



NEW SKILLS FOR YOUTH

JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

TENNESSEE

2018 SNAPSHOT

Tennessee is one of the 10 states selected to participate in New Skills for Youth (NSFY), an initiative enhancing state efforts to increase the number of learners across the country who are prepared for success in both college and career. NSFY is a \$75 million national initiative developed by JPMorgan Chase & Co. in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers, Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group.

In the first two years of the initiative, the Tennessee NSFY team scaled a regional approach to developing and refining high-quality career pathways. The Tennessee Department of Education also designed and launched a new college and career readiness indicator in the state's Every Student Succeeds Act accountability system for high schools.

In 2018, the Tennessee NSFY team focused on:

- **Establishing a statewide career pathways certification program:** Under the newly rebranded Tennessee Pathways initiative, Tennessee established standards and criteria for certifying high-quality career pathways.
- **Hiring and training regional career pathways coordinators:** In partnership with the Tennessee Board of Regents, the Tennessee NSFY team hired and trained nine regional coordinators, who act as the main points of contact between education and industry in their regions.
- **Aligning the delivery of regional career pathways across education, workforce development and economic and community development:** The Tennessee NSFY team worked across agencies to designate regions and align goals for career pathways development and delivery.

The Tennessee Context

Tennessee's efforts to transform and expand access to high-quality career pathways are directly connected to former Gov. Bill Haslam's Drive to 55 campaign.¹ The campaign was launched in 2013 with the goal of increasing postsecondary credential attainment by Tennesseans to 55 percent by 2025. Since then, Tennessee's major education and workforce development efforts, including the renowned Tennessee Promise tuition-free college program, have been aligned to this statewide goal.²

In addition to the Drive to 55 initiative, Tennessee has improved standards and accountability for career readiness. The state launched a three-phase overhaul of its Career Technical Education (CTE) standards in 2012, aligning course offerings with the state's K-12 standards and labor market needs. Around the same time, Tennessee also joined the Pathways to Prosperity initiative and launched a

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regional strategy called Pathways TN to push for alignment across K-12, postsecondary and local industry needs. Pathways TN has since rebranded to align with the Drive to 55 campaign.

Establishing a Statewide Career Pathways Certification Program

In 2018 Tennessee took a major step toward ensuring the sustainable delivery of high-quality career pathways by relaunching Pathways TN as Tennessee Pathways. The rebrand was more than just a name change; Tennessee Pathways is now better aligned with Tennessee Promise, the crowning initiative of the Drive to 55 campaign.

While Tennessee Promise removes financial barriers to help learners enroll in college and earn a degree, Tennessee Pathways ensures that learners are prepared with credentials to enter the workforce directly or have already made

progress toward a postsecondary credential by the time they arrive in college. This change signals cohesive alignment with Drive to 55 and secures the initiative as a core component of Tennessee's statewide vision for college and workforce readiness. In addition to clarifying the initiative's place as a component of Drive to 55, this shift has helped improve communication about career pathways goals with parents, students and school administrators.



The Tennessee NSFY team also established a new career pathways certification system in 2018 to better communicate its vision and expand access to high-quality career pathways. While the Tennessee Department of Education maintains and regularly updates CTE course standards and programs of study, the Tennessee Pathways certification program was designed to take a holistic approach to designing and delivering career pathways, emphasizing employer partnerships and early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs) in particular.

All career pathways must include four key components to be recognized as a certified Tennessee Pathways programs:³

- Relevant coursework;
- EPSOs and work-based learning;
- Cross-sector partnerships; and
- Alignment to labor market need.

The certification program directly ties into Tennessee's Ready Graduate indicator, a measurement of student achievement that was adopted in the state accountability system in 2017. Ready Graduate measures student "readiness" for postsecondary education or career based on SAT/ACT scores, completion of EPSOs, and the attainment of industry credentials.

With career pathways certification standards established, Tennessee released a request for applications from schools and districts in January 2019. Applicants were asked to identify alignment between their career pathways and Tennessee Pathways standards and will be assessed based on an evaluation rubric. Evaluations will begin in spring 2019, and the state hopes to certify career pathways in 10-15 schools per region, totaling 100 high schools across the state, by the end of the 2018-19 school year.

