How Do Intermediary Organizations Support Stronger Pathways Systems?

A National Landscape Scan

June 2022

educationfirst
experience | quality | results

Table of Contents

educationfirst

1 | Executive Summary

"If more students knew about [pathways programming], I think it would be such a game changer . . . to know that just because you may be in a lower income area in high school, that doesn't mean you can't be successful."

—Lanna Hernandez
CareerWise Colorado Apprentice, 18 years old
April 2022

Education First conducted a landscape scan to build knowledge and inform action across the field to strengthen pathways to good jobs for students

Why this report?

As they picture their future, students in the United States aspire for lives in which they can thrive, including a career with a good job. However, there are disparities in how easy it is for students of color, students who are experiencing poverty and students who attend school in rural communities to access educational opportunities that propel them to a job with the potential for upward economic mobility. Employers, policymakers, K12 system leaders, postsecondary providers and funders stand to benefit from coordinating across sectors to address pain points in their own systems and create a smoother and more equitable experience for all students.

Pathways intermediaries—organizations that knit K12, postsecondary and workforce systems together—play a crucial role in ensuring that all students have access to career-connected learning and that sector partners can smoothly coordinate their work**. By understanding the capacities that intermediaries bring to the pathways ecosystem and the underlying conditions that enable their work, pathways partners can create a stronger, more equitable system for everyone.

Who are we?

With support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Ascendium, Education First conducted a **nationwide landscape scan of pathways intermediaries.** Grounded in the perspective of intermediary leaders serving racially, socioeconomically and geographically diverse communities, this research provides stakeholders with a deep understanding of the **role and capacities of pathways intermediaries** as well as the **environmental conditions** that enable their success. It provides **actionable implications** for stakeholders to support pathways intermediaries in building an equitable system of pathways for all.

educationfirst

A set of high-level findings emerged from the research, along with a set of implications for those supporting pathways

NEED FOR EQUITABLE PATHWAYS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Indicators of postsecondary and career success underscore the need for career-connected pathways to help students access the good jobs they desire. Cross-sector programming and systems coordinated by intermediary organizations can support more students to access pathways to careers with the opportunity for upward economic mobility.

CORE CAPACITIES

This research identified six core capacities that intermediaries bring to pathways systems:
- *Cross-sector partnerships*
- *Community credibility*
- *Cross-sector data*
- *Program support*
- *Policy and funding*
- *Equity strategies*

ENABLING CONDITIONS

There are enabling conditions that accelerate progress or present barriers as intermediaries strive to support an equitable pathways system, including the following:
- *Policy context*
- *Partner engagement*
- *Narratives and community history*

TRENDS ACROSS A SAMPLE OF INTERMEDIARIES

An analysis of a sample of 190 intermediaries operating across the United States elevates the variety of organizations and approaches to pathways intermediary work.

SCALE

In order to scale their efforts, intermediaries must have a clear understanding about what components of their work lead to impact and work collaboratively with stakeholders to build a strategy for scaling.

SUSTAINABILITY

Partners and intermediaries should strive to access diversified funding sources and support proximate and cross-sector leaders in order to sustain their work.

IMPLICATIONS

To realize the benefits of pathways ecosystems, actors across the education and workforce sectors must move beyond traditional silos to support intermediaries in building equitable systems of pathways.

Stakeholders across the education and employment continuum express a clear need for equitable pathways

NEED FOR EQUITABLE PATHWAYS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Indicators of postsecondary and career success underscore the need for career-connected pathways to help students access the good jobs they desire. Cross-sector programming and systems coordinated by intermediary organizations can support more students to access pathways to careers with the opportunity for upward economic mobility.

CORE CAPA...

This research identified
capacities that interme...
pathways systems:
- *Cross-sector partne...*
- *Community credibil...*
- *Cross-sector data*
- *Program support*
- *Policy and funding*
- *Equity strategies*

...CROSS A SAMPLE ...ERMEDIARIES

...sample of 190
...operating across the
...evates the variety of
...d approaches to
...mediary work.

SCALE...

In order to scale their eff...
intermediaries must hav...
understanding about wh...
of their work lead to imp...
collaboratively with stak...
a strategy for scaling.

...LICATIONS

...enefits of pathways
...ors across the education
...ectors must move
...al siloes to support
...n building equitable
...ways.

NEED FOR EQUITABLE PATHWAYS

- Students aspire to live a good life and believe that a good job is a means to that end.
- Research shows that **racial disparities** exist in **postsecondary attainment** rates and **access to good-paying jobs.**
- Additionally, **geographic disparities** persist in postsecondary attainment rates and studies show that **students experiencing poverty** are less likely than their peers to stay on track.
- To ensure that all students can access pathways that lead to good jobs, **equity** must be a central design consideration.
- When implemented well and with equity as a guiding focus, career-connected **pathways can be beneficial for stakeholders across the ecosystem**: students, K12 schools and systems, postsecondary providers, employers and policymakers all benefit.
- Given these needs, pathways intermediaries help create a pathways system that connects the K12, postsecondary and workforce sectors to create programs and systems that better support students in their journeys.
- The complex task of creating a pathways system requires buy-in from multiple partners and capacity from intermediary organizations to coordinate all partners.

Intermediary organizations bring six core capacities to help develop and sustain strong pathways systems

NEED FOR EQUITABLE PATHWAYS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Indicators of postsecondary and career success u... access the good jobs they desire. Cross-sector pr... can support more students to access pathways to...

CORE CAPACITIES

This research identified six core capacities that intermediaries bring to pathways systems:

- *Cross-sector partnerships*
- *Community credibility*
- *Cross-sector data*
- *Program support*
- *Policy and funding*
- *Equity strategies*
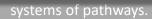
CORE CAPACITIES

- These core-capacity functions **may be performed by a single organization or a variety of different organizations** within an ecosystem.
- To succeed, intermediaries must deeply **understand and have credibility with** the communities they work with. Engaging in thoughtful **partnership cultivation and management** helps achieve this.
- High-functioning intermediaries **elevate student voice** to inform programming efforts and seek to incorporate the feedback of those they seek to serve.
- As part of their policy and funding efforts, it is important that successful intermediaries **communicate a clear vision** about pathways efforts.
- Effective intermediaries leverage partnerships and credibility to mobilize **resources**, **policy change** and **public support** for pathways efforts.
- Intermediaries should have a point of view on the **intended equitable outcomes for student subgroups**, as well as reflect equity priorities in their **internal structure and priorities.**
- Intermediaries operating in rural or politically conservative communities often need to make **strategic choices about when and how to explicitly discuss equity.**

SCALE

In order to scale their efforts, intermediaries must have a clear understanding about what components of their work lead to impact and work collaboratively with stakeholders to build a strategy for scaling.

systems of pathways.

The success and impact of intermediaries depends in part on the strength of enabling conditions

NEED FOR EQUITABLE PATHWAYS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Indicators of postsecondary and career success underscore the need for career-connected pathways to help students access the good jobs they desire. Cross-sector programming and systems coordinated by intermediary organizations ca... ...opportunity for upward economic mobility.

ENABLING CONDITIONS

- While not all elements required to create strong pathways are place based, **all pathways interventions must eventually land in place**—a school, classroom or employment experience—in order to affect the experience of students as they navigate to a career where they can thrive.
- Our research identified **three enabling conditions** that can accelerate progress or present barriers as intermediaries strive to create an equitable pathways system:
  + *Policy context*
  + *Partner engagement*
  + *Narratives and community history*
- Intermediaries and their partners should strive to **understand the enabling conditions** that are present within the place or places they are striving to affect change.
- Understanding community history, narratives and prior partner relationship is often **especially important** in rural communities and communities that are more racially and ethnically diverse.
- While engagement from partners in all sectors are needed, **buy-in and equity-oriented partnership from employers** are emerging as critical conditions.

...NDITIONS

...ditions that
...resent barriers
...to support an
...tem, including

...ment

...ry

...BILITY

...aries should
...ed funding
...oximate and
...order to sustain

TRENDS ACROSS A SAMPLE OF INTERMEDIARIES

An analysis of a sample of 190 intermediaries operating across the United States elevates the variety of organizations and approaches to pathways intermediary work.

IMPLICATIONS

To realize the benefits of an interconnected pathways system, partners across multiple sectors must move beyond traditional siloes to work together seamlessly.

While intermediaries vary across the country, this research observed trends in their characteristics and locations

NEED FOR EQUITABLE PATHWAYS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Indicators of postsecondary and career success underscore the need for career-connected pathways to help students access the good jobs they desire. Cross-sector programming and systems coordinated by intermediary organizations ~~ward economic mobility.~~

TRENDS ACROSS A SAMPLE OF INTERMEDIARIES

- An analysis of a sample of 190 intermediaries operating across the United States demonstrates the **variety of approaches** to pathways intermediary work.

- Through our desk research and conversations with proximate leaders, it became clear that the **structure and work of intermediaries are often influenced by the existing capacities and enabling conditions** in a locality or state.

- Local **context and conditions** play an important role in which organizations steps into the intermediary role, and this can result in wide variation in which organizations serve as an intermediary.

- There may be **co-lead intermediaries** within a community. Multiple organizations across a community can combine their areas of expertise to execute collaboratively on the core functions of intermediaries.

- Future research can build on this sample of intermediaries by **conducting deep stakeholder and landscape analysis within specific geographies** to identify organizations that are filling intermediary roles, what capacities they bring and where support is most needed.

TRENDS ACROSS A SAMPLE OF INTERMEDIARIES

An analysis of a sample of 190 intermediaries operating across the United States elevates the variety of organizations and approaches to pathways intermediary work.

of their work lead to impact and work collaboratively with stakeholders to build a strategy for scaling.

cross-sector leaders in order to sustain their work.

IMPLICATIONS
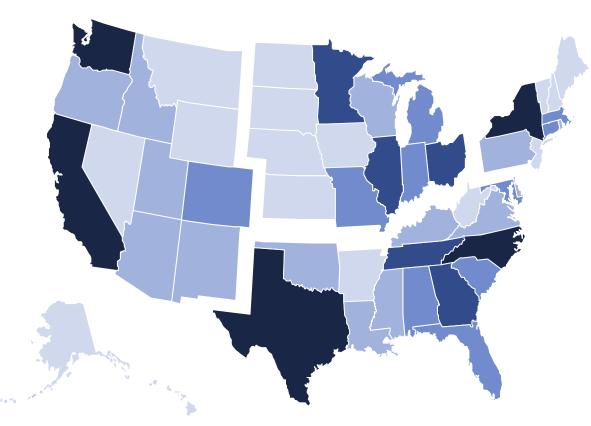
To realize the benefits of pathways ecosystems, actors across the education and workforce sectors must move beyond traditional siloes to support intermediaries in building equitable systems of pathways.

This sample also indicates that while intermediaries are operating in all states and regions, the concentration of intermediaries varies

Interpreting This Heat Map

Number of intermediaries in sample

13+
10–12
7–9
4–6
1–3

NOTE: The data in this map are drawn from a sample of 190 intermediaries from a national landscape scan.

Information was gathered based on publicly available materials. This sample is intended to illustrate the range and density of intermediaries in this state. It is not an exhaustive list. Organizations that work across multiple states are counted as operating in each state.

Of the intermediaries sampled in this analysis, **Texas** (30), **California** (19) and **New York** (17) have the largest number of pathways intermediaries operating in their state

educationfirst

Regions align with designations from the SREB Fact Book on Higher Education

Scaling the impact of intermediaries' work to new geographies requires a strong evidence base and plan for scale

NEED FOR EQUITABLE PATHWAYS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Indicators of postsecondary and career success underscore the need for career-connected pathways to help students access the good jobs they desire. Cross-sector ~~intermediaries~~ ~~who build equitable pathways systems~~ can support more students to access pathway ~~opportunities.~~

CORE CAPACITIES

This research identified six core capacities that intermediaries bring to pathways systems:

- *Cross-sector partnerships*
- *Community credibility*
- *Cross-sector data*
- *Program support*
- *Policy and funding*
- *Equity strategies*

SCALE

In order to scale their efforts, intermediaries must have a clear understanding about what components of their work lead to impact and work collaboratively with stakeholders to build a strategy for scaling.

SCALE

- To address **opportunity gaps** based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and geography, the availability of equitable pathways needs to be scaled.

- In order to scale their efforts, intermediaries must have a **clear understanding** about what components of their work lead to impact and work collaboratively with stakeholders to build a strategy for scaling.

- In the short term, common indicators that help intermediaries and their partners assess their readiness to scale include:
    + *Robust evidence that the innovation works in diverse settings with diverse students.*
    + *An independent external evaluation.*
    + *A clear and compelling scale strategy.*
    + *A strong coalition of support in the communities where the innovation(s) will be spread.*
    + *Sustainable sources of funding to support the scaling effort.*

A SAMPLE ~~OF INTERMEDI~~ARIES

~~This research studied~~ 190 ~~intermediaries from~~ across the ~~country who use a~~ variety of ~~different approac~~hes to ~~structure their wo~~rk.

~~IMPLICATIO~~NS

~~To expand equitable~~ ~~pathways~~ ~~systems across~~ the education ~~landscape, we mu~~st move ~~collaboratively t~~o support ~~intermediaries in bu~~ilding equitable systems of pathways.

Sustainability is a primary concern for many pathways intermediary organizations and their partners

Indicators of po...
access the goo...
can support mo...

CORE...

This research id...
capacities that...
pathways syste...
- *Cross-secto...*
- *Community...*
- *Cross-secto...*
- *Program su...*
- *Policy and f...*
- *Equity strat...*

A SAMPLE ...ARIES

...190
...cross the
...variety of
...hes to
...rk.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Sustainability considerations are especially crucial for intermediaries due to the common challenges they face with securing funding, such as the misconception that cross-sector coordination is low cost, the potential for intermediaries to compete with their partners for funding and limited access to long-term and diverse sources of funding.

- The sustainability of a pathways initiative—and the work of the intermediary—is determined in part by **how willing partners are to invest their resources into the collaboration.**

- Research has found that nonprofit-based pathways intermediaries **tend to rely primarily on philanthropic funding** to sustain their operations.

- Partners and intermediaries should strive to access **diversified funding sources and support proximate and cross-sector leaders** in order to sustain their work.

SCALE

In order to scale their efforts, intermediaries must have a clear understanding about what components of their work lead to impact and work collaboratively with stakeholders to build a strategy for scaling.

SUSTAINABILITY

Partners and intermediaries should strive to access diversified funding sources and support proximate and cross-sector leaders in order to sustain their work.

IMPLICATIONS

To realize the benefits of pathways ecosystems, actors across the education and workforce sectors must move beyond traditional siloes to support intermediaries in building equitable systems of pathways.

Additionally, conversations with rural stakeholders elevated unique needs and challenges as well as assets their communities can leverage to build pathways

RURAL FINDINGS

CORE CAPACITIES

- In managing partnerships and building community credibility, the **importance of trust came through particularly strongly in interviews with rural intermediary leaders**. Proximate leadership and a deep understanding of the rural context are factors that can help build trust between an intermediary and the community they seek to serve.

- Leading on equity is a crucial capacity. Rural interviewees noted that phrasing and language around equity particularly matters when working in the **rural context.** Intermediaries that have success moving equitable pathways efforts **often tailor conversations to focus on communities' local equity needs and the vocabulary they use.**

> "Who is furthest from opportunity in your community? We need to begin where your community is at. **If we don't do that, we are going to lose people so quickly.** [But if we do], then we can actually help create a process to bring stakeholders to the table for a conversation about how to change outcomes for students."
> —*Rural Intermediary Leader*

ENABLING CONDITIONS

- Rural communities often have a **strong need and desire** for employers to create good jobs in rural regions.

- Rural communities often have **strong preexisting relationships** among stakeholders and a **history of collaboration** that accelerates pathways efforts.

SCALE

- Rural pathways ecosystems might be able to **achieve scale** in their communities faster due to a **culture of decision-making** and **collaboration**.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Rural intermediary leaders indicate that the **leadership talent pipeline** is a cornerstone of their human capital **sustainability strategy.**

education**first**

Given these findings, our research identified eight overarching implications for stakeholders supporting pathways systems

NEED FOR EQUITABLE PATHWAYS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Indicator... -connected pathways to help students
access th... ...inated by intermediary organizations
can supp... ...for upward economic mobility.

IMPLICATIONS

1. To realize the benefits of an interconnected pathways system, **partners must move beyond traditional siloes** to work together seamlessly.

2. Because pathways work is complex and contextual, **investing in intermediaries helps build and sustain** interconnected systems.

3. Partners should expect that **intermediary capacities and structures will vary** to meet the needs of local context and conditions.

4. Intermediaries often play a crucial role in **advocating for coherent policies** that promote cross-sector collaboration.

5. Partners and intermediaries should strive to access **diversified sources of funding and support proximate and cross-sector leaders** in order to sustain their work.

6. Stakeholders must support **and invest in research and evaluation efforts** in order to better understand the role and impact of intermediaries.

7. In order to **scale their efforts**, intermediaries must have a clear understanding on what **components of their work lead to impact** and work collaboratively with stakeholders for scaling.

8. Actors across the pathways ecosystem must work together to **build the enabling conditions** that support intermediaries in building equitable pathways systems.

This rese...
capacitie...
pathway...
- Cros...
- Com...
- Cros...
- Prog...
- Polic...
- Equi...

In order...
intermed...
understa...
of their...
collabora...
a strateg...
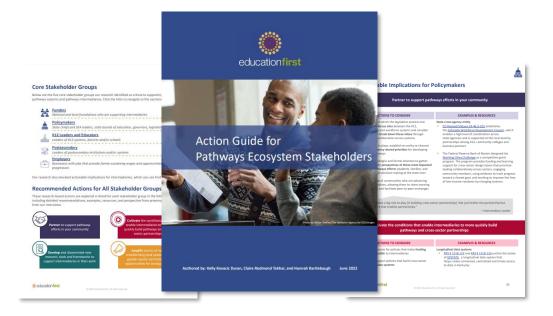
TRENDS ACROSS A SAMPLE OF INTERMEDIARIES

An analysis of a sample of 190 intermediaries operating across the United States elevates the variety of organizations and approaches to pathways intermediary work.

IMPLICATIONS

To realize the benefits of pathways ecosystems, actors across the education and workforce sectors must move beyond traditional siloes to support intermediaries in building equitable systems of pathways.

As stakeholders reflect on how to support intermediaries and build equitable pathways systems, our action guide can help

Action Guide for Pathways Ecosystem Stakeholders

This action guide **builds on the findings and implications of the landscape scan** and is intended to serve as a tool for stakeholders across pathways systems as they consider **actions to take to support intermediaries and build stronger pathways systems.** The way in which partners show up and engage helps create the enabling conditions that allow intermediaries to serve a crucial coordinating role, aligning partners and creating cohesive momentum.
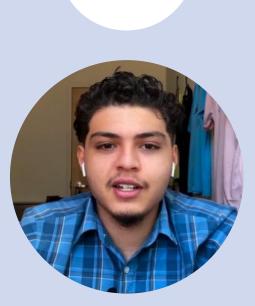
Click **here** for an **action guide** with recommendations specific for each stakeholder group.

This report is one of four public goods Education First produced to help stakeholders support intermediaries and strengthen career-connected pathways

Resources

Literature Review

A synthesis of the available research on pathways intermediaries, their core capacities, the conditions that enable their work and crucial considerations for supporting them

Full Report on the National Landscape Scan

Building on the literature review, a robust analysis of the perspective and experience of stakeholders who are striving to create equitable pathways for students, with a particular focus on intermediaries that serve BIPOC students, students who are experiencing poverty and intermediaries working in rural contexts

Action Guide for Pathways Stakeholders

Detailed recommendations for stakeholders that build on the findings and implications of the full report

Race, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (RIDE) Framework

The framework the research team used to ensure that principles of equity and inclusion along lines of racial, geographic and socioeconomic diversity guided this work at every step

CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THESE RESOURCES

"I want to be someone in life that took the right path to being as successful as they could. I dream about my future—if I'm taking the right steps right now, I'll be doing something I enjoy, and I'll be giving back to the people that gave to me."

—Jorge Ramirez
Student, California State University, Sacramento
January 2022

Source: Equitable Futures—Roadtrip Nation

2 | Setting the Stage and Landscape Scan Objectives

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Ascendium funded Education First to conduct a national landscape scan on pathways intermediaries

Who funded the research?

The BMGF Pathways team strives to ensure that more Black and Latino/a/x students, and students from low-income backgrounds, obtain **credentials of value** and have the professional skills, agency and social capital needed to **thrive in education and the workforce.**

Ascendium is working to support **rural postsecondary education** and **workforce training** so that all students—particularly rural and students who are experiencing poverty—**have equitable opportunities for socioeconomic mobility**.

Who conducted the research?

Education First conducted this **nationwide landscape scan** to better understand the **defining characteristics of intermediaries** that strive to connect education and workforce systems as well as **identify how invested stakeholders can help accelerate their impact**.

This landscape scan aims to build knowledge and inform action in the philanthropic, policy and education sectors to strengthen career-connected pathways for students

Why this report?

As they picture their future, students in the United States aspire for lives in which they can thrive, including a career with a good job. A large qualitative and quantitative study published in 2020 among nearly 4,000 Black and Latino/a/x youth from all income levels and white youth from lower-income households revealed insights about what students want for their futures. **Above all, students aspire to live a good life and believe that a good job is a means to that end.**

Students think that a **good job** …	Students think that a **bad job** …
✓ Pays well and offers benefits.	✗ Pays poorly; few to no benefits.
✓ Has a steady income and enables you to live debt free.	✗ Is something you do to make ends meet.
✓ Matches your strengths, passion or interest.	✗ Has poor or unsafe working conditions.
✓ Is something you enjoy.	✗ Demands a lot of time; long hours/commute.
✓ Is where you have amiable coworkers.	✗ No opportunity for career growth.
✓ Is where you have a good boss.	✗ Is where you have no control over your schedule.
✓ Is where you are respected.	
✓ Has opportunities for growth.	
✓ Comes with control and predictability.	
✓ Enables you to have space for both your work and your family.	

education first

At the same time, indicators of postsecondary and career success underscore the need for career-connected pathways to help students access the good jobs they desire

Racial and geographic disparities exist in postsecondary attainment rates.

While 42 percent of white adults ages 25 or older hold at least a bachelors degree, **just 28 percent of Black adults and 21 percent of Latino/a/x adults ages 25 or older do.** Additionally, just **19 percent of rural Americans** hold at least a bachelor's degree, compared to an average of 33 percent nationwide.

Students experiencing poverty are less likely to stay on track.

For community college students, higher-income students are nearly **twice as likely** as their peers experiencing poverty to transfer to a four-year institution and to attain a bachelor's degree within six years of first entry.

Racial disparities in accessing good-paying jobs persist, even with a credential.

