

Expanding career readiness for young people around the world

JPMorgan Chase is expanding access to higher education, high-value credentials, and real world work experiences that connect young people to high-wage, high-skill, in-demand jobs.

Expanding Economic Opportunity through High-Quality Career Readiness

JPMorgan Chase is committed to expanding access to economic opportunity through career readiness for young people around the world. The firm supports efforts to develop educational pathways for students that provide higher education, high-value credentials, and real world work experiences that connect them to high-wage, high-skill, in-demand jobs.

In the U.S., more than two out of three jobs demand some education beyond high school.¹ At the same time, about a third of high school graduates do not go to college right away and often struggle to find meaningful work.² Meanwhile, nearly 7 million jobs go unfilled in the United States, according to the Department of Labor.³ Across the European Union, recent graduates with vocational or post-secondary education, including apprenticeships, have higher employment rates than those who do not.⁴

Policymakers and businesses increasingly recognize that to prepare for the future of work and meet the growing demand for skilled workers, career pathways should begin in high school and continue into and through post-secondary education. These pathways should be carefully designed to meet the knowledge and skill demands of the labor market.

PREPARING OUR YOUTH FOR THE JOBS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

Current education and training systems are not meeting existing demand for skilled workers, nor are they effectively connecting adults and youth to good paying jobs.⁵ This disconnect will expand as workers without adequate skills to compete today are unable to keep pace with rapid technological change over time, falling further behind.⁶ By 2030, about 30 percent of the U.S. labor market and 375 million workers globally will need to change jobs or upgrade their skills to advance within the workforce.⁷

A shortage of adequately skilled workers threatens long-term economic prosperity. In JPMorgan Chase's "2020 Business Leaders Outlook" executives named finding qualified talent—especially in technical roles—as their top business challenge.⁸ Narrowing the skills divide will require collaboration between state and local education and training leaders, as well as businesses to create accessible career pathways that lead to good jobs for more workers.

JPMorgan Chase's international career readiness policy framework is forthcoming.



DESIGNING HIGH-QUALITY CAREER PATHWAYS

Creating high-quality career pathways that start in high school will expand economic opportunity for young people. Publicly funded programs must contain key quality elements:

- Strong cross-sector partnerships
- Data-driven educational programming aligned with high-skill, high-wage, in-demand fields and occupations
- Academic learning reinforced with related work-based learning experiences
- Embedded opportunities to earn both related post-secondary credit in a degree-granting program and industry-recognized credentials

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGH-QUALITY CAREER PATHWAYS

Building on the lessons learned and innovations tested by grantee communities over the past five years, JPMorgan Chase's *PolicyCenter* is advancing specific policy recommendations:

I. State leadership and support for scaling high-quality integrated career pathways:

Fostering state policy environments that seed and support high-quality local career pathways, so that innovation and implementation are replicated and scaled at the state level.

II. Creating seamless connections from high school to post-secondary to career:

Connections between high school, higher education, and good jobs should become seamless by developing educational pathways that offer students early post-secondary experiences and lead to credentials aligned with high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand careers.

III. Expanding access to work-based learning experiences:

Improving access to good jobs by connecting students to real work experiences in industries fueling future economic growth, such as technology and healthcare.

IV. Ensuring access and opportunity for all:

Removing barriers to meaningful career opportunities for historically disadvantaged populations, and supporting effective transitions from school to work, by aligning policy and practice to scale proven career pathways programs.

V. Leveraging employer partnerships:

Engaging employers at the state and local level in the design, implementation, evaluation, and modification of integrated high-quality career pathways as part of the broader state or local economic development strategy.

BUSINESS PLAYS A CRITICAL ROLE

Members of the business community must be full partners in the effort to address career readiness. In 2015, JPMorgan Chase launched an initial five-year, \$75 million investment to seed innovation in states and regions to dramatically increase the number of young people completing high-quality career pathways that start in high school and culminate in credentials that have value in the labor market.

