Jobs for the Future

Digital Jobs Pathways Toolkit

Jobs for the Future has developed this Digital Jobs Pathways Toolkit to serve as a strategic, action-oriented resource to help intermediaries build data-driven, learner-centered, and employer-aligned pathways to digital jobs.

Various types of organizations, including workforce development boards and community-based organizations, can serve as intermediaries, and there can be multiple intermediaries in a single region. Also known as backbone organizations, intermediaries may offer direct services, but their primary role in a pathways ecosystem is to act as the “glue” coordinating the activities of partners from multiple sectors to achieve a common set of goals and fulfill a collective regional vision. They’re also instrumental in building scalable and sustainable work-based learning programs.

This toolkit is a capacity-building and systems-change resource designed to empower intermediaries to lead partners from multiple sectors in collaborative efforts to design and enhance sustainable pathways in the digital jobs ecosystem. It supports practical action across the three key phases of pathway development:

1. **Understanding Sector, Stakeholder, and Regional Needs:** Intermediaries can take the lead in establishing a shared understanding of the regional digital jobs landscape by assessing the unique needs of all local stakeholders, identifying key partners and assets, and analyzing labor market supply and demand dynamics with employer input.

2. **Building Pathways and Strengthening Partnerships:** Intermediaries can help regional stakeholders forge formal partnerships with one another so they can co-develop models and devise coordinated plans for designing and operationalizing digital jobs pathways.

3. **Sustaining Services, Systems, and Strategies:** To create pathways that are resilient and able to evolve over time, intermediaries can develop strategies for ensuring that these initiatives have long-term funding and offer workers and learners wraparound supports so they’re better able to persist in and complete their training. Intermediaries can also engage with partners from multiple sectors to help them build relationships that last beyond the initial implementation phase.

In the sections that follow, this toolkit discusses each phase in depth, addressing five cross-cutting priorities that guide the development of digital jobs pathways:

- **Strengthening Pathways and Partnerships**
- **Building Employer Commitment**
- **Facilitating Network-Building**
- **Advancing Regional Supportive Services**
- **Managing Programs Effectively**

Each section offers tools that can facilitate the work of an intermediary in each phase, along with key takeaways, discussion prompts, and lists of additional resources. While each tool can be used independently based on an intermediary's specific needs, they are designed to build upon each other.

Table of Contents

Phase 1: Understanding Sector, Stakeholder, and Regional Needs 5

- Key Considerations in the Digital Jobs Sector 7
- Labor Market and Employer Needs Analysis Guide 11
- Regional Pathways Assessment 18

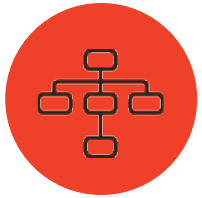
Phase 2: Building Pathways and Strengthening Partnerships 25

- Career Pathway Mapping Tool 26
- Pathway Implementation Planning Worksheet 29
- Employer Engagement Maturity Model 39

Phase 3: Sustaining Services, Systems, and Strategies 43

- Supportive Services Integration Guide 44
- Sustainability Planning Worksheet 48
- Digital Jobs Pathways Case Studies 60

Conclusion 63



Phase 1: Understanding Sector, Stakeholder, and Regional Needs

Effective digital jobs pathways begin with a grounded understanding of both local conditions and labor market realities. This section equips intermediaries with strategies for assessing the makeup of a regional digital jobs workforce and designing pathway strategies that are aligned with local employer demand. This section features three tools:

- **Key Considerations in the Digital Jobs Sector**
  This tool provides a strategic overview of the digital jobs workforce landscape, and helps intermediaries quickly get up to speed on national trends taking into consideration local implications. It distills complex labor market dynamics, such as shifts driven by the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), credentialing trends, and the growing importance of durable employability skills. Intermediaries can use this information to inform their conversations with partners and ground their pathway design in current realities.

- **Labor Market and Employer Needs Analysis Guide**
  Designed to translate raw labor market data into clear, usable insights, this guide helps users identify high-growth occupations, validate skills demand through employer feedback, and align training with regional needs. Users will have a prioritized list of digital jobs, a regional demographic snapshot, and a stronger understanding of how to engage employers in co-designing solutions.

