality education and training offerings and supportive services that enable educationally underprepared youth and adults to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in a given industry sector or occupation. The career pathway approach reorients existing education and workforce services from a myriad of disconnected programs to a structure that focuses on the individuals in need of education and training and their career paths, and it provides clear transitions, strong supports, and other elements critical to the success of participants (The Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Approach).
- Adopting the career pathway approach means redesigning the delivery of education, training, and employment services to be much more integrated, aligned and participant-centered. In tight fiscal environments, it can be financially prudent for partners at the state and local levels to commit to supporting a shared strategy, rather than for them to implement separate — or even competing — approaches (The Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Approach).
- A state career pathway system is a partnership of state-level agencies, organizations, and employers or an industry that provides a supportive policy environment for local/regional career pathway systems and programs and promotes the quality, scale, and sustainability

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of career pathways (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).

- A local/regional career pathway system is a partnership among local and/or regional agencies, organizations, institutions, and employers or an industry. It includes specific structural elements such as multiple entry and exit points and supportive services and navigation assistance. The system generally consists of linked and aligned career pathway programs. The partnership follows six key guiding principles: (1) Adopt and articulate a shared vision; (2) Demonstrate leadership and commitment to institutionalizing career pathways; (3) Ensure that career pathways are demand-driven, focus on sectors/occupations, and deeply engage employers; (4) Align policies, measures, and funding; (5) Use and promote data and continuous improvement strategies; (6) Support professional development (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- A local/regional career pathway system is comprised of the following structural elements that make up the career pathway: (a) A well-articulated sequence of education and training offerings; (b) Multiple entry points that accommodate participants entering at differing skill levels (including adults and out-of-school youth with very low basic skills); (c) Multiple exit points at successively higher levels of education and employment that are aligned with marketable, stackable, "creditable" credentials; and (d) Supportive services and navigation assistance for participants in the pathways (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- Ideally, a career pathway that focuses on educationally underprepared adults and youth starts with basic skill "bridge" programs. They provide seamless transitions for participants to earn marketable credentials in demand-driven fields that bear or articulate to postsecondary credit (i.e., are "creditable") and accumulate to higher credentials (i.e., are "stackable"). The pathway should lead to employment paying self-sufficient or family-supporting earnings and offering opportunities for advancement. (More robust career pathway systems may include stackable credentials that provide wages well beyond self-sufficiency.) The specific credentials included and the length of the career pathway will vary based on the industry or occupation (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- A local/regional career pathway system is managed by a partnership that adopts and articulates a shared vision. Partners adopt a shared vision of the career pathway system and a governance structure (formal or informal) that clearly delineates each partner's roles and responsibilities (e.g., through a memorandum of understanding) (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- A local/regional career pathway system is managed by a partnership that demonstrates leadership and commitment to institutionalizing career pathways. Partners demonstrate collaborative leadership and a commitment to building, sustaining and scaling up career pathways. This approach becomes the way they do business on a regular basis (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- A local/regional career pathway system is managed by a partnership that ensures that career pathways are demand-driven, focuses on sectors/occupations, and deeply engages employers. The career pathway system is responsive to the specific, dynamic contexts of the regional labor market and significantly engages multiple employers within a sector or occupational area in an interactive, ongoing working relationship (through sector strategies where applicable) (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- A local/regional career pathway system is managed by a partnership that aligns policies, measures, and funding. Partners align related policies, performance and accountability measures, and funding for career pathways,

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including through the use of aligned and braided funding across funding streams (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).

- A local/regional career pathway system is managed by a partnership that uses and promotes data and continuous improvement strategies. Partners are data-driven and focus on continuously improving efforts by measuring participants' interim and ultimate outcomes as well as process indicators (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- A local/regional career pathway system is managed by a partnership that supports professional development. Partners support robust and ongoing professional development for career pathways practitioners and administrators (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- A local/regional career pathway system is an extensive undertaking that almost always encompasses more than a single partnership or program. Usually, a series of career pathway programs are linked together to form a local/regional system (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- Career pathway programs are the building blocks of career pathways. They blend a set of interventions in a specific industry or occupation and are aligned in a longer-term career pathway leading to marketable, stackable, "creditable" credentials. Career pathway programs are comprised of the following interventions: (a) Learner-centered approaches to instruction and occupational training, including contextualization, dual enrollment, acceleration, and prior learning assessment; (b) Appropriate and meaningful assessment of participants' skills and needs (including accessibility needs for participants with disabilities); (c) Supportive services, including academic supports (e.g., tutoring and advising); non academic supports (e.g., child care, transportation, and financial assistance); career exploration; and, navigation assistance through the career pathway program and, ideally, into retained employment; and (d) Quality work experiences, including job placement assistance and, ideally, quality sector/occupation-specific pre-employment work experiences (e.g., internships, apprenticeships) (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- A state career pathway system is a partnership of state-level agencies, organizations, and employers/industry that provides leadership and a supportive policy environment for local/regional career pathway systems and programs and that promotes the quality, scale, and sustainability of career pathways. Partners at the state level may include the state workforce agency, adult basic education, postsecondary education, economic development, and human services. (For more information, see the Six Key Elements of Career Pathways developed by the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor.) Partnerships also should include agencies focusing on youth, people with disabilities, and those in the corrections system (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- At the state level, governors, legislators, and state agency heads can be important stakeholders who can demonstrate leadership and commitment to institutionalizing career pathways. Under the guiding principle of "demand-driven, sector/occupational based, and employer engagement," the roles of the state partnership are to ensure that local/regional career pathways are responsive to specific and dynamic regional labor market contexts, and to significantly engage multiple employers in an interactive, ongoing relationship, ideally through a connection to any state sector strategy (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- The state system partnership should align related policies and performance measures and braid funding at the state level. In addition, it should develop statewide policies that specifically support career pathways. Policies and measures should be aligned both horizontally across

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agencies and vertically within each agency among state, regional and local levels of government. Finally, the state system should include professional development opportunities for local/ regional staff and state-level staff involved in career pathways (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).

- States may be at different stages of system development. For example, in some states, a local area or region may have developed a robust career pathway system with multiple career pathways in the absence of a state system. In other states, highly visionary and committed state leaders may be leading the way and helping local areas and regions develop career pathway systems. In still other states, the two levels may be emerging together, albeit at different paces given funding opportunities and leadership (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).
- The U.S. Department of Labor developed six key elements of Career Pathways. These are: (1) Career Pathways build cross-agency partnerships and clarify roles. Key cross-agency partners at the local and state levels are engaged to participate in the initiative. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and formalized; (2) Career Pathways identify sector or industry and engage employers. Sectors and industries are selected, gap analysis is conducted, and employers are engaged in the development of career pathways; (3) Career Pathways design programs and provide a clear sequence of education courses and credentials that meet the skill needs of high-demand industries; (4) Career Pathways identify funding needs and sources. Necessary resources are raised and/or leveraged to develop and implement career pathway programs; (5) Career Pathways help align federal, state, and local legislation or administrative policies to promote career pathway development and implementation; (6) Career Pathways measure system change and performance. Measures are used to assess and determine system change and performance including policy changes for system-wide change (Six Key Elements of Career Pathways).
- Career pathways (i.e., a clear sequence of education coursework and/or training credentials) are aligned with the skill needs of industries important to the regional or state economies in which they are located, and reflect the active engagement of employers in targeted industry sectors regarding the skill requirements for employment or career progression in high demand occupations (Six Key Elements of Career Pathways).
- Career pathways include the full range of secondary, adult education, and postsecondary education options, including registered apprenticeship, with a non-duplicative progression of courses clearly articulated from one level of instruction to the next, with opportunities to earn postsecondary credits and lead to industry-recognized [and/or] postsecondary credentials (Six Key Elements of Career Pathways).
- Career pathways include curriculum and instructional strategies that make work a central context for learning (contextual learning) and help students attain work readiness skills (Six Key Elements of Career Pathways).
- Career pathways include, as appropriate for the individual, integrated education and training that combine occupational skills training with adult education services, give credit for prior learning, and adopt other strategies that accelerate the educational and career advancement of the participant (Six Key Elements of Career Pathways).
- Career pathways lead to the attainment of an industry-recognized degree or credential, which may include stackable credentials of value in the labor market and that articulate progressively to higher-level credentials or degrees (Six Key Elements of Career Pathways).

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- Career pathways help a worker enter or advance within a specific sector or occupational field, regardless of their skills at the point of entry (Six Key Elements of Career Pathways).
- Career pathways include academic and career counseling, wrap-around support services particularly at points of transition, and support the development of an individual career plan (Six Key Elements of Career Pathways).
- Career pathways are organized to meet the particular needs of adults, including childcare, accommodating work schedules with flexible and non-semester-based scheduling, alternative class times and locations, and the innovative use of technology (Six Key Elements of Career Pathways).
- Career pathways have the goal of increasing an individual's educational and skills attainment and employment outcomes (Six Key Elements of Career Pathways).
- Adapt pathway programs of study to prioritize door-opener dual enrollment courses to provide foundational industry exposure and ensure students have many options as they transition to postsecondary. When appropriate, incorporate strategic dual enrollment courses, which increase students' opportunity to earn credentials or degrees that launch high-wage, high-growth careers (JFF, Promising Credentials).
- Identify and adapt postsecondary health science programs of study (for example) to increase the credential applicability of recommended foundational door-opener dual enrollment courses such as Medical Terminology or Anatomy and Physiology (JFF, Promising Credentials).
- To support students through multiple stages of academic and career development, identify and pursue strategic opportunities to align and streamline industry-recognized credentials to stackable associate's degree-level credentials. Every step must align with promising careers in the region (JFF, Promising Credentials).
- Provide training for guidance counselors and advisors to review degree opportunities, dual enrollment, and labor market information with students. Ensure that support staff have the resources to communicate career growth, wage data, and course outcomes directly to students. Embed labor market discussions into sustained career advising (JFF, Promising Credentials).
- Vet data and program outcomes with regional industry leaders to determine labor market needs that cannot be identified by external evaluations. Work with industry leaders to identify in-demand employability and technical competencies (JFF, Promising Credentials).
- Develop systems for career exploration that incorporate student interest, passion, and career exposure to help youth make informed choices about their futures (JFF, Promising Credentials).
- Conduct further analysis to account for students who relocate, including job opportunities in neighboring labor markets (JFF, Promising Credentials).
- Identify barriers, particularly those faced by historically marginalized populations, to enrollment in dual credit courses. The goal is to increase the number of students who can access dual credit coursework. This includes providing early supports for academic readiness in English and math (JFF, Promising Credentials).

Policies

- State departments of education could evaluate the alignment of CTE programs with workforce demands to help school districts address unserved, high-demand occupations. They could help develop new high school CTE programs aligned to high-demand occupations in each region (Assessing the Alignment between West Virginia's high school Career and Technical Education Programs and the Labor Market).
- State departments of education could restructure programs that do not align to high-demand occupations or conduct additional analyses on whether programs align to other occupations in the region or around the state. If a region is preparing students for occupations

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that are not available in the region, these leaders might want to consider whether there is an opportunity to attract new industries to the region that would align to these CTE programs and thus would have a well-prepared potential workforce (Assessing the Alignment between West Virginia's high school Career and Technical Education Programs and the Labor Market).

- Expanded income support during training Unemployment Insurance in the United States is typically offered for a maximum of 26 weeks, although this may be expanded during national or local recessions. Other safety net programs for prime-age workers are limited and, increasingly, may prioritize work over training to maintain eligibility. Strittmatter (2016) noted that, in Germany, most workers engaged in training have some form of income support; in the United States, only one-in-five training participants receive income support. Workers who must choose between training and a return to employment are likely to face strong financial incentives to return to work, even if it means accepting low-wage work or returning to an industry clearly in decline. Recent proposals for wage insurance or reemployment insurance over the short- to medium-term could make engagement in, and completion of, training more feasible for a significant segment of the workforce (What works in Career and Technical Education).
- Support for capacity building among public sector training providers, especially community colleges. Given the greater fiscal variability at the state level, a federal role in supporting CTE provision, especially during economic downturns, is likely to be essential to avoid capacity constraints that limit effective training. Federal funding for programs aimed at individual workers should be accompanied by funding for CTE programs (What works in Career and Technical Education).
- Improved student access to information about program quality and expected outcomes. Additional investments in training opportunities for individual workers need to be accompanied by well-designed access to information. As noted throughout, training often raises earnings and employment, but results vary dramatically by the training provider, field of study, and across individuals with different work and career histories. At a minimum, workers in need of training support should have answers to the following questions: (a) How often do individuals with similar education, work experience, and prior earnings complete a particular CTE program? (b) What are the earnings and employment outcomes of individuals who complete this CTE program? Prior to completing the program, were the education, employment, and earnings of those completing the program similar to mine? (c) What are the employment and earnings of workers who have been dislocated from jobs in my industry but do not engage in some form of training? (What works in Career and Technical Education).
- Example of Emerging State Career Pathway System – Virginia's Career Pathways: This interagency effort developed out of a Governor's Task Force in 2008 that brought together leaders from the Office of the Governor, the Department of Labor and Industry, the State Council of Higher Education, the Virginia Community College System, the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and other state agencies. This task force created a set of coordinated strategies for building a statewide workforce development and education pathway. The principal purpose was to develop a workforce customized to the needs of industry and responsive to regional labor market demand. Through a combination of state, federal and private investments, Virginia is expanding upon this work to create industry-specific career pathways that extend from middle school through retirement age in each region of the state. These activities include scaling up the promising PluggedInVA model, which combines basic skills instruction and GED preparation with industry certifications

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and for-credit college coursework. Participants graduate with a GED, an industry certification, a Career Readiness Certificate, a digital literacy certificate, at least 12 community college credits and experiences with local employers. Virginia's progress in career pathways is suggested by the Governor's inclusion of both proposed legislation and budget amendment in his workforce package presented for consideration in Virginia's 2013 General Assembly and by the creation of a new Director of Education and Workforce Development who acts as a liaison between the Secretariats of Education and Commerce and Trade (A Framework for Measuring Career Pathways Innovation).

Work-based learning for specific youth populations

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Youth with justice system involvement: Two studies assessing the impact of employment-related programs on youth with justice involvement observed positive findings. In a random assignment study of the Avon Park Youth Academy and STREET Smart program (National Council on Crime and Delinquency 2009), the program improved employment and earnings. The Avon Park Youth Academy and STREET Smart program serves youth ages 16 to 18 who are transitioning out of a secure custody residential facility in Florida, and its vocational training component includes opportunities for work-based learning through on-the-job training. In a subgroup analysis of JOBSTART, a program providing basic skills education, occupational training, support services, and job placement assistance to youth who had dropped out of school, young males with prior justice system involvement experienced statistically significant gains in earnings in the fourth year after random assignment (Cave et al. 1993). A large-scale evaluation of the Reentry Opportunities Employment grant program is currently under way and will examine impacts on youth with involvement in the justice system (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Youth with prior or current foster care involvement: Although few studies have examined the labor market outcomes of youth with prior or current foster care involvement, two have found positive impacts. In a randomized control trial of an intervention helping youth transition out of foster care, youth in the program earned an average of $611 more than youth who did not participate in the program (Valentine et al. 2015). Youth who participated in the program received counseling, referrals to other services, financial assistance, group social and learning activities, and educational and vocational coordination. In a quasi-experimental study of the Foster Youth Demonstration Project, which provided youth with job preparation and educational and supportive services, youth with foster care involvement who participated in services longer were more likely than those participating for fewer quarters to secure a paid job (Institute for Educational Leadership 2008) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Youth experiencing homelessness: A study including two experiments found positive employment impacts of a social enterprise intervention and an Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program for homeless youth. A randomized control trial comparing a social enterprise to the IPS program for homeless youth reported that 39% of youth who

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participated in a social enterprise program reported any paid employment, compared to 32% of youth in the IPS program over the 20-month study period. However, this difference was not statistically significant. (Ferguson 2018). The youth who participated in the social enterprise intervention attended vocational and small-business classes and received clinical or case-management services. Youth in the IPS program met individually with their employment specialist, a case manager, and a clinician at least once weekly to discuss life goals such as employment (Ferguson 2018). In another study of youth receiving shelter services including temporary housing, skills training, and referral services, youth who received these services showed no significant improvement in employment status when compared to those receiving day treatment (Thompson et al. 2002) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).

- Youth parents or expectant parents: A randomized control trial of the Young Parents Demonstration (YPD) examined the provision of enhanced services to improve educational and employment outcomes for youth parents and those expecting a child. The core program components offered to all study participants typically included education, training, and employment-focused services as well as supportive services. The enhancements offered to the treatment group included mentoring or guided employment, education, training, and related supports. The study found positive earnings impacts for the first two rounds of grantees through the first two years after random assignment. However, overall, the enhanced services had no impact on employment and earnings (Trutko et al. 2018) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Youth disconnected from education or employment: The Performance Partnership Pilots provides services for disconnected youth, defined as individuals between ages 14 and 24 who are low income and either homeless, in foster care, involved in the juvenile justice system, unemployed, or not enrolled in or at risk of dropping out of an educational institution. In a synthesis of the local evaluations of the first cohort of pilots, of the six types of interventions implemented, three demonstrated evidence of improving expected youth outcomes — case management services for out-of-school youth, combined case management and WIOA services for out-of-school youth, and a two-generation education and training program for pregnant and parenting youth. However, one of the three local evaluations examining case management for disconnected youth also found evidence of negative effects of participation in career preparation and subsidized employment (Maxwell and Yañez 2020) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Youth who have experienced trauma: Two models of trauma-informed approaches for youth have been rigorously evaluated: the Attachment, Self-regulation, and Competency (ARC) model and the Sanctuary Model. The ARC model focuses on improving three areas impacted when youth experience trauma — attachment, self-regulation, and resiliency (Berk et al. 2018). For youth ages 13 to 19 in a residential environment, use of the ARC model reduced post-traumatic stress disorder and improved behavior (Hodgdon et al. 2013). The Sanctuary Model — initially developed for adults but more recently adapted to in-school youth and children — develops an understanding of trauma, uses a framework for addressing disruption, and includes an implementation toolkit (Berk et al. 2018). In a residential setting, one combined experimental and quasi-experimental study found that youth in locations that had implemented the Sanctuary Model had greater self-control, reduced verbal aggression, and used fewer negative coping strategies after

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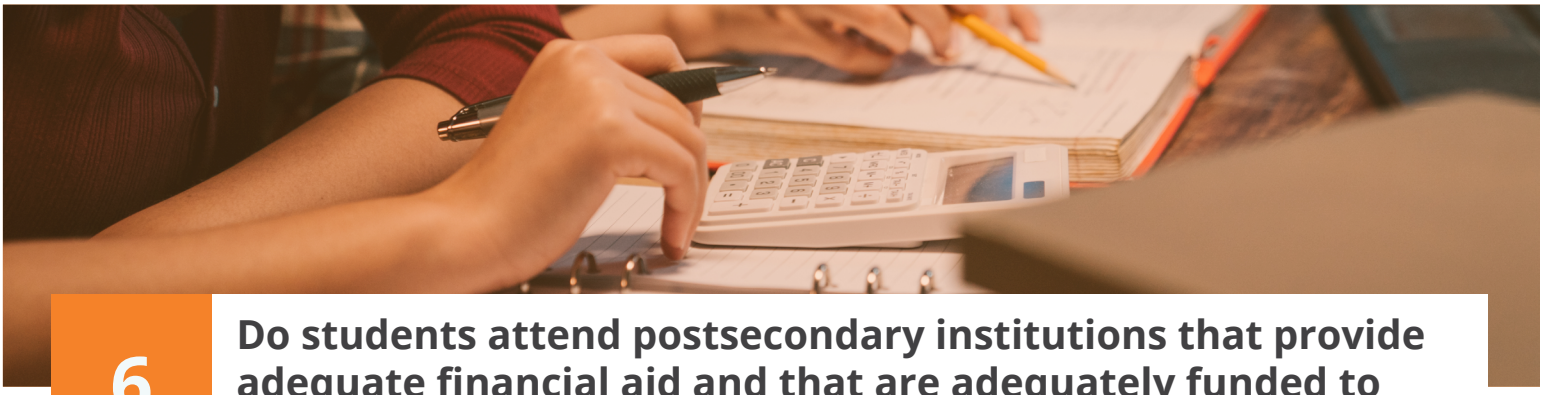
six months (Rivard et al. 2005). In addition, trauma-informed approaches are also used for adults with barriers to employment in settings outside of WIOA, and this strategy could be applicable to some adult job seekers within WIOA programs (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).



6 Do students attend postsecondary institutions that provide adequate financial aid and that are adequately funded to offer a quality educational experience?

Why this matters

Adequate financial aid and institutional funding are essential to ensure students can complete college without incurring unmanageable debt or working excessive hours that hinder their success. Insufficient aid disproportionately harms Black, Latine and first-generation students, leading to higher rates of loan default and long-term financial insecurity. Well-funded institutions can reduce these inequities by lowering unmet financial need and providing the supports necessary for students to persist and thrive.

Student loan repayment: Student loan default has serious negative consequences, including restricted access to other loans, increased repayment amounts due to collection costs and damaged credit. Among borrowers, loan delinquency and default disproportionately impact Black and Latine students. Within six years of starting college, 32% of Black borrowers who had begun repayment defaulted on their loans, compared to 20% of Latine borrowers and 13% of White borrowers. First-generation college students are also more than twice as likely to experience delinquency than students with at least one parent who has earned a bachelor's degree (EW Framework).

Unmet financial need: Higher levels of unmet financial need are likely to lead to more student loan debt or require students to work while enrolled in college, thus affecting their progression through college. In fact, students with more unmet need are less likely to graduate. At least in some states, it is the students with the lowest incomes who tend to have the highest levels of unmet financial need. In addition, Black students are less likely to receive nonfederal grant aid and receive lower average amounts than their peers. The Postsecondary Value Commission shows that Black students are, on average, burdened with approximately $8,300 in unmet financial need, whereas the average unmet need of White students is approximately $1,500 per year of attendance (EW Framework).

Cumulative student debt: Higher student loan debt is associated with decreased rates of home ownership and worse mental health outcomes.

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Compared to their peers, Black students take out loans more often than other racial and ethnic groups and have more debt on average. Though the amount of debt students accumulate during college is affected by student-level factors such as their expected family contribution (EFC), system-level factors such as the tuition and fees charged by institutions and the amount of grant aid made available to students are the largest contributors to rising student debt. Several factors, including the sector of the institution the student attended, the student's grade point average (GPA) in college, whether the student attained a degree and their labor market outcomes, also predict the probability of loan default. In particular, students attending for-profit institutions, who tend to be Black at disproportionately high rates, are at especially high risk for loan default (EW Framework)

Student loan repayment

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Incidence and types of education debt: Percent of adults who said they took out student loans for their education (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Higher education and student loans – Incidence and types of education debt: Percent of adults who borrowed and who still owe money on outstanding loans, and percent of adults who borrowed and have fully repaid their education debts (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Higher education and student loans – Incidence and types of education debt: Percent of student loan borrowers with various levels of outstanding student loan debt from their own education (i.e. less than $10,000 in outstanding loan debt, between $20,000 and $24,999, $25,000 and over) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Higher education and student loans – Incidence and types of education debt: Incidents of student debt disaggregated by the type of institution attended (e.g, public institutions, private not-for-profit, private for-profit) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Higher education and student loans – Incidence and types of education debt: Percent of adults who have taken out student loans for a child's or grandchild's education (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Higher education and student loans – Student loan payment status: Percent of student loan borrowers who were behind on student loan payments, disaggregated by family income level, educational attainment, race/ethnicity, and by type of institution attended (e.g, public institutions, private not-for-profit, private for-profit) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Percentage of student borrowers in the following repayment categories, as defined on the College Scorecard — making progress, paid in full, and deferment — 1, 2, 3, 5, and 10 years into the repayment phase of the loans (Education to Workforce).
- Average number of student loans. (Data source: Credit reporting data on student debt from Experian) (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Average number of open student loans reported in the last 6 months. (Data source: Credit reporting data on student debt from Experian) (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Average number of open student loans opened in the last 6 months. (Data source: Credit reporting data on student debt from Experian) (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Average number of student loans, including deferred student loans, never delinquent or

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derogatory. (Data source: Credit reporting data on student debt from Experian) (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).

- Average number of student loans, including deferred student loans, ever 60 or more days delinquent or derogatory in the last 24 months. (Data source: Credit reporting data on student debt from Experian) (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Average number of student loans, including deferred student loans, ever 90 or more days delinquent or derogatory in the last 24 months. (Data source: Credit reporting data on student debt from Experian) (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Average balance on open student loans reported in the last 6 months. (Data source: Credit reporting data on student debt from Experian) (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Average monthly payment on open student loans reported in the last 6 months. (Data source: Credit reporting data on student debt from Experian) (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Rate of loan default, disaggregated by race and type of institution. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education released groundbreaking data showing that half of Black or African American borrowers who first entered college in the 2003-04 academic year defaulted on their student loans within 12 years. Black or African American borrowers who started college in 2011-12, almost a decade later, have continued to face high default rates (Center for American Progress).
- Rate of loan default among borrowers who do not finish college, disaggregated by race (Center for American Progress).

System indicators

- Geographic distribution of average household student loan balances and average loan delinquency compared to median income (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- A zip code's percentage of minority population compared to its loan delinquency rate. A study by the Washington Center for Equitable Growth found that in the Washington, D.C. metro region, for example, zip codes in the northeastern part of the District of Columbia and east of the Anacostia River and adjacent suburbs — all of which have the largest shares of African Americans and Latinos — also have delinquency rates that range from somewhat high to extremely high. The same pattern holds in Los Angeles, where areas with large African American or Latino populations, such as Compton, Linwood, and Huntington Park, are also where delinquency is highest (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- A zip code's loan delinquency rate compared to its median income levels. A study by the Washington Center for Equitable Growth found a positive correlation between the share of minorities in a zip code and loan delinquency rates is highest for the middle of the income distribution. Among zip codes with a median income of about $20,000, for example, zip codes with a large share of Latinos and those without have approximately the same rates of delinquency. But among zip codes with a median income of around $60,000, those with large Latino share have much higher rates of loan delinquency than those without (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).
- Percent of adults who currently have education-related debt. A May 2015 report by the Federal Reserve found that twenty-three percent of adults have education debt of some kind, with 15 percent of all respondents having such debt for their own education, 6 percent for their spouse's/ partner's education, and 6 percent for their child's or grandchild's education (Federal Reserve, Economic Well Being).
- Method of financing student loans: Education debt is not exclusively financed through student loans, as 14 percent of respondents with education debt report that they have credit card debt from educational expenses, 5 percent used

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a home equity loan to pay for education, and 11 percent have some other non-student loan debt that was used to pay for education (Federal Reserve, Economic Well Being).

- Payment delinquency: Among respondents who borrowed for their own education, those who failed to complete an associate degree or bachelor's degree, those who attended for-profit institutions, and those who were first-generation college students are more likely to be behind on their payments than others.
- Type of loans (e.g., Direct Subsidized Loans, Direct Unsubsidized Loans, Perkins Loans, Private Loans, Direct PLUS Loans to Parents or Guardians) borrowed by undergraduate students, by race and ethnicity. Data reveal disparities in how students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds financed their postsecondary education, with Black or African American students being more likely than those from other groups to incur large amounts of educational debt. (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Advocate for more federal level support. Pew research points to three actions that the Department of Education and Congress could take to boost repayment success among struggling borrowers: (1) Identify at-risk borrowers before they are in distress — in particular, by using risk indicators such as borrowers missing payments early, repeatedly suspending payments, and having previously defaulted; (2) Provide loan servicers with resources and comprehensive guidance on how to prioritize interactions and engagement with high-risk borrowers; (3) Continue to eliminate barriers to enrollment in affordable repayment plans to build upon the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act. The act authorizes data sharing between the Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Education to streamline burdensome and duplicative income verification requirements for enrolling in income-driven plans. If effectively implemented, the act is a step in the right direction, but policymakers can do more to restructure the student loan repayment system, such as simplifying the process for direct and targeted outreach to those borrowers most at risk for — or already facing problems with — delinquency and default. These changes should be implemented in conjunction with clear and consistent repayment-management rules for servicers and other Department of Education contractors and with oversight mechanisms to ensure that those rules are successfully applied (Pew, Student Loan Default).
- A study by the Washington Center for Equitable Growth found that middle-class minorities are hurt the most by student loan delinquency. With respect to longstanding group and individual income and wealth gaps between minorities and the overall population, debt-financed higher education is not the solution, and may even be contributing to the problem. The fact that, among minorities, the middle class is most strongly affected implies the problem is structural racism, not poverty (Washington Center for Equitable Growth).

Policies

- To address structural barriers and improve financial security for older borrowers struggling with student loan debt, federal policymakers could consider canceling debt for long-term borrowers. As Urban research has shown, canceling debt for older borrowers who have been in repayment or default for more than two decades would provide significant relief for those most harmed by structural racism. Finalizing a new rule proposed by the Department of Education would provide such relief for these borrowers (Urban Institute, Ensuring Americans Can Retire Free from Student Loan Debt).
- Establish fair repayment terms. Currently, defaulted borrowers must pay more per month to exit default than they would under

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income-driven repayment plans, and they may also face wage garnishments that exceed this amount. New America and Urban research suggests the Department of Education could ensure defaulted borrowers don't pay more monthly than they would in repayment plans to prevent further financial strain (Urban Institute, Ensuring Americans Can Retire Free from Student Loan Debt).

- Encourage employers to match contributions to student loan payments. As outlined in the Secure 2.0 Act (PDF), employers can treat student loan payments as contributions to retirement savings and match these payments as contributions to employees' retirement accounts. Recent research projects that this Secure 2.0 provision could enable employees with student loans to spend about 3 percent more on everyday needs during their working years while earning a matching contribution from their employer to their 401(k) retirement account (Urban Institute, Ensuring Americans Can Retire Free from Student Loan Debt).
- Let older borrowers keep their Social Security benefits. To protect the financial well-being of older borrowers, especially those with the lowest incomes, federal policymakers could stop the garnishment of Social Security benefits (PDF) when a student loan is in default (Urban Institute, Ensuring Americans Can Retire Free from Student Loan Debt).
- Policymakers could also consider ways to prevent new borrowers from accumulating unaffordable debt, including reshaping parent PLUS loans, so parents don't borrow more than they can repay (Urban Institute, Ensuring Americans Can Retire Free from Student Loan Debt).
- Provide more grant aid for higher education. Policymakers could reduce reliance on student loans in communities most affected by structural barriers to wealth-building by increasing Pell grant amounts and establishing a need-based living stipend (Urban Institute, Ensuring Americans Can Retire Free from Student Loan Debt).
- Require degree programs to set students up for gainful employment. Establishing guardrails could help prevent students from taking on federal loans for programs that don't pay off. These guardrails could mirror the Department of Education's new standards for for-profit and career-oriented programs, which include debt-to-earnings ratios and a minimum earnings threshold. Federal policymakers could also consider setting tuition-to-earnings ratios or rules that combine multiple metrics (Urban Institute, Ensuring Americans Can Retire Free from Student Loan Debt).

Expenditures per student

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Per pupil expenditures. For elementary and secondary schools, data are reported annually at the state, district, and school levels through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) Per Pupil Expenditure Transparency website. Disparities in funding can be assessed vertically at the federal, state, and local levels, as well as horizontally between schools within the same district or postsecondary institutions within the same state (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- Equity Factor, a measure that indicates variance in per-pupil funding within a state (see this brief by New America for more information) (Education-to-Workforce Framework).

System indicators

- Expenditures per student: Education and related (E&R) expenditures per full-time equivalent (FTE) student based on 12-month enrollment.

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Measured population is twelve-month FTE enrollment calculated using 12-month instructional activity credit hours in IPEDS (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

- Additional metrics related to expenditures per student include: Distribution of students by credential level or program of study; Instructional expenditures per FTE student and as a percentage of E&R expenditures; Salaries as a percentage of instructional expenditures; Student support expenditures per FTE student and as a percentage of E&R expenditures; Administration expenditures per FTE and as a percentage of E&R expenditures; E&R expenditures as a percentage of total education and general expenditures; FTE faculty/staff per FTE student (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Expenditures per Completion: Education and Related (E&R) expenditures divided by the number of completions in a fiscal year. Measures all credentials conferred in a given year. Additional related metrics include: Distribution of completions by award level and program of study; Change in number of completions over time; Change in E&R over time (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- The Expenditures per Completion metric is a proxy for the resources required to educate students through to credential completion. It is a proxy because the data are not readily available to assign actual costs to individual students as they progress (or do not progress) toward completion. As such, this metric captures the costs associated with both completers but also non-completers, by comparing the resources spent to educate all students in a given year with the number of credentials awarded by the institution in that same year. Initiatives like CBD and the Voluntary Institutional Metrics Project already use the expenditures per completion metric to measure the cost associated with achieving the ultimate goal of degree completion (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Colleges can use data on per-student expenditure to track trends in their spending per student over time and in relation to peer institutions. Expenditure measures can help colleges determine how changes in spending over time impact resource allocation to core educational functions, such as instruction and student services, which can help contextualize changes in student completion rates. When interpreting trends in expenditures per student, institutions should evaluate whether changes in the metric resulted from changes in enrollment, changes in expenditures (or available revenues), or both, for better interpretation and use (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- For students, the per-student expenditure metric is not usually a concern or consideration in the decision-making process, but may be indicative of how much an institution makes available to spend on students relative to other institutions.
- The per-student expenditure metric can be useful for policymakers in clarifying the causes of price increases. It is a widely held belief that increases in student tuition and fees are the result of surges in college spending, but analysis from the Delta Cost Project shows that institutional spending has not risen as fast as prices. Rather, they find that a decrease in public subsidies is a primary contributor to price increases. (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Financial incentives for students: Performance-based incentives are monetary awards disbursed to students based on meeting specific academic benchmarks, and are intended to supplement (not replace) students' financial aid packages. By identifying and incentivizing short-term goals (such as maintaining a minimum level of enrollment, successfully completing coursework, or participating in advising programs), these initiatives support students' progression through college (EW Framework).

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Policies

- State Higher Education Funding: Tuition at public colleges depends on what states allocate for higher education, with students paying more when state investment falls or fails to keep pace with inflation. The unpredictability of state budget processes can also make it difficult for students to budget for the cost of college and risks negatively impacting college persistence (National College Attainment Network, State Higher Education Funding).
- Create a Federal-State Partnership: Less than 23% of public bachelor's degree institutions are affordable for a student receiving the average Pell Grant and community college students don't fare much better – with just 41% of institutions affordable. Congress should create a federal-state partnership that incentivizes states to invest in need-based aid and in stabilizing or reducing the cost of college. Doing so would provide additional support to students from low-income backgrounds.(National College Attainment Network, A Federal-State Partnership).
- State Higher Education Funding: Participating members of the National College Attainment Network (NCAN) identified state funding for higher education as a high priority. A Florida-based organization mentioned that a state-held council, which meets annually to discuss policy, regularly identifies state higher education funding as a top priority. Members in Ohio noted that higher education institutions typically receive little funding from the state and pointed to increased federal and state funding allocated in light of the pandemic as extremely beneficial. Some interviewees suggested that increased federal and state funding for postsecondary education, as appropriated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, would be helpful for the state to continue long term. Interviewees also mentioned that the funding flexibilities extended during the pandemic should continue as well. In other interviews, some NCAN members expressed a lack of confidence in understanding the landscape of higher education funding and how it differed from policy priorities around financial aid (NCAN, Building Momentum at the State Level).
- Spending per student enrolled in certification/training program/apprenticeship

Unmet financial need

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of undergraduates who received any aid and any federal, nonfederal, state, institutional and employer aid, by control and level of institution (NCES, Trends in Undergraduate Non Federal Grant and Scholarship Aid).
- Average amount received by undergraduates who received any aid and any federal, nonfederal, state, institutional, and employer aid, by control and level of institution (NCES, Trends in Undergraduate Non Federal Grant and Scholarship Aid).
- Percentage of undergraduates receiving any state grant aid and average amount received, by selected institutional and student characteristics (NCES, Trends in Undergraduate Non Federal Grant and Scholarship Aid).
- Percentage of undergraduates receiving need-based state aid and average amount received, by selected institutional and student characteristics (NCES, Trends in Undergraduate Non Federal Grant and Scholarship Aid).
- Percentage of undergraduates receiving merit-based state aid and average amount received, by selected institutional and student characteristics (NCES, Trends in Undergraduate Non Federal Grant and Scholarship Aid).

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- Percentage of undergraduates receiving any institutional grant aid and average amount received, by selected institutional and student characteristics (NCES, Trends in Undergraduate Non Federal Grant and Scholarship Aid).
- Percentage of undergraduates receiving need-based institutional aid and average amount received, by selected institutional and student characteristics (NCES, Trends in Undergraduate Non Federal Grant and Scholarship Aid).
- Percentage of undergraduates receiving merit-based institutional aid and average amount received, by selected institutional and student characteristics (NCES, Trends in Undergraduate Non Federal Grant and Scholarship Aid).
- Percentage of undergraduates receiving private employer aid and average amount received, by selected institutional and student characteristics (NCES, Trends in Undergraduate Non Federal Grant and Scholarship Aid).
- Student confidence in their ability to pay back student loans. A study by Jobs for the Future found that while Black students and female students of all backgrounds were more likely than other students to rely on loans to pay tuition, they also felt less confident in their ability to pay back those loans after graduation. While Latine students were not more likely than other students to rely on loans, they too were more likely than white students to not feel confident in their ability to pay back those loans. This research showed that Black students were 45% less likely than white students to feel confident they could pay back their loans, while Latine students were 16% less confident than white students. (Jobs for the Future, Unveiling Disparities).

System indicators

- Net Price: The average cost of attendance (COA) for an institution less all grant aid in a given year. *Net Price = COA – All Grant Aid*. The Cost of Attendance follows federal definitions for costs associated with a year of college, including tuition and fees; room and board (determined by living arrangements); books and supplies; and other expenses, like travel and personal items Grant aid includes grants from all sources (federal, state or local, institutional, and other). Measured population includes all first-time, full-time students and all full-time undergraduates by credential level; includes all students, not just aid recipients; excludes out-of-state students. Population is disaggregated by credential level, economic status (at that time), academic preparation, race/ethnicity, gender, age, first-generation status, program of study (at that time) (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Additional metrics related to net price include: Percentage of students applying for aid; Percentage of students receiving grant aid (by type or source); Net price for students receiving grant aid; Net price by dependency status; Net price divided by average income within quintiles; Net price for part-time, transfer, out-of-state students; Net price by year in college; Number of hours worked; Number of dependents (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Unmet need: The average net price for an institution less the average expected family contribution (EFC) in a given year. *Unmet Need = COA – All Grant Aid – EFC = Net Price – EFC.* Measured population includes all first-time, full-time students, and all full-time undergraduates by credential level; includes all students, not just aid recipients; excludes out-of-state students. Population is disaggregated by credential level, economic status (at that time), academic preparation, race/ethnicity, gender, age, first-generation status, program of study (at that time) (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Additional metrics related to unmet need include: Percentage of students applying for aid; Percentage of students receiving aid; Percentage of students with unmet need and their average unmet need; Unmet need for aid recipients by type or source; Unmet need by year in college; Part-time, transfer, and out-of-state unmet need; Student payment methods for meeting unmet need; Completion rates by level of unmet need; Number of hours worked; Number of

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dependents (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

- Student Share of Cost: The percentage of Education and Related (E&R) Expenditures covered by net student tuition revenue versus institutional subsidies in a fiscal year. Additional metrics include: Sticker price and net price; Net tuition revenue per 12-month FTE enrollment; E&R per 12-month FTE enrollment; Subsidy per 12-month FTE enrollment. This metric is drawn directly from the Delta Cost Project, which refers to it as the net tuition share of E&R. The metric quantifies the proportion of education-related expenditures paid for by net tuition revenue relative to other institutional resources, such as state and local appropriations, investment or endowment incomes or other revenues generated by the institution — or what Delta Cost calls the "subsidy share." (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Cost of Excess Credits to Credential: The per-student expenditures for excess credits to credential for all completers with excess credits in a given year. Measures all completers in a given year by credential level. Disaggregated by enrollment status, attendance intensity (at any time), academic preparation (at any time), race/ethnicity, economic status (at any time), age, gender, program of study (at exit) (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Additional metrics related to Cost of Excess Credits to Credential include: Excess credits earned by transfers by number/percentage of prior credits accepted; Total (instead of average) cost of excess credits to credential; Total and average net tuition cost to student of excess credits to credential (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

Practices and Policies

Policies

- The metric Cost of Excess Credits to Credential measures the financial outlay by the institution for students taking excess credit hours to credential. Because of the multitude of factors affecting this metric, it is imperative to determine whether efficiency is changing due to more students taking more excess credits, the expenditures per credit, or both over time. Changes in expenditures per credit over time can be controlled for by using the expenditures per credit in the year the credit was taken, instead of the year the student completed, for more precision. If costs increase largely due to excess course taking, institutions can proactively address degree pathways and academic advising to improve efficiency and help students complete more quickly and at a lower cost. The metric also provides institutions and policymakers with another piece of the cost–of-college puzzle, identifying a possible intervention strategy to reduce costs for both students and taxpayers. By creating efficient pathways to a credential, institutions and students can minimize excess credits to credential, lessening the cost per completer for the institution, student, and taxpayer (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Double Pell: The Pell Grant has served as the cornerstone of financial aid for students from low-income backgrounds pursuing higher education since its creation in 1972. This need-based grant provides crucial support for around 7 million students each year, or about one-third of undergraduates. At its peak, the maximum Pell Grant was worth more than 75% of the average cost of attendance at a four-year public university. Today, it covers less than 30%. Congress should restore the maximum Pell Grant to 50% of this cost, or roughly double the current amount. Congress should then tie the Pell Grant to inflation to sustain its purchasing power (NCAN, DoublePell for College Affordability).
- Implement Credit Transfer "Comeback" Programs. Programs like the Ohio College Comeback Compact have forgiven institutional debts and unlocked transcripts for stopped-out students, significantly improving re-enrollment and degree attainment (Ohio College Comeback Compact).

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- A CSA, or Child Savings Account, is a savings account whose proceeds are designated to pay for a student's higher education after age 18. These accounts are often created by a state or local government or nonprofit organization and intended to encourage more students to pursue postsecondary education. Many CSA programs offer savings incentives for families from low-income backgrounds who make their own deposits or engage in activities related to college preparation or financial literacy. Investment growth in the accounts can be tax-free at the federal or state level (NCAN, College Access and College Savings).
- College Savings Accounts: The Minnesota Kids Investment and Development Savings (MinneKIDS) Act is a bill that would allow the state of Minnesota to create a 529 college savings program to help children build savings for their future, such as college, technical school, apprenticeships and more. Accounts would be opened by the state for every baby born after June 2026, with small deposits made to seed the account. Accounts grow through family contributions and incentives, such as savings matches. Savings help pay for postsecondary education. Research shows that kids with college savings accounts are 3x more likely to attend college and 4x more likely to graduate (Minnesota Kids Investment and Development Savings).
- Policymakers should use net price results to evaluate how institutions and states spend their aid dollars and determine whether their practices align with the priorities of the federal government in lowering the net price for low-income students.
- Policymakers could use the metric of unmet need in tandem with net price to assess the full scope of financial burden that is placed on students and families and adjust financial aid policies accordingly — or encourage institutions to do so.
- The Student Share of Cost metric is highly relevant to policymakers because it quantifies the impact of decreased state support for higher education — and its direct impact on students. As per-student state investment has declined, students and families have had to pick up an increasing share of college costs, affecting their ability to access and succeed in college, especially for low-income students with fewer resources to draw on. A report using Delta Cost Project data noted that decreased state funding is responsible for almost 80% of the rise in public education tuition between 2001 and 2011. While more recent analysis shows a slight increase in per-student state and local funding for public colleges and universities (5.4% between 2013 and 2014), longer-term trends in state disinvestment in higher education have had a major impact on college affordability. State policymakers should work to restore appropriations to at least pre-recessions levels, and institutions should realign institutional aid practices to address the financial hardships of low-income students and families, who were unduly burdened by cuts (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Need-Based Student Aid: The price of higher education is ever rising, and students are bearing a greater proportion of this burden. Meanwhile, attainment is more important now than ever before. Unfortunately, students with limited resources have far worse outcomes than those from higher-income families. States can support students who may not have the financial means by investing in need-based aid (National College Attainment Network, Need-Based Student Aid).
- Equitable Free College: "Free college" has become a major policy discussion at the state and federal levels. Generally, states have implemented "free college" programs that cover the full cost of tuition and fees at a public, in-state, two-year (and, in some cases, a four-year) institution. An example of a more equitable approach would be for states to implement a "first-dollar" program (National College Attainment Network, Need-Based Student Aid).
- In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students: Students brought to the US as children deserve the chance to complete their education, but

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they face unique barriers to college access and affordability. To best support these students, for example, states should allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition and provide need-based aid for those who are income-eligible (National College Attainment Network, Access and Affordability for Undocumented Students).

