

Policies to Support Learners from Education to Workforce

Government Agencies & Systems Leaders

WHAT IS PATHWAYS MATTER?

Pathways Matter is an online tool that provides a comprehensive learner-centered framework for state policies supporting high-quality education to workforce pathways. Spanning K-12, postsecondary and on to employment, Pathways Matter identifies 20 state key policies within 6 focus areas that states can adopt and strengthen to support learners of all ages. Pathways Matter is based in three core principles:

1. **Learners take different educational journeys.** While some learners seamlessly transition from K-12 to postsecondary to employment, others use on-ramps and off-ramps and stackable opportunities to complete their journey. Still others need critical support to find a new occupation or advance their careers.
2. **Pathways require coordinated support from all stakeholders.** High-quality pathways do not operate in isolation and neither should the agencies, policymakers, education systems, intermediaries, employers and communities who support them. Stakeholders must work together to ensure that learners can earn valuable credentials and succeed in high-wage, high-skill occupations.
3. **Policies must work together to maximize benefits for learners.** Learners span age levels, systems of education and workforce areas. Policies that support them need to be integrated as well so that progress made at one level or system is not slowed or stopped at another.

Pathways Matter highlights the full ecosystem of policies used to prioritize success for states and communities.

WHAT DOES PATHWAYS MATTER INCLUDE?

Pathways Matter features resources for understanding how policies can support high-quality pathways:

- **Learner Journeys** – three example journeys showcasing how individual learners have benefited from a robust policy continuum on their pathway from education to workforce. Each journey illustrates how supports and specific policies help these learners overcome barriers to reach their goals.
- **Policy Continuum** – a comprehensive policy continuum with six focus areas made up of 20 key policies.
 - *Focus Areas:* Learner Pathways, Postsecondary Acceleration, Postsecondary Credential Attainment, Workforce Readiness, Employer Engagement, Continuum Alignment & Quality Indicators.
 - *Key Policies and State Exemplars:* The continuum includes a definition, rationale and state policy success indicators for each of the 20 Key Policies. Each key policy highlights 3-4 example states who are further along in their policy journey.
- **State Case Studies** – an analysis of how the policy continuum is being implemented in select states (AZ, CO*, FL*, ID, IN, KY, MS, NC, OH, TN, TX, UT). Each case study identifies which policies are in place, what they do and how each can be strengthened. (*Coming soon)



HOW CAN SYSTEM LEADERS USE PATHWAYS MATTER?

System leaders at government agencies are arguably the most important stakeholders in developing strong programs to support learners along all legs of their journeys. Pathways Matter can help this important work in the following ways:

1. **Pathways Matter provides a common framework for essential education to workforce policies.** Interest and activities in supporting pathways is high, but too often stakeholders use different terminology and definitions for similar policies and programs. Pathways Matter includes clear definitions, criteria for success and state exemplars for all 20 policies. System leaders can use this framework to align their definitions and understanding of quality policies.
2. **Pathways Matter highlights the importance of cross-sector coordination for strong policy implementation.** Pathways Matter provides a clear view of how different policies extend across learner levels and systems. System leaders can use this framework to determine which other agencies should be partners when implementing policies and programs.
3. **Pathways Matter gives system leaders a tool to analyze state education to workforce policies and programs.** System leaders can use this framework to conduct an analysis of current existing policies/programs in the state and their alignment to quality to develop a prioritization plan of developing policies and strengthening implementation. For select states (AZ, CO*, FL*, ID, IN, KY, MS, NC, OH, TN, TX, UT) (*Coming Soon) ExcelinEd has conducted a preliminary mapping of the policy landscape for system leaders to leverage in the state analysis.
4. **Pathways Matter provides state examples of promising policies and programs.** Each state is unique and requires a tailored policy, but there is also no need to reinvent the wheel. Pathways Matter provides 3-4 example states and criteria for success for each of the 20 policies to serve as inspiration on ways to strengthen policies and implementation.

WHAT'S NEXT?

ExcelinEd is committed to engaging policymakers, partner organizations and leaders in pathway work to help states strengthen their learner continuums. Future activities include:

- **Conducting additional state analyses** and updating existing ones to reflect the evolution of state policy.
- **Convening a network of states** interested in using Pathways Matter to develop a strategic plan for policy and program initiatives.
- **Creating additional resources** devoted to cross-continuum topics such as governance structures, equity-oriented policies, pathway navigation and advising and funding for outcomes and value.

Pathways Matter now more than ever. Join us in helping ensure that all learners have access to and supports for their education to workforce journeys.

Have questions or want to talk about the learner continuum in your state? We are here to help! Contact us at PathwaysMatter@ExcelinEd.org.