- **Regional Pathways Assessment**
  This tool helps intermediaries assess the current state of their local digital jobs ecosystem by identifying existing partnerships, regional assets, and critical gaps. It's especially valuable for teams looking to expand collaboration, be able to pinpoint where support is needed, and use shared insights to drive future planning. As a result, this tool can guide decisions about partnership building, investment priorities, and systems alignment.

Together, these tools advance four key digital jobs pathway priority areas: Strengthening Pathways and Partnerships, Facilitating Network Building, Building Employer Commitment, and Managing Programs Effectively. They do so by equipping intermediaries with the data, frameworks, and partner insights needed to make informed decisions, prioritize inclusive growth, and foster alignment across stakeholders. This foundational work ensures that subsequent pathway design efforts are rooted in real regional needs, shared goals, and sustainable collaboration.

This section explains how Phase 1 of the pathways development process lays the groundwork for coordinated, data-informed action to build pathways and strengthen partnerships in Phase 2.

Key Considerations in the Digital Jobs Sector

This resource provides an overview of emerging trends and actionable insights in the digital jobs sector to guide intermediaries in developing and strengthening regional pathways. Drawing from labor market data and expert insights, it outlines shifts in the digital workforce, essential program design components, and the critical role intermediaries play in advancing pathways that lead to quality digital jobs

Evolving Dynamics in the Digital Jobs Landscape

- **Digital jobs span all sectors of the economy and are rapidly changing.**
  Demand for workers with digital expertise is no longer limited to roles in traditional IT departments. Organizations in many sectors of the economy, including health care, finance, manufacturing, public administration, are looking for people with tech skills to fill hybrid roles that combine digital competencies with functions like marketing, administration, and operations. Tech-related spending is often dispersed across multiple departments rather than being centralized in IT. While overall demand for people with digital skill jobs has remained steady, specific occupations such as software development are expanding, while others, like computer programming, are declining.

- **Credential and degree requirements are diversifying.**
  Employers continue to prioritize well-established and well-recognized IT credentials—such as those offered through training programs run by CompTIA, Cisco, and Microsoft—despite the overwhelming number of education and training options available, a bachelor's degree remains the most frequently required qualification for IT jobs, but around one-third of digital job postings list no formal degree requirement. This reflects growing acceptance of non-degree training and education pathways that lead to in-demand skills. Employers are downplaying other types of credentials as well and are increasingly interested in hiring people who can demonstrate that they have the competencies and ability to complete work that contributes to business needs, no matter how they acquired those skills.

- **Durable skills and applied experience are essential.**
  Success in digital jobs hinges not only on technical knowledge but also on durable skills such as problem-solving, collaboration, adaptability, and communication. Moreover, employers are consistently seeking candidates with real-world experience. Work-based learning—including internships and apprenticeships—provide that real-world experience and offers participants valuable opportunities for learners to build non-technical durable skills and demonstrate the confidence and readiness to navigate workplace expectations.

- **AI is reshaping job functions across levels.**
  While the IT job market remains strong and tech careers represent reliable pathways to quality jobs and economic advancement, we must acknowledge that artificial intelligence is disrupting traditional entry-level roles, such as user support and software development, and automation is even having an impact on mid- and senior-level positions. To remain competitive in this evolving labor market, workers and learners must acquire foundational AI competencies, such as prompt engineering, data awareness, and ethical governance.

Building Learner-Centered Pathways in Partnership With Employers

- **Employer engagement must be intentional and sustained.**
  Intermediaries should engage employers early in the pathway design process to seek their guidance in shaping curriculum, identifying in-demand skills, and establish hiring expectations. Maintaining an employer engagement strategy that offers employers and other partners a clear value proposition is critical. Regional consortia—particularly those involving small and midsize businesses—can align training with collective hiring needs and increase employer commitment to recruitment, mentoring, and work-based learning. Memorandums of understanding (MOU) can formalize these partnerships and ensure accountability.

- **Work-based learning bridges education and employment.**
  Applied learning experiences—such as internships and apprenticeships—are critical for developing both technical and professional skills. These opportunities help learners expand their professional networks and build social capital, gain exposure to real work environments, and navigate workplace norms. Programs should integrate support for workplace transitions, including mentorship and coaching, to improve persistence and long-term success.

