NAVIGATING COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS AND **DUAL ENROLLMENT** IN URBAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS

COLLEGE IN HIGH SCHOOL
ALLIANCE

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INTRODUCTION

85%

By 2035, **85 PERCENT** OF GOOD JOBS THAT PAY A MEDIAN SALARY *of $74,000 per year* WILL REQUIRE SOME LEVEL OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

60%

However, only about **60 PERCENT** OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL ARE ACCESSING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

As a nationwide conversation continues about the value of postsecondary education, the clear reality remains: the most proven pathway for most Americans to a well-paying career runs through a postsecondary degree or credential.

To achieve this objective, there are many efforts underway across the country to provide students with the opportunity while they are still in K–12 to learn more about college and career, have exposure to different careers and the opportunity to begin to build a career identity, and get a jumpstart on the postsecondary education necessary to help those students get the degree or credential they are seeking. These initiatives, broadly defined under the rubric of "college and career readiness," are being implemented in school districts nationwide with partner colleges and businesses.

These opportunities include Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses, work-based learning experiences, and earning college credit through dual enrollment or other advanced coursework. They also include more formalized and structured programs that might incorporate multiple college and career readiness opportunities, like apprenticeships. There are many options and opportunities for how to expose students to college and career and prepare them for a rewarding career, and partners are working to ensure students can take advantage of these opportunities in all their forms.

In cities across the country, a number of city governments, school districts, colleges, business partners, and non-profits are taking advantage of the inherent opportunities available in a city to collaborate and expand access to college and career readiness opportunities for students. Cities have unique opportunities and challenges that make it both easier and harder to operationalize these initiatives effectively. This paper focuses on unpacking those opportunities and challenges, and presents a framework for cities to use to effectively expand college and career readiness opportunities for students.

DEFINING COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS INITIATIVES

College and career readiness initiatives are those that seek to support high school students in exploring and advancing their college and career journey. This includes providing students with the opportunity to participate in:

- **CTE Programs** in which they have the opportunity to take courses, either high school or college-level, that advance the student along a specific CTE pathway or program of study, and give them exposure to different industries and career identities.

- **Dual Enrollment** in which they have the opportunity to take college level courses in high school, which can include general education and CTE courses, offered by either a two-year or four-year institution of higher education partner.

- **Advanced Coursework** in which they have the opportunity to take other advanced coursework opportunities in high school like Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate, which may result in the earning of college credit.

- **Work-based Learning** in which they have the opportunity to experience the world of work through learning experiences that take place within the workplace, which could include job shadowing, career exploration days, and internships, which exist along a spectrum of experiences based on structure and intensity.

- **Apprenticeships**, the most intense and structured part of the work-based learning continuum, in which they have the opportunity to access structured programs that combine CTE, dual enrollment, and work-based learning during the student's educational journey that results in a structured career program. These include registered apprenticeship programs, youth apprenticeship programs, and pre-apprenticeship programs.

In addition to these opportunities, a well-functioning college and career readiness initiative is one that includes significant advising and college and career counseling for students. This counseling is essential to help young people choose between the different opportunities they might have (e.g., dual enrollment or other advanced coursework), learn how to interpret those opportunities and make decisions about what they might mean for the student's onward college and career journey, understand how what they are learning in these experiences or in their schooling more generally connects to future education and career goals, and continue to develop a career identity that maximizes the value of each of these opportunities.

Except where noted by referencing the specific college and career readiness opportunity, this paper is designed to discuss college and career readiness initiatives in cities and their shared opportunities and challenges holistically. And given the College in High School Alliance's focus on dual enrollment, that intervention will be highlighted more prominently.

COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS INITIATIVES IN CITIES

Cities have unique opportunities and challenges related to the expansion of college and career readiness initiatives and access to dual enrollment for students. While the data does not tell a universally consistent story, national and state-level data analyses do show that students in urban areas experience lower access to college and career readiness activities like Career and Technical Education and dual enrollment than their peers in suburban areas, and in some parts of the country are lower than in both rural and suburban environments.

This finding is seemingly counterintuitive; much of the traditional focus on access gaps in college and career readiness initiatives has fallen on rural areas, where distance, lack of resources or partners nearby, and small schools make offering these kinds of opportunities more challenging. Even in urban areas where distance may be less of an issue or there are plenty of local employers and institutions of higher education to develop partnerships with, there are unique challenges that make offering college and career readiness opportunities for students more difficult.

There are also unique opportunities for cities to capitalize on as well, driven by population density, having more partners close by, and having a higher number of employer partners than in other geographic locales. As a result, cities require special attention to take advantage of their inherent opportunities and help recognize and address their challenges to ensure that students have access to a broad range of college and career readiness activities, including dual enrollment. The benefits to students of being in an urban environment do not automatically accrue, and require institutional actors to be thoughtful in how they develop their partnerships and address challenge points.

Cities Have Unique Opportunities to Support College & Career Readiness

Cities have a number of opportunities to capitalize on in order to expand the availability of college and career readiness initiatives for students, including dual enrollment. This includes:

- **The Ability to Achieve Scale —** Many college and career readiness opportunities for students, like dual enrollment, are most sustainable when offered at scale. Urban areas provide the opportunity for scale given larger population sizes and the availability of more partners to draw from.

- **The Availability of Local Partners —** In addition to the city's school district(s), cities are also frequently blessed with having multiple institutions of higher education operating within the area, as well as a number of employer partners with a willingness to engage in supporting educational and career-based opportunities for students. Cities have access to multiple partners that they can draw upon to expand work-based learning opportunities for students, including businesses, community organizations, philanthropy, and government.

- **The Presence of Community Organizations —** Urban areas are also more likely to have a thriving civil society, including the presence of non-profits, community-based organizations and other intermediaries who can provide capacity and support to the institutional actors in expanding the availability of college and career readiness opportunities for students.

- **Proximity Between Partners —** Transportation may be less of an issue in cities that have public transit systems that provide more options for students to travel between their high school, a college, and an employer to take advantage of college and career readiness opportunities.

- **Availability of Data —** With multiple partners active and engaged in this space, there are likely more stakeholders who are collecting data, creating more opportunities to use that data to inform program design and availability.

- **The Presence of Local Philanthropy —** Many cities have access to local foundations or other philanthropic partners that are dedicated to supporting initiatives within that city and may be interested in supporting education programs.

- **The Power of City Government —** Many cities possess their own governance structures that may exert influence or direct control of education policy in the city, providing the opportunity for leadership, coordinated decision-making, and overcoming barriers.

