

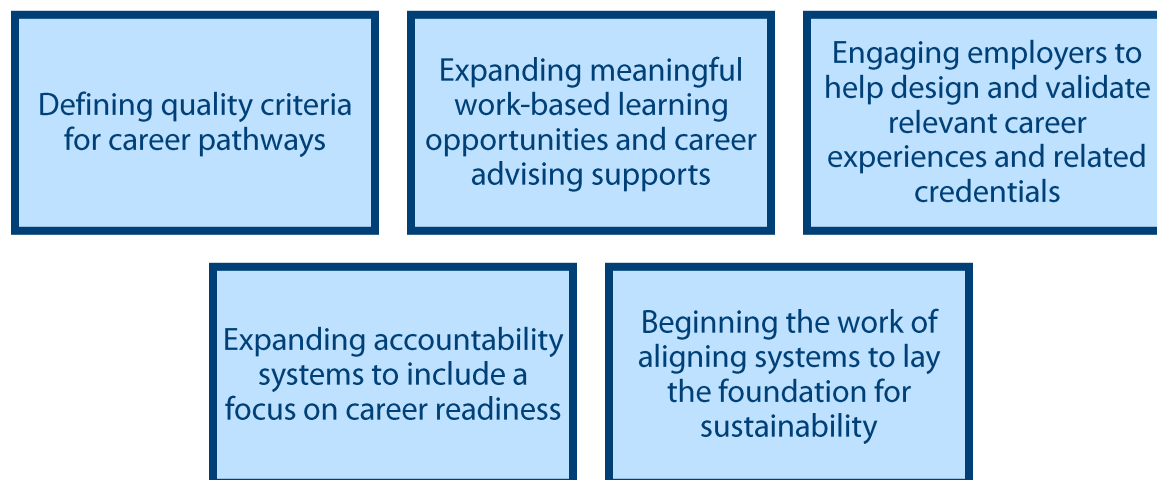


Executive Summary

State and national leaders are increasingly recognizing the need for high-quality career pathways to close critical skills gaps, strengthen state and regional economies, and provide every learner with an on-ramp to career success. To help states enact these transformations, JPMorgan Chase & Co. launched the New Skills for Youth (NSFY) initiative in 2016 in partnership with Advance CTE, the Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Strategy Group.

After an initial self-assessment and planning period, 10 states were selected to receive \$2 million each to execute three-year plans to transform their career readiness systems. While all of the selected states began the initiative at different places, all states made notable progress by the end of 2017 in designing, enhancing and scaling high-quality career pathways. This series of state snapshots describes how states are working to transform career pathways for all learners and documents the work states completed in the first year of NSFY Phase Two, which ran from January to December 2017. The executive summary describes common approaches states took to transform their career readiness systems during this period.

NSFY states focused on the following strategies in 2017:



Defining Quality Criteria for Career Pathways

Coming into the initiative, participating states had varying standards and expectations for the quality and rigor of career pathways, highlighting the need for systemic, statewide solutions to improve program quality. Some of the most pressing issues states faced included:

- Examining labor market data to identify priority industries;
- Inventorying all career pathways offered across the state;

- Ensuring that career pathways would offer meaningful experiences — such as rigorous coursework and work-based learning — on the way to a career; and
- Phasing out legacy programs that were not aligned with high-wage, high-demand opportunities.

The states all started from different places in the design and implementation of new systems. Some, such as Tennessee and Louisiana, had already undergone a rigorous revision process before the initiative started and were more focused on implementation and bringing programs to scale. However, all states made notable progress in the first year of the initiative.

States worked to define and secure buy-in for quality criteria for career pathways. In [Massachusetts](#), for example, a cross-sector committee representing the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, educational institutions, the governor’s office and other bodies jointly developed criteria for high-quality college and career pathways (HQCCP) and outlined the core components for two types of programs: early college pathways and innovation pathways. Under the criteria, HQCCP must:

- Provide equitable access;
- Be structured around guided academic pathways;
- Incorporate enhanced student supports;
- Expose students to different career options; and
- Be supported by partnerships between at least one institution of higher education, a secondary district or school and employer partners.

To encourage the adoption and execution of the quality criteria, Massachusetts has established a process to review, designate and support individual career pathways programs and plans to announce designated HQCCP sites in spring 2018.

Expanding Meaningful Work-Based Learning Opportunities and Career Advising Supports

Many states identified work-based learning and career advisement as core components of a high-quality career pathway, encouraging — and in some cases requiring — local leaders to fold them into their program design. Some NSFY states even went a step further, actively working to expand work-based learning and career guidance by passing new policies, developing guidelines, providing professional development opportunities to school leaders and counselors, and building out banks of resources and supports to engage more students in career pathways.

[Wisconsin](#) and [Oklahoma](#) implemented new academic and career planning policies. The Academic and Career Planning (ACP) process, which Wisconsin passed into law in 2013, is structured around individual student learning plans and requires all Wisconsin schools to provide robust career and academic advising to students in grades six through 12. The 2017-18 school year is the first full year of implementation, and while ACP was passed before the NSFY initiative began, state leaders in Wisconsin are working to embed ACP within regional career pathways design, train school counselors about career pathways opportunities in their area, and connect learners with work-based learning opportunities through the state’s InSPIRE portal.

In Oklahoma, the Legislature passed H.B. 2155 into law in 2017, calling for a statewide system of Individual Career and Academic Plans. The program is currently being piloted in 60 schools across 28 districts and is scheduled to be scaled statewide in the 2019-20 school year.