- **Curriculum must be responsive to and aligned with industry needs.**
  High-quality pathways programs should incorporate training that leads to stackable industry-recognized credentials that reflect current labor market demands. As traditional entry-level roles shift due to automation, programs must offer flexible on-ramps and emphasize durable skills like digital literacy, problem-solving ability, and adaptability. Technical training should be broadly accessible to create opportunities for all workers and learners, regardless of their backgrounds and previous experiences.

- **Supportive learning environments drive completion and success.**
  Instructional strategies should prioritize flexible scheduling, modular content delivery, and opportunities for real-time interaction to increase accessibility. Regular check-ins between learners and instructors, milestone-based progress tracking, and peer learning communities help learners remain engaged and accountable. Instructors should be trained to offer personalized support and create learning environments that meet the needs of all participants, regardless of their learning style and previous educational experiences.

- **Wraparound support is foundational, not optional.**
  Programs must address the full spectrum of learner needs. This includes offering career services such as resume development and mock interview activities; providing access to the tech systems and devices learners will need, including laptops and internet connectivity; and coordinating the delivery of supports such as transportation, child care, and housing assistance to enable learners to juggle training and personal responsibilities so they can fully participate in the program. Transparent communication of career outcomes like typical job titles and salary ranges helps learners set realistic goals and make informed decisions.

The Strategic Role of Intermediaries

- **Intermediaries align systems and stakeholders.**
  As trusted conveners, intermediaries coordinate efforts across education, workforce, and industry partners to align training with labor market needs. This ecosystem approach promotes shared ownership, leverages multiple funding streams, and ensures that learners have access to a continuum of support across institutions.

- **Intermediaries unify partners around shared goals and design.**
  By facilitating the development of a regional vision and outcomes framework, intermediaries ensure that programs are open to learners who are members of populations that are underrepresented in the tech workforce, embed work-based learning into the coursework, and advocate for stackable, portable credentials. This type of shared agenda will help partners focus on driving systemic change rather than providing siloed one-time programs and services.

- **Community trust is a cornerstone of inclusive pathways.**
  Collaborating with trusted community leaders and organizations is essential to recruiting and retaining learners who are members of populations that have long been underrepresented in digital jobs pathways. Through these

partnerships, program providers gain insights into effective ways to design programs and outreach strategies that are culturally relevant to members of the local community and thereby reduce barriers to access and completion.

To meet the evolving demands of the digital economy, leaders from all sectors of regional work and learning ecosystems must collaborate to co-design pathways that are broadly accessible, flexible, and aligned with quality job opportunities. Intermediaries play a critical role in driving this work by coordinating cross-sector partnerships and centering learner and worker needs.

Labor Market and Employer Needs Analysis Guide

This guide is designed to help intermediaries analyze labor market data and engage employers in providing feedback about the digital jobs they need to fill and the skills people need to qualify for those jobs. By grounding pathway strategies in accurate labor market data and direct employer input, organizations can better align training, support services, and employment pipelines with quality jobs.

Collecting and Analyzing Labor Market Data

Step 1: Collect Core Labor Market Information (LMI)

Gather regional labor market data to understand:

- Key economic indicators, including labor force participation in tech-enabled industries, educational attainment levels of the population, and unemployment rates by demographic group
- Population demographics that show breakdowns of the population by age, gender, and race and ethnicity
- Occupational data, including current and projected employment, average annual job openings, earnings, and typical entry-level education, work experience, and on-the job training requirements
- The distribution of digital jobs by occupation and industry sector
- Real-time demand for workers to fill digital jobs and the skills people will need to do those jobs based on volume of postings

Use internal LMI sources and consider supplementing that information with data from the following sources:

- Traditional LMI: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Economy at a Glance reports, state sources of labor market data sources, O*NET, and state workforce agencies
- Real-Time LMI: Job posting analytics from tools like Lightcast
- Regional Reports: State or local economic development dashboards
- Population Demographics: Census reports or regional studies of age, gender, and race and ethnicity breakdowns of regional populations

Step 2: Understand Regional Demographics

Use this table to disaggregate population data by demographic categories.

