

## Pathways to Prosperity Network

AN INITIATIVE OF JOBS FOR THE FUTURE  
AND THE HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF EDUCATION

# PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY NETWORK

The Pathways to Prosperity Network, a collaboration of states, Jobs for the Future, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, seeks to ensure that many more youth complete high school and attain a postsecondary credential with currency in the labor market. Each participating state is engaging educators and employers in building a system of grades 9-14 career pathways, combining high school and community college. Such pathways are intended to launch young people into initial careers, while leaving open the prospect of further education.

State and regional stakeholders together lead the work in each Pathways to Prosperity state, focusing initially on two or three regional labor markets. The long-term goal is to create statewide systems of career pathways that serve most students. Key sectors of the economy identified for pathways building across the states include information technology, health care, and advanced manufacturing.

## THE PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY REPORT

The network emerged as a result of the interest generated by the Harvard Graduate School of Education report, *Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century*. According to the report, roughly half of all young Americans arrive in their mid-twenties without the skills or labor market credentials essential for success in today's increasingly demanding economy. A reason is the nation's overreliance on a single four-year college pathway to help young people make the transition from high school to working life. The report calls for an intensive effort from employers, educators, and government and nonprofit leaders to build pathways that link work and learning and are aligned with labor market demand. From this call to action, the state Pathways to Prosperity Network was formed.

## 9-14 CAREER PATHWAYS

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

High schools and community colleges create 9-14 career pathways, with clear structures, timelines, costs, and requirements linking and integrating high school and postsecondary curricula and aligning both with labor market requirements.

### TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION: WHAT STATES AND REGIONS ARE DOING

Building on JFF's decade of experience designing and supporting early college high school designs and drawing on principles of best practices from career academies and Linked Learning, three Massachusetts community colleges, along with their intermediary and high school partners, are designing grades 9-14 career pathways to meet regional labor market needs. Bunker Hill Community College is designing pathways in health care, while Springfield Technical Community College is designing pathways for advanced manufacturing, and Mass Bay Community College is designing pathways in information technology.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The foundational building block of the Pathways to Prosperity Network is a grades 9-14 career pathway that integrates high school and college-level work—for example, a career academy or a comprehensive program of study that includes all the requirements for completing a high school diploma and a postsecondary credential with value in the labor market. The network develops 9-14 career pathways systems through four strategic implementation levers: early and sustained career information and advising systems; employer engagement; intermediaries; and enabling state policies.

In 2012, the first five Pathways to Prosperity states gathered regional stakeholders into coalitions to select the initial target regions. Teams from Jobs for the Future and the Harvard Graduate School of Education carried out asset mapping to assess the readiness of these regions to begin creating 9-14 pathways. In addition, members from all five state stakeholder groups came together for the 2012 Pathways State Network Institute at Harvard to learn from experts and one another about approaches to implementing the Pathways to Prosperity framework, as well as about successful European vocational systems.

Based on the institute and the results of the asset mapping, each state developed a work plan using

## KEY LEVER: CAREER INFORMATION AND ADVISING SYSTEM

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Starting in the middle grades, students are exposed to a wide range of career options, information, and opportunities to learn about high school and postsecondary courses of study leading to careers.

Students engage in a 9-14 continuum of work-based learning opportunities in their chosen career areas. Intermediaries, employers, and community-based organizations help young people make informed choices throughout each 9-14 pathway.

### TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION: WHAT STATES AND REGIONS ARE DOING

Long Beach, California, and Upper Cumberland, Tennessee, are network leaders in building out sequential career and workplace awareness,

exploration, and participation experiences, starting in middle school and culminating in internships and other work-related experiences in the final year of high school. Workplaces include nonprofit organizations, businesses, and government.

## KEY LEVER: INTERMEDIARIES

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Local or regional intermediaries serve as conveners, brokers, and technical assistance providers to schools and employers engaged in building and sustaining pathways. Intermediaries recruit business, nonprofit, and public employers and ensure that participating leaders understand and support the vision.

### TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION: WHAT STATES AND REGIONS ARE DOING

Drawing from the example of the Boston Private Industry Council and from discussions of intermediary functions at the 2012 Pathways State Network Institute, business leaders in several states are organizing to convene, support, and sustain activities linking schools, postsecondary institutions, and

employers to support work-based learning and career awareness and exploration activities.

Led by the mayor and the chamber of commerce, the Aurora, Illinois region has mobilized broad civic, education, and employer support to design pathways. The effort has engaged CEOs and other key local leaders to begin developing an intermediary. The asset mapping for the area identifies IT, advanced manufacturing, and health

care as the three areas for the future focus.

In Upper Cumberland, Tennessee, the Highland Initiative is working with four counties to open health care and pre-engineering/advanced manufacturing pathways. The initiative is administered by the Cookeville-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce and led by its Workforce and Education Committee.

the Pathways to Prosperity framework comprised of the four strategic implementation levers required to build a 9-14 career pathways system. As states and regions develop innovative and effective models for building out these levers, they share their design work across the network for peer learning and scaling up successes.

Major challenges of the Pathways work include engaging employers and industry organizations with high schools and community colleges. To accomplish this, intermediary organizations support cross-sectoral collaboration and communication. These organizations convene stakeholders and support businesses so that they can provide a sustainable, coherent continuum of work-based learning

opportunities for students, advice on Pathways curricula, and knowledge about the skills needed in the workplace.

