

# Nashville

## TENNESSEE

### THE NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK

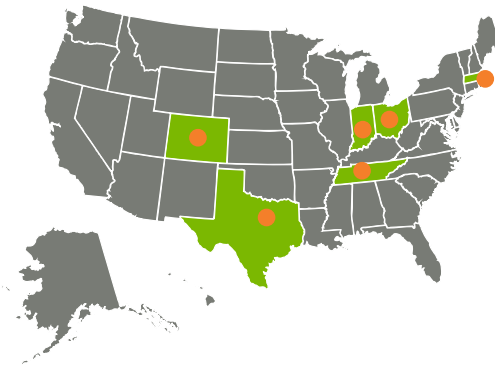
*New Skills ready network*, launched by JPMorgan Chase in 2020, bolsters the firm's efforts to support an inclusive economic recovery, as part of both their \$350 million, five-year New Skills at Work initiative to prepare people for the future of work and their \$30 billion commitment to advance racial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

Nashville, Tennessee, 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 learner 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 three years of this initiative, the Nashville, Tennessee, *New Skills ready network* team aimed to dismantle through systemic change barriers to success affecting learners from under-represented populations. During year two, the Nashville, Tennessee, team invested significantly in cultivating a foundation for future implementation across partner organizations. During year three, the Nashville, Tennessee, team focused their efforts on implementation through pilot projects within the initiative to maximize the potential of the learner experience in work-based learning (WBL) and postsecondary persistence. The work of the college and career readiness (CCR) coaches was increasingly invaluable to supporting college and career planning in Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) and to strengthening the partnership with the Tennessee College of Applied Technology – Nashville (TCAT-Nashville), Nashville State Community College (NSCC) and Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). Year four of the initiative presented opportunities to focus on career advising through maximizing initiative partnerships to develop plans for career pathways with strategic mapping.

In 2023-24, the Nashville, Tennessee, *New Skills ready network* team focused on:

- 1 Visualizing career pathway opportunities for learners through effective career pathway mapping;
- 2 Increasing the impact and support of career advising to aid seamless postsecondary transitions; and
- 3 Maximizing employer engagement opportunities to increase WBL experiences for learners.

# NASHVILLE TENNESSEE



## LEADERSHIP TEAM PARTNERS

- Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce (*site lead*)
- Metro Nashville Public Schools
- Middle Tennessee State University
- Nashville State Community College
- Scarlett Family Foundation
- Tennessee Board of Regents
- Tennessee College Access and Success Network
- Tennessee College of Applied Technology – Nashville
- Tennessee Department of Education
- Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- Tennessee Higher Education Commission



## VISION FOR SUCCESS

The Nashville, Tennessee, *New Skills ready network* team established a vision statement to guide the team's work over the five-year initiative and their efforts to develop and expand access to high-quality career pathways for all learners:

*With cross-sector stakeholder leadership, the New Skills ready network Nashville team will build high-quality career pathways with a focus on learners who are under-served and under-resourced. Learners will be supported to and through postsecondary education and into high-growth, high-wage careers in the local economy. Systemic inequities and barriers to postsecondary access, persistence, and success will be addressed.*

## PRIORITY 1

### Visualizing career pathway opportunities for learners through effective career pathway mapping

The Nashville, Tennessee, team continues to prioritize career pathway alignment for learners and leveraged year four to pursue further efforts to design visually appealing career pathway maps. The critical work in year three of deepening the engagement of postsecondary partners (TCAT-Nashville and NSCC) cultivated an opportunity to collaborate with MNPS partners to investigate seamless transitions. After discovering a lack of visuals detailing the process for learners to access a variety of career pathways, the Nashville, Tennessee, project team focused their year four efforts on creating visualizations that clearly map career pathways.

The collaboration inspired the Nashville, Tennessee, team's career pathway mapping workgroup to meet regularly and process through several existing maps and transferability processes. They started with high school and NSCC maps showing linkages to other partner institutions and dual enrollment opportunities. The maps will support continued family engagement efforts by providing opportunities for school personnel to have more personalized tools to present to families when they are making future career pathway and postsecondary decisions for learners.

While the Nashville, Tennessee, team recognizes that the mapping process does not yet clearly articulate an associate of applied science degree from the two-year postsecondary institutions into a bachelor of science degree at the four-year postsecondary institution (MTSU), there are plans for continued collaboration to work through those challenges. MTSU's consistent engagement with the team fosters an opportunity to lay the foundation for increasing opportunities at the four-year postsecondary level.



## PRIORITY 2

### Increasing the impact and support of career advising to aid seamless postsecondary transitions

The work in year three became a catalyst for expanding the Nashville, Tennessee, team's focus on seamless postsecondary transitions. The focus on career advising has also increased opportunities for the team to investigate summer "melt" and to survey learners to determine next steps in career advising. The survey intended to understand what learners wished they knew before transitioning from high school to postsecondary. Results of the survey revealed what learners were attempting to balance, including working jobs and considering furthering their education, which encouraged the project team to ramp up their strategies to support learners in their transitions.