- Support All Our Students: All students regardless of their race, ethnicity, or immigration status deserve the opportunity for affordable higher education. To support this goal, Congress should allow students from low-income backgrounds who are DACA/TPS recipients or those meeting similar requirements to be eligible for federal financial aid (NCAN, Support All Our Students).
- Need-Based Aid: Of the National College Attainment Network's (NCAN's) state policy priorities, need-based student aid was the issue with the greatest number of NCAN members identifying it as a higher priority for their state. Members often discussed need-based aid as an essential component of support for achieving better postsecondary access and attainment outcomes. While many states that identified this issue area as a higher priority currently offer some level of need-based student aid, many expressed that support levels are too low (e.g., Ohio). Most states (e.g., California, New York, Ohio, Tennessee) mentioned the importance of including support for students' basic needs and the true cost of attendance (housing, food, broadband, transportation, etc.) within aid programs (NCAN, Building Momentum at the State Level).
- Access and Affordability for Undocumented Students: Another NCAN state policy issue is access and affordability for undocumented students. Interviewees in multiple states identified supports for undocumented students as a high priority but expressed concerns regarding the political viability of such policies (NCAN, Building Momentum at the State Level).
- Equitable Free College: Members in California discussed the California College Promise program, which provides support for a variety of costs for students at community colleges. In Ohio and Texas, interviewees highlighted free-college programs that exist at the local level. Members in these states suggested that regional partnerships with community colleges may continue to be the source of free college for the time being. In other states (Florida, New York, Tennessee), members expressed concerns that free-college efforts may be susceptible to political challenges and would be unlikely to move forward. In those states, it was suggested that the label of "free" may be a hang-up. Some interviewees mentioned that policymakers may believe that free- or affordable-college opportunities are already being provided in their state, limiting the political will to expand such programs beyond community college or consider expanding aid available through current programs. (NCAN, Building Momentum at the State Level).
- Standardize Financial Aid Award Letters: Financial aid award letters can be difficult to decipher, and their formatting can vary from institution to institution. They can characterize PLUS loans as "awards," fail to explain what "work-study" requires, and obscure the bottom line. Students need and deserve clarity – about how much they will receive in grant funding, how much they will need to take out in loans and how much they will pay out of pocket. Congress should require standardized terms and formatting for award letters to help students make informed postsecondary decisions. (NCAN, Standardize Financial Aid Award Letters).
- Improve Loan Counseling: Student loans play a considerable role in how college students finance their education today. As student loan borrowing grows in prevalence, policymakers are increasingly aware of the need to improve its system of lending to students. An area of policy reform that would improve borrower experience and has bipartisan consensus is that borrowers should have more effective loan counseling. The U.S. Department of Education should ensure student loan counseling is consumer-tested with students and balances an informative

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process with one that does not create barriers to aid. Counseling provided to borrowers should include the cumulative student loan debt accrued and should advise borrowers to not to take on more debt than their expected starting salary (NCAN, Student Loan Counseling).

- Reform Work-Study: The Federal Work-Study program allows institutions to provide funding for students to work, either on or off campus (with limitations), to earn money that can be used to defray the cost of a higher education. Institutions of higher education receive a lump sum of dollars from the federal government, and then determine which students are eligible for work-study awards based on their enrollment. Currently, the total lump sum for each college is determined in part by the length of time an institution has participated in the Federal Work-Study program. This formula gives an advantage to older institutions, including elite ones enrolling fewer low-income students, over younger colleges. Congress should rework this outdated formula to target funds to schools with the largest portions of students from low-income backgrounds. Lawmakers should also increase investment in FWS, which at current funding levels can only support 10% of Pell Grant recipients (NCAN, Improve Federal Work-Study).
- Strengthen AmeriCorps: National and community service programs play an important role in the college access and success movement. Support for service programs, such as AmeriCorps, will help more underrepresented students engage with advisers and others who can help them navigate the path to (and through) postsecondary education. AmeriCorps participants may be eligible to receive an Education Award, which provides as much as the maximum Pell Grant in scholarship aide or to pay off student loans, in return for their service (NCAN, Support AmeriCorps for College Success)

Cumulative student debt

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

System indicators

- Cumulative Debt: The median amount of debt student borrowers incur while attending an institution or program. Includes all sources of student debt — federal, state, institutional, and private loans. Measures all undergraduate borrowers who leave the institution in a given year (completers and non-completers, but disaggregated). Disaggregated by credential level, completion status, economic status (at any time), enrollment status, attendance intensity (at any time), program of study (at exit), race/ethnicity, academic preparation (at any time), age, gender, first-generation status (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Other metrics related to cumulative debt include: Percentage of students borrowing overall and by type of loan; Loan debt by type of loan; Loan debt by dependency status; Cumulative loan debt across all institutions attended for transfer students (if available) (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Loan repayment rate: The percentage of borrowers in a cohort who make at least $1 of progress on their loan principal in a fiscal year, measured at one, three, five, and 10 years into repayment. Measured as the share of all borrowers entering repayment who have either paid in full or are in active repayment. Disaggregated by undergraduate versus graduate status, completion status, economic status (at any time while enrolled), program of study (at exit), race/ethnicity, enrollment status, attendance intensity (at any time while enrolled), academic preparation (at any time while enrolled), age, gender, first-generation status (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

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- Cohort default rate (CDR- federal three-year rate): The percentage of borrowers who enter repayment in a fiscal year and default in three fiscal years. Disaggregated by undergraduate versus graduate status, completion status, economic status (at any time while enrolled), program of study (at exit), race/ethnicity, enrollment status, attendance intensity (at any time while enrolled), academic preparation (at any time while enrolled), age, gender, first-generation status (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Other metrics related to loan repayment and default rates include: Incidence of deferment, forbearance, and delinquency; Use of income-driven repayment plans; Average amount of defaulted loan; Loan repayment and cohort default rates by loan type; Student Default Risk Index (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Debt data can be used to inform student decisions in the same way as net price, providing prospective students with a better understanding of how students in similar situations fare at the institution. Median cumulative debt seeks to quantify both affordability and financing methods used by typical students at each institution. While total loan volume across an entire institution, available on the Federal Student Aid Data Center, is a useful data point for evaluating broader trends regarding student loans, the median cumulative debt better demonstrates what is required financially of a typical student (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Understanding student loan debt is a necessary component to measuring institutional performance for policymakers and institutions alike, as financing can impact student access, progression, and completion. Specifically for cost metrics, the distinction among median debt among students of different economic statuses is essential, as high costs limit access to low-income students and further stratify higher education. With the disaggregates and submetrics, especially specific to low- and moderate-income students, institutions can use these data to develop better, more targeted counseling and services for populations who may be at risk of high student loan debt. Institutions and policymakers also can use the disaggregated debt data to help craft financial aid policies to reduce debt, especially for the most economically vulnerable students, as they are more likely to take on loan debt (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- To build on current practice, institutions are encouraged to integrate the Cohort Default Rate data they receive from the Department of Education with student-level data in their student information systems in order to conduct additional analysis. With this integration, institutions can disaggregate default rates by completion, economic status, and credential level — including by graduate and undergraduate student status — to determine which students default. With additional support from ED, institutions also can attempt to extend the CDR time frame beyond three years, disaggregate by loan type, and recalculate CDRs based only on debt accumulated at their institutions. CDRs are also an important consumer information tool for prospective students and families because a high cohort default rate signals that students may have a difficult time repaying their loans, and default has serious credit consequences for students. Policymakers also use CDRs to set basic standards that institutions must meet to receive federal financial aid dollars (IHEP, Toward Convergence).
- Implement Credit Transfer "Comeback" Programs. Programs like the Ohio College Comeback Compact have forgiven institutional debts and unlocked transcripts for stopped-out students, significantly improving re-enrollment and degree attainment (Ohio College Comeback Compact).

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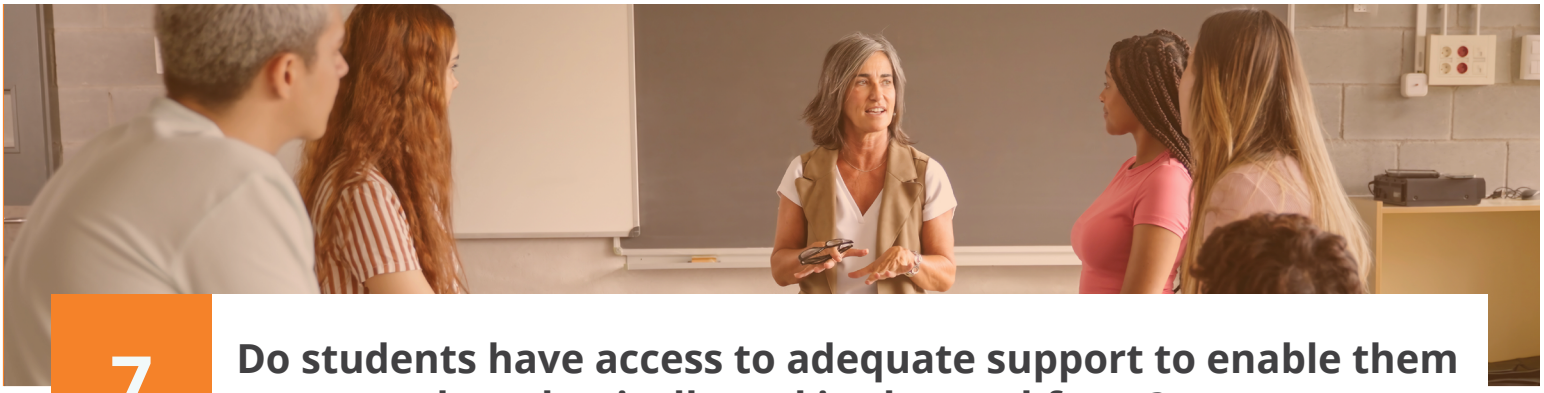

7 Do students have access to adequate support to enable them to succeed academically and in the workforce?

Why this matters

Adequate academic and career supports — things like advising, financial and nonacademic "wraparound" services and employer-aligned training — are critical because they boost persistence in school and translate learning into higher earnings and stable employment. Rigorous evidence shows that comprehensive student-success models such as CUNY's ASAP doubled community college graduation in randomized evaluations, demonstrating how structured supports change outcomes at scale (MDRC).

Likewise, sector-based programs that couple technical instruction with coaching and real employer connections (e.g., Year Up, Per Scholas/WorkAdvance, and Project QUEST) produce large and sustained earnings gains — among the strongest seen in gold-standard studies (Year Up United; MDRCMobility). These approaches work by linking colleges and employers to co-design curricula, provide work-based learning and smooth placement into in-demand roles (MDRC), which aligns support for students. Because employment and earnings rise with postsecondary attainment and verifiable skills, ensuring equitable access to these supports is a route to economic mobility, especially for students facing structural barriers.

Access to college and career advising

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- College students believe they will graduate with the skills and knowledge to be successful in the job market and in the workplace (Strada-Gallup, Crisis of Confidence).
- College students believe their major will lead to a good job (Strada-Gallup, Crisis of Confidence).
- College students speak often with faculty or staff about their career options (Strada-Gallup, Crisis of Confidence).
- College students have at least one official from a post-secondary institution initiate a conversation with them about their career options (Strada-Gallup, Crisis of Confidence).
- College students believe their school is committed to helping students find a rewarding career (Strada-Gallup, Crisis of Confidence).
- College students meet with an academic advisor before registration and at least once per term (Community College Research Center).
- Percentage of young people with access to paid internships

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System indicators

- The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250:1. Schools meeting or bettering this 250:1 benchmark often report higher rates of college counseling engagement, FAFSA completion, applications submitted and ultimately, enrollment (ASCA).
- An additional high school counselor is predicted to induce a 10 percentage pointincrease in four-year college enrollment (Hurwitz and Howell, 2013).
- Percentage of Graduates Who Found their Counselor Very Helpful: The percentage of graduates in the school who reported on the 2005 CCSR senior survey that the counselor has been very helpful in helping them plan what to do after high school. (Roderick, M. From high school to the Future).
- Counselor Press for Academic Achievement: The average of graduates' reports on the 2005 CCSR senior survey of the extent to which counselors in their school: (1) helped select courses needed for work or admission to college; (2) encouraged taking AP/honors courses; (3) encouraged continuing education after high school; and (4) talked about colleges/schools that were suited to the student's interests and abilities. The measure is constructed using Rasch rating scale analysis. The student-level version of this variable is also used in some analyses. (Roderick, M. From high school to the Future).
- Teacher/Counselor Structured Support: The average of graduates' reports on the 2005 CCSR senior survey of the extent to which teachers or counselors helped students with the college search and application process. Students were asked the extent to which teachers or counselors: (1) encourage students to apply to several different schools; (2) talk to students about what college would be like; (3) help students fill out applications for colleges or vocational/technical schools; (4) help students find scholarships to apply for; (5) help students decide which school to attend; (6) help students plan how to pay for tuition and other expenses; and (7) help students with college application essays or personal statements. The measure is constructed using Rasch rating scale analysis. The student-level version of this variable is also used in some analyses. (Roderick, M. From high school to the Future).
- Ratio of advisors (including success coaches, academic advisors, peer mentors, support staff, etc.) to students. Effective advising offers: ongoing guidance across a student's college journey; tailored services that align with individual levels of need; coordination of both academic and nonacademic resources; intentional, timely outreach; and support that is customized to each student's unique circumstances (Community College Research Center).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Collect data on student use of campus services and participation in special programs. Many institutions implement special programs or services to help students, but they fail to collect student-level data associated with those programs and services or to integrate that information with other data. Without such data, it is impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and services in improving student outcomes (Advancing by Degrees).
- Engage and assist students in completing critical steps for college entry. Low-income and first-generation students often face challenges in completing the steps to college entry, such as taking college admissions tests, searching for colleges, submitting college applications, and selecting a college. Students may not be aware of these steps, may lack information on how to complete them, and may not receive sufficient support and advice from those around them (What Works Clearinghouse, Helping Students Navigate the Path to College).

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- Schools should provide students who plan to attend a four-year college with hands-on assistance in completing their college applications. high schools should work with students to ensure that their applications are complete, submitted by deadlines, and (if applicable) of sufficient quality for acceptance. Because each student's needs and interests are unique, the What Works Clearinghouse panel recommends that, to the extent possible, school staff provide assistance to students one-on-one or during small workshops or classes designed to assist students with completing college applications, writing application essays, or reminding them about application deadlines. (What Works Clearinghouse, Helping Students Navigate the Path to College).
- The What Works Clearinghouse panel suggests that schools develop mechanisms for clearly communicating timelines for application milestones that occur over the course of the year. Schools can provide a handout that lists the key dates that students need to consider for the application process in their junior and senior years. The components of a timeline could include college entrance exams, college applications, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and state financial aid forms, admission acceptances, and financial aid and housing acceptances. (What Works Clearinghouse, Helping Students Navigate the Path to College).
- In later high school years, students still need one-on-one attention — from a counselor, a teacher, an administrator, or program staff — to facilitate and encourage rigorous course taking. A high school might schedule drop-in hours for students to receive academic advising and assistance with selecting courses from a teacher, counselor, or other staff person. (What Works Clearinghouse, Helping Students Navigate the Path to College).
- Schools and districts also should provide continuing professional development or counseling for counselors, registrars, teachers, and other staff on college prep course requirements, so that they can serve as an informative resource for students. (What Works Clearinghouse, Helping Students Navigate the Path to College).
- Get Your Data; Know Your Data: The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center's StudentTracker service is both widely available and relatively affordable ($595 per high school per year at the time of this writing). Despite this, too few districts and schools are subscribing to the service and accessing the postsecondary outcomes data of up to eight graduating classes of high school students. Districts and schools should be accessing this data to understand what happens to their students after high school graduation. Those postsecondary outcomes are important for understanding how well students are being prepared to make their next steps following high school graduation. Data from the NSC can make those efforts much easier. Even if districts and schools only make use of the preconstructed charts and never dive into the granular-detail data, they will still be getting access to valuable insights that are not easily accessible through other means (Using Data to Lift Completion Likelihood).
- Map the Postsecondary Pipeline: As described above, students' matriculation patterns tend to be place-based and proximate to their high school. That pattern emphasizes the importance of districts and schools knowing how students fare when they matriculate. Using data to understand the percentages of students heading to a given set of institutions and then understanding how the students do when they get there is critical. It also starts new conversations. For example, a district sending 40% of its students to an institution delivering a 30% second-year persistence rate should be asking why students are stumbling and what can be done to connect them with supports, better prepare them before arriving on campus, or both. Districts with better alternative destinations for their students can be changing the postsecondary

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advising conversation with students and parents. If meaningful progress cannot be made with an institution regarding students' outcomes, districts and schools should consider advising toward alternative pathways that would offer a higher likelihood of completion (Using Data to Lift Completion Likelihood).

- Put Completion on the Forefront for Students: Students make college-going decisions on the basis of all kinds of factors: cost and affordability, location, academic programs, family advice, institutional reputation, where their friends are going, campus atmosphere and amenities, and even the institutions' sports teams. These factors and more combine to comprise the concept of "fit" in fit and match. But our experience is that too few students are putting the likelihood of completion toward or at the top of their list of deciding factors. Tools like the College Scorecard allow students to look up completion rates for institutions, and this brief's analysis emphasizes the importance of considering completion in this critical decision (Using Data to Lift Completion Likelihood).
- Student outreach for career counseling services: A study by Wei-Cheng Mau, Amber Fernandes investigated differences in use of and satisfaction with career counseling services as a function of sex, race, and age based on a nationally representative sample of college graduates of different ages, gender, and ethnicity. Finding that Hispanic students were less likely to use career counseling services, they recommend employing outreach efforts that target this group and that are tailored to increase use may be helpful. Counseling professionals need to take a proactive role in reaching this population. For example, Flores and Spanierman (1998) have suggested that flyers be posted in the community at establishments that serve these targeted students. Providing information and making a presentation at a Hispanic American student association meeting may be more appropriate than waiting for students to seek counseling help at the center. Consideration should be given to taking programs and services to locations where various subpopulations of students naturally congregate (Bishop, 1990). The ability to reach out effectively to minority students will be increasingly important, and service delivery systems must be adapted to accommodate such populations (Characteristics and satisfaction of students who used career counseling services).
- Counselors who are interested in increasing the use of services by nontraditional students may want to make themselves more available and flexible during evenings and weekends when those students are more likely to be on campus and enrolled in classes. Creativity in programming that would make nontraditional students more aware of the programs and services available on campus should be applied. Rayman (1999) has made several excellent suggestions on how to be responsive to the needs of nontraditional students (Characteristics and satisfaction of students who used career counseling services).
- Use multiple measures to assess postsecondary readiness and place students. Most open-access institutions require incoming students to take brief standardized assessments in math, reading, and writing. The results of these assessments are used to place students in either developmental or college-level courses. However, there are concerns about misplacement rates arising from single placement tests used in isolation. One way to improve college readiness assessment (and therefore to reduce misplacement) is to use multiple measures — such as high school GPA, the number of years since high school graduation or equivalent, the number of courses taken in the subject (e.g., English or math), and the highest level taken in the subject (e.g., Algebra I or Algebra II) — to inform placement decisions (What Works Clearinghouse, Strategies for Postsecondary Students in Developmental Education).

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- Require or incentivize regular participation in enhanced advising activities. Advising, guidance, and counseling services help students determine academic majors, understand the relationship between school and subsequent employment, and address a variety of academic and personal issues. Some colleges have created more intensive advising experiences, often called "enhanced advising" or "intrusive advising." Enhanced advising replaces the quick, transactional structure of traditional advising (e.g., a focus on class schedules, degree requirements, and financial aid procedures) with a more holistic structure in which advisors ask deeper questions and engage with students to help them succeed. Mentoring programs that aim to build relationships between students and knowledgeable adults on goal-oriented academic planning may also be considered enhanced advising (What Works Clearinghouse, Strategies for Postsecondary Students in Developmental Education).
- Offer students performance-based monetary incentives. Performance-based incentives are monetary awards that students receive when they meet specific academic benchmarks. These awards supplement students' financial aid packages, which may be based on need (e.g., Pell grants) or past achievement (e.g., state merit aid grants). The short-term goal of such initiatives is to encourage students to perform better in (and successfully complete) their classes. A longer-term goal is to support students' progress through developmental education and course requirements to increase degree attainment (What Works Clearinghouse, Strategies for Postsecondary Students in Developmental Education).
- Compress or mainstream developmental education with course redesign. Guidance to participate in accelerated developmental experiences, referred to interchangeably as "intensive," "compressed," "condensed," or "time-shortened" models, can minimize the negative effects of being placed into developmental education. Students who register for more than one sequential course in a semester are more likely to enroll in the second course, thereby improving retention. Accelerated courses that mainstream developmental education students into college-level work with contextualization or supplemental instruction also help students achieve the goals and outcomes of the college level course assignments. Acceleration may promote persistence and academic success because the reduced time in developmental education also reduces the opportunity for external factors, such as work or family responsibilities, to hinder students' success (What Works Clearinghouse, Strategies for Postsecondary Students in Developmental Education).
- Teach students how to become self-regulated learners. Traditional academic instruction emphasizes learning content. Many students, including those in developmental education, arrive on college campuses with little knowledge about how they learn and which study strategies might work best. Schools and teachers should attempt to incorporate self-regulated learning strategies into existing subject-matter coursework. The training should encourage students to monitor and reflect on their learning and focus students on the parts of the learning process that they have control over. Typically, teaching students to become self-regulated learners involves demonstrating how to (a) approach a task, (b) implement that approach or strategy, (c) evaluate how well the approach or strategy worked, and (d) decide what to do next (What Works Clearinghouse, Strategies for Postsecondary Students in Developmental Education).
- Implement comprehensive, integrated, and long-lasting support programs. Some institutions have implemented comprehensive and integrated support programs that incorporate a variety of components. Although many colleges offer multiple supports to their students, what differentiates this practice from business as usual is the intentional focus on integrating

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these supports and incentivizing participation in the long term. One example is the City University of New York's (CUNY's) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). ASAP provides a comprehensive, integrated package of student services, monetary incentives, linked courses, an ASAP seminar, and other supports. The program's implementers sent consistent, strong messages to ASAP students to enroll full time, take their developmental classes early, and graduate within three years (What Works Clearinghouse, Strategies for Postsecondary Students in Developmental Education).

- On the ground, academic advisors should engage in continuous reflection on their own practice and how they might more effectively integrate humanized, proactive, and holistic approaches into the ways in which they support students. They can ask themselves questions that require self-reflection, such as: How can I approach interactions with students to cultivate more meaningful relationships with them? How do my students know I really care about them? What opportunities do I need to deepen my knowledge about so I can proactively encourage students to take advantage of them? What relationships do I need to strengthen on campus to ensure that I am able to be an effective conduit to the larger support network? (Revisiting the Role of Academic Advising in Equitably Serving Diverse College Students).
- Academic advisors should also make efforts to cultivate relationships with ethnic studies programs and other curricular and cocurricular units that provide culturally relevant learning opportunities across their institutions. Such connections are vital to academic advisors developing the capacity to provide holistic support and serve as a conduit to transformative learning environments for students of color on their campuses (Revisiting the Role of Academic Advising in Equitably Serving Diverse College Students).
- Evaluation and recognition practices for academic advisors. Institutions of higher education should ensure that advisors are evaluated and rewarded for having commitments and investing substantial energy in cultivating the ability to provide culturally engaging advising. Doing so might mean the prioritization of supporting activities that enhance culturally engaging academic advising skills through the allocation of professional development funding, annual performance reviews, and recognition awards (Revisiting the Role of Academic Advising in Equitably Serving Diverse College Students).
- Academic advisors should invest time and energy in understanding the unique issues their students of color often face. Higher education scholars have generated a plethora of research on the experiences of students of color, which can serve as an ample resource for academic advisors. However, advisors have a much broader range of resources available to them, such as culturally relevant literature from ethnic studies, diversity and equity programming on their respective campuses, and the wide range of digital resources (e.g., digital stories, blogs and vlogs, and online communities) college students of color create themselves and are now available online. These forms of knowledge can be critical tools for advisors who seek to enhance their capacity to find common ground with their students (Revisiting the Role of Academic Advising in Equitably Serving Diverse College Students).
- Humanize the practice of academic advising: Academic advisors working with students of color should make every effort to incorporate a human element into advising and demonstrate that they care about and are committed to their students' success. For advisors to be viewed as authentic, they should avoid being overly empathetic or completely disengaged. An overly empathetic advisor may seem disingenuous and patronizing to a student of color, and a completely disengaged advisor may give an impression that he or she is disinterested in the student. To be perceived as authentic human beings,

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advisors can share their own personal stories and struggles with their advisees. Advisors can also humanize academic advising by using the advisee's name during meetings, talking about pop culture or social activities with students, learning to pronounce an advisee's name correctly, sending an advisee useful individualized resources between meetings, inquiring about their advisees' home life, and being honest about the student's academic standing (Characteristics of Academic Advising That Contribute to Racial and Ethnic Minority Student Success at Predominantly White Institutions).

- Adopt a holistic, multi-faceted approach to advising: Advisors should both try to understand nonacademic challenges faced by students of color that might be influencing their academic experiences. For example, Asian American students encounter immense pressure to succeed, which results from both high family expectations and racial stereotypes that perpetuate assumptions that all Asian Americans are overachievers (Museus, 2008; Museus & Kiang, 2009). This pressure has been associated with negative psychological consequences, and Asian American students who are more likely than other groups to underutilize counseling services (Kim & Omizo, 2003; Suzuki, 2002). This can be detrimental for many Asian American students who come from communities that are already economically under-resourced and who are at risk. Understanding such nonacademic factors can enable advisors to more effectively understand the issues that their students face and when they should refer their racial and ethnic minority students to other offices on campus to address such issues (Characteristics of Academic Advising That Contribute to Racial and Ethnic Minority Student Success at Predominantly White Institutions).
- Practice proactive academic advising: Beyond typical academic-advising duties (e.g., helping students plan their coursetaking activity or fulfillment of graduation requirements), for example, advisors should consider proactively introducing or accompanying students of color to activities, events, and networks that will expose them to faculty members and peers with similar interests. Advisors should also consider how they can more fully incorporate intrusive advising practices into their work, including systems of monitoring and early intervention systems. In sum, incorporating a human element into advising, providing holistic academic advising, and practicing proactive advising can both communicate that they are interested and invested in the success of their racial and ethnic minority students and equip them to more effectively serve those undergraduate advisees of color (Characteristics of Academic Advising That Contribute to Racial and Ethnic Minority Student Success at Predominantly White Institutions).
- Academic advisors working with students of color should make every effort to incorporate a human element into advising and demonstrate that they care about and are committed to their students' success. For advisors to be viewed as authentic, they should avoid being overly empathetic or completely disengaged. An overly empathetic advisor may seem disingenuous and patronizing to a student of color, and a completely disengaged advisor may give an impression that he or she is disinterested in the student. To be perceived as authentic human beings, advisors can share their own personal stories and struggles with their advisees. Advisors can also humanize academic advising by using the advisee's name during meetings, talking about pop culture or social activities with students, learning to pronounce an advisee's name correctly, sending an advisee useful individualized resources between meetings, inquiring about their advisees' home life, and being honest about the student's academic standing (Characteristics of Academic Advising That Contribute to Racial and Ethnic Minority Student Success at Predominantly White Institutions).
- Community colleges and other educational institutions provide coordinated college and career navigation services to help students

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access career guidance and financial, academic, and personal supports that help them complete their studies and find employment. They also facilitate mentoring and peer support programs to allow students to learn from and support one another (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).

- Structured career counseling programs that integrate soft-skills development (communication, teamwork, problem-solving) into individualized career planning and training (Developing Soft Skills through Career Counseling for Graduate Students).

Policies

- Provide adequate funding for academic advising. Colleges and universities that are serious about addressing systemic racial inequities in student outcomes should allocate sufficient resources to ensure that academic advisors can offer students of color critical culturally engaging support. Allocating sufficient resources requires providing professional development opportunities and ensuring that academic advisors have manageable caseloads to spend a significant amount of their time learning about the realities of students of color, reflecting on their own practice and grappling with questions about how it can be more culturally engaging, and cultivating relationships with educators in culturally relevant curricular and cocurricular programs on their campuses (Revisiting the Role of Academic Advising in Equitably Serving Diverse College Students).
- Adopt hiring policies that evaluate an advisor candidate's capacity to provide culturally engaging support. While it is increasingly common for institutions of higher education to ask about and consider a candidate's experience with diversity and difference, the attention given to these factors can be superficial. Academic advisor search-and-hiring processes can more meaningfully center on a candidate's capacity to provide culturally engaging support to their students and advocate equity on their campuses. Such processes might involve including explicit language about prioritizing abilities to provide humanized, proactive, and holistic support to advisees. Such approaches might also warrant explicit interview questions and search committee conversations about a candidate's knowledge of diverse communities, their commitment to providing culturally engaging support, and evidence of their providing such support in the past or alternatively their capacity to do so (Revisiting the Role of Academic Advising in Equitably Serving Diverse College Students).
- Implement credit transfer "comeback" programs, which can forgive institutional debt and unlock transcripts for stopped out students, improving re-enrollment and degree attainment (Removing the Institutional Debt Hurdle).

Health insurance coverage (including mental health care coverage)

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percent of individuals with health insurance. This metric seeks to measure participation in any insurance program, including those offered by the government (such as CHIP and Medicaid), employers, or community clinics, as well as those that individuals purchase (for example, through Health Insurance Marketplaces). Multiple surveys measure health insurance coverage and can be adapted for use by educational institutions or employers. At the national level, they include the Current Population Survey, Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, National Health Interview Survey, and Survey of Income and Program Participation (EW Framework).

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- Percent of eligible individuals (children or adults) enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP. This data can be gathered either as part of a survey or by linking administrative records from state systems. This information can be used to support families with low incomes in enrolling in these programs (EW Framework).
- Rates of anxiety and/or depression among students, disaggregated by race (The Hope Center).
- Percentage of students indicated experiencing clinically significant symptoms of anxiety and depression in the previous two weeks (The Hope Center).
- Percentage of students stopping out of college who report that mental health was one of their reasons for stopping out (The Hope Center).
- Percentage of students reporting barriers to getting mental health support (e.g., availability, affordability or lack of insurance coverage, lack of awareness, fit, social stigma) (The Hope Center).

System indicators

- Availability of campus-based health plans (U.S. Government Accountability Office)
- Ratio of number of students to number of health, mental health, and social services FTE staff (for example, campus doctors, nurses, psychologists, and social workers) (EW Framework).
- Percentage of employers offering an employee assistance program or mental health access through health care plans or other services, as measured by employer surveys (EW Framework).
- Ratio of mental health professionals of those trained to provide Tier 1 mental health supports (e.g., counselors) (Learning Policy Institute).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Campus health fairs and enrollment assistance for Medicaid/Marketplace (Health Insurance Marketplace).
- Embedded academic advising on health insurance usage (Health Insurance Marketplace).

Policies

- State-level insurance expansion policies (The State of Medicaid Expansion Decisions).
- Federal laws currently allow full-time students to remain on parental plans through age 26 (Healthcare.gov).
- Institutional mandate for campus-wide health plan availability (American Council on Education).
- Expansion of healthcare plans for non or under-insured students, including focus populations such as students with children (US Government Accountability Office).

Food security (for college students)

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of individuals with high or marginal food security, as measured by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Security Survey Module. The USDA has developed survey modules to measure food security that can be used across settings. Varying survey lengths (in 18-, 10-, and 6-item modules) are available, with versions for children and youth, as well as translations into Spanish and Chinese. Starting in 2022, the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) will ask about food security among college students using the USDA items. (EW Framework).
- Percentage of eligible individuals participating in SNAP. This information can be used to support families with low incomes in enrolling in these programs. However, note that participation in nutrition assistance programs such as Free and

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Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS) and SNAP are considered weak measures of food security. For example, more than 1 in 10 households receiving SNAP benefits still experience very low levels of food security. (EW Framework).

- Percentage of individuals living in a census track with low access to healthy food, as defined by the USDA's Food Access Research Atlas. This resource accounts for the presence and distance of healthy food sources in an area, family income, vehicle availability, and transportation. (EW Framework).
- % of households or students experiencing food insecurity (Food Systems Journal).
- Food pantry utilization rates. Pace University's pantry, Provisions, allows students to swipe their student ID card at each visit. This enables the university to collect usage data — recording who uses the pantry, how often, and demographic information. This information is then used to assess how effectively the pantry supports students facing food insecurity (Pace University).
- SNAP enrollment among college students. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) provides public dashboards showing both student enrollment in SNAP and estimates of potential eligibility (based on FAFSA income ≤ 200% of the federal poverty level) across institutions, genders, and racial groups (Virginia State Council of Higher Education).
- Rates of food insecurity among college students. According to a survey administered by The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs, two-in-five survey respondents reported experiencing food insecurity. "Food insecurity" is categorized using USDA measures as having low, or very-low food security (The Hope Center).

System indicators

- Campus basic-needs center presence, such as Pace University's food pantry, Provisions (Pace University).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Colleges and universities can support their most at-risk students by providing pre-screening and application assistance for public benefits as a campus resource. (Trellis Strategies)
- Campus kitchens or food pantries. For instance, at Campus Kitchens, student leaders team up with university administration, community nonprofits, and dining services to build a more sustainable approach to addressing food waste on campus. Each Campus Kitchen provides meals, educates and engages with the community, and provides leadership opportunities for students (Campus Kitchens Project)
- Partnerships that make donated food accessible to students, like MarketBoxx at HBCUs (MarketBoxx).
- Many institutions now have a food pantry, but that often is not enough to significantly reduce food insecurity on campus. As noted in Use of Public Resources and Campus Supports, awareness is a major barrier to students accessing support. To effectively reduce food insecurity on campus, colleges should ensure that their resources are robust and promoted widely. Bunker Hill Community College's DISH Food Pantry provides an excellent example of both. The DISH Food Pantry provides students with refrigerated lockers, increasing accessibility for students who cannot visit during operating hours. The pantry also partners with Food for Free to provide students with microwavable meals to make the resource accessible to students without a kitchen (The Hope Center).
- Public social service agencies coordinate access to multiple work supports, such as cash assistance, food assistance, and subsidized child care, because many people have more than one barrier to employment. These services can provide the additional resources and stability low-income people need to find and secure employment. Some assistance programs also support individuals while they participate in required

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employment and training programs (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).

- Community- and faith-based organizations help families and individuals access transportation vouchers, food, temporary shelter, and transitional housing programs to ensure that an emergency situation does not derail their employment or training activities (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).

Policies

- Advocate for SNAP eligibility expansions for students (The Hope Center).
- Remove Student Barriers to SNAP. Due in part to the complex requirements and administrative burdens created by the program, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently found that two-thirds of students who are likely eligible for SNAP, and 6-in-10 students who are both food-insecure and likely eligible for the program, do not report receiving benefits. Federal policymakers should overhaul and simplify SNAP eligibility rules and ensure that all students with low incomes (who are at high risk of food insecurity) are able to seamlessly qualify for benefits. Congress should streamline SNAP eligibility by allowing enrollment in higher education to satisfy activity and participation requirements and putting students with low incomes on equal footing with other individuals who are eligible for SNAP, or by simplifying the student exemptions to ensure all groups of low-income students at risk of food insecurity can qualify without needing to satisfy the 20-hour-per-week work rule (The Hope Center).
- Improve Outreach to Students About Public Benefits. Federal policymakers should expand awareness, outreach, and enrollment in SNAP and other support programs that could reduce basic needs insecurity among students who qualify under the current rules. For example, federal agencies should build on a recent interagency Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Departments of Education and Agriculture to strengthen SNAP outreach and issue additional guidance clarifying that many students with low incomes could be eligible for SNAP under the current exemptions without needing to qualify through the 20 hour-per-week work exemption, such as students enrolled in community college and other career-focused programs that result in high employability, as well as those who are anticipating receiving federal work-study (The Hope Center).
- The USDA, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, should issue regular guidance and resources that promote data-sharing and outreach strategies to reach students who may be eligible for benefits but are unaware that they may qualify (The Hope Center).
- State/federal funding that can be used for campus food security programs, such as the Community Food Project Competitive Grant Program (National Institute of Food and Agriculture).

Access to affordable housing (for college students)

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of students experiencing housing instability or homelessness. Housing insecurity is defined by challenges that prevent someone from having a safe, affordable, and consistent place to live. Homelessness is the most severe form of housing insecurity — not having a fixed, regular, and adequate place to live (The Hope Center).
- Housing cost burden (% of income spent on housing). The already high (and increasing) cost of housing — primarily rent and related fees — is one of the more difficult student basic needs to address. When a student faces housing insecurity, they are more likely to experience

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other insecurities, such as lack of adequate food, transportation, and health care access (The Hope Center).

- Student mobility rate due to housing

System indicators

- Number of affordable units per low-income household (National League of Cities).
- Presence of a high-functioning Basic Needs Task Force on a campus to create an ecosystem of supports to address students' basic needs (The Hope Center).
- Cost of campus housing vs. subsidy support provided (Institute for Higher Education Policy)

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Emergency housing funds and rental assistance for students (Bipartisan Policy Center).
- Proactive healthy housing inspections in neighborhoods (National Center for Healthy Housing).
- Basic Needs Hub: One of the best ways to target the interconnected nature of basic needs insecurity is by creating a comprehensive, coordinated office (a "basic needs hub") to help students navigate the wide variety of programs and ensure they receive all possible support. Lee College's Student Resource and Advocacy Center provides a good model for other institutions to start this work (The Hope Center).

Policies

- Remove Student Restrictions to Federal Housing Supports. Students are often subject to severe federal restrictions that limit them from most federal and state housing assistance. Since 2005, U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) public and assisted housing programs and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) have contained rules that prevent the vast majority of college students under age 24 from receiving support, based on the mistaken assumption that all college students have access to on-campus housing or are otherwise financially supported by their family. Congress should remove a damaging policy routinely included in the HUD appropriations bill, which denies housing access to students, and also pass the Housing for Homeless Students Act, which would allow students to live in LIHTC housing if they've experienced homelessness within the last seven years (The Hope Center).
- Financial aid received by students for non-tuition costs is generally counted as "income" for determining a family's HUD program eligibility, which significantly and unfairly disincentivizes students in supported families from seeking higher education. Congress should remove these restrictions in HUD programs and exclude all financial aid from being counted as income (The Hope Center).
- Rent regulation / eviction protection for student tenants (Freedom for All Americans).
- Incentives for affordable housing near campuses (Freedom for All Americans).
- Allow emergency aid from the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) to be used to help students stay in school during critical periods. The FSEOG is a federal grant, administered by the Department of Education, used to provide extra financial assistance to students with demonstrated exceptional financial need. Evidence suggests emergency micro-grants are efficient temporary measures in cases where students experience housing instability and can contribute to the increased rate of college graduation. BPC has previously recommended allowing institutions to use a portion of their funds for micro-grant programs and recommends changes to the FSEOG allocation formula to increase support for low-income students. Rather than distributing FSEOG funds to institutions based on previous award amounts and cost of attendance, as under the current formula, BPC's proposal prioritizes institutions that effectively serve large numbers of low-income students (Bipartisan Policy Center).

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- Use the Moving to Work (MTW) demonstration to target Housing Choice Vouchers for community college students. Public housing authorities (PHAs) like the Tacoma PHA in Washington have used the flexibility permitted under MTW to prioritize federal HCV funding for community college students experiencing housing insecurity. Other MTW PHAs in jurisdictions with large low-income student communities could consider implementing similar pilot programs. BPC's J. Ronald Terwilliger Center for Housing Policy has recommended expanding HUD's MTW demonstration to a full program to allow more widespread use of innovations like this one (Bipartisan Policy Center).
- Support reforms to allow students to live in Housing Credit-financed units under certain conditions. The bipartisan Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act includes provisions to ensure that formerly homeless youth and residents of Housing Credit properties seeking to further their education are not prevented from living in tax-credit subsidized units. While there would still be restrictions on student eligibility under the program, these proposed reforms acknowledge the need for greater flexibility to meet the needs of people experiencing housing insecurity who want to further their education (Bipartisan Policy Center).
- Add questions about postsecondary enrollment status to the American Housing Survey. Originally recommended by HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research, this reform would help ensure data visibility to properly track housing insecurity and homelessness among the college student population using the country's most important instrument for gathering housing data (Bipartisan Policy Center).
- Collaborate with universities and community colleges to achieve housing and zoning reforms. Most higher education institutions have a vested interest in ensuring the affordability of their nearby housing markets, since most of their students will require off-campus housing. State and local jurisdictions seeking competitive grants such as HUD's new PRO Housing grants can work with colleges and universities to conceptualize inclusionary zoning and land use reforms that will ultimately increase the supply of affordable housing (Bipartisan Policy Center).

Access to technology (for college students)

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of households with broadband + device (computer/laptop) access (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Percentage of students with no internet access at home, by family income and race/ethnicity (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Percentage of students with no internet access by main reason for not having access (i.e. too expensive, the home lacked a computer or a computer adequate for internet use) (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Percentage of students who use the internet at home, disaggregated by sex, race/ethnicity, age, family income, and parent educational attainment (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Among students who use the internet anywhere, those reporting using it at home, at school, at a library or community center, or at someone else's home (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Percentage of students who use the internet at home by means of internet access (i.e. through a high-speed internet service installed at home,

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mobile internet service or data plan, satellite internet service, dial-up service, or some other service) (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).

- Student reports of connectivity issues affecting coursework (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Campus device-lending service usage (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Percentage of students who reported that they had missed assignments or been unable to fully participate in academic activities due to a lack of internet or technology access during the current academic term (The Hope Center).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Internet equity programs (state broadband subsidies). For example, the Student Freedom Initiative is helping Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other community institutions access funds made available through the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD, $42.45 Billion) and Digital Equity (DE, $2.75 Billion) programs implemented by the Department of Commerce / National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) (Student Freedom Initiative).
- Presence of campus tech support centers (CSUCCESS Program).
- Device loan programs by libraries or IT services (e.g., Wi-Fi hotspot lending) (CSUCCESS Program).
- Digital literacy workshops for students and families (CSUCCESS Program).
- The nonprofit organization EducationSuperHighway aims to provide high-speed internet access to all U.S. public school students. In the 2015 State of the States report, EducationSuperHighway (2015) stated that an additional 20 million students were connected to high-speed internet over the past 2 years and that 38 governors had committed to the initiative of connecting their states' classrooms to high-speed broadband (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) works to ensure that students have equitable access to DLR, both inside and outside of the classroom and at the right speed/bandwidth to engage in work and learning. In the 2016 report The Broadband Imperative II: Equitable Access for Learning, SETDA identified three strategies that policymakers and educators can use to improve equity of access outside of school: reaching out to families about the necessity of out-of-school access, leveraging community partnerships, and sharing out-of-school access options (Fox and Jones 2016). These strategies rely on community buy-in, such as local businesses offering internet access on their premises to students (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Some school districts are putting wireless routers on buses or providing mobile Wi-Fi hotspots so that students can access the Internet outside of the classroom. In California, the Coachella Valley Unified School District helped low-income residents obtain access by outfitting school buses with high-speed internet for use by students on the way to and from school and in the evening hours for homes near the parked buses (U.S. Department of Education n.d.). The Vail School District in Arizona implemented a similar initiative (Fox and Jones 2016) (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- When Cincinnati Public Schools decided to offer partially-online advanced placement courses, the school system provided mobile hotspots, called Kajeet SmartSpots, to students who did not have home broadband access (Meyer 2016). These hotspots not only allowed students to attend their AP classes, but also to complete homework
- Forsyth County Schools in Georgia partnered with the Cumming-Forsyth County (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).

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- Chamber of Commerce to disseminate a list of organizations and businesses in the community that offered free Wi-Fi hotspots (Fox and Jones 2016) (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Funding programs and providing devices for students are local-level strategies to increase student internet access to DLR outside the classroom. School District 87 of Bloomington, Illinois provided sixth- through eighth-graders with a digital learning device to use at both school and home (Fox and Jones 2016). Since over half of the students did not have at home internet access, the district also decided to allocate funding to provide low-income households with access to the district's internet connection (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Cincinnati's Kajeet SmartSpots program caught the interest of Green Bay Area Public Schools in Wisconsin. Instead of supplying mobile hotspots, however, the school district allowed students to "check-out" a SmartSpot laptop or other device, similar to borrowing a book from the library (Meyer 2016) (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Negotiate with internet providers to provide affordable rates to students experiencing poverty. The national nonprofit organization EveryoneOn works as a liaison between internet service providers and families that cannot afford broadband internet (Meyer 2016). The organization negotiates with internet service providers for more affordable prices for high-speed internet service and computers, and then helps inform families about these opportunities in their areas (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).

Policies

- State broadband funding/subsidies for low-income households (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- Institutional regulations requiring inclusive technology access (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- North Carolina launched the Wireless Networking Initiative, a statewide procurement effort that resulted in 95 percent of participating school districts having Wi-Fi access points in every classroom (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).
- New Jersey formed a statewide buying consortium for broadband services in schools that resulted in 16 percent savings on monthly costs and an average internet access bandwidth increase of 152 percent (Student Access to Digital Learning Resources Outside the Classroom).

Access to transportation (for college students)

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Transportation costs for an average commuter postsecondary student as a percent of their total living expenses (D. Price and D. Curtis).
- Percentage of community college students who commute to campus (The Hope Center).
- Percentage of community college campuses that have transit stops within walking distance (The Hope Center).
- Percentage of two-year and four-year students who rely on a vehicle or public transportation to get to class (versus walking or riding a bike) (The Hope Center).
- Percentage of students driving, using public transit, biking, or walking to get to campus (The Hope Center).
- Percentage of students who reported that they had missed class or work because of a transportation problem during the current academic term (The Hope Center).