- **A Significant Role in State Policy —** Given many cities are the population centers of their states, cities have significant influence over the direction of state policy and may be able to see their priorities reflected back from the state level.

Cities Have Unique Challenges

But cities also have unique challenges that they need to overcome to expand the availability of college and career readiness opportunities for students. This includes:

- **Scaling Opportunities are Essential to Reach All Students —** With larger populations of students who could benefit from college and career readiness opportunities, in order to make an impact the programs must be scaled. This can require many partners,

significant human capital, and significant funding in order to succeed.

- **Higher Concentrations of Poverty —** Cities typically experience <u>higher concentrations of poverty</u> and students in need, requiring additional resources and intentional work to establish and grow opportunities to serve these students. This also adds additional complexity in working in an urban context to reach scale and ensure all students have opportunity, and ensuring student access translates to meaningful completion.

- **The Complexity of Developing Relationships Between Large Organizations —** College and career readiness initiatives require strong relationships in order to function, whether between a high school and employer for work-based learning or high school and college for dual enrollment. However, in cities, the organizations needing to develop relationships are often large and have more complex procedures, making establishing and maintaining those relationships more challenging.

- **Multiple Partners Require Additional Coordination —** When multiple large partners need to collaborate in order for a relationship to function, a lack of alignment on priorities or vision can make it harder to serve the student population, and requires additional coordination in order to solve.

- **Challenges With Linking and Using Data —** While college and career readiness partners in cities might have access to more data than those in other areas, there can also be challenges associated with sharing and linking the data collected by multiple partners with their own data use and security procedures.

- **The Downside of Local Government —** Shifting city government priorities, which can be a consequence of

transitions in city leadership, may impact the work to improve access to college and career readiness opportunities or create complications for partners.
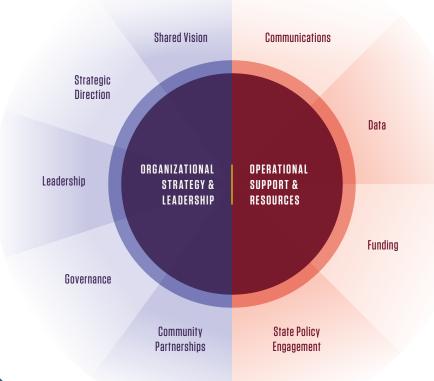
- **State Political Contexts May Deemphasize City Needs —** While cities might be home to a disproportionate share of a state's population, the political context of a state might deemphasize the priorities of partners in urban areas compared to partners in other geographic locales across the state.

HOW THIS PAPER WAS CREATED

This paper was developed through conducting interviews with stakeholders connected to college and career readiness initiatives in the nation's <u>25 largest cities</u>, across city government, city school districts, institutions of higher education, non-profits, local funders, and others in cities that were identified to have undertaken work in the college and career readiness space. This included interviews with stakeholders from Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New Orleans, New York City, and Washington, DC.

A Framework for College & Career Readiness in Urban Education Systems

Cities that are seeking to expand college and career readiness opportunities for students, including dual enrollment, should be mindful of the following framework:

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY & LEADERSHIP

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Shared Vision

Communications

Strategic Direction

Data

Leadership

Governance

Funding

Community Partnerships

State Policy Engagement

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY & LEADERSHIP

Shared Vision

Key partners and city leaders need a clear vision of what they are trying to accomplish.

A well-functioning college and career readiness ecosystem in which students have access to a full range of opportunities, including dual enrollment, CTE, and work-based learning, is one in which multiple partners are working together to contribute towards providing these experiences in a high-quality way as seamlessly as possible. Given how many partners must contribute to this ecosystem to make these opportunities available to students, including the city's school district(s), institutions of higher education, employers, non-profits, and sometimes city government, a strong and shared vision is necessary for the institutional actors in the ecosystem to properly meet students' needs.

A shared vision provides an important common starting point for each of the institutional actors to understand their role in achieving that vision and what they are meant to contribute towards making the vision a reality. It also creates a sense of shared purpose across the different organizations, which otherwise have different incentives for being engaged in the work, operating under different accountability systems, and responding to different requirements. Absent that shared purpose, misalignment can arise between critical parts of the system that will create challenges for students to overcome.

Shared visioning between the different parts of the college and career readiness ecosystem is also essential in being able to sustain the initiatives beyond whatever city or institutional leadership developed the initiative. With many potential actors at play across the school district(s), institutions of higher education, employers, and community partners, the leadership of each of these component parts is likely to turn over with some regularity. To ensure that an initiative is not hewn to a particular leader who may have departed within a few years, a shared vision can provide a compelling narrative to guarantee the continuation of the work across multiple leadership transitions. It can also help with recruiting new partners into the work, such as employers to partner on work-based learning experiences, by giving those new partners a clear understanding of what the value proposition for the initiative is and what they are trying to achieve.

How do I know if I have a shared vision or not?

- Can you describe your city's vision for college and career readiness in 30 seconds or less?
- Would your answer be shared by the other institutional actors within your city's college and career readiness ecosystem?
- Is your answer one that would be reflected back to you both by leaders at the other institutional actors but also day-to-day practitioners on the ground in your city's high schools and colleges?

How do I create a shared vision if I don't have one?

- Assemble a list of the key players who need to be part of developing a shared vision and have an important perspective to share.
- Solicit understanding from each of the key players identified about their priorities and motivation for this work.
- Identify areas of commonality across the responses, and craft a shared set of principles and values.
- If appropriate, develop a shared goal to actualize the vision that has been outlined and agreed to by the key actors.

Strategic Direction

Alongside a shared vision, the partners also need to agree on the specific challenges they are seeking to solve, the opportunities they are looking to create, and the order in which those will be addressed.

The college and career readiness ecosystem is complex and requires multiple partners to function well. Each component of that ecosystem also comes with its own opportunities and challenges that need to be overcome in order to ensure students have access. It is also highly customizable; comprising opportunities for students to earn dual enrollment, CTE opportunities, and work-based learning, the ecosystem can look very different depending on what the city's partners choose to focus on.

As a result, city partners should ensure that alongside their vision for the college and career readiness ecosystem for their city, the partners all have a clear sense of the strategic direction that will be taken to achieve that vision. For example, if this includes an emphasis on expanding dual enrollment opportunities, all of the partners should be aware of the existing challenges and their roles in addressing those challenges, rather than one partner being focused on dual enrollment while another is focused on work-based learning.