Only 75 percent of Black and Latino/a/x college graduates are employed within a year of graduating college compared to 83 percent of white graduates. Also, Black median incomes are 10 percent lower, and Latino/a/x are 5 percent lower than those of their white peers.

educationfirst

Sources: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center(2020); National Center for Education Statistics (2019); Lumina Foundation (2019)

To ensure that all students can access pathways that lead to good jobs, equity must be a central design consideration

CTE programs have a history of tracking students into limited opportunities.

Historically, career and technical education programs were used to **track students of color and students experiencing poverty into low-quality programs that led to jobs with limited or no opportunities for upward economic mobility**.
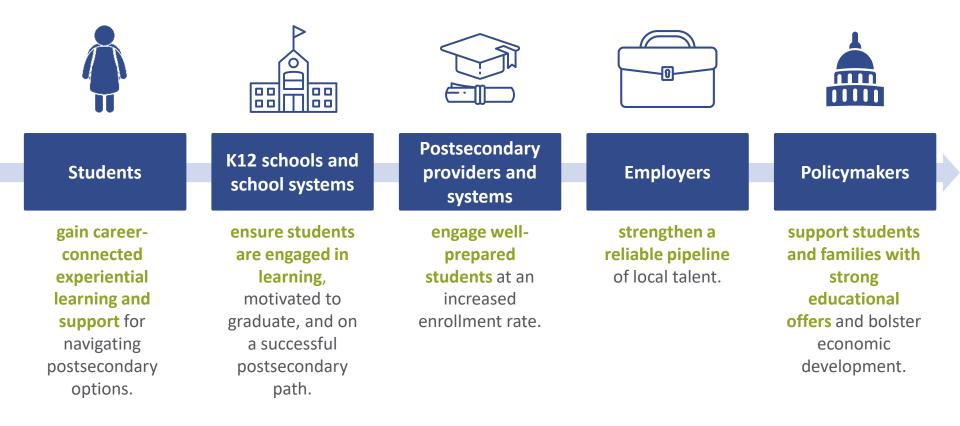
Equitable outcomes are more likely when programs are designed for equity.

A 2018 study of cross-sector collective impact efforts found that **initiatives that intentionally focused on equity in program design and implementations were more likely to close race- and income-based opportunity gaps** than initiatives with no explicit equity focus.

Students need support to develop a vision for their future in the workforce.

Structural barriers make it difficult for marginalized students—such as students of color and students experiencing poverty—to imagine themselves in **high-prestige occupations**. Pathways efforts must intentionally counteract stereotypes and implicit biases by providing **alternative representation, culturally relevant pedagogy and affinity-based mentorship** to support students on their journey.

educationfirst

When implemented well and with equity as a guiding focus, career-connected pathways can be beneficial for multiple stakeholder groups

Students	K12 schools and school systems	Postsecondary providers and systems	Employers	Policymakers
gain career-connected experiential learning and support for navigating postsecondary options.	**ensure students are engaged in learning,** motivated to graduate, and on a successful postsecondary path.	**engage well-prepared students** at an increased enrollment rate.	**strengthen a reliable pipeline** of local talent.	**support students and families with strong educational offers** and bolster economic development.

To address these needs, we researched the role of pathways intermediaries as key actors in creating more effective and equitable career-connected pathways

Research Objectives: What We Set Out To Learn

Core Capacities
What capacities are needed in pathways ecosystems, and how do pathways intermediaries deliver them?

Enabling Conditions
What characteristics of the larger ecosystem in which intermediaries operate tend to accelerate their work?

Proximate Perspective
What is the perspective of people who are closest to the problems that exist in the pathways ecosystem and that intermediary organizations exist to solve?

education**first**

This landscape scan is one of four public goods Education First produced to help stakeholders support intermediaries and strengthen career-connected pathways

Resources

Literature Review	A synthesis of the available research on pathways intermediaries, their core capacities, the conditions that enable their work and crucial considerations for supporting them
Full Report on the National Landscape Scan	Building on the literature review, a robust analysis of the perspective and experience of stakeholders who are striving to create equitable pathways for students, with a particular focus on intermediaries that serve BIPOC students, students who are experiencing poverty and intermediaries working in rural contexts
Action Guide for Pathways Stakeholders	Detailed recommendations for stakeholders that build on the findings and implications of the full report
Race, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (RIDE) Framework	The framework the research team used to ensure that principles of equity and inclusion along lines of racial, geographic and socioeconomic diversity guided this work at every step

CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THESE RESOURCES

We conducted desk research and interviewed stakeholders to develop the findings and implications in this scan

Research Methodology

Surveys

Surveyed 19 students from a mix of rural communities and metropolitan areas about their experiences in pathways programs

Interviews

Interviewed 41 people from several stakeholder groups, prioritizing proximate voice such as people engaged in pathways partnerships, people who live in the communities they serve and people whose racial or ethnic backgrounds match the students they serve:

- Funders
- Intermediary leaders
- K12 partners
- Postsecondary partners
- Policymakers
- National experts
- Students

Literature Review

Selected 52 studies to review that met our inclusion and priority criteria:

Inclusion Criteria

1. Published after the year 2000

2. Focused primarily on intermediaries and/or pathways work

3. Written by identifiable authors and organizations

4. Affiliated with reputable organizations or institutions whether that be a postsecondary institution, think tank, nonprofit organization, a governing body or other stakeholders known to impact a pathways intermediary

Priority Criteria

1. Focused on rural context and geographies

2. Peer-reviewed

3. Prioritized an intermediary's impact on BIPOC students, students experiencing poverty and/or rural students

This scan is divided into nine sections described below

|		
Setting the Stage and Landscape Scan Objectives	An introduction to the rest of the report (this section)	Slides 19–29
A Promising Solution: Pathways Intermediaries	An overview of equitable pathways, pathways intermediaries and the different research findings included within this report	Slides 30–41
Core Capacities	Detailed findings on the six core capacities that tend to be present among organizations in the pathways-intermediaries ecosystem	Slides 42–67
Enabling Conditions	Research findings on the enabling conditions that can impact the ability of pathway intermediaries to be successful in promoting equitable outcomes for students	Slides 68–80
Trends Across a National Sample of Intermediaries	An analysis of major trends in a sample of pathways intermediaries from across the country	Slides 81–97
The Student Journey	Perspective from students, gathered through survey results and interviews, on their experience participating in pathways programming and the impact of pathways intermediaries	Slides 98–108
Scale	Considerations from desk research and interviews for how pathways intermediaries can approach scaling their impact	Slides 109–116
Sustainability	Findings from desk research and interviews on factors that contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of pathways-intermediary organizations	Slides 117–125
Implications	Implications and best practices that funders, policymakers and practitioners should consider when supporting pathways intermediary efforts	Slides 126–131

education**first**
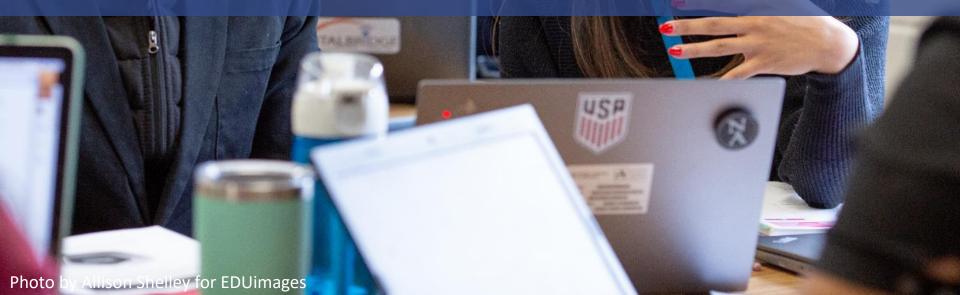
Click on each blue box to be taken to that section of the landscape scan.

These are definitions of key terms used in this scan

Term	Definition
Community	The site and the site's population that a collective initiative or effort seeks to serve.
Core Capacities	The capabilities, knowledge, skills and resources that constitute an organization's strength.
Enabling Conditions	The situation or environment that increases the likelihood of successful outcomes.
Partnership	A place-based, multi-stakeholder initiative or effort that strives to improve outcomes in a community.
Pathways	Integrated, intentionally designed structures and supports that span high school and postsecondary systems and enable the delivery of credit-bearing courses, learning experiences and student supports that lead to postsecondary credentials and successful transitions to the workforce.
Pathways Intermediaries	Organizations that sit at the center of an education and employment ecosystem, brokering partnerships and coordinating activities between K12 schools, postsecondary institutions and employers to increase equitable access to opportunities and paths to upward mobility for Black, Latino/a/x and young people experiencing poverty.
Proximate Leadership	Leaders who work or invest in social purpose organizations that focus on issues that have impacted them personally, serve their own geographic community or have race, ethnicity, gender or socioeconomic background in common with those they serve.
Rural	Given the wide diversity across rural communities, this scan does not pose a specific definition of rural to avoid the risk of excluding some communities based on the definition we selected. Rather, all research, organizations and communities that self-identified as rural or described their pathways focus as rural were included.
Systems Change	A shift in the conditions that produce and maintain societal problems such as practices, structures, policies, power dynamics, resource flows and mindsets; it often brings together stakeholders from multiple sectors including nonprofit, public, private or philanthropic institutions along with community constituents.

Sources: Education First (2020); Angela Jackson, John Kania and Tulaine Montgomery (2020); FSG (2018); U.S. Census Bureau (2016); Washington Post (2013); Equal Measure (2022)

3 | A Promising Solution: Pathways Intermediaries
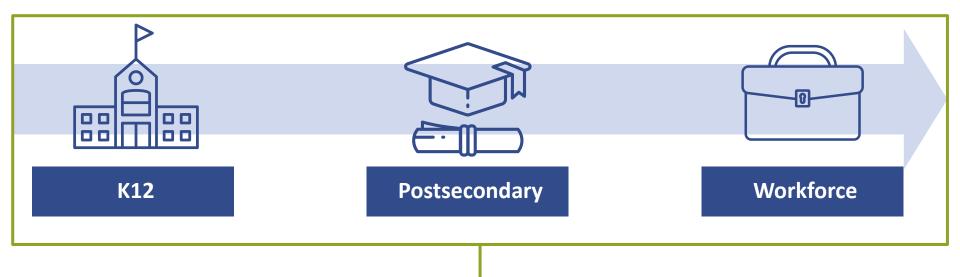
Photo by Allison Shelley for EDUimages

"We must ensure the pathways through higher education lead to successful careers by reimagining the connection between P12, higher education, and the workforce."

—Secretary Miguel Cardona
U.S. Department of Education
January 2022

To ensure that students can access careers with the opportunity for upward economic mobility, education and workforce sectors need to connect to form a pathways system

K12

Postsecondary

Workforce

The pathways system connects K12, postsecondary and workforce systems to create a coherent experience for students.

"*In my state, we have found that K12 schools, postsecondary institutions and employers have been isolated and siloed for way too long. Part of what we do is help educators understand what connecting to the workforce can do for schools. We bring them together in to discuss how we can support businesses with growing future employees and help kids see a vision for off ramps and on ramps to careers they want.*"

—Intermediary Leader

For the purposes of this landscape scan, "pathways" refers to the connections between high school, postsecondary and workforce spaces

Pathways connect **K12, postsecondary and workforce systems.**

Pathways are integrated, intentionally designed structures and supports that span high school and postsecondary systems and enable the delivery of credit-bearing courses, learning experiences and student supports that lead to postsecondary credentials and successful transitions to the workforce.

Other common uses of "pathways" that are **NOT** the focus of this research include:

Guided Pathways refers to a framework for **postsecondary institutions** to support students.

Guided pathways is an institution-wide approach to student success that is based on giving students clear, coherent and structured educational experiences that build in a variety of academic and nonacademic supports.

Career path commonly refers to a roadmap for advancement within **an organization**.

A career path is an advancement roadmap with short- and long-term benchmarks. It maps the route an employee takes from a lower-level position through successive roles to arrive at their ultimate goal.

education**first**

There are many important levers for creating a more coherent and equitable pathways system
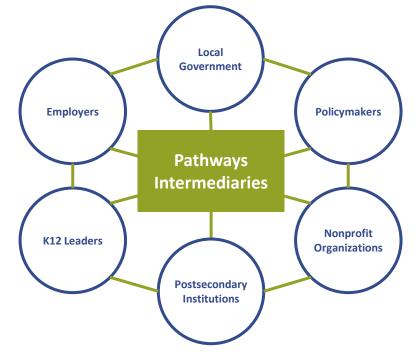
Common Elements of Quality Pathways
▪ Feature supports and policies to ensure equity within and across pathway opportunities.
▪ Begin in K12 and continue in postsecondary education and employment.
▪ Align to high-skill, high-wage and high-demand occupations in states and regions.
▪ Allow students to earn postsecondary credit and industry credentials while in high school.
▪ Include critical navigation supports for transition points between K12 and postsecondary.
▪ Support continued career advancement through additional credentialing and skill attainment.
▪ Support students to develop strong self-identity and career awareness.
▪ Include work-based learning opportunities such as apprenticeships and internships.

Intermediary organizations are a **mechanism to deliver these elements in place**—the communities, schools, community college, universities and places of employment where students will experience the programming and support they need to thrive (*see the Student Journey section to learn more about students' experiences in pathways programs*).

educationfirst

Sources: Advance CTE (2018); Chiefs for Change (2021)

The work of pathways intermediaries is creating a pathways system that delivers equitable outcomes for students

Pathways intermediaries are one or more organizations that connect state/regional/local employers, K12 education leaders, local government, postsecondary institutions, policymakers and nonprofit organizations to develop and grow the "education to career" pipeline. **Pathways intermediaries are distinguished from other cross-sector coordinating organizations by the fact that they partner with three specific sectors: K12, postsecondary and workforce.**

Pathways intermediaries create the ecosystem required for equitable pathways to exist by:

Changing systems and creating cross-sector partnerships.

+

Creating and running pathways programming.

educationfirst

Pathways intermediaries can consist of a single organization or close partnerships of multiple organizations

Example: Single Organization

HERE to HERE

HERE to HERE creates an effective youth talent development system that works for all Bronx and NYC students, educators and employers.

> "**HERE to HERE champions students by working to redefine the systems that unfairly burden Black and Brown students as they pursue their career ambitions. We understand that the issues are complex and interrelated. That's why we create effective partnerships, prioritize the thoughts and opinions of students, and mobilize people and organizations—demonstrating how our collective efforts to create a just and inclusive talent system will create lasting change. How we reinvent these systems determines our future.**"
> —Here to Here, *website*

Example: Multiple Organizations

CO Succeeds and The Colorado Education Initiative

Colorado Succeeds and **Colorado Education Initiative** collaborated to create the **Homegrown Talent Initiative**—a statewide partnership—to create homegrown, career-connected learning experiences for K12 students aligned to the needs and aspirations of their local economics.

> "**We have promoted a vision where the pathway intermediary behavior can be jointly held by organizations who see ourselves as having each a different kind of core customer ... In our ecosystem, it just makes more sense that you would assemble abundance partnerships to coordinate multiple organizations versus any one group in the state saying we are the pathways intermediary.**"
> —Landon Mascareñaz, *Colorado Education Initiative*

educationfirst

The complex task of creating a pathways system requires buy-in from multiple partners and capacity from intermediary organizations to coordinate all partners

Buy-In From Partners Looks Like:

Simultaneous Action by Stakeholder Groups	It is important to note that **no single partner can do this work on their own**. Stakeholder groups must be acting simultaneously and **interdependently** in order to build strong pathways. Partners must **move beyond traditional siloes** to work together seamlessly.
Deep Commitment to Partnership	In order for pathways efforts to be successful and sustainable, partners across the ecosystem must be genuinely committed to the work, both in mission and in action. Partners must dedicate **personnel, time and other resources** in order to move forward pathways efforts.
Willingness To Be Vulnerable	Part of the work of building strong pathways is acknowledging that current systems and ways of working are **often not serving students well**. Partners must come to the table with a willingness to be vulnerable and with an **open mind for feedback.**
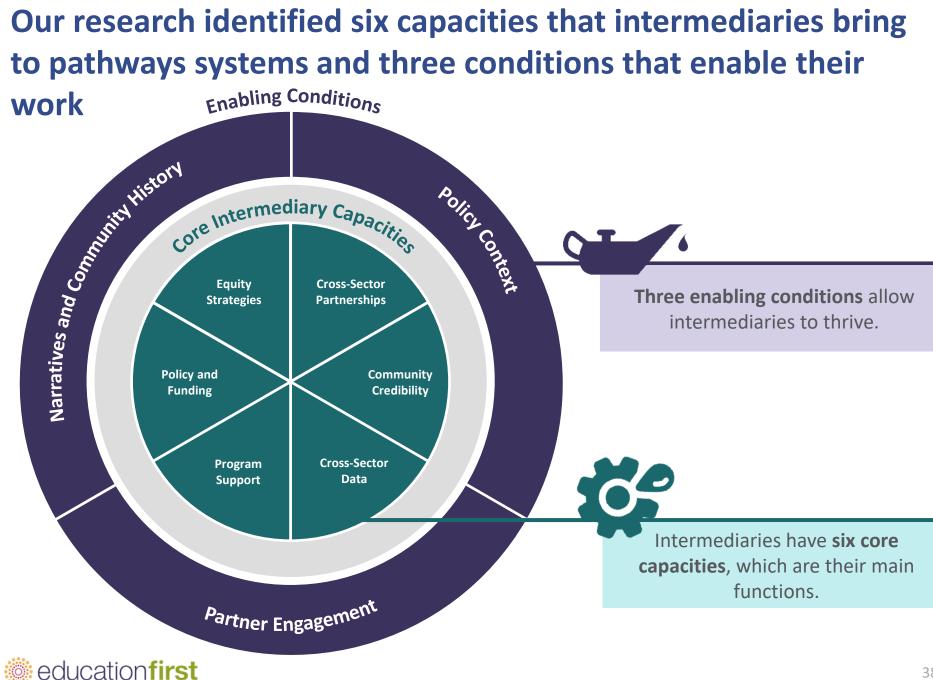
educationfirst

Our research identified six capacities that intermediaries bring to pathways systems and three conditions that enable their work

Enabling Conditions

Narratives and Community History

Policy Context

Partner Engagement

Core Intermediary Capacities

- Equity Strategies
- Cross-Sector Partnerships
- Policy and Funding
- Community Credibility
- Program Support
- Cross-Sector Data

Three enabling conditions allow intermediaries to thrive.

Intermediaries have **six core capacities**, which are their main functions.

In the next section, we will describe the capacities that effective intermediaries bring to pathways systems

Equity Strategies · Cross-Sector Partnerships · Policy and Funding · Community Credibility · Program Support · Cross-Sector Data

COMPONENTS OF EACH CAPACITY

OVERVIEW
Description and definition of the core capacity

WHY IT MATTERS
How this core capacity creates stronger and more equitable pathways systems

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN PRACTICE?
Illustrations of how intermediaries implement the core capacity

CONSIDERATIONS
Crucial ideas from interviewed stakeholders about pitfalls and ways to apply this capacity with equity as a core focus

Examples of practices from organizations

educationfirst

Then, we will describe the enabling conditions that affect intermediaries' work

COMPONENTS OF EACH ENABLING CONDITION

DESCRIPTION
Description and definition of the enabling condition

WHY IT MATTERS
How the enabling condition accelerates intermediaries' work when present in the environment

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN PRACTICE?
Illustrations of the enabling conditions and how they support intermediaries' work

CONSIDERATIONS
Crucial ideas for ensuring that the enabling conditions support pathways systems

educationfirst

In each section, we include the voices of proximate leaders sharing their experience and wisdom for supporting intermediaries

Research suggests that leaders who are proximate to the communities and issues they serve have essential knowledge, relationships and experience for developing solutions with measurable and sustainable impact.

Proximate leaders work or invest in social purpose organizations that:

DIMENSIONS OF PROXIMATE LEADERSHIP

Focus on issues that have impacted them **personally.**

Serve their own **geographic** community.

Have **race, ethnicity, gender or socioeconomic** background in common with those they serve.

- Lived Experience
- Place
- Identity

Understanding **rural** voice and context was a focus area for this research. This symbol will call out findings or examples rural leaders named as particularly important.
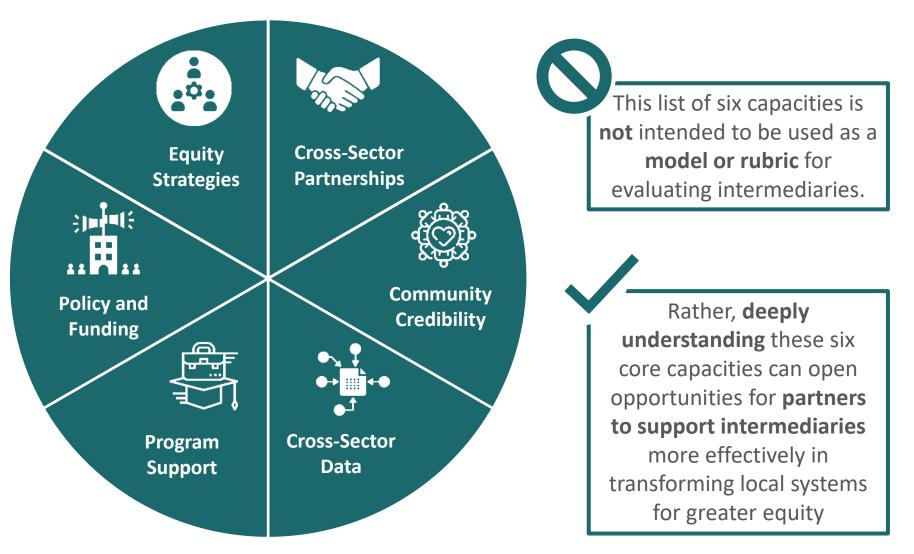
education**first**

4 | Core Capacities

"This income inequality gap that we have, that we've been talking about for so very long, really needs to start to close and [pathways partnerships are] a way to do that."

—Che Watkins
Executive Director, Braven Atlanta
May 2022
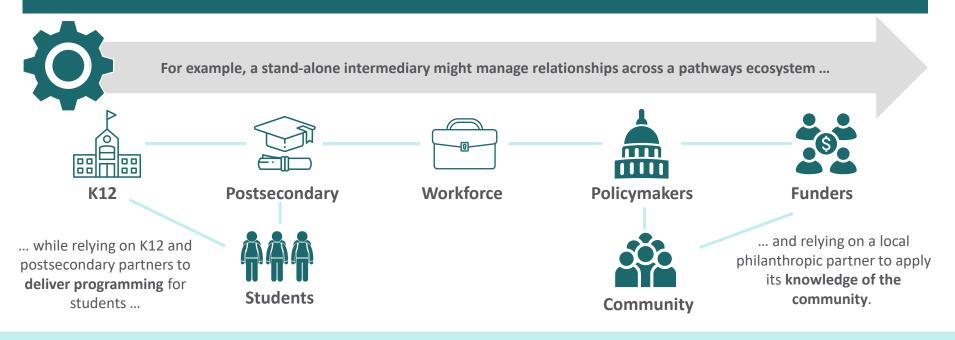
Within a pathways ecosystem, there are six core capacities that help drive and sustain pathways development

This list of six capacities is **not** intended to be used as a **model or rubric** for evaluating intermediaries.

