

# PATHWAYS MATTER

## How State Policies Build A Skilled, Educated Workforce

State policy is a critical lever for ensuring all learners—regardless of age—have access to high-quality, high-wage, high-demand education to workforce pathways. Though learners take unique journeys, a state’s overall structure and supports must be constant, ensuring learners graduate with credentials and qualifications most valued by their intended employers.

ExcelinEd’s *Pathways Matter*:

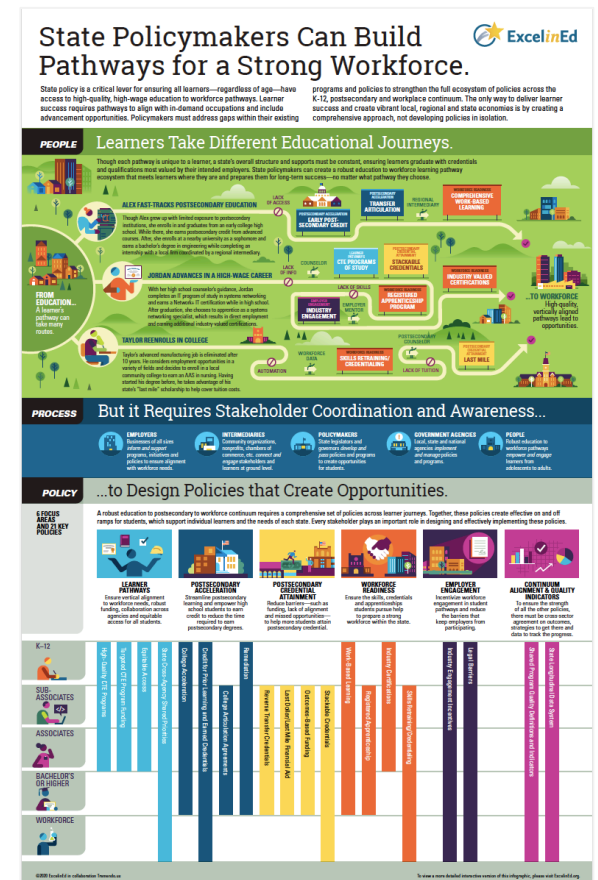
- Proposes a framework for states to think about the full set of policies necessary to support learners transitioning from education to the workforce.
- Highlights how individuals can benefit from a robust, interconnected set of policies.
- Describes each major policy and where strong state examples exist.

Every stakeholder plays an important role in designing and effectively implementing a robust education to postsecondary to workforce infrastructure. *Pathways Matter* outlines a comprehensive approach policymakers and stakeholders can use as a blueprint of policies and strategies to help them work together to address gaps and strengthen the state education policy ecosystem. The end result will deliver learner success to create long-lasting and vibrant local, regional and state economies.

### CONNECT WITH US

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**State Policymakers Can Build Pathways for a Strong Workforce.**

State policy is a critical lever for ensuring all learners—regardless of age—have access to high-quality, high-wage education to workforce pathways. Learner success requires pathways to align with in-demand occupations and include advancement opportunities. Policymakers must address gaps within their existing programs and policies to strengthen the full ecosystem of policies across the K-12, postsecondary and workforce continuum. The only way to deliver learner success and create vibrant local, regional and state economies is by creating a comprehensive approach, not developing policies in isolation.

**PEOPLE: Learners Take Different Educational Journeys.**

Though each pathway is unique to a learner, a state’s overall structure and supports must be constant, ensuring learners graduate with credentials and qualifications most valued by their intended employers. State policymakers can create a robust education to workforce learning pathway ecosystem that meets learners where they are and prepares them for long-term success—no matter what pathway they choose.

**PROCESS: But it Requires Stakeholder Coordination and Awareness...**

**POLICY: ...to Design Policies that Create Opportunities.**

A robust education to postsecondary to workforce continuum requires a comprehensive set of policies across learner journeys. Together, these policies create effective on- and off-ramps for students, which support individual learners and the needs of each state. Every stakeholder plays an important role in designing and effectively implementing these policies.

**LEADS ARE KEY POLICIES:**

- LEARNER PATHWAYS:** Meet critical alignment to workforce needs, about learning, credentialing and career access for all students.
- POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS:** Provide high-quality learning and prepare high school students to meet the long-term needs of the workforce.
- POSTSECONDARY ATTENDANCE:** Reduce barriers such as housing, food, and transportation, and ensure postsecondary access for all students.
- WORKFORCE READINESS:** Ensure that students, employers and apprenticeship and job training programs are aligned to prepare a skilled workforce within the state.
- EARLY CAREER ENGAGEMENT:** Increase workforce engagement in student pathways and ensure that learners that keep learners from participating.
- CREDENTIAL ALIGNMENT & VALIDITY:** To ensure the strength of all of the state’s credentials, alignment as a “continuum” approach is a critical step to take the program.