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System indicators

- Route convenience, frequency and schedules. Inconvenient routes, infrequent trips and limited trip scheduling also pose a problem for college students. Transit is often planned with the work commuter in mind and college students' schedules may not align with frequent ride times. Students may not be served by transit which seeks to transport to business hubs and central business districts (Trellis Strategies and D. Price and D. Curtis).
- Affordability. Public transportation is expensive, especially for low-income students who may not be able to afford the up-front costs of monthly or term-length transit passes, and thus pay the most expensive "per-ride" fees to get from home to college (Trellis Strategies and D. Price and D. Curtis).
- Housing and work proximity. In many communities, it is too expensive to live near transit lines, especially rail, and students get pushed further away from the most desirable transit lines, having to rely on buses with multiple transfers to get from home to school (Trellis Strategies and D. Price and D. Curtis).
- Transportation reliability and quality. The reliability and quality of public transit is undermined by operational deficits faced by transit systems, leading to over-crowded trains and buses, and to loewe quality rides without space to sit and without access to Wi-Fi that could enable transit times to be productive for school work (Trellis Strategies and D. Price and D. Curtis).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Complete Streets" collaboration to build streets that enable safer access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Typical elements that make up a Complete Street include sidewalks, bicycle lanes (or wide, paved shoulders), Shared-use paths, Designated bus lanes, Safe and accessible transit stops, Frequent and safe crossings for pedestrians, including median islands, Comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, Accessible pedestrian signals, Curb extensions, Narrower travel lanes, Roundabouts and more (Smart Growth America).
- University Transit Passes: Most research on university transit passes has identified benefits of offering free or reduced cost transit passes to students. A 2001 study found that offering transit passes to students may reduce the cost of attending college by $2,000, and only cost the university $30 per student, on average (Trellis Strategies).
- Provide student transit subsidies (The Ithacan).
- Include residents from the start. Involving residents in the design process, understanding the affordability implications of development in a neighborhood, and advocating for the needs of long-time, lower-income residents to developers and other stakeholders are important to avoid displacement and to champion community interests (Urban Institute).
- Establish community-benefit agreements. When projects are meant to protect communities from issues like gentrification, these agreements can promote benefits for existing residents, like rent control or good-paying jobs (Urban Institute).

Policies

- Fare-free transit zones for students. In 2024, Tufts University began piloting a free MBTA pass, providing transit across the Boston region, for students enrolled at its fine arts school. George Washington University trialed subsidized WMATA transit passes for students in 2021, and has continued that partnership (Streetsblog USA).
- Zoning policy promoting affordable housing near transit hubs. Investing in quality transit-oriented development (TOD) and locating it in previously segregated areas could help connect people to much-needed services and advance access to equitable opportunities (Urban Institute).

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- Allow for mixed-use developments near existing bus stops and transit hubs. Many zoning laws only allow for buildings to have one use, like single-family housing or retail. By raising building heights and expanding land uses, developers can help increase density and ridership in nearby stations and bring folks closer to transit to limit car use. Paired with incentives for affordable housing, local leaders can bring those with lower incomes closer to urban centers, rather than pushing them away (Urban Institute).
- Use existing federal dollars to fund projects. Local policymakers can draw on federal supports for these multistep, multistakeholder TOD projects. The Federal Transit Administration offers grants for transportation planning and capital investments that can help local governments address both public transit and housing needs in their development plans. The Biden administration has invested billions in improving public transit and climate-friendly infrastructure to support local governments in this work. For instance, the plan included $213 billion to produce and preserve affordable housing units in traditional homes and commercial buildings while working to eliminate exclusionary zoning laws. The administration also hopes to invest $85 billion to modernize existing transit systems (Urban Institute).

Access to child care subsidies (for college students) *Key source: E-W Framework*

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- % of student-parent families receiving subsidies (NCSL, Double Duties).
- Child care accessibility (spots per child enrolled student) (NCSL, Double Duties).
- Usage of campus-based child care centers (NCSL, Double Duties).
- Reports of student-parent dropouts due to care barriers (NCSL, Double Duties).
- Among parenting students, percent who reported they had missed three or more days of class in the previous term because of problems with childcare arrangements (The Hope Center).
- Childcare: Reported hours of paid childcare used in the past week, disaggregated by family income (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Childcare: Median monthly childcare compared to monthly housing payment. According to the federal reserve, just over half of parents who used paid childcare spent at least 50 percent as much on childcare as on housing, most people's single largest monthly expense (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Childcare: Providers of unpaid childcare (including child's grandparents, child's sibling, another relative other than the parents, a nonrelative such as a friend or neighbor, Headstart or another preschool that you don't pay for) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Forms of childcare used (paid or unpaid) disaggregated by employment status of parents (i.e. no working parent, two parents with one working, two parents with both working, single parent and working) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Caring for other adults: Relationships to those people provide unpaid care for because of aging, disability, or illness (i.e. parent or parent of spouse/partner, another relative, friend or neighbor, spouse or partner, adult child) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Frequency of unpaid care (i.e. daily, several days per week, several days per month, once a month or less) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).

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System indicators

- State funding policies for student-parent child care grants (EdNC).
- Regulations supporting on-campus childcare facilities (EdNC).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- On-site campus child care with sliding-scale fees (Community College Daily).
- Partnerships with local child care providers offering student discounts (Community College Daily).
- Institutional budgeting to support campus-based child care centers. Child care profit margins are tight and public subsidies aren't meeting needs to ensure child care providers earn a living wage and that families can afford care. If a college wants to prioritize retention and graduation of its student parent population, it's worth considering whether its budget can support center operations rather than expecting a child care center to break even on its own (New America, Funding for Campus Based Child Care for Student Parents).
- Partnering with Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. More than 1.5 million student parents are enrolled in community colleges, and around half of them have at least one child under age 6. Many student parent families qualify for Head Start, which is why the Kids on Campus initiative was created to help co-locate more Head Start programs at community colleges. Head Start provides families with free access to high-quality early childhood education and other services. For colleges that don't have the resources or experience to run a child care center, but want to meet the child care needs of their student parents, partnering with Head Start is a smart option. When colleges have space to lend to a Head Start program, they can help Head Start reduce or eliminate rent costs, allowing them to focus on critical services for student parent families. In turn, colleges can support access to high quality care for some of their student parents via connecting them to Head Start (New America, Funding for Campus Based Child Care for Student Parents).
- Child Care and Development Fund Subsidies. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) helps families afford child care. The federal program provides funding to states, who then provide subsidies to eligible families with children under 13. States design their subsidy programs within federal guidelines and make a variety of choices about eligibility that can impact how accessible subsidies are to those enrolled in postsecondary education. Campuses with child care centers should explore if and how they can accept state subsidy dollars so that eligible student parents can use them on campus (New America, Funding for Campus Based Child Care for Student Parents).
- Contracts for State Funded Preschool Spots. Some states offer free preschool for all families or families that meet income eligibility criteria. Campuses can explore entering agreements with state programs to offer preschool spots on campus (New America, Funding for Campus Based Child Care for Student Parents).
- College Foundation Support. Some campuses raise funds for child care for student parents through their foundations. For example, Utah Valley University received a large donation to help them construct a child care center that expanded capacity to serve student parents. College foundations can help support child care on campus by creating and marketing funds that donors can contribute to in support of basic center operating costs, facilities, or subsidies for student parent families (New America, Funding for Campus Based Child Care for Student Parents).
- Bond financing to build or renovate spaces used as child care facilities. Linn Benton Community College in Oregon dealt with this challenge by financing renovations to a building

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through a bond. They worked to bring a local ballot measure that ultimately allowed them to finance renovations to a building to bring it to current child care center standards (New America, Funding for Campus Based Child Care for Student Parents).

- Work study opportunities. Some campuses hire federal work study students to help in campus child care centers as assistants. This can help offset staffing costs where appropriate, and sometimes allow for Early Childhood Education students to get practical experience in their field of study (New America, Funding for Campus Based Child Care for Student Parents).

Policies

- State/federal subsidy eligibility for student-parents (Raising Expectations for Institutional Intervention).
- Institutional policy granting schedule flexibility for student-parents (Raising Expectations for Institutional Intervention).
- Community college child care grants. For example, the North Carolina Community College Child Care Grant is state aid directed to help student parents at North Carolina community colleges pay for child care. The North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) has allocated this funding to North Carolina's 58 community colleges since 1993, and it is administered through the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS). Financial aid teams at each college are tasked with getting their student parents connected with the funding (EdNC).
- Policies making it easier for student-parents to receive child care assistance. Georgia, Oregon and Washington amended their subsidy policies to make it easier for student parents to receive child care assistance. As of 2022, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning considers student parents a priority group among applicants to the state's subsidy program. Oregon's HB 3073 (2021) eliminated the required work hours for student parents receiving child care subsidies. The bill also allowed for additional paid hours of care so parents can study. Washington's HB 5237 (2021) removes a requirement that parents must be enrolled full-time and work a minimum number of hours. It also added pursuit of an associate degree as an approved educational activity for eligibility (NCSL, Double Duties).
- Policies providing student-parents additional financial support for child care. Legislatures in Minnesota and North Carolina appropriated funds for additional financial support for child care to student parents. North Carolina community college students who have completed at least 50% of their credential can apply for a $1,000 Finish Line Grant to put towards child care or other living expenses. Student parents in Minnesota can qualify for $6,500 per child each academic year through the state's Postsecondary Child Care Grant Program (NCSL, Double Duties).
- Policies improving data collection on students who are also parents. Connecticut and Illinois passed legislation to help lawmakers better understand the number of postsecondary students who are also parents and their ability to find on-campus child care. Connecticut's HB 6565 (2023) requires the state's Department of Education to conduct an assessment of child care needs of the student body and existing child care services and facilities on community colleges, technical colleges and state university campuses. Illinois SB 267 (2021) requires public institutions of higher education to annually collect data on students' parental status. Furthermore, institutions that operate on-campus child care centers must report the total number of children served each semester specifying how many are children of students (NCSL, Double Duties).

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Support Networks that Build Social Capital

Support networks — mentors, alumni, community groups, employers — unlock good jobs by brokering internships/apprenticeships and job-shadowing, sharing insider insight on hiring and workplace norms and providing resume/interview coaching.

8 **Do young people have strong, supportive relationships with colleagues, supervisors, mentors and other influential, experienced people?**

Why this matters

Strong relationships with bosses, mentors and colleagues help young workers learn faster, gain clear feedback and access opportunities — raising performance, satisfaction and retention. Supportive and inclusive networks also build confidence and skills while opening pathways to promotion and long-term economic mobility.

Mentorship: Meta-analyses find mentored newcomers earn more, advance faster and report higher satisfaction and commitment than non-mentored peers (Does Mentoring Matter? A Multidisciplinary Meta-Analysis Comparing Mentored and Non-Mentored Individuals by Liby T. Eby, Tammy D. Allen, Sarah C. Evans, Thomas Ng and David DuBois).

Social capital: Social capital — the resources people draw from close ties and wider networks (e.g., family support, job leads) — fosters belonging and upward mobility, whether built in person or online, especially when it bridges economic divides. Higher social capital is linked to gains in education, child well-being, health, safety,

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tolerance, happiness and civic/economic equality; its decline is worrisome (Putnam 1995, 2000, 2001). It supports health (Freese & Lutfey 2011), employment through referrals (Fernandez, Castilla, & Moore 2000) and social support (Putnam 1995), though time and money barriers make it harder for low-income households to build (Chantarat & Barrett 2012). Neighborhood conditions — crime, cohesion, interaction and informal social control — strongly shape social capital (Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley 2002; Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Mentorship

Indicators

System indicators

- Employee perception of mentorship and its contribution to upward mobility. For instance, the Harvard Business School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to report on the biggest contributors to their upward mobility. Responses included, "I had a role model or mentor at work," "I had someone at work to turn to for advice about how to move up," "I had someone at work who I trust I had a sense of belonging at work," "I had someone at work who cares about my advancement" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Employee perception of the lack of mentorship opportunities at work. For instance, the Harvard Business School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to report on the biggest barriers to their upward mobility. Responses included, "I do not have a role model or mentor at work," "I don't have anyone at work to turn to for advice about how to move up," "I don't have anyone at work who I trust," "I do not have a sense of belonging at work I don't have anyone at work who cares about my advancement " (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).
- Employee outlook on barriers for low-wage employees at their company. For instance, the Harvard Business School's "Upward Mobility Survey of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S." (2020) asked respondents to report on the biggest barriers to low-wage employees at their company. They are asked how strongly they disagree or agree with the following statements: "Low-wage employees don't have a role model or mentor at work," "Low-wage employees don't have anyone at work to turn to for advice about how to move up," "Low-wage employees don't have anyone at work who they trust," "Low-wage employees don't have a sense of belonging at work," "Low-wage employees don't have anyone at work who cares about their advancement" (Harvard Business School, Building from the Bottom Up).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Braven is a career-accelerating experience that prepares promising young people from humble beginnings to secure a strong first opportunity after college graduation. As part of their programming, they offer a 14-week virtual fellowship experience, BravenX, that equips participants with the skills, confidence, networks, and experiences necessary to launch a strong career. This program is fully virtual and identical in length, content, and cohort structure as our university-for-credit model. However, it is made possible through partnerships with college access and success organizations. Braven helps empower their alumni to build the foundation for their careers. BravenX Fellows earn a financial stipend upon completion of the program in lieu of academic credit. In some cases, BravenX is added as a scholarship requirement (Braven).

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Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Individuals have access to and are able to mobilize relationships that help them further their goals (Education-to-Workforce).
- Percentage of students or individuals reporting a high level of social capital on surveys such as the Social Capital Assessment + Learning for Equity (SCALE)
- Network Diversity, and Network Strength scales (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- Percentage of students or individuals reporting a high level of social capital on surveys such as the Social Capital Assessment + Learning for Equity (SCALE) Social Capital, Network Diversity, and Network Strength scales. (Education-to-Workforce).
- The EW Framework recommends consulting guidance by the Christensen Institute that describes emerging practices for measuring students' social capital using a four-dimensional framework based on quantity of relationships, quality of relationships, structure of networks, and ability to mobilize relationships (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- A student has strong developmental relationships, that is, close connections through which young people discover who they are, gain abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to interact with and contribute to the world around them. A developmental relationship is distinct from more generalized notions of positive relationships in that it is defined by the combination of five interconnected elements: express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- A student has access to the resources provided by developmental relationships. Resources can include things such as financial or material help, information, skill-building opportunities, guidance, and values and norms. The following social capital measure focuses on three types of resources: access to useful information, new connections, and skill-building opportunities (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- Students have a web or network of developmentally-rich relationships that can provide access to valuable resources. There are several indicators that have been used to understand the quality of an individual's social network, such as network structure, size, diversity, and strength (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- Students have people in their network who are from different cultures, racial and ethnic backgrounds, economic backgrounds, and have different skills (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- Students have people in their network they can go to for help, trust, and feel close to, as well as people who they feel less close to (i.e., weaker tie) but who may be influential in helping them access their goals or who may connect them to others (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- Catalysts to Mobilize Relationships and Resources: The degree to which an individual has different relationships that help build their self-awareness, confidence, relationships-building skills, and possible selves (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- Self-Initiated Social Capital: The degree to which an individual actively builds relationships and uses the relationships and the resources they have to reach their goals (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- Relationship-Building Skills: The degree to which an individual is able to build positive relationships with others (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).

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- Networking Skills: The degree to which an individual purposefully uses relationships within their social network to reach their goals (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- Personal Identity: The degree to which an individual has a clear sense of their personal identity (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- Racial and Ethnic Identity: The degree to which an individual has a clear sense of their racial and ethnic background and what this identity means to them (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- Sense of Purpose: The degree to which an individual has a clear sense of their life's purpose (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- Self-Efficacy for Reaching Life Goals: The degree to which an individual feels they can successfully reach their life goals (Search Institute, Social Capital Assessment).
- Progress Towards Education or Career Goals: The degree to which an individual reports making progress towards their education or career goals (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Commitment to Paying It-Forward: The degree to which an individual engages in behaviors that demonstrate a commitment to paying-it-forward to others (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Collective Efficacy to Change Systems: The degree to which an individual feels that they can work with their program or organization to change employment and education systems (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Occupational Identity: The degree to which an individual has a clear sense of their occupational identity (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Job-Seeking Skills: The degree to which an individual engages in behaviors that may lead to securing employment (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).

System indicators

- To measure concentration of social capital at a systems level, users could consider an index adapted from researchers Anil Rupasingha and Stephan Goetz. Their index includes: the number of all associations per 10,000 population, including religious organizations, civic and social associations, political organizations, professional organizations, labor organizations, physical fitness facilities, public golf courses, and sports clubs. The measure also includes commercial and nonprofit associations drawn from Census Bureau County Business Patterns data. It also includes
- the percentage of voters who participated in a presidential, state, or county election (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- The county-level census response rate in the person's county (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- The number of charitable, nonprofit organizations with an office in the county (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- Cohesiveness: The degree to which a person's social networks are fragmented into cliques (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Economic connectedness: The degree to which low-income and high-income people are friends with each other. Studies have shown that children who grow up in communities with more economic connectedness (cross-class interaction) are much more likely to rise up out of poverty (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Civic engagement: Rates of volunteering and participation in community organizations (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Program Support for Social Capital Development: The degree to which an individual reports receiving forms of support as a result of participating in a program that is believed

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to promote social capital (e.g., skill building, increasing network size) (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).

- Sense of Program/School Community: The degree to which an individual feels a sense of community within their program, school, or organization (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Psychological Safety: The degree to which an individual feels their program or organization provides a safe space for them to express who they are as an individual (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Volunteer Support: The degree to which an individual perceives that volunteers in their program or organization have provided them with social capital support (e.g., useful information, new connections) (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Seeking Volunteer Support: The degree to which an individual actively seeks social capital support from volunteers within their program or an organization (e.g., asks for information, guidance, and other forms of instrumental support) (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Seeking Teacher/Professor Support: The degree to which an individual actively seeks social capital support from teachers, professors, managers, and other campus staff (e.g., asks for information, guidance, and other forms of instrumental support) (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Number of membership associations per 100,000 people. Membership associations provide opportunities for people to form robust social networks in a community (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Economic connectedness index. This metric reflects the extent to which people with low socioeconomic status and people with high socioeconomic status are friends, as measured through connections on Facebook (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- In 2024, Braven & The Sheila Y. Oliver Center for Politics and Race in America (CPRA) at Rutgers University-Newark launched the Capitol Hill Fellowship as an opportunity for Braven Fellows to enter the public service space, particularly on Capitol Hill. Acquiring an internship in Congress can be especially hard for students from humble beginnings, whether that be tied to financial constraint or networks. Braven's Capitol Hill Fellowship lowers these barriers by supporting Fellows with applying to internships at Congressional offices, providing Capitol Hill Fellows with eight weeks of housing, professional development, a clothing stipend, and a monthly living stipend. Four Fellows participated in the inaugural year of the Fellowship (Braven).
- Students' social capital in STEM education (derived from families, peers, teachers, and professional networks) demonstrably promotes their STEM educational outcomes and career paths. Inclusive STEM schools and mentoring programs are some promising approaches that can enhance STEM social capital and outcomes of underrepresented students, particularly women, Blacks/Hispanics/Native Americans, youth with low socioeconomic status, and persons with disabilities (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Schools and nonprofit organizations can help cultivate social capital among young people through educational and non-educational programming (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- Providing relevant bridging social capital may make other programs that seek to increase economic mobility more effective. For example, recent programs that have had large impacts in helping families move to higher-opportunity neighborhoods or obtain higher-paying jobs provide bridging social capital and outperform

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traditional programs that focus solely on economic resources or skills. These results suggest that prioritizing the provision of adequate social support so people can take advantage of available economic resources may greatly amplify the impacts of existing programs to reduce intergenerational poverty (Opportunity Insights, Social Capital and Economic Mobility).

- Encouraging the formation of neighborhood associations (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Promoting civic engagement and participation, including by creating connections between neighborhood residents and city leaders (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Creating and maintaining parks and other public spaces such as libraries that give residents the opportunity to interact with one another (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Encouraging socializing across socioeconomic groups, including by designing public spaces intentionally and fostering connections across neighborhoods (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Supporting labor unions and the right to organize (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Policies

- Interventions such as zoning and affordable housing policies aimed at integrating neighborhoods and college admissions reforms to boost diversity on campuses can increase cross-class interaction substantially and are likely to be very valuable (Opportunity Insights, Social Capital and Economic Mobility).
- Policies that influence friending bias (i.e. the tendency for people to befriend people similar to them). While more work needs to be done to identify what types of interventions reduce friending bias, there are a number of programs being piloted around the country that warrant further study: efforts to reduce the size of groups in which students interact and limit the divisions created by tracking in schools, changes in architecture and urban planning to foster greater interaction, and the creation of new domains for interaction via programs that seek to break down class barriers. In some communities, it may be more fruitful to focus on increasing integration to increase cross-class interaction; in others, it may be more effective to focus on reducing friending bias (Opportunity Insights, Social Capital and Economic Mobility).
- Beyond direct efforts to increase cross-class interaction, our analysis suggests that providing relevant bridging social capital may make other programs that seek to increase economic mobility more effective as well. For example, recent programs that have had large impacts in helping families move to higher-opportunity neighborhoods or obtain higher-paying jobs provide bridging social capital and outperform traditional programs that focus solely on economic resources or skills (Opportunity Insights, Social Capital and Economic Mobility).
- Policy initiatives and programs aimed at enhancing opportunities for students to connect and engage with more interest-sharing peers and professionals in STEM fields could help them develop extended social networks that can support their educational and career pathways in STEM. ISTEMSs represent one of the latest comprehensive schoolwide reform models that offer opportunities for students, particularly underrepresented groups, to participate in a STEM-specialized learning environment with interest-sharing peers (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Policymakers and educators can introduce STEM-related materials or activities to the existing well-established student organizations such as Girl Scout STEM Programs and Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) STEM Programs (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).

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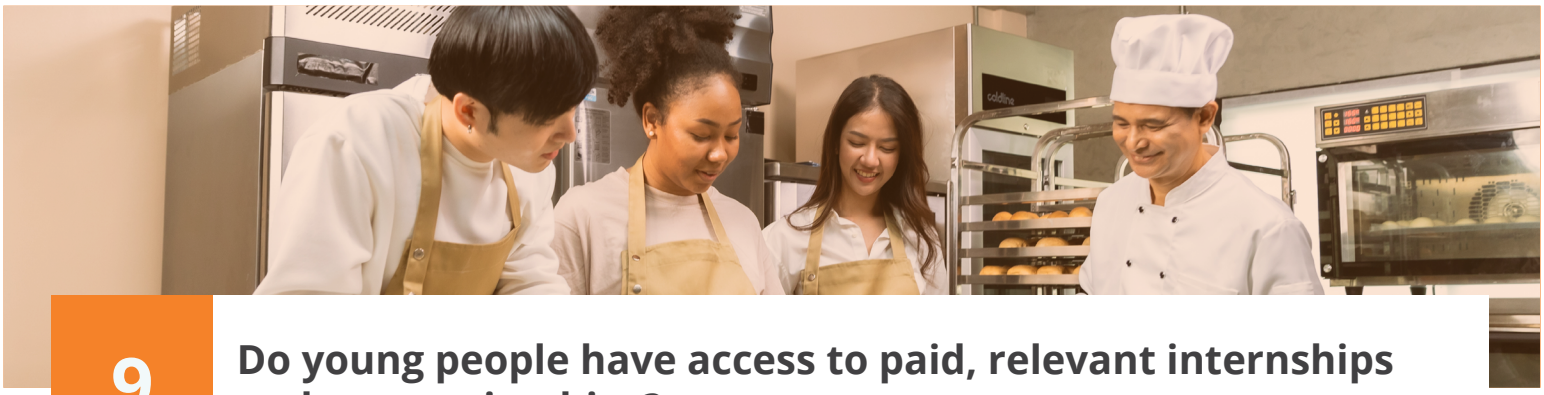
- To promote parental engagement in STEM, they must have expanded access to STEM learning resources and activities, especially for those parents without a college degree and those who are not working in STEM fields. Equally important is providing training and professional development in STEM for educators and social service providers, such as public librarians or museum staff, whose tasks involve engaging parents in their children's learning activities (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).
- Policy initiatives can create and facilitate well-designed mentoring programs that pair students (in particular women, under-represented minorities, low-SES students, and people with disabilities) with STEM educators or professionals who are knowledgeable and passionate about supporting students' educational and career development. Training and supporting those STEM educators or professionals in providing mentorship can help them be effective mentors for their mentees. Also helpful is partnering schools with industry organizations to offer internships for students to shadow professionals in real-world STEM settings (Leveraging Social Capital to Broaden Participation in STEM).



9 Do young people have access to paid, relevant internships and apprenticeships?

Why this matters

Access to paid internships allows young people to gain real-world experience, build professional networks and develop career-ready skills without sacrificing financial stability. Research from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) shows that students who complete paid internships are more likely to secure full-time employment after graduation and earn higher starting salaries. According to the NACE 2022 Student Survey, students who complete paid internships earn a median starting salary of $62,500, compared to just $42,500 for their unpaid counterparts (NACE). Paid interns also receive more job offers on average (1.61 vs. 0.94). For low-income and first-generation students, paid internships are especially important, as they provide both income and equitable access to career-building opportunities that unpaid positions often exclude.

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Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of students who participate in a work-based learning opportunity before graduation (Education to Workforce).
- Percentage of workforce training program participants who participate in a work based learning opportunity before program completion (Education to Workforce).

System indicators

- Number of new apprenticeships over time (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Demographic characteristics of apprenticeship cohorts (e.g., age range, gender, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, veteran status, justice system involvement) (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Change in demographic characteristics over time per enrollment cohort (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Representation of women in apprenticeship programs. Analysis by the Center for American Progress found that women are much less likely to participate in apprenticeship programs than men. In 2017, 92.7% of those completing Registered Apprenticeships were men and 7.3 % were women (CAP, The Apprenticeship Wage and Participation Gap).
- Earnings of women who complete apprenticeship programs. Analysis by the Center for American Progress found that women who participate in apprenticeship programs make far less than men. In 2017, among people who completed a Registered Apprenticeship, a woman made only 42 cents to a man's dollar. Surprisingly this trend has worsened since 2008, when women made 53 cents to a man's dollar (CAP, The Apprenticeship Wage and Participation Gap).
- Black and Hispanic participation in apprenticeships. Analysis by the Center for American Progress found that Black and Hispanic participation in apprenticeships roughly mirrors these groups' participation in the labor force (CAP, The Apprenticeship Wage and Participation Gap).
- Earnings by race/ethnicity of those who complete apprenticeship programs. Analysis by the Center for American Progress found that Black or African American apprentices had the lowest exit wages of all racial and ethnic groups examined, at $14.35 per hour in fiscal 2017. White apprentices had the second-lowest earnings at $26.14 — still more than 50% greater than black or African American apprentices' wages. Median exit wages for completing apprentices were highest for AIAN, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanic/Latino and Asian apprentices — all of whom earned around $30 per hour (CAP, The Apprenticeship Wage and Participation Gap).
- Occupations of enrollment cohort (e.g., electricians, child care workers, plumbers, nursing aides, orderlies and attendants, carpenters, home appliance repairers, heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, sheet metal workers, electrical power-line installers and repairers, correctional officers) (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Changes in apprenticeship occupations over time (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).

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- Amount of on-the-job training (OJT) and related technical instruction (RTI) required per apprenticeship program and changes in program requirements over time (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Program outcomes for Registered Apprenticeship participants (i.e., completed, cancelled, active) and average time spent in program (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Average Annual Earnings Differences for Apprenticeship Participants Versus Nonparticipants, both short term (i.e., sixth year after enrollment) and medium term (i.e., ninth year after enrollment). Data source: RAPIDS and state UI wage records (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Estimated Expenditures per Apprentice (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Social Costs and Benefits: Medium-Term (i.e., for 9 years after enrollment) and Career (i.e., for 36 years after enrollment) Under Baseline Assumptions. Data source: RAPIDS, state UI wage records, and OA and SAA annual budget estimates. Mathematica calculated social benefits as the sum of productivity benefits and reduced administrative costs of unemployment insurance, welfare, and food stamps (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Female apprentices views of Registered Apprenticeship (RA). Mathematica explored these issues through discussions with women who have participated in the program, executive directors of community-based organizations that received DOL grants from the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) program, and state apprenticeship directors (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Undertake Targeted Outreach: Grantees from Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) and four of the state RA directors agreed that school-age girls should be a target audience for advertisements about RA in the skilled trades. They explained that teaching girls and young women about the trades through career fairs, summer camps, subsidized summer employment programs, and visits to schools may help break down stereotypes that women should not or cannot work in industries such as construction (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Develop Skills and Manage Expectations Through Pre-apprenticeship Training. According to the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) grantees, many women they work with lack the basic occupational skills required to have a successful RA experience in the skilled trades, such as trade-related math skills, Occupational Safety and Health Administration training, and the appropriate level of physical fitness. To address this and prepare women for the rigors of construction apprenticeships, four of the WANTO grantees operate pre-apprenticeship training programs (when they have adequate funding). Through these programs, women acquire the basic required skills before entering an apprenticeship. They also meet tradeswomen (and tradesmen) and learn about the sometimes complicated RA application process. Armed with this knowledge, a woman is better equipped to decide if the trades are truly the best career path for her and select the occupation that best matches her skills, interests, and life circumstances (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).

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- Provide Child Care Support or Classes That Better Accommodate the Schedules of Single Mothers. Finding adequate child care that accommodates rigorous apprenticeship schedules is challenging, as is finding the money to cover these extensive child care needs. RA could consider providing child care subsidies, as suggested by directors in two states and by women respondents. Alternative, more convenient, class schedules or online learning (when possible) could be arranged. A focus on setting up detailed child care plans before the apprenticeship begins, perhaps as a step in the application process, could also be helpful. For example, one Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) grantee requires women to have a child care plan, a backup child care plan, and a backup to their backup plan before helping them get into an RA program. According to the grantee, this has been a successful strategy (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Address the Culture of Male-Dominated Construction Worksites. Help employers create and enforce policies to prevent harassment and discrimination at worksites. The WANTO grantees provide technical assistance to employers to develop methods to recruit women and to develop and implement effective sexual harassment policies. However, because of limited funds, it is not possible to provide these services to all employers that could benefit from them. WANTO grantees suggested that employers use existing resources like Hard Hatted Women's TOOLKIT to develop procedures and train male employees to follow them. This manual reviews effective methods for developing, revising, implementing, and monitoring sexual harassment policies on job sites (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Set goals for enrolling women in RA. State RA offices recommend targets for the percentage of women apprentices in a program based on calculations of the percentage of women in the local area, but these are not quotas. An administrator in one state noted that his state used to have targets for women in construction trades (2 to 6%, for example), but they have not been able to meet those goals for the past 20 years (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Increase monitoring of sponsors and employers. Monitoring RA programs for compliance with equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws focuses on ensuring that program sponsors are making "a good-faith effort" to recruit women, but it is perhaps less successful in ensuring that women are treated well in the workplace. Although EEO laws offer continual protection to workers from harassment or discrimination, and women can make a complaint at any time, women and the WANTO grantee directors stated that harassment and discrimination are prevalent across construction industry worksites. Moreover, some women we spoke to had hesitated to file complaints for fear of being labeled troublemakers or inviting further harassment (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).
- Connect Women with Effective Mentors and Peer Support. The learn-while-working model of apprenticeships means that new apprentices rely on peers at the worksite to teach them vital occupational skills and help them acclimate to workplace cultures and norms. The WANTO grantees emphatically suggested that apprenticeship programs should teach effective mentorship techniques to all workers. State RA directors from two states concurred that connecting women to a mentor is the single most important form of support for women in the program (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).

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Practices and Policies

Practices

- Internship programs for youth and young adults also have shown encouraging findings. A study of the Young Adult Internship Program (now known as Intern & Earn), which offers disconnected youth a 10- to 12-week paid internship, along with job readiness workshops and individualized supports, found that the program increased earnings for participants a year after completing their internship (EW Framework).
- YearUp — which offers six months of intensive training followed by paid six-month internships in the fields of information technology and financial operations to youth from low-income households — improved earnings measured three years after participation (though not after four years) (EW Framework).
- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) recommends that youth programs include multiple elements, including education and other supportive services, work experience, occupational skills training, mentoring, leadership development opportunities, and follow-up support (EW Framework).
- Sector-oriented training programs are designed to prepare workers for a particular industry or sector in demand by local employers. There are several examples of sector-oriented training programs that have proven effective in improving long-term employment, earnings, and educational attainment outcomes for participants. For example, the WorkAdvance model, which provides employee assessments, career readiness services, occupational skills training, and job development and placement services in different sectors, led to higher rates of credential attainment of 26 percentage points and increased earnings by an average of almost $3,000 several years after participation in the program (EW Framework).
- The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership's sectoral employment program provides training lasting two to eight weeks, along with case management and job placement assistance. It has been shown to increase earnings by more than $6,000, on average, over two years after acceptance into the program (EW Framework).
- Common industries targeted by sector-oriented training programs include health care, information technology, manufacturing, and transportation. Research suggests that key aspects of effective sector-oriented job training programs are on-the-job training and technical instruction that lead to an industry-recognized credential in demand by local employers, job search assistance and placement supports, and post-employment job retention services (EW Framework).
- Intentionally design and structure career pathways to enable students to further their education, secure a job, and advance in employment. A basic career pathway model includes multiple entry points to facilitate access to training in occupational skills and knowledge valued by employers and stackable credentials that match labor market demand. Multiple exit points aligned with employment opportunities offer participants flexibility to access employment at different stages of the career ladder. Individuals may enter and exit career pathways at multiple points as they advance in their careers (What Works Clearinghouse, Designing and Delivering Career Pathways at Community Colleges).
- Deliver contextualized or integrated basic skills instruction to accelerate students' entry into and successful completion of career pathways (What Works Clearinghouse, Designing and Delivering Career Pathways at Community Colleges).
- Offer flexible instructional delivery schedules and models to improve credit accumulation and completion of non-degree credentials along career pathways. Students must balance their education and training with jobs, families, and other obligations. Often, that can make traditional course formats and schedules problematic. Flexible delivery of instruction,

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through non-traditional course times and/or online or self-paced courses, can help students combine college with other commitments to facilitate access, and progress along, career pathways. Acceleration strategies, including awarding credit for prior learning and offering competency-based courses, can also help ensure that students acquire — and demonstrate mastery of — both technical and basic skills as they progress along a career pathway (What Works Clearinghouse, Designing and Delivering Career Pathways at Community Colleges).

- Provide coordinated comprehensive student supports to improve credit accumulation and completion of non-degree credentials along career pathways. Students often need to navigate a variety of academic and non-academic challenges that can affect their ability to complete coursework and progress toward earning a credential. These challenges include choosing the right program of study and career, balancing education with family and work obligations, and covering tuition costs and related educational expenses. Providing comprehensive student supports in a coordinated fashion helps students to be resilient to these challenges. The What Works Clearinghouse expert panel believes colleges should provide a broad range of academic and non-academic, career, and financial support services. These may include proactive academic advising, mentoring, coaching, counseling, career navigation, and financial aid, as well as referral to other support services. The panel believes these student supports should be intentionally integrated into the student experience so they are unavoidable as students progress along their career pathway — from intake to completion (What Works Clearinghouse, Designing and Delivering Career Pathways at Community Colleges).
- Develop and continuously leverage partnerships to prepare students and advance their labor market success. Career pathways that leverage employment-focused partnerships offer students both classroom- and work-based experiences to acquire the skills needed to be ready for work on day one. The benefits of investing in, building, and deepening employment-focused partnerships include: (a) improving the relevance and alignment of the curriculum to employer or industry needs; (b) expanding the opportunities for students to engage meaningfully with employer partners through employer presentations, onsite visits, work-based learning opportunities, and career fairs; and (c) increasing the potential for job placement and advancement. Ultimately, improving student labor market outcomes benefits students, employers, and colleges alike. There is an incentive for administrators, faculty, and staff to work together with employment-focused partners to design, implement, and continuously evaluate career pathways (What Works Clearinghouse, Designing and Delivering Career Pathways at Community Colleges).
- Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is a career-training program that offers structured on-the-job training combined with related technical instruction tailored to industry needs. The program, created in 1937, seeks to produce well-trained workers whose skills are in high demand. In 2010, almost 450,000 people across the nation were enrolled in RA. Apprenticeship programs range from one to six years and are offered in approximately 1,000 occupations, including the traditional skilled trades such as electrician, plumber, and carpenter, as well as such occupations as truck driver, child care worker, nursing aide, and correctional officer. For apprentices, RA provides on-the-job training, related technical instruction, incremental wage increases as skills are attained, and, upon completion, nationally recognized certification in the chosen career area. (Mathematica, An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States).

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- Support apprenticeship systems and program designs through support models, like Jobs for the Future's Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, which aims to connect a diverse population of youth and adults to quality jobs and enable businesses to develop workers with the skills they need to grow (Jobs for the Future).
- Leverage third party, external support to employers for building high-quality apprenticeship programs. Creating and sustaining high-quality apprenticeship programs poses significant challenges for many employers, particularly small and midsize businesses. In addition to demanding substantial resources, apprenticeships are difficult to develop and require time, training expertise, and organizational capacity — resources that many employers feel they lack . Without external support to help employers establish and manage apprenticeship initiatives, scaling such programs nationally remains a formidable task (Jobs for the Future).
- Apprenticeships: Apprenticeship models involve an industry- and employer-driven structured approach to occupational training. Apprenticeship models typically combine paid, work-based learning; on-the-job training and mentorship; related technical instruction, often provided in a classroom setting; and an industry-recognized credential upon completion. Apprentices are paid, productive employees of an employer that sponsors or partners with the apprenticeship program. Apprenticeship has long been dominated by the construction trades, and the existing evidence has largely been focused on these trades. However, DOL and state apprenticeship offices have recently focused on expanding apprenticeship programs in sectors with high demand for skilled workers, most notably health care, information technology, and advanced manufacturing. (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Transitional employment: Transitional jobs, also referred to as subsidized jobs, are a form of earn-and-learn employment program that provide participants with work experience and help them find employment by paying all or some of their wages. Transitional employment programs are not always included with other work-based learning models, because these programs offer a mix of strategies. For example, some transitional employment programs provide only work-based income support, whereas others aim to improve future employability by addressing employment-related barriers such as educational attainment and vocational skills. Transitional employment programs may often provide classroom training, job search assistance, and basic education services. They may also conduct job readiness assessments and tailor services based on career interests or by allowing participants to explore different vocational training opportunities (Sattar 2010) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Career pathways programs allow participants to progress through education and training in multiple discrete, stackable components in particular sectors by offering a clear sequence of education coursework or training credentials aligned with employer-validated work readiness standards and competencies (Kozumplik et al. 2011). Career pathways programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act are defined as programs that offer a clear sequence, or pathway, of education coursework and/or training credentials aligned with employer-validated work readiness standards and competencies, and are guided by six essential components. The six components are: (1) building cross-agency partnerships and clarifying roles, (2) identifying industry sectors and engaging employers, (3) designing education and training programs, (4) identifying funding needs and sources, (5) aligning policies and programs, and (6) measuring system change and performance (U.S. DOL and Manhattan Strategy

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Group 2015) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).

- Sector-oriented training programs are related to career pathways programs and aim to provide training that produce workers with the skills needed by groups of employers in a particular industry or sector that has strong local demand and offers the opportunity for career advancement (Schaberg and Greenberg 2020). These programs are often provided through partnerships between employers and training and educational organizations. Input from employers and published labor market information are used to design these programs, and employers also provide work-based training opportunities, such as internships or on-the-job-training, to participants (Holzer 2015). Many sector-oriented training programs also provide participants with job search assistance and job placement services, and some programs continue working with participants after they find a job (Schaberg and Greenberg 2020). Common industries targeted by sector-oriented training programs include health care, information technology, manufacturing, and transportation (Schaberg and Greenberg 2020). (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Incumbent worker training (IWT) programs provide those who are currently employed with services such as mentoring, on-the-job learning, and other training to help with career advancement and job retention. Under WIOA, IWT programs focus on ensuring that employees of a company can acquire the skills necessary to retain employment and advance within the company, or to acquire skills necessary for averting a layoff (WIOA 2017b). (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Elements of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth programs: (a) Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and dropout prevention; (b) Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services; (c) Paid and unpaid work experience; (c) Occupational skills training; (d) Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation and training for a specific occupation; (e) Leadership development opportunities; (f) Supportive services; (g) Adult mentoring; (h) Follow-up services; (i) Comprehensive guidance and counseling; (j) Financial literacy education; (k) Entrepreneurial skills training; (l) Services that provide labor market information; (m) Postsecondary preparation and transition services (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Job Corps, supported under the WIOA legislation, is the nation's largest and most comprehensive career technical training and education program for at□risk youth. The program's objective is to help disconnected youth become more responsible, employable, and productive citizens by providing them with individualized academic education, vocational training, counseling, and job placement assistance. A defining feature of Job Corps is its residential component: Most participants live in a Job Corps center during the week, where all education, training, and counseling services are provided. The National Job Corps Study, a nationally representative randomized controlled trial, found impacts on earnings and hours worked in the fourth year after enrollment (Schochet et al. 2008) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- The YouthBuild program, also funded under WIOA, aims to provide at-risk youth ages 16 to 24 with services to help them attain a high school diploma or equivalent and teaches them construction skills, and it has expanded to offer youth career pathways training in high-demand industry sectors (YouthBuild 2020) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program is a six-month residential program to improve the education, life skills, and employment potential

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of high school dropouts. Upon completing the residential phase of the program, participants receive a year of structured mentoring and are placed in employment, education programs, or the military. An RCT evaluation of the program found that three years after enrollment, program participants had higher rates of employment and earnings than the control group (Millenky et al. 2011) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).

- Year Up provides urban young adults with intensive training and offers internship tracks in desktop/network support, quality assurance, project management, advanced system administration, and cyber security at corporate partner locations. An RCT of Year Up's career pathways program for youth found that the program increased participant earnings, with program participants earning $1,895 more than those in the control group in the sixth and seventh quarters following random assignment (Fein and Hamadyk 2018) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Youth Transition Demonstration (YTD) projects, conducted between 2006 and 2012, were intended to help youth ages 14 to 25 with disabilities who received or were at risk of receiving Social Security disability benefits to become more economically self-sufficient. Participants were offered some combination of benefits counseling, career counseling, and coordination of services, as well as internships, job shadowing, job coaching, competitive paid employment, and empowerment training. An RCT study examining the program implemented in West Virginia observed positive impacts on employment and earnings one year after implementation (Fraker et al. 2012). However, an RCT measuring the impacts for all six YTD project sites 24 months after random assignment found no significant impacts on employment and earnings outcomes (Hemmeter 2014) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Youth Corps provides youth with a stipend as well as educational services, employment and training, and community service activities. An RCT study of Youth Corps found positive impacts on earnings 18 months after enrollment but no impacts on employment or education (Price et al. 2011) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Youth Career Connect (YCC) is a high school-based program designed to encourage America's school districts, institutions of higher education, the workforce investment system, and their partners to scale up evidence-based high school models that will transform the high school experience for America's youth to connect them to college and careers. The program blends features of the career academy and sector-based models, including small learning communities; college preparatory curriculum based on a career theme that aligns occupational training with employer needs; and employer, higher education, and community partners (Maxwell et al. 2019) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Work-based learning, a strategy used in many programs funded by WIOA Youth to provide youth with occupational and basic skills training in a work-like setting, is found to have positive effects on employment and earnings outcomes (Carter et al. 2011) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Genesys Works recruits high schoolers from underrepresented student groups and places them in year-long paid internships in the IT departments of tech and non-tech companies in their senior year, with the hope that the exposure to computers, corporate culture and adult mentors working in professional jobs will get them on the path to a technology-related college career (Genesys Works).

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Policies

- Promote policies that modernize and expand states' apprenticeship system to increase access to high-quality apprenticeships (Jobs for the Future).
- Advocate for expanded Apprenticeship Budget at the Federal Department of Labor. In Fiscal Year 2024, the government spent $184.35 billion on higher education via the Office of Federal Student Aid and Office of Postsecondary Education alone, while the Department of Labor's apprenticeship budget for FY24 was only $285 million. This funding gap reflects a longstanding emphasis on traditional degree programs despite growing recognition that apprenticeships offer a high quality, work-based alternative (Jobs for the Future).
- Strengthen incentives for employer participation (Policy Blueprint to Modernize and Expand Apprenticeships Nationwide).
- Establish a national framework for youth apprenticeship (YA) (Policy Blueprint to Modernize and Expand Apprenticeships Nationwide).
- Expand and strengthen pathways into apprenticeship (Policy Blueprint to Modernize and Expand Apprenticeships Nationwide).
- Position intermediaries as the facilitators of apprenticeship (Policy Blueprint to Modernize and Expand Apprenticeships Nationwide).
- Mitigate the "cliff effect" by disregarding income earned during apprenticeship training from means tested public assistance programs (Policy Blueprint to Modernize and Expand Apprenticeships Nationwide).
- As policymakers continue to make investments necessary to grow apprenticeship programs, their policies must center around women, people of color, and other underrepresented groups to ensure equitable access. Policymakers can help facilitate that access by continuing to support equity intermediaries and other workforce intermediaries that can help with recruitment and the coordination of supportive services such as child care, transportation, and legal assistance. The Center for American Progress has called for investments in labor management-led intermediaries that can fill this role (CAP, The Apprenticeship Wage and Participation Gap).
- Policymakers should work to eliminate occupational segregation in apprenticeship programs, as well as ensure that women and people of color have access to apprenticeship programs in the highest-paying occupations. Analysis by the Center for American Progress shows that gender wage gaps narrow significantly when women have access to male-dominated apprenticeship programs (CAP, The Apprenticeship Wage and Participation Gap).
- Policymakers should ensure that apprenticeship programs are required to comply with the Davis-Bacon Act and support wage progression. These policies help ensure that the highest-wage programs remain well-paying. (CAP, The Apprenticeship Wage and Participation Gap).
- Policymakers should seek to expand apprenticeships into new industries, while working to raise the wages in those industries. For example, child care and hospitality apprenticeships are popular among women, yet both industries are plagued by persistently low wages. It is not enough to expand apprenticeships into new industries; wages in historically undervalued occupations dominated by women must be raised as well. (CAP, The Apprenticeship Wage and Participation Gap).
- Policymakers should also ensure that incarcerated apprentices are paid at least the federal minimum wage, which can help reduce recidivism and facilitate re-entry. (CAP, The Apprenticeship Wage and Participation Gap).
- Policymakers should focus on implementation and enforcement of the 2016 EEO regulations and resist efforts to weaken the labor standards governing apprenticeship programs. (CAP, The Apprenticeship Wage and Participation Gap).