Rather, **deeply understanding** these six core capacities can open opportunities for **partners to support intermediaries** more effectively in transforming local systems for greater equity

education**first**

These core capacity functions may be performed by a single organization or a variety of different organizations within an ecosystem

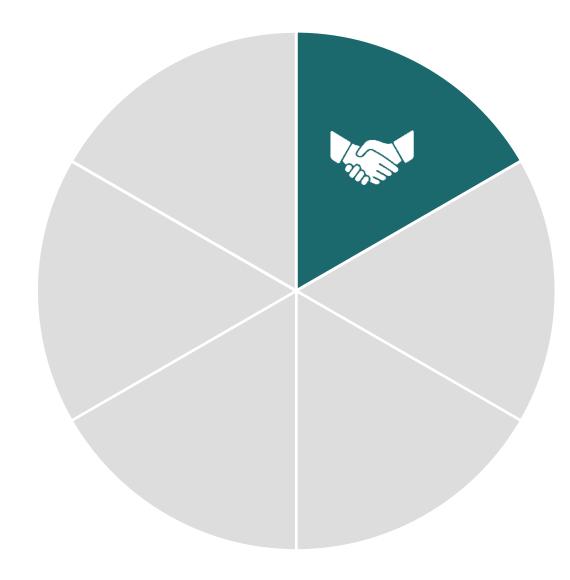Many organizations perform intermediary-like functions but **may not necessarily explicitly label themselves as an intermediary.** Additionally, some communities may have **multiple organizations who fill different intermediary-like functions. As a result, we focus on describing the main functions of an intermediary and how a variety of organizations may perform these functions.**

For example, a stand-alone intermediary might manage relationships across a pathways ecosystem …

K12   **Postsecondary**   **Workforce**   **Policymakers**   **Funders**

Students

Community

… while relying on K12 and postsecondary partners to **deliver programming** for students …

… and relying on a local philanthropic partner to apply its **knowledge of the community**.

> "I still don't think we see intermediaries being able to do all of these things concurrently … sometimes you see functions being stretched across institutions. When we talk about intermediaries, they don't have to be standalone—I think about it as a function."
> —*National Expert*

Effective intermediaries play a crucial role in catalyzing and sustaining relationships across K12, postsecondary and employers

OVERVIEW

> "**The intermediary's role is to link partners**. They start with individual conversations, then convene and pull people in the room—they tend to know who the partners are."
> —*Business Leader*

- Intermediaries help **create, develop and maintain** effective, equity-oriented partnerships across entities and sectors.

- Intermediaries help **align partners** on a clear and mutually shared vision.

- In order to cultivate partnerships and distribute leadership across partners, intermediaries must navigate the political **context** in which they are working as well as the preexisting **relationships** between partners.

WHY IT MATTERS

- The literature on systems change emphasizes that distribution of leadership and power across an organization or partnership allows for **greater buy-in from multiple stakeholders**, **reduces decision-making bottlenecks**, and **increases potential long-term staying power** of change created by the effort.

- **Building trust is a crucial requirement for intermediaries to be effective**. Trust among all the partners at the table is just as important as the trust between partners and the intermediary.

> "The trust factor is so important, and I go back to that over and over again. **Trust is the key**. Why do they think you're there? What do they think your reasons are going to be?"
> —*National Expert*

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN PRACTICE?

The most common partners intermediaries work with are from the K12 system, postsecondary institutions and employers. However, **partnerships can be formed with any organization from a community seeking to improve and bolster pathways for students.**

> "Intermediaries have a **unique ability to convene and bring the partners together to sit at the same table,** hear the same information and share across their work."
> —*Funder*

Sources: Equal Measure (2020), Chiefs for Change (2021)

As part of that partnership management function, the ability to build and sustain trust among partners is crucial

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Capacity in building and sustaining partnerships also connects to intermediaries' core function of creating cross-sector strategies for addressing equity gaps.

- In convening partners, intermediaries should seek to **identify the systems and structures** in place to ensure that a student's race, gender or socioeconomic status do not predict their success.

"Intermediaries have to have the understanding that they've got to bring a lot of different folks to the table to make this work, but they also have to have **credibility and trust** that they're not there just to do something for maybe one year or 10 months, and then they're going to jump and skip out."

—*Intermediary Leader*
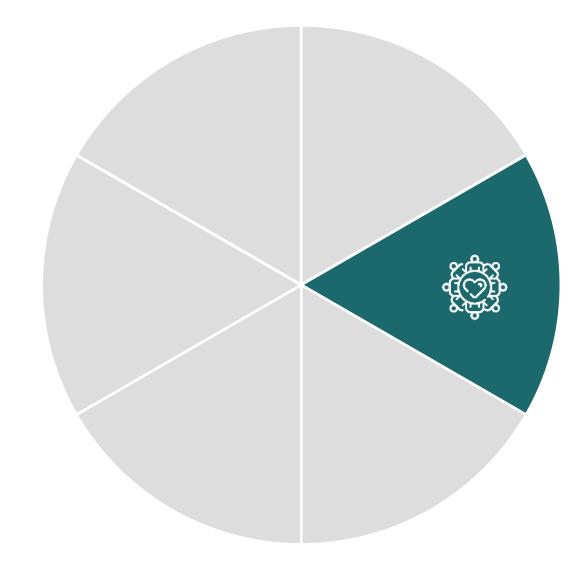
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Intermediaries may have specific viewpoints on the outcomes they are seeking to influence and what equity looks like. However, intermediaries are trusted when they are viewed as **being responsive to and receptive of multiple viewpoints** and having the ability to **make meaning of how complex those viewpoints are.**

"An intermediary's ability to **understand, value and respect** the unique space that a community college president has in navigating a really complicated ecosystem, concurrent with the needs of local or regional employers [and other stakeholders] is so important. Intermediaries help to bring partners to the table to **make sense of their independent complexities** and actually focus on the outcomes that they want to be true. **The way that we can get to meeting those outcomes is only through working together.**"

—*National Expert*

An emphasis on **the importance of trust came through particularly strongly in interviews with rural intermediary leaders**. Proximate leadership and a deep understanding of the rural context are factors that can help build trust between an intermediary and the community they seek to serve.

"When an **intermediary works in a rural context it's all about trust**, which is often built by people bringing an expertise and understanding that rural is in fact different from a metro area."

—*Rural Intermediary Leader*

Community Credibility

To succeed, intermediaries must deeply understand and have credibility with the communities they work in

OVERVIEW

- In order to do pathways work, intermediaries must **engage stakeholders across the community**. Intermediaries should have a strong **understanding of and connections with** educators, community leaders, policymakers, employers, workforce development organizations and students.

> "One of the things we know is that any time we embark on pathways, **we need partnerships across the board.** We need the public sector, the private sector, government representatives, NGOs, all of that to really be the most successful."
>
> —*Rural Intermediary Leader*

- Intermediaries must have **credibility** with students as well as with the organizations (employers and nonprofits) and institutions (K12 and postsecondary) that are rooted in the communities in which intermediaries seek to do the work. Especially for intermediaries engaged in direct programming, having credibility with students and other partner stakeholders is crucial for **being seen as a trusted resource** and generating engagement and impact.

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN PRACTICE?

- Intermediaries establish knowledge of their community through physical presence and partnerships. Engaging in **community listening sessions** and **town halls** is one way that intermediaries can develop relationships with and knowledge of communities.

- Having a **physical office space or presence** is another way intermediaries can help to establish, build and sustain credibility with their community.

> "As an intermediary we have offices and **presence in the place**. We are there in the place … You have to be doing the work in the place itself."
>
> —*Intermediary Leader*

- Intermediaries who work at the state or multistate level **foster deep partnership with local partners** within a specific community they are seeking to work in order to build trust, credibility and community knowledge.

> "It's really our **local partners who go in** and regularly meet with the high schools, bring in handouts, know where data are—it is very person to person … In every case, we are doing [this work] **through a local partner**."
>
> —*Rural Intermediary Leader*

Proximate leadership is a powerful lever for building community knowledge and credibility

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

- As intermediaries seek to establish credibility and develop partnerships across sectors, having leadership and staff members that are **proximate to the communities they seek to serve** often bolsters their efforts.

- As defined earlier (refer to slide 41 in this deck), **proximate leadership can** be based on the dimensions of lived experience, place and identity.

"An important piece is that the people doing the work are **from the place** … We've hired residents to lead the work, and I think that's critical. Oftentimes, when intermediary organizations are seeking leadership, they look for pedigree or the ability to raise money—**we seek residents that know the place and know the work**."
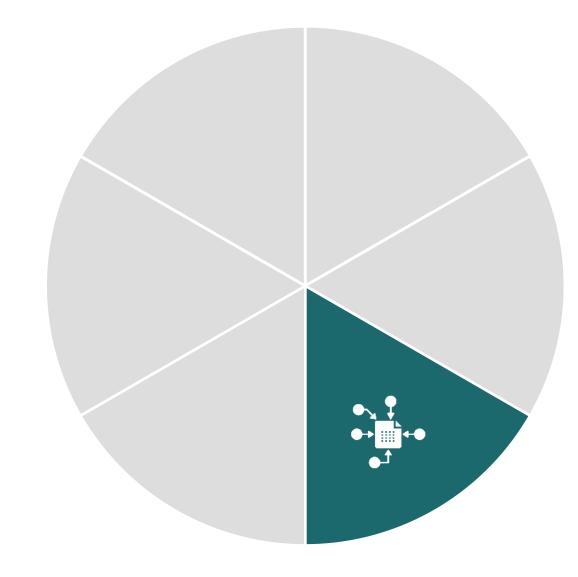
—*Intermediary Leader*

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Credibility and trust are important foundational pieces to intermediaries' work, and this is **especially true if the intermediary is part of a larger state or national effort** and not a grassroots effort of the community.

"The idea of a trusted partner is important. We typically go in working with regional partners that rural schools trust, but **when you go in with a statewide partner that they may or may not have heard about, it's a harder sell**."

—*Rural Intermediary Leader*

"It's one thing to say we have this great program or idea and we're going to go put it in this community. But that doesn't work, because it **doesn't respect the community** or what they or we are trying to do … What we know for sure is that **it is really important to look at the landscape, identify connections and talk with the community**—what is it they say they need?"

—*Intermediary Leader*

Data collection, fluency and analysis are key strengths of successful intermediaries

OVERVIEW

- Depending on the specific context of a community, intermediaries **can help connect data across systems or sectors.**

- The infrastructure to connect data across systems—ideally K12, postsecondary and workforce to at least some extent— needs to be set up in a way that allows the data to be **actionable**.

- Effective intermediaries use data **internally** to assess outcomes of students. Data should be used by intermediaries to inform the shared goals, vision and success measures among sector partners working to build and sustain pathways.

> "**When we set up the data infrastructure, you can then manage the pathways work**. Whether it's IT, teaching, petroleum, I can create direct pathways and case manage students into work."
>
> —*Intermediary Leader*

WHY IT MATTERS

By connecting data, intermediaries **can better identify gaps in data sources and knowledge** as well as **inform recommendations for policy or systems change.**

> "[Intermediaries] also have an opportunity to **focus partners on gaps in data** across the system and keep people focused on the barriers."
>
> —*Business Leader*

> "I think that any intermediary who's participating in conversations about pathways—they tend to have some capacity around understanding data ... **As we think about the relationship between data and policy, how do they make sure that we're advocating for the right solutions with the right actors at the right time** and building a case for it so that something can actually happen?"
>
> —*National Expert*

education first

Effective intermediaries often develop partnerships with local or state agencies and use local, state and federal data sources to set a vision that aligns with local market demands

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN PRACTICE?

Partnerships with local or state agencies allow intermediaries to better incorporate and understand student and/or population level data. While the specific data points gathered and used by intermediaries can vary widely, **common uses of data often include**:

- Tracking individual performance and experiences in pathways programming.
- Monitoring equitable outcomes across student/student groups.
- Understanding employment retention rates.
- Aligning curriculum, work-based learning opportunities and/or apprenticeships with job market projections.

Effective intermediaries use data externally to better align pathway programming. A wide variety of local, state and federal data sources can be compiled to better understand trends, gaps and priority areas within local labor markets:

- The **Bureau of Labor Statistics** provides federal as well as regional data regarding labor market trends.
- State workforce centers often provide support for state and local data labor market data and projects.
- Local business and economic development organizations can also serve as useful sources of labor market information.

Examples

Partners for Education at Berea College (PFE) has data sharing agreements with every public school district in their geographic focus region as well as with KYSTATS, the state longitudinal data entity. The longitudinal data system partnership allows PFE to see larger, population-level data in addition to individual-level student data. PFE has supported KYSTATS capacity by sponsoring a half-time staff member—creating deeper partnerships and bridges between the state data system and the work PFE is engaged in.

The **Rural Schools Innovation Zone (RSIZ)** brought together regional stakeholders, including K12 and postsecondary leaders, regional employers and the local employers to form the **Rural Impact Alliance**. The Alliance works to establish systems, processes and policies to ensure that RSIZ pathways are both high-quality and sustainable and uses data to identify local high-wage labor market sectors.

Effective intermediaries use data to assess programming, inform goals and prioritize equitable outcomes

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

- For intermediaries who provide or support direct programming, collection of **student participation data** can provide deeper context and nuance to the stories and experiences of the people they serve.

- **Disaggregation** of data by a variety of factors—race, gender, geography, special populations and socioeconomic status—helps **better identify the needs and experiences** of student groups, especially those most often marginalized. Fluency in disaggregating and analyzing data also connects to intermediaries' core function of creating cross-sector strategies for addressing equity gaps.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS
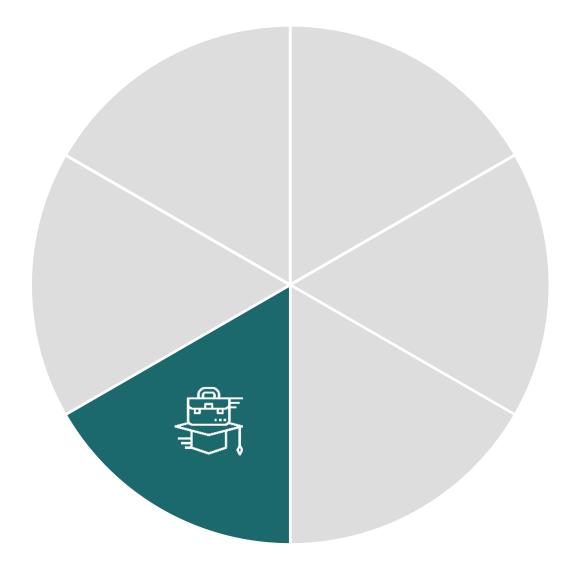
Intermediaries often gather program-specific data directly from participants and compile it in **spreadsheets or dashboards**. This process can be very manual in practice, and there is **room for better data connections across sectors as well as increased automation.**

"As of right now we do all the data collection. We work with our impact advisor, and they work directly with all our partners on the ground. It's really our local partners who go in and regularly meet with the high schools, bring in handouts, and know where data are—**it is very person to person**. I don't think there's ever going to be a way around that; I think that's just the way that rural schools are. But **we're trying to build out a system a bit more scalable in the future**."

—*Rural Intermediary Leader*

Successful intermediaries work with their partners to develop, support and empower effective pathways programming

OVERVIEW

- Intermediaries **may organize and deliver programming themselves,** directly connecting with and supporting students on pathways beginning in high school, through postsecondary opportunities and into the workforce.

- Alternatively, intermediaries may **support partners that provide programming**, rather than providing the programming directly themselves.

> "We do a lot of **programs** and **provide services**, but we also think about alignment, bringing funding and **coordination**."
>
> —*Rural Intermediary Leader*

> "We are working to **create institutional change** with employers and educational institutions. We don't do programs … We're not reinventing the wheel. There are often **best practices happening among the folks who are closest to the ground**. We identity those best practices, lift them up and where we can, make that best practice common practice."
>
> —*Intermediary Leader*

WHY IT MATTERS

- The amount of **focus placed on direct provision of programming can vary widely** based on the specific intermediary as well as their **geographic scope of focus**. Many intermediaries that are focused at the state level or higher may be more likely to focus on their role as a **system builder** or **convenor** of more locally focused intermediaries.

> "We are a **statewide intermediary,** and we work with a set of 45 local intermediaries. Those intermediaries are largely operating between employers, educators and organizations that can help them connect with students."
>
> —*Intermediary Leader*

High-functioning intermediaries elevate the voices of all students to inform programming efforts

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

Intermediaries can play a unique role in creating systems that allow for **the voices of those most proximate** to be embedded in pathways work and **better meet the needs of students**. While all students can benefit from strong pathways, those **pathways need to be built to work for those who have historically been least likely to have access** to postsecondary opportunities and family-sustaining wage employment. Intermediaries can help stakeholders across the pathways ecosystem **understand the experiences of students whose voices are often not heard**, such as BIPOC, students experiencing poverty and students from rural communities.

Examples

YouthForce NOLA engages youth through both surveys and focus groups in order to understand what student interest and knowledge of opportunities are. The organization strives to better align with skill demand from employers and identify opportunities to increase student awareness of opportunities available in their community.

HERE to HERE's Student Ambassador Fellowship program allows students to engage in professional development and serve as advocates for work-based learning opportunities in their schools and communities. Student Ambassadors have informed the design of annual work-based learning summits, conducted research on braided learning and created an **asset-based language guide** for stakeholders.

"We are doing a robust set of **youth focus groups and surveys**. With that, there's an ongoing balancing of considerations—it's an art, not a science. On the industry and employer side, it's important to understand the work and career pathways. We are always trying to understand **where skills are in demand** and **managing that with student interests** in a way that finds a middle ground. We want to increase student awareness beyond their immediate circle of awareness, but we also need to be connected to their **interest and intent**."

—*Intermediary Leader*

Jobs for the Future has identified four key design principles that can help inform intermediaries' efforts

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Jobs for the Future has identified **four key design principles** that effective intermediaries use as they build pathways programming, either to be delivered by them directly or through partner organizations:

1   **Apply best practices that are tailored to communities that have been most marginalized.**
- Intermediaries should utilize labor market information to drive decision-making and evaluate what opportunities are available and whether programming is aligned with labor market demands.
- Intermediaries should identify jobs that are high-demand and have the potential to be long-term "lifetime jobs" that provide a family-supporting wage.

2   **Focus on youth assets.**
- Intermediaries must recognize the unique strengths that youth bring and should particularly focus on the assets youth of color bring.
- An example of this is the **HERE to HERE Language Guide**, which is a resource for using asset-based language with students.

3   **Build cultural competence among youth and the adults who work with them.**
- Intermediaries can help youth develop soft skills and understand professional norms, jargon and communication styles.
- Intermediaries can also help employers create opportunities for bidirectional feedback that help foster a more welcoming work environment focused on learning and growth.
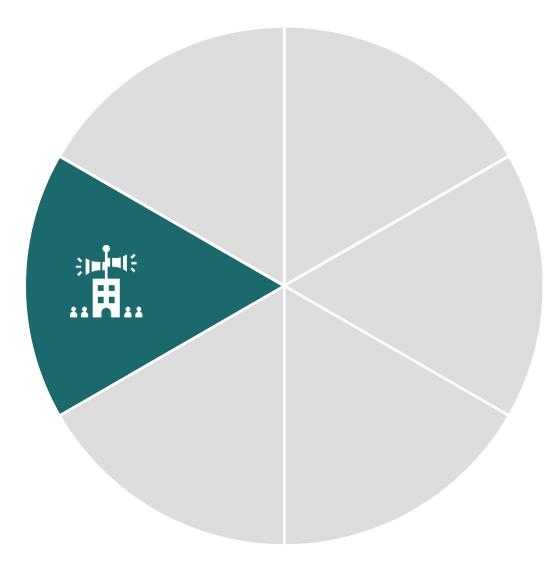
4   **Support youth in exercising self-advocacy.**
- Intermediaries must build their capacity internally to be able to hold conversations with youth regarding the inequities of systems and potential for workforce racism as well as support students in building the ability to identify and address challenges to equity in their workplace.

Source: Jobs for the Future (2020)

Policy and Funding

Successful intermediaries communicate a clear vision about pathways efforts in order to advocate for support

OVERVIEW

- Strong communications efforts help increase the **visibility** of pathways efforts, engage targets for **advocacy** and raise **funds**.

- Intermediaries play a key role in **bringing funding for pathways efforts** to a community. As such, intermediaries must be able to clearly communicate the **populations** they are serving, their specific **approach** to pathways work and the **intended outcomes** for students and the broader community.

- Research suggests that **effective communication** is essential for successful advocacy. In order to have impactful advocacy, intermediaries must **identify and communicate a clear vision** regarding pathways efforts. It is crucial that intermediaries have the **internal capacity and infrastructure** to execute communications efforts.

> "We **cannot create pathways that are or are perceived as lesser-than**. We can't have middle class folks think 'these are for other kids, not for my kids.' The pathways have to be seen as for their children too. We run the risk of tracking if we're not careful here."
>
> —*State Policymaker*

WHY IT MATTERS

- Being able to **articulate** the shared vision of pathways work helps set a shared understanding of the **need** for pathways creation and sustainability, the **value** of building cross-sector partnerships and the **intended outcomes** that the work is moving toward.

- Strong communication skills enable intermediaries to **build public will** for pathways across their community by illuminating the vision and impact of pathways efforts and aligning partners toward a common goal.

- Through their communications, vision-setting and partnership building, intermediaries can leverage their expertise, authority and credibility to **support and promote equitable policies at the federal, state, regional, local and institutional levels** to support pathways efforts.

> "As a statewide intermediary, **we sit between policy makers and educators**. We **engage all stakeholders in the dialogue,** but we try to unburden them from the day by day legislate briefings. [As part of that], within our infrastructure for implementation we have nine regional networks helping to **spread the word**."
>
> —*Intermediary Leader*

Effective intermediaries leverage their partnerships and credibility to mobilize resources, policy change and public support for pathways efforts

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN PRACTICE?

- Many intermediaries **mobilize their resources through partnerships** to secure and blend private and public funding.

- Effective intermediaries advocate for—or support partner advocacy of—**policies that support strong pathway transitions**, such as state-level P20W data system or funding low-cost dual enrollment programs for students.

- Successful intermediaries **weave together multiple funding streams, develop strategies to maximize the resources available and think strategically** about how to leverage available resources for greater added value.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The extent of an intermediary's **focus on advocacy may vary** depending on the size of their focus geography and capacity of the organization.