On this and other key challenges, Jobs for the Future provides state and regional participants in the network with coaching, advice on pathway design and policy, and other forms of technical assistance—including assistance with communicating the importance of career pathways for the future of the country's youth and the nation's employers. JFF and the Harvard Graduate School of Education also analyze, develop, and help advocate for public policies necessary for building and sustaining a system of 9-14 career pathways.

## KEY LEVER: ENABLING STATE POLICIES

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

State dual enrollment policies provide access to postsecondary education for low-income students. Districts and community colleges have financial incentives and sustainable funding to provide 9-14 programs of study in career and technical education leading to diplomas, certificates, or Associate's degrees. Accountability systems weigh dual enrollment courses as they weigh AP and IB. The state provides incentives for employers and unions to provide work experience opportunities.

### TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION: WHAT STATES AND REGIONS ARE DOING

Under its Innovation Campus program, Missouri has provided \$1.3 million to three metro St. Louis districts to build 9-14 pathways as part of

the Missouri Pathways initiative. These districts will strengthen their dual-credit programs and internships with local businesses and launch students on a fast track to earning affordable degrees in high-demand fields.

Predating Pathways but serving its needs, Illinois has funded the first set of nine learning exchanges, a \$10.3 million public-private partnership to boost careers in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math). The learning exchanges, with resources open freely to all, work together with regional, educational, and business networks to aggregate curricular resources, assessment tools, professional development systems, work-based learning opportunities, and problem-based learning challenges.

Similarly, Pathways benefits from North Carolina's College and Career Promise legislation, California's Linked Learning pilot, and Massachusetts' Connecting Activities legislation.

North Carolina's College and Career Promise offers all eligible high school students the opportunity to begin earning college credit at a community college campus at no cost to them or their families. These structured pathways include career preparatory coursework beginning in high school and progressing toward an Associate's degree or a certificate.

The Linked Learning Pilot Program (Assembly Bill 790) builds upon the work of the California Linked Learning District Initiative and benefits from the many lessons learned by its participating districts. The program will support

the work of 20 local education agencies and consortia to develop and support districtwide systems and policy for the delivery of Linked Learning.

Since the 1990s, Massachusetts' Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has provided funding to drive and sustain a statewide school-to-career system. In partnership with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, it establishes public-private partnerships through the 16 local Workforce Investment Boards to connect schools and businesses and provide structured work-based learning experiences for students that support both academic and employability skill attainment. Over 9,000 students participated in 2012.

## KEY LEVER: EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Employers commit to providing a continuum of learning opportunities at the workplace throughout the 9-14 pathway. Employers collaborate with educators and are supported by intermediaries in structuring and managing workplace learning. Employers support students' transitions into the local labor market.

### TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION: WHAT STATES AND REGIONS ARE DOING

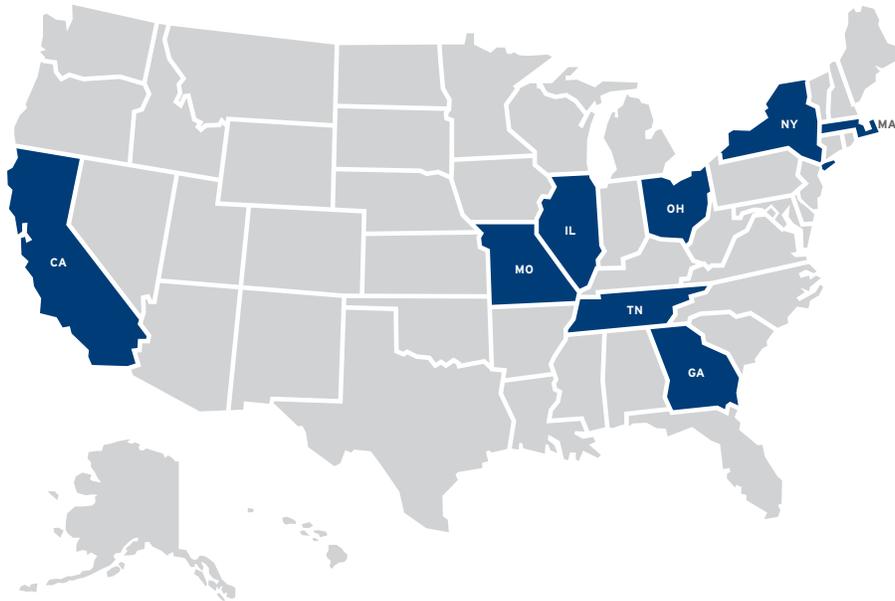
Chicago has launched five early college STEM high schools focused on information technology. CISCO, IBM, Microsoft, Motorola, and Verizon each sponsor one of the schools. Jobs for the Future provides school planning and professional development for this

Chicago Public Schools partnership with the City Colleges of Chicago. The model adapts the design of the IBM/CUNY P-TECH (Pathways to Technology Early College High School) in New York City.

Public school systems and a consortium of businesses including Volkswagen America, EPB, UNUM, McKee Foods, and Cormetech, with

support from the Public Education Foundation and civic leaders, are working to define and plan career pathways in key labor markets in the region. The local chambers of commerce and the Chattanooga Regional Manufacturers Association also provide strong industry leadership.

## MEMBER STATES



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**Jobs for the Future** works with our partners to design and drive the adoption of education and career pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for those struggling to succeed in today's economy.

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