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10 Do young people have educators, supervisors and colleagues of diverse representation?

Why this matters

Early exposure to effective, representative educators, colleagues and managers shapes young people's entry into the labor market: same-race/gender educators raise achievement, persistence and college entry/completion — with especially strong effects for students of color and Black men at HBCUs (Dee 2004; Carrell, Page & West 2010; Gershenson et al. 2022; Purnsley). In the workplace, same-race managers lower quits/dismissals and increase promotions; high-quality management boosts productivity and retention and better-managed firms outperform even after accounting for worker ability (Giuliano, Levine & Leonard 2011; Lazear, Shaw & Stanton 2015; Bender et al. 2018). Diverse, inclusive teams generate more novel, higher-impact ideas and foster engagement — advantages that matter most early in careers — so representation across the education-to-work pipeline strengthens persistence, advancement and long-term mobility (AlShebli et al. 2018; Hofstra et al. 2020; Yang et al. 2022).

Representational racial and ethnic diversity of colleagues and managers

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

System indicators

- Full-time faculty across race and ethnicity, disaggregated by faculty rank (e.g., full professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor/lecturer, no academic rank) (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Representational racial and ethnic diversity of instructors. Studies show students assigned to a teacher with similar demographic characteristics experience positive benefits in terms of academic perceptions and attitudes. A study of a large and diverse community college shows that performance gaps in terms of class dropout rates and grade performance between white and underrepresented minority students falls by 20 to 50% when taught by an underrepresented minority instructor (Egalite, Anna et al.; Fairlie, Robert et al.).
- Students under- or overrepresented by faculty by race and ethnicity. Measured by comparing percent of undergraduates and postsecondary faculty by race and ethnicity (Pew Research).
- Percent of undergraduates who are nonwhite compared to percent of postsecondary faculty who are nonwhite (Pew Research).
- Percent of postsecondary faculty by academic rank disaggregated by race and ethnicity. That is, the

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percent of faculty who are professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, lecturers, and other faculty (Pew Research).

- Diversity in higher education between faculty in STEM and non-STEM fields. Measured by faculty race and gender representation within academic disciplines (Biology, Chemistry, English, etc.) (Brookings).
- Potential wage gaps in higher education based on race, ethnicity, gender (rather than, say, academic field, experience, and research productivity) (Li, Diyi and Cory Koedel).
- Total full-time faculty by race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Percentage distribution of institution presidents by race, ethnicity, and gender (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- College and University administrators by position, race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Racial matches between managers and their employees and the effect on employee quits, dismissals and promotions. A 2011 study by Laura Giuliano, David Levine, and Jonathan Leonard examines how racial matches between managers and their employees affect rates of employee quits, dismissals, and promotions. In analyzing changes in management at hundreds of stores at a large U.S. retail firm, they find a general pattern of own-race bias in that employees usually have better outcomes when they are the same race as their manager. But they do find anomalies in this pattern, particularly when the manager-employee match violates traditional racial hierarchies (for example, nonwhites managing whites) (Guiliano, Laura et. al).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- The National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation have issued statements and funded initiatives focused on increasing diversity in science, with specific attention focused on expanding access to faculty positions (American Council on Education).
- The Consortium for Faculty Diversity in Liberal Arts Colleges offers residential postdoctoral fellowship awards, fostering the ability of member institutions to build relationships and recruit scholars to their institutions (American Council on Education).
- Institutions such as Harvard University (MA), Brown University (RI), and Boston College have developed comprehensive strategies to recruit, hire, and retain a more diverse faculty body. California Lutheran University, a liberal arts college, contracted with the University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education to increase inclusion and mitigate bias in their faculty search and hiring processes (American Council on Education).
- National agencies and consortia such as the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and the Center for the Integration of Teaching, Research, and Learning have encouraged discourse, provided resources, and offered training focused on expanding access to and increasing diversity in the academy at research universities and community colleges, respectively (American Council on Education).
- Philanthropic entities such as the Kresge Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and ECMC Foundation have partnered with the Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions to support faculty and increase access to positions at minority serving institutions, collaborating to offer mentorship, leadership development, and workshops focused on faculty success. These efforts are a promising start, and should be encouraged, evaluated, and expanded to promote meaningful progress toward a more diverse academy (American Council on Education).
- Increasing faculty diversity in the most vulnerable academic positions (i.e., non-tenure track and part-time positions) does not solve the overall

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problem; rather, it creates new, pernicious inequities (American Council on Education).

- One solution is to rethink whether and how institutions recognize the importance and value of multiple forms of scholarly and other contributions to make faculty positions more appealing, and to address the issue of work-life balance (American Council on Education).
- Increasing faculty diversity requires attention to departmental and campus climates and environments, including the provision of support and resources necessary for faculty retention (American Council on Education).

School and workplace racial and ethnic diversity

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Students are exposed to racial and ethnic diversity within their schools. Student body composition by race and ethnicity (%) (Education-to-Workforce).

System indicators

- Student body composition by race and ethnicity (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- Share of students attending high-poverty schools, by race or ethnicity (Urban Institute).
- Student enrollment per institution by race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college by race and ethnicity
- Degree attainment by race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Immediate college enrollment of recent high school or equivalent graduates ages 16 to 24, by race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Undergraduate enrollment across institution sector (i.e., public four-year, private nonprofit four-year, public two-year, for-profit) by race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Graduate enrollment across institution sector by race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- First-year persistence rates of bachelor's degree-seeking students by institution sector (i.e., public four-year, private nonprofit four-year, public two-year, for-profit) and by race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Patterns of borrowing, measured by cumulative debt by sector (i.e. public four-year, private nonprofit four-year, public two-year, for-profit), by degree level (undergraduate, graduate), and by race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Patterns of borrowing, measured by % who borrowed for their education, average amount borrowed per student, disaggregated by race, ethnicity and degree level received (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Unemployment rate for degree holders by race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Median annual earnings of adults ages 25 and older by educational attainment and race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Field of study for bachelor's degree recipients (e.g., STEM fields, business, education, health care fields, social sciences, humanities, general studies) by race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).
- Field of study for associate's degree recipients by race and ethnicity (Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education).

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Practices and Policies

Practices

- Use of research and data tools to understand school and workplace racial and ethnic diversity to understand equity issues and trends (National Equity Atlas).
- Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are internal communities of workers with shared identities and interests. Within a workplace, ERGs can help foster inclusion among employees, improve diversity in recruiting, and promote social impact.
- ERG's role in fostering inclusion: ERGs foster inclusion (defined as the extent to which an organization's systems and people promote a welcoming and fair environment for all employees) in a number of ways, including by helping employees feel that they belong and are part of a community, especially through connections that counter the feelings of being an "only" within an organization. Belonging to an ERG also helps employees feel that they can be authentic at work, and derive more meaning and purpose from the work that they do. Within the workplace, ERG systems and infrastructure strengthen acceptance, camaraderie, and fairness across groups and help members build allyship. ERGs also boost the visibility of underrepresented groups among larger groups in companies (McKinsey, Effective Employee Resource Groups).
- ERG's role in improving diversity. ERGs help with recruiting efforts by participating in talent attraction. The participation of ERG members, for example, in diverse panels and recruiting events, shows potential employees that a welcoming community exists at the organization they are considering joining. To support the career advancement of their members, ERGs foster sponsorship within or outside the ERG. And to improve the retention of underrepresented groups, some ERGs work with HR and leadership to communicate the needs of these groups (McKinsey, Effective Employee Resource Groups).
- ERG's role in promoting external impact. By connecting their members to colleagues and parts of the business looking to embed diversity in operations and core strategy, ERGs drive social impact. Within local communities, ERGs help improve brand visibility through volunteer activities and charitable giving to causes that ERGs consider important. Through ERG inputs, companies better understand their customers and are able to cater products to underrepresented groups. ERGs also help reform business operations, for example, when members of underrepresented groups call attention to unfair processes (McKinsey, Effective Employee Resource Groups).
- Companies can make their ERGs more effective by applying clear purpose to prevent strategic misalignment. To avoid conflicts between the strategies of ERGs and corporate DEI teams, effective DEI teams share their strategies with ERGs so the groups can devote activities and resources to overall DEI strategy. If ERG members want to expand the ERG's remit and activities by, for example, taking a more active role in debiasing internal processes or shaping corporate giving strategy, ERG leadership should decide whether to expand their scope of activities. They can then work with the company's DEI team to ensure that they are connected in their efforts. As a best practice, effective ERGs also focus on strategic alignment and a distinct purpose. They do so by clearly stating their goal and mission and how it ties to the company's DEI strategy; developing a charter that details the ERG's strategic objectives; drafting annual plans that outline initiatives to drive the strategic plan; defining who is accountable for the initiatives and how ERG members support them; establishing metrics to assess the impact of initiatives and programs (outlining how ERGs benefit employees, the organization, and potentially the community, depending on ERG goals); soliciting feedback and analyzing those metrics; and then making adjustments to ERG goals and initiatives (McKinsey, Effective Employee Resource Groups).

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- Companies can make their ERGs more effective by providing deliberate, detailed communications to eliminate the disconnect between expectations and reality. Effective ERG leaders align with their company's DEI team and communicate extensively about the ERG's purpose and goals. At a town hall, for example, ERG leaders provide a coherent overview of all ERGs, their purpose, the groups they serve, and how each employee can get involved, as well as the connection between ERG activities and the overall company DEI strategy. As a best practice, effective ERGs focus on generating employee interest and awareness, both for the ERGs themselves and for the activities and initiatives that they provide for their members. They share information using the company's communication channels; ensure that joining ERGs is easy; engage members through frequent communications and community-building events, ensuring that ERG members meet one another; and empower members to take action to further the goals of the ERG (McKinsey, Effective Employee Resource Groups).
- Companies can make their ERGs more effective by administering sound execution to avoid uneven levels of leadership support. Effective companies create a centrally aligned approach to allocating ERG funding and leadership support. As a best practice, effective ERG leaders take advantage of strong connections within their organization to get access to the right people and funding required to sharply execute their initiatives. Depending on the ERG's purpose and goals, the connections could be to other ERGs, to internal functions (such as recruiting and social responsibility), or to members of senior leadership who can help provide input on business topics and support the ERG at large. Effective ERGs also track the outcomes of their work and report them to leadership and their members. Common metrics tracked by effective ERGs include overall membership, event participation, member experience and sentiment, and intersectional demographics, such as race and gender within an LGBTQ+ ERG (McKinsey, Effective Employee Resource Groups).
- Companies can make their ERGs more effective by marshaling organizational support to lessen the burden on ERG leaders. ERG leaders often bear the burden of additional but uncompensated work on top of their regular responsibilities. Their ERG work is often made more difficult because many ERGs don't share practices or resources with one another. We have observed individual ERGs at the same company managing membership lists, communications, and events without sharing any of these resources. Companies may wish to consider recognizing and rewarding those who lead and run ERGs. Some companies compensate ERG leaders for their ERG work and make ERG responsibilities a formal part of leaders' roles, covered in their performance reviews. Effective organizations also provide ERG leadership with professional-development options, networking opportunities, and access to company leaders. As a best practice, leading companies ensure alignment among senior leaders about the role of ERGs as an important and necessary part of both employee experience and retention, particularly for traditionally underrepresented demographics. Leaders should view ERG participation and involvement as net benefits for both the employees themselves and for the company as a whole — and provide ERG leaders the room to carve out time for their ERG responsibilities (McKinsey, Effective Employee Resource Groups).

Policies

- Creating more equitable school attendance boundaries (Urban Institute).
- Developing centralized school lottery application systems that prioritize school diversity (Urban Institute).
- Ending school and neighborhood segregation, including by expanding affordable housing in resource-rich neighborhoods and reforming

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zoning policies to allow for more diverse, high-density, mixed-income communities (Urban Institute).

- Implementing more equitable school funding policies and advocating for reforms to state and federal funding (Urban Institute).
- Rethink school district lines by enrolling students across district lines. District lines are responsible for roughly 60% of segregation in schools. State policymakers should invest in the creation or expansion of interdistrict transfer programs and magnet schools to enroll students across district lines. Controlled choice approaches can succeed with the right design elements to help advance integration rather than facilitating segregation. These elements include four things: (a) Free transportation to make program participation a meaningful option for all families; (b) Fair, transparent, and inclusive lotteries to ensure true diversity; (c) Ongoing, extensive multilingual outreach and communication to families in a wide range of neighborhoods; (d) School siting policies that ensure that historically underserved students are not asked to bear disproportionate commuting burdens (Brown's Promise, Fulfilling Brown's Promise: A State Policy Agenda).
- Rethink school district lines by changing district lines. State leaders should consider changing existing lines. In many cases, shifting a district line by a matter of blocks can dramatically reduce segregation; in other cases, it may make sense to consider shifting to truly countywide school districts or pursuing other consolidation strategies. Strategically revising district lines can enhance diversity and improve resource equity (Brown's Promise, Fulfilling Brown's Promise: A State Policy Agenda).
- Rethink school district lines by strengthening anti-secession laws to prevent continued district fracturing and segregation. Without careful attention, efforts to promote integration may be met with backlash and backsliding. This is what happened in Tennessee after education leaders pursued an innovative effort to consolidate Memphis Schools into Shelby County School District, which would have integrated school districts and increased access to resources for the predominantly Black students in Memphis (Brown's Promise, Fulfilling Brown's Promise: A State Policy Agenda).
- Foster positive student experiences in integration efforts by promoting educator quality and diversity. A truly integrated school is staffed by diverse, high-quality, well-supported educators. State leaders should – every time they invest in an integration program – also do the following: (1) Publish annual educator quality and diversity data in the schools and districts impacted by the initiative, and how they compare to other schools in the surrounding district(s); (2) Set educator diversity, quality, and support goals in the schools and districts that participate, including timelines with interim targets; (3) Identify state resources to support educator quality, diversity, and support in schools and districts that participate; (4) Invest in opportunities to prepare, support, and retain teachers of color in the schools and districts that participate; (5) Require and fund ongoing, job-embedded, evidence-based professional learning for educators in schools and districts that participate, including support for understanding adult mindsets and asset-based pedagogies; anti-bias training; and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging training (Brown's Promise, Fulfilling Brown's Promise: A State Policy Agenda).
- Foster positive student experiences in integration efforts by encouraging meaningful student, family, and community engagement. State leaders should — every time they invest in an integration program — also provide guidance, training, and funding to local leaders that is focused on community engagement. This support should focus on four actions that will help educators in integrating schools: (a) Engaging families that live further from a particular school or who speak different languages. This is

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particularly important for magnet schools and other public, choice-based integration efforts, which cannot create diversity if diverse families are not aware of, connected to, and excited about sending their children to the schools; (b) Leveraging community-based organizations (CBOs) in both the "sending" and "receiving" communities to partner with a school to accelerate student learning and meet whole-child needs; (c) Creating parent and family advisory councils with power to participate in decision-making about a school's programming, practices, and policies. These councils should include meaningful representation of families from underrepresented communities; (d) Providing ongoing financial and personnel support for the daily work of authentic community engagement (Brown's Promise, Fulfilling Brown's Promise: A State Policy Agenda).

- Foster positive student experiences in integration efforts by ensuring all students have access to advanced coursework. Districts working to integrate schools are historically prone to segregate students within "integrated" buildings via biased academic tracking policies. State leaders should require — and fund — all schools, and especially those participating in an integration program, to do two things: (a) Conduct universal screening for participation in gifted and talented programs at the elementary level. For an example, see Maryland's universal screening requirement; and (b) Implement automatic enrollment policies that put all students who demonstrate readiness on one or more of a wide variety of valid metrics (including grades, end of course assessments, standardized tests, and teacher recommendations) into advanced courses (Brown's Promise, Fulfilling Brown's Promise: A State Policy Agenda).

School and workplace socioeconomic diversity

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Students are exposed to socioeconomic diversity within their schools. Student body composition by income (Education-to-Workforce).
- Share of students attending high-poverty schools, by race or ethnicity. Students from families with low incomes and students of color achieve better academic outcomes when they attend more economically and racially diverse schools (Urban Institute).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Use of research and data tools to understand school and workplace socioeconomic diversity to understand equity issues and trends (National Equity Atlas).
- Frequent student interactions with diverse peers. A study by N.A. Bowman found that rare or moderate diversity interactions in college are associated with virtually no growth (and sometimes even slight declines) in leadership skills, psychological well-being, and intellectual engagement, whereas very frequent diversity interactions are associated with considerable growth. The results are similar regardless of students' race, institutional characteristics, and whether the interactions are interracial or across multiple forms of difference (The Curvilinear Relationship between College Diversity Interactions and First-Year Student Outcomes).
- Broad, skills-based hiring processes help counter existing bias: In the hiring process, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives often expand outreach and recruitment efforts to reach qualified diverse candidates. This often means dedicated staff and the involvement

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of human resources departments. Indeed, a recent study of major employers found that employers with more centralized points of contact during the hiring process were less likely to discriminate by not interviewing qualified Black candidates. Research shows that after employers began specific efforts at broad-based recruiting, representation in management showed statistically significant increases for white women, Black men and women, Hispanic women, and Asian American men and women. Employers with employee resource groups are even more effective at recruiting qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds, as these groups take charge of making sure recruitment happens. Furthermore, hiring practices structured to emphasize necessary skills and qualifications, rather than subjective impressions, maximize the chances that selections are fair (National Institute for Workers' Rights).

- Diversity officers help minimize discriminatory hiring. To reinforce these efforts, the appointment of diversity, equity and inclusion officers promotes accountability for anti-discrimination practices across an organization. Research shows that diversity managers and diversity, equity and inclusion task forces are some of the most effective mechanisms for driving fair workplace reforms (National Institute for Workers' Rights).
- Pay audits and structured evaluations can remedy bias. Regular pay audits are also essential for identifying compensation disparities, particularly those based on gender and race. These audits are particularly important as discriminatory practices can compound over time through biased performance evaluations. Women at work are in a "double bind": they are penalized more than men for being too aggressive, and yet also penalized for not being aggressive enough. Organizations should implement structured evaluation systems that use clear, job-specific criteria and emphasize measurable contributions over subjective assessments (National Institute for Workers' Rights).
- Formal mentorship programs help prevent discrimination in promotions. Women and people of color are at a disadvantage in getting promotions because they are less likely to be sponsored by white men in senior positions. Research demonstrates that more formal programs lead to significant increases in the representation of Black women, as well as Latino and Asian American men and women, in management positions. In-house management training programs and transparent nomination processes further enhance workforce diversity and increase diverse representation in leadership roles. Additionally, tracking the distribution of high-impact projects and leadership opportunities ensures fair access to career advancement. Furthermore, inclusion efforts encompass a wide range of practices such as providing physical accommodations like ramps, offering parental leave policies, and creating spaces for religious practices like prayer rooms. These measures both support workers and help an organization comply with equal opportunity laws (National Institute for Workers' Rights).

Policies

- Creating more equitable school attendance boundaries (Urban Institute).
- Developing centralized school lottery application systems that prioritize school diversity (Urban Institute).
- Ending school and neighborhood segregation, including by expanding affordable housing in resource-rich neighborhoods and reforming zoning policies to allow for more diverse, high-density, mixed-income communities (Urban Institute).
- Implementing more equitable school funding policies and advocating for reforms to state and federal funding (Urban Institute).

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- Employer policies to improve workplace diversity: Invest in Diversity Initiatives. Investing in DEI initiatives can take several forms in business. For example, Walmart invests in DEI by offering a Supplier Inclusion Program that supports businesses and suppliers from communities often underrepresented in large-scale retail. Companies like Salesforce also emphasize DEI education. Through its partnership with professional skills-based platform Trailhead, employees can take courses and earn certifications in subjects such as inclusion guidelines for data visualization and inclusive content creation. According to the company's Annual Equality Update, its commitment to DEI education and inclusive hiring tactics has resulted in nearly 51 percent of U.S. employees coming from underrepresented groups (Harvard Business School Online).
- Employer policies to improve workplace diversity: Offer Bias Training Sessions. Stereotypes — whether blatant or unconscious — can negatively impact your organization and result in decreased motivation and employee engagement. One way to overcome workplace stereotypes is by offering unconscious bias training sessions to increase employees' awareness of implicit biases. For example, the Implicit Association Test (IAT) — developed by professors from Harvard University, the University of Washington, and the University of Virginia — helps identify implicit associations or stereotypes you might be unaware of. You can also provide employees the opportunity to earn a business ethics certificate to gain skills to identify and surmount biases. Don't be afraid to make training mandatory. According to Pew Research, approximately 53 percent of employees find DEI training helpful, with only 13 percent finding it unhelpful. In addition, companies like Google provide this type of training through workshops that more than half of its employees participate in (Harvard Business School Online).
- Employer policies to improve workplace diversity: Promote Pay Equity. Ensuring employees earn equitable salaries is crucial to championing DEI. For instance, in the U.S., women earn approximately 82% of what men do — a figure that's only increased two percent since 2002. While various factors impact that statistic, it's critical for your organization to offer equitable compensation, regardless of gender (Harvard Business School Online).
- Employer policies to improve workplace diversity: Prioritize Developing Talent from Underrepresented Groups. Developing talent from underrepresented groups is crucial to fostering diversity and inclusion. By providing opportunities for personal and professional growth, your organization can help address historical workplace disparities. For example, Leadership, Ethics, and Corporate Accountability highlights Google's push for DEI initiatives, including: Funding research on why fewer students who identify as female or are from underrepresented groups enroll in computer science programs; Offering financial support to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs in underrepresented communities; Forming recruiting teams that establish a "pipeline program" with universities that have large populations of underrepresented students (Harvard Business School Online).

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Local Workforce Systems

When local workforce systems partner with postsecondary institutions and CTE pathways, they ensure education and training are aligned with real job needs and opportunities. This collaboration helps employers hire skilled local workers while supporting individuals in career growth and advancement. The result is stronger local economies and more inclusive opportunities for long-term success.

11 Are workforce intermediaries working to bring together partners in the workforce system to develop and coordinate workforce strategies, policies and provide funding and capacity to support a cohesive, aligned workforce system?

Why this matters

Effective workforce intermediaries make local talent systems deliver real results — accessible, high-quality jobs for workers and reliable pipelines for employers. By convening employers, education providers, government and philanthropy, they coordinate policies and services, improve job quality and access and align efforts to local demand (Urban Institute). They also braid Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and non-WIOA resources in a shifting funding landscape — where state investments rose even as some federal training dollars declined — to target dollars where they have the greatest impact (Education-to-Workforce Framework). Finally, high-performing partnerships use data for continuous learning to remove structural barriers and they sustain impact through strong leadership, dedicated staff, clear roles and diversified funding (National Fund for Workforce Solutions).

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Expenditures on workforce development programs: Workforce development programs, such as apprenticeships and job training programs, benefit both job seekers and employers. For instance, apprenticeship programs offer valuable training and skills development for participants while providing employers with a reliable talent pipeline. However, workers of color and women historically have received lower-quality training and had insufficient connections to the labor market. Information on the level of government expenditures is critical to assessing whether states can provide high-quality workforce development programs for those who need it. The amount of state funding allocated to workforce development more than doubled between 2011 and 2020, though federal spending to support employment and training declined during this time (Education to Workforce).

Although federal programs under WIOA and other legislation support the public workforce system through funding distributed by state and local workforce development boards (WDBs), local systems also leverage other resources to sustain workforce programs and initiatives prioritized by leaders and other stakeholders. National and local foundations may support local workforce efforts. State and local government funding may also contribute to local workforce development. Four strategies to provide funding and resources are listed below (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).

Data-Informed Strategy and Continuous Learning: A data-informed strategy will ensure that employer and worker needs are met. Partnerships must gather and analyze labor market information and program data two learn more about what works and why and to understand the demand in the local workforce. Armed with this information, employers and partnership staff can develop continuous learning and improvement plans and identify the system changes needed to overcome the structural barriers to accessible employment and labor market mobility (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

Operational Capacity of Workforce Development Organizations: Effectively managed industry partnerships need committed partners at all levels. Strong leadership and dedicated staff, with the knowledge and skills to engage in the work and plan for sustainability, can help the partnership achieve long-term success. Dedicated funding from diverse funding streams and partners are essential to meeting the goals and objectives of the partnership and workforce investment in cross-sector approaches to meet labor market demands (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

Expenditures on workforce development programs *Key source: E-W Framework*

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Educational attainment of workforce program participants. Number of individuals who completed a degree, certification, credential, or other measures of educational achievement (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- Percent of workforce program participants who entered employment. Individuals who entered employment and/or were enrolled in education or training after program exit (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- Percent of workforce program participants who retained employment. Individuals who retained employment and/or were enrolled in education or training after program exit (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- Number of customers served. Individuals who received services through the Texas workforce system (Texas Workforce Investment Council).

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- How many students at a college or university are taking internships? The National Survey of College Internships (NSCI) found that far fewer college students (just 21.5%) reported taking an internship than previously reported. Prior studies have estimated that 50%-60% of college students have taken an internship. NSCI's data from 12,130 students suggest that these estimates may be too high, though the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic should be considered (National Survey of College Internships).
- Are there differences in internship participation by race, gender, first-generation college student status, and so on? The National Survey of College Internships (NSCI) found that internship participation may vary by racial identity, first-generation status and other attributes of students, disciplines and institutional characteristics (National Survey of College Internships).
- Which students are experiencing obstacles to internships, what are these obstacles and how can we change our programs to ensure equitable access to internships for all students? The National Survey of College Internships (NSCI) found an alarming number of non-interns (67.3% or 6,407 students) wanting to take an internship but not being able due to a variety of obstacles, thus revealing a considerable issue with equitable access. College and universities should pay more attention to adequately advertising internship positions, exploring how to reach busy and/or working students and engaging employers in creating more internships or other more accessible forms of work-based learning (e.g., online internships, campus-based experiences, etc) (National Survey of College Internships).
- Length of internship program: The National Survey of College Internships (NSCI) found the average length of an internship to be 18.3 weeks, a considerable investment in student (and employer) time (National Survey of College Internships).
- Student satisfaction with internship: The National Survey of College Internships (NSCI) found students on average reported being very satisfied with their internship experiences, but 1 in 4 reported less than satisfactory experiences. The large number of students reporting high rates of satisfaction is good news for higher education, but the 25% of students with less than satisfactory experiences indicates that considerable work remains to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality experience (National Survey of College Internships).
- Quality of supervision and mentoring: The National Survey of College Internships (NSCI) found students rated their supervisors' support for their well-being (M=4.2 on a 1-5 scale) more highly than their task-specific mentoring (M=3.45). These results suggest that while supervisor support appears to be of high quality, colleges, universities and employers could provide more training for supervisors on how to be effective mentors with respect to task performance (National Survey of College Internships).
- Are students experiencing racial, gender, or other forms of discrimination during the internship experience? The National Survey of College Internships (NSCI) found that while the number of students reporting discrimination at the internship site on the basis of their race, gender, sexuality, disability status, and/or other personal attributes is relatively low (3.3%), the fact that 86 students reported such behaviors is cause for concern. Campuses should provide training and resources for students, academic advisors and internship supervisors regarding anti-discrimination policies in the workplace and what to do in the event that a student experiences inappropriate behavior or treatment (National Survey of College Internships).

System indicators

- The amount of funding dedicated to workforce development programs as a percentage of total educational funding in a state (Education to Workforce Framework).

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- State investment in workforce preparation and development (that is, the amount states spent on education, training and recruitment of workers with programs concentrating on improving the skills base and job placement of a state and/or community's labor base) (C2ER, State Investment in Workforce Development on the Rise).
- Federal funding for workforce preparation and development (e.g., through U.S. Department of Labor programs) (C2ER, State Investment in Workforce Development on the Rise).
- Does the state provide workforce development funding through the following sources: (a) the department of labor and/or economic development; (b) the state education agency; (c) the state higher education office; (d) the community and/or technical college system; (e) other departments? (Education Commission of the States, Workforce Funding).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Funder alliances engage local workforce stakeholders to identify challenges where combined funding and resources can address workforce issues. For example, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions uses a collaborative funding model to pool financial support from various national foundations and local philanthropists interested in contributing to the same goal (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- State governments award performance-based funding to community colleges that reach a prescribed level of success in students completing programs or earning a degree. This performance-based approach is an alternative to the more traditional method of reimbursing colleges according to the number of students enrolled (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Community colleges and other training providers "blend" or "braid" funding to take advantage of various funding streams, enabling students to access a range of supports. Blended and braided funding both involve combining two or more sources of funding to support a particular program or activity; braided funding tracks how much of each source has been spent, while blended funding does not differentiate between streams once funds have been combined (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Local governments use social impact bond models such as Pay for Success, where private sector funds are used to cover up-front costs for workforce development programs with the expectation that investors may receive a "return" based on savings achieved through program success, such as reduced dependence on public assistance. Pay for Success programs are rigorously evaluated by third parties to determine if they produce intended outcomes. Social impact bonds allow governments to try new and innovative approaches without financial risk (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- SkillWorks: SkillWorks is a 10-year, $25 million initiative that seeks to improve workforce development in Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by pooling funds from foundations and other charitable entities. These combined resources support promising workforce partnerships focused on industry sectors, such as collaborations between employers and community colleges to provide industry-approved occupational training programs. The initiative is a collaboration among philanthropy, government, community-based organizations, employers and other stakeholders that want to help lowskill, low-income individuals move to family-sustaining jobs while also helping employers hire and retain skilled workers. The funder alliance model created by SkillWorks has been used by cities around the United States, as well as by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions (http://nfwsolutions.org/), which supports several regional and local workforce

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funding collaboratives (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).

- Redesigning for equity in workforce development would ensure job quality for all workers, increase competitiveness and drive inclusionary growth (CAP, A Design for Workforce Equity).
- Apprenticeships benefit apprentices and employers alike. Apprentices learn on the job, obtain credentials, contribute to meaningful work and earn a salary. Employers have loyal and productive workers, higher retention rates and the opportunity to train apprentices according to their own standards and procedures (Urban Institute, Public Sector Apprenticeship).
- Hire apprentices from the local community, which can reduce the need for other training programs. As with private employers, government agencies can use apprenticeships to fill job openings and those vacated by retiring employees, maintaining staffing and service continuity (Urban Institute, Public Sector Apprenticeship).
- Public sector apprenticeships can attract and expose young people to diverse career opportunities in government. Engaging and training young people for public sector careers can upgrade the quality and quantity of public services, thereby benefiting all residents (Urban Institute, Public Sector Apprenticeship).
- Finally, when public officials use apprenticeships for their own talent development, they can be more convincing in persuading private employers to do so as well (Urban Institute, Public Sector Apprenticeship).
- Examples of workforce development initiatives focusing on manufacturing, professional, scientific and technical services: (1) the American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI) aimed to increase registered apprenticeship in nontraditional occupations, such as manufacturing, healthcare and computer/IT, and to populations typically underrepresented in apprenticeship, including women and people of color; (2) Pledge to America's Workers sought commitments from companies to provide job training and apprenticeship opportunities. Several manufacturing companies were part of this initiative, pledging to expand workforce training in the sector; (3) Manufacturing USA is a network of 14 institutes dedicated to advancing manufacturing innovation, which also involves workforce development. These institutes focus on research and development in manufacturing technologies and creating training programs to develop skilled workers for advanced manufacturing jobs (C2ER, Powering Industry Growth Through Workforce Investment).
- Functions of a local workforce system: The programs, services and activities implemented by organizations in local workforce systems serve five major functions: (1) Providing employment services to help workers of all ages explore career interests, find jobs and advance; (2) Providing education and training to prepare workers for careers by developing occupational and technical skills; basic academic skills, such as reading, writing and math; and career readiness skills, such as teamwork, critical thinking, professionalism, conflict resolution and communication; (3) Providing supportive services can include both personal or academic supports to help people be successful in education, training or work; (4) Supporting employers' human resources needs, including defining hiring needs and job requirements, advertising for available positions, recruiting and screening candidates, onboarding new employees and supporting and upskilling incumbent workers; (5) Improving job quality and access for job seekers and workers by working with employers to adopt "high road" strategies (better pay, predictable schedules and other benefits) or advocating for changes, such as in local or state wage policies, hours and working conditions (Urban Institute, Guide to Learning about Local Workforce Systems).
- Organizations in local workforce systems perform various functions and take on varying roles, depending on their organizational type

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and mission. Organizations involved in local workforce systems can be grouped into the six categories: (1) Service providers offer education, training, employment and supportive services and include a range of organizations, such as community and technical colleges, high schools, American Job Centers, trade schools, unions and community organizations; (2) Government agencies oversee public workforce programs and funding; (3) Employers and industry and business groups hire and provide training to workers and may partner with local organizations to oversee, design and deliver programs; (4) Foundations and philanthropic organizations provide financial resources to workforce programs and organizations, primarily through grants. Corporations may also support workforce initiatives as part of corporate responsibility efforts; (5) Unions and advocacy organizations seek to change employer practices, working conditions and workforce policies; (6) Collaborative entities bring together partners in the workforce system to identify workforce needs; plan, develop and implement strategies to meet those needs; and raise funds to support these strategies (Urban Institute, Guide to Learning about Local Workforce Systems).

- The people who use the programs and services provided through local workforce systems fall into five general categories: (1) Unemployed workers are jobless, looking for work and available for work. Underemployed workers have part-time, temporary, intermittent, or low-wage work that does not provide enough income to live stably; (2) Youth, typically defined as people ages 16 to 24, may be participating in high school vocational or career technical education programs, attending high school equivalency or adult education classes, enrolled in postsecondary education and training, or receiving employment services; (3) Adults with low basic skills lack the math, reading, writing, or English proficiency skills required to enter postsecondary education or secure a middle- or high-wage jobs; (4) People with personal challenges to work have circumstances that make it difficult to complete training or secure a job, such as a disability, criminal history, housing insecurity, or lack of access to affordable child care; (5) Workers seeking career change or advancement may be experiencing job loss or insecurity, want to work in a more interesting field, or desire to move up from entry-level work. (Urban Institute, Guide to Learning about Local Workforce Systems).
- Coordination and Systems Change: In the context of local workforce systems, systems change refers to strategies that focus on improving coordination, collaboration and alignment across actors, policies and programs in the local workforce system toward specific objectives. Examples of shared objectives include improving accessibility to services for a target population to increase employment outcomes or meeting skilled labor gaps in a specific sector. Organizations within a local workforce system can undertake system change activities toward shared goals, including the following activities: promoting knowledge sharing; developing shared goals, strategies and plans; using scarce resources more efficiently and effectively. Coordinated approaches to improving employment and training outcomes and meeting stakeholder needs in local areas include sector strategies or partnerships that focus on local or regional needs of a specific sector, collaboration between training providers and employers and career pathway strategies that coordinate. Collaborative entities create or implement coordinated approaches or systems change strategies (Urban Institute, Guide to Learning about Local Workforce Systems).
- Identifying and Leveraging Multiple Sources of Funding: Local workforce system programs and services rely on various funding sources from federal, state and local government, as well as funding from private sources. Local workforce development organizations and policymakers overseeing workforce funding streams use a variety of funding models and initiatives, including

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the following: (a) Blended and braided funding, where individual organizations leverage multiple public and private funding streams to provide a set of programs and services; (b) Collaborative funding models, which pool funding from various foundations and philanthropies to support programs and initiatives with similar models or goals; (c) Performance-based funding, which distributes funds based on participant outcomes (such as completion or earnings) rather than outputs (such as enrollment numbers); (d) Public-private funding, where activities or programs are funded by a partnership between employers or philanthropies and public entities; (e) Social impact bonds, which use private-sector investor funds for workforce programs to create improved outcomes and pass on part of the savings achieved to investors (Urban Institute, Guide to Learning about Local Workforce Systems).

- Many local workforce system organizations and programs collect, analyze and disseminate data to identify needs, inform policy making, measure program progress and improve programs. Strategies using data to inform and improve local workforce system activities include the following: (a) Data sharing of participant information between agencies and organizations to allow education, training and employment programs to better meet participant needs and examine participant outcomes, such as educational attainment, job attainment and wages; (b) Labor market information analysis to identify local area employment growth by sector and potential skills gaps in the local workforce; (c) Performance measurement to help education, training and employment programs identify successes and challenges and improve; (d) Evaluation of programs to determine effectiveness or return on investment, leading to additional funding, program changes, or program replication (Urban Institute, Guide to Learning about Local Workforce Systems).
- Integrated service delivery: Creating more closely integrated services across programs has been an important principle of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), as well as the goal of many recent initiatives aimed at generating efficiencies and reducing challenges in reaching self-sufficiency for individuals and families. Integration of services and programs can impact all areas of operations, including case management approaches, training, staffing, funding and administration. Additionally, integration aims to reduce siloing, or separation and isolation, of programs and services, thus supporting increased access and improved efficiencies (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Co-location, consolidating administrative structures and cross-training. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO 2011) identified both co-location (that is, being located within the same building or facility) and consolidating administrative structures as ways to increase efficiency and improve coordination. At the agency level, 14 states consolidated core WIOA programs under a single agency, thus reducing or removing barriers to coordination. At the local level, the emphasis on co-location, as well as alignment and program coordination under WIOA, enabled partners to work together and streamline services (Dunham et al. 2020) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Shared data and data systems. The Employment and Training Administration encourages states to consider implementing integrated case management data systems across WIOA partner programs (U.S. Department of Labor 2020), and some research supports data-sharing policies to increase participants' access to different benefits (Adams and Spaulding 2018; Durham et al. 2019). Koller and Paprocki (2015) note the benefits of shared data systems between partners within American Job Centers (AJCs) include reducing burden related to data entry and increased ability to track services provided to customers across other programs (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).
- Pooled funding and cost sharing. Under WIOA,

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AJC partners must contribute to infrastructure costs, whether or not they are co-located. As of 2018, this was not the practice in many AJCs, and the expectation for contributing toward infrastructure costs corresponded directly with co-location (Brown and Holcomb 2018) (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Research Portfolio).

Policies

- Public funding is made available for workforce development programs
- Public sector apprenticeships exist nationwide but remain a very small segment of the government workforce. One prominent example of public safety services using an apprenticeship program is the California firefighting apprenticeship program, which has been operating for more than 25 years and has employed more than 10,000 apprentices across 175 fire departments. In Boston, an emergency services apprenticeship program was started in 2018 to attract more diverse candidates and address staffing shortages for emergency medical technicians (EMTs) across the city. These programs provide employment on-ramps to careers, while ensuring residents receive consistent, high quality services from critical government agencies (Urban Institute, Public Sector Apprenticeship).
    - ◊ Example of youth public sector apprenticeship in Kentucky (Automotive technician specialist). In 2018, Kentucky launched several pilot apprenticeship programs as part of a broader strategy related to filling critical skill gaps in the commonwealth's talent pipeline. One program was designed to train automotive technician specialists working for the Transportation Cabinet. The program was created to cultivate the next generation to fill current and future automotive technician jobs across the state's 12 transportation districts.The program also helped apprentices rapidly gain the two years' work experience required for the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification exam, preparing apprentices for a career in both the public and private sectors (Urban Institute, Public Sector Apprenticeship).
    - ◊ Example of youth public sector apprenticeship in Colorado (Teaching assistant). Colorado is facing general teacher shortages in rural areas, as well as increased statewide demand for specialists like early childhood educators, counselors and ESL instructors. To meet such local needs, CareerWise Colorado established a paraprofessional youth apprenticeship program in 2019 and has since worked with the Cherry Creek, Denver, Estes Park and Thompson public school districts to employ high school students in the local elementary schools. Across these four districts every year, 20 to 30 youth apprentices work as teaching assistants with early childhood and elementary-age children. During their program, apprentices divide their time between finishing high school classes, working in elementary schools and taking college courses to further their teaching education. Overall, the program has been successful for school districts, apprentices, students and parents. School districts see apprenticeships as an obvious solution for their staffing requirements and goals to bring more diverse, local staff to the classroom. Apprentices also benefit from the opportunity to learn whether teaching is right for them. Students benefit by having educators and counselors who are as racially and ethnically diverse as their classes. The program's success has spurred additional school districts in Colorado and other states to consult CareerWise on using this model (Urban Institute, Public Sector Apprenticeship).

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- ◊ Example of youth public sector apprenticeship in Maryland (Building maintenance technician). Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), like many school systems in the US, has a talent shortage across a range of occupations beyond teaching, including core administrative and building maintenance roles. To meet PGCPS's talent needs and help young people find career opportunities and employment, the school district started a "school-to-work" apprenticeship model. Select students start an apprenticeship while in high school and transition into full employment in the school system after completing the program. The first program at PGCPS was launched in 2018 with a building maintenance apprenticeship program including 20 students in 11th grade. Despite the challenges for on-the-job learning amid COVID-19, all 20 students in the first cohort graduated and are continuing the final years of their apprenticeships with PGCPS or an industry partner of the school. Hiring for the program's second year paused because of COVID-19, but plans to hire another cohort of 11th graders in the 2021–22 academic school year are under way. PGCPS leaders hope this example will create interest among other school departments to start apprenticeship programs. As the program coordinator noted, "We have many departments like IT, food services, HR, transportation that could all potentially benefit from an apprenticeship program."

- To create a more equitable workforce, policymakers must boldly shift away from presumptions based on the skills narrative to facilitate conditions in which employment risks and insecurities generated during economic change are shared equitably by everyone who has a stake in the economy (CAP, A Design for Workforce Equity).

- Workforce development thinking must shift so that the sole focus is no longer on upskilling but rather on creating a new system in which aggregating employer demand is determined by equity considerations. Supply-side job training interventions alone are insufficient to broadly manage changing employment effects and planning decisions when measured against factors such as stagnant wages, stalled compensation, and increased affordability issues. In order to drive the pursuit of inclusive economic growth, public policy must systemically align multiple mismatches in the labor market (CAP, A Design for Workforce Equity).

  - ◊ Example of increased state funding for workforce development programs: Minnesota's FY2020-21 biennial budget proposed more funding for Youth and Young Adult workforce development programs. Minnesota provided state funding for the Youthbuild program, Youth at Work Competitive Grants, and a Youth Program offer a construction career pathway for at-risk youth and young adults who have dropped out of school, youth with industry-recognized credentials and pre-apprenticeship training in residential construction; and provide summer and year-round employment and training services to low-income and at-risk youth, ages 14 to 24, through a partnership with the Local Workforce Development Boards and Youth Committees. However, the Department of Employment and Economic Development proposed a 6 % decrease in workforce development for FY2020-21 (C2ER, State Investment in Workforce Development on the Rise).

  - ◊ Example of increased state funding for workforce development programs: New Jersey has enhanced and refocused its investment in workforce development and apprenticeship programs over the past two years. There was a 32% increase

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in funding for workforce development programs in FY2019. The vast increase in funding is the result of additional support being put into the state's Manpower and Employment Services and the Work First New Jersey program. The focus of these funding increases being employment and training services, strengthening of workforce development programs in the state. FY2020 budget proposal continues that commitment to workforce initiatives (C2ER, State Investment in Workforce Development on the Rise).

  - ◊ Example of increased state funding for workforce development programs: California has proposed an 11% increase in funding for workforce development programs in FY2020. The Governor's proposed budget has included increased investment for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs and the state's High Road Training Partnership program, a sector partnership initiative of the California Workforce Development Board (C2ER, State Investment in Workforce Development on the Rise).

- Legislation such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in 2021 and the CHIPS and Science Act in 2022 have created training opportunities and encouraged workforce development in the manufacturing and PSTS sectors. These policies aim to strengthen and modernize the U.S. workforce by advancing research, expanding STEM education and equipping workers with the skills needed for a competitive, innovation-driven economy. Both federal and state policymakers have emphasized developing the workforce for these industries. In fact, approximately 40% of all state business incentives directly targeting workforce preparation and development are either in the manufacturing or professional, scientific and technical services (PSTS) industries (C2ER, Powering Industry Growth Through Workforce Investment).
- Some states are supporting growth by partnering with academic institutions to provide training and recruitment, such as the Virginia Talent Accelerator Program. Other states work with middle and high school students to encourage career exploration and engage them with relevant work opportunities such as the Massachusetts high school Apprenticeship Challenge, Nebraska's Developing Youth Talent Initiative and the New York Youth Jobs Program Tax Credit. By supporting workforce development, states hope to encourage growth within priority industries, like manufacturing. Below are some recent examples of how states are leveraging their workforce preparation and development programs to land major manufacturing projects (C2ER, Powering Industry Growth Through Workforce Investment).
- Georgia Quick Start helped the state land Hyundai's first dedicated electric vehicle facility in the U.S. in Bryan County, GA. Their workforce training program will provide customized workforce training free-of-charge. This incentive also helped Georgia secure a Kia training facility in 2008. The evolution of the program to meet modern workforce needs played a key role in helping Georgia land this state-of-the-art facility — a $7.59 billion investment that is projected to create over 8,000 direct jobs (C2ER, Powering Industry Growth Through Workforce Investment).
- Schneider Electric's plant expansion increases the company's energy storage capabilities to meet growing demand. The Missouri One Start program will provide customized recruitment assistance, along with resources to train and upskill new and existing employees. The company invested $73.6 million into the expansion project and received over $4 million in awards from the BUILD Program ($2,000,000), Missouri Works Program ($2,102,697), and Missouri One Start ($150,000). The project will create 241 additional jobs at the plant in Columbia, MO (C2ER, Powering Industry Growth Through Workforce Investment).