The Nashville, Tennessee, team increased capacity in year three by hiring a dual enrollment coordinator at TCAT-Nashville. This role has been essential in providing outreach in service of the CCR coaches, learners and families. After making frequent visits to MNPS schools and hosting evening informational visits for learners and families, TCAT-Nashville has experienced its largest enrollment in early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs), with more than 300 learners from MNPS. To further support seamless transitions and career advising, the Nashville, Tennessee, team leveraged the initiative's funding in year four to increase capacity at MNPS by staffing a director of postsecondary partnerships and at TCAT-Nashville by staffing two teaching positions to bring dual enrollment coursework to the initial four *New Skills ready network* priority schools. The collaboration among those roles allowed four new dual enrollment programs in information technology to be taught by qualified instructors, with an expansion into a fifth school beyond the four priority *New Skills ready network* schools.

The impact of this work has inspired more participation from under-represented learners in EPSOs, and the Nashville, Tennessee, team is looking for more ways to continue this effort into year five with a plan for sustainability beyond the term of the *New Skills ready network* investment. This commitment is an objective for the upcoming summit the team plans to host for all partner institution advisers so they can collaborate and problem-solve systemic barriers encountered during learners' secondary to postsecondary progression through career pathways.

## HIGH-PRIORITY INDUSTRY SECTORS



Advanced Manufacturing



Health Care



Information Technology



### PRIORITY 3

## Maximizing employer engagement opportunities to increase WBL experiences for learners



Providing high-quality WBL opportunities remains a priority for the Nashville, Tennessee, team. After the 2023-24 school year expansion of WBL to all schools within MNPS, 155 learners participated in 25 different employer experiences and were paid a total of \$70,000 in wages combined. The Nashville, Tennessee, team was able to tell the story of learners' experiences in a compilation [video](#) full of testimonials that has been leveraged as a marketing campaign to encourage more employers to engage as partners.

Understanding that employers are a critical component of the WBL experience for learners, the Nashville, Tennessee, team set a goal in year four of helping employers prepare to engage as partners. The team has developed an [employer guide](#) that includes methods for hosting and supporting learners on worksites, which will be distributed as the WBL coordinator regularly meets with current and potential employer partners.

Although transportation to and from employer sites remains a challenge, the work in years three and four allowed the Nashville, Tennessee, team to produce [Point of Departure: Navigating Nashville as a College Commuter](#), which provides insights into barriers MNPS graduates face in accessing postsecondary and WBL opportunities across the Middle Tennessee region. Recognizing that this issue continues to be a barrier at the secondary level, the MNPS director of schools has been steadfast in allowing learners to be employees within the district offices.



## LOOKING AHEAD

The Nashville, Tennessee, team remains hopeful about the opportunities to increase their reach and maintain momentum in scaling and sustaining the work in a way that increases dual enrollment and WBL opportunities across secondary and postsecondary institutions beyond the initial institutions of focus.

The development of career pathway mapping tools has inspired the Nashville, Tennessee, team to explore additional career pathways while supporting schools that are under capacity with enrollment. This work also assists in the team's continued efforts to increase learner transitions to postsecondary institutions after graduation from high school. In year five, the team plans to continue documenting their progress and leveraging the *New Skills ready network* to have more tactical conversations and explore more innovative ways to carry the work forward with each partner.



## ZAHRA ALKASHI

**EDUCATION:** Graduate, John Overton High School; attending Middle Tennessee State University, fall 2024

**NEW SKILLS ready network CONNECTION:** Zahra received support from a dedicated college and career readiness (CCR) coach, funded through the initiative, and participated in a paid work-based learning career practicum course piloted in four schools through the *New Skills ready network*.

### **If relevant, what prompted you to participate in the program or initiative?**

The CCR coach has been at my school for three years. I'm in the IT Academy at Overton, and this year our courses were all taught as dual enrollment. One of my CCR coaches, Ms. Wilson, and the Tennessee College of Applied Technology dual enrollment coordinator, Mr. Marquez, helped me to complete all the paperwork I needed to enroll in the course and get started. Ms. Wilson also told me about the work-based learning course and helped me talk through whether I wanted to participate.

### **What were your educational and/or career goals before participating in the program or initiative?**

I originally wanted to be an engineer and knew I would need to go to college. It was only after talking to counselors, teachers and business partners that I even started to consider anything else.

### **How did the experience shift your thinking about your education and/or career goals?**

The dual enrollment class with Mr. Moreland was really hands on, and he was such an engaging teacher. It was my favorite class in all of high school because of the cool things we got to do. I knew I wanted to do the work-based learning class, but I didn't have a way to get to work because I don't have a car and my school is not on the metro bus line. I have really loved being able to work on computers at my school, and I've been able to use the things I learned in my class with Mr. Moreland in my work-based learning job. Now I'm planning to go to Middle Tennessee State University and double major in both business and computer science.

### **What did you find to be most beneficial from participating in the program or initiative?**

I loved being able to take the hands-on information technology classes with Mr. Moreland — it changed how I thought about my future job. I've felt so supported since coming to Overton, especially working with my CCR coach, Ms. Wilson.