This can be accomplished through the use of an agreed-upon roadmap, a core initiative, or some other operational framework that gives all the partners a clear set of responsibilities to reference. Ultimately, a shared strategic direction is designed to ensure that each partner is maximizing their role in effectively realizing the vision outlined above.

How do I know if I have a strategic direction or not?

- Do you understand your specific role within your city's college and career readiness ecosystem? If another partner was asked about your role, would your answers match?
- Can you identify the specific elements of the college and career readiness ecosystem that your city is looking to advance?
- Can you identify the specific benefits that you are looking to bring students through your actions?

How do I create a strategic direction if I don't have one?

- Informed by the vision, work with all the relevant partners to develop the strategies and staging that will be used to implement that vision.
- Agree on what you, as a city, want to accomplish, by when, and what it will take to get there, as well as intermediate steps.
- Ensure roles and responsibilities are clear, robust, and well understood by all of the actors in the ecosystem.
- Use data to track progress along the path of your strategic direction, and encourage accountability from all key partners.

Leadership

It is necessary for city leaders to signal the priority of this work given its complexity, and valuable when city leadership can work to bring partners together — and also bring the city's businesses to the table.

Given the challenges of size and scale, of both the number of students seeking to take advantage of college and career readiness opportunities and the number (and size) of the relevant partners involved in bringing those opportunities, it is essential for cities to leverage the leadership necessary to place a priority on this work, bring the relevant partners to the table, and align them where necessary. City leadership, which usually includes the city's mayor's office, is composed of senior public figures with influence over the relevant partners.

Leadership can be essential in centering the vision, ensuring accountability towards the strategic direction agreed upon by the city, and keeping partners cooperating and advancing the work forward. Mayors, who may have an interest or role to play in the city's education governance, are also important because of their expansive portfolio of policy concerns which likely means they have deeper relationships with business interests in the city than any of the education partners.

City leadership, therefore, can play an important role in bringing business and industry to the table and unlocking access to expanded work-based learning and other CTE opportunities for students. Overall leadership at the city level can also be important to ensure continuity of the relevant initiatives beyond the tenure of leaders at the individual partners such as relevant city school districts or institutions of higher education.

Do I have the right leadership for my initiative?

- If a disagreement arises between key partners, is there a more senior leader who can serve as arbitrator of the disagreement?
- Is the mayor's office aware of and working to support your work? Would they be able to speak to citywide college and career readiness efforts if asked by a reporter today?

How do I generate more leadership enthusiasm for this work?

- Ensure that the city's leaders know about this work, understand its relevance, and how it aligns with their interests and priorities.
- Ask for help from city leaders, particularly if you have a specific value add that they can provide to your initiative (such as business outreach).

Governance

Relationships at multiple levels are vital for so much of this work to succeed, and a governance structure that facilitates the creation and deepening of those relationships is key.

Building a college and career readiness ecosystem that provides students with multiple options, including dual enrollment and work-based learning, requires a lot of relationships between key partners. For example, it requires relationships between school districts and colleges to make it possible for high school students to take college courses and it requires relationships between school districts and employers if students are participating in work-based learning experiences. And often, it requires relationships at multiple levels across multiple different stakeholders within each partner. Looking just at the institution of higher education alone as a partner, in order to ensure they are a productive and contributing member of the partnership it may be necessary to involve the college's admissions, registrar, academic department chairs, and faculty for dual enrollment to function successfully.

These relationships are even more critical because each of the partners with the city's college and career readiness ecosystem, such as school districts, colleges, businesses, community partners, non-profits, and government agencies, have their own set of incentives, constraints, and cultures that may not be immediately compatible with the other partners'. When organizations might not be set up to effectively work with each other, it is only the power of relationships that can overcome that.

In order for relationships to develop and grow between partners, thoughtful governance is necessary. Governance can never be a replacement for relationships; a set of rules about how partnerships should function to resolve an issue or disagreement can never be a substitute for a phone call between trusted colleagues. However, relationships need space to be able to grow, and governance can be effective in giving the right partners the space and structure to begin to develop their relationship.

Do I have the right governance for my initiative?

- Do the partners feel like they have clear rules for how to work through challenges, or just like they need to go to a lot of meetings?

- Do you see functioning and meaningful relationships between the different partners in the initiative? Do they appear to like each other and work well together? If so, is that just a fluke, or attributable to the governance structure that exists to help govern that relationship?

How do I improve my initiative's governance?

- Understand the objectives of what the governance system is attempting to accomplish. Compare how it is currently functioning (or not) with how you would like it to function, and adjust accordingly.

- View the engagement opportunities generated by a governance structure as spaces for relationships to develop and grow, rather than a bureaucratic process that is designed to solve all challenges (it won't).

Community Partnerships

Significant additional capacity can be provided through partnerships with intermediaries, non-profits, funders, and other partners, who can also help maintain the cohesiveness of the initiatives through leadership changes at the main partners.

A number of cities that have seen success in expanding college and career readiness opportunities for students have deployed additional capacity through partnerships with intermediaries such as non-profits, funders, community groups, and other partners. The benefits to involving these organizations can be significant, as they:

- **Add Capacity —** These groups can be leveraged to add capacity to do the work of making these opportunities available to students. For example, drawing on an intermediary organization to bolster college and career readiness counseling for high school students.

- **Add Expertise —** Oftentimes, if these groups are specifically set up to support college and career readiness opportunities for students, they have a wealth of knowledge and expertise that they can share with the high school, college, and employer partners to improve the functioning of the program.

- **Can Facilitate Between Partners —** These groups can also help facilitate the relationship between the provider partners like the school district and institution of higher education, and often have the ability to understand and speak to the challenges and incentives of the different systems.

- **Create Resilience to Leadership Transition —** Turnover is often high among school district and college senior leadership, and regular elections can also create volatility in the mayor's office. With the likelihood in any given year that one key senior leader is new, these groups can provide institutional memory and ensure the work continues forward.

Local foundations, in particular, can serve an important role by using their funding to catalyze work in specific areas, incentivize partners to the table, and facilitate the development and execution of other parts of this framework. But even if the support is non-monetary, community partnerships bring a significant amount of value to this work.

Am I leveraging my community partnerships?

- Does your city's college and career readiness initiative utilize any community partnerships with non-profits, funders, community groups, or other partners?
- If not, are you sure they don't exist, or are you just not working with them?
- If you do have existing relationships, when was the last time you sat down with your partner for a conversation about vision, strategy, and goals to see if you are maximizing their ability to contribute?