These communities developed and scaled innovative programs that helped tens of thousands of students in eight countries, ten states, and more than twenty cities gain education, skills, and credentials they need to compete for good jobs.⁹

JPMorgan Chase is redoubling its investment in high-quality career readiness for youth and advancing a broad policy agenda to create high-quality career pathways by building durable partnerships between local school systems, post-secondary institutions, education and workforce development agencies, and employers.

I. STATE LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR SCALING HIGH-QUALITY INTEGRATED CAREER PATHWAYS

States have a clear role in developing and expanding access to high-quality career pathways. A key lesson from the first cohort is that when leadership from the governor, chief state school officer, and other relevant state and business intermediaries elevate career readiness as a priority, states can set expectations for quality career pathways by defining benchmarks and aligning policy throughout the education and training system.¹⁰

Outlining critical quality elements in a state framework gives local leaders guidance and vision for implementation, which should help integrate career pathways considerations (see “*Designing High-Quality Career Pathways*” on page 2) into all aspects of existing youth work systems and eliminate ineffective or low quality career programs. State leaders should also work to align secondary and post-secondary systems, and labor agencies with employers in the design of systems and programs to ensure participants obtain the skills needed for today’s jobs.

- **Massachusetts** established the Governor’s [Workforce Skills Cabinet \(WSC\)](#) to align the departments of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, and Housing and Economic Development to support a comprehensive strategy to help individuals develop and continuously improve their skills and knowledge to meet the varying hiring needs of Massachusetts employers. The WSC, established by Executive Order, has created “High-Quality Career Pathways” and awarded more than \$24 million in grants to 63 different institutions that impact more than 7,100 students per year.¹¹
- **In Rhode Island**, the [Governor’s Workforce Board \(GWB\)](#) convenes educators, employers, and other stakeholders to develop new state work-based learning standards and guidance on implementing high-quality work-based learning. Rhode Island established the GWB as the state’s primary policy-making body on workforce development matters (RI General Law 42-102).¹²
- **Kentucky** supported the development of high-quality career pathways at the local level by setting new rules that require schools and districts to only use state and federal funding to support career pathways that are aligned with priority industries or top occupations. Kentucky leveraged labor market data from the Kentucky Center for Statistics—the state entity responsible for collecting and distributing education and workforce data—to inventory, evaluate, and justify the development and continuation of high-quality career pathways. Importantly, the state phased out low-quality programs that did not meet new standards.



II. CREATE SEAMLESS CONNECTIONS FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO POST-SECONDARY TO CAREER

Career pathways should begin in high school and continue seamlessly into and through post-secondary education. Research has shown that high school students who earn college credit as part of a career-focused education pathway complete degrees faster, at less cost, with better outcomes, and with the greatest gains going to underserved students.

States and localities should develop career pathways that span high school, community college, and 4-year universities that are aligned to high-wage, high-skill jobs.¹³ They should also develop accountability systems that measure career readiness. The federal government can play an important role in providing financial support to states as they develop and implement state-wide strategies for increasing dual-enrollment programs for low-income and underrepresented students.

- **Dallas County** [Promise](#) and the Dallas County Community College District Foundation launched a scholarship in 2017 that covers the cost of tuition in partnership with matching university scholarships from the University of North Texas at Dallas and other universities for students who enter career pathways aligned to high-demand jobs. In 2019, 98 percent of high school seniors at 43 schools signed the Promise Pledge to apply to college, and early results show increases in financial aid, college enrollment, and retention for Promise students.¹⁴
- **Kentucky** is working to create a more [seamless handoff from secondary to post-secondary](#) education through a partnership between the state Department of Education (KDE) and the Community Technical College System (KCTCS). KDE is creating apprenticeship career pathway blueprints and providing career advising to learners, while KCTCS is developing guidance to help high school students navigate post-secondary education and provide other supports.
- **Ohio** established [College Credit Plus](#) that offers qualifying students in grades seven to 12 tuition-free access to college courses at Ohio public colleges and participating private institutions. The Ohio Department of Higher Education has taken measures to ensure [access is equitable](#).



