

Denver, Colorado

2022-23 SNAPSHOT

THE NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK

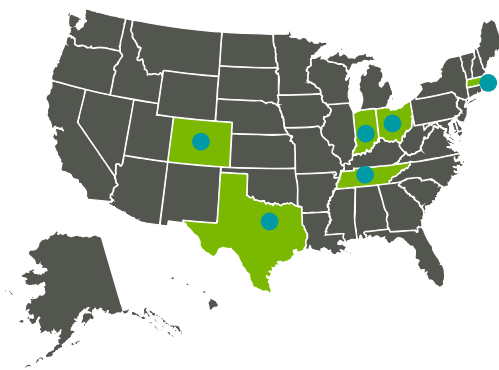
New Skills ready network, launched by JPMorgan Chase in 2020, bolsters the firm's efforts to support an inclusive economic recovery, as part of both their \$350 million, five-year New Skills at Work initiative to prepare people for the future of work and their \$30 billion commitment to advance racial 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 third 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.

Denver, Colorado, is one of the six sites participating in the *New Skills ready network*. This five-year initiative, launched by JPMorgan Chase in 2020, aims to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways.



NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK SITES:

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

In the first year of this initiative, the Denver, Colorado, team – working under the name *New Skills Ready Initiative (NSRI)* – prioritized building a shared data framework to better measure the impact of career pathways and began mapping career pathways with built-in accelerators. The Denver, Colorado, team established the foundation for sharing data across secondary and postsecondary institutions and documented their career pathways strategy to integrate dual/concurrent enrollment, Career Technical Education (CTE), work-based learning, industry certifications and aligned advising.

In the second year, the team aligned work-based learning within career pathways; expanded a data framework with protocols for data collection, sharing and analysis; and launched their Individual and Career Academic Plan (ICAP) pilot with secondary and postsecondary partners. The achievements by the team in the first two years of the initiative provided a solid foundation for year three, as they continued to expand work-based learning opportunities; leverage data across all secondary, postsecondary and workforce partners; and support learner transitions as they navigate through high-quality career pathways. In 2022-23, the Denver, Colorado, *NSRI* team focused on:

- 1 Improving and leveraging data use across secondary and postsecondary partners to ensure equitable access to career pathways;
- 2 Integrating high-quality work-based learning within all *NSRI* career pathways; and
- 3 Enhancing the learner experience when transitioning from secondary to postsecondary institutions.

DENVER, COLORADO



LEADERSHIP TEAM PARTNERS

- The Attainment Network (*site lead*)
- Colorado Community College System
- Colorado Department of Education
- Colorado Department of Higher Education
- Colorado Workforce Development Council
- Community College of Denver
- Denver Public Schools
- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- University of Colorado Denver



VISION FOR SUCCESS

The Denver, Colorado, *NSRI* team established a vision to guide the team's work over the five-year initiative:

The Denver, Colorado, New Skills Ready Initiative team aims to dramatically increase the number and diversity of students who complete selected high-quality career pathways that start in high school, continue into and through higher education, and lead to good jobs in Denver's labor market. This partnership will also deliver a national model for closing equity gaps and increasing postsecondary attainment resulting in family-sustaining wage employment.

PRIORITY 1

Improving and leveraging data use across secondary and postsecondary partners to ensure equitable access to career pathways

In year one of the *NSRI*, the Denver, Colorado, team prioritized developing a shared framework for defining, collecting and analyzing data to help the team measure the success of the career pathways strategy. The work in year one supported the team's progress in year two in building out a cohesive data framework and agreed-upon data collection protocols across partners. The Denver, Colorado, team continued to build on their progress and achievements in the second year by leveraging the data framework to address the identified gaps in learner access, participation and outcomes for career pathways, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender and other dimensions of equity. The Attainment Network helped to guide the work throughout the years of the initiative by implementing data sharing agreements across secondary and postsecondary partners, operationalizing protocols to ensure efficiency with data sharing and establishing processes to ensure that data informs the development and implementation of learner supports in *NSRI* career pathways.