"Intermediaries can work at national, regional, local, hyperlocal or neighborhood levels ... If you're a national intermediary, you probably have as much policy advocacy as direct implementation programming. At the neighborhood level, your advocacy and org work is probably a fraction comparatively to what you're doing in direct service and support. **There is often a sliding scale of emphasis across all of these roles depending on the regional or geographic scope of the intermediary**."
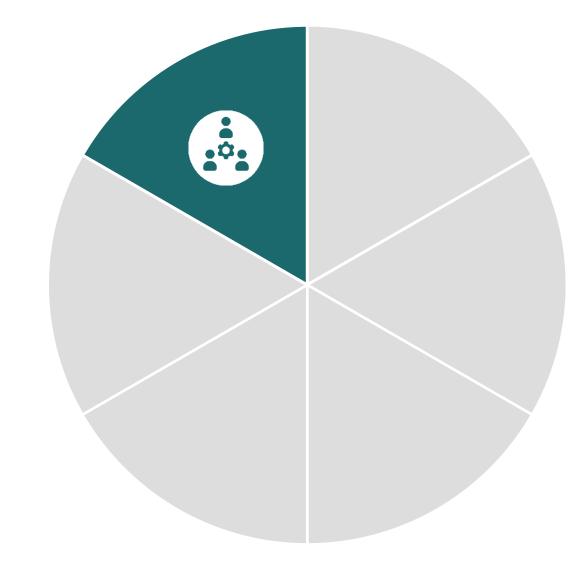
—*National Expert*

Example

Homegrown TALENT INITIATIVE

The **Homegrown Talent Initiative**, which is co-led by the **Colorado Education Initiative** and **Colorado Succeeds**, started off solely funded by philanthropy and is now moving toward a braided funding model that combines philanthropic dollars with funding from the Colorado Department of Education, specifically seeking out funding for CTE coordinators and grants focused on supporting rural communities.

Sources: Jobs for the Future (2020), National Fund for Workforce Solutions (2008)

Intermediaries committed to equity have a point of view on what intended outcomes look like for student subgroups

OVERVIEW

As the convener within a pathways ecosystem, intermediaries foster the **co-creation of equitable principles and practices** across partners. Intermediaries play a lead role in **establishing equity-based goals** for pathways efforts, often specifically naming the intended outcomes for BIPOC students, students from low-income backgrounds and/or students from rural communities.

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN PRACTICE?

- Intermediaries are uniquely well situated to **name and serve as a rallying point for equity goals** that articulate the outcomes communities want to see for BIPOC students and students experiencing poverty.

  *"**Having a point of view actually really matters**, especially as we think about things like outcomes and what intermediaries might advocate for or on behalf of other systems-level actors. If we want to put a stake in the ground and say, 'What we care about is transforming outcome for Black and Latinx youth,' you have to have a point of view about that."*

  —National Expert

- Intermediaries are a critical piece of the ecosystem in their **ability to set ambitious equity goals and lead their partners**—across all sectors—in implementing programs, policies and/or processes that advance equity through pathways efforts.

- In order to identify these equity goals, **intermediaries must build their own data capacity and ability to facilitate conversations around disaggregated data** sp that they can understand whether access to and participation in pathways programming is equitable.

Example

commit
OUR KIDS. OUR TOMORROW.

Commit's <u>true north goal</u> for their work explicitly states that white residents in Dallas County are three times more likely than their Black and Latino/a/x neighbors to have the access, resources and supports needed to be employed at a living wage. Therefore, their goal is that by 2040, at least half of all 25–34 year old residents, irrespective of race, will be provided the opportunity to earn a living wage.

Effective intermediaries reflect a focus on equity within their internal practices in addition to their external work

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN PRACTICE? (CONTINUED)

- In addition to serving as a leader on equity within the partnership, **high-functioning intermediaries also intentionally commit to focusing on racial justice and equity internally.**

- In practice, this often means **hiring and investing in BIPOC staff** and those who are **proximate to the communities** they seek to serve.

> "Hiring more people of color and investing in those people of color that are hired is so important. One of the entities I'm thinking of, **they offer healing retreats for their BIPOC staff. How many workplaces offer that? How empowering it must be to feel seen that way by your employer.** I think that organization is also, to some extent, committed to the value and the mission and the calling of racial justice and equity, despite the funding for that not always being there."
>
> *—Funder*

> "I am from the region we serve, and everyone on my leadership team is from the region. We're all from there, and **we all have the lived experience that is similar to the people we're serving**. The majority of our team from the top to bottom came from low-income backgrounds and are the first generation in their family to go to college. **So I think that it's important for the intermediary to mirror the place and to be connected to the place where they serve**."
>
> *—Rural Intermediary Leader*

Intermediaries who provide direct programming drive and lead on equity goals by supporting students directly

HOW DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE? (CONTINUED)

- Valuable intermediaries **play a role in helping students identify and address challenges they face in the workplace.** One way intermediaries provide this support is by bolstering students' "soft skills" and deepening their understanding of the workplace norms.

- These intermediaries also help students address **nonacademic needs.** Intermediaries can connect students who need access to housing, transportation, healthcare, childcare or immigration support to other agencies and organizations that specialize in those areas. Connections to these supports can be especially important for students of color and/or students from rural communities.

"The relationships in the community around barrier navigation are an important factor for us being able to support students—I think that's one that's really key for us. **While we have our own resources, we know our goal is to set up young adults to be able to do barrier navigation on their own by connecting them with the best resources in the community**. That's another one that we as an organization really need to have a handle on—being able to know that **if somebody has food insecurity or housing insecurity, what are the resources and how might we be able to connect them with those as quickly as possible**?"
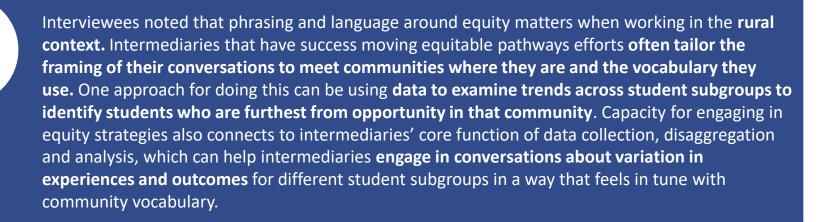
—*Intermediary Leader*

Example

As part of **Urban Alliance's** High School Internship program, students complete six weeks of pre-employment job skills training before beginning their internship. Throughout the duration of their internship experience they engage in weekly post-high school planning, job skills and life skills workshops to help prepare them for their path after the program. In addition, each intern is assigned to a dedicated Urban Alliance program and a one-on-one workplace mentor, who provide support to guide the intern's professional development.

Source: Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers (2005)

Intermediaries in rural or politically conservative communities are strategic when discussing equity, sometimes resulting in a less explicit focus on race

Interviewees noted that phrasing and language around equity matters when working in the **rural context.** Intermediaries that have success moving equitable pathways efforts **often tailor the framing of their conversations to meet communities where they are and the vocabulary they use.** One approach for doing this can be using **data to examine trends across student subgroups to identify students who are furthest from opportunity in that community**. Capacity for engaging in equity strategies also connects to intermediaries' core function of data collection, disaggregation and analysis, which can help intermediaries **engage in conversations about variation in experiences and outcomes** for different student subgroups in a way that feels in tune with community vocabulary.

"We really spent time with that language, very explicitly at our organization. **Our focus is on the question of, Who is furthest from opportunity in your community?** We need to begin where your community is at. **If we don't do that, we are going to lose people so quickly.** [But if we do,] then we can actually help create a process to bring stakeholders to the table for a conversation about how to change outcomes for students."

—*Rural Intermediary Leader*

"You can't talk about equity in the same way in a rural place, especially in the rural South, that you can in other places ... We don't let people blame students, and we don't let people blame families. We focus on talking about what the system does and how the system can better serve these populations of students. When **somebody from the East coast or West coast drops in with their urban and usually pretty liberal frame, those conversations go nowhere. They stop**."

—*Rural Funder*

education first

5 | Enabling Conditions

"By investing in [pathways programming], this administration continues to flex its creativity in how we support the commonwealth's economy through the development and retention of skilled workers—with the ultimate goal of providing financial security and a better quality of life for the citizens of Pennsylvania."

—Secretary Jennifer Berrier
Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry
May 2022

Intermediaries' success is determined in part by the conditions of the place in which they work

The role of place in pathways intermediaries' work

While not all the elements required to create strong pathways are place based, **all pathway interventions must eventually land in a place**—a school, classroom or employment experience—in order to **affect the experience of students** as they navigate to a career where they can thrive.

Ways to understand place and examples

Intermediaries and their partners should strive to understand the enabling conditions that are present within the place or places that they are striving to affect change. A few ways to define or understand place include:

Political and geographic boundaries of various scale

> *Districts, cities, counties, regions, states*

Operational or statistical boundaries

> *Metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), ERS Commuting Zones*
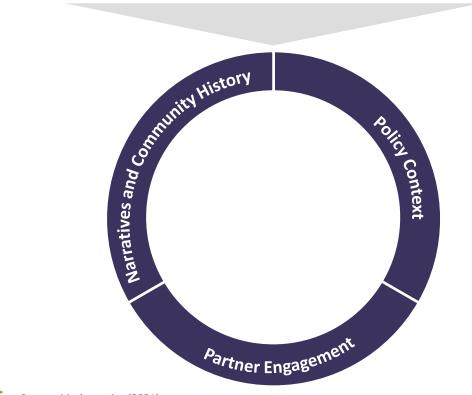
Contextual, cultural and relational boundaries

> *Shared history, culture, language or mission*

Sources: Opportunity Insights (2017); U.S. Office of Management and Budget (2022); Measure of America—Social Science Research Council (2020); U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (2012); Forbes (2019); JFF (2017)

educationfirst

Our research identified three enabling conditions that can accelerate progress or present barriers as intermediaries strive to create an equitable pathways system

What are enabling conditions?

Enabling conditions are the situations or environments that increase the likelihood of successful outcomes for pathways efforts.

Narratives and Community History

Policy Context

Partner Engagement

Narratives and Community History

The community history and narratives it holds about its students and partners influence how quickly intermediaries' work can take hold

DESCRIPTION

Community history and narratives: Partners are aware of prior relationships, work to mitigate power dynamics, and collectively craft a new story of collaboration and equity.

WHY IT MATTERS

Stakeholders' beliefs, experiences and history with collaborating across sectors influences how quickly pathways intermediaries brokers the relationships and generates the buy-in they need to be successful.

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN PRACTICE?

- In some communities, there might be **underlying or existing trust between cross-sector partners** as a result of past collaborations or strong relationships between leaders. This trust can manifest as eagerness to contribute resources and time to pathways efforts and the vulnerability with which partners approach sharing information and entering into problem-solving spaces together.
- When communities have **powerful shared narratives** about who they are and how they work together, partners across the community are more likely to **collaborate for a common vision**. This appears through community-level gatherings, political campaigns, local histories and messaging campaigns from partners—such as the local community foundation—that create a shared sense of identity.

"Storytelling is a powerful tool for systems change. **People who are working in complex systems only know the part that they specifically touch**. It's powerful for all stakeholders in a community to map that shared system together to enable greater coordination."

—Funder

The importance of community history and storytelling is often more pronounced in places that are racially and ethnically diverse as well as smaller communities

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Communities who are committed to systemic change often find that **explicitly addressing the legacy and ongoing reality of racism** in a community is a crucial first step to the **healing needed for partners to buy into the work**. This is particularly true for communities where Black, Indigenous and people of color have been explicitly excluded from decision-making tables and places of power in the past.

- The small population size of many rural communities means that (1) some **key actors may play multiple roles within a community**, allowing for streamlining of decision making, and (2) **key actors are deeply connected and committed to others doing work in their community,** and there is a strong history of coordination, which helps accelerate work more quickly.

"How do we clean up the opportunity mess we've created? **The reality is that we have multiple decades (if not centuries) of leaving not just people of color behind, but also [specifically] Black and Brown males**. Data have shown this for a long while. While we've been able to bring other populations to career-connected learning or worlds of opportunity, this is the next nut to crack."

—*State Policymaker*

"Community colleges play such a central [role] in the community—the theatre program is the local theater. The arts program is the local gallery. **Within rural communities it is a small, tight-knit community—when we talk to them about community partners, the local diner conversations at lunch move pathways work.** So many frequent and informal touch points drive strong relationships. This can be a great asset, but I have a concern about equitable access for these communities."

—*Rural Intermediary Leader*

> Rural communities often have strong preexisting relationships among stakeholders and a history of collaboration that accelerates pathways efforts.

Policy Context

The policy environment also boosts or inhibits pathways efforts

DESCRIPTION

Policy context: Policymakers draft and work to pass federal, state, local and institutional polices that encourage cross-sector collaboration.

WHY IT MATTERS

Supportive institutional, local, state and national policies create clear goals and financial incentives for pathways development that enhance intermediaries' success.

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN PRACTICE?

- Eighteen states have successfully passed legislation to create **statewide longitudinal data systems** that incorporate pre-K, K12, postsecondary and workforce data (see **the appendix** for a full list). When these systems provide **data that are timely, relevant and accessible for practitioners**, they support greater cross-sector coordination.
- State and federal policies that **reduce financial barriers for postsecondary completion** enable more students—particularly students who are experiencing poverty—to access higher education at a cost affordable for them. Programs that **create funding streams for dual-enrollment opportunities, apprenticeships and more** have a similar effect for students.
- **Administrative policy and cross-agency collaboration** are also crucial to creating a coherent policy context for pathways work.

> "[At the state level,], we have all of these really **siloed** agencies where nobody is owning or holding themselves accountable for students to make that transition from high school graduation into a post-secondary pathway. It makes the work challenging."
> — *National Expert*

> "There are some policy goals we'll have next year. One of our goals is to make youth apprenticeship as a path for high school graduation more accessible in our state. It's allowable now, but how can we give people a little nudge to **make it more formal so that there are fewer barriers** or perceived barriers."
> —*State Policymaker*

Interviewees named four key areas of policy that create supportive environments for pathways intermediaries

POLICY	EXAMPLES OF WHY IT MATTERS
1 Policies that support **free or low-cost dual enrollment opportunities** for all students help strengthen pathways efforts and create clear funding structures.	"In rural communities—property-poor districts, which tend to be low-income and BIPOC students—**students and families are expected to pay for those dual-enrollment courses.** That means students in communities that are very poor and predominantly Black and Latino/a/x have to pay for those courses over here, even though **those courses may be free to other students in the state**." —*Intermediary Funder*
2 Graduation requirement **policies that allow for or encourage dual-credit course completion** also help bolster pathways efforts.	"We went from being the only remaining state with no statewide requirements for high school graduation to **having a menu of 13 options**. They include industry certificates, concurrent enrollment and a capstone, **all of which are remarkable opportunities from a policy standpoint to drive pathway work**." —*Rural Intermediary Leader*
3 Policies that allow **for centralized, timely access to connected K12 and postsecondary data** as well as labor market data help support pathways efforts.	"Everyone would love for things to be more automated. Folks understand the need for longitudinal data tracking. **The reason we are not further along, despite two years of pandemic, is in part because of politics at the state level**—as a state we have some of the most **prohibitive student privacy laws in the country**." —*Intermediary Leader*
4 **Accountability policies that lead to a fragmentation** of responsibility or misalignment of incentives **hinder pathways efforts.**	"What I really hope to see is state-level policy changes being enacted. There is only so far that advocacy can go **until we have people who are working for the state who have the responsibility to convene, connect, and identify outcomes for a state's education and workforce vision**. This shouldn't be a side project or something it is nice to have, but rather **becomes the expectation**." —*Intermediary Leader*

Partner Engagement

Because pathways initiatives require consistent partnership, the level of commitment from potential partners influences how effectively intermediaries work

DESCRIPTION

Partner engagement: Partners from multiple sectors—the K12 system, postsecondary institutions, employers, philanthropy and policymakers—deeply commit to collaboration.

WHY IT MATTERS

No single organization or sector can do this work on its own. Partners who commit to simultaneous, interdependent action are able to break down traditional siloes to access the benefits of equitable pathways systems.

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN PRACTICE?

- Partners across all sectors commit people, time and other resources to the shared effort.
- Each partner buys in to the necessity of sharing data and working together to address pain points to create a stronger system for all.
- When state and local policymakers buy in to the work of developing pathways, intermediaries often find they are better able to navigate the policy landscape to support pathways efforts.

"If any other state wants to form a group like ours, **that relationship with the governor, legislators and key educators is essential, especially the relationship with the governor.** We are very fortunate that the two governors we've been working with for the last 15 years or so are in line most of the time with our goals."

—Intermediary Leader

"We have partnered with local K12 systems, local business and industry, local higher ed institutions ... **If one of those isn't that invested in the project, then we haven't seen success."**

—Intermediary Leader

While partners from all sectors are needed, buy-in and equity-oriented partnership from employers is emerging as critical enabling conditions

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

- In order for pathways efforts to be effective, employers must be at the table and committed to the vision. Employers are a key and primary stakeholder in any pathways development work and stand to gain the benefits of an increasingly diverse workforce by helping to develop a pipeline of local talent.
- Some employers might need support in building the cultural competency necessary to support students—and particularly students of color—in internships or apprenticeship opportunities to ensure that students feel welcome and enabled to bring their whole selves to the work environment.
- In rural communities in particular, pathways work can intersect with economic development by creating a strong talent pipeline that attracts employers to rural regions.

"At the very beginning, the sentiment among some of the employers was, 'Higher ed is the problem. Education is failing.' Now, **the trust that has been built over time between the employers and higher ed has been interesting to watch.** Because the higher ed folks feel heard, and I think the employers have shifted a little bit, and they realize that they're part of the problem too. And **we're all part of the solution**. So, it's people—it's a people business, right? I mean, this is relational based, and you've got to have people that have those skill sets."

—*Intermediary Leader*

Enabling conditions for pathways often present in rural communities are a strong need
and desire for employers to create good jobs in rural regions.

Sources: Jobs for the Future (2020), Harvard Business Review (2016)

6 | Trends Across a National Sample of Intermediaries

"We really need to try something new. A large part of the education system isn't preparing people for jobs."

—John Donnelly
Vice Chairman, JPMorgan Chase & Co.
September 2019

As of June 2022, Education First gathered a sample of 190 intermediary organizations operating across the country to understand the diversity of intermediaries across the country

As we engaged in **desk research** and **conversations with proximate leaders** across the pathways landscape, we **compiled** information on a sample of intermediaries.

Gathering information on this sample of intermediaries allowed us to **understand interesting trends** across intermediaries and document the **various forms** intermediaries can take and **different approaches** organizations bring to pathways work.

This sample is **not exhaustive** and does not capture all intermediaries currently operating across the country. It is a **starting point** for understanding the diversity, scale and key approaches of intermediaries across the country.

Our research into intermediaries uses publicly available information on a few key areas of interest

Identification of Intermediaries

Desk Research	**Membership in Existing National Networks**

- **Desk Research**

- **Recommendations From Interviewees**

Membership in Existing National Networks

- Jobs for the Future's **Building Equitable Pathways** Community of Practice
- New **America's Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship** (PAYA)
- Gates Foundation **Community Investment Initiative** and **Accelerate Ed** grantees
- **StriveTogether** network members
- **Say Yes to Education** sites

Methodology

- We identified a **sample of intermediaries** operating across the country.
- Information on **key areas of interest** was gathered through a review of:
  + Organization websites.
  + Publicly available materials, such as profiles, case studies, research reports and annual reports.

Limitations

- As a national scan, the information on this sample of intermediaries focused on **breadth**, not **depth**.
- Because publicly available materials were the primary sources of information used, it is important to note that the **depth and specificity of information publicly available varied** across organizations.

This sample highlights how local context influences intermediaries and where the greatest equity needs may be

Capacities and enabling conditions influence intermediaries' structure and work

Through our desk research and conversations with proximate leaders, it became clear that the **structure and work** of intermediaries are often influenced by the **existing capacities and enabling conditions** in a locality or state.

Intermediary capacity may live across multiple organizations

As noted earlier, there may **be co-lead intermediaries within a community** helping to move forward pathways initiatives. Multiple organizations across a community can combine their areas of expertise to **execute collaboratively** on the core functions of intermediaries.

There is variation in which organizations play an intermediary role

Local context and conditions play an important role in **which organizations** step into the intermediary role, and this can result in **wide variation**, which can be seen in the organizations included in this analysis.

Communication capacity varies widely
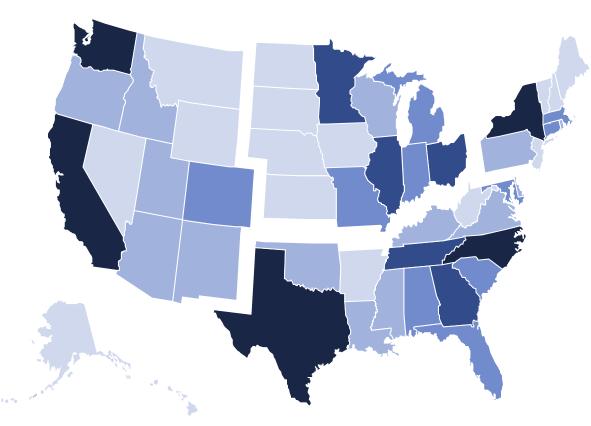
The **amount and clarity of information available** on organization's website and through other publicly available materials **varied widely.**

This sample can help stakeholders across the country better understand which states have the greatest need for pathways support

This sample can be used to begin to understand where there is the **greatest need for pathways systems** in terms of access and equity. For example, states where a larger proportion of the population identifies as BIPOC or lives in rural communities or where fewer working-age adults have postsecondary credentials are likely **strong candidates for equity-focused investments in pathways systems**.

This sample also indicates that while intermediaries are operating in all states and regions, the concentration of intermediaries varies

Interpreting This Heat Map

Number of intermediaries in sample

13+
10-12
7-9
4-6
1-3

NOTE: The data in this map are drawn from a sample of 190 intermediaries from a national landscape scan.

Information was gathered based on publicly available materials. This sample is intended to illustrate the range and density of intermediaries in this state. It is not an exhaustive list.

Organizations that work across multiple states are counted as operating in each state.

Of the intermediaries sampled in this analysis, **Texas** (30), **California** (19) and **New York** (17) have the largest number of pathways intermediaries operating in their state

education**first**

Regions align with designations from the SREB Fact Book on Higher Education

A state-level analysis of **California** and **Washington** can be found in Appendix C of this report

Understanding This Heat Map

Heat Map
Number of intermediaries in sample

13+
10-12
7-9
4-6
1-3

NOTE: The data in this map are drawn from a sample of 190 intermediaries from a national landscape scan.

Information was gathered based on publicly available materials. This sample is intended to illustrate the range and density of intermediaries in this state. It is not an exhaustive list.

Organizations that work across multiple states are counted as operating in each state.

