

New Skills for Youth Phase One Snapshot: Wisconsin

Wisconsin's primary accomplishment during Phase One of the New Skills for Youth grant was developing a "shovel-ready" action plan that would build upon quality efforts under way and deliver high-quality career pathways within each of the state's 16 technical college regions. The framework for this plan, called the Regional Career Pathways Project, draws on CEO champions within each region to drive workforce-relevant education and training aligned to local industry needs. The vision for this plan was driven by Wisconsin's goal of leveraging career readiness strategies to reduce gender, racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps.

Foundations for the Work

Wisconsin's work during the Phase One grant period built upon a foundation of cross-sector collaboration and a commitment to equity. At the state level, the [Governor's Council on Workforce Investment](#) and the [Technical College system](#), which delivers Career Technical Education (CTE) in 16 regions, have been key drivers shaping career readiness activities in the state. The Governor's Council serves as the state's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act implementation body and works closely with the Department of Workforce Development to set the state agenda for workforce education and training. Meanwhile, the Technical College system, which is the designated state recipient for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, works to expand access to high-quality career pathways by engaging employer advisory councils to review and guide

curriculum development for each associated degree or diploma program. Further, Wisconsin's vision for equity in the K-12 system, called "[Every Child a Graduate](#)," includes career readiness as a core component of its mission to close achievement gaps and prepare all students for college and career.

School districts in Wisconsin develop an [Education for Employment plan](#) that includes requirements for career planning, among other things. While the plan was established in 1985, it was not until 2013, when the state Legislature enacted the [Academic and Career Planning Initiative](#) (ACP), that implementation of academic and career planning became compulsory statewide. ACP was funded at \$1.1 million and provides support, training and tools to build local capacity for college and career advisement. Beginning in fall 2017, the law requires school districts to provide planning services — including parent

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

engagement, career awareness activities, work-based learning and CTE opportunities — for all students in grades 6 through 12. To support regional implementation of ACP, the state has rolled out a web-based career guidance platform called Career Cruising that provides students and counselors with career-relevant planning tools and connects students with information about postsecondary options.

Additionally, in recent years, Wisconsin state agencies have been working to connect and expand data systems to better monitor student academic and employment outcomes and highlight achievement gaps. Currently, career readiness data are collected through the Career and Technical Education Enrollment Reporting System (CTEERS), which is used to comply with accountability requirements for Perkins-funded CTE programs. However, Wisconsin has been working to develop an integrated P-20 longitudinal data system that will enable the state to track not only postsecondary enrollment but also credit accumulation, remediation requirements, progress toward degree completion and credential attainment.

Work During Phase One

Wisconsin's approach to Phase One was driven by a vision for statewide equity. The project team believed that expanding access to high-quality career pathways that equip students with workforce-relevant skills and culminate in an industry-recognized credential could close achievement gaps and prepare students for sustainable economic success. Wisconsin's needs assessment and data analysis confirmed the necessity of this vision, drawing attention

to gender, racial and socioeconomic gaps in access to quality career pathways.

In addition to verifying and elevating equity gaps, Wisconsin's needs assessment brought to light challenges related to local implementation and accountability. The project team identified exemplar career preparation activities across the state but also recognized the need for strategies to scale up best practices so that quality would no longer be confined to pockets of excellence. Further, the team acknowledged the need to strengthen state data collection efforts to ensure that relevant and verifiable career readiness data could be accessed in one place.

A “Shovel-Ready” Action Plan

With the needs assessment results in mind, the project team designed a regional strategy for strengthening and expanding high-quality career pathways, to begin implementation in early 2017. The strategy, built upon a framework called the Regional Career Pathways Project, aligns with and leverages the 16 regions in the state's Technical College system. Each region will be coordinated by a director and led by a CEO champion who, along with representatives from higher education, K-12 and the community, would set the agenda and drive CTE and training activities locally. The state team plans to lean on this structure to influence the quality of career pathways by hiring regional directors and providing implementation tools.

For example, the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment developed two tools during Phase One that regional directors can use to plan their work. The first tool, a [Talent Development Scorecard](#), can be used to assess the quality of and opportunities within

regional career pathway delivery systems, including sector and cluster strategies, career pathways and partnerships and career expos. The second tool, an [Asset Mapping resource](#), provides an evaluation framework for determining best practices in talent management.

Another Phase One accomplishment for Wisconsin was the integration of assessment data from the WorkKeys® career readiness exam into the WISEdata reporting dashboard, enabling districts to monitor the career readiness progress of their students. While CTE data are still located in a separate system, the project team sees this integration as the initial step toward consolidating data.

Looking Ahead

Moving forward, the Wisconsin New Skills for Youth Project team aims to pilot and scale the Regional Career Pathways Project. The team has selected four regions within which to launch the project — Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, Madison College, Milwaukee Area Technical College and Moraine Park Technical College, each selected based on its diversity and opportunity for drawing out replicable best practices. The team then plans to add additional regions until the project is implemented statewide. State policymakers have signaled interest in supporting this effort. The state Legislature committed to introducing a bill during the 2017 legislative session that would fund

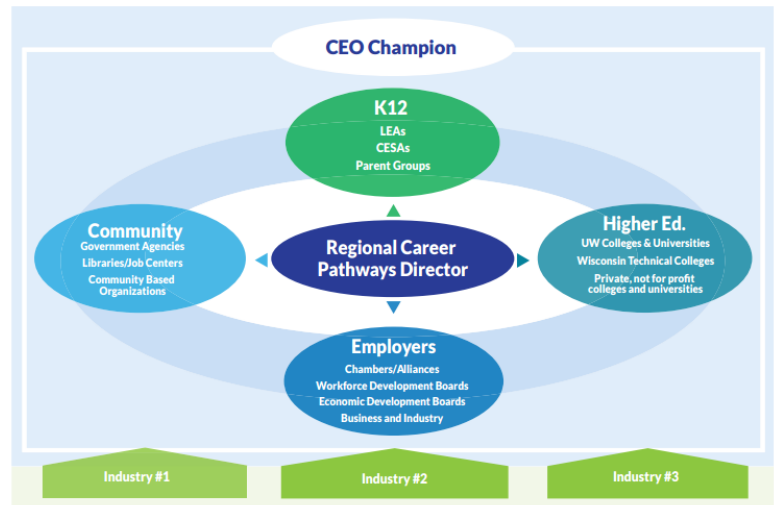


Figure 1: Wisconsin's Regional Career Pathways Project framework

regional career education and workforce development directors, helping drive the work of the Regional Career Pathways teams. This bill was originally introduced and passed the State Assembly in 2016 but did not make it through the Senate before the end of the session. If this work is successful, members of the Legislature indicated interest in providing funds to scale the work in the future.

Wisconsin also plans to strengthen its statewide accountability system by encouraging the adoption and use of career readiness indicators in school and district report cards. The first step in this process will be integrating career readiness data, which have until now been collected in the CTEERS data system, with the state WISEdata system to reduce duplication and consolidate data reporting in a central location. The Department of Public Instruction has made moving the CTEERS data into WISEdata a priority, and this integration is now under way.