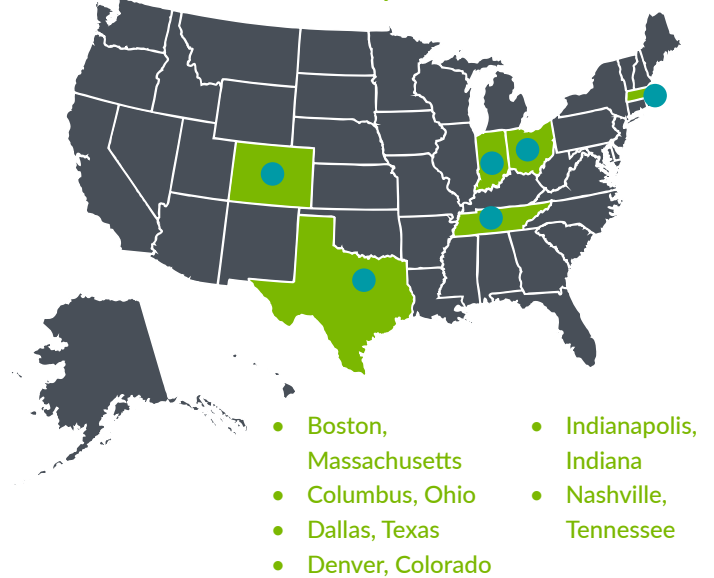


Annual Report: 2021–22

To support and accelerate career pathways, JPMorgan Chase & Co. partnered with Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group to launch the *New Skills ready network* in 2020. The five-year initiative, part of JPMorgan Chase's \$350 million global New Skills at Work program, aims to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways. The six *New Skills ready network* sites are: Boston, Massachusetts; Columbus, Ohio; Dallas, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Nashville, Tennessee. This annual report seeks to identify common trends across each of the sites, including implementation steps built on progress from year one, planning and action through year two, and common lessons learned. Common priorities for work in year three are also discussed. For more specific information about each site's progress, see year two's [site snapshots](#).

In year one, many sites began critical discussions surrounding core elements of high-quality career pathways, aligning and identifying program areas they would like to focus on in the upcoming years. **Dallas, Texas**, focused on aligning labor market information to determine what analysis tool and data sources would be most appropriate for making data-informed decisions. Other sites — including **Columbus, Ohio**, and **Indianapolis, Indiana** — identified specific career pathways such as information technology or manufacturing to pilot analysis and transformation efforts that will be expanded in future years. Some sites such as **Denver, Colorado**, and **Boston, Massachusetts**, worked to develop shared definitions for work-based learning, which allowed for expanded conversations around credit for prior learning and awarding postsecondary credit for work-based learning efforts. Finally, many sites began the intentional integration of equity efforts in year one, aligning definitions of equity-oriented terms and conducting professional development to ensure a focus on closing equity gaps. The **Nashville, Tennessee**, leadership team trained almost 400 participants, including staff, administration and community

New Skills ready network sites



members, to build a shared foundational knowledge around systemic inequities in career pathways systems.

Moving into year two, each site built on foundations laid in year one. While the initiative's four cross-site priority areas (see page 2) remained key to the success of the teams, each site tailored how it implemented those priorities to meet the needs of its specific community. Year one featured the teams making broad decisions affecting the entire project team and steering the direction of their city's progress for the future of the initiative. Year two saw more intentional action through smaller working groups, as objectives and goals became more targeted. **Columbus, Ohio**, for example, formalized six working groups to drive progress in these content areas by bringing together experts from each partner most connected to that type of work. Teams also began focusing on and narrowing their initial scope, refining efforts from an overarching program area to a more specific career pathway that could serve as a proof point of success for the remainder of their career pathways.

NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK PRIORITY AREAS



Key Priorities

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

Partners

 SECONDARY K-12 DISTRICT	 STATE CTE DIRECTOR OR LIAISON
 POSTSECONDARY 2-YEAR	 STATE K-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION AGENCIES
 POSTSECONDARY 4-YEAR	 STATE WORKFORCE AGENCY
 POSTSECONDARY TECHNICAL COLLEGE	 LOCAL FOUNDATION PHILANTHROPY
 LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY CHAMBER, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	 LOCAL CITY GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

JPMorgan Chase & Co. and the national project team identified four priority areas through which the six sites conduct most of their planning and implementation:

Strengthening the alignment and rigor of career pathways:

New Skills ready network sites use policy and funding levers to improve the quality and rigor of career pathways and make those career pathways widely available to and accessed by all learners, especially in under-served populations.

Designing, implementing and scaling real-world work experiences:

Sites embed meaningful work-based learning opportunities within career pathways while also removing barriers to participation and success for learners. Sustained collaboration among educators, learners and employers helps fuel economic growth and set learners on the right path to long-term success in employment.

Building seamless transitions to support postsecondary success:

Sites establish partnerships and agreements among high schools, postsecondary institutions, employers and intermediary organizations to increase learner attainment of degrees and credentials aligned with high-wage, high-skill, in-demand careers. They work toward this goal through aligned advising, recruitment efforts and additional supports.

Closing equity gaps: Sites are able to understand where gaps in access, enrollment, persistence and completion occur in available career pathways by population group. Using that foundational knowledge, sites work to remove barriers to meaningful career opportunities for historically disadvantaged populations by aligning equitable policy and practice to scale proven career pathways programs that ensure equity and access.



ACTION AREAS

Throughout year two, common themes emerged as action areas for the six sites:

1. Mapping and analyzing the quality and alignment of career pathways;
2. Aligning systems of career advising;
3. Increasing learner access to work-based learning opportunities; and
4. Intentionally embedding equity throughout all initiatives.

ACTION AREA 1

Mapping and analyzing the quality and alignment of career pathways

Each academic partner entered the *New Skills ready network* with a pre-existing set of criteria that guided its career pathway/program quality review and evaluation. To streamline the process, sites engaged multiple stakeholders (learners, teachers, administrators, etc.) to provide feedback on which elements should be included in the process of evaluating high-quality career pathways. Sites incorporated the feedback and worked to develop rubrics and criteria that would allow for systematic processes of evaluating all career pathways aligned from secondary through postsecondary.



The **Indianapolis, Indiana**, project team finished the project they started in year one to map and analyze specific career pathways. Each of the career pathways was evaluated against a criteria review tool, which connected the career pathways across educational institutions and looked at various components of each career pathway, including access for non-traditional populations, credential attainment, course sequencing and connection to labor market information. As a result of this process, Indianapolis Public Schools consolidated or sunset career pathways, reducing the number of career pathways offered from 42 to 33, including 25 Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways. Each of these career pathways is aligned with the state's Next Level Programs of Study (NLPS), statewide

course sequences that aim to improve the consistency, quality and intentionality of CTE instruction throughout Indiana. Connection with the state through the *New Skills ready network* minimized duplication of effort around career pathway review as career pathways were evaluated with NLPS in mind from the outset.



Similarly, the **Boston, Massachusetts**, leadership team leaned heavily on progress from year one to develop career pathways in the four focus high schools participating in the *New Skills ready network* initiative. Across educational partners, teams worked to expand the collaborative development of career pathways that directly support learners with resources that facilitate success in each career pathway. The team thought critically about access, including evaluating policies to ensure that they meet the needs of learners and reviewing career pathways development through the lens of the local context, which helps to build equity, cultural wealth and representation for learners as they navigate career pathways. The Boston, Massachusetts, leadership team led partners through collaborative conversations that fostered meaningful connections to inform the development process and guide critical alignment on workforce development to plan for career pathways work in year three.

ACTION AREA 2

Aligning systems of career advising

Career advising became a common priority for sites as they looked to align systems of secondary and postsecondary education and provide more intentional learner supports. To ensure seamless advising systems, sites needed to understand the barriers for learners and how to overcome those barriers. Sites developed shared language and practices in streamlining systems of advising. They also built capacity within their systems through individualized

career plans, career coaches and strengthening alignment across local education agencies and institutions of higher education.