Sources: NCES Common Core of Data (2022); NCES Selected Statistics From the Public Elementary and Secondary Universe (2018); SREB Fact Book on Higher Education (2022)

REGIONAL PROFILE: WEST

Intermediaries represented in sample operating in this region:
77

State	Intermediaries in Sample	Percentage of Students in State—BIPOC	Percentage of Students in State—Rural	Percentage of Working-Age Population With Associate Degree or Higher
Alaska	1	40%	30%	39%
Arizona	6	60%	10%	39%
California	19	73%	6%	43%
Colorado	8	43%	14%	52%
Hawaii	2	71%	9%	45%
Idaho	6	23%	25%	39%
Montana	3	18%	**36%**	43%
Nevada	3	63%	6%	**33%**
New Mexico	6	**77%**	25%	36%
Oregon	5	33%	15%	44%
Utah	4	24%	10%	46%
Washington	13	40%	12%	48%
Wyoming	1	19%	29%	40%

The three states with the <u>highest</u> percentages for BIPOC and rural students and the <u>lowest</u> percentage of the population with an associate degree or higher are highlighted in orange to help identify where the greatest equity needs might be.

Understanding This Heat Map

Heat Map
Number of
intermediaries in sample
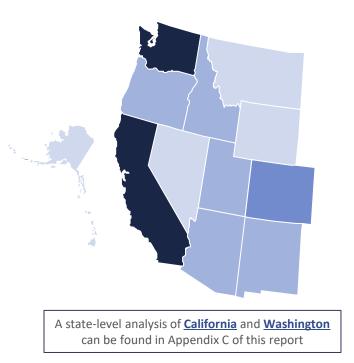
13+
10-12
7-9
4-6
1-3

NOTE: The data in this map are drawn from a sample of 190 intermediaries from a national landscape scan.

Information was gathered based on publicly available materials. This sample is intended to illustrate the range and density of intermediaries in this state. It is not an exhaustive list.

Organizations that work across multiple states are counted as operating in each state.

REGIONAL PROFILE: MIDWEST

Intermediaries represented in sample operating in this region:
73

State	Intermediaries in Sample	Percentage of Students in State—BIPOC	Percentage of Students in State—Rural	Percentage of Working-Age Population With Associate Degree or Higher
Illinois	11	**49%**	11%	46%
Indiana	9	29%	28%	**39%**
Iowa	1	21%	34%	45%
Kansas	2	31%	28%	45%
Michigan	7	30%	21%	41%
Minnesota	12	31%	22%	52%
Missouri	7	25%	27%	41%
Nebraska	3	31%	25%	47%
North Dakota	1	21%	39%	48%
Ohio	12	26%	22%	40%
South Dakota	2	23%	**41%**	44%
Wisconsin	6	27%	23%	45%

The three states with the highest percentages for BIPOC and rural students and the lowest percentage of the population with an associate degree or higher are highlighted in orange to help identify where the greatest equity needs might be.

A state-level analysis of **New York** can be found in Appendix C of this report

Understanding This Heat Map

Heat Map
Number of intermediaries in sample

13+
10-12
7-9
4-6
1-3

NOTE: The data in this map are drawn from a sample of 190 intermediaries from a national landscape scan.

Information was gathered based on publicly available materials. This sample is intended to illustrate the range and density of intermediaries in this state. It is not an exhaustive list.

Organizations that work across multiple states are counted as operating in each state.

REGIONAL PROFILE: NORTHEAST

Intermediaries represented in inventory operating in this region:
51

State	Intermediaries in Sample	Percentage of Students in State—BIPOC	Percentage of Students in State—Rural	Percentage of Working-Age Population With Associate Degree or Higher
Connecticut	9	46%	12%	50%
Maine	1	9%	54%	**44%**
Massachusetts	7	39%	9%	55%
New Hampshire	2	12%	34%	49%
New Jersey	3	**57%**	8%	50%
New York	17	56%	11%	49%
Pennsylvania	6	32%	19%	**44%**
Rhode Island	4	41%	10%	45%
Vermont	2	8%	**56%**	49%

The states with the highest percentages for BIPOC and rural students and the lowest percentage of the population with an associate degree or higher are highlighted in orange to help identify where the greatest equity needs might be.

A state-level analysis of **Texas** can be found in Appendix C of this report

Understanding This Heat Map

Heat Map
Number of intermediaries in sample

13+
10-12
7-9
4-6
1-3

NOTE: The data in this map are drawn from a sample of 190 intermediaries from a national landscape scan.

Information was gathered based on publicly available materials. This sample is intended to illustrate the range and density of intermediaries in this state. It is not an exhaustive list.

Organizations that work across multiple states are counted as operating in each state.
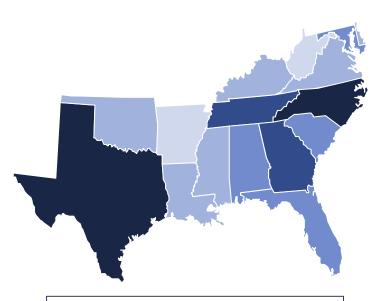
REGIONAL PROFILE: SOUTH

Intermediaries represented in inventory operating in this region:
132

State	Intermediaries in Sample	Percentage of Students in State—BIPOC	Percentage of Students in State—Rural	Percentage of Working-Age Population With Associate Degree or Higher
Alabama	7	44%	40%	36%
Arkansas	2	37%	34%	33%
Delaware	5	53%	17%	41%
Florida	9	60%	12%	42%
Georgia	10	58%	27%	42%
Kentucky	6	21%	37%	36%
Louisiana	5	53%	27%	32%
Maryland	9	61%	14%	49%
Mississippi	4	54%	**47%**	35%
North Carolina	14	49%	37%	44%
Oklahoma	4	41%	31%	34%
South Carolina	9	46%	34%	40%
Tennessee	12	36%	30%	37%
Texas	30	**71%**	16%	39%
Virginia	4	47%	25%	50%
West Virginia	2	7%	42%	**31%**

The three states with the highest percentages for BIPOC and rural students and the lowest percentage of the population with an associate degree or higher are highlighted in orange to help identify where the greatest equity needs might be.

The following slides examine high-level themes across organizations included in the sample

	Geographic Focus	**Partners**	**Labor Market Focus**	**Equity Focus**
QUESTION	What **geographic level of focus** is the intermediary currently operating at?	Which **sector partners** does this intermediary bring to the table?	Does this intermediary focus on **specific labor market areas**?	Does this intermediary focus on **priority student populations**?
EVIDENCE	Stated geographic range of focus on website: national or multiple states, state, multiple counties or a single city or county	▪ School district or state agency named as partner on website ▪ Postsecondary provider or system named as partner on website ▪ Business or workforce organization named as partner on website	Areas of labor market stated as focus of programming on website	▪ Stated focus on rural students and/or majority of students served come from rural community ▪ Stated focus on BIPOC students and/or majority of students served are BIPOC ▪ Stated focus on low-income students and/or majority of students served are low-income

On each slide, we have included **example** organizations. Note that these are intended to be **illustrative**, **not exhaustive**.

Sampled intermediaries tend to focus on the local, regional or state-level, with few intermediaries stretching their operations across the country or multiple states

Number of organizations in the sample operating at different levels

11 — Multi-state or National

Examples:
GENESYS WORKS.
rootEd ALLIANCE

42 — State

Examples:
CAREER CONNECT WASHINGTON
IDAHO BUSINESS for EDUCATION — Great Schools are Good Business
MYAP — Montana Youth Apprenticeship Partnership

59 — Regional

Examples:
UP PARTNERSHIP — unlocking potential together
Charleston Regional Youth Apprenticeships AT TRIDENT TECHNICAL COLLEGE

78 — Local

Examples:
Success Boston COLLEGE COMPLETION INITIATIVE
Apprenticeship 2000
EmployIndy — GUIDING MARION COUNTY'S WORKFORCE

Evidence found for geographic focus:
Stated geographic range of focus on website
<u>Local:</u> *Works in a single city or county* | <u>Regional:</u> *Works in a specific multi-county region*
<u>State:</u> *Works across a specific state* | <u>Multi-state or national:</u> *Works across multiple states*

educationfirst

92

The majority of the intermediaries in the sample engage K12, postsecondary and workforce partners

Number of organizations in the inventory sample with these sector partners

148

K12, Postsecondary & Workforce

Examples:

For the majority of organizations included in the sample, partners from **all three sectors** were identified

16

K12 & Postsecondary

Examples:

15

Postsecondary & Workforce

Examples:

6

K12 & Workforce

Examples:

Some organizations only clearly indicated partnerships across **two sectors** in publicly available materials–these organizations **have the potential to expand** into a third sector

Evidence found for partnership:
K12: School district or state agency named as partner on website
Postsecondary: Postsecondary institution or system named as partner on website
Workforce: Business or workforce organization named as partner on website

For intermediaries in the sample who stated a labor market focus, the most common fields were healthcare, IT and manufacturing

Number of organizations with the top three labor market foci

38 — Healthcare

Examples:

30 — Information Technology

Examples:

33 — Manufacturing

Examples:

Evidence found for labor market focus:
Areas of labor market stated as focus of programming on website

The majority of organizations sampled included some explicit statement of commitment to equity on their websites

Number of organizations with explicit equity commitment

111

Explicit Equity Commitment

Examples:

Colorado Education Initiative

SAYYES TO EDUCATION SYRACUSE

EmployIndy
GUIDING MARION COUNTY'S WORKFORCE

GRADUATE! TACOMA

Equity Goal Examples

Graduate Tacoma – 2030 Equity Goal

"By 2030, 70 percent of Tacoma Public Schools students will earn a degree, technical certificate, or gain a good-earning wage employment opportunity within six years of high school graduation. Targeted efforts will focus on students of color and those impacted by poverty."

EmployIndy's Diversity, Equity Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Anti-Racist Organization Statement
Excerpt
"We at EmployIndy understand that racism is a distinctly harmful problem that members of our community--and our organization--experience. As an organization, we are collectively committed to prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion through policies, recruitment, retention, and professional development. We will maintain accountability, including but not limited to anti-racist training, performance reviews, and the incorporation of anti-racist practices in our programs."
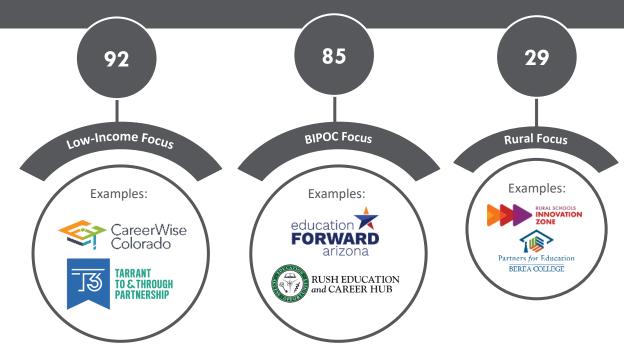

Evidence found for equity commitment and student focus:
Explicit Equity Commitment: Organization has an explicit commitment to equity, diversity and/or inclusion on their website
Low-Income Focus: Stated focus on serving low-income students and/or indicates majority of students served are low-income
BIPOC Focus: Stated focus on serving BIPOC students and/or indicates majority of students served are BIPOC
Rural Focus: Stated focus on serving rural students and/or indicates majority of students served are rural

However, fewer stated a specific focus on serving BIPOC students, students experiencing poverty and students in rural communities

Number of organizations with a specific student population equity focus

Many organizations who had an explicit equity commitment **also communicated a focus** on BIPOC students, students experiencing poverty and/or students in rural communities. However, **some organizations that work with priority student populations did not communicate an explicit commitment to equity.** For example, the Rural Schools Innovation Zone in Texas does not have an explicit equity commitment but does primarily serve rural students.

92

Low-Income Focus

Examples:

CareerWise Colorado

T3 TARRANT TO & THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

85

BIPOC Focus

Examples:

education FORWARD arizona

RUSH EDUCATION and CAREER HUB

29

Rural Focus

Examples:

RURAL SCHOOLS INNOVATION ZONE

Partners for Education BEREA COLLEGE

Evidence found for equity commitment and student focus
Explicit Equity Commitment: Organization has an explicit commitment to equity, diversity and/or inclusion on their website
Low-Income Focus: Stated focus on serving low-income students and/or indicates majority of students served are low-income
BIPOC Focus: Stated focus on serving BIPOC students and/or indicates majority of students served are BIPOC
Rural Focus: Stated focus on serving rural students and/or indicates majority of students served are rural

The sample of intermediaries can serve as a starting point for additional research

The sample of intermediaries captured serves as an **introduction to pathways efforts** currently happening across the country.

Stakeholders who are interested in supporting or learning from the organizations identified here should validate the data gathered from publicly available materials with additional **due diligence** and **conversations** with intermediaries and their partners.

There are likely more organizations serving as pathways intermediaries. Identifying a **specific geography of interest** and conducting a **deep stakeholder and landscape analysis** within that area is an important foundational step for determining what organizations are currently serving as intermediaries, the capacities they bring and **where support can best be provided**.

educationfirst

7 | The Student Journey

"Educators know that there are certain turning points in students' academic journeys that hold the potential to change their trajectories forever."

—Deborah S. Delisle
President & CEO, All4Ed
May 2022

The student experience in pathways programming is another crucial component to understand the practices of effective intermediaries

In order to **better understand students' perspectives**, we gathered student voice through a **survey** of program participants at two organizations as well as 1:1 **interviews** with students. These interviews and surveys come from a sample of students and are not exhaustive but help **provide insight** into students' perceptions and experiences.

STUDENT SURVEY

STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Wconducted a survey with 19 students from YouthForce NOLA and CareerWise Colorado. The survey focused on understanding **how students became connected** with pathways efforts and **how their program supported them** in pursuing their academic and professional goals.

We interviewed two students about their involvement in and experiences with pathways programming in their community. We focused on understanding **what drove their initial interest** in pathways programming, **their experience** participating and their plans and aspirations for their **next steps**.

education**first**

Education First surveyed students participating in pathways programming from two organizations

YouthForce NOLA

In LAUNCH, YouthForce NOLA's year-long program, students are able to earn advanced industry certifications, complete training to improve their soft skills, professional, financial and digital proficiency, build a professional network, and develop a career success plan.

CareerWise Colorado

In CareerWise Colorado's apprenticeship program, students split their time between their traditional high school classroom and the workplace. Students gain meaningful work experience and nationally recognized industry certification and build a professional network. They also have the opportunity to earn debt-free college credit.

Survey Respondents

- Survey was administered between late March and early April 2022
- 19 respondents
- Ages ranging from 17 to 22
- 58% of respondents were BIPOC

The majority of students surveyed found the skills and experiences they gained through their pathways programs valuable

Students stated that **exposure** to different pathways, **preparation** for the workforce and the **ability to gain college credit** were key ways their intermediary's programming helped to support them.

"CareerWise provides me with unique **support** to help me achieve my **professional goals** and dreams by **motivating me to take college classes** as well as helping me **explore more opportunities** that the business field has to offer."
—*Student (19 years old)*

"The **resources** on their website have helped me as I've had to write **cover letters**, draft a **resume** and participate in interviews and presentations."
—*Student (18 years old)*

Students felt that pathways programming helped them **gain real world experience** and **develop professional skills.**

"They give me the **opportunity to work** in an occupation that would have normally taken me decades to get to, within a year. It has been a very eventful and **impactful experience** and **has shaped my life for the better**."
— *Student (18 years old)*

"What attracted me was that they were offering opportunities to **work in a professional environment** while still attending high school."
— *Student (19 years old)*

Beyond professional skills training, students noted that additional **student support structures** from their intermediary bolstered their program experience.

"They **open many doors** into fields and positions that many high schoolers couldn't be in otherwise. They also **help develop networking, interpersonal and other important workplace skills**."
— *Student (18 years old)*

"During our apprenticeships, we have a **monthly meeting** where we can ask the CareerWise teachers questions. Even outside the monthly meeting, we **can ask them questions** and **seek advice**."
— *Student (18 years old)*

education first

Individual student interviews emphasized the crucial role intermediaries play in supporting students

INTERVIEW 1: LANNA HERNANDEZ

Age: 18 years old

Location: Denver, Colorado

Race/Ethnicity: South Korean & Latino/a/x

Education:
High school diploma
Project management certification

Apprenticeship Focus
Business Operations—Marketing

Source: New America (2019)

Student Experience: Apprenticeship Program

INITIAL INTEREST

During her sophomore year of high school, Lanna went to her guidance counselor and asked about **how to connect her academic learning to a future career path**, and the counselor connected her with information about **CareerWise Colorado's apprenticeship program**.

"I went to a counselor, and I told her, 'I'm not really sure where I'm supposed to go from a high school setting to like a McDonald's part-time job to a **professional career setting**.' I have no idea how to do that, and I feel like the school system **really lacks** teaching students how to do that or how to **consider future plans other than college**."

WHY THIS PROGRAM?
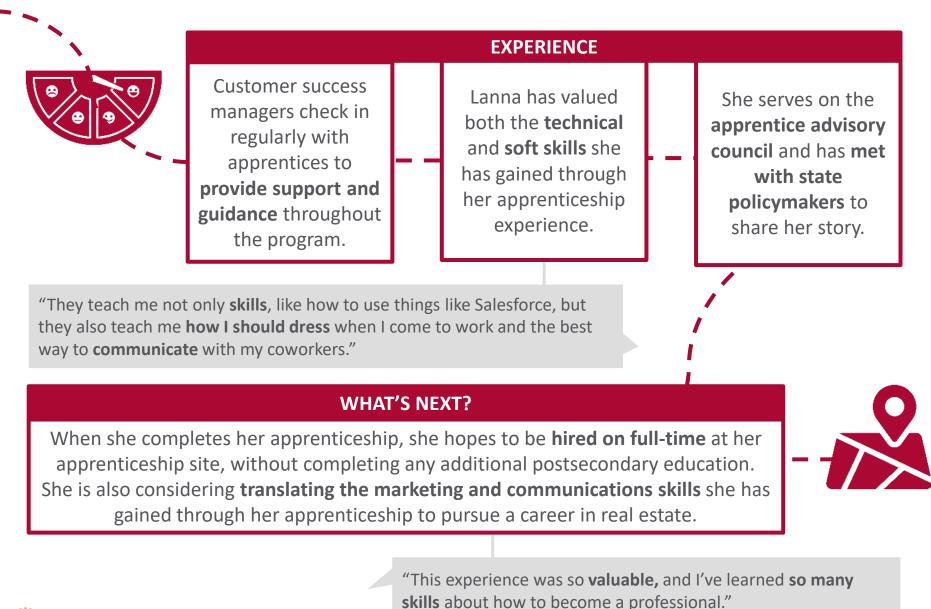
She was drawn to CareerWise Colorado's apprenticeship program because of the opportunity to gain real world **professional experience**, the support for pursuing **certifications or postsecondary education** and the **free cost.**
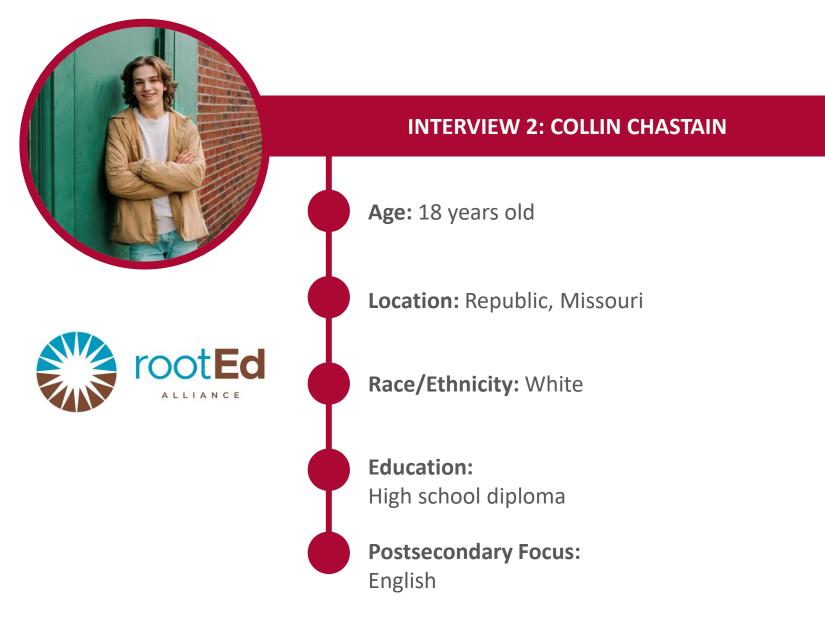
"When I first heard about this program, I was like, 'There's no way this can be **free**.' This is like a **dream come true.**"

Student Experience: Apprenticeship Program (continued)

EXPERIENCE

Customer success managers check in regularly with apprentices to **provide support and guidance** throughout the program.

Lanna has valued both the **technical** and **soft skills** she has gained through her apprenticeship experience.

She serves on the **apprentice advisory council** and has **met with state policymakers** to share her story.

"They teach me not only **skills**, like how to use things like Salesforce, but they also teach me **how I should dress** when I come to work and the best way to **communicate** with my coworkers."

WHAT'S NEXT?

When she completes her apprenticeship, she hopes to be **hired on full-time** at her apprenticeship site, without completing any additional postsecondary education. She is also considering **translating the marketing and communications skills** she has gained through her apprenticeship to pursue a career in real estate.

"This experience was so **valuable,** and I've learned **so many skills** about how to become a professional."

educationfirst

INTERVIEW 2: COLLIN CHASTAIN

Age: 18 years old

Location: Republic, Missouri

Race/Ethnicity: White

Education:
High school diploma

Postsecondary Focus:
English

Source: New America (2019)

Student Experience: Advising Program

INITIAL INTEREST

Collin became connected with his high school's **rootEd** advisor after she came to his class during the fall of his senior year and had **one-on-one conversations** with students to **discuss their college and career plans**.

"When my rootEd advisor came to my high school, I was **finally able to learn about resources** that helped me understand college opportunities, learn about scholarships and financial aid and think about how my college experience would prepare me for my career goals."

WHY THIS PROGRAM?

As a first-generation college student, he **wanted to pursue a postsecondary degree but didn't always know how to access resources** to do so. Being able to work with a rootEd advisor appealed to him because it allowed him to build a relationship with a trusted adult in his school who could help connect him to resources and connect his education and career goals.
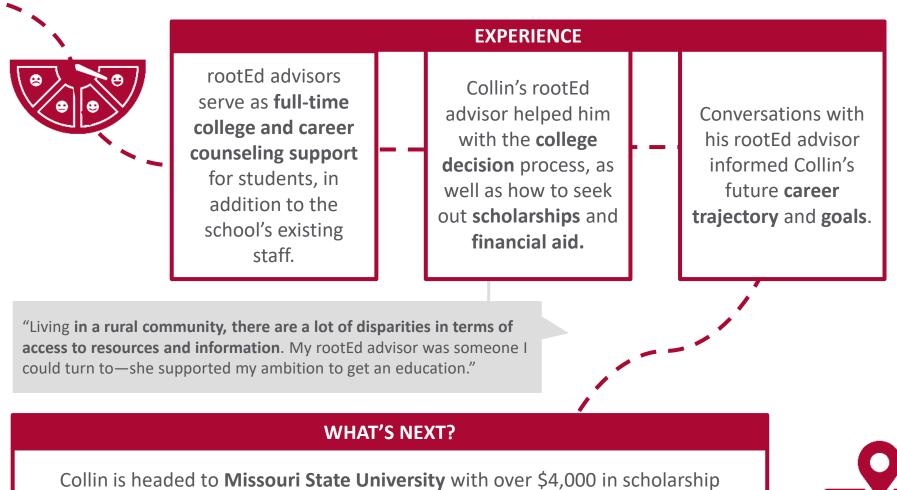
"The resources my rootEd advisor has connected me with are **something that I've been looking for since middle school**. I've always been ambitious in wanting to know about college opportunities, learning about scholarships, learning about financial aid, all of those processes."

educationfirst

Student Experience: Advising Program (continued)

EXPERIENCE

rootEd advisors serve as **full-time college and career counseling support** for students, in addition to the school's existing staff.

