



Community Based Organization Playbook

Unlocking Career Success



This playbook provides ways in which Community Based Organizations (CBOs) can blur the lines between high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. CBOs play a significant role to Raise the Bar for student success by developing an *education-to-workforce system* that focuses on Unlocking Career Success.

Step 1

Expand Community Partnerships

Step 2

Expand Pathways Ecosystems

Step 3

Lead System Innovation

Expand community partnerships

Education and workforce initiatives are designed to improve people's lives, yet the voice of the community is not always included when these initiatives are developed. Ensuring that youth, family, and community voice is present during public policy development and throughout implementation is paramount to education and workforce systems working in lockstep with the people they intend to serve. When expanding community partnerships, consider how to:



Elevate stakeholder voice by engaging in formal stakeholder convenings, like those that states are required to host as part its upcoming Perkins and WIOA state plans, as well as coordinating and sharing through less formal channels to capture how public policy decisions impact the lives of people in the communities that they serve.



Align community and system goals by working with staff in city, municipal, or state government, P-12, higher education, and workforce systems to understand how youth career pathways fit within their strategic plans, where there may be gaps in services or unmet student needs, and how actors in non-governmental spaces can support and lead change.



Convene and advocate by leveraging relationships with existing boards and trustees, employers or other private sector partners, philanthropic partners, donors, or other sponsors to develop a shared voice and strategy to advocate for the needs of youth, build partnerships that integrate the community, and to shape future policy.

Tools for expanding community partnerships:

Connect with Decision Makers Across Systems

Connect with decision makers across P-12, higher education, and workforce systems. In California, Unite LA is working to redevelop the education system from cradle through career through programs such as L.A. Youth at Work that connects youth to internships.

Participate on a Committee, Board, or Council

Participate on a committee, state workforce development board, or advisory council. In Delaware, the Rodel Foundation has been partnered with Delaware Pathways, a public-private partnership designed to create meaningful job experience and college-level courses for high schoolers.

Advocate for Resources

Advocate for resources— financial, human, and physical—that fill community gaps. Resources can be sourced through membership dues, philanthropy, local, state, and federal grants, and volunteer entities. In Rhode Island, Skills RI is a workforce intermediary that partners with government agencies, institutions of higher education, and CBOs to expand economic opportunity by connecting unemployed and under-employed with socially minded employers.



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Community partners can drive education and workforce systems to help young people access high-quality learning experiences in and outside of school. CBOs often have greater flexibility than traditional system actors to provide direct student supports and partner coordination, such as helping youth to extend their learning or transition beyond high school into higher levels of education and the workforce. When expanding the career pathways ecosystem, consider how to:



Create models of shared learning by bringing together leaders across the community, education, and workforce systems as part of a cross-cutting team or working group that is representative of the community and ensure that each partner is responsible for leading specific actions with shared accountability to support the success of the initiative.



Leverage the strengths of each organization, which can help to build capacity to engage employers, scale work-based learning opportunities, expand youth apprenticeship, and strengthen student career navigation and coaching.



Use resources and information strategically, by braiding funding that better connects public, private, philanthropic, and corporate resources, and use data to inform the organization's strategy, guiding staffing, programming, and partnership development.

Tools for expanding career pathways ecosystems:

Provide Direct Funding

Provide direct funding or mobilize philanthropy to launch community -wide initiatives for expanding capacity and coordination of pathways programming spanning K12, Higher Ed, and Workforce.

In Michigan, Detroit at Work serves as a workforce intermediary for jobseekers and employers, providing information on in-demand career pathways and bolstering system wide capacity.

In Illinois, the Chicago Roadmap harnesses the power of the city's leading civic, philanthropic, and academic partners to enhance pathways for students.

Engage State and/or Local Workforce Development Boards

Communities can help to connect in-school and out-of-school youth programs that are administered through WIOA and other workforce development funds that may be state-issued to support youth employment and student transition as well as to expand wrap-around services for youth.



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Tools for expanding career pathways ecosystems (continued):

Support Research-Driven Partnerships

Community partners often work across multiple local education agencies and can support the identification and replication of evidence-based practices across LEAs and those that can be used to inform state policy development and iteration, as well as to better link educators, policymakers, and researchers within the career-connected learning system.