How do I go about finding new community partners?

- Discuss with local funders — even if they are not potentially able or willing to support your initiative — as they have lots of local relationships and will know if there are organizations that can help you.

OPERATIONAL
SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Communications

Given the number of practitioners in colleges and high schools, partners at the system level, businesses, parents, and students, it is essential that clear communications are prioritized that are informed by the vision and strategic direction.

College and career readiness initiatives are complex. In order for students to be able to access and navigate the full range of college and career readiness opportunities available to them, they need to understand each of those opportunities, the potential value it has for their college and career journey, and how to maximize the value of taking part. That's a tall order just for one of the opportunities like dual enrollment or work-based learning, but to be truly effective students should understand and navigate the whole ecosystem.

To achieve high levels of student understanding requires a support system of adults who are also highly knowledgeable in the college and career readiness ecosystem who can help students understand their choices. At the bedrock of the system's success, therefore, is clear and informative communications from the various stakeholders within the system to parents and students. This challenge is even greater in cities where the number of parents and students who need to be informed, and the number of adults who need to be trained to be as helpful as possible to parents and students, is greater. In New York City Public Schools, for example, there are more than 900,000 students in more than 1,800 schools, demonstrating the communications challenge.

Proper communications to large populations of students and parents is also essential to ensure all students have the ability to access and benefit from these opportunities. If only students in the highest-resourced schools are finding out about how to take advantage of college and career readiness initiatives — whether from the school or their parents — then these opportunities will always be unevenly distributed. It is essential, therefore, that the city partners thoughtfully confirm that communications are developed and prioritized to ensure the right information is reaching as many students as possible.

How do I know if my own communications efforts are successful?

- Have you done any surveying of students or parents to understand their level of knowledge and awareness about college and career readiness initiatives?

- How confident are you that high school or college counselors working with students know the college and career readiness opportunities well enough to successfully advise and counsel those students?

- What efforts are you undertaking at the system level to understand the efficacy of your communications to stakeholders and how to improve them?

How can I improve my communications with students, parents, and other stakeholders?

- Make sure the vision behind your college and career readiness initiative is fully communicated to students and parents, particularly around the value of these experiences for individual students to take. Students and parents need to know why these opportunities are worth pursuing.

- Also prioritize ensuring that counselors, advisors, and other adults who interact with students and parents are competent and knowledgeable about the city's college and career readiness initiatives to be able to counsel and advise students on the opportunities, what to take advantage of, and how.

Data

Cities should take advantage of their often data-rich ecosystems to inform the next steps in implementing their vision and strategic direction.

Because of the number of partners and the size of those partners (particularly the school district(s) and institution(s) of higher education), cities often have access to significant data to be able to make informed choices about implementing their vision and strategic direction for college and career readiness initiatives. And when dealing with large populations of students, data-informed decisions are essential to ensuring students have access to properly calibrated college and career readiness opportunities that are likely to propel them to success after high school.

As data systems get bigger, however, they can often become more unwieldy and difficult for users to navigate. Data collection for the sake of data collection is not by itself a net positive; the data actually needs to be used by the city's stakeholders to make informed decisions on program design and implementation.

Needed data for these kinds of initiatives can also often be collected by multiple partners, and may not be easy to link outside of the context of statewide data systems. Partners should work together to understand what data they need, whether that data is being collected by one of the partners (it may), and how to link data together appropriately to be able to review as a partnership and use the data to inform implementation. This can include looking at data around participation and success trends for the different college and career readiness initiatives, with a focus on where student access gaps may exist, longer-term outcome data

for students who participate in different opportunities to examine how it impacts their college and career outcomes, and using local employment data to ensure career opportunities are aligned to local workforce needs. With the higher concentration of employer partners in cities, and particularly of larger businesses, city partners should seek to leverage the unique advantage of having these partners and their data systems to drive program alignment and relevance.

How do I know if I am effectively using my data?

- Have you worked with your partners to understand what data are available and relevant to your city's college and career readiness initiative?

- Do you know how to access the data? When was the last time that you reviewed it?

- Can you think of a recent example where data was used to inform a specific implementation decision with respect to your city's college and career readiness initiative?

How can I improve in using my data?

- Develop a process with your partners to ensure that data are used to make decisions about program and policy design. Decide on the data you will look at together and the cadence with which you will use it.

- Consider what data to make public — the more publicly available data for all partners to be able to use, the better.

Funding

Local funding, whether from the city or a local funder, can catalyze progress, but needs to be aligned to the other components of this framework in order to be effectively invested.

Obviously, funding can play an important role in expanding access to college and career readiness opportunities for students, particularly when it is thoughtfully deployed to ensure students with the least access to these kinds of life-changing opportunities can benefit. There are many funding needs that can be supported, including paying for dual enrollment courses for students, instructor credentialing to teach dual enrollment or CTE, supporting the costs of work-based learning experiences for students such as transportation, supporting school counselors and navigators, providing career navigation technology platforms, and many more.

Access to local funding, therefore, can be extremely beneficial in advancing the city's overall college and career readiness initiative. Cities with access to local education funders stand to benefit the most, and have the most options for how and where to deploy funding. But funding also needs to be maximized in value and thoughtfully deployed. It should be informed by the city's vision and strategic direction for its initiative, so that the funding can be used most effectively to advance the city's priorities.

Partners engaged in this work also have access to funding from multiple sources, whether local, state, federal, or philanthropic. Partners should work together to consider all the possible sources of funding that are being received across each of the streams, and how they can be aligned to maximize value for students.

How do I know if I am effectively using my funding?

- Are you aware of all the sources of local, state, and federal funding that you and the partners in this initiative are receiving, and how they could support your initiative?
- Has the use of funding been strategically decided in connection with your city's vision for what it wants to achieve from its college and career readiness initiative?

How can I improve in generating and deploying funding?

- Consider the priorities of local foundations and businesses that make charitable contributions, and determine if there is any alignment with your initiative.
- Work with partners to determine all the different sources of local, state, and federal funding that could be deployed to support this initiative, and if there are any opportunities for blending and braiding to enhance the work.

State Policy Engagement

Cities can only proceed so far on their own, and a thoughtful engagement strategy around state policy is essential to the success of any major citywide initiative.

