



Columbus, Ohio

Columbus, Ohio, is one of the six sites selected to participate in the *New Skills ready network*. This five-year initiative, launched by JPMorgan Chase & Co. in 2020, aims to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways.

In the first year of this initiative, the Columbus, Ohio, *New Skills ready network* team focused on building both the internal capacity of each partner organization and the capacity of the new leadership team developed to support this work. The team identified two sector areas (information technology [IT] and health care) and started a mapping process to better understand a learner's journey across partner institutions through career pathways in these sectors.

In 2021-22, the Columbus, Ohio, *New Skills ready network* team focused on a number of important tasks, including finalizing the evaluation of career pathways across institutions and conducting learner focus groups. The team

developed a series of equity lens questions to ask when following through with action steps to ensure that equity components were embedded within each aspect of the team's workstreams. They also convened data experts from each of the partners to discuss data sharing and alignment, laying the foundation for data sharing agreements between institutions, and built out an employer relation inventory to understand how and where partners were connecting with employers around selected program areas.

In 2021-22, the Columbus, Ohio, *New Skills ready network* team focused on:



Building and aligning cross-sector structures;



Mapping and selecting identified equitable career pathways; and



Strengthening communication with learners and families.

THE NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK



NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK SITES:

- Boston, Massachusetts
- Columbus, Ohio
- Dallas, Texas
- Denver, Colorado
- Indianapolis, Indiana
- Nashville, Tennessee

New Skills ready network, launched by JPMorgan Chase & Co. in 2020, bolsters the firm's efforts to support an inclusive economic recovery, as part of both their \$350 million, five-year New Skills at Work initiative to prepare people for the future of work and their new \$30 billion commitment to advance racial equity. Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group are working with sites to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways in six US communities.

The six *New Skills ready network* sites are: Boston, Massachusetts; Columbus, Ohio; Dallas, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Nashville, Tennessee. These sites are formulating new partnerships between local school systems, higher education, employers, and government entities to develop pathways and policy recommendations that give underserved students

access to higher education and real-world work experiences that lead to high-wage, in-demand jobs.

These snapshots provide an overview of sites' accomplishments in the second year of the *New Skills ready network* initiative, including the development of priority objectives and action steps toward those objectives. Through the *New Skills ready network* initiative JPMorgan Chase is looking to advance the following priority areas to prepare students for good careers and economic mobility:

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

Partners engaged on the leadership team

- Ohio Excels (site lead)
- Columbus City Schools
- Columbus State Community College
- Ohio Department of Education
- Ohio Department of Higher Education
- The Ohio State University

VISION FOR SUCCESS

Columbus, Ohio

Columbus' goal throughout this project is the following:

All students in Columbus City Schools, Columbus State Community College, and The Ohio State University have the academic, technical, and professional skills they need to succeed, and that Columbus businesses have the workforce they need to prosper. Columbus students across the K12 and postsecondary spectrum are engaged in high-quality career pathways that fuel their aspirations, prepare them for success, and are supported through their transitions into high-wage, high-skill, in-demand careers in the Columbus region.

This goal will be met through developing a central Ohio career pathways system with cohesive partnerships that can strategically utilize resources and data to provide opportunities for learners at all levels, particularly those learners who are under-represented in higher education and workforce.

To be successful in this goal, all partners strive to align high-quality career pathways across the network to support learners through transitions in their academic and career journeys. The project team plans to align the strategic goals of partner institutions and create processes that allow for regular tracking and analysis of updated information.

PRIORITY 1



Building and aligning cross-sector structures

In year one, the Columbus, Ohio, project team worked to build internal capacity through establishing internal project teams that would prioritize the *New Skills ready network* initiative and building relationships across partner institutions. In year two, the team built upon this relational foundation to allow work to be prioritized at each partner and better aligned to other Columbus initiatives. Though transitions in positions connected to the initiative often shifted responsibility to new people, each institution now has a dedicated project manager, which increases each partner's capacity to work on the initiative. Other team members from each partner participate in one of the six workgroups based on their area of expertise. The project team refined the workgroups from year one; the six workgroups are Equitable Pathways; Communications; Data; Work-Based Learning; Counseling, Advising and Student Engagement; and the Workforce Advisory Council. Each of these workgroups convenes the appropriate expert from each partner to drive strategic project work for other identified priorities and tasks. State-level leaders are included in these conversations to facilitate statewide impact and resource sharing.