# LEARNER PATHWAYS

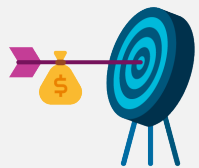
*Ensure vertical alignment to workforce needs, robust funding, collaboration across agencies and equitable access for all students.*

K-12	SUB-ASSOCIATE	ASSOCIATE	BACHELOR'S OR HIGHER	WORKFORCE
HIGH-QUALITY CTE PROGRAMS				
TARGETED CTE PROGRAM FUNDING				
AUDIT FOR QUALITY AND EQUITY				
STATE CROSS-AGENCY SHARED PRIORITIES				



## HIGH-QUALITY CTE PROGRAMS

Align all CTE programs with high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations that reflect the state's economic and workforce priorities. Ensure that these programs feature the academic and technical skills and knowledge learners will need to be successful.



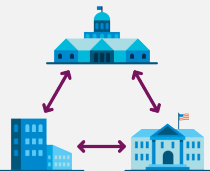
## TARGETED CTE PROGRAM FUNDING

Dedicate state funding for CTE programs—but only if they are aligned to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations. Target specific funds for pathway completion and demonstrated learner outcomes.



## AUDIT FOR QUALITY AND EQUITY

Conduct a biennial audit of CTE programs for quality and equity to ensure that all learners have access to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage pathways. Collect school- and student-level data to evaluate outcomes of CTE programs against established shared metrics for quality and equity.



## STATE CROSS-AGENCY SHARED PRIORITIES

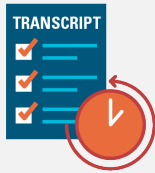
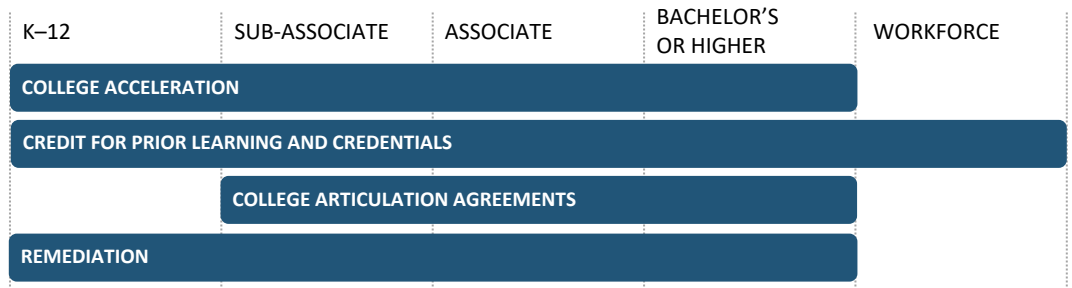
Establish shared priorities and collective accountability across state agencies and education systems for learner pathway development, supports and success. Ensure that business and industry have a seat at the table and can lead discussions related to demand and training requirements.





# POSTSECONDARY ACCELERATION

*Streamline postsecondary learning and empower high school students to earn credit to reduce the time required to earn postsecondary degrees.*



## COLLEGE ACCELERATION

Provide and incentivize a range of options for learners to earn college credit while in high school. Ensure that all learners have access and financial support to accelerate their journey to a postsecondary credential.



## CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING AND CREDENTIALS

Implement a consistent state policy for awarding postsecondary program or elective credit for prior learning, work experience and earned industry credentials.



## COLLEGE ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

Establish statewide articulation agreements to ensure college credits earned in K-12 or at one institution transfer and count toward a degree at another. Minimize or eliminate credit loss and misalignment for transitioning learners.



## REMEDiation

Replace outdated developmental and remedial education with college credit bearing options paired with intensive supports. Adopt co-requisite remediation programs or offer remediation to learners before they graduate high school.





# POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

*Reduce barriers—such as funding, lack of alignment and missed opportunities—to help more students attain postsecondary credentials.*

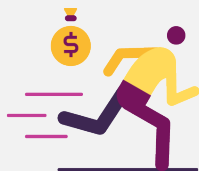
K-12

SUB-ASSOCIATE	ASSOCIATE	BACHELOR'S OR HIGHER	WORKFORCE
REVERSE TRANSFER CREDENTIALS			
LAST DOLLAR/LAST MILE FINANCIAL AID			
OUTCOMES-BASED FUNDING			
STACKABLE CREDENTIALS			



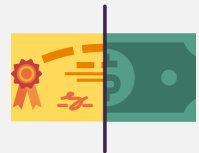
## REVERSE TRANSFER CREDENTIALS

Establish a statewide policy to allow students to earn an associate degree while continuing to work toward a bachelor's degree. Ensure two-year and four-year college credits can be combined toward the credential.