Much of [Ohio](#)'s focus has been on expanding work-based learning opportunities and ensuring that interested students are connected with meaningful opportunities to gain real-world experiences associated with their program of study. In 2017, the Ohio Department of Education released guidance to help local school boards grant academic credit for work-based learning, as directed by the state Legislature earlier in the year. The Department also developed a robust work-based learning toolkit with resources, guidance and tools to help community partners, schools and educators connect learners with meaningful work-based learning opportunities. [Rhode Island](#) used the business community by engaging state business leaders to define and develop learning standards for work-based learning that could be implemented at the high school level.

Engaging Employers to Help Design and Validate Relevant Career Experiences and Related Credentials

A key tenet of NSFY work is ensuring that processes and career pathways are demand driven and employer led. In 2017, NSFY states focused on establishing new relationships with business leaders, building processes to integrate employer voice into program design, and empowering industry leaders to play an active role in systems transformation.

In [Louisiana](#), state leaders leveraged existing employer networks, which were established through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), to reach regional industry leaders. Through NSFY, the state began to establish education subcommittees on regional workforce development boards to maximize these networks and ensure that the design and goals for Jump Start, Louisiana's statewide model for career pathways, are aligned with industry needs. Subcommittees are responsible for setting goals for credential attainment, program completion and student success in their regions.

[Ohio](#) received nearly a dozen industry endorsements for the new OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal, a diploma endorsement that recognizes students who demonstrate certain employability skills. In [Rhode Island](#), state leaders convened a statewide committee of industry leaders to validate new Career Technical Education (CTE) and work-based learning standards, ensuring that they align with the knowledge and skills learners would need in the workforce.

Expanding Accountability Systems to Include a Focus on Career Readiness

State planning and stakeholder engagement around the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provided opportunities for NSFY states to enhance accountability for career readiness in high schools. Overall, ESSA was a critical leverage point for states. All told, seven NSFY states identified measures of career readiness in their federal accountability systems.¹

This includes [Oklahoma](#), which updated its state accountability system in 2017 to value career readiness achievements in school and district report cards. Under the new system, the state has adopted a postsecondary opportunities indicator. This indicator awards points based on student completion of Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) or dual enrollment courses and has been expanded to include work-based learning and other programs leading to industry certification.

Separately, [Kentucky](#) has taken steps to leverage data to support career readiness initiatives. Through NSFY, the Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics has drawn on workforce and education data to identify credentials of value; map access opportunities for students across the commonwealth; and determine whether career pathways offerings are aligned to high-wage, high-demand occupations.

Beginning the Work of Aligning Systems to Lay the Foundation for Sustainability

The NSFY work is woven into the priorities of each state. Ongoing efforts around WIOA implementation, ESSA planning and career pathways transformation provided a ripe environment for the work to take hold. States are restructuring the way career pathways are delivered and laying the foundation for long-term sustainability, which means integrating new strategies and policies within broader statewide initiatives.

In [Tennessee](#), state leaders are working to integrate NSFY efforts into Governor Bill Haslam's Drive to 55 initiative, which includes a number of efforts to grow the state economy by helping Tennesseans gain postsecondary credentials. The Tennessee NSFY team hopes that, by aligning their career pathways work with the Drive to 55 vision, they will be able to leverage other opportunities, such as the Tennessee Promise tuition-free community college program, to ensure that all of their initiatives are mutually reinforcing and work toward a common goal of learner success.

The [Nevada](#) NSFY state team leveraged a ripe political environment under Governor Brian Sandoval to build momentum for high-quality career pathways. In 2016, Governor Sandoval established the Office of Workforce Innovation to lead strategic workforce planning statewide. The office was formally codified into law by the Legislature in 2017 and helped lay the foundation for scaling high-quality career pathways by identifying priority industries, brokering relationships with industry leaders and connecting key stakeholders.

This was a common approach for many other NSFY states as well. [Rhode Island](#) aligned all NSFY activity with Governor Gina Raimondo's PrepareRI initiative. [Ohio](#) developed the SuccessBound brand that undergirds all of the myriad components of the state's career pathways efforts. [Delaware](#) leveraged NSFY to strengthen Delaware Pathways, a statewide initiative to enhance and expand high-quality career pathways.

Looking Ahead

While much of the work in 2017 was focused on adopting new policies, generating buy-in and laying the foundation for systems transformation, the year ahead will put that work to the test. The NSFY states set ambitious goals for 2018 to expand high-quality career pathways and bolster the number of students enrolled in them. Across the cohort, common priorities for 2018 include aligning career pathways with newly designed quality criteria, scaling career advising and work-based learning, and further integrating NSFY strategies within statewide workforce development and career readiness activities. Ultimately, states hope to see this work lead to lasting systems transformation that results in improvements in student outcomes.

Seven out of 10 NSFY states have gubernatorial elections in 2018, including four states with a retiring or term-limited governor. Securing commitments from gubernatorial contenders before November

will be a priority for NSFY states in the year ahead. Many states are already laying the foundation for sustainability by proactively engaging candidates on both sides of the aisle, codifying new policies and protocols, and securing partnerships with key stakeholders.

New Skills for Youth 2017 State Snapshot Index

Focus area	Covered in state snapshot	
Access and Equity	Delaware	
Career Advising	Massachusetts Oklahoma	Rhode Island Wisconsin
Communications	Nevada Ohio	Oklahoma
Data and Accountability	Kentucky Oklahoma	Tennessee
Dual Credit	Ohio	
Employer Engagement	Louisiana Ohio	Rhode Island Wisconsin
Graduation Requirements	Nevada Ohio	
Instructor and Leader Quality	Kentucky Louisiana	Oklahoma
Program Quality	Kentucky Massachusetts Ohio	Rhode Island Tennessee Wisconsin
Systems Alignment	Nevada Rhode Island	Tennessee
Work-Based Learning	Delaware Ohio	Rhode Island

¹ <https://careertech.org/resource/mapping-career-readiness-essa-full>