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# Aligning K-12 and postsecondary career pathways with workforce needs

Jennifer Zinth

Since 2013, states have witnessed significant legislative activity related to secondary- and postsecondary-level career/technical education (CTE). One key goal of much recent policymaking activity has been to improve alignment between high school and postsecondary CTE programs, including by developing state or regional structures to design career pathways that prepare students for high-skill, high-demand jobs.

This report provides a first look at state policymaking activity in 13 states. Policy activity summarized here (1) establishes a process for educators and employers to convene and use workforce data to set priorities, and (2) sets forth strategies to enhance and scale up career pathways bridging K-12 and postsecondary, designed to prepare students for high-skill, high-demand jobs.

While not a comprehensive compilation of state policies addressing these issues, this review is intended to allow readers to determine whether policies have been adopted in these 13 states, and compare and contrast approaches.

“Since 2013, a number of states have enacted legislation to better align curricular offerings and career pathways with state or regional workforce needs.”

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Some states, including Colorado and Illinois, have taken a statewide approach, creating or assigning an existing state-level entity to develop or revise career pathways.

Other states such as Louisiana are encouraging or requiring the creation of regional partnerships of K-12, postsecondary and business/industry partners to better align career pathways with workforce needs.

California is a state that has created one or more competitive grant programs to support local alignment initiative. Other states have made an appropriation to one or more statewide entities to finance such efforts.

State	Business and Industry Engagement	Career Pathways
California	<p>Establish a structured, sustainable process through which education and employer communities come together and use economic development data to set priorities.</p> <p><b>Yes</b> – Two programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>California Career Pathways Trust provides competitive grants to develop pathways aligned with regional workforce development needs (West’s Ann. Cal. Educ. Code § <b>53011</b>).</li> <li>California Career Technical Education Incentive Grant Program provides competitive grants for programs that form ongoing and structural industry and labor partnerships, and reflect regional or local labor market demands and focuses on current or emerging high-skill, high-wage or high-demand occupations (<b>53070 – 53076</b>).</li> </ul>	<p>Design and implement policies and related strategies to strengthen and scale career pathways that span secondary and postsecondary levels, include rigorous core academic and career-technical content, provide high-quality work-based learning opportunities and culminate in credentials that open doors to high-skill, high-demand jobs.</p> <p><b>Yes</b> – Three programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Career Technical Education Pathways Program (<b>88530 – 88540</b>) (passed 2012 – scheduled to sunset July 1, 2016).</li> <li>California Career Pathways Trust (<b>53010 – 53016</b>).</li> <li>California Career Technical Education Incentive Grant Program (<b>53070 – 53076</b>).</li> </ul>
Colorado	<p><b>Yes</b> – The Key Industries Talent Pipeline Working Group brings together the state Workforce Development Council, the Department of Higher Education, the Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Employment, and the Colorado Office of Economic Development to, among other duties, use sector partnerships to advise the development of career pathway programs for critical occupations in key industries (<b>C.R.S.A. § 24-46.3-103</b>).</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> – Workforce Development Council charged with leading efforts to design new career pathways (<b>C.R.S.A. § 24-46.3-104</b>).</p> <p>In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2013 <b>legislation</b> called for development and implementation of advanced manufacturing career pathway.</li> <li>2015 <b>H.B. 1230</b> creates the Innovative Industries Workforce Development Program to offer high school, ABE or high school equivalency, and postsecondary students internship opportunities in “innovative industries” (advanced manufacturing, aerospace, bioscience, construction, electronics, energy and natural resources, engineering and information technology industries).</li> </ul>
Illinois	<p><b>2015 H.J.R. 52</b> directs the Board of Higher Education to establish a Higher Education Commission on the Future of the Workforce, to examine current and projected workforce needs, and identify partners to support efficient and effective delivery of postsecondary credential and degree programs aligned with regional workforce needs.</p>	<p><b>Partial</b> – 2014 <b>legislation</b> encourages the creation of private/public partnership boards that, if created, must meet at least five of seven criteria. Three of these criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage and define the implementation of programs of study in advanced manufacturing technology to meet the competency and skill demands of manufacturers.</li> <li>Define a minimum of four programs of study in advanced manufacturing technology to meet the needs of the broadest number of manufacturers in the area.</li> <li>Encourage formal alignment and dual-credit opportunities for high school students who begin advanced manufacturing technology training to transition to community college programs of study in advanced manufacturing technology.</li> </ul>
Kentucky	None known	<p><b>Yes</b> – 2012 <b>legislation</b> creates the career and technical education accessibility fund to provide grants for the development of career pathways and programs of study in high-demand occupational fields for students in middle schools and high schools.</p>