Throughout year three of the initiative, the Denver, Colorado, team continued to improve their existing data sharing, collection and analysis processes to support the learner experience within *NSRI* career pathways. The team had greater access to data in year three of the initiative because of the previously implemented data sharing agreements across institutions and partners. Throughout year three, this increased data sharing fostered greater connections across institutions, which in turn provided the space for strategic decision-making for *NSRI* career pathways to ensure that the career pathways prepare learners for in-demand careers with family-sustaining wages.



The diligence and dedication to quality data collection and sharing across institutions allow the Denver, Colorado, team to better track learner progress and success. Over the past three years of the NSRI, the team has seen a 35 percentage point increase in the number of high school and postsecondary learners participating in industry-aligned high-quality career pathways that lead to earning a family-sustaining wage, a successful launch of a learner transitions data sharing pilot and the implementation and use of data-enriched continuous feedback loops among partners. The work of the Denver, Colorado, team on data improvement priorities has fostered a collaborative, co-designed culture for NSRI partners for career pathway implementation and provides critical baseline and goal-setting data as the initiative continues. In year four of the initiative, the team will prioritize data use and the establishment of a career pathways intent indicator. This indicator will allow the Denver, Colorado, team to more proactively identify learners who are interested in career pathways and meet learners' needs to successfully enter and complete career pathways and transition into a career that provides family-sustaining wages.



PRIORITY 2

Integrating high-quality work-based learning within all NSRI career pathways

RESOURCES DEVELOPED IN YEAR 3

- [The Attainment Network 2022 Annual Report](#)
- [High Quality Pathways Rubric](#)
- Policy Briefs:
 - [Stackable Credentials](#)
 - [Transferability](#)
 - [Data Infrastructure](#)
- [Visual Notes From Learner Perspectives on Career-Connected Education – A Colorado Symposium](#)
- [Data Resources – Workforce, Industry, & Demography](#)
- [Demo of Colorado Future Jobs](#)
- [DPS Career and College Success Career Development Equity Stance](#)
- [DPS Career Development Team Annual Report 2021-2022](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Quality Expectations](#)
- [CDE Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force Interim Report](#)

In year one, the Denver, Colorado, team brought together partners, including the Colorado Workforce Development Council, to design work-based learning and began the process of creating, mapping and documenting a career pathways development strategy. In year two of the initiative, the team focused on engaging employers to better understand their experience, skills and education requirements and how those requirements align with work-based learning strategies. The strategic focus on the work-based learning continuum in year two led secondary and postsecondary partners to create visual maps to demonstrate career pathway on- and off-ramp offerings, including opportunities for work-based learning, to guide learners currently in high school all the way through master's degree completion using stackable credentials.

In year three, the Denver, Colorado, team built on their previous achievements by focusing on the integration of work-based learning opportunities in career pathways that prepare learners for in-demand careers that provide family-sustaining wages. The team intentionally worked with postsecondary partners to map career pathways with work-based learning opportunities to [Department of Labor registered apprenticeships](#) and beyond. The strategic integration of work-based learning opportunities for learners in career pathways by the Denver, Colorado, team has improved equitable access to work-based learning and career exposure for learners. Through year three, the team supported a 63 percentage point increase in the number of high school learners participating in career exposure activities.

The Denver, Colorado, team has also leveraged their collaboration with secondary, postsecondary and workforce partners to identify high-quality apprenticeship and work-based learning experiences for learners engaging in NSRI career pathways. The information obtained from these collaborative partnerships is being incorporated into a high-quality career pathways rubric that includes the identification of high-quality apprenticeship experiences for learners. The rubric will be publicly available in year four of the initiative, and the Colorado Department of Higher Education will use this rubric to guide the integration of work-based learning in career pathways across Colorado, highlighting the impact of the NSRI and the benefits of the investment for learners statewide.



