



Columbus, Ohio

Columbus, Ohio, is one of the six sites selected to participate in the *New Skills ready network*. This five-year initiative, launched by JPMorgan Chase & Co. in 2020, aims to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways.

In the first year of the initiative, the Columbus, Ohio, *New Skills ready network* team focused on building both the internal capacity of each partner organization and the capacity of the new leadership team developed to support this work. The team identified and established workgroups around work-based learning, communications and equitable career pathways to leverage the unique expertise of each organization and to ensure progress in the key priority areas. Lastly, the team

prioritized a number of key foundational elements of their overall strategy, including improving their data capacity and identifying the two initial program areas (health care/health services and information technology) in which they will focus their efforts for the next year.

In 2020-21, the Columbus, Ohio, *New Skills ready network* team focused on two major priorities:



Developing relationships and building capacity across and within partner organizations; and



Identifying and analyzing program areas to attend to career pathway quality.

THE NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK



NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK SITES:

- Boston, Massachusetts
- Columbus, Ohio
- Dallas, Texas
- Denver, Colorado
- Indianapolis, Indiana
- Nashville, Tennessee

New Skills ready network, launched by JPMorgan Chase & Co. in 2020, bolsters the firm's efforts to support an inclusive economic recovery, as part of both their \$350 million, five-year New Skills at Work initiative to prepare people for the future of work and their new [\\$30 billion commitment](#) to advance racial equity. Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group are working with sites to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways in six US communities.

The six *New Skills ready network* sites are formulating new partnerships between local school systems, higher education, employers, and government entities to develop pathways and policy recommendations that give underserved students access to higher education and real-world work experiences that lead to high-wage, in-demand jobs.

These snapshots provide an overview of sites' accomplishments in the first year of the *New Skills*

ready network initiative, including the development of priority objectives and action steps toward those objectives. While the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic presented challenges to launching the work, the sites demonstrated strong early progress toward developing high-quality career pathways through collaborative stakeholder engagement.

Through the *New Skills ready network* initiative JPMorgan Chase is looking to advance the following priority areas to prepare students for good careers and economic mobility:

- Strengthening the alignment and rigor of career pathways;
- Designing, implementing and scaling real-world work experiences;
- Building seamless transitions to support postsecondary success; and
- Closing equity gaps.

Partners engaged on the leadership team

- Ohio Excels (site lead)
- Columbus City Schools
- Columbus State Community College
- Ohio Department of Education
- Ohio Department of Higher Education
- The Ohio State University

Columbus, Ohio's Vision for Success

Columbus' goal throughout this project is the following:

All students in Columbus City Schools, Columbus State Community College and The Ohio State University have the academic, technical, and professional skills they need to succeed, and that Columbus businesses have the workforce they need to prosper. Columbus students across the K12 and postsecondary spectrum are engaged in high-quality career pathways that fuel their aspirations, prepare them for success, and are supported through their transitions into high-wage, high-skill, in-demand careers in the Columbus region.

This goal will be met through developing a Central Ohio career pathways system with cohesive partnerships that can strategically utilize resources and data to provide opportunities for learners at all levels, particularly those learners who are under-represented in higher education and workforce.

To be successful in this goal, all partners will strive to align high-quality career pathways across the network to support learners through transitions in their academic and career journeys. The project team plans to align the strategic goals of partner institutions and create processes that allow for regular tracking and analysis of updated information.

Setting the Context

At the regional level, many partnerships existed prior to the launch of the *New Skills ready network*. Columbus City Schools (CCS) and Columbus State Community College (CSCC) worked together on other initiatives to support the alignment of career pathways. CSCC leads CCS and other partners in their participation in the *Central Ohio Compact*, a regional partnership of dozens of educational institutions at both the secondary and postsecondary levels working toward the goal that 65 percent of Central Ohioans will earn postsecondary credentials by 2025. Much of the work of the Compact is aligned with the goals of the *New Skills ready network*.



At the state level, the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) are active participants and key partners in this work, providing both support and advisory roles. Multiple statewide initiatives, including their robust statewide articulation and transfer agreements, are being leveraged to further the goals of the *New Skills ready network*, including the College Credit Plus program, Career-Technical Assurance Guides, the Choose Ohio First scholarship program and others. These initiatives, along with a supportive policy environment that has long funded Career Technical Education, credentials, and other key aspects of the Columbus, Ohio, *New Skills ready network* priorities, will be critical throughout the grant cycle.