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- Hyundai Steel Plant: This first-of-its-kind site marks Hyundai's inaugural North American steel facility to support automotive manufacturing. To support the workforce the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) will develop a new local workforce training center. Hyundai will also have access to LED FastStart's workforce recruitment and training services. The agreement leaves potential for $100 million in performance-based grant awards for infrastructure improvements. Hyundai's $5.8 billion investment in Donaldsonville, LA will create over 1,300 direct jobs (C2ER, Powering Industry Growth Through Workforce Investment).
- Ohio partnered with Anduril to create a 5 million square foot advanced defense manufacturing facility for autonomous systems, weapons and other U.S. national defense products. The $1.5 billion endeavor in Pickaway County, OH represents the largest single job creation and new payroll project in the state's history. In addition to a $70 million award from the Ohio Future Fund, JobsOhio helped secure the project by offering their Job Creation Tax Credit and their Talent Acquisition Services program tools to Anduril. According to the State Business Incentives Database, the Job Creation Tax Credit provides a refundable and performance-based tax credit applied toward the company's commercial tax liability. JobsOhio's Talent Acquisition Services will identify talent challenges and build sustainable talent recruitment strategies for companies to help them acquire human capital (C2ER, Powering Industry Growth Through Workforce Investment)
- A common focus of workforce development programs is offering an incentive for employers to provide training by reimbursing or allowing a tax credit against the training costs. Both the Minnesota Automation Training Incentive Pilot Program and Arizona's Rapid Employment Job Training Grant offer reimbursement for training costs. Minnesota reimburses training costs for small businesses to train existing workers in new automation technology. Employers can apply for grants up to $25,000 to cover the cost of training workers who work full time and earn at least 120% of the federal poverty wage. As a direct response to COVID, Arizona's program reimburses the cost of training for hires made after March 1, 2020. Virginia created the Worker Training Tax Credit to incentivize businesses to not only provide training but also collaborate with middle and high schools to provide manufacturing training or instruction. Companies can receive a 35% tax credit for training costs, up to $500 per worker and $1,000 if the worker's income is below the state median wage. For employers that provide training to middle and high school students, they are eligible for the 35% tax credit on direct training costs (C2ER, New Workforce Development Programs).
- In Massachusetts, the Advanced Analytics-Data Science Internship Program reimburses the cost of intern stipends for students with postsecondary degrees, Bachelor's and above, who intern with a research institution or small business. The reimbursement ranges from $20-$40/hour depending on the education level of the intern (C2ER, New Workforce Development Programs).
- North Carolina's Golden LEAF Opportunities for Work program provides grants up to $500,000 to help the state prepare for job growth, especially jobs that require postsecondary degrees. The program accomplishes this goal through re-engaging individuals in the workforce, providing skills training and postsecondary opportunities and addressing barriers to employment in rural and economically distressed communities. The program targets "disconnected" youth, people who are underemployed and those experiencing long term unemployment (C2ER, New Workforce Development Programs).

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Data-Informed Strategy and Continuous Learning

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Use multiple sources of labor market information: Workforce Development Organizations use economic, industry and employer-specific data to identify labor and skill shortages, job quality issues and disparities in labor market outcomes for frontline workers and people of color. What success looks like: More data from and for employers to identify trends, growth occupations and specific skill and hiring needs becomes available (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Gather quantitative input and feedback: Workforce Development Organizations use feedback from employers, workers and partners to inform the development of equitable goals and strategies to guide program design, implementation, learning and evaluation. What success looks like: Engaged employers use data to guide investments that increase the retention and advancement of frontline workers. A continuous improvement process and better understanding of the root causes of inequities in program access and outcomes (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Define clear outcomes and measures: Workforce Development Organizations collaborate with employers and partners to establish a data-sharing agreement. This should include disaggregated data by race and gender and a mechanism for ensuring data quality. What success looks like: Employers and partners use data to identify solutions to job quality and other issues facing the industry. A clear vision and path for data sharing, reporting and continuous learning for the industry partnership and related programs and activities (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Collect and analyze disaggregated baseline data: Workforce Development Organizations use disaggregated data as a starting point for tracking progress. Report on data over time as part of a continuous learning and improvement process. What success looks like: Better data about populations served, the specific activities, expected outcomes and cost. More investment in populations that experience disparities in outcomes (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Review performance metrics and disaggregated data with partners: Workforce Development Organizations discuss insights and implications for the partnership's work and identify areas of success and improvement. What success looks like: Partners use data to align programs with industry needs and produce equitable outcomes for frontline workers and people of color. Clear benchmarking against peers to learn from similar programs and understand what's working, or not, for different populations (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Use systems thinking to understand root causes of issues. Workforce Development Organizations identify systems that need to be changed by employers, industry and partners to achieve the partnership's goals, address structural racism and reduce barriers to employment and labor market mobility. What success looks like: Systems, policies, programs and practices among partners change to address structural barriers. Partners share an understanding of root causes and systemic solutions to address racial and other disparities in employment and career advancement (National Fund for

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Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- TOOL for using multiple sources of labor market information: Understanding Your Community: Labor Market and Workforce Development System Data Toolkit (CSW) – Use this compilation of data and related resources to help answer questions about local and regional labor markets (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using multiple sources of labor market information: The Racial Equity Index (PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute) – This tool provides a snapshot of how well a community is doing on racial equity compared to its peers. It can be used to develop a snapshot for your industry or region (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using multiple sources of labor market information: A Guide to Accessing and Using Workforce Data (Abt Associates) – Use this overview of the different types of data and how to acquire and use data from administrative sources to guide a discussion about what data is accessible in your region (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for gathering qualitative input and feedback: Making Data More Useful (National Fund) – This report identifies and summarizes effective strategies to gather data and use data to understand participant progress and make program improvements (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for gathering qualitative input and feedback: How to Use Qualitative Research in a Workforce Collaborative (National Fund) – Use this as a guide to embed qualitative research into program design and improvement (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for defining clear outcomes and measures: Measuring Business Impact: A Workforce Development Practitioners Guide and Lessons Learned (Commonwealth Corporation) – Use this overview of measuring business impact of sector-based and other workforce development projects to guide how your industry partnership measures success (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for defining clear outcomes and measures: A Point-Menu System for Measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers (Aspen Institute) – Use this report to identify which indicators of effectiveness in meeting employer needs (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for collecting and analyzing disaggregated baseline data: Insights for Action: MSP Regional Sector Analysis (RealTime Talent) – This report documents the labor shortage and skills gap as a baseline for the Minneapolis–Saint Paul region and the impact of workforce programs and initiatives on closing those gaps. Use this to understand how collecting baseline disaggregated data can inform workforce programs and initiatives (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for collecting and analyzing disaggregated baseline data: Manufacturing Employer Survey (SkillUp Washington) – This report provides an example of how an industry partnership might gather information from employers to strengthen the talent pipeline to high demand entry and mid-level manufacturing jobs. This approach can be applied across industries (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for collecting and analyzing disaggregated baseline data: The Essentials of Disaggregated Data for Advancing Racial Equity (Race Matters Institute) – Use this to understand the basics of how to disaggregate data (National Fund for

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Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- TOOL for reviewing performance metrics and disaggregated data with partners: The Three Elements of Continuous Learning: Priorities, Plans, and Culture (Collective Impact Forum) – Use this framework to think about how to integrate continuous learning into collaborative efforts (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for reviewing performance metrics and disaggregated data with partners: Learning to Thrive: How data can fuel better workforce development results (CSW) – Industry partnerships can use lessons from the Twin Cities benchmarking initiative and data culture self-assessment to discuss the importance of data collection, learning and continuous improvement (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for reviewing performance metrics and disaggregated data with partners: Data-Driven Feedback Loop Examples (Living Cities) – This tool provides a series of templates/options for developing data-driven feedback loops that are proven to help you change behavior. Use the templates to develop a data-driven feedback loop for your industry partnership (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using systems thinking to understand root causes of issues: Changing Workforce Systems: A Framework for Describing and Measuring Systems Change (Urban Institute) – Use this conceptual framework of systems change goals, activities and measurement options to guide discussions of systems change with industry partnership stakeholders (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using systems thinking to understand root causes of issues: SkillWorks Systems Change Final Report (Mt. Auburn Associates) – This report examines how components of SkillWorks came together to achieve system change, including in the area of public policy and the activities underpinning their effort. Use the report to identify potential policy changes that your industry partnership might address (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using systems thinking to understand root causes of issues: Systems Thinking Toolkit (FSG) – Use this compilation of different guides and tools for system mapping to understand an issue facing your industry partnership and the eco-system or create a plan for action (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using systems thinking to understand root causes of issues: The Power of Creating a Racial Equity Backmap (Race Matters Institute) – Use this overview of the back-mapping process that helps communities identify the root causes of inequities (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

Operational Capacity of Workforce Development Organizations

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Operate with Knowledgeable Staff: Engaging employers and partners to discuss topics like job quality, equity and inclusion and worker needs is important and requires expertise and competency in a variety of areas. What success looks like: More employer relationships at multiple levels within an organization. More employer champions speak

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with and recruit their peers. Employer and partner participation that moves away from transactional interactions (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- Invest in Staff Training to Maintain Industry Knowledge: Staff must be equipped to research trends about regional partners, assets and resources to stay relevant to industry and worker needs. What success looks like: Partnership is responsive to market changes with staff who serve as a catalyst for change. Staff have competencies related to emerging areas of expertise such as job quality, systems change and racial equity and inclusion. Staff know how to act on employer feedback and how to include worker voice and perspective (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Align Partnership Priorities and Goals: Ensure that organizational funding, policies, structure and staffing support strategic engagement across partners and activities. What success looks like: Partnership goals and activities are formalized into organizational staffing plans. Adequate funding and resources are available to support staff in meeting their objectives (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Identify and Communicate the Partnership's Value: To attract funding from different sources and secure financial commitments from employers, partnerships must "pitch" the value-add of their work. What success looks like: Sustainable funding from employer partners to support partnership initiatives. An increase in total funding and mix of funding sources over time. Aligned funding that supports partnership goals and impact broader systems (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Build Relationships with Policy and Funding Decision Makers: Relationships are key to developing a solid understanding of the environment that influences the partnership's work and impacts equitable access to resources and outcomes. What success looks like: A mechanism for communicating with employers and elevating employer and industry voices regarding policy decisions. The infrastructure and opportunity to impact a system, such as transportation, that intersects with policy, workforce development and economic development. More legislative and administrative support for industry partnerships and strategies, such as work-based learning and apprenticeships (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for operating with knowledgeable staff: Job Quality Competency Model (National Fund) – Use this model to better understand what skills and competencies are necessary for collaboratives to embark on job quality work with employers (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for operating with knowledgeable staff: Collaborative Leadership – Learn what collaborative leadership is and how to practice it. Use this to develop an environment where stakeholders depend on collaborative problem-solving and decision-making (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for operating with knowledgeable staff: Changing Systems Is Like Moving a Mountain: And Other Insights from Successful Workforce Leaders – Use this summary of lessons learned and key skills for system change leadership as a guide for identifying partners who reflect these skills and finding ways to develop them across partners and staff (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for operating with knowledgeable staff: Core Skills for Public Sector Innovation – A beta model of skills to promote and enable innovation in

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public sector organizations. Industry partnerships can use as a guide to identify partners who reflect these skills and find ways to develop them across partners and staff (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- TOOL for aligning partnership priorities and goals: Partnering Up: How Industry Partnerships Can Bring Work-Based Learning to Scale (National Skills Coalition) – This brief discusses the important role industry-driven partnerships can play to align workforce, education and human services systems. Use this to identify partnership goals and strategies for systems-level work (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for aligning partnership priorities and goals: Co-Invest for Impact: A Pivotal Model for Workforce Success (National Fund) – Use this blog series to learn about different co-investment models being used in four regional collaboratives (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for aligning partnership priorities and goals: Sustainability Guide for Funder Collaboratives (National Fund) – Use this framework and tools for thinking about sustainability and apply that thinking to the development and sustainability of your industry partnership (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for aligning partnership priorities and goals: Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations (FSG) – This report offers a review of what it takes to be a backbone organization and how to evaluate and support its work (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for building relationships with policy and funding decision makers: Sector Partnership Policy (National Skills Coalition) – Read some examples of state sector partnership policies that help local communities meet the needs of both workers and employers (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for building relationships with policy and funding decision makers: Funding Career Pathways (CLASP) – Use this federal funding toolkit for state and local/regional career pathway partnerships (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for building relationships with policy and funding decision makers: Public Funding for Job Training at the State and Local Levels (Urban Institute) – Use this mapping of funding flows in three states and a summary of strategies to identify ways in which an industry partnership might supplement funding for job training programs (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for building relationships with policy and funding decision makers: Opportunities for State Economic and Workforce Development Collaboration (Urban Institute) – Explore examples of sector strategies that support better state-level funding alignment and collaboration between workforce and economic development agencies (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for building relationships with policy and funding decision makers: Promoting the Adoption of Sector Strategies by Workforce Development Boards (Ray Marshall Center, UT) – This summary of the processes and funding models through which workforce boards have adopted a sector-based approach and the roles they play can be used as a guide for talking with workforce boards about aligning resources that support industry partnerships (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

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- TOOL for identifying and communicating the partnership's value: The Step-By-Step Guide to Evaluation: How to Become Savvy Evaluation Consumers (WKKF) – Use this guide that was designed to demystify evaluation and help organizations get the most out of learning from their work to develop an approach to evaluating industry partnerships (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for identifying and communicating the partnership's value: SkillWorks Phase II Evaluation: Overview of Outcomes (Mt. Auburn Associates) – This report on outcomes and lessons learned from a regional funders collaborative can be used by industry partnerships to identify intended outcomes and opportunities for working with the public workforce system (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for identifying and communicating the partnership's value: Genesis at Work: Evaluating the Effects of Manufacturing Extension on Business Success and Job Quality – Learn about the Genesis initiative – how it worked with manufacturers, results it achieved and key considerations for other industry partnerships to learn more about this approach (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for identifying and communicating the partnership's value: Metropolitan Dallas Healthcare Employer Learning Consortium Case Studies – This report highlights success stories and lessons learned from three hospitals in the consortium working with other community and educational partners on upskilling. Use this report as a guide for communicating about industry partnership outcomes (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for investing in staff training to maintain industry knowledge: Succession Planning for Workforce Partnerships: A Toolkit for Practitioners (SkillWorks) – This report offers lessons learned and a series of tools geared to help projects plan for succession and turnover (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for investing in staff training to maintain industry knowledge: Voices from the Frontline: An Introduction to New York City's Frontline Workforce Professionals – This report lays the groundwork for learning from workforce development professionals and what they need to stay and advance in the field. Industry partnerships can use this to understand some of the challenges facing partner organizations and staff (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

Adaptive and Innovative Work Culture

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Workforce Development Organizations actively engage with stakeholders (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Assess community dynamics: Engage with local, regional and national networks and coalitions to understand overall economic, funding and other community dynamics (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Share access to your findings: Share data, experience and knowledge across the local and larger field in order to increase resources, strengthen policy and improve practice for the workforce system (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).

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- Develop strategies with stakeholder input: Develop and effectively communicate a clear strategic plan with input from customers, staff, board and other stakeholders (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Adapt over time: Ensure that staffing, organizational systems and strategies continue to meet the changing needs of customers and funders (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce Development Organizations hire passionate teams with diverse perspectives, skills and experiences (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Hire for core values: Hire staff that are committed to organization's core values, their own personal growth and that of participants (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Ensure diverse perspectives: Ensure that the staff team embodies diverse perspectives, including direct business and industry experience, knowledge of targeted occupations and experience with participant challenges (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Apply strategic onboarding: Provide an intentional onboarding process that allows new hires to understand the organization's core values and strategies, the external environment, customer needs and their unique staff roles (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Create a targeted work culture: Provide a work environment that is reflective of targeted occupations, professionally appropriate, results-oriented and conducive to positive interactions (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce Development Organizations incorporate a strong staff development process around evidence-based practices (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Offer consistent skill-building opportunities: Create intentional skill-building and professional development plans that reflect staff aspirations and organization needs, through regular planning, feedback and evaluation conversations (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Provide peer learning opportunities: Ensure regular opportunities for peer learning and individual and team skill building, including outside training and internal learning events (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Monitor capacity-building resources: Monitor and document the results of capacity-building efforts (both short-term and long-term), to refine staff development strategies and to be able to communicate to funders the importance of capacity-building resources (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Use learning and practice tools: Use learning and practice tools (e.g., checklists, session or meeting plans, interview protocols, scripts, etc.) to help staff apply effective practices on a consistent basis (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce Development Organizations build a data-informed culture of learning at all levels (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Clearly define outcome goals: Clearly define and communicate outcome goals that relate to the organization's mission and strategic vision, with regular sharing of progress made toward those goals (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Identify milestone goals: Identify interim milestone result goals (for individuals and teams) that align with broader outcome goals and are regularly monitored through progress reports (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Consistently reflect on data trends: Create intentional, regular time for reflection on data trends, external benchmarks and the stories or contributing factors behind the data (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Support innovation and failure: Nurture a "safe", trusting environment that supports innovation, celebrates progress and sees failure as an opportunity for learning (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).

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Funding Sustainability

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Workforce Development Organizations build an intentional resource development model (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Keep track of funding trends: Understand past trends in funding sources, requests and results (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Learn from industry peers: Learn from local and national peers about relevant potential sources and successful resource development strategies (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Align fundraising with mission: Align fundraising with mission and strategic goals. Build on core competencies and use funds to deepen staff capacity (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Diversify funding targets: Diversify targets and sources within the funding types that are most likely to be successful (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Balance long and short-term resources: Balance long-term renewable sources with new short-term opportunities (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Build a long-term plan: Build a long-term resource development plan with clear short-term progress milestones (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce Development Organizations actively engage their board, staff and partners in resource development (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Designate clear roles: Designate clear staff roles and expectations for resource development (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Participate in advocacy efforts: Participate in local, regional and national advocacy efforts to grow available funding for workforce services (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Maintain clear board member expectations: Maintain and reinforce clear resource development expectations for Board members (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Develop board and staff skills: Intentionally develop Board and staff skills in leveraging their connections and communicating the organization's impact (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Pursue collaborative fundraising: Pursue opportunities for collaborative fundraising with other community partners (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce Development Organizations communicate compellingly about organization's goals, values and results (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Frequent alignment with mission: Have ongoing interaction with key fundraising stakeholders, to understand their connection with the organization's mission (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Communicate tangible results: Provide clear, compelling communication of tangible results, with meaningful comparative context (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Offer personal stories: Offer personal stories that spotlight the community need being addressed and the difference that investments are making (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Find feedback in rejections: Seek feedback and learn from rejection, using it as an opportunity to refine funding strategies or communication (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Celebrate results: Provide occasions for celebration of results and recognition of stakeholders, to nurture and deepen relationships (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).

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- Workforce Development Organizations generate mission-relevant supplemental revenue
- Provide fee-based services: Provide fee-based services that offer the organization's skills and capacity to employers or other community partners (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Develop alternative staffing models: Develop alternative staffing models that provide work-ready temporary employees with available support services (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Develop social enterprise models: Develop social enterprise models that provide employment opportunities for participants, generate revenue and offer a valued service in the community (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Consider how infrastructure and climate funding can be used to support workforce development. Get a high-level look at the different ways BIL and IRA can be used to advance workforce development in your community and how this guide can help you prepare a successful application that includes workforce programming and supports. Potential resources include: Understanding, Pursuing and Securing Infrastructure Funding; How to Use Infrastructure Funding for Workforce Development (Local Infrastructure Hub, Investing in High-Quality Infrastructure Jobs)
- Examples of how other cities have incorporated workforce development strategies into their winning BIL and IRA grant applications. Look at how five cities included workforce development strategies across five different grant programs. These include: (a) Orlando, FL: Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program: FORWARD Orlando; (b) Syracuse, NY: Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program: Reconnecting A Post I-81 Viaduct Syracuse; (c) Burlington, VT: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant; (d) Program: Reconnecting Downtown Burlington; (e) Boise, ID: Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Grant Program: Increasing Access to Electric Vehicle Charging in Boise; (f) Austin, TX: Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grant Program: Austin Reuse Warehouse (Local Infrastructure Hub, Investing in High-Quality Infrastructure Jobs)
- Determine the funding opportunity that is best suited to your needs. Explore a list of 35+ high-impact Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) for inspiration. Each NOFO overview includes detailed information on the high-level process, highlights how workforce development is included in the grant considerations and whenever available, includes examples of winning applicants. Potential resource: High-impact NOFOs (Local Infrastructure Hub, Investing in High-Quality Infrastructure Jobs)
- Tap into the existing workforce development ecosystem to ensure the proposal will have the support, knowledge and expertise to successfully win the funding. You don't need to go it alone; many programs, partnerships and expertise already exist in your community. Potential resource: Tapping into the Power of the Workforce System (Local Infrastructure Hub, Investing in High-Quality Infrastructure Jobs)
- Leverage opportunities to maximize funding impact and reach, strengthen your proposal or project and, if awarded, fill any potential gaps in services, personnel or infrastructure through the blending and braiding of various funding sources. You can also explore how planning processes may help you further integrate your partnerships and funding. Potential resources: Combining Different Funding Sources to Maximize Results; Using Planning Processes to Build Strategic Partnerships That Support Your Work (Local Infrastructure Hub, Investing in High-Quality Infrastructure Jobs)
- If you anticipate a funding gap, consider innovative funding models and determine whether your proposal would benefit from leveraging an existing model or whether to work with experts to develop a new model tailored to your community needs (Local Infrastructure Hub, Investing in High-Quality Infrastructure Jobs)

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Investment in Experience of Workforce Development Program Teams

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Analyze Local Workforce Employers and Worker Needs: Local workforce development ecosystems are complex and come in all shapes and sizes. Workforce professionals might be employed in community colleges, city, state and local governments, industry associations, for-profit and nonprofit organizations and other community-based organizations. They work in a wide array of occupations and professions, each with varying wages, benefits, working conditions, job titles and required skill sets. Turnover rates and advancement opportunities vary across organizations, with some professionals feeling the pressure to move from under resourced institutions to jobs in other parts of the system with better compensation. There are few studies of this workforce. Commissioning a local analysis of our own workforce needs and issues — as we encourage other industries to do — could serve as the basis for developing job quality improvement strategies locally that result in significant service improvements (Aspen Institute).
- Facilitate Stronger Connections Among Workforce Professionals: Local workforce leaders and practitioners have organized their field-building and collaborative work to varying extents. Some have established local or state coalitions, annual conferences, regular informational sessions and newsletters. Others offer certifications for frontline workers, academies focused on policy, trauma-informed care and race equity. Some host national organizing initiatives, such as the National Skills Coalition for state coalitions and the National Fund for Workforce Solutions for local funders' collaboratives. But in many areas, opportunities for practitioners to connect and collaborate are few, if they exist at all. Fellows who gather in Workforce Leadership Academies might have heard of each other or met across the competitive setting of a crowded RFP bidders' conference, but many say they wish they knew about the work other practitioners have been up to in their greater community. Investments in locally based, field-wide training and advancement can facilitate relationship-building, create a better understanding of the larger ecosystem, promote shared frameworks and stimulate more naturally occurring — rather than only grant-required — collaboration (Aspen Institute).
- Change the Incentives and Underlying Mental Model: In this field of practice, which is often funded by performance-based contracts, the number of job placements has served as a persistent measure of success. Public and private grants are often short-term and measured in immediate job outcomes. The level of allowable per-participant and administrative costs puts significant pressure on frontline workers, with impacts on wages and job instability. This, in turn, results in turnover that undermines the relationships with job seekers, employers and partners on which the field's success depends. It also requires making the case to funders about how increased investments in our own workers can improve the outcomes for those we serve. We need to promote the commonsense idea that by providing job stability and investments in workforce workers' skills, the field can retain valuable talent, build professional relationships and provide more effective services — ultimately maximizing the value of the resources invested. As employers, implementing job quality strategies ourselves can give workforce professionals a practical understanding of challenges and needs when discussing workforce issues with private sector employers (Aspen Institute).

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- Raise Up Workforce Professionals' Voices: Many workforce organizations seek to amplify workers' voices as a strategy for changing employer practice — for example, by providing worker feedback to employers interested in improving their human resource practices, or by connecting with formal unions, worker centers, or other worker advocacy groups. Workers' voices in local workforce ecosystems start with those being served: the participant, the job seeker and the worker. Ensuring that their voices help shape the delivery of services is essential; there is no substitute for lived experience to ensure that services are delivered *with* rather than simply delivered *to*. For example, the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce is exploring how program participants define successful outcomes and how those benchmarks can inform program design (Aspen Institute).
- Nonprofit workforce development organizations can embed within their own operations the same racial equity practices, job stability and career pathways that we are promoting among other employers. Given the typical incentives, this can be challenging. Workforce leaders could find ways to come together across competitive lines, as we encourage other industries to do and identify the common issues they face in order to develop strategies about the field's workforce and talent development. Policy change is also needed and workforce professionals' and participants' voices are needed to raise the visibility of the field. This means investing in building and strengthening local workforce coalitions to bring these voices to press for the policy change, which can result in quality jobs and consequently higher quality service (Aspen Institute).
- In California, ReWork the Bay, supported by the James Irvine Foundation and partnered with Jobs for the Future and Path Group, is tackling the job quality paradox with eight nonprofit workforce organizations. This worker-led participatory research project aims to reimagine job quality for frontline workforce development staff and develop strategies for improvement (Aspen Institute).

12 Are local workforce systems coordinating with regional education and training partners (e.g., education providers, training providers, community-based organizations) to help young people acquire career skills and credentials, find apprenticeships, jobs and access supportive services?

Why this matters

When local workforce systems coordinate with regional partners — community colleges, employers, unions, K–12 and human-services agencies — they can align training with real labor-market demand, so the skills and credentials young people earn actually translate into "good jobs." Evidence is strong that employer-linked, sector partnerships boost earnings and advancement:

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randomized and long-term studies of programs like WorkAdvance/Per Scholas, Project QUEST and Year Up show sizable, sustained gains in participants' earnings, often 14–30% per year and persisting for 7–14 years after enrollment (MDRC; Per Scholas Employment Program; Project Quest). Coordination also expands paid work-based learning — such as Registered Apprenticeships — which literature reviews link to meaningful lifetime earnings gains (Review of the Literature on Registered Apprenticeships). Crucially, regional partnerships make it feasible to braid in supportive services (transportation, childcare, advising, case management) that research shows double community-college graduation and improve longer-run outcomes when delivered at scale (e.g., CUNY ASAP and its Ohio replication). Together, these coordinated approaches help more young people — especially those facing systemic barriers — earn credentials of value, connect to quality jobs and persist with the wraparound supports needed to thrive in the workforce that regional economies are projected to reward most (Urban Institute).

Stakeholder Engagement: Industry partnerships have two major types of constituents: employers and regional partners. Regional partners can include workers, workforce investment boards, economic development entities, education and training providers and community-based organizations. Regional partners are essential to understanding worker needs and designing programs and strategies that improve outcomes for workers and businesses.

Provide Employment Services: Unemployed and underemployed people, as well as workers seeking career changes or advancement, often need help finding and retaining good jobs or advancing in their careers. Additionally, youth often need help finding and navigating information about careers and the labor market. People with little or no work experience may need to learn "soft" skills such as teamwork, critical thinking and communication (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).

Provide Education and Training: Various education and training providers contribute to the local workforce system by preparing workers for successful careers. They may collaborate with employers and industry on content, instruction and hiring students. Programs that provide individuals with employable skills include high school and college career and technical education, adult basic education and certificates and degrees from two- and four-year colleges (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).

Offer Supportive Services: Many people experience personal challenges to preparing for and securing employment and adults and youth often need help meeting their education and employment goals. Supportive services help remove barriers to employment and may include assistance with child care, transportation and housing; financial and personal counseling; academic support; and mentoring (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).

Stakeholder Engagement

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Number and diversity of stakeholder groups represented in regional intermediary outreach

System indicators

- Level of collaboration among local workforce entities (e.g., Workforce Investment Boards or other regional public agencies responsible for local workforce developments within state)

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- Increased collaboration between education and training providers, community-based organizations, and employers. Informed decision-making and the development of new strategies to address trends and gaps (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- More partners are consistently engaging workers in the design and evaluation of programs and strategies. Activities that partners are engaged in to improve job quality in the region increases. Training and other support for populations facing barriers to employment and career advancement and a commitment to racial equity and inclusion improves (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Training, funding priorities, policies, and practices better meet employer and worker needs. Programs and services are more accessible. Outcomes for frontline workers and people of color improve (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Develop and maintain relationships with a diverse group of partners. Partners should reflect the community and demonstrate a commitment to meeting employer and worker needs. This includes building relationships with the public workforce development system to better align resources that support employers and workers (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Share industry intelligence and trends. Stakeholders share information that speaks to trends affecting their work (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Incorporate workers as shareholders. Add worker voice and perspective around needs, barriers, and potential solutions to inform industry partnership goals, investments and activities. (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Communicate openly and convene partners regularly. Share partnership successes and challenges and identify opportunities for continuous learning and improvement. (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for developing and maintaining relationships with a diverse group of partners: Communities at Work Playbook (Aspen Institute & FutureWorks) – This playbook highlights the work of seven regional industry partnerships and action steps for partnership building, business engagement and community collaboration (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for developing and maintaining relationships with a diverse group of partners: Community Engagement Toolkit (Leading Inside Out & Collective Impact Forum) – Use this set of strategies, processes, and tools for engaging community members and organizations most impacted by social challenges in designing and implementing solutions (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for developing and maintaining relationships with a diverse group of partners: Toolbox for the Systems Change Mindset – National Fund (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for sharing industry intelligence and trends: Insights for Action: MSP Regional Sector Analysis (RealTime Talent) – Use this example

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to help your partnership or region document labor shortages, skills gaps, and the impact of workforce programs and initiatives on closing those gaps (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- TOOL for sharing industry intelligence and trends: Information & Communication Technology: Shared Prosperity in the Digital Age (SkillWorks and EARI) – This report, which examines the issues behind the perceived ICT talent shortage, including specific concerns relative to racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, can serve as a guide for identifying diversity, equity and inclusion issues (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for sharing industry intelligence and trends: Envisioning the Future of Home Care: Trends and Opportunities in Workforce Policy and Practice (PHI) – This report provides an example of how to look at the current and projected home care landscape, focusing in turn on consumers, workers and the sector. The approach can be applied to different sectors of the economy (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for sharing industry intelligence and trends: It's Time to Care: A Detailed Profile of America's Direct Care Workforce (PHI) – This report provides a detailed overview of the direct care workforce (including key concepts and definitions), an analysis of how this role has evolved, and a statistical profile of the workforce. Use this as a guide to develop a more detailed profile of workers in your industry (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for incorporating workers as stakeholders: What We Mean by Worker Voice – National Fund (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for incorporating workers as stakeholders: Employee Engagement Benefits and Strategies for Small Businesses – Pacific Community Ventures) – This is an article about the benefits of employee engagement and a set of tactics for strengthening employee engagement and creating a strong workplace culture. These tools can be used to coach businesses on job quality improvements with potential business benefits (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for incorporating workers as stakeholders: Incorporating Worker Wisdom in High Road Training Partnerships (UC Berkeley Labor Center) – This is a deep dive into the essential element of incorporating worker voice throughout the partnership, including several promising practices gleaned from the field (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for incorporating workers as stakeholders: Adding a Gender Lens to Non-Traditional Programs (Jobs for the Future) – Use this toolkit to learn how to engage and support women and other underrepresented communities as they seek new, high-potential careers (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for incorporating workers as stakeholders: Worker Voice and Employer Engagement – Aspen Institute (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for incorporating workers as stakeholders: Engaging Frontline Employee Voice – Talent ReWire (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for communicating openly and convening partners regularly: Talking the Walk: A Communication Manual for Partnership Practitioners (The Partnering Initiative) – Use this toolkit for partnership practitioners from all sectors, to understand the importance of good

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communication and help develop techniques to improve communications – both inside, and beyond the partnership (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- TOOL for communicating openly and convening partners regularly: Advancing Equity Through Workforce Intermediary Partnerships: Best Practices in Manufacturing, Service and Transportation Industries (Jobs with Justice Education Fund) – This report details examples of sustained engagement and outcomes of workforce intermediary partnerships and can be used to guide how an industry partnership might develop a commitment and approach to advancing equity (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for communicating openly and convening partners regularly: Advancing Workforce Equity Guide for Stakeholders – National Fund (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Understanding the number and type of jobs being created (Labor Market Information) and the credentials or skills that map to those needs (Tapping into the Power of the Workforce System).
- Jointly developing a workforce strategy or plan for infrastructure and climate jobs; partnering on grant submissions for infrastructure funding that will advance the plan's implementation (Tapping into the Power of the Workforce System).
- Utilizing the virtual and physical job center infrastructure for the hosting of information or recruiting sessions and the provision of job readiness and job search services (Tapping into the Power of the Workforce System).
- Investing in the development of new training programs, with support of the workforce board, local employers, unions and educators, such as apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs (Tapping into the Power of the Workforce System).

Provide Education, Training, and Employment Services

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percent of program participants engaged in work-based learning. This is measured in an effort to expand work-based learning as a core education and training program preemployment strategy for youth and adults (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- Number of new apprenticeship programs developed in traditional and non-traditional occupations. This is measured in an effort to expand registered and industry-recognized apprenticeship programs in both traditional and non-traditional areas to ease workforce shortages through engaging and assisting employers to begin new programs (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- Number of new apprentices enrolled in new apprenticeship programs in traditional and nontraditional occupations. This is measured in an effort to expand registered and industry-recognized apprenticeship programs in both traditional and non-traditional areas to ease workforce shortages through engaging and assisting employers to begin new programs (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- Percentage of people with access to career support services

System indicators

- Vacancy rate for high-wage, high-growth jobs (or whatever phrasing we're using throughout)

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- Percentage of students attaining industry aligned credentials (e.g., certificates / postsecondary degrees)

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Accelerated learning: Colleges and universities use accelerated learning approaches such as modularized courses, prior learning assessments, and integrated basic skills and occupational instruction to prepare individuals for in-demand jobs in shorter periods of time and get them on a path to a new career (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Career-ready credentials: Nondegree education and training providers work with employers, industry organizations, and business and trade associations to create credentials focused on the skills and competencies needed for employment in a particular occupation. Employers across an industry then use those credentials for hiring new workers (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Work-based learning: Employers provide work-based learning experiences in specific occupations through apprenticeships, internships and other on-the-job training programs. Labor unions and employers partner to provide apprenticeship opportunities (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Career academies: Public high schools create small learning communities called career academies, which offer students occupational training at a technical school or college in addition to their regular academic instruction (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (I-BEST): The I-BEST model was implemented by Washington State's community and technical colleges system as an alternative to traditional postsecondary education programs that require students to complete basic education or remedial courses before taking college coursework. I-BEST incorporates competencies in reading, math, English, and job readiness into career training programs. I-BEST uses a team teaching approach with one instructor providing skills training and the other teaching basic skills (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Workforce development programs intentionally recruit and engage participants (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Define and apply workforce development program criteria: Clearly define and consistently apply program criteria, informed by business needs and mission priorities (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Identify outreach methods: Use data to identify most effective referral partners and outreach methods to reach the target population (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Create Buy-In: Communicate the workforce development program's unique value and available support in multiple ways to build applicant buy-in (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Identify individual success barriers for participants in workforce development programs: Use interviews and assessments to gauge participant strengths, motivation and potential barriers to success (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Apply data for support: Monitor the workforce development program's recruitment process data to identify where additional support or clearer expectations are needed (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce development programs provide demand-driven experiential training (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Build basic skills: Provide access to contextualized "bridge" programming to build basic skills needed for targeted occupations (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).

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- Provide access to training leading in industry-recognized certifications or academic credentials (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Use experiential learning approaches: Use interactive, experiential adult education approaches that increase participant engagement in learning (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Give work experience opportunities: Offer short-term work experience opportunities to strengthen skills and confidence, e.g., internships (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Model expectations: Model the expectations and environment of the workplace, e.g., attendance policies, work quality, dress, etc. Provide supports to ensure participants in workforce training can meet expectations (e.g., professional dress lending program and/or trainings specific to workplace expectations) (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Use project-based curriculum: Use team and project-based curriculum to strengthen problem solving, interpersonal and teamwork skills (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Use industry-informed criteria: Communicate and implement clear industry-informed criteria for deciding when participants are "work ready" (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Apply motivational interviewing techniques: Use motivational interviewing approaches to help participants make changes needed to accomplish goals (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce development programs help build a community of support (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Make use of cohorts: Use a cohort approach to job preparation and follow-up, to foster peer support and accountability (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Foster peer support: Structure regular opportunities for participants to get support from peers, staff, alums and other partners (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Make regular contact: Have clear expectations about regular contact with participants to support relationship development (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Assign peer mentors: Engage alums, business professionals and other allies as peer mentors or cheerleaders (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce development programs provide career-focused coaching and support services (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Build rapport: Develop a long-term coaching relationship with workforce development program participants around career and education goals (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Provide career pathways: Help workforce development program participants access information about the needs and benefits of relevant career pathways (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Provide community resources: Connect participants to a wide range of community resources to assist with work readiness challenges (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Offer financial literacy training: Offer or link participants to financial literacy training and financial coaching to best use available resources (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Ensure training is ongoing: Provide ongoing staff training to improve coaching skills and awareness of relevant career pathways (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Invest in frontline worker supportive services. Expand roles like retention specialists, job coaching, resource navigators. Advocate for increased supportive services such as housing, transportation, and child care. What success looks like: More diversity among workers participating in and successfully completing education and training programs. Better education, employment and advancement outcomes for frontline workers and those facing disparities in the labor market (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

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- American Job Centers provide job seekers with "one-stop" services including local labor market information, job listings, counseling, and assessment to help people find new employment, as well as job training. Customers may include people who have been laid off and need reemployment services, and those who are new to or less experienced in the workforce. Staff may also connect customers to other programs such as unemployment insurance, veterans' programs, and vocational rehabilitation services (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Public libraries host job clubs where small groups of job seekers meet regularly to share experiences and contacts while benefiting from peer support (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Workforce development boards contract with community- and faith-based organizations to create and staff career centers for particular populations, such as older workers or immigrants, where individuals can get assistance with job applications and résumés, and find out about training and career opportunities (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Workforce service providers facilitate job-readiness and soft-skills programs to prepare inexperienced workers for job interviews and workplace behaviors (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Goodwill of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey: Employment programs and services include job readiness and vocational training, work experience, job placement and workforce reentry support. These employment programs focus on helping people with disabilities and other personal challenges to employment find good job opportunities. They also support local employers by providing a reliable source of qualified and motivated employees (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- TOOL for investing in frontline worker supportive services: The Benefits of Bridging Divides: How YouthBuild Philly Shares its Supportive Practices to Build Business Value and Better Jobs (Aspen Institute) – This report documents how YouthBuild Philly engages retail businesses to strengthen equity, inclusion, and retention for youth the organization serves. These practices can be applied in developing approaches for engaging youth and adults (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for investing in frontline worker supportive services: The Women's Fund for the Greater Cincinnati Foundation – This toolkit offers a collection of nearly 60 workplace policies to help employers support, stabilize, and retain employees. These policies can be used as a guide to identify which are most important for workers in a range of industry sectors (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for investing in frontline worker supportive services: A Retailer Bets on Learning and Development – This report shares how Goodwill San Diego adapted its culture and operations to enhance job quality and business performance in response to a mandated local minimum wage increase. Use this to identify specific practices that support worker advancement (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for investing in frontline worker supportive services: Workplace Financial Wellness Services: A Primer for Employers (Prosperity Now and Center for Social Development) – Use this primer to learn more about workplace financial wellness services, questions to consider when exploring these services and employer experiences with the provision of these services (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for investing in frontline worker supportive services: Guide to Employee Financial Wellness – National Fund (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

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Offer Support Services

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Public social service agencies and workforce service providers refer customers to additional services that may support them while they seek or sustain work. Supportive service providers may also create common intake forms so customers can apply for several services at once (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- College and Career Navigation Initiative: From 2010 to 2012, the Colorado Community College System partnered with the Colorado Department of Labor and the Colorado Department of Education to implement the College and Career Navigation Initiative (CCNI). The central goal of CCNI was to align workforce, adult basic education, and career and technical education resources. To achieve this goal, CCNI implemented college and career navigators, co-located at community colleges and American Job Centers. These navigators provided intensive support services for clients at both locations while liaising between participating organizations. Services included career guidance as well as navigation through college enrollment and financial aid processes. CCNI targeted general educational development completers, adults in need of basic skills education, and English as a second language students, among others (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Funding the expansion of training available through eligible training programs, such as those on the ETPL, in climate and infrastructure fields, or customized training partnerships (CTs) that the board may have in place with specific employers or unions for upskilling their workers (Tapping into the Power of the Workforce System).
- Co-funding or braiding workforce and infrastructure funding to bridge any gaps such as supportive services in current programming, expand the number of individuals who can be served or expedite the launch of new cohorts (Tapping into the Power of the Workforce System).
- Leveraging existing partnerships to maximize community reach, facilitate the delivery of supportive services or address translation and language services for English language learners (Tapping into the Power of the Workforce System).
- Building worker knowledge around their rights, protections, services and reporting avenues (Tapping into the Power of the Workforce System).
- Implementing policies that will protect and uplift all workers (Tapping into the Power of the Workforce System).

Participant experiences in workforce development programs

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Participant's sense of safety and belonging in a workforce development program. A feeling of safety and belonging fosters trust, engagement, and motivation. Participant sense of safety and belonging is a key motivating factor for participants to overcome barriers that might prevent workforce program completion. Methods to collect metric data: Collect disaggregated participant survey data before, during, and after workforce program

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participation. Conduct focus groups facilitated by workforce program alumni. Conduct pulse surveys assessing safety, belonging, and inclusivity. (C) Questions to ask participants: To what degree do you feel seen and understood in your workforce program? To what extent do you feel welcomed at your workforce program after you graduate? Do you trust the staff in your workforce program? Do you feel supported by the staff at your workforce program? (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).

- Participant's sense of safety and belonging in a job. Focus group participants, particularly women and persons of color, expressed significant concerns entering industries that are white, male dominant, or where these participants have been historically plagued by harassment. Focus group participants who felt safe at work reported being more likely to retain employment, maintain a mindset of advancement, and progress along a career pathway. Understanding participants' sense of safety and belonging at work provides valuable information about the quality of work-based learning opportunities. This is especially important because safety at work is heavily linked with burnout, negative employee performance, and turnover. Methods to collect metric data: Gather program alumni feedback through multiple mediums to increase participant comfort to provide candid responses. Conduct on-site visits to employer partners. Conduct focus groups with program alumni, particularly those participating in work-based learning opportunities.Questions to ask participants: Do you feel respected at your job or work-based learning opportunity? To what extent do you feel physically and emotionally safe at work? Do you feel safe raising a workplace concern to your supervisor? Do you feel informed of your rights and protections at work? (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Change in participant self-confidence or self-esteem. Building self-confidence and self-esteem are fundamental for personal and professional growth. By creating more confident participants you create more confident and effective ambassadors for your program. Participants in focus groups report being more likely to complete programs, gain and retain employment, and advocate for themselves with a positive shift in self-confidence. Methods to collect metric data: Administer surveys before, during, and following program completion. Administer evidence-based perceptual feedback surveys such as the Employment Hope Scale or those developed by REDF. Conduct participant interviews with trained program peers rather than program staff. This removes a potential power dynamic and fosters a greater sense of trust with the facilitator. Questions to ask participants: Do you feel confident and prepared to participate in a professional interview? How confident do you feel in your abilities to perform the tasks required for your desired job? To what extent do you feel able and confident to be the authentic version of yourself in a professional setting? (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Growth in emotional intelligence and regulation or shift in mindset. Positive shifts in emotional regulation allow participants to look beyond the now and toward long-term success. In focus groups, we heard extensively from participants who felt particularly triggered in the classroom and at work because of prior educational and labor market trauma. Methods to collect metric data: Conduct qualitative interviews facilitated by peers or workforce program staff. Administer assessments of perceived employment barriers or "the shift from not possible to work to very possible to work." Conduct pre-program, mid-program, and post-program focus groups. Questions to ask participants: Have you noticed that you have a more positive mindset? If so, how does this affect your ability to learn or your reaction to performance feedback? Are you able to see things from someone else's perspective? How comfortable do you feel looking beyond the now toward future success? How confident do you feel in navigating workplace challenges and

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using them as opportunities to learn, grow, and improve? (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).