Collin's rootEd advisor helped him with the **college decision** process, as well as how to seek out **scholarships** and **financial aid.**

Conversations with his rootEd advisor informed Collin's future **career trajectory** and **goals**.

"Living **in a rural community, there are a lot of disparities in terms of access to resources and information**. My rootEd advisor was someone I could turn to—she supported my ambition to get an education."

WHAT'S NEXT?

Collin is headed to **Missouri State University** with over $4,000 in scholarship funding. He plans to study English and use his degree to become an author or go into the publishing business. He is also considering pursuing law school.

8 | Scale
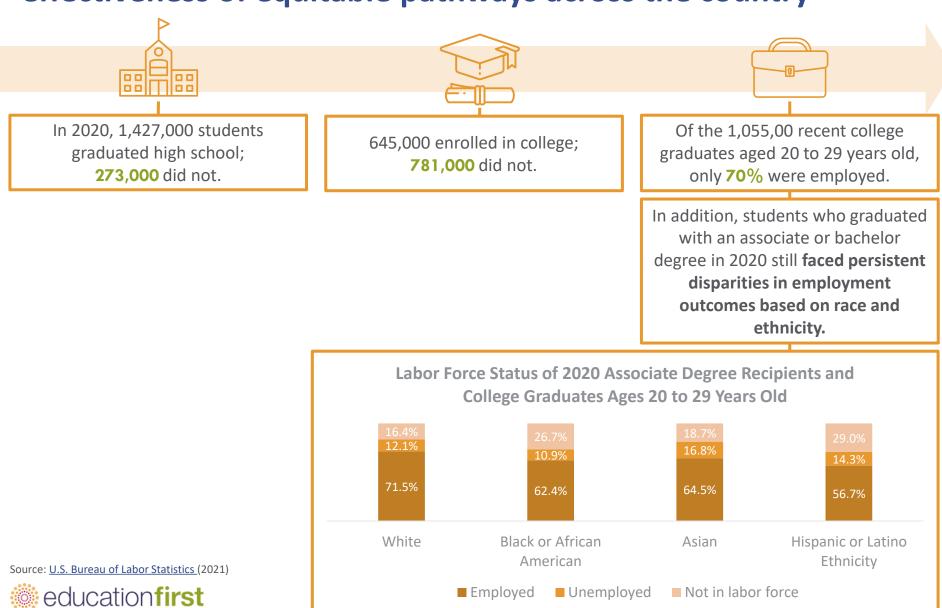
"Scaling equitable pathways is no small feat, and it requires federal, state and local policy shifts that close historic economic opportunity disparities."

—Erica Cuevas
Associate Director, Jobs for the Future
January 2022

There is a profound need to scale the availability and effectiveness of equitable pathways across the country

In 2020, 1,427,000 students graduated high school; **273,000** did not.

645,000 enrolled in college; **781,000** did not.

Of the 1,055,00 recent college graduates aged 20 to 29 years old, only **70%** were employed.

In addition, students who graduated with an associate or bachelor degree in 2020 still **faced persistent disparities in employment outcomes based on race and ethnicity.**

Labor Force Status of 2020 Associate Degree Recipients and College Graduates Ages 20 to 29 Years Old

	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity
Not in labor force	16.4%	26.7%	18.7%	29.0%
Unemployed	12.1%	10.9%	16.8%	14.3%
Employed	71.5%	62.4%	64.5%	56.7%

■ Employed ■ Unemployed ■ Not in labor force

education first

To address opportunity gaps based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and geography, the availability of equitable pathways must be scaled

To scale is to build on demonstrated successes to ensure that solutions reach their maximum potential, have the greatest possible impact and lead to widespread change.

"Scaling is not necessarily replication of a model. It's not necessarily taking an intermediary and establishing one in another county, then another county. It's about **finding a channel for scale**—who has existing infrastructure and enough mission and values alignment to integrate these practices into their ways of working?"

—*Funder*

As stakeholders seek to scale the impact of successful pathways intermediaries and efforts, it is crucial to consider **scaling support for both the core capacities intermediaries bring** and the **enabling conditions that accelerate their work.**

While there are countless frameworks for scaling up innovations, achieving large-scale impact remains elusive

To build stronger pathways systems at scale, stakeholders must spread innovations that build intermediary capacity and strengthen the enabling conditions in the pathways system. As they attempt to do so, intermediaries and their partners can face **common challenges in scaling the impact of innovations in education:**

Building an innovation that solves for the wrong problem. Unless pathways intermediaries design their work in deep partnership with the intended beneficiaries of the work, they run the risk of developing and attempting to scale an innovation that does not address the root causes of inequities.

Thinking that getting bigger is the only way to scale. Without a clear understanding of the range of possible strategies and targets for scale, organizations often default to growing their organization to increase the reach of their innovation, which can limit their potential success.

Scaling without clarity on what components of their work lead to impact. Due to the difficulty and cost of conducting high-quality evaluations of innovations in education, it can be unclear what components of an innovation are most important for delivering equitable impact.

As a result, understanding impact, generating funding that supports scale and adapting to community context are crucial for successful scale

Measurement, learning and evaluation efforts can illuminate the causal impact of pathways intermediaries' work, helping to make decisions about what to scale. Some intermediaries like Year Up have used evaluations to understand what aspects of its program lead to greatest impact, informing its decisions to scale and allowing it to make a strong case for the long-term value of its work.

"What is the benefit to employers, and how can they articulate that? … I don't know that we have enough longitudinal data to really know that, but I think these are really great things to capture that can then articulate the longer-term value of apprenticeship and what this means for our state."

—*State Policymaker*

Financial support from employers and the public sector enable intermediaries to to serve more students. Philanthropic giving, while a crucial component of the financial health of intermediaries, is often insufficient for intermediaries to expand their reach to more students.

"If there's no business imperative to support pathways work, then our scale will never be big enough because doing it on philanthropic dollars does not attend to the number of low income and kids of color we need to serve. So, it must move out of just being supported by philanthropy."

—*Intermediary Leader*

Particularly when intermediaries scale to new geographies, adapting the innovation to the context of the new community is crucial. This can be done by partnering closely with trusted and credible leaders or institutions in the new community.

"As we scale this work statewide, we partner with all of our community colleges that represent rural communities. The representatives and our peers across the state at the community college level have the pulse in their community. They understand those critical needs, and their stakeholders trust them, and we also trust them to help us facilitate this work."
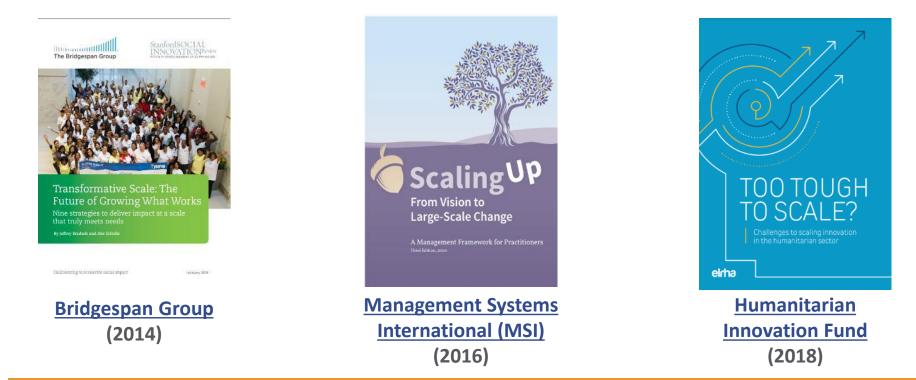
—*Intermediary Leader*

Rural pathways ecosystems might be able to achieve scale in their communities faster due to a culture of decision-making and collaboration.

"I would argue, you can get to scale faster in rural communities … than you can in the more urban communities because [in rural areas] superintendents show up, they decide, they tell you they're going to do something, they go home and they do it. Whereas in urban places, you have trouble even getting the superintendents to return your call." —*Funder*

Established tools and frameworks can help stakeholders assess whether pathways efforts are ready for scale

Detailed frameworks and practical toolkits support leaders as they consider how to scale the impact of their work.

Bridgespan Group
(2014)

Management Systems International (MSI)
(2016)

Humanitarian Innovation Fund
(2018)

When selecting a framework for scale, it is important for intermediaries to recognize that most existing frameworks are not built for the pathways context and often have a limited equity lens for considering race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status or geography.

In the short-term, common indicators help pathways intermediaries and their partners assess their readiness to scale

Pathways innovations that strengthen intermediary capacities or the enabling conditions in a pathways system are more likely to scale successfully if they have the following:

- Robust evidence (quantitative and qualitative) that the innovation works in diverse settings with diverse students

- An independent external evaluation

- A clear and compelling scale strategy

- Support from/endorsement of trusted individuals in the field

- A strong coalition of support in the communities where the innovation/s will be spread

- An innovation designed to be implementable in the communities where the innovation will spread

- Sustainable sources of funding to support the scaling effort

educationfirst

9 | Sustainability

Photo by Allison Shelley for EDUimages

"As we work in our districts and elsewhere, we've seen how [pathways] can be the glue that holds everything together, achieving positive and equitable outcomes throughout California."

—Kyla Johnson-Trammell and Jill A. Baker
Superintendents, Oakland Unified and Long Beach Unified School Districts in California
May 2022

Source: Ed Source (2022)

Sustainability is crucial for pathways efforts to take root in communities long enough to transform student outcomes

Sustainability is the ability of a nonprofit or initiative to manage resources such that it **perpetuates its ability to fulfill its mission** over the long-term. These resources include money and human capital.

Stakeholders must consider the sustainability of both the **broader initiative or ecosystem of partners** and the **intermediary organizations** themselves.

Sources: Miles and Frank (2008); National Council of Nonprofits (retrieved 2022)

Sustainability is especially crucial for intermediaries due to common challenges they face with securing funding

As a result of coordinating an ecosystem of pathways partners to do this work, pathways intermediaries can often face **challenges** in attracting and retaining support from public and private funders, including:
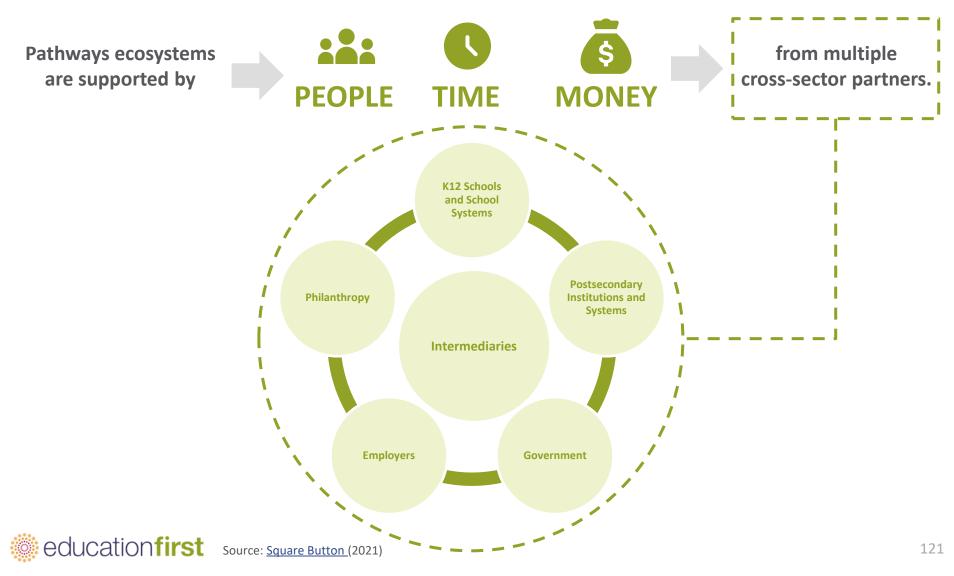
Perception that cross-sector coordinating support is low-cost or "overhead." Funders often are eager to fund programs or at times struggle to connect the work of an intermediary to tangible results.

The potential that intermediaries will compete for funding with initiative partners. Because pathways work touches on multiple sectors, conflicts over funding can occur between partners. This sometimes results in tension or pushback when intermediaries seek funding to sustain their operations.
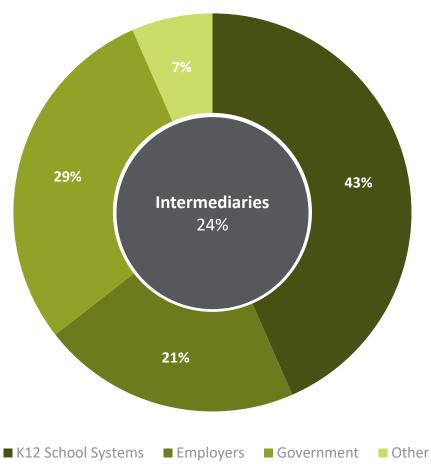
Short-term funding for long-term work. Because the work of a pathways intermediary takes time, it is challenging to knit together short-term grants to support the long-term work of systems change. This is compounded when funders seek measurable results in short windows of time.

The sustainability of a pathways initiative—and the work of the intermediary—is determined in part by how willing partners are to invest their resources into the collaboration

Pathways ecosystems are supported by ➡️ **PEOPLE** **TIME** **MONEY** ➡️ **from multiple cross-sector partners.**

- K12 Schools and School Systems
- Postsecondary Institutions and Systems
- Government
- Employers
- Philanthropy
- Intermediaries

Source: Square Button (2021)

educationfirst

One analysis of seven pathways ecosystems found that partner spending accounts for 76 percent of the total cost of pathways initiatives

Total Pathways Ecosystem Spending *(percent of total)*

Intermediaries
24%

43%

29%

7%

21%

In 2019, seven intermediaries and partner organizations spent a total of **$94 million** on pathways efforts, **$23 million** of which was spent on their operations and programming.

- ■ K12 School Systems
- ■ Employers
- ■ Government
- ■ Other

educationfirst

Nonprofit-based pathways intermediaries tend to rely primarily on philanthropic funding to sustain their operations

Depending on the **structure** of the intermediary organization, its revenue sources—and opportunities for sustainability planning—will vary.

In 2019, a majority of seven nonprofit-based pathways intermediaries' funding **came from philanthropy.**

Revenue Sources for Seven Nonprofit-Based Intermediaries in 2019
(average percent of total revenue)

Philanthropic Sources
65%

0%   100%

■ Philanthropic Sources

■ In-Kind Contributions

■ Public Sources

■ Other (earned revenue, corporate contributions, or other sources)

education**first**

For pathways intermediaries to sustain their work, it is crucial to diversify funding sources and support proximate leadership

For intermediaries that provide direct services, multiple funding streams and not being solely dependent on **philanthropy are important to sustain operations and keep services affordable**.

> "We have **benefited from revenue diversification**—we fold in federal dollars and Title [dollars] and competitive grants—we also manage the Charles Perkins grant ... We have done dabbling in corporate sponsorships and want to grow in that area."
>
> *—Intermediary Leader*

Intermediaries who are **intentional about setting up a model for sustainability** from the outset of their work are more likely to be successful.

> "A common practice for sector is thinking that taxpayer dollars will pay, and there will be public-sector adoption. **To some extent yes, but they won't adopt the entire practice.** There are business models and financial models that include fee for service, credit approaches—are there credits from state or federal funding, like carbon offset but in social settings. Where are public dollars for it?"
>
> *—Funder*

When intermediaries have **proximate leadership and community buy-in**, they are more likely to have sustainability in pathways efforts.

> "Ensuring the success in the community and having **a voice within their community** is important for the rural colleges—seeing their voice is important and has an impact on what happens in the community. There is a strong desire to have people in the community stay."
>
> *—National Expert*

Rural intermediary leaders indicate that **leadership succession planning and the leadership talent pipeline** are cornerstones of their human capital sustainability strategy.

> "We have to produce students that are competitive in the world job market, regional job market, state job market ... **have the ability to keep jobs close, but also be future leaders of the community**."
>
> *—National Expert*

educationfirst

Supporting cross-sector leaders and securing public funding for pathways efforts improves the sustainability of the broader ecosystem of partners

The leadership and engagement of partner organizations is crucial for sustaining cross-sector pathways efforts.

"**How do we better understand that there are partnerships in place and relationships underway that will make a difference in the way that the system evolves over time, as opposed to being single source?** When we think of one passionate leader who's just really committed to this and it happens, but then that person leaves, and everything falls apart—that would say something about the quality of our system."

—*National Expert*

State investment in pathways programming and intermediaries who are organizing pathways ecosystems is important for sustainability of efforts. Through support from key state leaders' offices and/or direct funding for pathways efforts, intermediaries better sustain and potentially scale their work.

"I think when you look at policies that states have established and/or [are] going to establish, **flexibility and the use of funds and/or resources in a way that benefits the region [is important]**. It's not hammered into what the state capital thinks. It's hammered into what the regional approach is needing to do."

—*National Expert*

Leveraging local employer interests early on in pathways development **allow intermediaries to access new funding streams** and operational support driven by employer partnerships.

"**Our intermediary is business led**. We are not going to create a program that doesn't have an employment opportunity. That is the basis of all our work. I spoke with someone in a rural community—they built a drone program because of student interest, but there was no way to get them hired off it, so it was a waste of time. **You need to have a density of employment opportunities locally**."

—*Intermediary Leader*

educationfirst

10 | Implications

Our research identified five core groups of stakeholders whose key actions support intermediaries' pathways efforts

Over the following slides we will share a set of **overarching implications** for stakeholders seeking to support pathways systems and intermediaries.

Stakeholders across the pathways ecosystem can take **coordinated actions** to help support the **conditions that enable** intermediaries to thrive. These stakeholders include:

Funders
National and local foundations who are supporting intermediaries

Policymakers
State chiefs and SEA leaders, state boards of education, governors, legislators

K12 Leaders and Educators
Leaders of K12 systems, districts and/or schools

Postsecondary
Leaders of postsecondary institutions and/or systems

Employers
Businesses with jobs that provide family-sustaining wages and opportunities for career progression

In addition, click here for an action guide that builds on the following implications with detailed recommendations specific for each stakeholder group

Through this research, a set of implications for stakeholders supporting pathways systems have emerged

1 **To realize the benefits of an interconnected pathways system, partners must move beyond traditional siloes to work together seamlessly.**

Across sectors, all stakeholder groups—K12, postsecondary, employers, policymakers, funders and students—benefit when there are strong and equitable pathways within a community. Strong pathways systems are not possible based only on the actions of a sole actor, and partners must be committed to working across sectors. This system transformation cannot happen unless all partners come to the table with a willingness to not only actively collaborate but also to share strategies and connect data across sectors.

2 **Because pathways work is complex and contextual, investing in intermediaries helps build and sustain interconnected systems.**

Intermediaries bring crucial capacity to systems, including supporting the creation of concrete structures and programs as well as fostering trust and relationships.

3 **Partners should expect that intermediary capacities and structures will vary to meet the needs of local context and conditions.**

The structure and work of intermediaries are often influenced by the existing capacities and enabling conditions of a locality and state. There can be wide variation in who the intermediary organization is and how they specifically structure their work, given the needs of a community.

Through this research, a set of implications for stakeholders supporting pathways systems have emerged (continued)

4 **Intermediaries often play a crucial role in advocating for coherent policies that promote cross-sector collaboration.**

State-level policies that create funding sources, align accountability requirements and create structures for cross-sector collaboration can accelerate the development of pathways systems. Intermediaries and their partners can advocate for a coherent policy environment to achieve equitable outcomes.

5 **Partners and intermediaries should strive to access diversified funding sources and support proximate and cross-sector leaders in order to sustain their work.**

Intermediaries often face challenges in attracting and retaining funding, and diversified funding sources build more robust and sustainable financial support for intermediaries and their pathways efforts. Additionally, by supporting proximate and cross-sector leaders, intermediaries can increase their credibility and trust within communities.

6 **Stakeholders must support and invest in research and evaluation efforts in order to better understand the role and impact of intermediaries.**

Intermediaries should work with stakeholders across the pathways ecosystem to prioritize efforts that track both short- and long-term outcomes and impacts of pathways efforts.

Through this research, a set of implications for stakeholders supporting pathways systems have emerged (continued)

7 **In order to scale their efforts, intermediaries must have a clear understanding on what components of their work lead to impact and work collaboratively with stakeholders to build a strategy for scaling.**

Intermediaries should work closely and collaboratively with other stakeholders when considering how and where to scale their efforts. In order to do this well, strong investments in measurement, learning and evaluation are important.

8 **Partners across the pathways ecosystem must work together to create the enabling conditions that support intermediaries in building equitable pathways systems.**

Pathways partners can take concrete actions to cultivate the enabling conditions that allow intermediaries to serve a crucial coordinating role, aligning partners and generating cohesive momentum for creating and sustaining equitable pathways.

education**first**

As stakeholders reflect on how to support intermediaries and build equitable pathways systems, our action guide can help

Action Guide for Pathways Ecosystem Stakeholders

This action guide **builds on the findings and implications of the landscape scan** and is intended to serve as a starting point for stakeholders across pathways systems as they consider **actions to take to support intermediaries and build stronger pathways systems.** The way in which partners show up and engage helps to create the enabling conditions that allow intermediaries to serve a crucial coordinating role, aligning partners and creating cohesive momentum.

Click **here** for an **action guide** with recommendations specific for each stakeholder group

11 | Conclusion

Photo by Allison Shelley for EDUimages

Effective intermediaries play a crucial role in building pathways systems that deliver equitable outcomes for students

As this scan has demonstrated, there are leaders across the education, policy and workforce sectors who seek to build a **strong future** for their communities—one in which students have the opportunity to gain the skills and experiences necessary to obtain employment in a career that provides a family sustaining wage.

K12 → Postsecondary → Workforce

Pathways Intermediaries — Local Government, Policymakers, Nonprofit Organizations, Postsecondary Institutions, K12 Leaders, Employers

Pathways help deliver on the promise of that future for all students and are especially powerful for helping make this vision a reality for BIPOC students, students from low-income backgrounds and students from rural communities.

