

## New Skills for Youth Phase One Snapshot: California

In recent years, California has invested more than \$1.4 billion in grants and initiatives to develop and strengthen career pathways. While this work has resulted in many new partnerships and programs, the state's New Skills for Youth (NSFY) Phase One needs assessment illuminated the necessity to strengthen cross-state collaboration and data sharing to create a more cohesive and sustainable career readiness system. California's early achievements and action plan aim to "glue together" disparate initiatives to promote quality at the local level.

### Foundations for the Work

California's state-level career readiness work, prior to Phase One, is best described as expansive and fragmented. In recent years, the state Legislature has invested more than \$1.4 billion in various initiatives designed to strengthen the development of high-quality career pathways. Such initiatives include the California [Linked Learning Pilot Program](#), which was piloted in 2012 and sustained through philanthropic dollars to support programs that integrate technical coursework, work-based learning and student support services within the standard high school experience; the [California Career Pathways Trust](#), which invested \$500 million in funding and sparked the creation of 567 new K-14 career pathways; and the \$900 million [CTE Incentive Grant Program](#), which was passed in 2015 and is designed to enhance existing and develop new Career Technical Education (CTE) programs in high schools. In most cases,

funding for CTE programs is contingent on legislative actions and limited funding opportunities, as well as the active engagement of local industry leaders.

Resulting in part from such investments, California has developed statewide networks of business and industry engagement. The [REAL Coalition](#) draws on expertise from 21 business associations to develop solutions for key economic issues. The Real Coalition includes leaders from the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce and the Bay Area Council. Both organizations also serve on California's Career Pathways leadership team along with the California Department of Education (CDE), the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), the California Workforce Investment Board, and the California Linked Learning Alliance.

The CCCCCO runs a campaign called Doing What Matters for Jobs and the Economy that

*Phase One of JPMorgan Chase & Co.'s New Skills for Youth grant extended from May to October 2016. With bold visions for improving career readiness in K-12 education, each Phase One state spent the grant period performing a diagnostic assessment of its career preparation system and preparing for implementation of a new action plan. This snapshot describes California's experience and progress in Phase One, including promising practices and innovations.*

supports regional capacity planning and sector priorities using labor market needs. Regional deputy sector navigators operating under the Doing What Matters banner work at the local level to engage employers and align workforce and education priorities in each sector. The CDE also has lead staff members assigned to support each state industry sectors. Most of these initiatives are administered locally, which has highlighted the need for state agencies to coordinate to ensure that programs are strategic and sustainable.

Enhancing local flexibility is the [Local Control Funding Formula](#). The formula was enacted in the 2013-14 academic year and consolidated K-12 categorical state funding streams to provide base, supplemental and concentration grants to local education agencies. School districts receive adjustments based on the number of targeted under-served students. The intent of the funding formula was to encourage local decisionmaking, taking into account the state's vast size and diversity across regions, and to provide additional supports for high-need student populations. As a result, the state is able to influence local decisionmaking primarily through accountability, competitive grants and technical assistance contracts.

## Work During Phase One

California's approach to Phase One was to streamline activity across disparate grant programs and employer networks to establish a cohesive statewide strategy for K-14 career pathways. This approach would build upon California's significant investments in career pathways development to provide what the state project team referred to as "glue

funding": investments and strategies to reinforce and integrate statewide systems.

California's needs assessment revealed the need to disaggregate career pathways data to evaluate program outcomes. This inability to disaggregate data was partly due to the need for increased data collection and sharing, such as through a federated data system, in addition to a lack of shared definitions across the state. Other gaps identified through the needs assessment largely echoed the project team's early thinking: To achieve systems transformation and strengthen high-quality programs of study across the state, California would need to strengthen regional support structures, promote a coordinated employer engagement strategy, develop network partnerships across state agencies and shift core funding so that the work of developing and scaling high-quality career pathways could be sustained.

## *Making Progress on Systems Alignment*

During Phase One, California made progress toward linking data systems across secondary and postsecondary education and employment to monitor student outcomes. One notable accomplishment was the release of the [LaunchBoard Accountability System](#), which provides California community colleges data on employment outcomes for students graduating from CTE programs. The system takes advantage of [Senate Bill 66](#), which was enacted in 2016 and requires the Department of Consumer Affairs to share data with the community college system.

In addition to sharing data across sectors, CCCCCO worked with CDE and the state

Workforce Development Board to map their respective program activities, developing crosswalks of requirements and resources to determine overlap and opportunities for alignment. This strengthened the state's capacity to analyze performance outcomes across career pathways and catalyzed a working relationship across agencies.

California also made headway toward integrating career readiness into the state accountability system. In fall 2016, the State Board of Education approved a new accountability framework that provides unprecedented weight to college and career readiness, including CTE pathway completion. Moving forward, the California project team also aims to provide guidance documents on how to leverage the local control funding formula, which includes its own set of accountability indicators, to encourage high-quality career pathways.

## Looking Ahead

Building upon early achievements in Phase One, the NSFY team aims to implement new strategies to "glue together" disparate initiatives and strengthen quality career pathways at the local level. These strategies include establishing an industry-led network to guide regional efforts; providing support structures for regional implementation; and expanding career readiness support services, including career guidance, counseling and wrap-around services for students. This approach acknowledges the size and diversity of California's many career pathways delivery

systems but still aims to promote quality at the local level.

While the state made early progress in Phase One to link data across sectors, the project team aims to continue this work by executing additional Memoranda of Understanding across different agencies and building a statewide federated data system. The team also aims to adopt shared data definitions to ensure that agencies have a common understanding of and ability to monitor student progress on career pathways spanning secondary and postsecondary education and employment.

Additionally, California plans to develop and disseminate career pathways frameworks, which would enable the state to circumvent challenges with regional delivery and define quality at the state level. The team aims to convene a task force to develop and launch the frameworks and has plans to leverage incentive funding to encourage local school districts to adopt the model.

While California has made significant investments in career pathways development in recent years, the state project team made use of early implementation and funding grant money during Phase One to begin the process of "gluing" the pieces together. Moving forward, California aims to make policy and funding changes to create more sustainable systems that enable success at the regional and local levels but encourage a statewide definition of quality.