Hiring and Training Regional Career Pathways Coordinators

Another accomplishment for the Tennessee NSFY team in 2018 was hiring and training nine regional Tennessee Pathways coordinators to support the planning and delivery of high-quality career pathways within each of the Tennessee Pathways regions. The coordinators serve as the main points of contact for K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions and industry leaders in their regions and are responsible for helping schools and districts apply for and receive Tennessee Pathways career pathways certification.

Governance and management of the Tennessee Pathways regional coordinators is split between the secondary and postsecondary sectors. While the Board of Regents serves as the employer of record for career pathways coordinators, the coordinators are funded, managed and trained through the Tennessee Department of Education. This approach ensures that the Tennessee Pathways initiative can effectively support learners as they transition from secondary to postsecondary education. The coordinators meet once each quarter to share best practices and receive continuing training and education to support their work.

Coordinators also work with the regional directors from the Department of Economic and Community Development (ECD), the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD), regional CTE consultants and local employers to identify priority labor market needs and align career pathways with high-skill, high-wage, in-demand opportunities. Additionally, each career pathways coordinator is charged with identifying and recruiting one flagship employer to serve as a champion for career pathways in the region and help connect learners with work-based learning opportunities.

Aligning the Delivery of Regional Career Pathways Across Education, Workforce Development and Economic and Community Development

While the Drive to 55 goal provided the vision necessary to prioritize and accelerate Tennessee's career pathways efforts, the NSFY team encountered inefficiencies early in the initiative with the way education and workforce training were delivered regionally in the state. At the time, Pathways TN regional intermediaries were funded through disparate grants and programs, making setting consistent goals and expectations across the state challenging. These challenges were exacerbated by fragmentation across workforce and economic development regions. Specifically, LWD had organized the state into 13 regions, which were not aligned with ECD or Pathways TN regions. This fragmentation posed a number of difficulties for the regional Pathways TN implementation teams and coordinators, who were working with both departments, as well as the Higher Education Commissions, to designate locally relevant career pathways.

A lot of the burden fell to local elected officials and community leaders, who were involved in multiple planning meetings for workforce and economic development, often addressing related but uncoordinated questions. After hearing complaints from local leaders, Gov. Haslam decided it was time for a statewide reorganization and directed the three agencies to work together to align their service delivery regions to improve coordination in the delivery of workforce, community development and education services. In 2018, the regions were reorganized geographically into nine coordinated regions across the state.⁴

This approach has helped the Tennessee NSFY team better coordinate with both LWD and ECD to implement high-quality career pathways aligned to the needs of each region. The transition to

coordinated regions has also contributed to better collaboration and partnership across agencies. Workforce development directors were required to involve regional career pathways consultants in the creation of their workforce development plans and are working together to align their goals with a shared vision for success in each of their regions. Additionally, the state has been making a more consistent investment across LWD, ECD and education, focusing workforce development investments to build career pathways for in-school youth.

Looking Ahead

In the third and final year of NSFY, Tennessee's focus will be on sustainability. Gov. Haslam, who launched and championed the Drive to 55 campaign, was term limited and left office in January 2019. His successor, Gov. Bill Lee, emphasized CTE and support for rural communities in his campaign and will likely continue Gov. Haslam's workforce development priorities. The Tennessee NSFY team has forged strong relationships across agencies — in particular with the Board of Regents, LWD and ECD — over the course of the initiative, and the work under Tennessee Pathways has strong foundations for sustainability.

With the Tennessee Pathways rebrand complete, 2019 holds great potential for the statewide adoption of the newly established career pathways certification standards. As Tennessee Pathways becomes an increasingly recognized brand, the NSFY team hopes it will feature more in local school and district curriculum development — and funding — plans. The work of the regional career pathways coordinators, who have been funded for five years, will also help promote sustainability.

Acknowledgments

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¹ Drive to 55 Alliance. Retrieved from <http://driveto55.org>

² Drive to 55 Alliance. Tennessee Promise. Retrieved from <http://driveto55.org/initiatives/tennessee-promise/>

³ Tennessee Department of Education. *Tennessee Pathways certification & designation*. Retrieved from https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/ccte/pathways/ccte_tn_pathways_designation.pdf

⁴ Tennessee Department of Education. Pathways regions. Retrieved from <https://www.tn.gov/education/pathwaystn/pathways-regions.html>