By virtue of population, there is a lot that cities can do to advance their interests in college and career readiness absent a favorable state policy environment. But in many cities where these initiatives are currently underway, there are limits to what can be accomplished at the city level without supportive state policies.

As a result, cities do need to think about how they are engaging with the larger statewide conversation on college and career readiness, how these conversations are happening in other cities in the state, and the level of discussion about college and career readiness in rural areas. Cities should engage with their state policymakers, both legislative representatives from the city and the relevant state agencies, to find points of alignment or opportunity where state policy can be leveraged to advance the city's initiatives. This is particularly important if additional funding is necessary to advance the city's college and career readiness initiative, as the state is an important source of education funding.

How do I know if I am effectively leveraging state policy?

- How aware are the legislators that represent your city about your initiative? Can they speak competently about the work you are doing and your needs?

- How aligned do you feel state policy is with what you are trying to do? Are you in lockstep, or do you feel like your city is "going it alone" with your initiative?

How do I improve my state policy engagement?

- Speak to your legislators. Make sure they understand what you are trying to do, and what your needs are.

- Speak with state agencies. Ensure that they are aware of any challenge points that exist in policy for your city's initiative, and the results that you are seeing.

PROFILES IN PROGRESS

A NUMBER OF CITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY HAVE SEEN SUCCESS IN IMPLEMENTING DIFFERENT PARTS OF THIS FRAMEWORK.

There are many lead actors who come to this work — it might be the mayor's office, the public school district, a non-profit partner, or a funder. The following case studies represent interesting work happening in cities that demonstrate adherence to some elements of the framework outlined above. Though there is always more work to do, and these case studies may not reflect all the work happening in these cities in the college and career readiness space being led by other partners, these cities and the key partners featured stand out for interesting college and career readiness work, including dual enrollment, that other cities may wish to learn from.

EdVestors

EdVestors is a local foundation and intermediary organization based in Boston that brings institutions and organizations together around a shared agenda, makes targeted investments, and supports collaboration across partners.

One of EdVestors' main initiatives has been focused on the Career Pathways Initiative, which works to promote college and career success by Boston students.

The Career Pathways Initiative was created out of the need in Boston for coordination among partners and stakeholders around career learning to address the region's growing need for workers with STEM backgrounds. Boston has experienced significant growth in demand for these workers from technology employers moving to the city. Through the Career Pathways Initiative, EdVestors has centered the importance of **community partnerships** to bring together a number of the relevant organizations, including New Skills Boston, Success Boston, Boston Private Industry Council, the Boston Mayor's Office, the Office of Workforce Development, school district partners, and postsecondary institutions.

As an intermediary entity, EdVestors serves as the convener for the Career Pathways Initiative that leverages the work across the participating community partners. The organization also provides targeted **funding** to support the city's agenda. New Skills Boston is a key initiative within the portfolio of work on college and career readiness in Boston, and EdVestors serves as the site lead. New Skills Boston focuses on bringing more relevant pathways that are tied to

industry sectors and deepening connections between secondary and postsecondary partners. As site lead, EdVestors provides the role of convener and intermediary, and is focused on building pathways and career exploration. There is a specific need for this in Boston given the high degree of autonomy that exists between the district and higher education partners that has meant implementation can look very different across schools.

The development of the New Skills Boston initiative involved the creation of a specific vision and **strategic direction** shared across the key partners, which has shown significant successes. These include:

23,000
BPS students in 6th–12th grade have access to college and career planning resources and support

400
Student support professionals reached through two citywide Seamless Advising summits in 2023 and 2024

~3,200
2023–2024

+44%
SINCE 2020

~3,200 BPS students enrolled in pathways programs in the 2023–2024 school year, up by 44% compared to 2019–2020 school year

91% **+17%** 2022–2023

91% of seniors enrolled in pathways graduated from high school in the 2022–2023 school year, exceeding the district average, up by 17% compared to non-pathways students.

44% **+20%** FROM 2020

44% of all class of 2023 BPS graduates participated in an internship during their high school careers, up by 20% from the class of 2020.

EdVestors credits the city's success in growing career pathways opportunities for the city's students to ongoing engagement with city **leadership**, even through multiple transitions in the Mayor's office, the partners have been able to leverage and develop better relationships with the city's employers. And because the initiative has been housed with an intermediary organization, the **governance** exists to allow it to thrive even as leadership changes and staff and personnel turn over at the relevant partners.

But there are still challenges to address to continue expanding the reach of initiatives like New Skills Boston. EdVestors identifies **data** collection and use as a continuing challenge to demonstrate program success and expand their reach, as well as the challenges of taking new opportunities to scale.

Chicago Public Schools & City Colleges of Chicago

The Chicago Roadmap is a collaboration between Chicago Public Schools and the City Colleges of Chicago, with the participation of the Chicago Mayor's Office and other stakeholders in the city with the vision to dramatically and equitably increase student outcomes in college readiness, enrollment, persistence, degree attainment, and employment.

Through the Chicago Roadmap, students prepare to increase academic readiness for opportunities beyond high school, participate in opportunities like dual credit and CTE in pathways like healthcare, IT, manufacturing, and construction, with access to student advisors and support. Ultimately, the Chicago Roadmap provides students with a pathway for high school graduates to seamlessly transition from high school to City Colleges of Chicago, four-year colleges and universities, employment, or other post-secondary opportunities.

The Chicago Roadmap is operated with **leadership** from Chicago Public Schools and City Colleges of Chicago, through a strong relationship with the Mayor's Office. The functioning of the Chicago Roadmap is anchored in a strong **governance** structure that works across various departments at both CPS and CCC. Individual contributors participate in working groups and committees in five domains: (1) Academic Readiness & Success; (2) Access to High-quality Programs; (3) Student Advising & Supports; (4) Career Exploration, Experience & Preparedness and (5) Transparency, Alignment & Collaboration. The Chicago Roadmap centers **community partnerships** by bringing together employers and industry partners, funders, and other consultants, where needed.

In its beginning stages, partners of the Chicago Roadmap identified a **strategic direction** to support students transitioning from K–12 education to postsecondary, prioritizing a desire to address challenges of students leaving high school who do not meet college readiness benchmarks; low completion rates at the post-secondary level; lack of access to high-quality programs; complicated enrollment processes; and lack of awareness related to trades programs.