- Career preparedness: Surveys confirmed that most of the participants prioritize skill training over job placement, while ranking credential attainment as the most important workforce program metric. A "clear career pathway/plan" was the second greatest determining factor for program completion based upon survey results. It trailed "work life balance." Methods to collect metric data: Evaluate participants on their performance in simulated work environments. Collect employer-provided feedback on participant job preparedness. Assess in-program participant performance based on industry job expectations. Questions to ask participants: How comfortable are you explaining your training to someone outside of your workforce program? How prepared do you feel for professional interviews after your workforce program? What percentage of what you learned in your workforce program training do you use in your job? (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Change in participant social capital: In the survey of workforce participants and alumni, professional networks and relationships were prioritized over placement into a job. In focus groups, participants expressed the importance of networking. Often, networking transcends things that may have hindered participants such as lack of experience or a criminal record. Methods to collect metric data: Administer pre-program and post-program surveys to participants and alumni to compare their relationships and networks. Conduct peer-led one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Questions to ask participants: Has participation in your workforce program opened additional opportunities for you, either personally or professionally? Do you notice a change in the way that you communicate now versus before the program? How comfortable do you feel communicating your goals and interests to friends and family after the program, versus before and during? (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Utilize individuals with shared experience to collect feedback. Repeatedly, focus group participants praised the focus group process for enlisting individuals who had experienced workforce programs firsthand as the focus group facilitators. Focus group participants noted that they felt more comfortable speaking with individuals who had recently been in similar situations. They also expressed a greater willingness to provide honest and authentic feedback about their program experiences. The advisory council writes, "There's an assumption that workforce development participants won't be professional enough to lead a productive focus group session. We on the advisory council believe it to be the other way around. If programs don't enlist individuals who have experienced programs, they will struggle to collect the kind of candid feedback that can be used to inform program improvements." The advisory council continues, "Training participants [to lead focus groups] is a quick and easy process and will buy workforce organizations instant credibility with the participants they serve and honest feedback that wouldn't be gleaned otherwise" (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Invest in trauma-informed and resiliency-building strategies. Based upon findings from the survey and focus groups, the advisory council concluded that most participants who access workforce development programs have experienced past trauma. Frequently, these traumas are closely related to previous experiences in educational and work settings, making the risk of triggering trauma during a workforce program or work-based learning experience high. This was particularly true of focus group participants who reported having a learning disability. The advisory council believes it invaluable for workforce development program staff to receive training to understand the brain science behind trauma and develop strategies to identify and support

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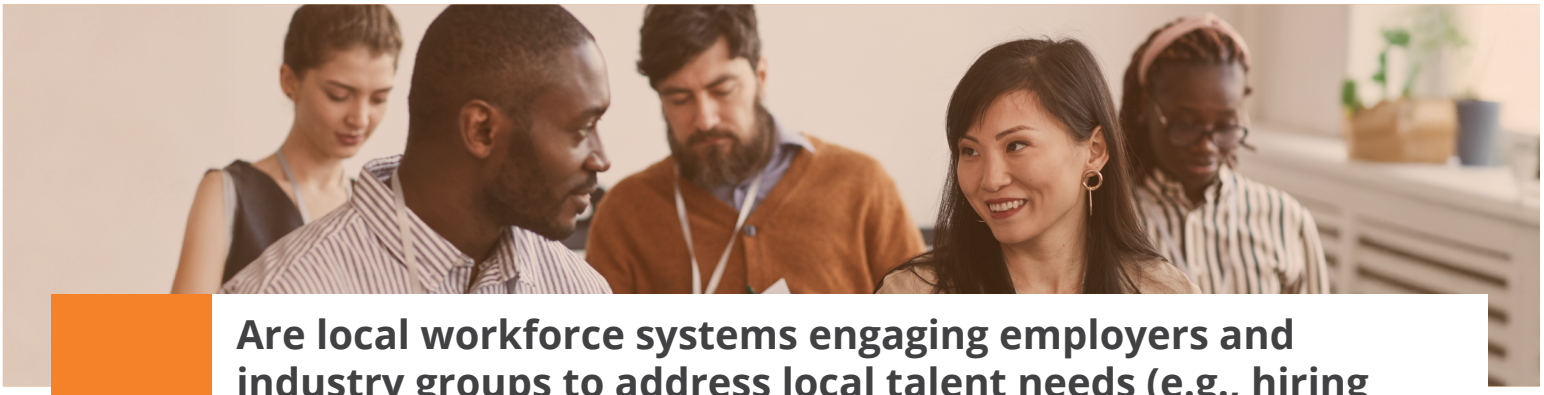
participants who have experienced trauma. Furthermore, workforce service providers should help participants better understand trauma as a key component of job readiness training and develop strategies to navigate future traumas, particularly those that may be triggered in a work setting (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).

- Incorporate worker and learner voice in strategic decision making. As evidenced by the title of this report, Making Decisions with Us, Not About Us, there is significant interest amongst workforce development participants in accessing leadership opportunities, giving back, and actively helping to shape the workforce development system. The advisory council believes that workforce development participants are the most overlooked asset that the workforce system possesses and are often invited only to participate in the occasional survey or focus group, or are hired, when convenient, because it is cost-effective. The advisory council can think of no better designer, implementer, or evaluator of programs designed to increase economic opportunity than individuals who have experienced barriers to opportunity firsthand and are able to identify supports that will prove most impactful (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).



13 Are local workforce systems engaging employers and industry groups to address local talent needs (e.g., hiring and training workers, helping develop and deliver career and technical education, providing resources for workforce development activities)?

Why this matters

Engaging employers and industry groups is essential for local workforce systems because it aligns training to real demand, reduces skills mismatches and coordinates actions across education, economic development and human-services policies. Evidence on sector partnerships — formal collaboratives among employers, training providers and community organizations — shows they help workers secure better jobs and earnings while helping firms fill critical roles and align work-based learning to current needs (Maguire et al., 2010; Hendra et al., 2016). Employer participation also advances job quality and access: federal "Good Jobs" guidance encourages boards and partners to incorporate practices such as transparent pay, safe scheduling and clear advancement pathways and to embed these in partnership design (U.S. Department of Labor & U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022). WIOA further reinforces employer engagement by requiring states and regions to plan for employer services and by tracking "effectiveness in serving

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employers," which promotes collaboration across systems and policies. Finally, sustained dialogue with industry clarifies HR priorities — recruitment pipelines, onboarding and upskilling — so that local strategies address real talent needs and improve retention.

Develop and Coordinate Workforce Strategies and Policies: Part of what makes a local workforce system a system is its ability to coordinate across stakeholders, programs and organizations that may perform similar functions or serve similar populations. A successful system also requires strategies and policies that reflect the needs of stakeholders with different goals and agendas. Coordination and collaboration among organizations in a local workforce system is vital to ensuring scarce resources are used to address priorities effectively and efficiently (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems). Employers often engage in industry partnerships to address talent needs. They begin as a coalition of the willing. Workforce intermediaries work to build trust with employers and industry. As additional employers become involved and the industry partnership develops, members recognize their roles for investing in workers and creating quality jobs. (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

Improve Job Quality and Access: Local workforce systems seek to not only get people into jobs, but improve working conditions and connect people with positions that provide a living wage and benefits, as well as safe and nondiscriminatory working environments. In many local areas, the workforce system plays a significant role in economic development to ensure that residents, especially the economically disadvantaged, can take advantage of the job opportunities created by new employers and industry (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).

Support Employer's HR Needs: Although local workforce systems often focus on directly serving adults and youth, they also support the human resources needs of local industry. Local workforce systems help employers identify job candidates through prescreening, train new workers and provide post-placement services to retain skilled employees (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems)

Develop and Coordinate Workforce Strategies and Policies

Indicators

System indicators

- The local workforce system has a way to identify credentials of value. Develop and execute a model to identify credentials of value – including postsecondary technical subbaccalaureate credit and non-credit credentials, industry-based certifications, apprenticeship certificates, and licenses (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- The local workforce system has an approach to clarify and connect pathways. Streamline and clarify existing career pathways and models to increase alignment between secondary and postsecondary technical programs to maximize credit for credentials of value (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- Quality job criteria: Workforce development organization uses quality criteria for new business development and relationship maintenance, including wages, benefits, job hours, safety, training and advancement practices, accessibility, career paths, etc. (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce development organizations have a well-defined organizational strategy for engaged business success (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).

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- Defined business engagement outcomes for success: Workforce development organization has identified key outcomes for its work with businesses, as well as for jobseekers (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Defined set of employer interventions and services: Workforce development organization has identified a varied but defined array of services to support the hiring, skill development, and job retention practices of its business partners (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Designated business development and assistance staff: Workforce development organization has designated an adequate number of staff — or has developed robust partnerships — to focus on developing good knowledge of business needs and managing business relationships and providing technical assistance (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Staff with relevant corporate, labor, or industry experience: Workforce development organization staff in key instructional, business development, and technical assistance roles have prior experience in a corporate setting, preferably in targeted industries or occupations (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Strong internal data culture and tracking system: Workforce development organization has in-depth data on its employer base and areas of success and challenges in matching participants to market need (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce development organizations have a deep understanding of industry and employer needs (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Labor market information competency: Workforce development organization accesses and uses relevant local labor market information resources on a regular basis and confirms that input through feedback from employers, unions and other local and sectoral sources.
- Strategic employer targeting: Workforce development organization uses its internal results data and quality job criteria to intentionally target specific employers for new development or relationship deepening (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Engaged industry advisors: Workforce development organization regularly engages with industry advisors to understand overall trends and the specific needs of targeted occupations, as well as fill in gaps in staff knowledge (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Relationships at multiple levels: Workforce development organization's staff are networking in multiple levels and divisions of employer organizations to identify areas of need and potential matches with program offerings (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Understand workplace needs and culture: Workforce development organizations develop a deeper understanding of occupations and specific employers' needs, hiring and promotion policies through site visits; job shadowing; informal dialogue with supervisors and current/former employees; and online workplace transparency tools (e.g., Glass Door, HourVoice, etc.) (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce development organizations maintain a "value add," embedded relationship with employers (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Consultative approach to identify "value add": Workforce development organization uses ongoing employer dialogue to better understand needs and to identify how a working relationship can add immediate and long-term value (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Connections to useful resources: Workforce development organization helps employers connect with other resources, including funding, (e.g., public training grants), additional referral sources, useful industry information, relevant peer connections and collaborative opportunities (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Program partnership opportunities: Multiple options for corporate employees to be involved in program activities and support, offering

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opportunities for staff professional development and useful executive-level relationships (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).

- Temporary, gig and work experience options: Temporary work options (preferably related to a career pathway) are developed as needed to offer additional work experience or income support for participants as they increase their skills (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Recognition of business engagement: Workforce development organization communicates that it values business support through different forms of special recognition (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Workforce development organizations develop ongoing feedback loops and shared metrics. The organization works with employers to understand specific placement, retention and advancement results and to identify and influence employer-side metrics that it could help to improve (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Simple, concise feedback options: Workforce development organization and relevant staff agree on simple non-burdensome options for staying in regular touch about the quality of services being offered and jobseekers' experiences (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Feedback to business practices: Workforce development organization shares data, peer stories, and recommendations with business partners on successful worker hiring, retention and advancement practices (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).
- Internal knowledge sharing processes: Program staff in a variety of functions have an ongoing process for gathering business feedback, reflecting on trends, and applying the information about employer needs to strengthen curriculum, coaching, job matches and other technical services (Corporation for a Skilled Workforce).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Sector strategies focus on an industry's local or regional workforce needs through the identification of needs, education development, training or other strategies and the implementation and coordination of services. Sector strategies aim to effect long-term changes benefiting both employers and workers, often involving systemic change. Sector strategies are often led by workforce intermediaries that bring multiple stakeholders together in an industry. Workforce intermediaries can be public agencies, nonprofits, labor unions or other organizations established specifically to coordinate these services and partners within an industry. Through close collaboration with employers and deep understanding of industry trends and needs, sectoral strategies aim to meet employers' and workers' current and future demands. These initiatives also aim to increase industry competition and advance the employment of low- and middle-income workers by aligning education and training provided in local workforce systems with the skills workers need to meet employers' human resources needs. With evidence of positive effects for participants in sector-based training programs, federal policy and programs are increasingly focusing on these strategies. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act encourages sector strategies and partnerships, and state governments have implemented sectoral strategies to meet employers' and job seekers' workforce needs (Urban Institute).
- Sector strategies — regional, industry-focused approaches to building skilled workforces — are one of the most effective ways to align public and private resources to address the talent needs of employers. While not new, there is a growing body of evidence showing that sector strategies are workforce interventions that can simultaneously improve employment opportunities for job seekers and the

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competitiveness of industries. As such, sector approaches have received renewed interest from government, the business community and philanthropy (Workforce GPS)

- Engaged Partnerships: Engaged partnerships bring new perspectives, resources, and expertise to sector strategies work. Truly engaged partners build trusting relationships, collaborate toward shared goals, and co-create solutions that will reach those goals. Examples of organizations to include in a sector partnership are: (a) Public workforce system partners, who provide leadership, employer engagement, workforce development expertise and resources, worker and learner outreach and advocacy and structural capacity; (b) Key employers and industry-affiliated organizations, who provide leadership and guidance on talent needs, industry trends, and labor market information validation; (c) Education and training partners, who provide expertise on curriculum development, delivery of training programs, and student advocacy and support; (d) Community-based organizations, who provide worker advocacy, worker and learner supports, outreach and recruitment assistance, and community engagement (US Department of Labor).
- Data-informed decision making: Data provides insight into trends, challenges, and opportunities, enabling informed choices and targeted solutions. Data draws from varied sources throughout the lifecycle of the sector partnership. Data includes, but is not limited to, the following: (a) Labor market information including employment trends, occupational data, job vacancy information, wage and earnings data, education and training requirements, and geographic analysis; (b) Skills gap analysis to provide information on the skills and competencies required for occupations within the targeted sector compared to the skills possessed by the current available workforce; (c) Worker and learner demographics to inform the skill development needs of the worker pipeline; (d) Employer and worker feedback to measure satisfaction with strategies and outcomes and find areas for improvement (US Department of Labor).
- Worker Voice and Job Quality: Incorporating worker representation and job quality in sector strategies ensures that solutions meet both worker and employer needs, successfully providing workers with pathways to careers and employers with skilled workers. Understanding and meeting worker needs can be accomplished in the following ways: (a) Worker representation in governance structures, including committees or advisory boards; (b) Direct feedback on challenges and supports needed for access and successful completion from individuals working in the targeted industry, learners and job seekers; (c) Including trusted community-based partners in the sector partnership, including committees and work groups to provide input and assistance with necessary wraparound supports for worker success; (d) Development of job quality guidelines for targeted industries and occupations (US Department of Labor).
- Leadership and Vision – Engaged Partners: Sector partnerships identify and engage key collaborators within the sector, including businesses, economic development organizations, workforce development organizations, nonprofit organizations, education and training institutions, Registered Apprenticeship partners, and other community groups. These varied partners are involved in both setting and carrying out the vision of the sector partnership (US Department of Labor).
- Leadership and Vision – Data Informed Decision Making: Relevant data should drive sector selection, vision development, and goal alignment, including traditional and real-time labor market information, employer input, industry reports, academic studies, surveys, and organizational data. The partnership uses data to set and measure clear objectives (US Department of Labor).
- Leadership and Vision – Worker Voice: Leadership engages with workers, labor organizations and

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community groups, inviting them to be active participants in the planning process, serve on committees, and take part in work groups. They prioritize worker perspectives, concerns, and priorities to build comprehensive strategies (US Department of Labor).

- Leadership, Vision, and Alignment: A shared vision, supported by all partners, serves as the guide for fostering ongoing collaboration, advancing initiatives, and sustaining momentum. A shared vision facilitated by the intermediary and created with input and commitment from all partners serves as the guide for fostering ongoing collaboration, advancing initiatives, and sustaining momentum. When partners align their efforts toward common objectives, partnerships become more resilient and capable of adapting to evolving circumstances as they work toward their shared goals, build trust in one another, and stay committed to agreed-upon outcomes. Best practices for sector partnerships include: Organize and facilitate partners to identify sector partnership vision, mission, goals, and strategies; Formalize an agreement that outlines partner expectations and commitment to the shared vision; Identify metrics to be regularly reported to ensure continued alignment and success; Create engaged employers to act as sector strategy champions to engage other employers and partners to increase the impact of the partnership; Create working committees to carry out the identified strategies (US Department of Labor).
- Resources and Capacity: Sector partners contribute their resources in support of the partnership's vision and in alignment with its shared goals to design and implement solutions and ensure sustainability. Planning, maintaining, and growing resources and capacity are fundamental to the success of sector partnerships and strategies. These include financial and human resources, technical expertise, and organizational structures that support effective decision-making and implementation, among others. Because adequate funding and other resources are critical to sector strategies efforts, all sector partners should commit resources in support of the vision of the partnership and in alignment with its shared goals. These resources contribute to the development of effective solutions and long-term sustainability. Best practices include: Develop a comprehensive funding strategy that lays out a variety of funding sources and identifies leveraged funds from partners; Conduct gap analysis activities to understand the availability of resources and seek additional support where required; Develop formal agreements that outline each partner's resource commitments and responsibilities; Integrate resource planning into the overall strategic planning process to ensure resources are directed toward priority areas; Incorporate sustainability planning into all resource- and capacity-building activities (US Department of Labor).
- Resources and Capacity – Engaged Partnerships: Data informed decision making: Engaged partnerships increase capacity by bringing an array of unique strengths, expertise, and resources to work toward a shared vision. By co-contributing and leveraging investments of both funds and time, partners ensure that sector strategies are equipped to address complex challenges (US Department of Labor).
- Resources and Capacity – Data Informed Decision Making: Sector partnerships must have the ability to access and analyze data to identify trends, assess needs, and evaluate outcomes, thereby optimizing resource allocation, mitigating risks, and capitalizing on opportunities. Employers and public partners can provide access to and analysis of a variety of data sources, which are integral to identifying needs, devising targeted solutions, and effectively implementing strategies (US Department of Labor).

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- Resources and Capacity – Worker Voice: Amplifying worker voice allows sector partnerships to gain valuable insights into the real-world experiences, needs, and aspirations of the workforce, ensuring that resources are directed towards initiatives that appeal to and meet the needs of workers, leading to greater program participation and outcomes (US Department of Labor).
- Industry Engagement: Throughout all phases of the work, employer partners' insights and expertise provide crucial context for understanding industry workforce needs and ensuring strategies and solutions are relevant and responsive. Industry engagement is critical to the success of all sector strategy work. Industry insight and expertise, which may come from employers, associations, and/or labor organizations, provide crucial context for understanding industry workforce needs and ensuring solutions and initiatives are relevant and responsive. This engagement helps to establish robust talent pipelines by identifying skill needs and gaps, aligning training models and curricula, and keeping pace with evolving industry needs. Key industry leaders must be engaged from the beginning and throughout to drive sector strategy design, implementation, and refinement. Best practices include: Identify industry champions and begin sector strategy discussions with employer needs analyses to understand industry talent needs; Verify labor market information with employers to ensure accurate data and emerging trends; Conduct a skills gap analysis to identify needed solutions; Include employers in solution design and implementation; Schedule regular meetings for the sector partnership with clear agendas for action and decisions; Recognize and celebrate employer contributions and sector partnership successes (US Department of Labor).
- Industry Engagement – Engaged Partnerships: Engaged industry leadership drives successful sector strategies. Active participation and commitment by these leaders must drive sector strategies and solutions. Their leadership sets the tone for collaboration and ensures the success of initiatives. Industry leadership and engagement supports other critical partners, such as education and training providers and workforce development organizations, to implement relevant skill development programs and initiatives for the workforce (US Department of Labor).
- Industry Engagement – Data Informed Decision Making: By leveraging data-driven insights, the sector partnership can better understand and respond to the needs of industry. Data enables an understanding of industry trends, challenges, and opportunities, which is then validated, refined, and deepened with employers, resulting in more targeted and effective strategies and better outcomes (US Department of Labor).
- Industry Engagement – Worker Voice: While industry insight and expertise are vital for understanding employer needs, worker voice provides essential perspectives on job quality within the sector. By actively engaging with workers and incorporating their feedback into sector strategies, partnerships can ensure that solutions and initiatives are responsive to workers' needs and experiences and are designed to ensure workers can successfully access and complete (US Department of Labor).
- Sector-Based Service Delivery: Successful sector strategies reflect a deep knowledge of the needs, characteristics, and dynamics of the targeted sector and of the existing workforce's skills, education and training, needs, and barriers, leading to creation of pathways and opportunities for workers to enter and advance in careers in the sector. Successful sector strategies reflect a deep knowledge of the needs, characteristics, and dynamics of the targeted sector and of the existing workforce's skills, education and training, needs, and barriers. These strategies create pathways and opportunities for workers to enter and advance in careers in the sector with the necessary

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training, skills, and credentials. Sector strategies aim to fill an industry's near-term workforce needs and to create talent pipelines that address long-term, future needs through training, work-based learning opportunities, and exploratory activities for the future workforce. Best practices include: Develop or enhance specific courses, programs, and credentials to better align post-secondary education offerings to industry-identified workforce and skill needs; Establish clearly defined career pathways within the industry for job seekers and workers to begin and advance in the industry; Train talent-facing staff and educators in industry expectations, career pathways, culture, and opportunities; Include talent-facing staff in designing strategies, leveraging both existing resources and expertise in event or program design; Build work-based learning experiences, including Registered Apprenticeship, for every level of job seeker and training (US Department of Labor).

- Sector-Based Service Delivery – Engaged Partnerships: Committed partners collaborate to develop solutions that are responsive to unique sector workforce needs and position workers to take advantage of career opportunities in the sector (US Department of Labor).
- Sector-Based Service Delivery – Data Informed Decision Making: Sector strategies should use both employer and industry data, as well as data about the workforce, to develop meaningful solutions. Identifying skill gaps, barriers, developing curriculum and competency models, and offering training opportunities that reflect worker interests which result in positive outcomes for the industry and workers alike (US Department of Labor).
- Sector-Based Service Delivery – Worker Voice: Incorporating worker voice into service delivery design results in initiatives that are responsive to worker needs, provide targeted wraparound supports, and create a skilled talent pipeline for the targeted sector (US Department of Labor).
- Continuous Improvement: A continuous improvement mindset, including measurement of progress toward employer, worker, and community goals, fosters adaptation, innovation, and effectiveness over time. A continuous improvement mindset fosters adaptation, innovation, and effectiveness over time. Sector partnerships establish metrics to measure progress toward employer, worker, and community goals. Continuous monitoring and evaluation allow sector partnerships to assess, evolve, and transform alongside the sectors they serve, creating opportunities for sustainability. Best practices include: A review of progress toward goals on a quarterly and annual basis; Feedback collection from all sector partners via survey to understand each partner's perception of value and return on investment; Reflection on solutions and events to identify best practices and areas for improvement to continue to grow and scale the work; Provide training to service providers on industry trends and to employers on worker challenges and barriers; Provide opportunities for professional development for intermediary staff on topics such as effective facilitation, strategic funding, data access and use, and relevant industry knowledge (US Department of Labor).
- Continuous Improvement – Engaged Partnerships: Engaged partners foster an environment of continuous improvement and accountability, seeking ways to learn, innovate, and improve strategies and outcomes together. Engaged partners provide iterative feedback that strengthens sector strategies over time (US Department of Labor).
- Continuous Improvement – Data Informed Decision Making: Incorporating data collection and analysis into assessment and decision-making throughout the sector strategy cycles helps partnerships identify areas of success and opportunities for improvement. Ongoing data analysis enables sector partnerships to respond quickly to changing industry dynamics

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and contributes to sustainability. Successful sector partnerships measure quantitative and qualitative success and showcase their value (US Department of Labor).

- Continuous Improvement – Worker Voice: Obtaining regular feedback from workers fosters a culture of open communication and positions sector partnerships to address concerns and barriers from workers and creates opportunities to implement changes to ensure greater workforce participation and success (US Department of Labor).
- Develop a state-wide vision and strategy for workforce development. For instance, Minnesota's P20 Partnership (MNP20) works to influence change, foster innovation, and advocate for policies and practices that address priority issues in education and workforce development. Their current efforts include: Developing a statewide vision for dual enrollment as part of the College in High School Alliance's "Next Phase of Dual Enrollment Policy Cohort"; Engagement in efforts to grow and sustain the state's educator workforce, in partnership with the Governor's Workforce Development Board; Gathering input on its draft credentials of value framework and identifying opportunities for potential implementation; Supporting work related to career pathways for learners of all ages; Continuing to foster connections, collaborations, and convenings across the educational ecosystem; Supporting capacity-building for the incubation, acceleration, and amplification of innovative ideas and initiatives
- Elected officials work with economic development agencies to attract residents and businesses to their municipalities. These collaborations can take the form of development projects for specific city areas, such as neighborhood revitalization initiatives (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Workforce intermediaries facilitate employer-led sector partnerships that bring together multiple stakeholders from particular industries to align training and services for workers to acquire needed skills (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Workforce development boards use local labor market and workforce system data to assess performance and develop strategies for improvement. These assessments include identifying key characteristics of unemployed or underemployed workers, as well as skilled positions that employers are having trouble filling (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- UpSkill Houston: One example of a workforce intermediary is the Greater Houston Partnership, whose UpSkill Houston initiative focuses on closing the skills gap in the Houston, Texas, region for careers in petrochemicals, construction, health care, and other key sectors. UpSkill Houston is an employer-led, collaborative workforce effort with three stated objectives: 1. Attract individuals to skilled jobs and professions in critical sectors. 2. Train individuals on basic employability and technical skills. 3. Place and retain individuals in critical skills jobs and professions. The UpSkill Houston action plan was developed by the Greater Houston Partnership's Regional Workforce Development Task Force, with members from industry, education, social services, and the public sector. Key strategies of the action plan include sector councils, an awareness campaign, adopting common approaches for basic skills and employability, coordination across stakeholders, the development of a data system, and supply-side synchronization (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Develop and Maintain Employer Leadership: Employers and industry are actively and consistently engaged and understand the role they play in improving outcomes for workers. What success looks like: Employers attend meetings, invite peers to meetings, are responsive to requests, help determine

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priorities, co-invest to meet those priorities, and provide data to inform partnerships. Employers make job design changes and take action inside of their own organizations to invest in training, policies, and practices that support equitable worker retention and career advancement (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- Use Labor Market Data and Industry Intelligence: Data informs the development of equitable goals and activities that address employer and worker needs – including conversations about the quality of jobs and needed competencies, training, and career pathways. What success looks like: Education and training programs are aligned with industry needs and produce equitable outcomes for frontline workers and people of color. More employers understand and empathize with the need to improve the quality of their jobs and support worker advancement (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Increase Awareness of Partner Roles: Employers, partners, and stakeholders need to understand their roles and make a commitment to address racial disparities. Partnerships play a key role in ensuring that workers and their communities are included in the process to identify and address disparities in hiring, credential attainment, advancement, and labor market mobility. What success looks like: Partnership strategies are developed in concert with the communities and workers impacted; Employers that are committed to racial equity and inclusion; Employers change organizational culture and hiring, retention, and career advancement policies and practices; Workplaces that are more equitable and attract diverse talent, leading to better retention and company profitability (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Identify Necessary Systems Changes: Only by addressing the role that systemic and structural racism play in employment and labor market mobility can partnerships achieve their equity goals. What success looks like: Strategies to change the systems that perpetuate racism and limit access to jobs and labor market mobility (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for developing and maintaining employer leadership: The Next Generation Sector Partnerships training manual – Use this step by step guide to help you build strong, employer-led industry sector partnerships. (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for developing and maintaining employer leadership: Talent Pipeline Management Academy Curriculum (US Chamber of Commerce Foundation) – Use this toolkit to identify strategies for effective and sustained employer engagement and leadership using employer and other data. (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for developing and maintaining employer leadership: Leading and Partnering for Greater Economic Opportunity: A Guide for Colorado Businesses (Colorado Workforce Development Council) – Use this guide to learn more about ways businesses can lead at a collective table and work together. (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for developing and maintaining employer leadership: Sector Strategy Resources – WorkforceGPS, Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for developing and maintaining employer leadership: Reimagining Employer Engagement

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Toolkit – Aspen Institute (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- TOOL for developing and maintaining employer leadership: CareerSTAT Resource Center – Leverage Partner Expertise and Resources (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using labor market data and industry intelligence : Falling off a Cliff: When Workers Can't Afford to Take a Job – Use this to see how local data can illustrate the cost of frontline jobs and the impact on workers' public benefits. (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using labor market data and industry intelligence: Workforce Equity Dashboard – National Fund (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using labor market data and industry intelligence: Advancing Workforce Equity – PolicyLink (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using labor market data and industry intelligence: Burning Glass Research (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using labor market data and industry intelligence: CareerSTAT Resource Center – Workforce Planning and Analytics (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for increasing awareness of partner roles: The Business Case for Racial Equity (WKKF & Altarum) – Learn about the importance of racial equity as both an imperative for social justice and a strategy for economic growth (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for increasing awareness of partner roles: A CEO Blueprint for Racial Equity (PolicyLink, FSG, Just Capital, and Living Cities) – Use this roadmap to help companies understand and address the intended and unintended consequences of all their products, policies, and practices on people of color (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for increasing awareness of partner roles: The Role of Senior Leaders in Building a Race Equity Culture and Awake to Woke to Work: Building a Race Equity Culture (Equity in the Center) – Use this to understand the role of leaders and the conditions needed to shift mindsets, policies, and practices toward race equity and the resources and strategies to help you move from commitment to action (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

Policies

- In 2025, the Colorado General Assembly passed HB 21-1330, which created a Student Success and Workforce Revitalization Task Force. The Task Force recommended building a learner-centered talent ecosystem, ensuring better results from targeted increases in State education and training investments, and ensuring a flexible and adaptive talent development system. Its stated goals were to: (1) Seamlessly integrate postsecondary education, skills attainment, and training strategies to improve the flexibility and permeability of the system; (2) Future-proof talent development by investigating and scaling strategies that help the postsecondary education and workforce development strategies be more adaptive and efficient; (3) Improve the ability for learners, employers, community members, and state agencies to navigate the postsecondary talent development system; (4) Increase postsecondary credential attainment, particularly for the students who historically have not connected to postsecondary education or training within

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six years of high school graduation; and (5) Reduce bureaucratic barriers to cross-functional education and training (Colorado's Talent Development Systems).

- Minnesota's Governer's Workforce Development Board to strengthen the skills of Minnesota's workforce. The Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) has a responsibility to advise the Governor on Minnesota's workforce system. The Board represents key leaders from business, education, labor, community-based organizations, and government. The GWDB has statutory responsibility under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which provides leadership on opportunities and key workforce strategies for the state. The Board provides a venue for workforce stakeholders building on a shared vision and mission. The GWDB is Minnesota's state Workforce Development Board, mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, Title I, Subtitle A, Chap. 1, Sec. 101, State Workforce Development Boards and further defined by Minn. Stat. 166L.665 which has been affected by law enacted during the 2017 legislative session and has been amended by 2018 Minn. Stat. 116L.665. The GWDB By-Laws provide additional guidance to the Board's activities (Minnesota's Governer's Workforce Development Board).
- In 2009, Minnesota legislators formed the Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership. The purpose of the Partnership is to "create a seamless system of education that maximizes achievements of all students, from early childhood through elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, while promoting the efficient use of financial and human resources." Its work focused on two primary goals: Goal #1: Adopt a single statewide definition of a quality credential across P-20 and the workforce. Goal #2: Create a single list of all the credentials offered in the state, and highlight those which meet the state's definition of quality and have the greatest labor market value (Minnesota's P20 Council).

Improve Job Quality and Access

Indicators

System indicators

- Number of individuals enrolled in upskilling and reskilling programs. This is measured in an effort to institute and expand upskilling and reskilling programs as part of core education and training inventory, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of employers for middle-skill workers (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- Percent of individuals completing upskilling and reskilling programs. This is measured in an effort to institute and expand upskilling and reskilling programs as part of core education and training inventory, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of employers for middle-skill workers (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- Percent of individuals completing integrated education and training programs. This is measured in an effort to expand integrated education and training (IET) programs for middle-skill occupations and increase learner persistence to completion, certification, and employment (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- Percent of individuals entering employment post-program completion. This is measured in an effort to expand integrated education and training (IET) programs for middle-skill occupations and increase learner persistence to completion, certification, and employment (Texas Workforce Investment Council).
- Percent of individuals attaining a short-term credential. This is measured in an effort to

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respond flexibly to employment changes through the identification and delivery of programs that support the attainment of short-term credentials, including industry-based certifications and licenses (Texas Workforce Investment Council).

- Percent of individuals attaining an industry-based certification or license. This is measured in an effort to respond flexibly to employment changes through the identification and delivery of programs that support the attainment of short-term credentials, including industry-based certifications and licenses (Texas Workforce Investment Council).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Adapt and implement a job quality and equity framework. Using the examples below, start by developing an understanding of how various job quality principles can connect to your general pursuit of infrastructure funding and equity goals. You can also learn more about what BIL, IRA, as well as related federal policy and guidance say about equity and job quality to better align your proposal or project with federal priorities. Job quality framework tools include: Job Quality and Equity Framework; Infrastructure Funding and Its Connection to Job Quality and Equity; Job Quality and Equity in Recent Executive Orders and Other Policies (Local Infrastructure Hub, Investing in High-Quality Infrastructure Jobs)
- Industry partnerships encourage employers to adopt "high-road" strategies, such as paying living wages, offering paid leave and other benefits, improving working conditions, and providing ongoing training to boost productivity and employee retention (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Industry organizations and labor unions support policy changes to improve job quality for workers or to enforce existing regulations in particular sectors, while working to create and improve career ladders within those sectors (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- State and local governments adopt minimum- or living-wage laws to improve incomes for low-wage workers. Such laws compensate for inconsistencies between the high cost of living in some cities and the federal minimum wage. Governments may also adopt laws that regulate hiring practices to limit discrimination against certain populations (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Economic development agencies build local hiring agreements into development plans that include a public investment. Successful implementation of local hiring agreements must include the buy-in of many stakeholders — community- and faith-based organizations, unions, training providers, developers and business, and workforce service providers — as well as a centralized mechanism for providing trained, prescreened job candidates to employers (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Activate Employers to Make Jobs Better: Build member awareness of best practices in their sector that strengthen job quality, enhance worker voice, and result in business success. What success looks like: Better outcomes for workers, e.g., credentials earned, job placement, retention, promotions, and wage gains. Better outcomes for businesses, e.g., lower turnover, higher productivity, and improved customer satisfaction. (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Promote Career Advancement. Workforce Development Organizations work with employers to redesign jobs, develop career pathways, and remove barriers to career advancement by changing business practices. Examples include providing workers with more information about skill development, offering financial assistance, and creating more flexible work arrangements.

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What success looks like: Diversity of the talent pipeline across different occupations within the industry sector increases. Career pathways and resources to support advancement are clearly defined. Better outcomes for workers, e.g., credentials earned, job placement, retention, promotions, and wage gains (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- Promote Racial Equity and Inclusion. Racial equity is one part of racial justice and includes addressing root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. In the context of an industry partnership, racial equity and inclusion means adopting policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impact, and outcomes for all (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Use disaggregated data by race and gender. Analyzing disaggregated data can help identify the root causes of inequities and mobilize investments to populations with the largest disparities in outcomes. What success looks like: Ability to identify opportunities to improve outcomes for workers experiencing inequities; Better capacity to observe improvements (or lack of) in disparities; A process to implement interventions with a race equity lens (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Define Racial Equity and Inclusion: To identify the partnership's racial equity and inclusion goals, all partners must understand a clear definition of racial equity and inclusion for the industry sector, employers, partners, and workers in the region. What success looks like: Specific goals for reducing disparities in industry sectors and occupations; Partners that are committed to changing their practices to achieve the agreed-upon REI goals for frontline workers and people of color; Increased diversity of the workforce in different occupations within the targeted industry sector (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Share Worker Experiences and Resource: Employers and partners discuss and share information regarding different policies and practices that support racial equity and inclusion in employment and training programs, hiring, and career advancement. What success looks like: Employer and stakeholder awareness increases, leading to a commitment to action; Employers change policies and practices to support racial equity and inclusion; An increase in placements, retention, wages, and advancement for people of color and others facing employment and income disparities; Better outcomes for workers, e.g., credentials earned, job placement, retention, promotions, and wage gains (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Develop Specific Indicators and Measures of Success: Success includes the collection of disaggregated baseline data according to race and gender and targets for improvement. What success looks like: Equitable and culturally relevant programs and services for populations facing barriers to employment; Ability to track the progress on goals, activities, and outcomes and inform future changes and improvements (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for activating employers to make jobs better: Job Design Framework (National Fund) – Use this menu of components to identify different ways to create the right quality job for employers and workers. These components can also help define job quality and set goals for improvement (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for activating employers to make jobs better: Good Jobs Good Business (Pacific

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Community Venture) – Use this toolkit to help small businesses create good jobs and connect to pro-bono business advisors across the country. Industry partnerships can use it to frame conversations with businesses and suggest potential resources (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- TOOL for activating employers to make jobs better: Job Quality Outcome Maps – National Fund (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for activating employers to make jobs better: DOL Job Quality Toolkit (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for promoting career advancement: Advancing Frontline Women (FSG) – This report offers 12 evidence-based practices that companies can employ to help break down workplace barriers for women and create a competitive advantage (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for promoting career advancement: A Guide to Upskilling America's Frontline Workers (Deloitte and Aspen Institute) – This guide outlines upskilling practices that employers have effectively applied to develop their frontline workers. Industry partnerships can use this to learn more about which employer practices are already being implemented in their industry (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for promoting career advancement: UpSkilling Playbook for Employers (UpSkill America) – This playbook highlights examples of employers investing in upskilling strategies to support worker advancement and business competitiveness (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for promoting career advancement: Progression in Employment: Employer Toolkit & Case Study Collection (Institute for Employment Studies) – This toolkit can be used to engage employers in building pathways and opportunities to support career progression for workers, by creating a supportive work environment through job redesign and supportive management. (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for promoting career advancement: DOL Apprenticeship Playbook for Business Partners (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using disaggregated data by race and gender: Improving Training to Brighten the Future of Black Workers (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies) – Use this resource to learn about the impact of disaggregating workforce program data according to race (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using disaggregated data by race and gender: The Essentials of Disaggregated Data for Advancing Racial Equity (Race Matters) – Use this resource to learn about the basics on how to disaggregate data (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using disaggregated data by race and gender: The Power of Creating a Racial Equity Backmap (Race Matters) – Use this resource to learn about back-mapping, a process that helps communities identify the root causes of inequities (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for using disaggregated data by race and gender: Leveraging Disaggregated Data to Advance Equitable Growth in Smaller Communities – PolicyLink (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

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- TOOL for defining racial equity and inclusion: Ready for Equity in Workforce Development (Race Forward & CSI) – Use this racial equity readiness assessment tool and learn more about practices and policies that support institutional racial equity (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for defining racial equity and inclusion: 10 Essential Questions for Employers, Business Owners, HR Professionals and Hiring Managers (Associated Black Charities) – This resource can be used a starting place to inform changes to policies, practices, and organizational culture (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for sharing worker experiences and resources: The Competitive Advantage of Racial Equity (PolicyLink and FSG) – This report highlights examples from 12 leading companies such as Gap Inc., PayPal, and Cigna, who are driving innovation and growth by advancing racial equity (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for sharing worker experiences and resources: Advancing Frontline Employees of Color (FSG) – This resource identifies evidence-based practices that can be used to advance racial equity and foster work environments where all people feel valued and thrive (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for sharing worker experiences and resources: Race-Explicit Strategies for Workforce Equity in Healthcare and IT (Race Forward) – Workforce practitioners can use these four solution categories to focus on how to implement systemic, race-explicit, and high-impact outcomes (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for sharing worker experiences and resources: Adding Racial Equity to The Menu (ROC United & Race Forward) – This toolkit for restaurant employers identifies the skills and tools that are most critical to supporting all restaurants in moving the needle on racial equity in the industry. Use this toolkit with other sectors of the economy as well (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for sharing worker experiences and resources: Manufacturing Pathways in Milwaukee: Bringing Skills and Equity to Manufacturing's Future (Center on Wisconsin Strategy) – This case study focuses on how equity is built into this apprenticeship innovation as it responds to the evolving manufacturing sector. This approach can be applied to other industry partnerships (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for increasing awareness of partner roles: Partnering for Equity: How Sector Partnerships are Tackling Workforce Disparities (Ray Marshall Center) – Use this resource to understand why partnerships become involved with diversity, equity, and/or inclusion efforts and how they approach this work (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for developing specific indicators and measures of success: Roadmap for Racial Equity (National Skills Coalition) – This resource outlines workforce training and education policies to advance racial equity. The roadmap identifies specific goals at a systems-level that can serve as an example for industry partnerships (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for developing specific indicators and measures of success: National Equity Atlas (PolicyLink) – Use this to find disaggregated, longitudinal data on demographic change, racial and economic inclusion, and the economic benefits of equity for the largest 100

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cities in America (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- TOOL for identifying necessary systems changes: Creating Consensus with Targeted Universalism (FSG) – Use this approach to change management as a catalyst for addressing inequities at the systems level (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for identifying necessary systems changes: ReWork Reimagining a Bay Area Workforce System Grounded in Racial and Gender Equity (Insight Center and ReWork the Bay) – This report provides valuable insights into the discriminatory roots of labor and workforce policies and starts a conversation about the narrative and system changes needed (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for identifying necessary systems changes: Beyond Training and the Skills Gap (Race Forward) – This report provides practical tips for racially equitable communications to broaden the collective responsibility for employment and other economic outcomes (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for identifying necessary systems changes: Toolbox for the Systems Change Mindset – National Fund (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for identifying necessary systems changes: Racial Equity Framework for WFD Funders – Workforce Matters (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

Strengthen workforce talent pipeline

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Business and trade associations develop employer-led talent pipeline management initiatives to create secure sources of skilled workers for current and future job openings. (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- American Job Centers conduct initial interviews and prescreen potential job candidates, then recommend them to employers. They may also provide job-retention services to workers to reduce turnover. Centers often hold job fairs or host other hiring events (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Community colleges work directly with local employers to develop customized training curricula or create facilities and equipment for programs that meet human resource needs (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Nondegree education and training providers create incumbent worker training programs, which help employees learn new skills that support advancement or update their skills and credentials (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).
- Talent Pipeline Management: Talent pipeline management is a demand-driven, employer-led strategy for closing the skills gap in a particular city or region. Using lessons learned from supply chain management, which focuses on the flow of goods and services, the talent pipeline management model puts employers in leadership roles as "end-use customers" of workforce education and training partnerships. Talent pipeline management

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has three foundational principals: Employers create value around the jobs most critical to their competitiveness; Employers organize and manage scalable network partnerships with education and training providers; Employers collaborate with partners to develop measures and incentives to reinforce and improve performance. The US Chamber of Commerce Foundation is engaging employers and their workforce partners in different places to develop talent pipeline management approaches in their workforce systems (Urban Institute, Understanding Local Workforce Systems).

- Promote Skills-Based Hiring: Work with employers to articulate competencies, work experience, and educational requirements for jobs. Share industry intelligence with educators and other partners. What success looks like: More diverse workers will recognize their skills and competencies in job descriptions and will be more likely to apply. Placements, retention, wages, and career advancement increase for people of color and others facing employment and income disparities (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- Improve recruitment, hiring, and retention practices: Create a more diverse workforce and an equitable and inclusive workplace by working with employers to update hiring practices. This can include updating job descriptions, referral sources, hiring criteria, workplace culture, policies, and practices. What success looks like: Diversity of the talent pipeline across different occupations within the industry sector increases. Placements, retention, wages, and career advancement increases for people of color and others facing employment and income disparities. Better outcomes for businesses, e.g., lower turnover, higher productivity, and improved customer satisfaction (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for promoting skills-based hiring: Building the Talent Pipeline: An Implementation Guide (US Chamber of Commerce Foundation) – Use this guide to learn about six strategies employers can use to be more effective end-customers of education and workforce partnerships (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for promoting skills-based hiring: Opportunity @ Work Marketplace – This tool connects employers with online training providers to job-seeking STARs (Skilled Through Alternative Routes), allowing employers to more quickly identify and vet STARS who meet their needs (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for promoting skills-based hiring: Making Work-Based Learning Work for Retail: A Guide for Retail Employers (Jobs for the Future) – Use this guide for an overview of work-based learning models and advice on how to implement them to develop stronger talent (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for promoting skills-based hiring: Skilled Credentials at Work – SHRM Foundation (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for improving recruitment, hiring, and retention practices: Talent Rewire and Grads of Life's Opportunity Navigator – This tool can help employers understand and follow best practices for opportunity employment (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships) (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for improving recruitment, hiring, and retention practices: The Women's Fund for the Greater Cincinnati Foundation – This toolkit offers a collection of nearly 60 workplace policies to help employers support, stabilize, and retain employees (National Fund for Workforce

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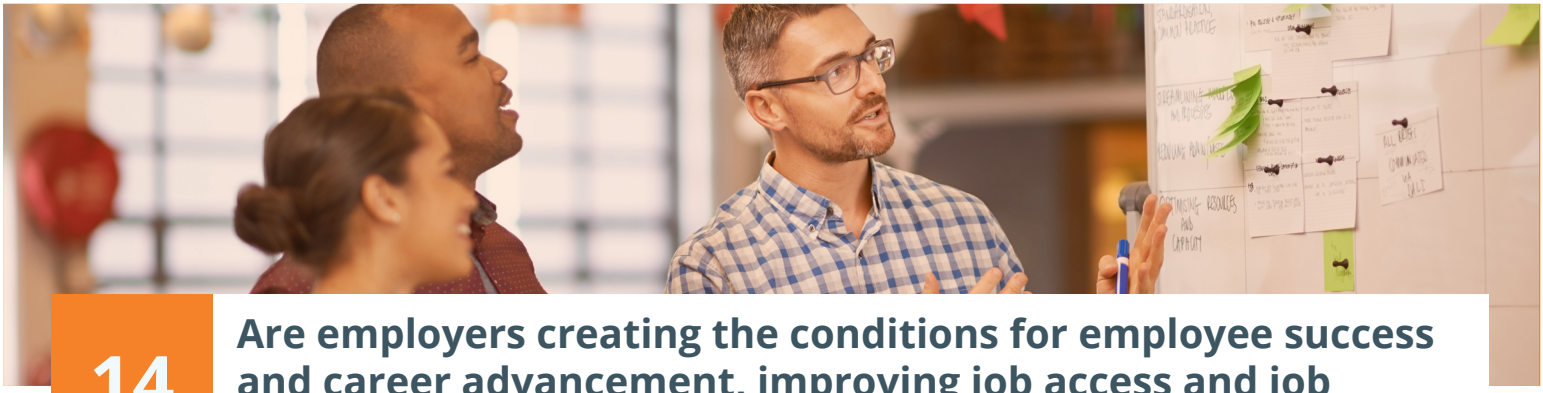
Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships) (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).

- TOOL for improving recruitment, hiring, and retention practices: The Management Center, Equity and Inclusion Tools – This library of tools can help organizations address internal practices and management approaches related to equity and inclusion (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships) (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).
- TOOL for improving recruitment, hiring, and retention practices: CareerSTAT Resource Center – Inclusive, Local Hiring (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships) (National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Toolkit for Developing High-Performing Industry Partnerships).



