

New Skills for Youth Phase One Snapshot: Ohio

Ohio's efforts in Phase One of the New Skills for Youth (NSFY) initiative built upon early work in accountability, career guidance and industry credential attainment to focus on expanding access to quality career pathways for all students in the state. One of the state's most notable accomplishments during this time period was mapping existing programs to identify those students who do not have access to high-quality career pathways. Ohio's reflective approach to mapping and analyzing data led to the launch of the state's SuccessBound brand and campaign, which it plans to use as a strategy to coalesce support for career readiness and raise awareness about opportunities available to students.

Foundations for the Work

In recent years, executive leadership and growing enthusiasm for career readiness have empowered state policymakers in Ohio to undertake a number of efforts to strengthen career preparation systems. Namely, Governor John Kasich's [Executive Workforce Board](#), which includes business and industry representatives, members of the Ohio General Assembly, and state education and workforce development decisionmakers, has not only signaled political support and prioritization of a strong workforce development agenda but also launched new initiatives such as the [OhioMeansJobs](#) career advising website.

In this environment, the state has enacted new policies to strengthen accountability, improve career advising, and increase the number of students earning industry-recognized

credentials. After the state Legislature passed a law in 2012 to reframe the structure of the state's school accountability report card, the Ohio Board of Education developed a plan to integrate career readiness data starting with a [school report card specifically focused on Career Technical Education \(CTE\)](#). This report card grades CTE programs on an A-F scale and includes metrics such as technical skill attainment, placement after graduation and industry credential attainment. Since the CTE report cards were rolled out in 2013, Ohio has recorded a 15-point increase in the percentage of students taking technical skill examinations.

The same piece of legislation updated the statewide accountability system by integrating industry credential attainment into a student's "[Prepared for Success](#)" score, which indicates the degree to which students are graduating from high school prepared for postsecondary

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

education or career. Students earning state-approved credentials are weighted the same as students earning passing grades on college entrance examinations or achieving an honors diploma.

To further prioritize credential attainment at the high school level, in 2014 the Legislature [revised Ohio's graduation requirements](#) and adopted a new credential diploma pathway. The new plan is scheduled to first affect the class of 2018 and will enable students who earn a state-approved credential and achieve a score that demonstrates career readiness on a job skills assessment to earn a diploma. Previously, students could complete a college- and career-ready course of study only by earning a passing grade on five subject examinations.

The same law also required districts to provide career guidance to all students in grades 6-12 by the 2015-16 school year. The primary mechanism by which school-based counselors provide career guidance services is the [Career Connections framework](#), which enables students to develop individualized plans that embed career awareness, exploration and planning into the educational pathway. The framework builds upon tools and resources such as the OhioMeansJobs website.

Work During Phase One

Early in the Phase One planning period, Ohio's cross-sector NSFY project team made the decision to augment its needs assessment with a statewide survey to engage disparate stakeholders and gather input to inform the development of an action plan. The survey had targeted questions for each type of respondent, including business leaders,

teachers, school administrators, school counselors, parents, students, community organization leaders and higher education administrators. The state also invested significant time and effort to ensure that the survey was disseminated as widely as possible. In one example, the Department of Education required all external presentations given by agency staff within a specific window to include a link to the survey. The team also marketed the survey to the general public through online advertisements and extensive communications efforts, ultimately generating more than 12,000 responses.

The survey was supplemented with focus groups, data analysis, and a review of existing state policies, which enabled the project team to approach the action planning system thoughtfully. Filtering responses by stakeholder group brought to light differences in perception among students, parents and educators. For example, the survey revealed that while 71 percent of students expressed interest in career-focused options, only 27 percent of administrators perceived there to be great interest.

Mapping Career Pathways Data to Highlight Access Gaps

The Ohio project team took the opportunity afforded by the Phase One grant to intentionally examine and reflect on data to identify where and which students had limited access to high-quality career pathways. One of the initial challenges the team faced was figuring out how exactly to define access if, for example, a student lives in a district with a high-quality CTE program but is unable to enroll in that program due to prohibitive transportation costs. Ultimately, the team

chose to define access as having a high-quality program within a 10-mile radius. Using this definition, the team mapped out each state-approved career pathway, highlighting the geographic regions with limited access. The resulting map heavily informed the state's planning process in Phase One.