State	Business and Industry Engagement	Career Pathways
Louisiana	<p><b>Yes</b> – Jump Start CTE programs are to be developed jointly by regional teams consisting of LEAs, technical and community colleges, business and industry leaders, and economic and workforce development experts. (La. Admin Code. tit. 28, pt. CLXIII, § 101). Jump Start proposals may include indications of regional job demand by targeted industry sector, provided by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), a Louisiana postsecondary institution, or an equivalently credible source; and descriptions of the competencies and skills that leading local industries desire in entry-level hires. (La. Admin Code. tit. 28, pt. CLXIII, § 201)</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> – Jump Start CTE programs (La. Admin Code. tit. 28, pt. CLXIII, § 101 through § 503).</p>
Mississippi	<p><b>Partial</b> – Career Pathway Experience – Program Operational Guide provides that the Career Pathway Experience (CPE) program is a joint effort of the school, business and industry, and the community, and that a CPE program should have an active council of business/industry representatives, labor representatives and school personnel. However, regulation does not require such councils and does not require use of data to determine program priorities (Miss. Admin. Code 7-93).</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> – Career Pathway Experience – Program Operational Guide (Miss. Admin. Code 7-93)</p>
North Carolina	<p><b>Yes</b> – Education and Workforce Innovation Program (N.C.G.S.A. § 115C-64.16).</p>	<p><b>Partial</b> – The Education and Workforce Innovation Program awards competitive grants to schools, local administrative units or regional partnerships of two or more local administrative units. However, as of Sept. 1, 2015, the General Assembly has not appropriated 2015-16 funds to support these grants.</p>
Nevada	<p><b>Partial</b> – The board of trustees of a school district in a county with a population of 100,000 or more must develop a CTE program, and any other board of trustees of a school district may develop a CTE program. To the extent funds are available, the district superintendent must develop an advisory technical skills committee that includes community business/industry representatives. An advisory technical skills committee must review the curriculum, design, content and operation of the CTE program to determine its effectiveness in preparing students to enter the workforce and supplying an appropriately trained workforce to businesses and industries in the community (N.R.S. 388.385).</p>	<p>None known</p>
New Jersey	<p>None known</p>	<p><b>No</b> – While the State Board of Education adopted Standard 9, 21st Century Life and Careers, which includes the 12 Career Ready Practices in October 2014, no evidence of development of career pathways meeting specified criteria.</p>

State	Business and Industry Engagement	Career Pathways
New Mexico	<b>Potential partial state activity</b> – 2013 memorial requests that the Economic Development Department, Workforce Solutions Department, Public Education Department, Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of New Mexico and the Arrowhead Center at New Mexico State University coordinate efforts to align the education and training provided to the types of employment available in the state. However, it is unclear if economic development data are used, or if action took place (2013 H.M. 45).	<b>Potential state activity</b> – 2015 memorial requests that the Higher Education Department, Public Education Department and Workforce Solutions Department collaborate on high-quality career pathways that bridge high school curricula, postsecondary studies and 21st century job opportunities (2015 H.M. 14).
Ohio	<b>Partial</b> – While not setting priorities per se, OhioMeansJobs, an effort of the Workforce Board, puts workforce demand data in the hands of K-12 students and other stakeholders. 2014 H.B. 393 establishes a mechanism for disseminating info about OhioMeansJobs. R.C. § 6301.14 established in 2013 creates the OhioMeansJobs workforce development revolving loan in the state treasury. The fund shall consist of a portion of the proceeds from the upfront license fees paid for the casino facilities. In addition, R.C. § 3313.6020 (est. by 2014 H.B. 487) requires local boards to adopt policies on career advising, which must specify how the district will train its employees on how to advise students on career pathways, including training on advising students using online tools.	<b>Not statewide</b> – From 2015 H.B. 64: “Career-Technical Education Enhancements, up to \$1,008,000 in each fiscal year shall be used to fund the Ohio Career Counseling Pilot Program. The program shall utilize Career-Technical Planning Districts to deliver comprehensive career counseling services to students in grades seven through 12. Participating institutions shall provide the following services: ... (3) Provide students in grades seven through 12 with career pathways that feature academic coursework integrated into career-technical training, including introduction to these pathways for students in grades seven and eight.”
Rhode Island	2012 regulations direct the commissioner to “ensure that current labor market data is analyzed to inform the creation or expansion of career preparation programs in critical and emerging industries.”	2014 legislation (H.B. 8371) amends § 42-102-10 and renames the Human Resource Investment Council as the Workforce Board. The legislation reorganizes the board’s membership to include representatives from secondary education and tasks the council with supporting and overseeing statewide efforts to develop and expand career pathways that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector, and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector.
Tennessee	While state policy at this time is not aligned with these goals, four regions of Tennessee are engaged in the Pathways to Prosperity Network.	

## AUTHOR

Jennifer Zinth is Director, High School and STEM at ECS. She loves helping state policymakers on issues she’s passionate about. When she’s not trying to save the world through policy, she also loves trying new recipes and spending time with her husband and son. Contact Jennifer at [jzinth@ecs.org](mailto:jzinth@ecs.org) or (303) 299.3672.

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