## LAST DOLLAR/LAST MILE FINANCIAL AID

Provide dedicated state financial aid to qualifying learners that fills in gaps in federal assistance (last dollar) and promotes attainment for learners just shy of completing a degree (last mile).



## OUTCOMES-BASED FUNDING

Transition postsecondary funding models from those based on learner enrollment to ones based on learner outcomes. Dedicate more funding to programs and institutions that show demonstrated success in meeting success metrics such as job placement and long-term wage earnings.



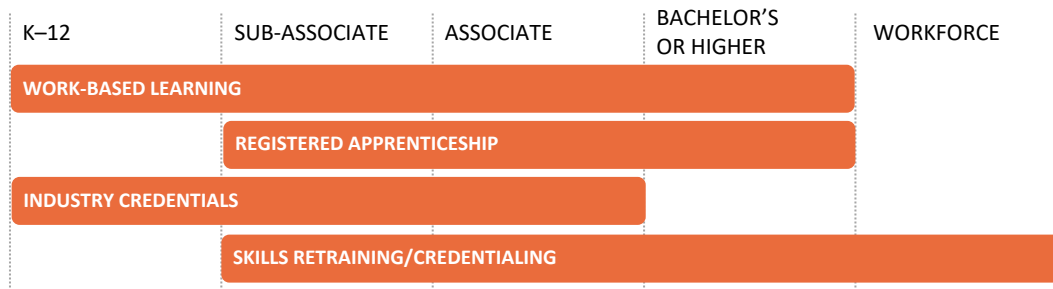
## STACKABLE CREDENTIALS

Define and promote a combination of industry and academic credentials that reflect articulated pathways to advanced learning and employment. Ensure that postsecondary credential programs are widely accessible to all learners and reflect value in the labor market.



# WORKFORCE READINESS

*Ensure the skills, credentials and apprenticeships students pursue help to prepare a strong workforce within the state.*



## WORK-BASED LEARNING

Establish a statewide K-12 and postsecondary work-based learning program that promotes learning through a series of progressive learner experiences both in the classroom and in a work setting. Provide guidance and support for how education and business and industry collaborate to achieve mutual priorities.



## REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Establish clearly defined program guidance for state-promoted registered apprenticeships and apprentice programs outlining prerequisites, requirements, funding, stakeholder incentives and participant outcomes.



## INDUSTRY CREDENTIALS

Ensure all industry credentials earned in K-12 or postsecondary are aligned with high-demand, high-skill, high-wage occupations and valued by state and regional employers.



## SKILLS RETRAINING/CREDENTIALING

Identify and promote non-degree programs and credentials that support new, transitioning and displaced learners in career change and advancement. Ensure that supports include funding supports for learners and incentives for participating employers who train or retrain them.





# EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

*Incentivize workforce engagement in student pathways and reduce the barriers that keep employers from participating.*

K-12	SUB-ASSOCIATE	ASSOCIATE	BACHELOR'S OR HIGHER	WORKFORCE
INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT INCENTIVES				
LEGAL BARRIERS				



## INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT INCENTIVES

Establish, sustain and promote a comprehensive set of industry and employer engagement incentives for supporting education to workforce pathways. Incentives may include grant funds, tax credits, or local and regional support services.



## LEGAL BARRIERS

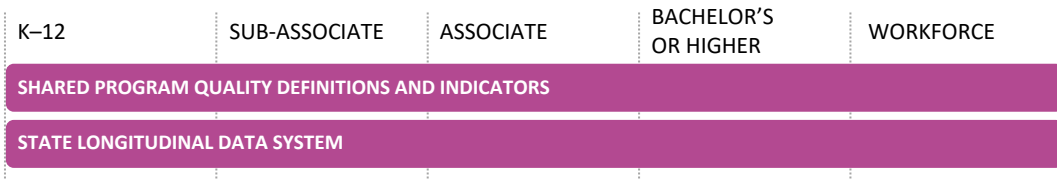
Remove or lessen legal barriers such as liability insurance, workers' compensation and worksite age restrictions to provide more learners with work-based learning opportunities.





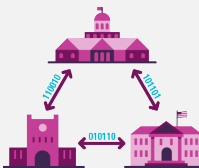
# CONTINUUM ALIGNMENT & QUALITY INDICATORS

*To ensure the strength of all the other policies, there must be cross-sector agreement on outcomes, strategies to get there and data to track progress.*



## SHARED PROGRAM QUALITY DEFINITIONS AND INDICATORS

Establish shared statewide definitions and indicators for quality of and success in education to workforce pathways. Ensure these shared priorities extend across agencies and systems and inform decisions about program offerings, funding and outcomes.



## STATE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM

Ensure the state's cross-agency data system collects and reports on data needed to evaluate education workforce programs against shared metrics for quality and success. Data should span agencies and education systems and into the workforce to inform decision-making and drive outcomes.