The **Nashville, Tennessee**, team sought to make aligned career advising from middle school to postsecondary a central focus. The team's overarching goal is to increase learner access to postsecondary opportunities

through individualized approaches built upon a college and career advising framework, which was developed in year one. This framework was implemented by embedding a college and career readiness coach in each of the four schools Nashville selected as pilots for the initiative. The purpose of this coach is to collaborate with school administrators and counselors to help learners access and succeed in high-quality career pathways beyond high school graduation. While the eventual goal is to have coaches advise all learners in 9th through 12th grade, the coaches focused specifically this year on providing personalized advising for seniors. The Nashville, Tennessee, team is also working to expand their college and career advising framework to the middle grades to assist in planning an educational trajectory through high school graduation and into postsecondary success. The goal of expanding advising to middle school is to prepare learners to have these types of conversations with their future coach and build buy-in at a younger age.

• The **Denver, Colorado**, team also focused on career advising by launching a pilot for the Denver Public Schools (DPS) Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP), which is shared with the two- and four-year postsecondary institutions to more deeply align advising for learners who might transfer. The ICAP serves as a roadmap to help articulate the path to college or career opportunities and includes progress toward graduation, career exploration opportunities and learning about financial aid and financial literacy. The ICAP is completed with a learner's family, counselors and teachers and is now required for all DPS learners. As part of the pilot to further

include postsecondary institutions, Denver partners also articulated data sharing agreements across institutions to better facilitate credit transfer, aiding in seamless transition across institutions.



The **Dallas, Texas**, team began work to bring consistent advising efforts to the middle grades, as landscape scans conducted in year one revealed a lack of alignment across schools in the Dallas Independent School District (ISD). Dallas ISD decided last year to bring CTE and Career Institutes into the same division as Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH), early college high schools and other college- and career-ready initiatives, in part due to the support of and discussions driven by the *New Skills ready network*. Because Dallas students have a wide array of secondary options, learners must be able to make informed decisions about their high school of choice that are aligned with their interests and post-high school plans. Dallas ISD invested in a new curriculum, piloted by eight middle schools in spring 2022, that focuses on career exploration. Both the restructuring and resulting course will help students map their interests to career pathways, which then connect to various school options. This is allowing the district to better communicate about the array of options and embed the career various pathways into students' broader career exploration efforts. This work is still in the early stages, and much will be learned from the pilot to inform the full roll-out in the 2022-23 school year. Dallas ISD is focusing on how to ensure consistent implementation of the curriculum and how to support truly comprehensive K-12 career counseling.



Increasing learner access to work-based learning opportunities

Year two allowed sites to expand their work into the field of work-based learning. This effort meant creating common definitions around work-based learning not only within the educational institutions but also across industry. Sites were also able to expand the delivery methods for work-based learning, creating opportunities for learners to take part in apprenticeships and virtual internships.



The **Boston, Massachusetts**, team focused on increasing a shared understanding of and access to work-based learning. Across the project team meetings, participants committed to developing a vision for work-based learning to encompass the range of opportunities and inform the design, implementation and scaling of real-world work experiences for learners in career pathways. In collaboration with the Boston Private Industry Council and the Workforce Investment Board, Boston Public Schools homed in on industries of focus that specifically benefit from work-based learning. Postsecondary partners are strengthening data collection efforts about work-based learning to better understand how learners are accessing and using work-based learning. This mapping will help

these institutions further align with Boston Public Schools through the shared framework.



Nashville, Tennessee is also investing in and committing to growth in work-based learning through collaborative strategy among partners, focusing specifically on ensuring equitable access to meaningful work-based learning opportunities at all levels. Both Nashville State Community College and Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) indicated this commitment through intentional action around work-based learning. Nashville State, for example, hired a work-based learning coordinator to help drive connections among educators and employers and foster growth in this area for learners. MTSU is examining practices for earning credit for prior learning through work-based learning, distinct from its successful internship programs that allow learners to gain academic credit through real-world work experiences. At the secondary level, Metro Nashville Public Schools launched a youth apprenticeship program; more than 70 learners are participating in paid work-based learning experiences in information technology, health care and marketing.