Approach to Systems Transformation

Columbus and the surrounding region have a collaborative mindset around systems transformation. Frequently called “The Columbus Way,” this collaboration between private and public entities around the region enables partners to leverage both new and existing relationships. These public-private partnerships focus buy-in from stakeholders across a variety of contexts for the betterment of the region, especially in the areas of education and workforce development. Because projects in the Columbus region often involve collaboration among a variety of stakeholders, new partnerships are quick to expand into other collaborative relationships both within the *New Skills ready network* and outside of it. Existing entities, such as the Workforce Advisory Board at CSCC, serve as exemplars of this mindset and help the *New Skills ready network* rally around support structures already in place.

PRIORITY 1

Developing Relationships and Building Capacity Across and Within Partner Organizations



To effectively make progress in each of their action plan priority areas, the Columbus, Ohio, *New Skills ready network* project team first had to work to build relationships and capacity within each partner and across the project team. Without the necessary infrastructure in place, the team felt the initiative would be siloed into work that each partner conducted independently.

Each partner worked diligently to establish internal project teams that would prioritize the *New Skills ready network* initiative. While partner leads were already identified, other decisionmakers and experts that could provide significant input and support needed to be brought to the table. For example, the ODHE established a *New Skills ready network* internal team that could help support the work and prioritize the project at the state level. Other partners with a decentralized structure, such as The Ohio State University (OSU), needed to establish an internal framework to centralize efforts around the project.

The team also built trust and developed relationships through the work. Ohio Excels, which was new to the intermediary role within the context of career pathways, hired a project manager to streamline the work of the leadership team, organize cross-sector workgroups and facilitate communication across partners. Five expanded workgroups composed of members of the leadership team and other subject matter experts were established to facilitate the work of the larger project team. The workgroups are Equitable Pathways, Communications, Student Engagement and Supports, Data and the Business Advisory Council. These groups are charged with focusing the work over the next year. For example, the Student Engagement and Supports workgroup is bringing the leadership team strategies for input and consensus around non-academic supports including the recruitment and retention of learners, advising at all levels and community partnerships to address access and equity barriers. These workgroups will also allow content-specific experts from each of the partners to provide valuable insight into their areas of the project.

Due to COVID-19, the Columbus, Ohio, project team has yet to meet in person, which created challenges through the first year. Despite these challenges, the project team worked diligently to establish and develop these key relationships that will serve as the foundation for work in the next year. Moving forward, the leadership team is better equipped and prepared to tackle the next four years of work because of this infrastructure developed both internally and among partners.

PRIORITY 2
**Identifying
and Analyzing
Program Areas
to Attend
to Career
Pathway
Quality**



Another key priority was identifying program areas that the team would focus on over the next year of work. Through conversations with CCS, CSCC and OSU administrators and faculty, the project team decided on health care/health services and information technology as their primary focus. They selected these program areas due to labor market demand, existing supports and resources in these areas, and connection to career pathways embedded in postsecondary partners.

Once these two program areas were identified, the team began work to further address key elements of their action plan. Project team partners began collecting internal information about programs and outcome data specific to health care/health services and information technology. Other partners began looking at additional labor market information to better understand industry needs and job data in these sectors. Finally, workgroups began to examine quality indicators for career pathways, especially where indicators between secondary and postsecondary partners align. This analysis will allow the leadership team to cross-walk indicators for quality around these two program areas and determine how well current career pathways align to them. In the next year, the leadership team will work to identify high-value, industry-recognized credentials including degrees, certificates and licenses; map the specific curricular pathways in these program areas that lead to these credentials; and develop consistent components of work-based learning in these two program areas.

**Looking
Ahead**

Moving forward, the Columbus, Ohio, *New Skills ready network* team is poised for significant progress beyond these two priorities. While the partners needed to dedicate time and attention to relationship and capacity building in the first grant year, with those foundational pieces in place, the project team can take increased action in year two of the grant and beyond. Focusing on the two aforementioned program areas also allows for more specific and directed action steps.

In the year ahead, the team plans to align career pathways in the identified program areas for all partners. The team will also work to better determine which career pathways in these sectors are high quality and should be scaled, while working to transform career pathways that are no longer connected to high-wage, in-demand occupations. The team is also planning to make strides in elevating work-based learning opportunities through identifying one or more intermediaries that could serve as a hub for connecting employers and educational institutions. Finally, work is underway to build a communications strategy to more effectively engage learners and families around career pathways in the Columbus region.