



# Dallas

## TEXAS

Dallas, Texas, was one of the six sites participating in the *New Skills ready network*. This five-year initiative, launched by JPMorgan Chase in 2020, aimed to improve learner participation in and completion of high-quality career pathways.



**NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK SITES:**  
 Boston, Massachusetts • Columbus, Ohio  
 Dallas, Texas • Denver, Colorado  
 Indianapolis, Indiana • Nashville, Tennessee



Photo by Alison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

As the initiative closed its final year, the Dallas, Texas, *New Skills ready network* team persisted with momentum to scale initiative goals set in years three and four. In year five, the team focused on prioritizing work-based learning (WBL), coalescing significant partnerships focused on economic mobility and labor market intelligence and leveraging Dallas Independent School District (ISD) as a model for career pathway development and implementation success. The investment motivated partners to focus on opportunities to maximize their respective networks and engage in

conversations to understand how to best meet the needs of all stakeholders and learners.

During year five, the Dallas, Texas, two-year postsecondary site partner, Dallas College, and four-year postsecondary site partner, University of North Texas – Dallas (UNT-Dallas), expanded their efforts to streamline employer engagement activities. This breakthrough connection catalyzed conversations to develop more intentional assessment of needs to fill existing gaps that serve as barriers for learners in accessing meaningful WBL opportunities.

## THE NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK

*New Skills ready network*, launched by JPMorgan Chase in 2020, bolsters the firm's continued investments to assist people in preparing for and accessing careers in the future of work. Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group worked 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. Through the *New Skills ready network*, these sites formulated new partnerships among local school systems, higher education, employers, community partners, and government entities to develop and scale 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 fifth and final 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 sought 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.

In 2024-25, the Dallas, Texas, *New Skills ready* network team focused on:

- 1 Assessing platforms, data systems and tools that are beneficial to learners and support partner needs;
- 2 Broadening virtual access at the secondary level while preserving infrastructure for postsecondary WBL experiences; and
- 3 Accessing labor market information to provide high-quality data for partners.

## PRIORITY 1

### Assessing platforms, data systems and tools that are beneficial to learners and support partner needs

The Dallas, Texas, team transitioned from their year four focus on implementation of the Personalized Pathway Manager tool to refinement in the final year of the initiative after allowing time for the complete process of beta testing, which included school-based personnel using the tool to monitor learner progress in career pathways. Throughout year five, school principals, counselors and advisors were trained on effective use of the tool. This process helped learners make informed decisions about career pathway enrollment through the use of the tool with school practitioner support. The team's idea was to provide access and visibility while monitoring learner progress individually and collectively as a cohort, promoting opportunities to develop intentional intervention plans with capabilities to make real-time adjustments in support of learner needs. The successful implementation of the tool in Dallas ISD served

as a proof point to encourage Dallas College to begin its use of the tool with three career pathways in spring 2025 and to plan for a full rollout in the 2025-26 school year.

The use of supportive, flexible platforms and data systems was also connected to WBL work the Dallas, Texas, team expanded upon as a component of personalized career pathway development. The investment increased Dallas ISD's data capacity to help streamline its caseload management by leveraging existing WBL-connected data systems and improving upon their functionality and capabilities. This increased data capacity also allows for centralized data processing and communication across institutions. The Dallas, Texas, team hopes to include this additional WBL information as a future expanded component of the Personalized Pathway Manager tool.

## DALLAS TEXAS

### LEADERSHIP TEAM PARTNERS

- Commit Partnership (*site lead*)
- Child Poverty Action Lab
- City of Dallas
- Dallas College
- Dallas Independent School District
- Dallas Regional Chamber
- United Way
- University of North Texas – Dallas
- Workforce Solutions



### VISION FOR SUCCESS

The *New Skills ready* network work in Dallas, Texas, is driven by a vision for success that is anchored in a community-wide strategy called Dallas Thrives, which aims to create pathways out of poverty for the youngest residents. The “north star” of this work is to double living-wage attainment, with a focus on achieving racial equity in living-wage employment, by 2040. By braiding the Dallas Thrives strategy, momentum and community support with the *New Skills ready* network framework and partner expertise, the team is looking to create a career pathway design and maintenance process that is financially sustainable after the grant ends and scalable across the community as pilot projects evolve into routine practices and programs. Through true systems change, the community can make measurable and sustainable progress toward its economic mobility goals for learners and young adults.