To address these and other challenges, the Chicago Roadmap worked to create systemic change and invest in human capital. An example of this work has been the Chicago Roadmap's efforts to address a shortage of credentialed dual credit teachers in Chicago. To respond to this challenge, the Chicago Roadmap has helped scale the offering of various early college course modalities (online, asynchronous, etc.) and has developed course specific resources to build dual credit teachers capacity. The Chicago Roadmap emphasizes the importance of **communication** between partners, working to overcome misalignment or obstacles created by the different cultures and incentives of the secondary and postsecondary system, and ensuring that the lines of communication remain open and are frequently utilized.

In its 2024 progress report, the Chicago Roadmap partners identified the following successes since its creation in 2020:

- Students who completed transitional math and English courses, classes which, when passed, allow CPS students to accelerate into college credit classes at City Colleges, are more likely to automatically start City Colleges at the college level and are more likely to stay enrolled until their second year compared to their peers in developmental education courses.

22% + **19%**

Since FY19 the proportion of **BLACK STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR COLLEGE-LEVEL MATH** *at City Colleges increased by 22%, the proportion of black students eligible for* **COLLEGE-LEVEL ENGLISH** *increased by 19 percent.*

25%

FALL TO FALL RETENTION *at City Colleges* **FOR TRANSITIONAL MATH STUDENTS** *was 25 percentage points higher than for students starting in developmental education courses.*

12%

FALL TO FALL RETENTION *at City Colleges* **FOR TRANSITIONAL ENGLISH STUDENTS** *was 12 percentage points higher than for students starting in developmental education courses.*

- Since the inception of the Chicago Roadmap, transitional math classes have grown to be available in up to 75 high schools and up to 50 high schools for transitional English.

The Chicago Roadmap is reaching the end of its original five-year plan, and is working to develop the Chicago Roadmap 2.0 that will build upon and extend the work to date. Some of the objectives identified for the next phase of the Chicago Roadmap include: working to scale the opportunities created to date, bringing Chicago-based four-year institutions of higher education into the partnership by creating streamlined pathway maps that start with Early College, through Associate Degree completion and then Bachelor degree completion with zero credit loss, and beginning to incorporate the Illinois College and Career Pathways Framework into all aspects of the work.

The Commit Partnership

DALLAS, TX

The Commit Partnership is a collective impact organization based in Dallas, Texas, with the vision that half of all 25–34 year old Dallas County residents will earn a living wage by 2040.

This organization works through initiatives to increase access to educational experiences for students, including college and career readiness initiatives.

The Commit Partnership was created as the culmination of a task force effort convened by the Mayor of Dallas in 2010–2011 to examine challenges faced by the Dallas ISD, with a focus on expanding educational opportunities available to students. The Commit Partnership was the result, tasked with **leadership** duties and serving as a "connector" organization of **community partnerships**. Through Commit, multiple stakeholders from across the Dallas area come together to develop and implement college and career pathways in the city. The partnership brings together members of the community, the city, and county schools, as well as industry partners like the Dallas Regional Chamber, who is one of the initiative's biggest partners.

Through this partnership work, stakeholders are asked to focus on large goals — to come together for a collective vision and work on measuring and tracking progress towards the efforts taken on by the organization. The Commit Partnership identifies key levers that can enact large change, and then develops **data** systems to be able to track progress, builds the community partnerships necessary to ensure these initiatives thrive, and serves as an implementation partner where it has expertise. The partnership structure also gives Commit access to **funding** through regional investors and funders who are committed to this work. As a result of the Commit Partnership's work since 2012, 50,000 more students are meeting the key benchmarks outlined for their success as the region moves closer to achieving its vision.

The Commit Partnership seeks to ensure a clear **strategic direction** for the partners in the region: increased economic opportunity for young Dallas County residents. The group is also deeply involved in **state policy engagement** to support the creation, passage, and implementation of state policy meant to unlock additional opportunities and support for students in the region and across Texas.

THE COMMIT PARTNERSHIP IDENTIFIES KEY LEVERS THAT CAN ENACT LARGE CHANGE, *and then* DEVELOPS DATA SYSTEMS *to be able to track progress,* BUILDS THE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS *necessary to ensure these initiatives thrive, and* SERVES AS AN IMPLEMENTATION PARTNER WHERE IT HAS EXPERTISE.

EmployIndy

EmployIndy has a long history supporting college and career readiness opportunities for students in Marion County, Indiana, the county that includes the City of Indianapolis.

EmployIndy began its existence as a federally mandated workforce development board for Marion County, but evolved with support from successive Indianapolis mayors to become a more holistic organization serving the area's workforce needs, developing and coordinating **community partnerships**, and administering programs and services across a number of strategic priorities. EmployIndy credits the **leadership** of the Indianapolis Mayor's Office for supporting and prioritizing this work and expanding college and career readiness opportunities for students.

This includes the organization's Young Adult Initiatives, which focus on fostering opportunities for youth success in employment and re-engaging young adults who are disconnected from the education system through college and career opportunities. These initiatives involve the coordination of multiple partners, including career centers, postsecondary institutions, community partners, and residents.

EmployIndy also focuses on business engagement in its young adult initiatives, and coordinates the workforce ecosystem to guide **funding** in strategic ways, focusing on access gaps, and removing barriers to quality employment. EmployIndy's "value add" as an intermediary is to help businesses know and understand how to participate effectively and get to the right opportunity aligned to their goals.

EmployIndy has seen many successes including helping to develop, with the state as a partner, a career advising framework for all grade levels through college — this is now being adopted at the state level for all students. This demonstrates the advantage of **state policy engagement** for cities looking to advance their own work. Further, IndyAchieves is a major success of this program — IndyAchieves is a promise scholars program helping high school students go to college, along with coaches to support those students.

> **EMPLOYINDY'S "VALUE ADD" AS AN INTERMEDIARY IS TO HELP BUSINESSES** *to know and understand how to* **PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY AND GET TO THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY ALIGNED TO THEIR GOALS.**

The organization identified the ongoing need to partner with employers to identify talent pipeline challenges and encourage them to become part of workforce solutions and co-producers of talent. Convening employers, community and education partners also helps better align incentive systems across the community and workforce. They also identified the importance of working closely with city/county government to ensure continuity of support going forward.

Greater Los Angeles Education Foundation

LOS ANGELES, CA

The [Greater Los Angeles Education Foundation](#) has been partnered with the [Los Angeles County Office of Education](#) to work on expanding college and career readiness opportunities in the LA area, with a strategic direction of focusing on expanding dual enrollment opportunities.