PRIORITY 3

Enhancing the learner experience when transitioning from secondary to postsecondary institutions



In year one of the *NSRI*, the Denver, Colorado, team documented the career pathways development process within and across partners, including the integration of dual/concurrent enrollment, CTE, work-based learning, industry certifications and aligned advising. This priority resulted in the Denver, Colorado, site strengthening the alignment between and across secondary and postsecondary partners to support learner transitions and the transfer of credit across certificate and two-year and four-year degree programs.

In the second year of the initiative, secondary partner Denver Public Schools (DPS) worked closely with postsecondary partners to extend the application and usefulness of *ICAP*, also referred to as Learner Transitions, and related data to support learners as they transition to postsecondary institutions. The use of the Learner Transitions tool became a standard practice among partners in the *NSRI* to support learners with successful transitions from secondary to postsecondary institutions and eventually into the workforce.

In year three of the initiative, the Denver, Colorado, team identified opportunities to improve the learner transition experience with secondary and postsecondary partners, specifically DPS and the Community College of Denver (CCD). The Attainment Network, as site lead, leveraged a consultant to help the institutions focus on improvements in the learner transition process. The consultant worked with both institutions to identify and prioritize the institutional and systemic challenges that impede learners' experiences when transitioning between the institutions. The process improvement work has opened the doors of communication across the institutions and has generated progress and excitement among partners. A significant challenge that the

HIGH-PRIORITY INDUSTRY SECTORS



Behavioral Health



Business



Cybersecurity



Engineering



Health Care



Information Technology



institutions have remedied over the course of three years includes sharing data related to concurrent enrollment registration processes. Previously, the DPS and CCD data systems were not updated to provide the community college with timely updates about learners' registration, resulting in erroneous rosters for CCD staff and incorrect registration for learners. DPS and CCD are mitigating the challenge of misaligned systems through information technology automation to ensure that each institution has access to timely information on learners' schedules, enrollments and more. This change across the institutions has improved the relationship between practitioners, created efficiencies in registration and increased the capacity to support learners more strategically in accessing concurrent enrollment.

Centering the learner experience and voice is a Denver, Colorado, team priority. In addition to improving the learner experience during institutional transitions in career pathways, the team invested in elevating learner voice to understand the barriers learners face and ways the team can mitigate those barriers. The Attainment Network hosted a Learner Voice Symposium that highlighted the learner experience and leveraged learners' voices to push project team partners to make changes in the career pathway system. The Attainment Network also provided grants to Metropolitan State University of Denver, University of Colorado Denver and eight other organizations across the state to support elevating learner voice in the career pathways work.

As the Denver, Colorado, team continues to improve student transitions in year four of the initiative, the team will prioritize the mapping of new high-wage, high-demand career pathways that lead to family-sustaining wages. New career pathways in the *NSRI*, such as Behavioral Health, can be challenging to map due to the complexity of the field. Currently, the Denver, Colorado, team aims to launch the Behavioral Health career pathway by fall 2023. Outside of the challenges with mapping, finalizing and launching some of the new *NSRI* career pathways, the Denver, Colorado, team has seen great success in supporting the expansion of existing career pathways to new schools within DPS; 20 schools in DPS now provide learners in the Denver area with access to equitable, high-quality career pathways to support their preparation for and transition into an in-demand career that provides family-sustaining wages.



LOOKING AHEAD

In year four of the *NSRI*, the Denver, Colorado, team is prioritizing aligned communications strategies and resources for partners across the initiative with a specific focus on elevating learner voice, supporting streamlined processes among and between institutions through continued process improvement efforts and establishing a career pathways intent indicator as the next phase of the learner transitions work.

As the Denver, Colorado, team looks forward, the team is also keeping sustainability and scalability top of mind in terms of staffing and capacity, funding and leveraging the lessons learned in the site to support similar work throughout the state. The work of the Denver, Colorado, *NSRI* team continues to inform state-level policy and is valued within other areas of Colorado, informing the development and implementation of equitable high-quality career pathways for learners.