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III. EXPANDING ACCESS TO WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Work-based learning—sustained interactions with industry professionals in work settings—allows learners to develop the real-world skills they need to be successful in their careers. Research shows that participation in work-based learning experiences that allow students to learn from and develop relations with industry professionals is associated with higher job quality later in life.¹⁵ In addition to setting standards for high-quality work-based learning, states can expand access to work-based learning opportunities by establishing and supporting intermediaries at the state, regional or local level to coordinate between employers and educators and broker opportunities for learners. Intermediaries can be non-profits, employer associations, or even school-or district-based staff that work to demystify, strengthen and expand high-quality experiences for youth in their regions.

Apprenticeships have produced positive outcomes for workers and employers in the U.S.—94 percent of apprentices retain employment after program completion with an average salary of \$70,000, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.¹⁶ Eighty-seven percent of registered apprenticeship employer sponsors would strongly recommend apprentices to other businesses, nearly all employers surveyed reported that apprenticeships help them meet their skill demands, and 3 in 4 reported improved productivity, according to a report by the Urban Institute.¹⁷

- **Denver** is working to create the largest work-based learning program in the country by providing students with access to academic coursework,¹⁸ technical skills training, and in-depth experiences working in leading career areas. Students, who participate in Denver Public Schools CareerConnect with one of their 200+ business partners are up to 270 percent more likely to graduate on time.¹⁹
- **Delaware** designated the [Delaware Technical Community College](#) as a statewide intermediary for the [Delaware Pathways](#) initiative to connect students with local employers at both the secondary and post-secondary levels, and developed a model to scale work-based learning coursework and employer engagement tools. The state has increased the number of students participating in pathways from 1,850²⁰ to 16,000.²¹
- **South Carolina's** [Apprenticeship Carolina](#) program has supported over 31,000 apprentices through nearly 1,000 programs, over 200 of which serve youth, and is considered a model program by the U.S., Department of Labor.²²
- **Maryland** has expanded the [Apprenticeship Maryland](#) program to half of the counties in the state with a plan to scale the program to reach all counties in the future. The program connects Maryland Public School students to apprenticeships in high-demand career fields through a 'learn-while-you-earn' model and provides students a clear path to full-time employment immediately following graduation.²³
- In the **South Bronx**, [New York Alliance for Transport and Logistics \(NYATLAS\)](#) is working to expand the New York Mechanic's Apprenticeship Program.²⁴ NYATLAS is working alongside local employers, the New York City Department of Education, City University of New York, and labor and youth service groups to identify in-demand occupations in the transportation sector, develop relevant training and credential courses, and implement work-based learning programs for high school students.



Source: U.S. Department of Labor

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR STATE INITIATIVES

National programs can support high-quality state initiatives. Congressional proposals to scale apprenticeship programs and provide assistance to system intermediaries include the bipartisan [Effective Apprenticeships Rebuild National Skills \(EARNs\) Act](#), which would strengthen and expand registered apprenticeship programs that prepare students for high-quality careers through a combination of paid on-the-job training and classroom instruction.²⁵ The [Leveraging and Energizing America's Apprenticeship Programs \(LEAP\) Act](#) is a bipartisan measure to provide employer tax credits to businesses for offering apprenticeships registered with Department of Labor or with state agencies.²⁶

IV. ENSURE ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

Another critical lesson from the first JPMorgan Chase cohort is that states and localities must ensure equity and access when designing or reforming systems and actively take steps to remove systemic barriers that prevent learners from accessing, feeling welcome, and succeeding in high-quality career pathways.

It is not unusual for career pathway programs to lack both a coordinated strategy for connecting students to real-world work experiences and a robust data system to track student outcomes. In an effort to identify opportunities for reform, the city of Baltimore conducted an audit of existing career and technical education programs and found that while the school system offers more than 70 industry credentials, typically only higher performing schools have access to in-demand career tracks.²⁷

To promote equity, states, school districts, and colleges should use data to identify disparities in high quality program availability, participation, performance, completion, and outcome by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, geographic locale, etc., and should inform equitable allocation of resources to close equity gaps.

Low-quality career pathways programs, where students of color and low income students have been historically overrepresented, should be phased out and replaced with new high-quality programs aligned with high-wage careers and post-secondary education opportunities for all.

