

New Skills for Youth Phase One Snapshot: Delaware

Delaware entered into New Skills for Youth (NSFY) having already begun extensive career pathways work through the Delaware Pathways initiative. Building upon this effort, the Delaware team used Phase One to build a comprehensive, high-quality career pathways system that is accessible to *all* Delaware students. The team created a detailed strategic plan with clear and transparent milestones and targets and accomplished some of the early objectives outlined in the plan to set the foundation for years to come.

Foundations for the Work

The Delaware Pathways program started in 2014 as part of Governor Markell's Delaware Promise campaign. The Delaware Promise is a commitment among public and private-sector partners to ensure that youth and adults enter the labor market with credentials that support their education and career goals. The initiative is led by a cross-sector team, which has developed a regional career pathways system that is informed by labor market needs and offers youth the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials, early college credit and relevant work experience. Since 2014, the initiative has been scaled to reach 86 percent of all high schools in the state, and student participation has increased by at least 300 percent.

Delaware Technical Community College, which serves as the state's community college system, has taken an active role in leading this

work. In Delaware, community and technical college tuition is free for students who meet the criteria for the SEED and Inspire scholarship programs. As such, Delaware has prioritized the alignment of grade 7-14 programs of study, and efforts are under way to partner with all public and private institutions of higher education, apprenticeship programs, and other postsecondary and/or workforce providers to achieve the objectives of the program.

Work During Phase One

During Phase One, the state team and an external reviewer conducted a needs assessment and analysis of student outcomes data. The needs assessment found that the Delaware Pathways initiative is a strong system that has been effectively deployed at the state level. However, since the initiative is only a few years old, the data analysis revealed that additional work is required across the

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 Delaware's experience and progress in Phase One, including promising practices and innovations.

education, workforce and community partners to build systems that support students with disabilities and other barriers to employment, in addition to ensuring that all students are able to participate in work-based learning experiences that align with their career pathway.

Cross-Sector Plan and Targets

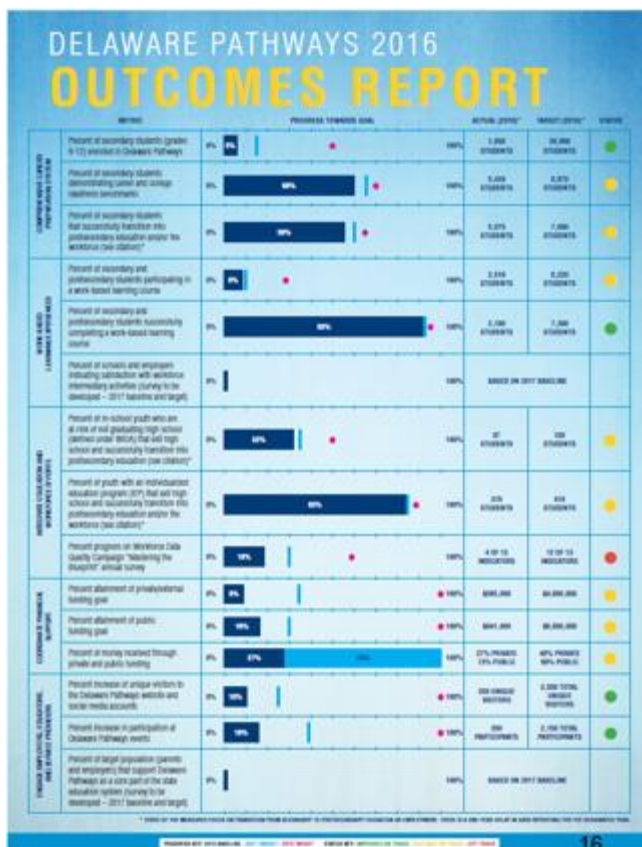
During Phase One, the Delaware NSFY team developed the Delaware Pathways Strategic Plan that builds upon the state’s career readiness system. The plan focuses on five strategies, each with its own detailed activities and milestones. Additionally, each strategy is owned by a different member of the cross-sector team to ensure success and engage additional partners, thus creating a sense of shared ownership and accountability for specific parts of the work. The strategies are to:

- Build a comprehensive system of career preparation that aligns with the state and regional economies, led by the Delaware Department of Education;
- Scale and sustain meaningful work-based learning experiences for students in grades 7-14, led by the Delaware Technical Community College;
- Integrate education and workforce development efforts and data systems, led by the Delaware Department of Labor;
- Coordinate financial support for Delaware Pathways, led by the United Way of Delaware and the Rodel Foundation; and
- Engage employers, educators and community organizations to support Delaware Pathways, led by the Delaware Workforce Development Board.

The plan also includes the [Delaware Pathways Outcomes Report](#), a public-facing document listing the state’s targets for this work. The report includes current performance metrics, annual and three-year targets, and whether or not the state is on track to meet the anticipated goals. Student equity is a primary focus of the report, and targeted outcome data are included for certain subgroups. Some of the main metrics include:

- Percentage of secondary students (grades 9-12) enrolled in Delaware Pathways;
- Percentage of secondary students meeting career and college readiness benchmarks; and
- Percentage of secondary students that successfully transition into postsecondary education and/or the workforce.

These metrics inform three overarching goals that the cross-sector team has agreed to address and hold regular status checks about to monitor progress. The metrics include:



- **Pathway to Career Success:** By 2020, more than 20,000 students (approximately 50 percent of all students in grades 9-12) will enroll in career pathways that prepare them for in-demand occupations and provide opportunities to obtain early college credit and industry credentials.
- **Link to Delaware Employers:** By 2020, more than 2,500 high school students (approximately 25 percent of all students in grade 12) and 5,720 postsecondary students (approximately 30 percent of all students at the community college level) will participate in an early career experience in partnership with a Delaware employer.
- **Bridge Between Education and Workforce Efforts:** By 2020, federal and state programs that serve in-school and out-of-school youth as well as youth with disabilities or other barriers to employment will work collaboratively to define common performance measures and refer youth who need additional assistance to partner organizations.
- The Delaware Department of Labor, in partnership with the Department of Education, created a taxonomic template to classify low-, middle- and high-skill jobs in Delaware, which includes wage records, employee career trajectories and workforce readiness indicators to inform career pathway design and development.

The state also launched three new career pathways in environmental science, nursing assistant and K-12 teacher preparation, all of which were developed in partnership with postsecondary and employer partners. These career pathways offer opportunities for industry-recognized credentials, early college credit and work experience.

Additionally, the state team completed the initial steps for scaling effective work-based learning reforms. This effort began with a series of “[virtual tours](#)” to highlight best practices in work-based learning and the development of a framework document to scale employer engagement in Delaware. The team also completed early work to establish a statewide workforce intermediary — an organization whose purpose is to better connect educators and employers and place secondary and postsecondary students in meaningful work experiences. This effort included staff position descriptions, engagement strategies with partnering employers and school districts, and a series of standardized legal tools for youth.

Phase One Strategic Actions

In addition to creating the strategic plan and the Outcomes Report, the Delaware state team accomplished the following action items to advance the state’s career pathways system:

- The team secured more than \$1.2 million in private support from employer partners and philanthropic organizations to support youth;
- Delaware Technical Community College, in partnership with the Department of Education, developed a template for sharing labor market information that will eventually become an online dashboard; and

Looking Ahead

The Delaware state team will build on the work accomplished during Phase One to achieve, improve and expand career pathways and work-based learning experiences. The detailed

milestones of the strategic plan will inform work routines, and the state leadership will track progress against the metrics in the Outcomes Report. Besides serving as a public accountability mechanism, the Outcomes Report will also inform the team on its progress

and prompt conversations about adjustments and course corrections that might need to be made. As the team continues implementation, these regular progress monitoring meetings will inform necessary changes to the plan.