Taking advantage of the **state policy engagement** that has seen dual enrollment and career pathways receive significant funding opportunities at the state level in recent years, the Greater Los Angeles Education Foundation has created a framework for expanding dual enrollment in LA and is working to implement it.

The Foundation's work to expand dual enrollment access in LA began with the [Los Angeles College Accelerator Network](#) (LA CAN), which was a temporary incubator focused on working with LA stakeholders to understand the challenges and opportunities to expand dual enrollment opportunities — working with the [Education Strategy Group](#) (ESG) and utilizing the College in High School Alliance and ESG's [Unlocking Potential: A State Policy Roadmap for Equity and Quality in College in High School Programs](#).

Through philanthropic funding, the LA CAN initiative leveraged districts that were already invested to create the [Los Angeles County Toolkit to Equity-Centered Dual Enrollment Partnerships](#). The toolkit is a regional guide with practical information, aligned with national best practices, and which can be used by others as an example when beginning this type of work. As a result of the work of LA CAN, dual enrollment is now institutionalized as a program priority in Los Angeles, and the city now has an initial foundation for what the program agenda can look like and the dual enrollment strategy can be cohesively built out.

> **AS A RESULT OF THE WORK OF LA CAN, DUAL ENROLLMENT IS NOW INSTITUTIONALIZED AS A PROGRAM PRIORITY** *in Los Angeles, and the city now has an initial foundation for what the program agenda can look like* **AND THE DUAL ENROLLMENT STRATEGY CAN BE COHESIVELY BUILT OUT.**

Since the creation of the toolkit, the Foundation has been working with the Los Angeles County Office of Education on **communications** to promote and generate awareness of the toolkit, structure, and priorities. In addition, the Foundation has begun implementation work by providing **funding** to seed positions in the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) focused on dual enrollment with support from the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, which is critical for LACOE's role as the Regional Technical Assistance Center for Los Angeles County districts that have received Golden State Pathways Program investments to expand postsecondary and career pathways, including dual enrollment.

Greater Twin Cities United Way

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

[Greater Twin Cities United Way](#) has been a key partner in supporting college and career readiness work taking place in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and other parts of Minnesota, through the organization's vision and commitment to "unite education and the employment system, for wealth building and purpose-driven careers."

As a mission driven funder and implementer looking to impact the college and career trajectories of Minnesota youth, Greater Twin Cities United Way's **strategic direction** has been to focus on the creation of Career Academies in the Twin Cities and across Minnesota.

The Career Academies work undertaken by Greater Twin Cities United Way seeks to provide funding and technical assistance to support the creation of career academies centered around specific, sustainable, and in-demand career pathways for students in grades 9 through 14, combining dual enrollment opportunities and work-based learning alongside traditional CTE opportunities for students in available pathways.

Greater Twin Cities United Way has also been focused on providing the **funding** to develop **community partnerships** between school districts, community organizations, postsecondary, and industry, to ensure sustainability of the initiative beyond the life of the organization's investments and support in the space. This includes collaborations with strategic partners like local chambers of commerce and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce Foundation and private industry councils, as well as mission-driven groups looking to address underrepresentation in educational opportunities, such as Native Skywatchers and Hmong American Partnership.

The work supported by Greater Twin Cities United Way to date has seen good success for Twin Cities and Minnesota high schools students. Since the initiative was launched in 2015, Career Academies has supported over 20,000 students through over 60 partnerships across Minnesota. 80% of these students identify as Black, Indigenous, or Students of Color and 90% identify as BIPOC, living with a disability, or low-income. According to an evaluation report published in 2020 of the Career Academies, "this far exceeds the statewide participation rates for students of color in similar statewide programs, which average 13% in concurrent enrollment programs. Students earned 9,891 college credits, saving over $3 million in college tuition by accessing college credits through their high school programs."

Greater Twin Cities United Way identified shared definitions around career pathways as a challenge necessary for partners to overcome to thrive in this work, particularly working across sectors like education and industry who do not otherwise interact and have different values, philosophies, and incentives. The organization also identified **state policy engagement** as a key need for cities looking to be involved in advancing this work, because while cities have some flexibility and freedom to advance the work absent a favorable state policy environment, having supportive state policies can significantly improve sustainability of the city's initiatives.

YouthForce NOLA

YouthForce NOLA is a non-profit focused on implementing its vision that every New Orleans public school graduate will thrive in a meaningful, well-paying career.

The organization's creation came from the realization of a mismatch between the preparation that students received in school and local job opportunities. The organization was born from a collaborative of business, civic, and community leaders who, together, set a clear **strategic direction** for addressing these challenges. Today, YouthForce NOLA energizes, funds, and connects partners across the New Orleans community to provide dynamic, practical learning experiences that bridge school and work for public high school students, promoting college and career readiness opportunities for all students.

YouthForce NOLA's work is guided by drawing upon the many community partners across New Orleans to drive progress forward. A number of these partners participate in a Steering Committee comprising the important citywide stakeholders, providing clear **governance** for the initiative. The Steering Committee provides strategic guidance, vision, and oversight for YouthForce NOLA in developing and refining the organization's strategy and making connections across **community partners** to ensure coordination and efficiency of the myriad of college and career readiness efforts in the city.

This is especially important in New Orleans because of its unique K–12 structure in which nearly all public schools are charters and there is not a traditional central organizing district office. While schools have space to innovate, high-quality college and career preparation–including technical training, engaging with local businesses, and offering paid internships–benefit greatly from a system-level coordinator.

The unique structure for New Orleans's K–12 system also makes **funding** critical, as smaller schools can struggle to raise the funds necessary to be able to create new college and career readiness opportunities. YouthForce NOLA also focuses on **communications** with many stakeholders to motivate family, education, business, community, and civic partners to invest in and choose to prioritize college and career readiness.

> **GIVEN THE UNIQUE STRUCTURE** *and some of the challenges associated with working across New Orleans,* **YOUTHFORCE NOLA HAS EXPANDED ITS FOCUS TO INCLUDE STATE POLICY ENGAGEMENT** *to promote the New Orleans work* **BY DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS AND SHARED PRIORITIES WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES** *across the state.*

Given the unique structure and some of the challenges associated with working across New Orleans, YouthForce NOLA has expanded its focus to include **state policy engagement** to promote the New Orleans work by developing partnerships and shared priorities with other

communities across the state. This has involved working collaboratively at the state level to understand and communicate what communities across the state are doing well, particularly as it relates to training, work-based learning, and soft skills, which have seen a focus from the state legislature and the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

As the organization continues its work to expand college and career readiness opportunities for New Orleans students, YouthForce NOLA is expanding its partnerships to include more institutions of higher education. The organization is also working with leaders in the City of New Orleans who focus on youth and families, through a master planning process, to get youth-serving institutions aligned and creating goals and targets for the region.