Metric	Data Point	Source
Total Population		
Population Growth Rate (next 5 years)		
% by Age (18–24, 25–34, etc.)		
% by Race/Ethnicity		
% by Gender		

Reflection Question: How do these demographics align with regional populations digital jobs pathways are designed to serve?

Step 3: Analyze Occupational Trends

Determine the regional living wage benchmark by using the MIT Living Wage Calculator to identify the hourly and annual living wage in your region. JFF recommends using the calculator to find the living wage for a household with at least one adult for your metropolitan statistical area; alternatively, you may want to find the calculations for households with varying family compositions to establish a range for the living wage in your region.

Hourly Living Wage (e.g., $22.75 for single adult, no children in metro area):

Annual Equivalent:

Use LMI data and the living wage estimate to complete the following analysis.

Which digital jobs currently employ the most people?

Which digital jobs are projected to grow the most based on the number of annual openings?

Which digital jobs have a median wage at or above a living wage?

Use the table below to identify the five most promising occupations based on the questions above. Note that the occupations you identify should generally demonstrate the potential for future growth, pay a living wage, align with the average level of educational attainment of your regional workforce, and have only a limited risk of disruption due to automation.

Occupation	Total Number of People Employed	Number of Annual Openings	Median Hourly Wage	Entry-Level Education
Example: Computer user support specialist	15,943	1,255 average annual openings	$36.24	Some college

Reflection Question: Which of these occupations offer the best accessibility, pay, and growth?

Engaging Employers to Validate Data

Step 1: Build a Partner Database

Use the tables below to collect information about the organizations that are active within the local tech industry. The first table, “Existing Employer Partnerships,” brings together the details of employer partnerships to help analyze trends and search for gaps in industry relationships. The second table, “Potential Industry Partnerships,” helps identify additional organizations that may offer valuable insights into digital jobs pathways. Consider the following strategies to identify and approach new potential partners:

- Engage with local networks such as regional industry groups, professional associations, chambers of commerce, or tech-focused councils.
- Join or follow relevant online groups and communities such as those on LinkedIn.
- Make the most of connections with your existing training partners and ask members of their staff for introductions to employers that may be open to collaborating on regional pathways work.
- When engaging with employers, demonstrate the value you can offer and raise their awareness of the value and relevance of pathways by providing them with labor market insights, information about learner outcomes, or community impact data.

Existing Employer Partnerships

Company	Industry	Tech Focus	Partnership Type	Contact Name	Email
Example: CodeBridge Solutions	IT services	Cloud infrastructure	Internship and curriculum input	Alex Smith	alex@codebridge.com

Potential Industry Partnerships

Company	Industry	Tech Focus	Potential Role	Contact Name	Email
Example: VentiBank	Financial technology	Data analytics	Co-design credential path	Taylor Reed	taylor@ventibank.com

Step 2: Gather Employer Feedback

Gathering industry and employer feedback provides you with an opportunity to gain insights directly from the field, including details about the challenges employers face or upcoming initiatives that may align with digital jobs pathways. You can gather employer feedback in a number of ways, including individual interviews, focus group conversations, or surveys. You can also connect with potential employer partners at regional business events, such as meetings of the chamber of commerce or local industry associations.

Consider asking questions like these to get to know employers and better understand their needs:

- What occupations are hardest to fill and what skills are in highest demand right now?
- Does our data appear to reveal trends that don't align with what you're seeing?
- Are there any barriers that limit people's access to your digital roles or make it difficult to thrive in those roles?
- What credentials or experiences do you value most in entry-level hires?
- How do you see your talent needs evolving in the next three to five years?

Synthesizing and Applying Insights

The final step is to integrate the data and employer feedback into an overall digital jobs pathway strategy. Use the questions below to reflect on findings, develop a strategy encompassing all the trends you have identified, and adjust course as needed.

What trends did employers confirm or challenge?

What new roles or needs were identified?

What are the implications for learners and workers who are members of populations that have faced barriers limiting their access to digital jobs?

What employer engagement strategies should be added?

How will the pathway design shift based on the analysis?