Develop New Data Collection Tools

Optimize data-informed decision making and to both better understand and communicate the needs of students.

In Massachusetts, the [Boston Private Industry Council](#) analyzed real-time data to guide education and workforce activities, leading to new research reports on college and careers to better understand the realities of Boston Public School graduates.

Prioritize Support for Underrepresented Students

Data can also help to identify equity and opportunity gaps for youth and coordinate strategies that integrate community partners to help address these barriers.

Supporting underrepresented students can lead to increased community impact, additional funding, and the closing of equity and opportunity gaps perpetuated by existing structures.

Regularly reviewing disaggregated data to see changes in outcomes allows CBOs to nimbly shift their supports to populations that need additional intervention.



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Community partner are critical within the career-connected ecosystem, and are positioned to lead innovative programs, support strategic financing, and to coordinate wrap-around and support services for youth. CBOs can also help initiatives to reach their intended scale, support student equity, and can directly support student transition and work-based learning efforts. When leading system innovation, consider how to:



Create innovative programs through direct employer, educator, and workforce system engagement and work to support innovative human resource policies, like skills-based hiring models, to develop paid work-based learning opportunities, internships, and registered apprenticeship programs for youth.



Support strategic financing which includes working with public and private partners to develop a coordinated funding strategy, which may include the development of a memorandum of understand or partnership agreement, to braid or blend resources, or work to jointly develop grant proposals or work with philanthropic organizations.



Develop and expand student-focused supports which can include partnerships across local educational agencies, community and technical colleges, and local workforce boards to expand the four keys to Unlocking Career Success including dual or concurrent enrollment, work-based learning, industry credentials, and student advisement.

Tools for leading systems innovation:

Provide Durable Skills Training

The Boys and Girls Club of America, (BGCA) provides a wide range of workforce readiness training. In Tennessee, the Juice+ Technical Training Center enrolls youth in self-paced training programs with career tracks such as logistics and IT.

In Minnesota, Achieve Twin Cities partners with local school districts to offer a range of career and postsecondary planning guidance and resources for high school students by physically embedding into local schools. Through physical and virtual services, the organization provides leverage to local schools and to educate students on the wide range of postsecondary opportunities.

Connect Youth to WBL Opportunities

Engage employers to help youth find and secure paid internships. This can include preparatio of youth with resume development and mock interviews or helping students to understand what good jobs might mean for them, and how to prepare for and seek good jobs. For example, the Urban Institute provides a guide to effectively engaging employers.

In Louisiana, YouthForce NOLA operates as a connector across schools, businesses, students, and the larger community to provide opportunities for student work experience, technical skills, and employability training.

In Philadelphia, LaunchPad partners with schools without CTE programs to engage students, especially diverse students in well-paid technology careers, including support though afterschool programing and a summer program that combines colleges credits with technical training.



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Tools for leading systems innovation (continued):

Support Paid Interns

The [YMCA of South Hampton Roads](#) hosts an annual Counselor Internship Program for youth ages 16 and 17 to prepare them to be a future camp staff members.

In New York City, nonprofit organizations provide internship opportunities for low income young adults thanks to support from the city's [Work Progress Program](#).

Provide Wrap-Around Supports

DOL-funded YouthBuild programs are community-based pre-apprenticeship programs that provide job training and education opportunities for historically underserved youth.

[UnitedWay Long Island](#)'s signature program is YouthBuild, changing the future pathway of youth by addressing core issues such as housing, education, and employment. Youth from low-income families work toward their GED High School Equivalency while earning essential job skills.

In Connecticut, [ReadyCT](#) is a workforce intermediary that develops partnerships between local schools and the business community to support career-connected learning through the full continuum of work-based learning experiences.

The National Partnership for Student Success ([NPSS](#)) is supporting President Biden's goal to have an additional 250,000 postsecondary transition coaches, tutors, mentors, student success coaches and wraparound supports coordinators supporting students in school and out-of-school time programs by 2025. LEAs, schools, and CBO's are able to [access technical assistance](#), and resources to support [postsecondary transition coaching](#).



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