As the organization continues its work to expand college and career readiness opportunities for New Orleans students, YOUTHFORCE NOLA IS EXPANDING ITS PARTNERSHIPS TO INCLUDE MORE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

New York City Public Schools Office of Student Pathways

NEW YORK CITY, NY

[New York City Public Schools](#) have invested significantly in expanding college and career pathway opportunities for the more than [900,000 public school students](#) in New York City.

This effort, which draws support from the Mayor's Office, the City Council, and operates in partnership with the City University of New York and the State University of New York, is managed through the Office of Student Pathways, a dedicated **governance** function within NYC Public Schools for college and career readiness opportunities.

The work of the Office of Student Pathways is guided by their **vision** to ensure career readiness for New York City students, with relevant pathways into jobs that provide

> *Ongoing data collection and reporting showed* NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS WERE NOT EARNING A FAMILY-SUSTAINING WAGE POST-HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION. *This has led to the office's strategic direction of* FOCUSING ON HIGH-WAGE AND HIGH DEMAND CAREER PATHWAYS, *which has* MANIFESTED IN THE CREATION OF THE FUTUREREADY NYC, *administered by the Office.*

economic security. The Office of Student Pathways has undergone a number of reorganizations in order to tune up its mission and vision, but throughout its evolution has remained committed to the goal of college and career readiness for its students.

The Office of Student Pathways is responsible for maintaining **community partnerships** and collecting relevant **data** on student outcomes, which the Office believes are critical to their success. Ongoing data collection and reporting showed New York City Public Schools students were not earning a family-sustaining wage post-high school graduation. This has led to the office's **strategic direction** of focusing on high-wage and high-demand career pathways, which has manifested in the creation of the FutureReadyNYC, administered by the Office.

FutureReadyNYC which is now in its third year, operates with a five-pillar framework that guides its implementation:

- Early College Credits and Credentials
- Career-Connected Instruction
- Work-based Learning
- Personalized College and Career Advising
- Financial Literacy

Students participating in FutureReadyNYC have the opportunity to complete:

- A four to eight course sequence of career connected instructional credit in Business and Finance, Education, Healthcare, and Technology, with additional pathways being piloted.

- At least seven college credits through early college courses aligned to the student's pathway.

- A personalized college and career plan through working directly with an advisor.

- Work-based learning opportunities, including one paid experience before graduation.

- Financial literacy coursework.

FutureReadyNYC is a central tenet of the Office of Student Pathways' college and career readiness strategy, but this feeds into larger system level efforts that leverage cross sector partnerships, with employers, with institutions of higher education, with community based organizations (CBOs), to work with K–12 to reimagine learning, centered in engagement, relevance and rigor and to prioritize stronger, pathways specific postsecondary advisement. This work encompasses a large portfolio of CTE programs, modern youth apprenticeships, more intentional dual enrollment opportunities, and the ability to participate in early college high schools or P-TECH opportunities. The Office of Student Pathways has identified **communications** as one of the most important elements of ensuring access to these opportunities for a school district the size of New York City Public Schools, as well as strong partnerships with the other relevant stakeholders to the work. New York City's college and career readiness efforts are also somewhat ahead of the rest of the state, therefore the city is expanding its **state policy engagement** to ensure the development of a supportive state policy ecosystem for these student opportunities.

District of Columbia Executive Office of the Mayor

WASHINGTON, DC

In the District of Columbia, the Mayor's Office has been working to advance college and career readiness initiatives for Washington, DC students through the leadership of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME).

This effort has involved a number of initiatives designed to support and grow existing college and career readiness efforts in the city.

The DME is responsible for supporting effective service delivery and to providing a **strategic direction** to coordinated work across the relevant stakeholders in the District, including the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, DC Public Schools, the District's charter schools, the institutions of higher education that serve DC students, local businesses, and community organizations and non-profits already working to support access to these opportunities for DC students. Toward this goal, the Office of Education Through Employment Pathways (ETEP) was created via Mayor's Order in February 2024. The primary function of the ETEP is to allow the District to better understand students' career outcomes through their education and professional journeys, which is being accomplished through the creation of the Education Through Employment Data System which integrates education, workforce, social services, and juvenile justice **data**.

The DME also coordinates stakeholders and makes additional recommendations for citywide improvements for access to college and career opportunities. This has included more than $100 million in **funding** to support college and career readiness opportunities in the District, including the creation of The Advanced Technical Center (ATC), which provides access to CTE opportunities for DC's students in grade 9–11. The ATC offers four course pathways that provide both high school and college credits in cybersecurity, health information technology, and general nursing. In the first two years alone, students earned 2,300 college credits through participation in ATC classes.

The Deputy Mayor for Education's office has also been working on supporting the expansion of dual enrollment opportunities in the District more broadly, including leading the development and implementation of a set of recommendations for dual enrollment improvement and expansion in DC across a wide range of stakeholders. In addition to continuing work to develop DC's longitudinal data system, the Mayor's Office is working on **communications** to address awareness around college and career readiness opportunities in ways that resonate with families and students in the District who may not be familiar with them. They are also working on developing and growing support for these initiatives among DC's education advocacy community to be able to continue advancing the work and making the case for funding and policy support as well as increased commitments from key partners, including industry and higher education.

CONCLUSION

Cities have unique opportunities and challenges to address in working to advance college and career readiness for their students. While they have access to significant resources in the form of local businesses, colleges, intermediaries, and potential philanthropy, the need to navigate large bureaucratic organizations and deliver these services at scale to the city's student population creates challenges.

In order to successfully expand college and career readiness opportunities for students, cities need to bring all relevant partners to the table and ensure they have a clear vision with an agreed strategic direction to tackling their challenges and supporting implementation. They need leadership, from the relevant parties and support from the city government, to implement change, as well as support from partners including non-profits and intermediaries. In implementing their college and career readiness initiatives, cities need to prioritize clear communications with practitioners, parents, and students, use existing data from multiple partners to inform program decisions, support and align funding appropriately to focus on student access and success, and ensure robust and relevant engagement with state policy. As evidenced by this paper, there are many important initiatives already underway to support college and career readiness in cities, and this framework can be used to enhance and supplement those existing efforts.