HOW ARE SITE TEAMS ENGAGING SECONDARY PARTNERS?

While leadership teams are engaging secondary partners through each component of the New Skills ready network, following are some examples of how each site is implementing practice at the secondary level.

- Boston, Massachusetts** — In Boston Public Schools (BPS), the *New Skills ready network* team facilitated more collaboration and co-development of career pathways to directly support learners with resources that are helpful to their success in those career pathways. As part of the career pathways planning process, secondary schools, BPS, the Boston Private Industry Council, employers and postsecondary institutions developed a partnership to offer career pathways program components.
- Columbus, Ohio** — Columbus City Schools participated in the evaluation and selection of pilot career pathways programs, which will test the work of the network before expansion to the remainder of the career pathways. The leadership team also leveraged secondary learners as key stakeholders in their CTE messaging focus groups.
- Dallas, Texas** — The Dallas Independent School District selected eight schools to pilot a new middle school curriculum that focuses on career advising and exploration, allowing learners to have more information about potential long-term secondary options.
- Denver, Colorado** — Denver, Colorado, partners collaborated to expand data sharing between Denver Public Schools and postsecondary partners. This expanded data sharing allows all of Denver's network to leverage the Individual Career and Academic Plan outcomes data in decision-making across institutions.
- Indianapolis, Indiana** — Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) was instrumental in the review and mapping of each career pathway city-wide, including updating each one for alignment with the state's Next Level Programs of Study. Multiple connected initiatives recruit IPS students for participation in expanded work-based learning efforts.
- Nashville, Tennessee** — The four high schools involved in the Nashville, Tennessee, site are each represented on the leadership team. These schools piloted the involvement of college and career readiness coaches on behalf of the network. By 2025, the goal is to have at least one college and career readiness coach in each school within Metro Nashville Public Schools.



Intentionally embedding equity throughout all initiatives

In year one, many sites began processes to identify equity gaps across career pathways within their institutions. In year two, sites recognized that focusing on equity in a silo segments equity from intentional career pathways transformation work, access to work-based learning and aligned career advising. As a result, sites began to intentionally embed equity and access as key components across workstreams.

During year one, the **Nashville, Tennessee**, project team focused heavily on equity, arriving at shared agreements on equity terms and offering equity-oriented trainings for staff. As a result of this process, the Nashville, Tennessee, team pushed to deepen the work through the entire partner network at a systems level in year two. The project team took a holistic approach to incorporating equity through a systems-level change strategy, facilitated through “systemness training.” This training, based upon the Civic Lab’s Stakeholder Engagement Process, establishes a system-level framework, focused on level setting across partner organizations to evaluate their systems. This training allows the team to take a closer look at learner outcomes and impact.

The **Indianapolis, Indiana**, team also incorporated equity by helping the state to pilot equity labs as a portion of the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) process. The CLNA is a key component of the federal Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) and is designed to better direct resources toward CTE pathways that lead to high-skill, high-wage and in-demand occupations and activities that address equity and opportunity gaps. The purpose of these labs is to support districts and colleges in ensuring that students have meaningful access to, are engaged in and are completing high-quality CTE programs using data-driven analysis and in articulating a commitment to advancing equity. Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) piloted the equity labs as a preliminary part of the statewide roll-out, taking on a comprehensive equity evaluation process, which was then incorporated into the work the district is doing more holistically. Postsecondary partners were also involved in these discussions as stakeholders invested in the success of IPS learners.



New Skills ready network Year Two Snapshot Index

All sites involved in the *New Skills ready network* built on the progress from year one while also conducting deeper work to transform career pathways in selected priority areas that aligned with the needs of each community.