## PRIORITY 2

### Broadening virtual access at the secondary level while preserving infrastructure for postsecondary WBL experiences

Revitalization of WBL programming was a focal point for the Dallas, Texas, team during year five, especially as a strategy for secondary and postsecondary partners to increase learner engagement. The launching of Economic Mobility Systems through the [Economic Mobility Center](#) (EMC), a non-profit organization supported by *New Skills ready* network funding, helped the team coalesce around WBL, especially for Dallas ISD, Dallas College and UNT-Dallas. The EMC organized and brought more alignment to the initiative's goal of effectively engaging employers. The power of the *New Skills ready* network inspired the idea of virtual experiences from a presentation during the Boston, Massachusetts, convening and unveiled the Dallas, Texas, team's interest in engaging with the [Work-Based Learning Alliance](#) to provide support for virtual WBL.

The Work-Based Learning Alliance partnership provided 40 learners in Dallas ISD with an opportunity to have successful experiences with employers. Participating employers provided outstanding ratings in feedback and expressed an interest in continuing the programming. Through the positive collaboration, more than 200 learners will have virtual WBL placements in the 2025-26 school year. This innovative process helped the Dallas, Texas, team begin to overcome the long-standing transportation barrier that prevented learners from accessing in-person WBL.

As postsecondary partners, both Dallas College and UNT-Dallas also welcomed the opportunity to engage

employers in more meaningful ways, leveraging the more aligned WBL definition the Dallas, Texas, team developed through the initiative. While Dallas College did not have a comprehensive WBL strategy before, its participation in the initiative guided the launch of [Next Generation Sector Partnerships](#) to support learners through industry sector-based WBL experiences. This talent development strategy helped the college align eight career pathways and WBL as a means to direct learners to respective employers. The *New Skills ready* network helped to expand the Dallas, Texas, site's postsecondary access to WBL by hiring a project lead to manage the learner-employer relationships, which was an effective strategy to secure more WBL placements.

In addition to Dallas College's success with its approach to WBL, UNT-Dallas increased its knowledge of how many learners were participating in internships by leveraging the data infrastructure created through the *New Skills ready* network. UNT-Dallas faculty were also engaged in a summer intensive, which included workshops to refresh internship program materials to centralize processes and employer connections through automation. Grounding in research around socioeconomic mobility, the UNT-Dallas partners invested initiative resources in designing programming and hiring a new director of WBL innovation to continue demonstrating the importance of placing value and focus on learner internship experiences.

## HIGH-PRIORITY INDUSTRY SECTORS



Education



Health Care



Information Technology

## PRIORITY 3

### Accessing labor market information to provide high-quality data for partners

Throughout the first four years of the initiative, the Dallas, Texas, team had an interest in providing and understanding essential labor market information but lacked the research to support effective career pathway development through use of such information. During year five, Dallas College partners hired a data analyst with a specific focus on merging data intelligence pulled from Dallas ISD, Dallas College and UNT-Dallas to provide better knowledge of how career pathway data essentially connects to the broader workforce with a focus on learner needs. The data helped the team develop When Education Pays Off,

a report that elevates the needs of Dallas ISD learners and families as they make informed career pathway decisions in connection with high-quality, in-demand careers.

The Dallas, Texas, team plans to continue their collaboration to scale the findings of the report to ultimately provide practitioners with real-time data regarding the labor market and continue effectively refining programs. The data insights will be shared with partner institutions and will highlight effective approaches to career advising and navigation for learners.



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## LOOKING AHEAD

The Dallas, Texas, team recognizes the benefit of synergizing the work that was happening in a more traditional, siloed way before their involvement in the initiative. Many of the *New Skills ready network* partners are looking forward to continued collaboration through a newly designed alignment council led by the EMC with oversight from the Dallas Commit Partnership. This council prioritizes career pathway development to increase economic mobility for learners while leveraging the tools that have been created to monitor progress and effective outcomes.



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Learn about the year five journey and plans for sustainability for all six *New Skills ready network* sites in the 2024-25 Snapshot Series at <https://careertech.org/resource-center/series/new-skills-ready-network/>.



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