Mitigating barriers to entry, such as program cost, distance, and pre-requisite requirements, would increase participation of historically underrepresented students. Additionally, providing career guidance and mentoring services offer students support during their course of study and increase the likelihood of program completion and job attainment.²⁸

Examples of state and local initiatives designed for equitable access and outcomes include:

- In **Baltimore**, education leaders are working to expand the talent pipeline to include more students of color and low income students by imbedding opportunities in historically underserved parts of the school district, enabling students to obtain the work experience and course work necessary for high demand jobs in the region.
- **Tennessee Promise** removes financial barriers to accessing higher education by guaranteeing students two years of free attendance towards an associate's degree at any state community college, college of applied technology, or other public institutions through a last dollar scholarship that covers tuition expenses not covered by federal grants. In addition to funding, Tennessee provides college application support and career guidance through ongoing mentorship to students, which aids in increased access to high-quality post-secondary career training programs for previously underserved students.

- In **Rhode Island**, a state Department of Education analysis revealed that female learners, learners with disabilities, learners of color, and low-income learners were not accessing high quality career training programs linked to in-demand careers at the rate of the larger student population. In response, Rhode Island established Innovation and Equity grants²⁹ to provide funding to support sector-focused initiatives that expand access to high-quality career pathways for students in these groups.



V. LEVERAGING EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CAREER PATHWAYS

Employers play a critical role in the career pathways ecosystem and should take an active role in the design and implementation of high quality state and local initiatives. In the design phase, employers should help build and validate pathways to ensure that programs equip learners with the skills, training, and credentials that meet employer needs in target occupations.

States should engage employers and key industry leaders to create flexible multi-discipline credential standards that support economic development growth in key industries. Employer input should be regularly provided to clarify changes in requirements and pre-requisites for specific careers. In the implementation phase, state and local career pathways leaders and intermediaries should prepare employers for their role in providing real-world work experiences and career support services to youth participants. Creating career pathways that work for all is an imperative for businesses to remain competitive.

- In **Colorado**, industry leaders inform the development of sector-specific competency-based career pathways programs that align education, training, and existing workforce systems to prepare students with skills and credentials required for in-demand jobs in growing industries.³⁰

WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE (WPI)

The Business Roundtable established the CEO-led Workforce Partnership Initiative (WPI) to address the challenges they face in recruiting and training skilled workers by driving solutions to increase the skills and diversity of America's workforce.³² Business Roundtable members are building and leading strategic partnerships between business, nonprofits, and educational institutions that are designing, accelerating, and expanding successful career pathways and workforce readiness programs around the country.³³

In the greater Washington, D.C. region, for example, business leaders from over a dozen of the area's leading employers are focused on expanding the regional tech talent pipeline—particularly in the areas of data analysis, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence—by increasing the number and quality of skilled students graduating with in-demand digital core competencies. The Greater Washington WPI is partnering with top universities to create new industry recognized credentials in target digital technology fields and to determine where education can be better aligned to support employers' needs for skilled workers equipped to respond to rapid technological change.

- In **Los Angeles**, business leaders are partnering with the LA County Economic Development Corporation and twenty-eight community colleges to develop the regional talent pipeline for in-demand jobs through the Los Angeles Orange County Regional Consortium. The Consortium is focused on strengthening and expanding sector specific career pathway programs in high growth industries including entertainment and digital media production, cloud computing, and advanced transportation. Employers are informing pathways program design and developing work-based learning opportunities for students.³¹

PRIVATE SECTOR MENTORING PROGRAMS

In 2010, JPMorgan Chase launched The Fellowship Initiative (TFI) to provide intensive academic and leadership training to help young men of color from economically-distressed communities complete their high school educations and better prepare them to excel in colleges and universities.

TFI is part of the firm's broader ongoing efforts to provide adults and young people with the education, skills, and resources that contribute to greater economic mobility.

To date, more than 200 JPMorgan Chase employees have worked with TFI Fellows as mentors, coaches, speakers, or volunteers in various capacities in Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, and New York.

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