Intermediaries play a crucial role in building and sustaining pathways efforts in communities, and future investments in deepening, expanding and researching their impact are important.

Next steps

Education First would like to **remain a thought partner** to share our research, expertise, and network as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Ascendium Education Group continue to explore grantmaking strategies that can **dramatically scale support for building pathways ecosystems.**

Opportunities for future collaboration include:

- Conduct state-specific scans to identify existing intermediary organizations, nascent pathways efforts, and organizations that are well-positioned to grow into the intermediary role given their current capacities

- Develop self-assessment and reflection tools around the six core capacities and three enabling conditions to support cross-sector partnerships

- Support discussions about grantmaking strategies and initiatives to implement recommendations from this work

- Provide strategic support and technical assistance to intermediaries—particularly intermediaries operating in rural regions—as they consider approaches for scale and sustainability

Acknowledgments

This work would not have been possible without the contributions of the following individuals:

- **Isa Ellis,** Education Pathways, U.S. Program, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Kirstin Yeado,** Support Rural Postsecondary and Workforce Training, Ascendium Education Group
- **Dakota Pawlicki,** Talent Hubs, CivicLab
- **Taylor White,** Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship, New America
- **Kim Braxton,** Equal Measure
- **Robert Roach,** Equal Measure
- **Jack Hill,** Education First
- **Yeonjae Lee,** Education First
- **Rei Nakamura,** Education First

Thank you

This scan was authored by:

Kelly Kovacic Duran
Principal
kkovacic@education-first.com

Claire Redmond Takhar
Consultant
ctakhar@education-first.com

Hannah Bartlebaugh
Associate
hbartlebaugh@education-first.com

Aman Falol
Associate Consultant
afalol@education-first.com

Joselin Padron-Rasines
Consultant
jpadronrasines@education-first.com

**To discuss this project in more detail, please contact Kelly Kovacic Duran
at kkovacic@education-first.com.**

12 | Appendices

Appendix A:
Our RIDE Framework

Education First explicitly focused on equity during the research and recommendation development phases of the landscape scan

How do we understand racial and socioeconomic equity?

Racial Equity is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. All people are able to achieve their full potential in life, regardless of race, ethnicity or the community in which they live. Working toward racial equity means actively supporting efforts to dismantle racial and structural inequities that limit opportunities so that people from historically marginalized racial and ethnic communities can participate, prosper and reach their full potential.

Socioeconomic equity is the systematic fair treatment of people of all socioeconomic backgrounds that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. It is important to consider the intersectionality of class and race, particularly for lower-income students.

An equity lens for our research is important because it keeps us accountable to produce results that serve all students. It helps the research team make decisions and design research that prioritizes voices and perspectives of experts and community most proximate to the problem.

Click **here** to explore resources, including the
Race, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (RIDE) Framework used for this project

educationfirst

This understanding of equity was operationalized in our research in multiple ways

Race, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework

Outlines guidelines for each of the four phases of the work and ensures that the landscape scan collectively addresses the needs of stakeholders

Scoping and Planning Research

- Scoped research to focus on race, equity, inclusion and diversity using an asset-based approach and desire-based framing.
- Developed a plan to engage stakeholders most proximate to the problem.

Literature Review

- Prioritized resources that reflected a diversity of perspectives along the lines of race, socioeconomic status and geography. Named gaps in the existing research, including elevating BIPOC perspective and the experiences of rural communities.
- Developed equity-focused considerations for reciprocal engagement, including compensation criteria for interviewees and critical friend reviewers.

Data Collection and Analysis

- Sought to interview and engage leaders proximate to the needs and challenges of BIPOC students, students from low-income backgrounds and students from rural backgrounds.
- Gathered feedback from students being served by pathways intermediaries.
- Engaged a set of critical friend reviewers from key stakeholder groups to review findings and offer feedback on sections of the research.

Dissemination Plan

- Considered methods for staying engaged with stakeholder groups for ongoing awareness, feedback and input.

education**first**
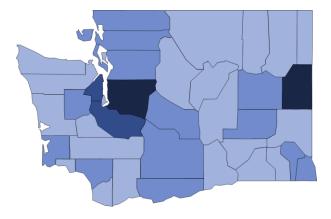
Appendix B:
States with Pre-K Through Workforce SLDS

As discussed in the scan, policy is a crucial enabling condition for pathways; 18 states have statewide longitudinal data systems that span early learning to workforce data.

States with Pre-K Through Workforce SLDS
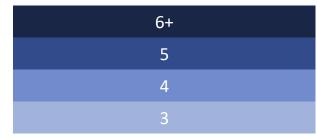
Connecticut	Minnesota
Florida	Mississippi
Georgia	Nevada
Illinois	Rhode Island
Indiana	Tennessee
Kansas	Texas
Kentucky	Utah
Maryland	Virginia
Massachusetts	Washington

Appendix C:
Sample of Intermediaries:
State Analysis

In our sample of intermediaries, 13 operated in Washington

Interpreting This Heat Map

Number of intermediaries in sample

6+
5
4
3

NOTE: The data in this map are drawn from a sample of 190 intermediaries from a national landscape scan.

Information was gathered based on publicly available materials. This sample is intended to illustrate the range and density of intermediaries in this state. It is not an exhaustive list.

For the purposes of this heat map, organizations operating at the state level were indicated as operating in every county.

Stakeholders who are interested in supporting or learning from the organizations identified here should validate the data gathered from publicly available materials with additional due diligence and conversations with intermediaries and their partners.

Intermediary Organizations	Partners engaged			Years in Operation
	K12	*Postsec.*	*Workforce*	
LOCAL				
Foundation for Tacoma Students	✓	✓	✓	12
Graduate Strong	✓	✓	✓	3
REGIONAL				
Community Center for Education Results	✓	✓	✓	12
Eastside Pathways	✓	✓	✓	11
Workforce Development of Seattle-King County	✓	✓	✓	2
LaunchNW	✓	✓	✓	<1
STATE				
Career Connect Washington	✓	✓	✓	4
Washington STEM	✓	✓	✓	11
Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee	✓	✓	✓	14
MULTI-STATE OR NATIONAL				
Achieving the Dream		✓		18
Year Up		✓	✓	22
Community Catalyst Partners	✓	✓	✓	2
The Graduate! Network		✓	✓	17

144

In our sample of intermediaries, 30 operated in Texas (slide 1 of 2)

Interpreting This Heat Map

Number of intermediaries in sample

15+	
14	
13	
12	

NOTE: The data in this map are drawn from a sample of 190 intermediaries from a national landscape scan.

Information was gathered based on publicly available materials. This sample is intended to illustrate the range and density of intermediaries in this state. It is not an exhaustive list.

For the purposes of this heat map, organizations operating at the state level were indicated as operating in every county.

Stakeholders who are interested in supporting or learning from the organizations identified here should validate the data gathered from publicly available materials with additional due diligence and conversations with intermediaries and their partners.

Intermediary Organizations	Partners engaged			Years in Operation
	K12	*Postsec.*	*Workforce*	
LOCAL				
Austin Aspires	✓	✓	✓	8
Rural Schools Innovation Zone	✓	✓	✓	3
Tarrant To & Through Partnership	✓	✓	✓	2
University of Texas at El Paso	✓	✓	✓	30
REGIONAL				
Communities in Schools Northeast Texas	✓	✓	✓	33
Dallas Regional Chamber	✓	✓	✓	113
E3 Alliance	✓	✓	✓	16
Education Partnership of the Permian Basin	✓	✓	✓	6
Greater Houston Partnership	✓	✓	✓	8
Jasper Independent School District	✓	✓	✓	Unclear
The Commit Partnership	✓	✓	✓	10
UP Partnership	✓	✓	✓	13
greater:SATX Regional Economic Partnership	✓	✓	✓	Unclear

In our sample of intermediaries, 30 operated in Texas (cont.)

Interpreting This Heat Map

Number of intermediaries in sample

| 15+ |
|-----|
| 14 |
| 13 |
| 12 |

NOTE: The data in this map are drawn from a sample of 190 intermediaries from a national landscape scan.

Information was gathered based on publicly available materials. This sample is intended to illustrate the range and density of intermediaries in this state. It is not an exhaustive list.

For the purposes of this heat map, organizations operating at the state level were indicated as operating in every county.
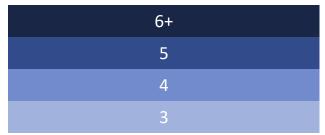
Stakeholders who are interested in supporting or learning from the organizations identified here should validate the data gathered from publicly available materials with additional due diligence and conversations with intermediaries and their partners.

Intermediary Organizations	Partners engaged			Years in Operation
	K12	*Postsec.*	*Workforce*	
STATE				
Communities Foundation of Texas	✓	✓	✓	11
Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas	✓	✓	✓	2
Texas 2036		✓	✓	6
Texas A&M Agri-life Extension	✓	✓		4
Texas A&M University - Commerce	✓	✓	✓	1
Texas Association of Community Colleges		✓	✓	9
Texas Education Agency	✓	✓		2
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board		✓	✓	11
Texas Regional Pathways Network	✓	✓	✓	3
Trellis Foundation		✓	✓	1
MULTI-STATE OR NATIONAL				
Achieving the Dream		✓		18
Complete College America	✓	✓	✓	13
Genesys Works	✓	✓	✓	20
Purpose Built Communities	✓	✓	✓	13
rootEd Alliance	✓	✓	✓	4
The Graduate! Network		✓	✓	17
Year Up		✓	✓	22

In our sample of intermediaries, 17 operated in New York

Interpreting This Heat Map

Number of intermediaries in sample

4+
3
2
1
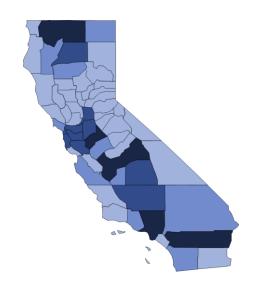
NOTE: The data in this map are drawn from a sample of 190 intermediaries from a national landscape scan.

Information was gathered based on publicly available materials. This sample is intended to illustrate the range and density of intermediaries in this state. It is not an exhaustive list.

For the purposes of this heat map, organizations operating at the state level were indicated as operating in every county.

Stakeholders who are interested in supporting or learning from the organizations identified here should validate the data gathered from publicly available materials with additional due diligence and conversations with intermediaries and their partners.

Intermediary Organizations	Partners engaged			Years in Operation
	K12	*Postsec.*	*Workforce*	
LOCAL				
Children's Aid	✓	✓	✓	8
City University of New York	✓	✓		6
Harlem Children's Zone	✓	✓		25
Harlem Renaissance Education Pipeline	✓	✓	✓	7
Here to Here	✓	✓	✓	7
Hobart and William Smith Colleges	✓	✓	✓	12
Rochester Area Community Foundation	✓	✓	✓	50
Say Yes Buffalo	✓	✓	✓	11
Say Yes Syracuse	✓	✓		14
The Fund for Public Schools	✓	✓	✓	39
REGIONAL				
United Way New York City	✓	✓	✓	8
STATE				
New York State Education Department	✓	✓	✓	9
MULTI-STATE OR NATIONAL				
Achieving the Dream		✓		18
Genesys Works	✓	✓	✓	20
Purpose Built Communities	✓	✓	✓	13
The Graduate! Network		✓	✓	17
Year Up		✓	✓	22

In our sample of intermediaries, 19 operated in California

Interpreting This Heat Map

Number of intermediaries in sample

6+
5
4
3

NOTE: The data in this map are drawn from a sample of 190 intermediaries from a national landscape scan.

Information was gathered based on publicly available materials. This sample is intended to illustrate the range and density of intermediaries in this state. It is not an exhaustive list.

For the purposes of this heat map, organizations operating at the state level were indicated as operating in every county.

Stakeholders who are interested in supporting or learning from the organizations identified here should validate the data gathered from publicly available materials with additional due diligence and conversations with intermediaries and their partners.

Intermediary Organizations	Partners engaged			Years in Operation
	K12	*Postsec.*	*Workforce*	
LOCAL				
California State University, Monterey Bay	✓	✓	✓	6
Cradle to Career Sonoma County	✓	✓	✓	8
El Monte Promise Foundation	✓	✓	✓	10
Fresno County Office of Education	✓	✓	✓	6
JobTrain		✓	✓	55
Mission Promise Neighborhood	✓	✓	✓	10
Siskiyou County Office of Education.	✓	✓	✓	9
Stanislaus County Office of Education	✓	✓	✓	4
REGIONAL				
LAUNCH (Local Apprenticeship Uniting a Network of Colleges and High Schools)	✓	✓	✓	4
North State Together	✓	✓	✓	6
Unite LA	✓	✓	✓	24
STATE				
Early Care & Education Pathways to Success	✓	✓	✓	3
Foundation for California Community Colleges	✓	✓	✓	10
Linked Learning Alliance	✓	✓	✓	14
MULTI-STATE OR NATIONAL				
Achieving the Dream		✓		18
Complete College America	✓	✓	✓	13
Genesys Works	✓	✓	✓	20
The Graduate! Network		✓	✓	17
Year Up		✓	✓	22

Appendix D:
Takeaways From Interviews

Education First conducted more than 40 field interviews with diverse stakeholders to understand the perspective of those most proximate to pathways efforts.

Interviews

The research team conducted 41 interviews to make sure the voice of leaders, partners and participants most proximate to the work of pathways intermediaries informed both the findings and recommendations within the report.

Interviewees

Interviewees were diverse along lines of race, ethnicity, gender, professional experience and geography. In particular, we sought to understand the perspective of the following:

- Business leaders
- Education leaders
- Funders
- Intermediary leaders
- National experts
- Rural funders
- Rural intermediary leaders
- State policymakers
- Students

The following slides are summaries of takeaways shared by these stakeholders. To protect confidentiality, interviewees who did not give explicit permission for their names to be shared alongside these takeaways are listed anonymously.

educationfirst

Major takeaways from interviews

Abby Jo Sigal, Co-Founder and Former CEO
Here to Here

- Seasoned staff members with relationships and long tenure are critical for success. Pathways intermediary operational success is sustained by seasoned staff members who have relationships with stakeholders at every level. Retaining a larger staff of senior collaborators is critical for organizational health, but supporting their success is a challenging economic model to sustain.
- Funders can help scale pathways intermediary success if they focus on system metrics when measuring effectiveness. Funders supporting pathways intermediaries operationalize success by working with them to measure and organize their operations and partnerships around system metrics and changes to stakeholder thinking.
- Intermediaries enhance pathways outcomes when they prioritize strong partnerships with K12 and postsecondary. Quality pathways work needs to happen within institutions where learners spend the most time. That means facilitating more pathways opportunities within the K12 and postsecondary systems. Intermediaries are best suited to support educational institutions by removing barriers and creating the multiple partnerships necessary to achieve this strategy.

Alisha Benson, Chief Executive Officer
Greater Spokane Incorporated

- Storytelling is a critical skillset that pathways intermediaries use to cultivate new partnerships and facilitate cross-sector relationships.
- Leading with data helps a pathways intermediary facilitate difficult conversations, measure progress toward equity and demonstrate the value of each partner's time during convenings.
- A core need of learners in rural communities is early access to work opportunities. Intermediaries can focus on facilitating education and employer partnerships, removing policy barriers and facilitating access to internships and apprenticeships as early as high school.

educationfirst

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Allatia Harris, Vice Chancellor, Strategic Initiatives—Workforce Development, Community Relations and Diversity
San Jacinto College

- The workforce partnerships that San Jacinto has with employers in the region are much more transformational rather than transactional. An emphasis is placed on the fact that, by helping bolster the number of learners who are prepared for the local labor market, the region will grow, and both the college and the workforce sector ultimately benefit.
- Pathways intermediaries that are really doing a good job bring with them their own expertise, and skills, capacity or connections that the postsecondary institution itself does not have. Having the knowledge and expertise of the area and the connections to make meaningful partnerships is crucial.

Allen Pratt, Executive Director
National Rural Education Association

- In the context of pathways work, intermediaries play a crucial role in bringing stakeholders to the table and aligning them around a vision of what the future could look like for students in a specific region. When doing that kind of work in a rural community, intermediaries need to have credibility and trust from the community and focus on the sustainability of the work to help build that trust.
- From a policy perspective, states that allow for greater amounts of flexibility at the regional and local levels set up an environment that better enables intermediaries to do the work on the ground and innovate in response to the unique needs of rural communities.
- Understanding local labor market data is crucial for building strong pathways and generating momentum around pathways work. That data needs to be accessible to a variety of stakeholders, including teachers, who use it to inform their work in the classroom as well as regional leaders, who can drive broader community-level work.

education**first**

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Ben Small, Superintendent/Incoming Executive Director for LaunchNW
Central Valley School District

- An intermediary best performs the time-consuming task of coordinating between all equitable pathways stakeholders. They make sure that each stakeholders desires and the needs of learners are connected to each conversation, advocacy efforts and collaboration. From a policy perspective, states that allow for greater amounts of flexibility at the regional and local levels set up an environment that better enables intermediaries to do the work on the ground and innovate in response to the unique needs of rural communities.
- Intermediaries can help foster communal trust, legitimacy and stronger equitable pathways partnerships through three activities: 1) surfacing each stakeholders needs, 2) expanding access to pathways participation and leadership opportunities to all and 3) making sure pathways work is community driven.

Cate Swinburn, Co-founder and President
YouthForce NOLA

- Politics, governance and policy interpretation greatly influence the stakeholder habits and perceptions concerning data. For instance, the decentralized education system of independent charter schools in New Orleans results in the need for upwards of 30 data-sharing agreements rather than one (which is more common in other major metropolitan areas). Educators are critical enablers of success for quality pathways work and are the biggest gatekeepers to young people. This work cannot happen if educators don't believe in the work or skills connected to quality pathways programming.
- The pandemic is disillusioning young people, and there is an intense need for youth and their families to make money right now. Intermediaries and quality pathways stakeholders need to think about how they help students experiencing poverty assess the deferred value of pathways and internship opportunities in a way that does not harm their families' immediate needs.

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Courtney DeOreo, Executive Director, RITE/Senior Director, Tech Talent
Greater Cleveland Partnership

- In order to drive the transformation of the education and workforce system, the work has to be demand driven—employers have to be at the table and own the work. Employer engagement is crucial.
- One of the unique strengths that pathways intermediaries have when working to connect siloed workforce and education systems is the ability to optimize resources and, through partnerships, create a system that a variety of partners within a region can plug in to and utilize without needing to start from scratch.

Dreama Gentry, Executive Director
Partners for Education at Berea College

- In terms of tracking metrics for success and student outcomes, having the dual ability to collect specific participant data and partner with KYSTATS for population-level indicators has been useful for deeply understanding impact.
- One of the biggest assets of rural communities is people's commitment to a place. Their deep knowledge and sustained commitment to a community helps serve as a foundation for a broader willingness to work together and collaborate on what is necessary to support all kids.
- To build trust with a community, it's important to have a deep knowledge or understanding of the context, something that comes from being from the place or having a shared lived experience of it. There also needs to be a long-term commitment to doing the work in the place.

Emily Klement, Vice President
Rural Community College Alliance

- The strength and sustainability of a pathways intermediary in rural areas is dependent on their ability to develop strong organizational leadership who were once beneficiaries of the organization.
- Quality pathways in rural areas are effective when they provide stackable postsecondary credentials for learners and exit opportunities into employment after each credential. An example of this can be a nursing pathway that ensures learners can begin with earning their CNA, while also developing clear support and understanding toward a graduate school nursing credential.

education**first**

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Eric Ban, Executive Director, Economic Mobility Systems
The Commit Partnership

- Helping institutions and regions realize they must collaboratively adopt data strategies and technology systems that work across the institutional silos is essential for intermediaries to support quality pathway implementation. One important point on student data is that we can and should improve student data security AND help the data be more interoperable for better use by both students and those that serve them.
- Intermediaries who possess a combination of program, data and technology systems knowledge and skills are best positioned to help execute regional pathways work. Building relationships and trust in these areas will help the intermediary connect the strategy to the tools to manage the work at scale.
- Intermediaries must understand the interests of the leaders in the pathway coalition. For example, higher education leaders care deeply about college enrollment. Thus, ensuring the strategy has college enrollment as a goal and then the data and systems to track to that goal in real time across K12 and higher ed aligned to good regional jobs will keep higher education leaders at the table and committed to the work.
- User-centered design principles are essential for engaging students and those who serve them across the K12, postsecondary and work continuum. Students need ownership of their data and credentials with the agency to use them to secure scholarships, postsecondary programs and work-based learning in more equitable ways. Frontline advisors need case-management tools that help organize the data in a 360-degree view to include data from multiple sources to best support student needs.

Gene Chasin, President and CEO
Community Catalyst Partners

- Intermediaries can provide value to equitable pathways partners by improving their capacity to use tools like dashboards and data-driven decision-making. This keeps pathways partners accountable toward progress and enthusiastic about how their behavior may help improve outcomes for all students.
- When scaling into new areas, an intermediary may find more success if they focus driving policy change and partnerships within a metro area. This allows for better regional aggregation of resources and allocation of support to counties and cities that need more others within a region.
- Existing trust and relationships are critical for an intermediary to help facilitate cross-sector pathways partnerships and sustainable collaboration.

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Hollis Salway, Director of Development and Research
CareerWise Colorado

- Qualitative metrics can be a useful source of evaluating success, and there is a need to capture opportunities and evaluate learning through more qualitative metrics and a push for practitioner-driven learner. Those qualitative data points and related conversations are real measures of progress and innovation.
- As a business-led organization, CareerWise is not going to create a program that is not connected to local job opportunities. There needs to be connection to a density of employment opportunities, and this is especially true in rural communities. This has been a struggle in Colorado for rural communities.

Jasmine Haywood, Strategy Director
Lumina Foundation

- Investors can support more equitable outcomes by making their biases and objectives explicit throughout their granting process. If a funder is committed to dismantling inequities, they should make this commitment and expectation explicit to all potential grantees.
- Intermediaries compromised of staff with strong preexisting knowledge of racial equity and longstanding relationships within postsecondary are often effective investments.
- Intermediaries that are committed to equity and achieve results hire more people of color and invest in the long-term development of these staff members.

Kirk Banghart, Chief Facilitator
Colorado Rural Education Collaborative

- Especially in rural communities, understanding the community context is crucial. That specific context is important for identifying what supports are needed, what growth can look like and what outcomes are appropriate to use as measures of success.
- A key potential entry point for funders to support intermediaries work is by providing more general operating support. Additionally, there is a particular opportunity for corporate philanthropy to lean in and provide deeper investment into rural leadership.
- Intermediaries can have unique insights into the context of a community and the root causes of systemic issues.