Individual snapshots are available in the [Learning that Works Resource Center](#):

- [Boston, Massachusetts](#)
- [Columbus, Ohio](#)
- [Dallas, Texas](#)
- [Denver, Colorado](#)
- [Indianapolis, Indiana](#)
- [Nashville, Tennessee](#)

LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH YEAR TWO

While the focus on these priorities drove much of the work across the six sites and their corresponding partner networks, lessons learned from year one and through year two also affected site progress. In year one, sites built collaborative partnerships that allowed them to overcome significant challenges in year two. The following represent specific lessons learned that affected workstreams across sites.

Ensure that work is collaborative but also is conducted by the appropriate partner

In the first year, one organization could easily shoulder the weight of the initiative. As the initiative moves forward, leadership teams have understood that dividing the work among all of the partners is important to ensure that goals and objectives are being met. The division of labor allows partners to understand their contribution to the work and how it will affect their organization at a systems level. Each of the sites has working groups (although they are broken down differently depending on site) to ensure this level of collaboration and work distribution. **Dallas, Texas**, reduced redundancies by bringing the *New Skills ready network* initiative under the Dallas Thrives umbrella and standing up a steering committee to support its integration. Dallas Thrives and the steering committee will bring together and support the alignment of eight major systems in Dallas, which collectively serve 80 percent of Dallas learners and youth. This new steering committee is enabling a more focused approach to aligning metrics, data, resources and priorities focused squarely on education and workforce development.

Effectively communicate the return on investment for all stakeholders

Communicating the return on investment for stakeholders helps solidify the commitment of all organizations to move forward on the initiative. Leadership team members have to understand how the work of the *New Skills ready network* affects both their daily work and the work of their organization. Sites are learning how to communicate the work of the collaborative to connect to area employers and recruit learners to new and improved career pathways. The process of “telling the story” and sharing regular updates allows leadership teams to ensure longitudinal sustainability and consistency across years through changes in connected initiatives, state policy and institutional staff.



Include learner and family voice in the development of career pathways

The individuals who will be most affected by the work should also have a voice in the development of the career pathways. Sites were simultaneously challenged and encouraged by the opportunity to engage both community organizations and learner voices in the creation of their next steps toward high-quality career pathways. **Columbus, Ohio's** project team, for example, focused very heavily on the inclusion of learner and family voice in year two, hiring an external consultant to facilitate focus groups with hundreds of learners and their families. In year three, the Columbus, Ohio, team will be developing a communications plan to ensure that messaging around career pathways and postsecondary success is inclusive of the needs of learners in their community.

Work to create and implement consistent definitions across the career continuum

Consistent language ensures more equitable opportunities for all stakeholders, who are often required to navigate a variety of disparate education terms in an effort to access high-quality career pathways. As site teams evaluate career pathways, realign work-based learning efforts and recruit additional stakeholders, communication about the work should be clear, aligned and consistent. Site leads should consider developing definitions in all pillars of the work to ensure that all stakeholders are using similar language when speaking about the work of career pathways. **Denver, Colorado,** focused on engaging employers to better understand experience, skill and education requirements and how those requirements align with work-based learning strategies. The team uses Colorado's Work-based Learning Continuum as a common framework for partner institutions, providing structure for the alignment of work-based learning to industry certification and stackable credentials while standardizing practices across partners. The use of this consistent framework helps the team prioritize equity by facilitating access to these opportunities for learners of all backgrounds.

LOOKING AHEAD

As sites enter year three of this five-year initiative, each is focusing on leveraging its foundational commitments and major accomplishments of the first two years to drive real impact. The sites are continuing to build capacity within each of their partner organizations through collaborative working groups and ongoing leadership meetings to ensure that this initiative is sustained for years to come. At the same time, the *New Skills ready network* sites are focused on building institutional capacity by advancing pilots, implementing career pathways in schools and supporting key school-based positions such as work-based learning coordinators and career coaches. Critically, the sites are expanding their focus on stakeholder engagement, particularly among learners, families and industry, to better connect career pathways and work-based learning opportunities and remove barriers. Each site is eager to continue this work in year three, strengthening high-quality, equitable and aligned career pathways for all learners.