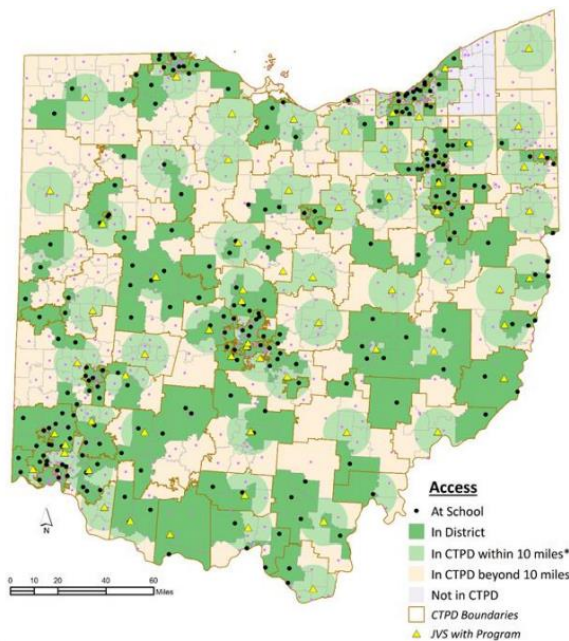


Figure 1: The result of Ohio's career pathways mapping efforts

This intentional approach to examining and reflecting on data extended beyond the project team. In August, the team convened a group of more than 20 stakeholders, including members from the state education agency, the Governor's Office, higher education and the business community, to review early results from the survey and discuss implications for Ohio's career preparation system.

Launching SuccessBound

Another early win for Ohio was the development of the SuccessBound brand. In addition to the perception gaps between students and administrators, Ohio's needs assessment revealed that many students were

unaware of the different career-focused opportunities available to them. To address these knowledge gaps, the Ohio project team immediately began to work on a communications strategy to target students, parents and educators and raise awareness about career preparation opportunities, particularly for underserved students in urban areas where access actually outpaced participation in high-quality career pathways.

During the six-month Phase One grant period, Ohio developed a brand and logo for the campaign. The state aims to use the SuccessBound campaign to drive career readiness efforts moving forward, helping to engage students early in their career trajectories and connect them with valuable career preparation opportunities.

Looking Ahead

The core vision that drives Ohio's three-year action plan is the goal of improving access to high-quality career pathways for all students across the state. To do this, the project team aims to improve communications efforts, strengthen career guidance services, and continue to integrate career readiness indicators into statewide accountability mechanisms.

Starting with a key driver of college and career readiness and building upon the accountability systems currently in place, the Ohio project team discussed with the State Board of Education strengthening career readiness metrics within the state's accountability system under the Every Student Success Act. The team also plans to develop and release a career readiness metrics toolkit that can be used at both the state and local

levels to guide policymakers through the process of analyzing and reflecting on career readiness data.

Ohio also aims to strengthen services to students by empowering local administrators and guidance counselors to integrate academic and technical learning. For example, the state plans to unveil a web-based tool called Standards by Design that school districts can use to design model courses of study. Additionally, the state plans to create a dynamic career pathways tool that will enable students to draw connections among jobs, occupations and education and training opportunities. To foster more education and business partnerships, Ohio plans to repurpose its six regional Tech Prep centers to serve as intermediary organizations tasked with coordinating relationships and opportunities for work-based learning and professional development among K-12, business and industry and higher education.

Further, the state plans to continue the work under way to increase the number of students earning credentials of value — work that has

catalyzed in recent years under the state's revised accountability system and updated graduation requirements. The state is currently

piloting a senior-year credentials program that is designed to reach under-engaged students and help them earn an industry-recognized credential

prior to graduation. Currently, 51 programs are active in Ohio schools. Ohio plans to expand the program to 200 schools by the 2019-20 academic year.

Finally, the project team will roll out the SuccessBound brand to help bridge the gap between students and career opportunities. This work will involve developing and disseminating communications tools and training state support staff to implement these engagement strategies.

Although Ohio will experience a change in state leadership in 2019 due to gubernatorial term limits, Governor Kasich has been thoughtful about creating a transition plan to sustain Ohio's workforce development priorities across administrations.



Goals: SuccessBound Ohio aims to achieve two overarching goals.

- Goal 1: Have all students proceeding and succeeding along paths that lead to meaningful, fulfilling and life-sustaining careers.
- Goal 2: Ensure that Ohio's workforce is responsive to and satisfies current and emerging employer demand in a way that positions the state as a leader in workforce quality and availability.