14 Are employers creating the conditions for employee success and career advancement, improving job access and job quality?

Why this matters

Creating the conditions for employee success and career advancement is essential to improving job quality, retention and overall organizational performance. Research consistently shows that employees value opportunities for growth and development more than any other factor when deciding whether to stay or leave a job — "career growth opportunities" is the No. 1 reason people change jobs (Gallup). When employers provide structured pathways for advancement, access to training, mentoring and cross-departmental projects (American Psychological Association; Great Place to Work) and clear systems for feedback and recognition, employees report higher satisfaction, stronger performance and longer tenure (Oracle; Great Place to Work).

At the systems level, organizations that invest in quality professional learning, talent marketplaces and upskilling programs build more resilient workforces capable of adapting to changing labor demands (American Psychological Association; Workforce Edge; World Economic Forum). Effective policies include transparent internal mobility platforms, individualized career development plans and formal coaching programs, all of which help employees map out and pursue growth within their organizations. Evidence from Workforce Edge and the APA finds that these practices not only expand job access but also foster loyalty and engagement — key drivers of both economic mobility for workers and long-term organizational success.

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Working conditions for employee success

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percent of employees who say professional development or career growth opportunities are very important to them in a job. For instance, in a survey of employee satisfaction, Gallup discovered "Career growth opportunities" is the No. 1 reason people give for changing jobs (Gallup).
- Percent of employees participating in professional training/development (Rahman Shiri).
- Organization's overall employee retention rate and turnover rate; voluntary turnover rate; involuntary turnover rate; new hire retention; retention rate for top employees; turnover rate by department, manager, and position (Oracle).
- Measures of employee satisfaction (gathered via surveys, focus groups, and interviews); average length of employment; new employee satisfaction rate; top employee satisfaction rate (Oracle).
- Employee job performance (Great Place to Work).
- Employee job satisfaction; feelings of being valued and supported at work (Great Place to Work).
- Employee's opportunities for advancement (Great Place to Work).

System indicators

- Organizations provide quality training and mentoring. Organizations can design projects that involve multiple departments so employees can cross-pollinate their skills and understand the company's bigger picture (American Psychological Association).
- Organizations create pathways for career advancement. Some companies today are developing talent marketplaces — online portals where employees can see current openings, read job descriptions, and understand the organizational hierarchy. These tools allow employees to map out their personal career trajectory (American Psychological Association).
- Organizations provide relevant and reciprocal feedback. Managers give frequent and honest assessments, but also listen when employees talk about their needs (American Psychological Association).
- Organizations recognize learning and accomplishment. With an emphasis on learning, companies can create a fluid, flexible workforce. One approach is "upskilling," internal programs that teach new skills or upgrade existing skills. Notably, upskilled workers are more likely to report career advancement into a good job, experts say. Separately, offering college-tuition benefits helps employees earn a degree debt-free and accomplish long-term career goals. This benefit is particularly attractive to entry-level workers in fields like fast food, retail, and health care (American Psychological Association).
- Organizations provide formal education. (The formal training and practical requirements for a given role, such as a specific degree, licence, or certification) (Great Place to Work).
- Organizations provide high-quality employee assessments. (The employee performance reviews, one-on-ones, and any other efforts used to measure strengths and weaknesses and find ways for employees to improve) (Great Place to Work).
- Organizations offer relevant job experience to employees. (The day-to-day, hands-on learning employees do as they master their roles, take on new challenges, and grow within the organization) (Great Place to Work).
- Organizations provide coaching and mentorship. (the coaching, mentorships, and any soft skills or interpersonal training employees may complete, such as customer service training, resilience training, mental health education or conflict resolution training) (Great Place to Work).

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Practices and Policies

Practices

- Make opportunities and pathways visible for internal employees. Employees need to be alerted to internal growth opportunities. People in human resources, especially, need to consider whether roles could be filled by internal candidates across regions or lines of business instead of immediately looking externally. Ideally, HR professionals, managers and employees should understand which roles are a potential fit for current employees, given their specific sets of experiences and skills, so that they can successfully find new opportunities — without having to look outside the company (World Economic Forum).
- Provide opportunities to learn and practice. Employees need opportunities to learn different skills that might be required by new roles. Identifying paths and courses that can teach key skills is a start, but employees also need the chance to practice new skills, learn from mistakes, and reflect on the experience. For example, customer support representatives at Fidelity Investments can learn a new skill in the morning, practice it in live customer calls (with a manager observing) in the afternoon and then reflect on the experience with others who are learning the same skill (World Economic Forum).
- Deliver rich feedback and coaching. Providing performance feedback is an essential part of learning. This includes understanding employees' career aspirations and counseling them in how to develop important skills. HR is essential to the process: The department needs to establish these policies and ensure that managers actually implement them. HR should also ask employees how they feel about the help they're getting from their managers (World Economic Forum).
- Formal training: This could be a training program developed internally at your organization or a third-party program through a certifying body, university or other institution. This might include: Professional development such as workshops, conferences and job-specific education offerings; Higher education programs such as bachelor's or advanced degrees, certifications, or specializations. Many employers offer these options through a tuition assistance program; Technical training such as courses or certifications in software applications, programming, or mechanical or manufacturing technologies; Soft skills training in areas such as leadership, communication, collaboration, or innovation (Workforce Edge).
- Mentoring and coaching. Whether through a manager-employee relationship or a mentor-mentee arrangement, employees can gain valuable insight and advice from a more experienced colleague (Workforce Edge).
- Internal opportunities. In your own organization, you can identify multiple ways for employees to explore growth opportunities: New responsibilities and projects can give employees a chance to stretch their skills and gain new knowledge; Informational interviewing enables employees to meet with coworkers in different roles to learn about their roles and experiences; Job shadowing lets employees spend time one-to-one with coworkers to observe and participate in different job functions (Workforce Edge).
- Networking. Making new professional connections is a powerful way to gain insights and knowledge. Your organization can encourage this by supporting membership in professional organizations or assigning employees to cross-functional project teams (Workforce Edge).
- Education benefits: Giving employees access to education benefits on their first day of work. This includes access to funding for any kind of learning that applies to an employee's job (examples include high school diplomas, degrees, professional certifications, bootcamps, etc.) (Workforce Edge).
- Establish Clear Career Paths. This is the foundation on which an employer's career development program rests. Employees need

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to see that there are opportunities to grow their careers — and that there are clear ways to make it happen. Across the organization, clarify what career advancement looks like at each position, including the specific skills and capabilities required for advancement. Set up transparent and achievable milestones that employees can reach as they progress (Workforce Edge).

- Invest in training and learning. To move forward, employees need opportunities to stay up to date on industry trends, build new skills, and grow their professional knowledge base. Some of this will happen on the job, but that approach isn't enough by itself. Whether the employer develops training programs internally or seeks them out externally, they should build a structured learning program that is clearly connected to the career paths in the organization (Workforce Edge).
- Create a mentoring program. Being paired with a more senior employee is a powerful way for less experienced workers to grow. They benefit from their mentor's hard-earned insight and advice, plus they can expand their professional network. What's more, the benefits of mentorship flow in both directions as more experienced workers benefit from their mentees' fresh perspectives (Workforce Edge).
- Involve every department. Especially in larger organizations, it's easy for employees to become siloed within their job function — which can limit career development. Look for ways to encourage cross-departmental collaboration. This could include stretch assignments, job rotations, or project-based collaboration. This can not only help make employees more well-rounded, but it also exposes them to potential new career opportunities (Workforce Edge).
- Reward development. As employees take the development steps outlined for them, employers should take time to celebrate their success. This could be in the form of monetary reward, but other kinds of recognition can be important, too. Employees want to see that their employer values their contributions (Workforce Edge).
- Prioritize learning and skill development. Start by involving stakeholders across the organization to gain a comprehensive view of which skills are most valuable. Then identify internal or external resources that can help employees boost those skills. Make those learning opportunities accessible, affordable and easy for employees to use. Enlist leaders at every level to encourage and model continuous learning.
- Support emerging leaders. Successful organizations need a leadership pipeline to secure their future. Identify up-and-coming leaders in the organization and support their growth with training and development opportunities (Workforce Edge).
- Don't neglect individual contributors. Not everyone aspires to leadership, but that doesn't mean their careers should stagnate. Explore how individual contributors can expand their skills even if they don't manage others (Workforce Edge).
- Help employees grow their networks. At every level, employees can gain new insights and knowledge when they connect with others. Provide opportunities for employees to expand their contacts. External networks are important, too, and can help employees gain fresh perspective and stay current in their field. Encourage employees to take advantage of professional associations, networking groups and more (Workforce Edge).
- Encourage internal mobility. Employees who move to new functions within an organization not only boost their own development and growth, but they also bring valuable cross-functional insights and skills that can elevate overall organizational performance. It's in your organization's best interest to enable internal mobility (Workforce Edge).
- To facilitate employee's internal mobility and promotion, develop a transparent system or platform for employees to pursue internal job openings. Set organizational targets for internal hiring. This will vary by organization,

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job level, and department, but assigning specific numerical goals for in-house hires is an important way to show your organization's commitment (Workforce Edge).

- When employees pursue internal opportunities, offer relevant training, coaching, and mentorship to support their success. Allow and promote stretch assignments, job shadowing and project-based cross-functional teams to help employees build new skills and provide a glimpse of potential career paths within your organization (Workforce Edge).
- Don't place excessive restrictions on internal mobility — for example, requiring multiple layers of approval or multiple years with the organization before employees are eligible. If employees feel that internal moves are discouraged, they're more likely to look at external opportunities. In fact, companies that excel at internal mobility are able to retain employees for an average of 5.4 years. That's nearly two times as long as companies that struggle with it, where the average retention span is 2.9 years (Workforce Edge).
- Create individualized career development plans. Create personalized plans to help employees grow in their careers and build new skills. Include measurable goals, clear milestones and regular feedback (Workforce Edge).

Experiences and Neighborhood Conditions

Young people living in neighborhoods with ample resources and access to public services like healthcare, healthy foods and financial aid tend to perform better academically.

15 Do K-12 systems make sufficient contributions to academic growth for students?

Why this matters

K–12 systems that drive real academic growth lay the foundation for students to access quality jobs and move up economically. Stronger cognitive skills are consistently linked to higher individual earnings and broader economic growth (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008). At the student level, having a

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high–value-added teacher who raises achievement increases college attendance and earnings and reduces teen parenthood, demonstrating that gains in learning translate into later labor-market advantages (Chetty, Friedman & Rockoff, 2014). Adequate, sustained school resources also matter: increases in per-pupil spending boost adult wages and lower poverty, especially for children from low-income families (Jackson, Johnson & Persico, 2016). And at the community level, places with higher-quality K–12 schools show greater intergenerational mobility, underscoring education's role in expanding opportunity (Chetty, Hendren, Kline & Saez, 2014).

Access to preschool: High-quality pre-K jump-starts children's language, early math and social skills, leading to smoother kindergarten entry and higher achievement through the early grades (Phillips et al., 2017; Magnuson & Duncan, 2016; Ansari, 2018). In state-funded programs, children who completed pre-K arrived at kindergarten with clearly stronger vocabulary, problem-solving and print awareness than near-age peers who had not yet attended (Barnett et al., 2018). Benefits are largest for children in poverty, though middle-income children also gain most of the same short-term academic advantages — so expanding access both lifts overall achievement and advances opportunity (Ansari, 2018; Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Effective Public Education: Effective public education drives both near-term achievement and long-term mobility. Effective teachers raise grades, test scores and college-going (Chetty et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2015). Facilities matter, too: poor air filtration and proximity to environmental hazards increase absences and depress learning (Vazquez-Martínez, Hansen, & Quintero, 2020). Investments that improve quality pay off — high-quality early classrooms boost adult earnings, and attending well-funded public schools increases attainment, graduation, achievement and wages (Chetty et al., 2011; Jackson, Johnson, & Persico, 2016; Johnson & Jackson, 2019; Lafortune, Rothstein, & Schanzenbach, 2018). Notably, raising per-pupil spending by 10% across all 12 school years lowers the likelihood of adult poverty for children from low-income families (Jackson, Johnson, & Persico, 2016; Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

School economic diversity: Decades of research show that a school's socioeconomic composition powerfully predicts student outcomes. Since the Coleman Report, studies find that peer and school context — especially concentrated poverty — depresses achievement beyond individual family poverty or background (Coleman, 1966; Borman & Dowling, 2010; Mickelson, 2018). A meta-analysis confirms that school-level SES effects on achievement exceed student-level effects (Sirin, 2005) and the poverty–achievement relationship is even stronger in medium- to high-poverty schools (Goodlad & Keating, 1990). Mechanisms include less experienced or uncertified teachers, higher turnover, weaker facilities and materials and fewer advanced courses in socioeconomically segregated schools (Orfield et al., 2014; Henneberger et al., 2019; USGAO, 2018). Because racial and socioeconomic segregation are tightly linked — and Black and Latine students are disproportionately in high-poverty schools — diversifying schools is central to improving opportunity and outcomes (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Frankenberg, 2009; Mickelson, 2018; Reardon, 2016).

Preparation for college: College readiness spans four facets — aspirations and beliefs, academic preparation, knowledge and information and fortitude/resilience (Kurlaender, Reed, & Hurtt, 2019). It strongly predicts later outcomes, including college performance and completion (Chingos, 2018; Destin, 2018). Academic preparation — rigorous coursework, higher GPAs and strong test performance — raises the likelihood of enrollment and success; SAT/ACT and state tests predict college grades, though GPA is the stronger predictor of completion and taking more advanced math in 9th–10th grade increases high school graduation and four-year attendance even after controlling for

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background (Chingos, 2018; Fina, Dunbar, & Welch, 2018; Long, Conger, & Iatarola, 2012). Readiness also depends on mindsets and motivation: peer learning, role models and goal-focused counseling support persistence (Destin, 2018; Kurlaender, Reed, & Hurtt, 2019). Finally, practical know-how matters — students lacking clear information about applications and financial aid are less likely to enroll (Kless, Soland, & Santiago, 2013).

Digital access: Digital access is now essential — 93% of U.S. adults use the internet — yet large gaps persist for low-income households, people of color, rural and tribal communities and people with disabilities (Pew Research Center 2024; Atske & Perrin 2021a, 2021b; Vogels 2021a, 2021b; White House 2021; Wilson, Wallin, & Reiser 2003; Wodajo & Kimmel 2013). For students, disparities are stark: about one-third of Black, Latine and American Indian/Alaska Native children lack high-speed home internet (All4Ed 2020; Ujifusa 2020). Device access is limited too — 1% have no internet-connected device and 14% have only one (often a smartphone), patterns concentrated among lower-income families and students of color (Moore, Vitale, & Stawinoga 2018). These gaps constrain instruction and deepen inequities in learning and employment; roughly 70% of teachers assign internet-dependent homework, creating a "homework gap" for students without reliable access (FCC 2009; McLaughlin 2016; Gorski & Clark 2001).

Access to quality public pre-K

Key source: E-W Framework

Contributing indicators

- Share of 3- and 4-year-old children enrolled in nursery school or preschool. Higher rates of parent-reported enrollment suggest that residents have access to crucial early education opportunities in a community (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Practices

- Developing recruitment, training, and retention strategies for building a high-quality workforce of early childhood caregivers (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Creating universal preschool programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Encouraging parental involvement in preschool education and educating parents about the benefits of formal preschool programs (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Supporting parents and informal child care providers in learning about evidence-based practices that can be used at home to support healthy development (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Effective public K-12 education systems

Contributing indicators

- Average annual improvement in English Language Arts. This metric captures the impact or quality of the schools children attend, using nationally standardized state assessments for English Language Arts from third through eighth grade (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Average annual improvement in Middle Grades Math and High School Graduation, disaggregated (Strive Together).

Practices

- Investing in hiring, training, and retaining a high-quality and diverse workforce of educators (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

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- Creating evidence-based curricula that fulfill students' diverse needs (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Fostering positive learning environments for students, including by reducing class sizes, developing programs that prevent bullying, moving away from punitive disciplinary practices and applying other trauma-informed practices (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Practices outlined in the Kindergarten Readiness, Early Grades Literacy, Middle Grades Math and High School Graduation StriveTogether Outcomes Playbooks (StriveTogether).
- Developing additional supports for underprivileged students, such as afterschool programs, high-impact tutoring and summer learning programs (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Ensuring that school and district accountability systems advance continuous improvement and a comprehensive vision of student success (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

School racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity

Key source: E-W Framework

Contributing indicators

- Student poverty concentration: Share of students attending high-poverty schools, by student race or ethnicity (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Practices

- Ending school and neighborhood segregation, including by expanding affordable housing in resource-rich neighborhoods and reforming zoning policies to allow for more diverse, high-density, mixed-income communities (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Creating more equitable school attendance boundaries (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Developing centralized school lottery application systems that prioritize school diversity (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Implementing more equitable school funding policies and advocating for reforms to state and federal funding (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

College and career readiness after high school graduation

Contributing indicators

- College readiness: Share of 19- and 20-year-olds with a high-school degree (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Practices

- Creating programs that help address barriers to school attendance, prevent dropouts and provide alternative pathways to high school graduation (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Providing supports that help increase students' academic readiness for college, such as dual enrollment, test preparation and summer bridge programs (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Creating programs that increase students' access to information about college and offer assistance with completing applications and applying for financial aid (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

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- Identifying and addressing financial barriers that prevent students from applying to or enrolling in college, including by providing scholarships to students from underrepresented groups (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Ensuring that school and district accountability systems advance a comprehensive vision of student success, including measures of college and career readiness (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- The High School Graduation and Postsecondary Enrollment StriveTogether Outcomes Playbooks provides a deep overview of leading research, indicators, policies and practices that support advancing these outcome areas (StriveTogether).

16 Do young people live in well-resourced neighborhoods?

Why this matters

Living in well-resourced neighborhoods is critical for young people's long-term health, education and economic mobility. Research shows that access to safe, economically inclusive and environmentally healthy communities — where schools are well-funded, opportunities are integrated and trauma and crime exposure are low — predicts higher graduation rates, college attendance and adult earnings (Chetty et al., 2016; Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative). Conversely, concentrated poverty, racial segregation and environmental hazards erode stability and belonging, limit opportunity and perpetuate inequities across generations.

Community economic inclusion: Community conditions powerfully shape health, education and employment. Concentrated poverty and rising class-based segregation erode stability and belonging and are linked to higher teen pregnancy, joblessness and school dropout (Massey, Gross, & Shibuya, 1994; Mijs & Roe, 2021). By 2017, 40% of low-income children attended schools where at least 75% of students were poor; these contexts offer weaker peer norms and academic supports, depressing graduation and four-year college enrollment (Boser & Baffour, 2017; Palardy, 2013). Economic segregation widens attainment gaps for low-income students (Mayer, 2002) and creates a spatial mismatch between jobs and jobseekers that elevates unemployment in low-SES neighborhoods (Mouw, 2000). Mobility evidence shows that moving to higher-opportunity areas raises college attendance and earnings — effects that grow with each additional year of exposure — and improves adult well-being (Chetty, Hendren, & Katz, 2016; Chetty & Hendren, 2018; Ludwig et al., 2013). These patterns underscore the need for community economic inclusion strategies that reduce concentrated poverty and integrate neighborhoods

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and schools (Fiscella & Williams, 2004; Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Neighborhood racial diversity: Neighborhood racial segregation entrenches exclusion and blocks the cross-racial ties that build belonging and opportunity. Segregation by race and income concentrates poverty (Quillian, 2012) and reflects a legacy of discriminatory policies like redlining that produced persistent hardship and high segregation for Black communities (Massey & Denton, 1993). Compared with white households at similar incomes, Black households are more likely to live in higher-poverty, lower-education neighborhoods and to experience downward neighborhood mobility — moves from lower- to higher-poverty areas — patterns tied to racial wealth gaps (Quick & Kahlenberg, 2019). Segregation across neighborhoods, schools and networks limits Black youths' human-capital development and depresses adult outcomes (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009). It also aligns with stark asset disparities: white families hold about 10× the wealth of Black families and over 8× that of Latine families; Black entrepreneurs face weaker access to capital; and homes in predominantly Black neighborhoods are undervalued while predominantly white enclaves command premiums (Loh, Coes, & Buthe, 2020). Reducing neighborhood racial segregation is therefore central to economic inclusion and mobility (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Environmental quality: Environmental quality powerfully shapes health and upward mobility. Low-income communities and people of color face disproportionate exposure to air pollution, toxic waste, extreme heat and disaster risk; nearby hazardous sites and coal impoundments correlate with higher poverty and unemployment and remediation is often deprioritized (Greenberg, 2016; Margai, 2004; Taylor, 2014). These hazards magnify disaster impacts — lower-income households suffer greater housing and income losses and hourly workers are least able to maintain earnings during crises (Fothergill & Peek, 2004; Hallegatte et al., 2020). Early-life pollution has lasting negative effects: lower exposure during the prenatal period and early childhood is associated with higher test scores and greater adult earnings, while higher particulate pollution in the year of birth reduces low-income children's future income ranks and labor-force participation.(Sanders, 2012; O'Brien et al., 2018; Isen, Rossin-Slater, & Walker, 2017). Reducing environmental hazards and improving the built environment is therefore a core mobility strategy (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Safety from Trauma: Exposure to trauma in childhood disrupts brain and social-emotional development — undermining attachment, emotion regulation, agency and self-efficacy — and is linked to lasting mental health challenges and poorer school outcomes (Romano et al., 2015; Staudt, 2001). Empirical reviews find consistent associations between maltreatment and impaired cognitive and language development and lower academic achievement (Veltman & Browne, 2001). Adolescents with early physical trauma show markedly higher rates of aggression, anxiety/depression, dissociation, delinquency, PTSD and social withdrawal — on average about twice those of non-maltreated peers — and experience more absences and suspensions (Lansford et al., 2002). In short, trauma threatens students' learning and long-term well-being, making safety and trauma-informed supports essential to educational and life outcomes (Romano et al., 2015).

Safety from crime: Safety from crime underpins educational, psychological and economic success. Higher neighborhood crime — both perceived and actual — elevates stress, depression, anxiety, PTSD and delinquency; witnessing or experiencing violence is a strong predictor of adolescent violence (Curry, Latkin, & Davey-Rothwell, 2008; Berman et al., 1996; Kelly, 2010). Moving to lower-poverty, lower-crime areas reduces youth violent-crime arrests, with especially large overall arrest declines for young women (Kling, Ludwig, & Katz, 2005). Exposure is widespread — about 60% of children

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encounter violence in a year — and is linked to substance use, chronic disease and socioemotional problems that hinder school and work (Finkelhor et al., 2009; Langton & Truman, 2014). Harms are unequal: men of color face greater exposure and higher community violence is tied to behavior problems and lower achievement among Black children (Berton & Stabb, 1996; Thompson & Massat, 2005). Property and financial crimes also erode trust and stability, with U.S. costs estimated at $390 billion in 2017 (AuCoin & Beauchamp, 2004; Miller et al., 2021).

Just policing: Just policing supports economic mobility, community trust and people's sense of agency, while punitive practices (e.g., frequent stops and stop-and-frisk) are linked to anxiety, trauma and institutional disengagement. National data show that increased police visibility and enforcement reduce public confidence — one additional arrest per officer predicts a 1.5% drop — undermining informal social order (Hauser & Kleck, 2017; Sampson, 1990). In New York City, police contact among young men is associated with trauma and anxiety and neighborhoods with more frisks and use-of-force report higher psychological distress among men (Geller et al., 2014; Sewell, Jefferson, & Lee, 2016). Prior criminal-justice contact also triggers "system avoidance," lowering engagement with medical, financial, labor-market and educational institutions (Brayne, 2014).

Neighborhood economic diversity

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Share of people experiencing poverty who live in high-poverty neighborhoods. A high-poverty neighborhood is where more than 40% of residents are experiencing poverty. This metric reflects the extent of economic segregation in a community (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- The concentration of poverty within a city or county. percentage of city or county residents experiencing poverty who live in a high-poverty neighborhood (defined as a neighborhood in which more than 40% of residents experience poverty). (Education-to-Workforce).
- Percentage of children under age 6 living in neighborhoods in which more than 20% of the population lives in poverty (Rhode Island Kids Count).
- Concentration of Poverty Block (Neighborhood Poverty): Based on 2000 U.S. Census information on the block group in which students lived on two reverse-coded indicators: (1) the log of the percentage of male residents over age 18 employed one or more weeks during the year and (2) the log of the percentage of families above the poverty line (Roderick, M. From high school to the Future).
- Economic inclusion: Share of residents experiencing poverty living in high-poverty neighborhoods (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

System indicators

- Percentage of city or county residents experiencing poverty who live in a high-poverty neighborhood (defined as a neighborhood in which more than 40% of residents experience poverty) (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- Percentage of families who have lived in poverty for two generations or more (Brookings Institute).
- Share of residents experiencing poverty who live in high-poverty neighborhoods. Economic segregation excludes families with low incomes from well-resourced and opportunity-rich neighborhoods, undermines their sense of

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belonging, and creates neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and distress, which damage their children's long-term prospects (Urban Institute).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Expanding affordable housing in resource-rich neighborhoods (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Supporting community development in high-poverty neighborhoods, including by addressing vacancy and blight; and investing in schools, transportation and job creation (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Balancing community development with creating opportunities for residents with low incomes to move to more resource-rich communities (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Enforcing fair housing laws (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- ImpactTulsa's Child Equity Index: ImpactTulsa is a collective impact organization in the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network that works with local partners in the Tulsa, Oklahoma area to advance more equitable outcomes. The Child Equity Index, a data tool developed by ImpactTulsa in partnership with Tulsa Public Schools, aims to help partners better understand the landscape of opportunity and systemic inequities in the Tulsa area. The index uses more than 40 indicators to measure environmental conditions across six domains of influence: (1) student-level factors, (2) neighborhood health, (3) neighborhood socioeconomic status, (4) neighborhood safety, (5) neighborhood pride and custodianship and (6) neighborhood access. The index uses student addresses to attach "place-based" measures to neighborhood environments, defined using census tract and zip code geographic boundaries. The index also uses a Neighborhood Model to measure the relationship between environmental conditions and students' academic outcomes. Findings from the Child Equity Index have sparked conversation about systemic inequities in Tulsa and have translated into action for students and families. For example, when Internet access maps by census tract revealed inequities in access for low-income communities and communities of color, local school districts adjusted their remote learning strategies, and their partners launched a City of Tulsa Internet Access Taskforce. (Education-to-Workforce).

Neighborhood juvenile arrests

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Rate of juvenile arrests by city or county (number of arrests per 100,000 residents) (Education-to-Workforce).
- Minority youth who experience contact with the criminal justice system. A study in the American Sociological Review has shown aggressive policing can lower educational performance for black boys. These findings provide evidence that the consequences of policing extend into key domains of social life, with implications for the educational trajectories of minority youth and social inequality more broadly (Aggressive Policing and the Educational Performance of Minority Youth).
- High school graduation rate and adult incarceration rate of youth who have ever been incarcerated. Estimates based on over 35,000 juvenile offenders over a ten-year period from a large urban county in the US suggest that juvenile incarceration results in large decreases in the likelihood of high school completion and large increases in the likelihood of adult incarceration (National Bureau of Economic Research).

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- Juvenile arrest data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program are publicly available and regularly reported (Education-to-Workforce).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Examining juvenile arrest rates by type of offense (for example, drug abuse violation, curfew and loitering, disorderly conduct, etc.) can also help data users better understand community dynamics and inequities in policing (Education-to-Workforce).
- Examine data on post-arrest handling of juvenile cases (For example, users could examine whether youth are referred to juvenile court after arrest or diverted from formal court processing (Education-to-Workforce).
- Restorative justice practices engage youth in repairing harm to victims, communities, or both, through actions such as restitution, community service, victim mediation, and family conferencing (The Justice Center: Council of State Governments).

Exposure to neighborhood crime

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Number and percentage of students who feel safe at school and traveling to and from school, as measured by a school climate survey (Promise Neighborhoods; The Urban Institute, prepared for U.S. Department Of Education).
- Proportion of children with a parent or guardian who has served time in jail (Data source: Health Resources and Services Administration) (StriveTogether 2021).

System indicators

- Rate of violent felonies and property felonies by city or county (number of incidents per 100,000 residents). (Education-to-Workforce).
- Rates of reported violent crime and property crime. Exposure to crime, even if one is not a direct victim, can contribute to stress, depression, and anxiety in youth and adults and teens who are exposed to high levels of violent crime are more likely to engage in criminal activity themselves. (Data source: Federal Bureau of Investigation) (StriveTogether 2021) (Urban Institute).
- Rate of juvenile arrests by city or county (number of arrests per 100,000 residents) (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- Rate of juvenile justice arrests (Data source: Federal Bureau of Investigation) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Numbers of reported property crimes and reported violent crimes per 100,000 people. This metric uses the numbers of reported property and violent crimes to measure community safety levels (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Shifting toward evidence-based policing, in partnership with communities (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Promoting community-led violence prevention initiatives, which identify residents at highest risk and intervene before conflict occurs (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Preventing gun violence by limiting access to firearms and raising awareness of gun safety best practices (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

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- Creating reentry supports for those recently released from jail or prison (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Improving neighborhoods by redeveloping vacant or abandoned properties, installing street lighting and supporting community-development activities (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Improving residents' financial security, including by strengthening the social safety net and reducing obstacles to accessing public benefits (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Implementing restorative justice approaches, which can help reduce recidivism (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Neighborhood racial diversity

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

System indicators

- Percentage of an individual's neighbors who are members of other racial or ethnic groups, calculated as a Neighborhood Exposure Index. (Education-to-Workforce).
- Neighborhood exposure index, or share of a person's neighbors who are people of other races and ethnicities (Data source: American Community Survey) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Proportion of community residents who are immigrants (Data source: National Equity Atlas) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Ratio of the share of local elected officials of a racial or ethnic group to the share of residents of the same racial or ethnic group (Data sources: American Community Survey; local elections data) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Share of the voting-eligible population who are registered to vote and share who turn out to vote (Data source: Census) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Index of people's exposure to neighbors of different races and ethnicities. Racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods are hallmarks of inclusive communities. This metric calculates separately for each racial or ethnic group the average share of that group's neighbors who are members of other racial or ethnic groups (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Racial diversity: Neighborhood exposure index, or share of a person's neighbors who are people of other races and ethnicities (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Reforming zoning policies to allow for more diverse, high-density, mixed-income communities (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Expanding affordable housing in resource-rich neighborhoods (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Reducing housing discrimination in the private market, including by enacting source-of-income laws and funding fair housing organizations (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Narrowing racial homeownership gaps, including by creating affordable homeownership opportunities for households of color (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Enforcing fair housing laws (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

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Environmental quality

Indicators

Systems indicators

- Air quality. Carcinogenic, respiratory and neurological toxins in the air can harm people's health. A higher value for this metric indicates better air quality and lower exposure to toxins (Urban Institute).

Policies

Policies

- Reducing the carbon footprint of all public-sector operations, including by transitioning to clean energy sources, electrifying bus and vehicle fleets, retrofitting city-owned buildings, and implementing other energy efficiency measures (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Incentivizing private-sector actors to reduce their carbon footprints, including by leveraging government procurement and contracting procedures (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Improving the quality and frequency of public transportation and encouraging housing development near transit to reduce reliance on personal vehicles (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Developing parks and other green spaces to absorb carbon and improve air quality (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Investing in green infrastructure, such as permeable pavements, that can help mitigate exposure to environmental stressors like extreme heat (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Addressing home health hazards, such as lead paint and pipes, to foster safe and healthy home environments (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Just policing

Indicators

Systems indicators

- Juvenile arrests per 100,000 juveniles. High number of arrests among young people, ages 10 to 17, is a strong indicator of elevated criminal legal system involvement and over policing. This metric includes arrests for any crime or status offense (Urban Institute).

Policies

Policies

- Creating community responder or co-responder programs for nonviolent emergencies, such as mental health or behavioral crises, domestic disputes, traffic safety issues and homelessness (Urban Institute).
- Creating diversion programs and other alternatives to arrest, trial and incarceration (Urban Institute).
- Improving police officer recruitment, retention and training, as well as addressing officer wellness (Urban Institute).
- Minimizing the use of over-policing strategies, including stop-and-frisk, pretextual and non-safety-related traffic stops and "broken windows" policing (Urban Institute).
- Shifting funding from police departments to other local agencies where appropriate, such as funding programs in schools to address truancy

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instead of relying on police officers to enforce truancy laws (Urban Institute).

- Shifting toward evidence-based policing, in partnership with communities (Urban Institute).
- Supporting greater police accountability, including by publishing data on police misconduct and use of force, advocating for the reform of qualified immunity and creating civilian oversight boards that operate independently of law enforcement agencies (Urban Institute).

Political participation and representation

Indicators

Systems indicators

- Ratio of the share of local, elected officials of a racial or ethnic group to the share of residents of the same group. Political scientists commonly use this metric to capture the extent to which racial and ethnic groups are represented by their community's elected leaders (Urban Institute).
- Share of the voting-age population who turns out to vote. Voter turnout is a well-established and broadly available reflection of political engagement in a community (Urban Institute).
- Number of membership associations per 10,000 people and ratio of Facebook friends with higher socioeconomic status to Facebook friends with lower socioeconomic status. Social networks help connect people across lines of income, education, and identity, enabling them to share information and other resources that support well-being, connect to opportunities for advancement, and strengthen feelings of belonging (Urban Institute).

Policies

Policies

- Adopting direct democracy practices, such as participatory budgeting, to empower community members and encourage them to participate in local governance (Urban Institute).
- Creating public financing systems for local elections (Urban Institute).
- Reducing barriers to voting, including by automatically registering voters, expanding the number of voting sites and their voting hours and offering additional options, such as mail-in, early and absentee voting (Urban Institute).
- Restoring voting rights to formerly incarcerated people (Urban Institute).
- Scheduling local elections to coincide with state or national elections, which can lead to a more representative electorate (Urban Institute).
- Scheduling local elections to coincide with state or national elections (Urban Institute).
- Strengthening and diversifying the local government workforce, including by investing in hiring, recruitment, training and compensation (Urban Institute).
- Strengthening civics education courses in schools (Urban Institute).
- Supporting labor unions and the right to organize (Urban Institute).
- Switching from at-large to district elections, adopting proportional representation systems and moving to choice voting or cumulative voting systems to make local governments more representative of their constituents (Urban Institute).

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Community resources

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Creating local community resource maps, such as The Commit Partnership's Community Resource and Asset Map (The Commit Partnership).
- United Way 211, a free help line for people to find resources, support and services in their local community (United Way).
- *Promotoras* are community health workers who serve as liaisons between their communities and health and social providers, particularly with Hispanic/Latino communities. They are trusted members of the community who share common language, culture and lived experiences to those they serve (MHP Salud).
- GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs): The federal program is a comprehensive intervention program and is tasked with equalizing access to higher education for low- income students. The GEAR UP grantees are charged with establishing partnerships among school districts, colleges and other organizations to operate the projects; and states and partnerships are awarded six- year grants to provide the services at high-poverty middle and high schools (Bridget Terry Long, Dropout Prevention and College Prep).
- Upward Bound: One of the largest and longest running federal programs, Upward Bound is "designed to generate skills and motivation necessary for success in education beyond high school among young people from low- income backgrounds and inadequate secondary school preparation" (Public Law 90- 222, December 23, 1967) (Bridget Terry Long, Dropout Prevention and College Prep).
- Talent Search: The Talent Search program was created in 1965 as one of the original federal TRIO programs, which also includes Upward Bound (discussed in the previous section). The program is designed to help low- income, first generation college students prepare for and gain access to college by providing information on the types of high school courses students should take to prepare for college and on the financial aid available to pay for college. The program also helps students complete financial aid applications and navigate the college application process. (Bridget Terry Long, Dropout Prevention and College Prep).
- Project GRAD: First launched in Houston, Texas, Project Graduation Really Achieves Dreams (Project GRAD) is designed to improve academic achievement, high school graduation rates, and rates of college attendance for low- income students. It does this by first trying to help students arrive at high school better prepared academically by implementing a specific reading and math curricula, along with enhanced professional development for teachers, at the elementary and middle school levels. At the high school level, Project GRAD offers special academic counseling and summer academic enrichment and a college scholarship (Bridget Terry Long, Dropout Prevention and College Prep).
- AVID: The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program targets students in fifth through twelfth grade with the hope of helping students who are capable of completing a rigorous curriculum but currently fall short of their potential. Many of AVID's students are from low- income or minority families. To improve outcomes, AVID attempts to enroll students in more challenging classes, including honors and advanced placement (AP) courses. Students also enroll in the AVID elective, in which they learn organizational and study skills, work on critical thinking, and get academic help from peers

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and college tutors (Bridget Terry Long, Dropout Prevention and College Prep).

- Puente Project: The Puente Project is an outreach program with the goal of increasing the number of educationally disadvantaged students who enroll in four year institutions, earn degrees, and return to the community as mentors. Although it services all kinds of students, Puente targets Latino students in particular as an original goal was to increase the number of Latino students attending the University of California. The program includes a rigorous counseling component in which participants meet with trained community members. Students must also meet at least monthly with teachers and advisors to discuss challenges and life choices. Their parents must also sign a statement agreeing to support the student and attend necessary meetings (Bridget Terry Long, Dropout Prevention and College Prep).

Safety from trauma

Contributing indicators

- Deaths caused by injury per 100,000 people. These deaths both reflect and cause trauma in a community. They include planned deaths (e.g., homicides or suicides) and unplanned deaths (e.g., from motor vehicle and other accidents) (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Practices

- Creating programs to educate parents and families on children's health, development, and care needs (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Fostering positive learning environments for students, including by developing programs that prevent bullying, moving away from punitive disciplinary practices, and applying other trauma-informed practices (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Preventing gun violence by limiting access to firearms, keeping guns out of schools, and raising awareness of gun safety best practices (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Increasing access to mental health services, including substance use treatment and prevention (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Creating targeted supports for vulnerable groups, including children and young people — particularly those in foster care and those returning from juvenile detention — and survivors of domestic or intimate partner violence (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Strengthening workplace safety regulations and creating paid sick leave and predictable scheduling laws to enhance worker well-being (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Improving traffic safety by implementing calming measures, building complete streets and creating safer environments for pedestrians and bicyclists (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

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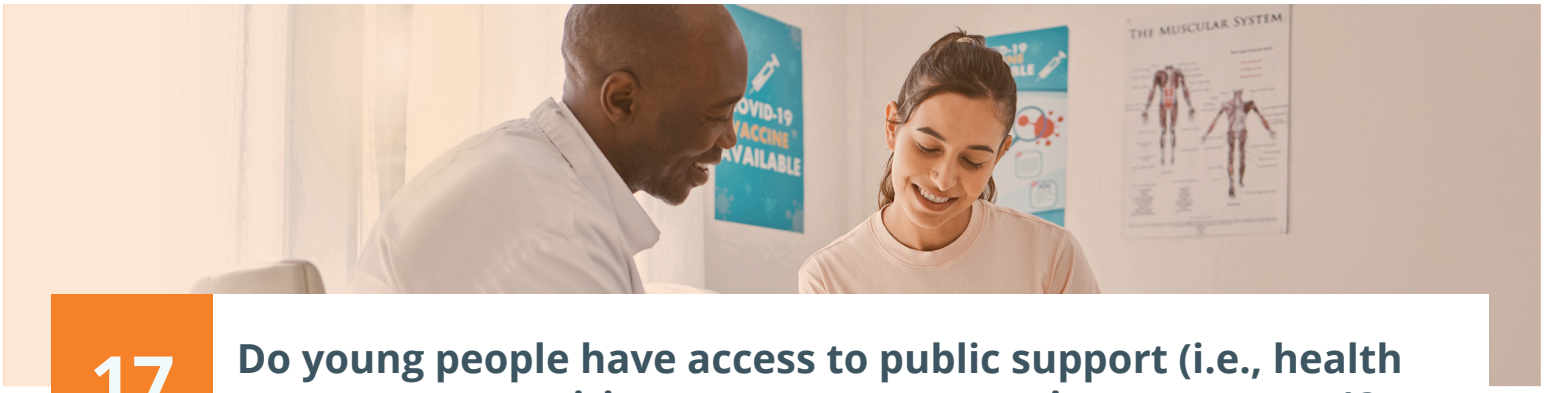

17 Do young people have access to public support (i.e., health care access, nutrition programs, economic support, etc.)?

Why this matters

Access to public support programs significantly influences college students' ability to graduate by mitigating economic hardships and fostering stable, supportive environments conducive to learning and staying focused on early career success.

Programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provide essential financial resources to low-income families. These supports alleviate economic stress, enabling parents to better meet their children's basic needs and invest in their education. Studies have shown that access to cash assistance and income supports correlates with increased high school and college graduation rates, as well as higher overall educational attainment (Urban Institute).

Access to affordable housing: Access to affordable, stable housing is foundational. Residential stability supports psychological well-being and enables people to invest in relationships, community, health and education (Desmond & Gershenson 2016). Compared with other renters and homeowners, rent-burdened households face higher eviction rates, greater financial fragility and heavier reliance on safety-net programs (Pew Charitable Trusts 2018). Stability and homeownership are linked to higher student achievement and children in higher-quality neighborhoods do better educationally (Vandivere et al. 2006). Higher rent burdens correlate with poorer self-reported health and delayed medical care (Meltzer & Schwartz 2015) and with childhood obesity (Nobari et al. 2019). Falling behind on rent is associated with worse caregiver health and maternal depression, more child hospitalizations and health problems and broader material hardship (Sandel et al. 2018). Children in rent-burdened households have lower health ratings, are retained more often and exhibit more behavioral problems than peers in stable housing (Aratani et al. 2011; Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Housing stability: Housing stability matters: eviction sets off cascading harms across work, neighborhoods and health. Workers who have been evicted are 15% more likely to be laid off (Desmond 2016). Housing instability often pushes families into lower-income, higher-crime areas with fewer employment opportunities (Desmond 2016; Kull, Coley, & Lynch 2016). Homeownership reduces residential moves and frequent moves are linked to lower child cognitive and social functioning, higher maternal psychological distress and greater parenting stress (Desmond 2016). After an eviction, renters are 25% more likely to face long-term housing instability, which is associated with barriers to care and increased emergency-

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department use (Desmond 2016; Kushel et al. 2006). The broader toll is stark: suicides tied to evictions and foreclosures doubled from 2005 to 2010 (Desmond 2016), and — controlling for sociodemographics and prior health — people who moved for cost reasons in the previous three years were nearly 2.5 times as likely to report an anxiety attack (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Transportation access: Transportation access underpins access to jobs, education, health care and child care — supporting economic success, autonomy and belonging. Limited or distant transit access is linked to higher unemployment; in New York City, neighborhoods with insufficient transit had a 12.6% unemployment rate versus 8.1% in transit-rich areas (Kaufman et al. 2015) and transportation barriers more broadly hinder employment (Fletcher et al. 2010). Across cities, better transit access is associated with a lower likelihood of receiving public assistance (Sanchez, Shen, & Peng 2004). Yet even where transit exists, routes and schedules may not match destinations or non-peak shifts common in entry-level work (Sanchez 1999; Sanchez 2008). A federal review found 70% of entry-level jobs are in suburbs and only 32% lie within a quarter-mile of transit (GAO 1998) and costs (e.g., commuter rail fares) can further limit use for low-income workers (Sanchez 2008). Vehicle access improves job opportunities (Andersson et al. 2018; APTA 2019); one study found strong positive employment effects from car access while transit access showed no effect (Blumenberg & Pierce 2017). Shorter commutes are also tied to long-term mobility: places with more very short commutes see better adult outcomes for children and a one–standard deviation reduction in childhood commute times is associated with a 7% increase in adult earnings (Chetty & Hendren 2018; Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Access to health services: Access to health services — especially having a usual source of care — improves prevention and reduces avoidable hospital use. Children with a usual source of care have fewer unmet medical, dental and prescription needs; fewer delays or problems getting treatment; and fewer difficulties seeing specialists — even among the insured (Devoe et al. 2012). Better access is linked to lower hospitalization for ambulatory care–sensitive conditions such as asthma, hypertension, heart failure, COPD and diabetes (Bindman et al. 1995). Adults with a usual source of care receive preventive services earlier (pap smears, breast exams, mammograms), improving health and reducing stress and costs (Ettner 1996; Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative). By strengthening physical health, access also bolsters people's sense of power and autonomy.