The connections drawn from this collaboration also allow the overall initiative to support and build upon new and existing initiatives that align with the *New Skills ready network*. Announced in late 2021, the [Columbus Promise](#) is a city-wide pilot initiative across multiple partners including the City of Columbus and Columbus State Community College (CSCC) to cover full tuition for Columbus City Schools graduates for the next three years. The program is available to all graduates, including undocumented learners, and provides them with a coach who advises them on their postsecondary success. The program aligns *New Skills ready network* partners and is connected to the career pathways affected by this initiative, providing further access to postsecondary pathways for all learners. Another initiative aligned with the goals of the *New Skills ready network* is [STEAMM Rising](#), which brings together K-12 educators and learners in science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics and medicine to develop talent in these workforce and educational areas. The program connects the three Columbus, Ohio, educational partners and aligns with many of the priorities of the initiative.



Mapping and selecting identified equitable career pathways



In year one, the project team selected the IT and health care program areas to map across all three educational institutions to understand how well transitions were working and where learners encountered gaps or barriers. In year two, the project team (in particular, the Equitable Pathways workgroup) completed this mapping and evaluation process. The team also came to an agreement about key terms and definitions, such as *programs of study*, *pathway* and *program area*, across institutions to help connect work among partners. Using a criteria review tool, the team evaluated all individual career pathways within IT and health care and visually mapped out where there were gaps and where objectives were not being met. For example, the workgroup reviewed eight Columbus City Schools programs, seven CSCC programs and seven Ohio State University programs against health care career pathway criteria to help identify strengths and opportunities for growth and improvement. The criteria review tool looked at curricular alignment, work-based learning opportunities, connection to labor market need and connection to an industry-recognized credential, among other criteria. The results of the assessment were visualized in Tableau to assist in the analysis.

As a result of this mapping process, the team chose to focus on two career pathways in IT and three in health care because they were the career pathways that would most benefit from holistic alignment across institutions. Using these five career pathways, the team then developed a clear vision stating that each career pathway would have a fully aligned and seamless connection across all three institutions, complete with on and off ramps, work-based learning opportunities, integrated advising initiatives and other goals. Each institution is developing an enhancement plan that will outline how it will drive progress toward this vision for each of the five selected career pathways.

In year three, the project team will work to improve these five career pathways through design workshop meetings with all stakeholders, including faculty and administrators, with the goal of increasing student enrollment in the next school year. The team will also be cross-walking high school graduation and postsecondary entry requirements as well as access barriers across institutions. One identified priority is a focus on math prerequisites, which often limit a learner's ability to access certain career pathways. The team aims to align requirements to ensure that they are completed before a learner progresses to the next postsecondary stage in their career pathway.



Strengthening communication with learners and families



In year one, the project team convened a Communications workgroup, with a focus on improving learner-centered communication to increase enrollment in career pathways. The workgroup selected and onboarded local communications firm Warhol and Wall Street. In year two, in collaboration with Warhol and Wall Street, the Columbus, Ohio, project team recruited dozens of learners, primarily from Columbus City Schools, to participate in polling, focus groups and co-design sessions. This strategy was designed to create communications “not for, but with the end user” to ensure that materials meet both learners’ and families’ needs in how they digest and receive information. While reaching families was an initial challenge, the team was able to recruit more than 100 family members through direct outreach efforts. Other stakeholders such as principals, guidance counselors and career advisers were included in the feedback collection process as well.

As a result of this stakeholder engagement, the Communications workgroup gleaned key insights that will inform future work. Learners shared that they get most information about potential career opportunities from their immediate networks – primarily close family and friends. This situation leads to less awareness about high-wage, in-demand careers that may be appealing to or valuable for learners; for example, in the health care sector, learners were unaware of other career opportunities beyond becoming a doctor or a nurse. It also leads to a disconnect about on-the-job tasks; for example, focus group participants understood the job in IT to be performing routine administrative functions or procedural business activities, rather than high-skill technical tasks. Focus group participants across groups identified the need for increased exposure to a wider variety of career opportunities regardless of age and for increased racial and gender representation in promotional materials and messaging. As one focus group participant noted, “Children can’t be what they can’t see.”

As a result of these focus groups, the project team will develop a communications plan in year three based on the feedback from each of these stakeholders. While initially focused on recruitment at the secondary level, the communications plan will be applicable to learners at all levels. Eventually, the messaging will be published and rolled out district-wide and in the recruitment materials of each of the postsecondary partner institutions.

Looking Ahead

The progress made in year two, built upon the foundations of year one, now queues up projected work for the year ahead. The Columbus, Ohio, project team has identified three key priorities for year three. First, the team will align curriculum and requirements within the health care and IT sectors and identify areas in which supports such as additional tutoring or remedial coursework are needed. Second, the project team will focus on communicating career pathway options to stakeholders, particularly a shared approach among partners about the on and off ramps for students within a career pathway. This will be the culmination of the communications work to date. Finally, the team will focus on cultivating work-based learning, including increasing access and the quality of opportunities. The project team has built out a glossary of common experiential learning terms across partners, including the state, and is piloting an employer recruitment and information guide.