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Kyle Hartung, Associate Vice President
Jobs for the Future

- The core functions or capacities of intermediaries can often, in practice, actually be stretched across institutions rather than simply residing in one standalone organization. In order to be transformative, intermediaries can be a hub in terms of being a convenor/connector, but ultimately, they need to reside as one node in a larger system.
- While there is truth in the value of being seen as a neutral convenor of partners, having a point of view actually really matters: Intermediaries should have a clear vision about the outcomes they are looking for, particularly how equity shows up in those outcomes, and how they might advocate for or on behalf of other systems-level actors.
- In terms of enabling conditions, having a sustainable funding model, community recognition of need for the work and champions who can help drive shared leadership across partners are all important factors.

Lindsay Lovlien, Senior Program Officer, Policy and Advocacy
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

- State-level policymakers have laid strong policy foundation to support pathways work in Washington, but there's an overall lack of coherence that makes impact and implementation difficult. There are some ways that philanthropy can support making the state-level policy more coherent overall, including funding research, comms and advocacy; providing technical assistance; investing in regional approaches; and helping to sustain pathways collaboration.
- Part of what has made this work difficult is the structure of the Washington state legislature. For example, K12 and higher ed policy are considered by different committees, so structurally, no one is holding that transition space. It's also easy for the conversation to get bogged down in details rather than having anyone hold a compelling whole-system view.
- Intermediaries have a role to play with advocacy at the state level, but their efforts are nascent. More and more, networks are starting to co-locate and identify similar organizations to play intermediary roles across different efforts, such as WA STEM and CCW work. The Black Joy consortium is putting together a funding proposal, so their funding asks and advocacy priorities will be telling for where grass-middle momentum is in the state.

education**first**

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Maud Daudon, Project Leader
Career Connect Washington

- Role clarity is the key for different stakeholders to participate. Educators cannot take on the pathways work by themselves, and employers can't design the curriculum. If role clarity on quality pathways is achieved, the intermediary can help leverage the time of each stakeholder and then take from it.
- With rurality, the greatest challenge is the distance between academic learning and where the work experience is happening. Broadband accessibility is a necessity, and we should apply what we learned during the pandemic to improve equitable access to meaningful work experiences.
- Equity goals should be measurable and simple for accountability. Data benchmarks and systems should work to disaggregate by demographics and geography to ensure pathways work and outcomes serve all students.

Lisa MacDougall, Managing Director, Philanthropy and Social Impact
rootEd Alliance

- As rootEd Alliance thinks about scaling and expanding to new states, we consider the local policy environment and the potential for state-level partnerships, both of which can enable rootEd's impact to be scaled and sustained in the long-term.
- Key to the success of the rootEd model are collaborative, local partnerships with expert practitioners; in Missouri, for example, Ozarks Technical Community College serves as rootEd's lead programmatic partner, providing invaluable insights into the needs, challenges and opportunities in rural communities across the state.

educationfirst

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Meg Long, Managing Director, Portfolio Strategy and Management
Blue Meridian Partners

- Intermediaries with different levels of focus—national, regional, local, hyperlocal—are likely to have different levels of emphasis on specific aspects of intermediary work. For example, national intermediaries are more likely to place a large focus on policy and advocacy as well as direct implementation. For intermediaries focused at the neighborhood level, there's probably much more focus on direct service and support rather than advocacy work.
- In rural geographies, first identifying where infrastructure already exists and identifying channels of scale results in more successful scale.
- Financial savings for public systems can often be a compelling value proposition to push systems to reengineer themselves and adopt a set of practices. You need to incentivize the system to change the way it's functioning in order to implement something with fidelity.

Meredith Jaremchuk, Chief Program Officer
Year Up

- When thinking about entering a new location, our organization considers a number of factors including, but not necessarily limited to, employer demand and commitment to providing internships, systems and collaborative work already being done in the community, transportation infrastructure, and the local donor community context.
- When entering a new geography, our organization prioritizes building relationships with community, particularly relationships that can help young adults with barrier navigations (for example, organizations that can help young adults dealing with food insecurity or housing insecurity).

Michael Gonzalez, Executive Director
Rural Schools Innovation Zone

- It requires a strong leader with deep knowledge of the community to manage the relationships and partnerships between superintendents, business leaders and institutions of higher education.
- Access to funding is important for the continued success and expansion of intermediaries.

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Rod Gramer, President and CEO
Idaho Business for Education

- Early buy-in from the business community and state-policy leadership help a pathways intermediary scale their services and partnerships across most geographies within a state.
- Funders can address a critical sustainability need for pathways intermediaries by allocating funds to support general operations.

Romanita Matta-Barrera, Chief Workforce Officer, SA WORX
greater:SATX Regional Economic Partnership

- SA WORX is focused on four primary areas: IT, financial services, bioscience and manufacturing. These areas were chosen in alignment with San Antonio's targeted regional economic development efforts and based on the fact that there is demand from employers in those sectors in the area. Additionally, the jobs available in those sectors have entry-level roles that can lead to economic mobility.
- SA WORX values hearing directly from youth participating in programming such as job shadows and internships as well as from K12 stakeholders and employers. Feedback from pre- and post-program surveys to stakeholders help inform what type of work-based learning opportunities provide the most value for students. Key survey metrics help demonstrate whether students are truly better equipped for college and career after participating.
- The ability to invest in technology platforms this year has allowed SA WORX to deepen and expand engagement between students and employers. SA WORX created a digital one-stop shop that streamlines communications between SA WORX and employer partners and helps employers connect with high school intern applicants. With a commitment to continuous improvement and a focus on DEI, SA WORX piloted a new marketable skills development digital badging program with several underserved, high-poverty high schools. SA WORX provided students with a combination of modules on emotional intelligence, workplace success, resilience and growth mindset to further enhance their skillsets for future employment.

educationfirst

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Shelly O'Quinn, CEO
Innovia Foundation

- Community governance models are an enabling condition that help a pathways intermediary sustain strong partnerships after the transitions of key leaders.
- Intermediary models specifically designed to address the needs and aspirations of rural learners are the ones that have the most success when scaling into new communities. In terms of enabling conditions, having a sustainable funding model, community recognition of need for the work and champions who can help drive shared leadership across partners are all important factors.
- Successful intermediaries often connect the workstreams employees from different pathways organizations and enable better collaboration.

Wynn Rosser, President and CEO
TLL Temple Foundation

- Leaders in rural school districts are high-capacity leaders—they are smart, passionate, caring people who are thinking about equity. However, when considering working with rural school districts, it is important to understand that they often don't have the layers of administration resources and capacity that most larger districts have.
- When there are multiple funders working within a community, it is helpful for the funders to take a step back and communicate among themselves to consider what they are asking for and providing to their grantees in order to potentially stream expectations of and support for grantees. For example, doing a crosswalk of the grant initiatives and identifying expectations in terms of convening, reporting, coaching, etc., and starting to streamline those efforts.
- If funders focus only on communities that already have some level of backbone or mature convener in place, in many cases they are actually excluding a large portion of rural communities that have been underinvested in philanthropically for so long and don't have that preexisting organization due to that historical lack of investment. If funders do not include a rural carve-out or specific focus on rural communities, those rural communities will probably be baked out by the design criteria.

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Rebecca Holmes, President and Chief Education Officer; Landon Mascareñaz, Vice President of Community Partnerships; Samantha Olson, Vice President of Strategy
Colorado Education Initiative

- The Colorado Education Initiative team has tended to see the most success in communities where there is strong buy-in from all stakeholders (employers, K12, higher ed, etc.). If one or more of those groups is not strongly invested at the beginning, it can be more challenging to launch the work with enough momentum to see early wins.
- CEI's partnership with CO Succeeds has enabled both organizations to achieve more for the supported districts than if either had tried to go it alone. While it took some time to identify the lanes for each organization, this collaboration at all levels between each organization has built intermediary capacity in the Colorado ecosystem that feels coherent to the communities.
- CEI has found that taking a hyper-local, data-driven approach to equity has enabled communities to have focused conversations about what equity means in their context; by examining who is furthest from opportunity in each community, stakeholders can align on a shared, equity-oriented vision while avoiding some of the baggage of the current national conversation on race and equity.

Amy Spicer, Senior Director of Implementation, Partnership and Strategy; Landon Mascareñaz, Vice President of Community Partnerships; Katherine Novinski, Assistant Director, Implementation and Partnership
Colorado Education Initiative

- The success of Colorado Education Initiative's work is predicated on having buy-in from all stakeholders: K12, business/industry and higher ed. The intermediary is beneficial when it points all partners to a north star and roots toward better outcomes for all with data.
- Philanthropy is an effective "kickstarter" for new pathways initiatives, but intermediary staff should use this money to iterate, design better systems and leverage dollars from more sustainable sources.

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Libbie Brey, Senior Researcher; Destiny McLennan, Researcher
Education Northwest

- Pathways intermediaries can help postsecondary pathways partners in rural areas develop the capacity to collect and use their institutional data to better serve all learners.
- Transportation is a common inhibitor to student success in rural areas. Pathways intermediaries and community colleges are well positioned to facilitate partnerships that help rural areas and community colleges facilitate more remote work-based learning opportunities.

Abby Benz, Chief Strategy Officer; Heather Mulford, Director of Strategic Operations
Ozarks Technical Community College

- For intermediaries that operate at state level and/or with intentions to scale in rural communities, community colleges and K12 schools are partners most proximate to students and have the pulse in their community. They understand critical needs, their stakeholders trust them, and the intermediary should develop their service around those relationships and the needs they surface.
- In rural communities, focusing on career counselors as a key partner and lever of change is an effective way to disseminate regular and up-to-date pathways information to learners.

Education Leader

- Intermediaries can assist rural communities by connecting employers to postsecondary institutions and facilitating earlier access to paid work-based learning opportunities.
- Funders should work to narrow their selection criteria and clarify their pathways intermediary investment focus to reduce the administrative burden for emerging organizations with great community need and lots of momentum.
- Innovation, piloting new ideas and continuous improvement are three qualities of a pathways intermediary that is able to cultivate new partnerships and excitement between all partners in a rural geography.

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

Intermediary Leader

- Our organization supports both programmatic work as well as engaging in systems change work and creating conditions for what it means to have a high-performing education and training system.
- We are really intentional about not being a data hub or home to the data infrastructure for pathways work—there is not an intent to function like a coordination system. Instead, focus is placed on trying to build out and/or shift current systems—such as working with the city to shift the way that the longitudinal data system is organized—rather than trying to build out a data infrastructure within the organization.
- In terms of stakeholders and enabling conditions that impact organizational outcomes and success, the organization is focusing on employers first as a key stakeholder to work on shifting mindsets and behaviors, aiming to increase their collaboration and coherence.

Funder

- Trusted messengers are needed for equity conversations. When attempting to discuss race with stakeholders who may be uncomfortable applying this analysis lens to their data, a trusted messenger can help cultivate the trust and goodwill necessary to form partnerships committed to equity. An intermediary can be best positioned to be this messenger.
- Sustainable funding can be difficult to gain. Part of the challenge for us is that, if they are going to be responsive to the community and partners, the organization doesn't want to just become a vendor to the state and accept any money that they offer that would put them in a very difficult and challenging spot.

education**first**

Major takeaways from interviews (continued)

National Expert

- When thinking about stakeholders and enabling conditions that have the most impact on an organization's outcomes and success, state education boards, funders and faculty are three of the most important/impactful stakeholder groups.
- In defining success, the ultimate measure of success is not just about building the pieces along the pathway for a student or having them graduate with a credential. A student should obtain a job that can help support their family in order for efforts to be considered truly successful.
- One of the key considerations for selecting regions for our organization's rural community of practice was the presence of strong partnerships with corporations in other rural areas of the state. In terms of the partners most critical to driving the success in that work, workforce partners are at the forefront and connecting with them is crucial.

State Policymaker

- The relatively permissive policy environment in our state does not put many limits on pathways intermediaries and stakeholders looking to engage in pathways work. However, there are things that can be done to accelerate the work, including setting a strong foundation for coordination and myth-busting perceived barriers.
- Looking ahead, there is a focus on role-sorting so that there can be a true system for pathways work instead of just having nice pilots. The intention is to define more specific coordination around specific entities as a foundation to scale from.
- There is purposeful thought being put into ensuring that the scaling and growth of pathways doesn't run the risk of becoming a tracking issue; there is a desire to ensure that pathways are not, in perception or in practice, considered to be lesser than.

educationfirst

Appendix E:

Works Cited

Works Cited

- Advance CTE, Council of Chief State School Officers, Education Strategy Group and New Skills for Youth, *Ensuring Career Pathway Quality: A Guide to Pathway Intervention*, https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/files/resources/18-138%20AdvanceCTE-ProgramEvaluationAnd%20InterventionGuide071318_1.pdf (July 2018).

- Braxton, Kimberly, and Roach, Robert, "Equitable Pathways Intermediary Framework" [unpublished framework], Equal Measure, January 2022.

- Callahan, Jessica, Ito, Mizuko, Campbell Rea, Stephen, Wortman, Amanda, *Influences on Occupational Identity in Adolescence: A Review of Research and Programs*, https://clalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Influences_on_Occupational_Identity_Adolescence.pdf (May 2019).

- Ansalone, George, "Tracking: A Return to Jim Crow," *Race, Gender & Class: A Potpourri in Psychology; and Others*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41675228?read-now=1&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents (2006).

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Equitable Futures Initiative, Goodwin Simon Strategic Research, Wonder Strategies for Good, *Striving to Thriving: Occupational Identity formation among Black and Hispanic students and students from households with lower incomes*, https://equitablefutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Striving-to-Thriving-Report-in-Brief-Sept-2020-Updated.pdf (September 2020).

- Bradach, Jeffrey, and Grindle, Abe, *Transformative Scale: The Future of Growing What Works*, The Bridgespan Group, https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/transformative-scale/transformative-scale-nine-pathways (February 2014).

- Britt, Jessica, Fein, David, Maynard, Rebecca, and Warfield, Garrett, *Improving Academic Success and Retention of Participants in Year Up's Professional Training Corps*, Project Evident, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58d9ba1f20099e0a03a3891d/t/61000d46065c2d3b39c0cdbc/1627393354762/Year+Up+Actionable+Evidence+Case+Study+July21.pdf (July 2021).

- Career Connect Washington, *Progress Report to Governor Inslee and the Legislature*, https://secureservercdn.net/166.62.110.60/w9p.ea4.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-Career-Connect-Washington-Progress-Report-to-Governor-Inslee-and-the-Legislature.pdf (September 2020).

- Career Connect Washington, *Career Connect Washington Task Force*, https://www.wtb.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CCT2018_8PgFolio_SimplePrint.pdf (February 2018).

- Carlos Jamieson, von Zastrow, Claus, and Perez Jr., Zeke, Education Commission of the States, "50-State Comparison: Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems," https://www.ecs.org/state-longitudinal-data-systems/ (December 2021)

educationfirst

Works Cited (continued)

- Chiefs for Change, *Education-to-Workforce Learner Pathways: How Intermediary Organizations Can Support and Help Sustain Effective Partnerships*, https://www.chiefsforchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Education-to-Workforce-student-Pathways.pdf (October 2021).

- Colorado Education Initiative and Colorado Succeeds, *Phase 1: Explore & Design, The Process, Progress, and Emerging Learnings*, Homegrown Talent Initiative, https://homegrowntalentco.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Homegrown-Talent-Initiative-Phase-1-Recap-Emerging-Learnings-2.pdf (2020).

- de Brey, Cristobal, Musu, Lauren, McFarland, Joel, Wilkinson-Flicker, Sidney, Diliberti, Melissa, Zhang, Anlan, Branstetter, Claire, and Wang, Xiaolei, *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018 (NCES 2019-038)*, National Center for Education Statistics, https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf (2019).

- Dembicki, Matthew, "Cardona: Connecting the education and workforce systems," *Community College Daily*, https://www.ccdaily.com/2021/05/cardona-connecting-the-education-and-workforce-systems/ (May 2021).

- Evidence-Based Policy Team, "RCT of Year Up's Professional Training Corps—a workforce training program for economically disadvantaged urban young adults," Arnold Ventures, https://www.arnoldventures.org/stories/a-randomized-controlled-trial-of-year-ups-professional-training-corps-a-workforce-training-program-for-economically-disadvantaged-urban-young-adults (June 2021).

- Education First, *Proximate Leadership: What Is It and Why Does It Matter?*, https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1bRSi8ueabPan7yyaBTWVdzUbuAe-bVtk/edit#slide=id.p1 (June 2020).

- Fein, David, "Scaling Up to Close the Opportunity Divide for Low-Income Youth: A Case Study of the Year Up Program," Abt Associates, https://www.yearup.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/cpioscalingupyearup_b508.pdf (May 2016).

- Faulkner, Renée, "Rethinking Regional: Leveraging Regional Networks to Support Career Pathways," Jobs for the Future, https://www.jff.org/points-of-view/rethinking-regional-leveraging-regional-networks-support-career-pathways/ (March 2017).

- Gardiner, Karen N., "How Can Postsecondary Education and Training Programs Help Working Students Persist? Findings from Career Pathways Studies," Abt Associates, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED616437.pdf (November 2021).

education**first**

Works Cited (continued)

- Gonzalez, Naihobe, Aikens, Nikki, and Gosciak, Jennah, *What Drives Systems Change? Key Findings and Implications from a Literature Review on Systems Change in Education,* Mathematica*,* https://www.mathematica.org/publications/key-findings-and-implications-from-a-literature-review-on-systems-change-in-education (May 2021).

- Hancock, Bryan, Lund, Susan, and Schaninger, Bill, "Grabbing Hold of the New Future of Work," McKinsey & Company, https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/grabbing-hold-of-the-new-future-of-work (May 2021).

- Hansen, Michael, "The U.S. Education System Isn't Giving Students What Employers Need," *Harvard Business Review*, https://hbr.org/2021/05/the-u-s-education-system-isnt-giving-students-what-employers-need (May 2021).

- Hartung, Kyle, Hoffman, Nancy, Loyd, Amy, and Niño, Derek, "Intermediary Functions and Features in Pathways Systems," Jobs for the Future, https://www.Jobs for the Future.org/resources/intermediary-functions-features-pathways-systems/ (November 2020).

- Hawley Miles, Karen and Frank, Stephen, *The Strategic School: Making the Most of People, Time, and Money*, Corwin Press, https://www.erstrategies.org/tap/the_strategic_school_making_the_most_of_people_time_and_money (2008).

- Humanitarian Innovation Fund, "Maximise the impact of your innovation," *The Humanitarian Innovation Guide*, https://higuide.elrha.org/toolkits/scale/

- Hoffman, Nancy, Murphy, Lucretia, and Seaton, Gregory*, How Intermediaries Can Help Black and Latinx Youth Develop a Strong Occupational Identity: Four Principles of Practice*, Jobs for the Future, https://Jobs for the Futureorg-prod-new.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/Intermediaries_Help_Black_Latinx_Youth_Develop_Occupational_Identity.pdf (December 2020).

- Jeffrey, Ashley, and Jimenez, Laura, *Preparing Students of Color for the Future Workforce: Lessons From Communities in Indiana and New Mexico,* Center for American Progress, https://www.americanprogress.org/article/preparing-students-color-future-workforce/ (April 2021).

- Kania, John, Kramer, Mark, and Senge, Peter, *The Water of Systems Change,* FSG, https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/ (June 2018).

- Langston, Abbie, Scoggins, Justin, and Walsh, Matthew, "Race and the Work of the Future: Advancing Workforce Equity in the United States," PolicyLink, https://www.policylink.org/research/race-and-the-work-of-the-future (2020).

educationfirst

Works Cited (continued)

- Lewis, Kristen, *A Decade Undone: Youth Disconnection in the Age of Coronavirus,* Measure of America, Social Science Research Council, https://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/moa/ADecadeUndone.pdf (May 2020).

- Lumina Foundation, *Statewide Educational Attainment Goals*, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED587417.pdf (March 2018).

- Lounsbury, Susan, Datubo-Brown, Christiana, and Bartlebaugh, Hannah, *SREB Fact Book on Higher Education,* Southern Education Regional Board, https://www.sreb.org/fact-book-higher-education-0 (May 2022).

- Management Systems International, "Tool 6: Scalability Assessment Checklist," *Scaling Up—From Vision to Large-Scale Change: Tools for Practitioners*, https://www.msiworldwide.com/sites/default/files/2021-03/ScalingUp_toolkit_printabletools_tool6.pdf (2021).

- Mulvaney, Mick, *"*Revised Delineations of Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Micropolitan Statistic Areas, and Combined Statistical Areas, and Guidance on Uses of the Delineations of These Areas (OMB Bulletin No. 18-03), https://www.bls.gov/bls/omb-bulletin-18-03-revised-delineations-of-metropolitan-statistical-areas.pdf (April 2018).

- National Council of Nonprofits, "Nonprofit Sustainability," https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/nonprofit-sustainability (2022).

- Opportunity Pathways Network, "OPeN Working Group 2_Concept Notes_vShared," https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-KdBv47Bx-M5wWt4TIBZBiIiLrQUBHI15hbY18ZsXJk/edit (2021).

- ORS Impact and Spark Policy Institute, "When Collective Impact Has an Impact," https://www.orsimpact.com/DirectoryAttachments/10102018_33801_97_CI_Study_Executive_Summary_October_2018.pdf (2018).

- Rock, David, and Grant, Heidi, "Why Diverse Teams are Smarter," *Harvard Business Review*, https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-diverse-teams-are-smarter, (November 2016).

- Smillie, Siri, *Policy Design Principles for Connecting Education to Work*, Education Commission of the States, https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Policy-Design-Principles-for-Connecting-Education-to-Work.pdf (September 2021).

- Square Button, *Equitable Futures Career Pathways, Phase 1: Financial Analysis*, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hZY1TY3omkmrVqjz2mxUH4H_cNjXK01p/view (2021).

education**first**

Works Cited (continued)

- Sullivan, Erin, and Splansky Juster, Jennifer, "Securing Funding for the Backbone Role: Lessons from the Field," Tamarack Institute, https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/securing-funding-for-the-backbone-role-lessons-from-the-field (July 2019).

- United States Census Bureau, "CPS Historical Time Series Tables," https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/educational-attainment/cps-historical-time-series.html (2022).

- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "College Enrollment and Work Activity of High School Graduates News Release," https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/hsgec_04272021.htm (April 2021).

- U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, "Commuting Zones and Labor Market Areas," https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/commuting-zones-and-labor-market-areas/ (February 2012).

- Vander Ark, Tom, "Business Leadership for Education Scores Texas-Size Win for Kids," *Forbes*, https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomvanderark/2019/08/14/business-leadership-for-education-scores-texas-size-win-for-kids/?sh=148ed8524e66 (April 2019).

- Weaver, Liz, *The Nuts and Bolts of Backbone Functions*, Tamarack Institute, https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/VC/CoP%20and%20Webinar%20Slides/The%20Nuts%20and%20Bolts%20of%20Backbone%20Functions%20-%20Singapore.pdf (2020).

- White, Taylor, Brosnan, Julie, "Infographic: Visualizing the Youth Apprentice's Journey," New America, https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/infographic-visualizing-youth-apprentices-journey/ (March 2019).

educationfirst