Access to affordable housing

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Number of affordable and available housing units per 100 households with low, very low and extremely low incomes. This metric reflects the extent of housing options for households with low incomes. Housing is considered affordable when monthly costs fall at or below 30% of a household's income (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Number and share of public-school children who are ever homeless during the school year. This metric reflects levels of housing instability in a community. Homelessness is defined as living with others because of housing loss or economic hardship; living in shelters, transitional housing and unsheltered locations; or living in motels or hotels because of a lack of other accommodations (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

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- Affordable housing: Ratio of affordable and available housing units to households with low- and very low-income levels (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Housing instability and homelessness: Number of public-school children who are ever homeless during the school year (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Family structure and stability: Share of children in various family living arrangements (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Home ownership: Percent of adults who own their homes, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age group, income and disability status (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Home ownership: Percent of adults who rent their homes, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age group, income and disability status (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Home ownership: Percent of homeowners who have homeowners insurance (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Cost of housing: Percent of adults who own their home and have a mortgage (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Cost of housing: Median monthly mortgage payment among adults who own their home (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Cost of housing: Median monthly rent payment among adults who rent their home (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Renter experience: Reasons for renting, including the following responses: Can't afford down payment for a house; More convenient or flexible to rent; Can't afford mortgage monthly payment; Renting is less financially risky; Cheaper to rent; Can't qualify for home mortgage; Prefer to rent; Trying to buy (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Percentage of residential units that are unoccupied, or vacant, in a given year, disaggregated by rentals and homeownership (US Census Bureau).
- Average age of housing stock, which helps communities isolate potential issues, like exposure to asbestos and/or lead paint and connect people to resources (US Census Bureau, American Community Survey).
- Student mobility rate (Promise Neighborhoods; The Urban Institute, prepared for U.S. Department Of Education).
- Students experiencing housing instability and changing schools as a result (Data sources: Local SEA, LEA or school records or analysis) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Number of students experiencing housing instability that requires changing schools (StriveTogether 2021).
- Number of students who experience homelessness during the school year (StriveTogether 2021 and Urban Institute).
- Number and share of public school children who are ever homeless during the school year. Housing instability and homelessness represent extreme manifestations of powerlessness and the loss of dignity and belonging, disrupting family stability and undermining both physical and emotional health (Urban Institute).
- Percentage of eligible households receiving federal rental assistance (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- Living arrangements: Types of household living arrangements reported (i.e. living with spouse/partner, with adult children under age 18, with adult children, with parents, with brothers or sisters, with other relatives, with other non-relatives, living with someone else) (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Neighborhood satisfaction: Percent of adults who were either somewhat or very satisfied with the overall quality of their neighborhood (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).

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- Neighborhood satisfaction: Percent of adults who were satisfied with characteristics of their neighborhood: quality of local schools, crime risk, natural disaster and severe weather risk, cost of housing (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).
- Natural disaster risks: Percent of adults reporting being financially affected by natural disasters or severe weather events such as flooding, hurricanes, wildfires or extreme temperatures (Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking).

System indicators

- There is sufficient availability of affordable housing for the number of families with low incomes in an area (city or county). (Education-to-Workforce).
- Percentage of eligible households receiving federal rental assistance. (Education-to-Workforce).
- % of household income spent on rent (StriveTogether 2021).
- Number of affordable and available housing units per 100 households with low, very low and extremely low incomes. This metric reflects the extent of housing options for households with low incomes. Housing is considered affordable when monthly costs fall at or below 30% of a household's income (Urban Institute).
- Ratio of (1) the number of affordable housing units to (2) the number of households with low and very low incomes in an area (city or county). Housing units are defined as affordable if the monthly costs do not exceed 30% of a household's income. Households with low incomes are defined as those earning below 80% of area median income (AMI), and very low-income households are defined as those earning below 50% of AMI. (Education-to-Workforce).
- Location affordability index (StriveTogether 2021).
- Eviction rate (StriveTogether 2021).
- Environmental racism, as measured by air quality index (StriveTogether 2021).
- Environmental racism, as measured by environmental health hazards (StriveTogether 2021).
- Level of public investment in neighborhoods as measured through programs like Opportunity Zones, Community Development Blocks and tax credits (StriveTogether).
- Share of people experiencing poverty who live in high-poverty neighborhoods. A high-poverty neighborhood is where more than 40% of residents are experiencing poverty. This metric reflects the extent of economic segregation in a community (Urban Institute).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Increasing the overall housing supply, including by reforming zoning and land-use policies, streamlining permitting processes, and creating incentives for developers to build new housing (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Creating more dedicated affordable housing, including by subsidizing affordable housing development, establishing incentives for developers to create affordable units (e.g., density bonuses), and exploring ways to build affordable housing on publicly owned land(Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Preserving subsidized and unsubsidized affordable rental housing (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Supporting permanently affordable housing models, such as community land trusts (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Creating affordable homeownership opportunities, including by providing downpayment or closing-cost assistance and expanding access to financing, such as through the use of subsidized or shared appreciation (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Providing rental assistance to residents and incentivizing landlords to rent to tenants

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receiving assistance (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

- Adopting rent regulation, eviction prevention, just-cause eviction, and right-to-counsel policies to protect tenants (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Enacting foreclosure prevention, property tax relief, and rehabilitation assistance programs to assist homeowners (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Reforming property taxes and property assessment processes to ensure that they do not disproportionately burden residents with low incomes (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Creating permanent supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Invest in safe, affordable housing (Alliance for Early Success).
- Balancing resident needs with inspector capacity: Initiatives focused on maintaining safe and healthy housing typically engage both property owners and tenants, and in many cases, housing inspectors. These programs intend to ensure that existing affordable homes remain safe, healthy and high-quality. They typically address common home health hazards, which often fall into one of two major categories: physical injury/safety risks (i.e. unstable staircases or broken handrails) and illness-inducing hazards (such as lead paint, mold, pests, carbon monoxide, etc.). (Results for America).
- Healthy home environment assessments: Professional home inspections evaluating environmental health risks (Results for America).
- Proactive inspections to help maintain safe and healthy housing. The foundation of many effective programs is a more strategic deployment of a jurisdiction's home inspection capacity. Oftentimes, this includes using data analysis to identify high-risk blocks or neighborhoods and then sending inspectors to walk those areas, conduct visual exterior assessments, speak to residents and schedule proactive inspections (Results for America).
- Raising tenant and landlord awareness about maintaining safe and healthy housing. Many successful programs include a robust education component — often run by inspectors — to help landlords and tenants identify home hazards and other threats to home safety. This can include written materials, videos and public workshops (for instance, walking through a home to demonstrate an inspection). Such efforts also often include information on how to request a home inspection (Results for America).

Policies

- Housing rehabilitation loan and grant programs: Funding in the form of loans and/or grants to income-eligible owner-occupants to assist with repair, rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of homes (Results for America).
- To ensure property owners have the financial capacity to address home hazards, some programs provide income-eligible property owners with grants and/or loans to assist with repair, rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of homes. Funding is often tied to specific forms of home improvement, such insulation, plumbing or mold removal (Results for America).
- Lead paint abatement programs: Programs focused on removing lead-based and contaminated surfaces from homes and other buildings (Results for America).
- Adopting rent regulation, eviction prevention, just-cause eviction and right-to-counsel policies to protect tenants (Urban Institute).
- Balancing community development with creating opportunities for residents with low income by addressing vacancy and blight; and investing in schools, transportation and job creation (Urban Institute).

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- Creating affordable homeownership opportunities, including by providing down payment or closing-cost assistance and expanding access to financing, such as through the use of subsidized or shared appreciation (Urban Institute).
- Creating more dedicated affordable housing, including by subsidizing affordable housing development, establishing incentives for developers to create affordable units (e.g., density bonuses) and exploring ways to build affordable housing on publicly-owned land (Urban Institute).
- Creating permanent supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness (Urban Institute).
- Enacting foreclosure prevention, property tax relief and rehabilitation assistance programs to assist homeowners (Urban Institute).
- Enforcing fair housing laws (Urban Institute).
- Expanding affordable housing in resource-rich neighborhoods (Urban Institute).
- Increasing the overall housing supply, including by reforming zoning and land-use policies, streamlining permitting processes and creating incentives for developers to build new housing (Urban Institute).
- Preserving subsidized and unsubsidized affordable rental housing (Urban Institute).
- Providing rental assistance to residents and incentivizing landlords to rent to tenants receiving assistance (Urban Institute).
- Reforming property taxes and property assessment processes to ensure that they do not disproportionately burden residents with low incomes (Urban Institute).
- Supporting community development in high-poverty neighborhoods, including incomes to move to more resource-rich communities (Urban Institute).
- Supporting permanently affordable housing models, such as community land trusts (Urban Institute).

Access to transportation

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Transit connectivity index (Data source: Center for Neighborhood Technology) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Individuals have access to low-cost and timely transportation to commute to school or work (Education-to-Workforce).
- Average commute time to work, school, or college (Education-to-Workforce).
- The Low Transportation Cost Index, from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (Education-to-Workforce).
- Distance to school and average student travel time (Birth to Grade 3 Indicator Framework, 2017).
- Average travel time to school (Data sources: Local SEA, LEA or school records or analysis) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Average travel time to work (Data sources: Center for Neighborhood Technology; American Community Survey) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Percentage of workers who commute by walking and by biking (Data sources: Center for Neighborhood Technology; American Community Survey) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Trips made to work by mass transit (Data sources: Center for Neighborhood Technology; American Community Survey) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Access to mass transit departure and arrival points (Measuring Accessibility).

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- Share of income spent on transportation. This metric reflects how much households spend on both public transit and cars (Urban Institute).
- Transportation access: Transit trips index and low transportation cost index (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

System indicators

- Transit trips index. This metric reflects a community's access to public transportation. It is file-ranked nationally based on the number of public transit trips taken annually by an average household earning 80% of the area median income (Urban Institute).
- Transit trips index and transportation cost index. Without accessible transportation options, families may be unable to take advantage of opportunities for work and education, or they may have to trade expensive commutes for other needs and goods (Urban Institute).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Complete Streets approach to ensure the design of streets balance the needs of different modes of transportation, support local land uses, economies, cultures and natural environments (Smart Growth America).
- Districts and schools explore transportation solutions to help students living far from school participate in sports or afterschool programs. (Promise Partnership Utah).
- The United Way of Central Minnesota notes that a challenge in regards to transportation is that students within 2 miles of the school will not be picked up by the bus. This has students to the extent that some transfer schools twice within a single school year to access transportation during winter months. (United Way of Central Minnesota).
- Expanding transportation options, including public transportation, such as buses and light rails and active transportation, such as bike lanes and sidewalks (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Improving the quality and frequency of public transportation (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Reducing barriers to using public transportation, including by providing fare subsidies, making systems easy to navigate (e.g., having clear signage and route maps in multiple languages), and centralizing fares across different modes of transportation (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Improving transportation accessibility for people with mobility challenges, including by creating paratransit systems and ensuring existing transit is accessible to people with disabilities (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Encouraging housing development near transit, including affordable housing and housing for people with disabilities (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Policies

- Complete Streets policies (Smart Growth America).
- Availability of public transportation subsidies for students (Data sources: Local SEA, LEA or school records or analysis) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Affordable housing within walking distance from public transportation (Data source: Center for Neighborhood Technology) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Build housing development near transit, including affordable housing and housing for people with disabilities. Coordinate transportation and housing policy in a manner that simultaneously: (a) increases the number of residents living in close proximity to public transit; (b) fosters walkable communities centered around new and existing transit stations; and (c) preserves and expands affordable housing near these stations. By acting early, local jurisdictions can make the most of opportunities to preserve and create affordable housing as part of the development that takes place around new or planned transit stations. (Urban Institute and Local Housing Solutions).

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Indicators

System indicators

- Overall health: Share of adults who rate their own and their children's health as good or excellent (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Access to and utilization of health services: Health Professional Shortage Area ranking for primary care providers (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Neonatal health: Share of low-weight births. Children with low birth weight (less than 5 lbs., 8 oz.) face elevated risks for other future health problems. (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Number of people per primary care physician. Primary care providers play central roles in the provision of health services. A lower number of residents per physician suggests better access to essential health services in a community (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Investing in building a high-quality, culturally competent pipeline of health workers, including by providing financial incentives to encourage health professionals to serve in rural or otherwise underserved areas and expanding the number of community health workers (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Addressing barriers that prevent residents from accessing health services, including by offering patients transportation to health care and alternative treatment options, such as virtual visits, mobile clinics or school-based health centers (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Creating programs that assist residents in obtaining health insurance, navigating care, and improving their health literacy (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Expanding the number of federally qualified health centers, which can provide lower-cost care to underserved residents (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Improving access to reproductive health care (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Increasing access to mental health services, including substance use treatment and prevention (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Improving access to prenatal care, including by expanding the use of birth centers (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Establishing home-visiting programs for first-time parents (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Creating parenting support and education programs for expecting families, including programs that focus on prenatal care (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Creating targeted supports for vulnerable groups, such as teenage parents (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Promoting awareness of existing programs, such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Improving access to healthy food, including by creating fruit and vegetable incentive programs (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

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Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Individuals have access to a reliable Internet connection and a personal desktop or laptop computer (Education-to-Workforce).
- Percentage of individuals who have both (1) access to at least one desktop or laptop computer owned by someone in the home and (2) reliable broadband Internet (Education-to-Workforce).
- Number and percentage of students who have school and home access to broadband internet and a connected computing device (Promise Neighborhoods; The Urban Institute, prepared for U.S. Department Of Education).

System indicators

- Access to internet and computer/devices and technical support (StriveTogether 2021).
- Percentage of the community that has access to a desktop or laptop, a smartphone, a tablet or another computer (Data source: American Community Survey) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Percentage of households that have broadband internet subscriptions (Data source: American Community Survey) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Residential fixed broadband deployment (Data source: Federal Communications Commission) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Share of households with a computer and broadband internet subscription in the home. This metric reflects a community's digital divide by measuring in-home access to a computer and the internet, including DSL, cable modem, cellular data and fiber connections. Without reliable access to online resources, young people and adults are locked out of opportunities to learn, build skills and gain the credentials they need to advance economically (Urban Institute).
- State has a broadband task force/commission to promote broadband access (National Council of State Legislatures).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Connectivity: Even when learning is in-person, students and their families need internet access, proper equipment and training on utilizing online learning platforms to complete school-based learning and assignments. This access allows for greater access to learning opportunities and also ensures they can obtain learning materials if they must stay home. School districts should determine which students do not have internet access and equipment and determine through partnership with local and state governments, along with community partners how to secure the resources to address gaps. Districts and schools should also assess whether school staff have access to needed technology and equipment and the skills to use them. (Attendance Works, Expanded Metrics).
- Technology to support learning and assessment in the classroom and online (Annie E. Casey Foundation).
- Local and state coalitions who advocate for access to broadband with city and state officials and by partnering with telecommunications companies (National Council of State Legislatures).
- Addressing physical barriers to home broadband internet access, such as the lack of appropriate infrastructure or wiring (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Addressing financial barriers to home broadband internet access, including by providing direct cash transfers or subsidies for the costs of broadband service and devices, such

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as laptops, tablets and phones (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

- Creating free, public options for accessing the internet, including by providing Wi-Fi in public, accessible spaces like libraries (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).
- Providing digital literacy training for residents, particularly underserved residents, to close the digital divide (Urban Institute, Upward Mobility Initiative).

Policies

- The state subsidizes broadband subscriptions for families with limited incomes (FCC).[1]
- Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: Offers broadband infrastructure and digital equity grants (Connected Nation).
- Smart Cities policies and resources

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1 Federal funding for this program has ended but we chose to include it so that communities see what federal programs can look like.

Food security

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of individuals living in a census track with low access to healthy food, as defined by the USDA's Food Access Research Atlas. (Education-to-Workforce).
- Number and percentage of children who consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily (Promise Neighborhoods; The Urban Institute, prepared for U.S. Department Of Education).
- Percentage of eligible individuals participating in SNAP. (Education-to-Workforce).
- Percentage of eligible units with children under age 18 not receiving SNAP (Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center).
- Percentage of eligible units with children under age 18 not receiving SNAP (Desired outcome: Families have access to necessary services through expanded eligibility, reduced administrative burden or programs to identify needs and connect families with services) (Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center).
- Percentage of eligible individuals receiving WIC benefits (U.S. Department of Agriculture).
- Percentage of individuals with high or marginal food security, as measured by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Security Survey Module (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- Number of food-insecure children in the U.S. (Campaign for Grade-Level Reading).
- Percentage of households reporting child food insecurity (Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center).
- Percentage of individuals with high or marginal food security, as measured by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Security Survey Module. (Education-to-Workforce).
- Number of children who receive free lunch during the summer (Campaign for Grade-Level Reading).

System indicators

- Percentage of individuals with high or marginal food security, as measured by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Security Survey Module (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- Proportion of eligible students participating in the School Breakfast Program (Data source: U.S. Department of Agriculture) (StriveTogether 2021).
- Proportion of households experiencing food insecurity (Data sources: Census, Child Protective Services) (StriveTogether 2021).

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Practices and Policies

Practices

- Support health and affordable food options in high-poverty neighborhoods (Alliance for Early Success).
- Increase participation of families, child care providers, schools and communities in federal nutrition programs (Alliance for Early Success).
- Summer food programs keep kids healthy when school is out (Campaign for Grade-Level Reading).
- Breakfast at school improves attendance and learning (Campaign for Grade-Level Reading).
- Reduced Administrative Burden for SNAP (Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center).

Policies

- Create Food Security: College students who are worried about their next meal are not able to fully engage in their studies. Unfortunately, students who experience food insecurity are often ineligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – a crucial means-tested program that provides a monthly benefit to be used for qualifying food purchases – due to requirements that can present undue barriers for students to access this assistance. Policymakers should make permanent the COVID-era exemption that allows students who would otherwise be eligible for SNAP to receive these benefits by fulfilling the 20-hour work requirement with a combination of work and credit hours. (NCAN, Ensuring Food Security).
- States expand access to WIC benefits (e.g., increasing income threshold, extending benefits for postpartum people).
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): Allows educational programs in eligible low-income areas to serve a free meal and/or snack to students 18 and younger (No Kid Hungry).

Health insurance coverage

Key source: E-W Framework

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Percentage of individuals with health insurance. This measure captures participation in any insurance program, including those offered by the government (such as CHIP and Medicaid), employers, or community clinics, as well as those that individuals purchase (for example, through Health Insurance Marketplaces). Multiple surveys measure health insurance coverage and can be adapted for use by educational institutions or employers. At the national level, they include the Current Population Survey, Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, National Health Interview Survey, and Survey of Income and Program Participation. (Education-to-Workforce).
- Percentage of eligible individuals (children or adults) enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP. This information can be used to support families with low incomes in enrolling in these programs. (Education-to-Workforce).
- Percentage of eligible individuals (children or adults) enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP (Education-to-Workforce Framework).
- Percent of uninsured U.S. children overall and percent of uninsured U.S. children who are living in poverty (Campaign for Grade-Level Reading).
- Percent of children nationally without a medical home. A medical home is a health care setting that patients visit regularly for their primary care needs, building familiarity and consistency with care providers (Campaign for Grade-Level Reading).

System indicators

- Ratio of population per primary care physician. Access to health services is essential to both preventive care and treatment of health conditions, enabling people to enjoy the good health that facilitates success in school, work and social relationships (Urban Institute).

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- Air quality index. Environmental hazards expose people to health risks that threaten their quality of life and may undermine school and work performance (Urban Institute).
- Deaths due to injury per 100,000 people. Exposure to trauma affects children's brain and socioemotional development; undermines people's feelings of connection, agency and self-efficacy; and interferes with capacities for school and work success (Urban Institute).
- The Hope Center Student Basic Needs Survey aims to understand the prevalence of student basic needs in securities on campuses and to provide actionable data for partner institutions (The Hope Center Student Basic Needs Survey).
- Impact of benefit cliffs and marginal tax rates on families as they move out of poverty. As earnings increase, the percentage of each additional dollar in income lost through benefit reduction or increased tax liability is called the effective marginal tax rate. An income increase that triggers a loss of public benefits equal to or greater than the dollar value of the income increase (i.e., a marginal tax rate of 100% or higher) is called a benefit cliff. At low earnings levels, refundable tax credits and means-tested transfers result in higher total income after taxes. As earnings rise, however, benefits and tax credits phase out and tax liabilities increase. The specific programs a household participates in, family size and composition and state and local policies influence a household's phase-out pattern. As a result, those with similar earnings can experience very different marginal tax rates, although such variation is smaller at higher incomes (Institute for Research on Poverty).
- The structure of the public welfare system makes it difficult to break out of low-wage work. The net loss of resources that can occur when coming off public assistance acts as a barrier to upward mobility. Three key structural factors contribute to this problem: (a) Income cut-offs that are lower than survival needs; (b) Benefits that end abruptly instead of tapering off (benefits cliffs); (c) Confusing systems where different benefits have different eligibility rules and are administered by different agencies (United Way Greater Cleveland).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Expand outreach to ensure access to affordable, physical, oral and mental health insurance coverage for children and parents (Alliance for Early Success).
- Simplify enrollment to ensure access to affordable, physical, oral and mental health insurance coverage for children and parents (Alliance for Early Success).
- Eliminate barriers to retention to ensure access to affordable, physical, oral and mental health insurance coverage for children and parents (Alliance for Early Success).
- Address health care shortages — both of providers who accept Medicaid/CHIP, and of providers who offer specialized care (e.g., dental care, mental health, developmental specialists) (Alliance for Early Success).
- Increase access to comprehensive health (medical) homes that identify and respond to the physical, social and emotional determinants of health (Alliance for Early Success).
- Prioritize funding for prevention programs, including those delivered outside of traditional medical settings (Alliance for Early Success).
- Implement health care data systems to track and improve referral and follow-up services (Alliance for Early Success).
- Improve coordination between IDEA Part B and C, primary care and public health programs (Alliance for Early Success).
- Access to high-quality, affordable, comprehensive health care (including preventative, acute, emergency and chronic care) for physical, mental and oral health for all families with infants and young children (Annie E. Casey Foundation).

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- Policies and programs which would increase access to health insurance for children and to improved education for parents, particularly in low-income families, could play an important role in fostering children's educational success. In families, parents are the first teachers, preparing their children to read simply by talking and reading to them frequently. Parents can be the first to spot health and developmental problems that may lead to reading difficulties. But parents don't always know what to look for or how to help their children and access to health care is essential. Poverty is strongly associated with lack of health insurance coverage. For example, 10% of people in families with incomes of $50,000 or more are not covered by health insurance, but this jumps 19 % for those with family incomes between $25,000 and $49,999 and to 29% for those with family incomes below $25,000. Children in poor families also are more likely than their peers to have parents with limited education, because lower education is associated with earning lower incomes. (Annie E. Casey, Double Jeopardy).
- The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta CLIFF tools to address the problems with benefits cliffs: The public benefits system is notoriously complex, with different benefits administered by separate agencies and structured around different requirements. The confusion and uncertainty about when a wage increase will cause benefits to be lost acts as a barrier to career advancement. To address this problem, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta has designed the Career Ladder Identifier and Financial Forecaster (CLIFF) tools. This set of tools models the complex interaction of public benefits, taxes and tax credits with career advancement to help people plan a career move away from public benefits. The CLIFF tools help assess the long-term financial implications of a new career, predict when a worker will experience a benefits cliff and map out individualized details of a career move. Because of the differences in benefits requirements, benefit amounts, and wages across the country, CLIFF tools must be customized by location. Demo versions are available online, and organizations can request access to the full suite (United Way Greater Cleveland).

Policies

- Expanding Medicaid, under the Affordable Care Act, eligibility significantly increases access to healthcare for low-income families and children. States that expanded Medicaid have seen higher rates of insured children, better access to preventive care and improved health outcomes. States like New Mexico and Oregon have seen significant declines in uninsured rates after expansion (Centennial Care Medicaid; Oregon Health Plan).
- Expanding School Based Health Centers allows students to access medical, dental and mental health services in schools. Medicaid reimbursement for SBHC services ensures financial sustainability. Colorado and Maryland use Medicaid billing to fund SBHCs, improving student health and attendance (Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment; Maryland Public Schools).
- California, Illinois and Washington offer coverage to all children, including undocumented minors, extending Medicaid/CHIP-like coverage to all children, regardless of immigration status (California Budget and Policy Center; Illinois Department of Human Services; Washington State Health Care Authority).
- Continuous eligibility policies for Medicaid and CHIP benefits ensures children maintain Medicaid/CHIP coverage for 12 months, even if family income fluctuates.
- Streamlining Medicaid/CHIP enrollment through automatic data matching with other public programs (e.g., SNAP). Reduces paperwork and administrative barriers for families. Louisiana uses data-driven auto-enrollment to increase child health coverage rates (Louisiana Department of Health).
- Universal child health insurance. In 1998, an Institute of Medicine committee found that "insurance coverage is the major determinant of whether children have access to health care,"

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and that uninsured children are "most likely to be sick as newborns, less likely to be immunized as preschoolers, less likely to receive medical treatment when they are injured, and less likely to receive treatment for illnesses such as acute or recurrent ear infections, asthma and tooth decay." Other studies have verified that after enrolling in the Children's Health Insurance Program, children's unmet health needs fall by 50 % or more and their routine health, dental and asthma care improves in terms of both access and quality. Despite gains made under the Affordable Care Act, however, the United States is still far from ensuring that all children have health insurance (Campaign for Grade-Level Reading).

- Ensure a medical home for every child. A medical home is a health care setting that patients visit regularly for their primary care needs, building familiarity and consistency with care providers. Care typically is provided by a team of practitioners including physicians, medical assistants, nurses, nurse practitioners and care coordinators. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) defines a medical home for infants and children as having well-trained primary care physicians who are known to the child and family, able to develop "a partnership of mutual responsibility and trust," and able to help manage and facilitate all aspects of pediatric care. Medical homes are especially important for medically underserved children, who often have more "chronic conditions and economic, geographic and psychosocial factors" that combine to aggravate medical problems (Campaign for Grade-Level Reading).
- Medi-Cal status: California's Medicare health care program (California Department of Education & WestEd, Cradle-to-Career Data System Public Data Definitions).
- Policy changes can reduce "benefit cliffs" and marginal tax rates, but there are trade-offs. Avoiding high marginal tax rates and benefit cliffs may be an important policy goal even if high marginal tax rates and benefit cliffs, themselves, do not produce large behavioral responses. For example, lowering marginal tax rates and smoothing benefit cliffs can help ensure that low-income families see greater resources from working more, a potentially important issue of fairness. Researchers and policymakers have suggested a range of options, from making tax credits and benefits universal, to eliminating credits and benefits and replacing them with wage subsidies. More incremental approaches aim to lessen the blow of marginal tax rates and benefit cliffs, such as holding benefits constant for a transition period, or better coordinating phase-in and phase-out rates across programs. While there is no clear consensus on the best approach, there is agreement that any policy lever would have trade-offs in terms of benefit eligibility and levels, caseload sizes and associated public costs (Institute for Research on Poverty).

Financial assistance

Indicators

Contributing indicators

- Rates of financial insecurity by race. That is, the ability of a college student to meet food, housing, utility, medical care and child care expenses and a $500 emergency expense, disaggregated by race. A study by Jobs for the Future found that compared with white students, Black and Latine students were more likely to have needed food, housing, utility and medical assistance. Black students additionally were more likely than white and Latine students to have needed child care assistance. Both Black and Latine students were more likely than white students to have faced difficulty covering a $500 emergency. (Jobs for the Future, Unveiling Disparities).

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- Rates of financial insecurity by gender. That is, the ability of a college student to meet food, housing, utility, medical care and child care expenses and a $500 emergency expense, disaggregated by gender. A study by Jobs for the Future found that in comparison to men, women were almost two times more likely to report they would struggle to handle a $500 emergency. Additionally, women in the sample indicated a significantly higher likelihood of using welfare services than men: Women were 1.5 times more likely to use food assistance, 1.4 times more likely to use housing assistance, 1.3 times more likely to use utility assistance and 1.6 more likely to use medical care assistance. Among students who were parents, women were two times more likely to require child care assistance. (Jobs for the Future, Unveiling Disparities).
- Rates of financial insecurity by parent-status. That is, the ability of a college student to meet food, housing, utility, medical care and child care expenses and a $500 emergency expense, disaggregated by whether the student is a parent. A study by Jobs for the Future found that being a parent had a major impact on the use of welfare assistance across all measures, with use of food assistance 4.6 times higher, use of medical assistance 3.2 times higher and difficulty of covering a $500 emergency 1.5 times higher compared with students who were not parents. The greater financial insecurity of parents was evident within all racial and ethnic groups. (Jobs for the Future, Unveiling Disparities).
- Rates of financial insecurity of students based on their grant/scholarship status. That is, the ability of a college student to meet food, housing, utility, medical care and child care expenses and a $500 emergency expense, disaggregated by whether the student relied on grants and scholarships to pay for college. Students relying on grants or scholarships (including Pell grants) were more than two times more likely than those not relying on this method of tuition payment to need food, housing, utility and medical assistance. In addition, students who relied on student loans to pay tuition were more than 2.5 times more likely than other students to be unable to cover a $500 emergency and also more likely than students who did not rely on loans to face more financial insecurity across all the measures. Those students relying on family assistance and personal savings were the least likely to face financial insecurities. (Jobs for the Future, Unveiling Disparities).
- Average Education and Occupation Status of Adults (Neighborhood SES): Based on 2000 U.S. Census information on the block group in which students lived on two indicators: (1) the log of the percentage of employed persons 16 years old or older who are managers or executives and (2) the mean level of education among people over 18 (Roderick, M. From high school to the Future).
- Student Immigrant Status: Student reported on the 2005 CCSR survey if she was born in the United States and age of immigration (Roderick, M. From high school to the Future).
- Work: Students reported on the 2005 CCSR survey how many hours per week was spent working for pay (Roderick, M. From high school to the Future).
- Findings from student financial wellness surveys. For example,Trellis Strategies' Student Financial Wellness Survey offers insights into how student's financial wellness influences success at postsecondary institutions. The survey covers topics including basic needs, financial behaviors, paying for college, perceptions of institutional support and mental health (Student Financial Wellness Survey).

System indicators

- The IHEP Toward Convergence framework explores the advantages and disadvantages of six potential measures of economic status: Pell Grant receipt, Pell Grant eligibility, expected family contribution (EFC), income, poverty status and student's home location (geocode). It ultimately recommends using Pell Grant receipt as the primary indicator of low-income status. Income is a promising indicator for economic status that should be tested further in the field

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and explored for inclusion in future iterations of the framework. (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

- The IHEP Toward Convergence framework recommends using Pell Grant receipt as the primary indicator of low-income status among college students, despite its known limitations. Pell receipt is the most frequently used measure of economic status in the field and each alternate indicator faces even more substantial limitations than Pell receipt. While Pell receipt is a frequently used proxy for economic status, it is not perfectly accurate. Its primary limitation is that it undercounts the proportion of low-income students, especially at institutions where many do not apply for federal financial aid, due to either lack of information, low costs, or citizenship status. Also, it is subject to changes in federal financial aid policy, sometimes causing notable shifts that may not actually reflect demographic shifts. However, Pell receipt remains the primary indicator of economic status used by the field, is fairly comprehensive of low-income students and takes into consideration important factors that influence financial need, such as family size. (IHEP, Toward Convergence).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Institutions can use economic status to disaggregate other metrics and gain a better understanding of how low-income students are accessing and succeeding in their colleges or universities. Low-income students face different challenges in higher education than do middle- and high-income students, so it is crucial that institutions have access to disaggregated data to identify gaps and to tailor solutions and financial aid strategies for the neediest students. Recent research confirms that some institutions serve low-income populations more effectively than others, so institutions can use these data to continuously improve student access and success.
- State and federal policymakers often express interest in understanding how low-income students access, progress through and succeed in higher education. At the federal level specifically, policymakers are interested in the outcomes of low-income students and a recent Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) proposal includes Outcome Measures for Pell Grant recipients.
- Student Basic Needs Centers: Over the past 10 years, colleges, especially public and community, have stepped in to provide and connect students in need with supports. One national survey found that 74% of the responding institutions had some kind of emergency aid program in place for their students. Consolidating these services through Basic Needs Centers located on college campuses and accessed virtually can make it easier for students to apply for an array of financial, food, child care, housing, transportation and other assistance in "one shop." One of the biggest challenges with these centers, however, is their low utilization rate. Some research suggests that utilization rates rise when students are provided nudging in the form of email or text messages about services in ways that are not stigmatizing (Jobs for the Future, Unveiling Disparities).
- United Way's SparkPoint centers help families meet basic needs, increase income, build credit, grow savings and reduce debt. The centers' financial coaches work one-on-one with clients to set goals, create action plans and stay accountable. By focusing on strengths and long-term stability, SparkPoint empowers low-income families to achieve lasting financial well-being — all at no cost to participants (United Way).

Policies

- Federal, state and local assistance for students facing financial hardships: Systems and policies of financial support for students have not kept pace with the "new economics of college." Unlike in the past, when four-year colleges largely admitted young white students from middle income or higher families, the good news today is that there are many more people from low-income families attending college who are also

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older adults, workers and caregivers. However, although the demographics of students have shifted, college costs have risen, minimum wages have stagnated and inflationary pressures have driven up the costs of food and housing. Students from low-income families are more likely than other students to depend on loans, grants and scholarships to help cover the expenses of attending college. But as this and other research shows, these kinds of financial assistance are inadequate, leaving too many students hungry, homeless and unable to pay basic expenses including medical and child care. Unfortunately, outdated rules currently exclude many students from participating in federal food and housing assistance programs. And even among those who qualify, the uptake of benefits has been low. In 2018, for example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture found that only 2.6% of eligible students were receiving SNAP food assistance compared with 85% of those in the population as a whole who were eligible for this program. Additional research has found that housing assistance programs also sometimes limit student eligibility. For postsecondary education to be accessible and feasible for all students, the "new economics of education" will require systems of assistance that better meet student need and increase accessibility (Jobs for the Future, Unveiling Disparities).

- National data on postsecondary student financial wellness — the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study — are limited. The NPSAS, which surveys students about how they finance their education, is administered only every three to four years. Data about student financial wellness are not collected in the survey but gathered mainly through interviews, which results in a much more limited sample. To better monitor student financial well-being and address gaps, annual institutional-level financial well-being data are needed. With this kind of data, institutions can assess student financial insecurity over time, link financial insecurity measures to outcomes to assist policy and program development and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and policy changes (Jobs for the Future, Unveiling Disparities).

18 Do young people live in communities with local governments that are attentive to the needs of all community members and with residents who are engaged in collective decision making?

Why this matters

Young people do better in communities where local governments listen to all residents and where neighbors help shape decisions. Civic participation builds "collective efficacy," which is linked to safer neighborhoods and stronger conditions for youth development (Sampson, Robert J. et al). When residents vote, meet and organize, officials are more responsive and public goods are delivered more

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equitably — core lessons from the civic voluntarism tradition (Verba, Schlozoman, and Burns, 2003). Descriptive representation also matters: when elected bodies include members who share constituents' identities, trust and engagement rise and policy attention to those communities increases (NBER). Election rules that broaden participation (e.g., aligning local with national election calendars) further improve representativeness and accountability (University of Chicago Press). Together, responsive local government and engaged residents strengthen the "power and autonomy" that undergird upward mobility for young people.

Political participation: Political participation is a core source of individual and community power. Voters report greater empowerment, life satisfaction, well-being and self-rated health; residents of low-turnout states have higher odds of fair/poor health. (Blakely, Kennedy, & Kawachi 2001). Participation gaps persist: white eligible voters outvote Latine and Asian voters nearly 2:1 and exceed Black turnout by wide margins; Black and Latine people engage less overall, reflecting unequal resources and added structural barriers (e.g., time, information and registration costs) (Leighley 2001; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady 1995; Verba et al. 1993). Broader civic involvement — voting, petitions, meetings, donations, letters, campaigns and group membership — correlates with higher empowerment, though causality is not established (Zimmerman & Rappaport 1988). Activism is linked to higher well-being across multiple dimensions (Klar & Kasser 2009). Youth organizing amplifies political engagement: in California, 1.5- and second-generation youth activists were more likely to vote (81% vs. 60%) and protest (35% vs. 7%) than peers and youth in organizing groups encouraged their parents' political involvement far more often (88% vs. 12%) (Terriquez & Lin 2019; Terriquez & Kwon 2014). (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility)

Descriptive representation: Descriptive representation — electing officials whose identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender) reflect their constituents — correlates with greater political influence, engagement and belonging among underrepresented groups. Black adults represented by Black members of Congress report higher internal efficacy: 35.2% "strongly disagree" that "people like me have no say," versus 26.4% without a Black representative (Gleason & Stout 2014). Among Black constituents, co-ethnic congressional representation is linked to a 10-point increase in being "very interested" in campaigns, an 11.6-point increase in caring "a great deal" who wins, a 9-point increase in voting and a 2.3-point increase in top-tier community engagement; effects for Latine constituents at this level are smaller and not statistically significant (Fowler & Merolla 2012). At the state level, higher shares of Black legislators raise Black turnout — and similarly for the Latine turnout — across election types from 1996–2006 (Rocha et al. 2010). Together, these findings indicate that descriptive representation strengthens power, autonomy and civic participation. (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Political participation and representation

Indicators

System indicators

- Political participation: Share of the voting-eligible population who turn out to vote (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Descriptive representation among local officials: Ratio of the share of local elected officials of a racial or ethnic group to the share of residents of the same racial or ethnic group. Political scientists commonly use this metric to capture the extent to which racial and ethnic

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groups are represented by their community's elected leaders. (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

Practices and Policies

Practices

- Scheduling local elections to coincide with state or national elections (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Reducing barriers to voting, including by automatically registering voters, expanding the number of voting sites and their voting hours and offering additional options, such as mail-in, early, and absentee voting (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Adopting direct democracy practices, such as participatory budgeting, to empower community members and encourage them to participate in local governance (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Restoring voting rights to formerly incarcerated people (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Supporting labor unions and the right to organize (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Strengthening civics education courses in schools (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Switching from at-large to district elections, adopting proportional representation systems and moving to choice voting or cumulative voting systems to make local governments more representative of their constituents (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Creating public financing systems for local elections (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).
- Strengthening and diversifying the local government workforce, including by investing in hiring, recruitment, training and compensation (Urban Institute, Boosting Upward Mobility).

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Bibliography

Organization	Publication	Description	Source
National Fund for Workforce Solutions	Organization website	National network that invests in industry-led, worker-centered workforce partnerships to improve job quality and economic mobility.	Link
Urban Institute – Upward Mobility Initiative	Upward Mobility Framework Project	Urban's Upward Mobility Framework and tools help communities define, measure and improve upward mobility and racial equity.	Link
Urban Institute	Organization website	Nonpartisan research organization that analyzes social and economic policy to improve people's lives and strengthen communities.	Link
Skilled Work	Organization website	Nonprofit focused on advancing worker and community power by defining, measuring and improving job quality.	Link
Results for America	Economic Mobility Catalog	Catalogue of evidence-based strategies, programs and issues to help governments advance economic mobility.	Link
Jobs for the Future (JFF)	Organization website	National nonprofit that designs and scales education and workforce solutions to drive equitable economic advancement.	Link
Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System	Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2024	National report summarizing findings from the 2024 Survey of Household Economics and Decision making on Americans' financial well-being, work and housing.	Link
Education to Workforce Partnership	Education-to-Workforce Indicator Framework	Framework and tools that help states and communities build shared, cross-sector data systems to track indicators from early education through careers.	Link

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Organization	Publication	Description	Source
Harvard Business School – Managing the Future of Work	Building from the Bottom Up: What Business Can Do to Strengthen the Bottom Line by Investing in Front-Line Workers	Report outlining how employers can improve job quality, advancement pathways and productivity for workers in low-wage roles.	Link
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)	Toward Convergence: A Technical Guide for the Postsecondary Metrics Framework	Technical guide that recommends a common set of metrics and definitions to align postsecondary data systems and assess student success and value.	Link
Local Housing Solutions	Housing Policy Library	Searchable library of housing policies that localities can use to expand affordability, stability and access to opportunity.	Link
StriveTogether	StriveTogether	Homepage of a national network supporting cradle-to-career collective impact partnerships to improve outcomes for children and families.	Link
Urban Institute	Workforce Development – Urban Institute	The Urban Institute's hub for research, tools and resources on workforce development, job quality and economic security.	Link
University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps	Website providing county-level health rankings and evidence-informed strategies to improve health and equity.	Link
Results for America – Job Quality Playbook	What Is Job Quality?	Explains the dimensions of job quality and provides a framework and tools for governments to design policies that create better jobs.	Link
Local Infrastructure Hub	Local Infrastructure Hub	Portal that helps local governments navigate, apply for and implement federal infrastructure funding opportunities.	Link
Education Strategy Group	Forging Futures: How States Can Center Economic Mobility in Postsecondary Attainment Agendas	Report advising states on embedding economic mobility and job quality goals into postsecondary policy and performance metrics.	Link
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)	CLASP – Policy Solutions That Work for People	A national anti-poverty organization focused on policy advocacy for low-income people and communities of color.	Link

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Organization	Publication	Description	Source
U.S. Department of Education / ERIC	The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Research Portfolio: A Research Evidence Scan of Key Strategies Related to WIOA	Scan of research evidence on strategies aligned with WIOA, highlighting which approaches show positive impacts on employment and earnings.	Link
U.S. Department of Education / ERIC	Supporting Postsecondary Success for Justice-Impacted Youth and Young Adults	Report describing barriers and promising practices for helping justice-impacted young people access and complete postsecondary education.	Link
Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice	Hope Student Basic Needs Survey Report 2023–24	National survey documenting rates of food, housing and financial insecurity among college students and their links to academic outcomes.	Link
Center for American Progress	Center for American Progress	Homepage of a progressive policy institute that produces research and advocacy on education, economic policy, equity and other issues.	Link
National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)	2017–2018 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:18) Undergraduate Students (NCES 2017-098)	Technical documentation and findings on how undergraduates finance their education, including grants, loans and work.	Link
U.S. Department of Labor – Employment and Training Administration	A Typology of Career Pathways Programs: Final Report (ETA Occasional Paper 2012-10)	Study that categorizes different career pathways program models and summarizes evidence on their design and outcomes.	Link
Early Success / Campaign for Grade-Level Reading	Early School Success Framework (2018 Framework v1.0 / 2024 update)	Framework outlining conditions, strategies and indicators to support children's early school success and grade-level reading.	Link
Workforce Edge	How to Create and Nurture Career Growth Opportunities for Employees	Description of employer strategies to build internal mobility through learning opportunities, mentorship and transparent advancement paths.	Link

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Organization	Publication	Description	Source
Community College Research Center (CCRC)	Accelerating Student Progress Into and Through College: Early Findings From the ASAP Ohio Demonstration	Evaluation showing that comprehensive support programs like ASAP can increase community college credit accumulation and persistence.	Link
Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC)	Evaluation 2024: Texas Workforce System Evaluation Report	State report assessing the performance and coordination of Texas's workforce programs and recommending improvements.	Link
Annie E. Casey Foundation	Who Are Opportunity Youth?	Brief explaining who "opportunity youth" are, the systemic barriers they face and why reconnecting them to school and work matters.	Link
Aspen Institute	The Aspen Institute	Homepage of a global nonprofit that convenes leaders and produces research on equity, economic opportunity and civic life.	Link
CLASP	The Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Framework Version 1.0	Framework defining quality standards and metrics for career pathway systems across education, workforce and human services.	Link
American Council on Education – Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education	Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report – Executive Summary (2019)	Executive summary documenting racial and ethnic disparities in postsecondary access, completion, faculty representation and debt.	Link
OECD	Measuring and Assessing Job Quality: The OECD Job Quality Framework	International framework that defines and measures job quality across earnings, security and work environment dimensions.	Link
Braven	Braven	Homepage of a nonprofit that partners with colleges and employers to provide career-readiness courses and coaching for underrepresented students.	Link
Advance CTE	Inclusive Goal Setting: A Manual for State Career Technical Education Leaders	Guide for state CTE leaders on setting inclusive performance goals that advance equity in career and technical education.	Link
SCALE (Education Development Center & partners)	SCALE Measures User Guide	User guide for administering and interpreting student survey measures related to learning mindsets, sense of belonging and social-emotional skills.	Link

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Organization	Publication	Description	Source
Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE)	Industry-Recognized Credentials: National Best Practices and Application to Massachusetts	Report identifying national best practices for using industry-recognized credentials and recommending how Massachusetts can strengthen its approach.	Link
National College Attainment Network (NCAN)	National College Attainment Network	Homepage for NCAN, a membership organization that advances policies and practices to increase postsecondary access and completion for underrepresented students.	Link
Washington Center for Equitable Growth	An Introduction to the Geography of Student Debt	Analysis showing how student debt burdens vary across regions, neighborhoods and demographics, with implications for policy and equity.	Link
U.S. Department of Education / ERIC	Credential Currency: How States Can Identify and Promote Credentials of Value (ED516183)	Report offering a framework and tools for states to assess which credentials have real labor-market value and should be promoted.	Link
Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC)	Job Quality	State site explaining Colorado's job quality framework and resources for employers to improve wages, benefits and worker voice.	Link
NCES	Career and Technical Education (CTE) Statistics – CTE Statistics (CTES)	Portal providing national data on secondary and postsecondary CTE participation, coursetaking and outcomes.	Link
Education to Workforce Partnership	Education-to-Workforce Indicator Framework (E-W Indicator Framework)	Detailed documentation of cross-sector indicators spanning early childhood through workforce outcomes to support data-driven decision-making.	Link
Literacy Texas / U.S. Department of Labor	Six Key Elements of a Successful Adult Education Program (U.S. DOL)	Brief summarizing six core components — such as partnerships, funding and data use — of effective adult education and workforce programs.	Link
Advance CTE	Credential Currency: How States Can Identify and Promote Credentials of Value	National report describing how states can evaluate and prioritize "credentials of value" that lead to good jobs and further education.	Link

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Organization	Publication	Description	Source
Equitable Growth	America's Job Quality Crisis — and How to Revive Workers' Pay, Dignity, Job Advancement and Economic Well-Being	Explores trends in declining job quality and recommends policy solutions to improve wages, stability and upward mobility.	Link
SHRM Foundation & Partners	Skilled Credentials Toolkit	Toolkit helping employers understand, adopt and leverage skills-based hiring and non-degree credentials in talent management.	Link
Skilled Work	Worker-Centered Benchmarking Project	Project page describing tools and metrics that help organizations benchmark job quality from the perspective of workers themselves.	Link

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StriveTogether®

Every child. Cradle to career.

StriveTogether is a national network of community partnerships that join together neighbors, including youth and families, nonprofits, businesses, schools and more, to work toward a future where youth can thrive in their communities. Cradle to Career Network members change the way their communities work together by building connections, sharing resources and using data to put more young people on a path to economic mobility. Our work helps young people meet seven key life milestones so that they have the opportunities they need to reach their goals and, ultimately, thrive.

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