Regional Pathways Assessment

This tool helps intermediaries assess the current state of their regional digital jobs ecosystem by identifying partnership strengths, gaps, and opportunities that can inform the next steps in pathway development. It should be completed with feedback from regional partners from multiple sectors who play a role in advancing regional digital jobs pathways. The assessment is designed to facilitate intentional collaboration internally and externally and should be regularly revisited and updated.

Partnership and Ecosystem Snapshot

Strong and collaborative partnerships are the foundation of effective digital jobs pathways. Mapping existing relationships clarifies who is already involved, how they contribute, and where there are engagement gaps. Use the table below to list all partners involved in the regional digital jobs ecosystem, including employers, education providers, and community-based organizations. Choose one of the following descriptors to rate their engagement level: active (currently engaged and contributing), passive (aware but not currently involved), or potential (not yet engaged but aligned). For their role, specify the partners' contributions to digital jobs pathways.

Partner Name	**Organization Type**	**Engagement Level** (active, passive, or potential)	**Digital Jobs Pathways Role**
Example: TechCo Inc.	Employer	Active	Co-designs IT curriculum, hosts apprentices
Example: County IT Department	Public sector employer	Passive	Aware of efforts, could be engaged to offer internships

Regional Asset Map

A clear understanding of assets helps build credibility with employers and funders, strengthens proposals, and supports regional alignment. Assets can be internal (those that an organization controls) or external (those that an organization must access through partnerships). Fill in the table by listing assets in each of these four categories:

Knowledge: Industry knowledge, staff expertise, labor market data
Facilities: Training spaces, labs, meeting rooms
Relationships: Political support, community leaders
Partners: Aligned organizations, trusted partners, consortia

Category	Asset	Contact	Description
Knowledge	Example: Labor market dashboard (Lightcast)	Workforce analyst	Provides real-time data on IT and cybersecurity job postings

Facilities	Example: Digital Skills Lab at City College,	Emily Lopez	Houses virtual reality setups and secure labs for network simulation training
Relationships			
Partners			

Gaps and Opportunities

Identifying where new investments or partnerships are needed is a key aspect of enhancing digital jobs pathways. Use the questions below to describe in detail where gaps exist across partnerships, training, support, and employer engagement. Reflect on responses to help prioritize strategic decisions in pathway development.

What types of partnerships are missing?

Are there any training or credentialing gaps?

What supportive services are underdeveloped or missing?

Where is employer engagement weak or underutilized?

Next Steps

Using insights to plan for sustained action is necessary to build and enhance partnerships. Use the table below to document concrete actions based on findings from the assessment. The next steps should focus on building capacity, filling identified gaps, and leveraging existing strengths.

Focus Area	Key Insight From Assessment	Immediate Next Step	Person/Team Responsible	Timeline
Example: Employer engagement in AI	More input from employers is needed on desired AI skills	Coordinate with the chamber of commerce to host AI-focused employer meeting	Program coordinator	one month

Key Takeaways and Reflection

As intermediaries work to strengthen regional digital jobs pathways, Section 1 established the foundation for digital jobs pathways by understanding regional dynamics and aligning them with employer demand. Through analysis of sector trends, thoughtful assessment of regional assets, and labor market information validated by employers, this section emphasizes the importance of starting with a shared understanding among partners.

Key Takeaways

- Digital jobs are broad and evolving, requiring adaptive, cross-sectoral training approaches and pathways.
- Intermediaries play a central role in convening stakeholders, aligning systems, and interpreting labor and workforce data to support equitable access to quality jobs.
- Employer input is essential to ensure pathway design incorporates training and skills that lead to quality jobs.

Discussion Prompts

- What are the most promising digital jobs in the region, and are they accessible to target populations?
- Where are there gaps in current training or support systems?
- How can employer insight be used to shift or validate pathway strategies?

Suggested Additional Resources

- Intermediary Functions and Features in Pathways Systems this JFF resource offers a deeper dive into the structural and operational capacities intermediaries must build to lead regional digital jobs initiatives.
- Tech Jobs Are in High Demand- But Are They High Quality? This JFF piece examines labor market trends and job quality in digital fields that can help intermediaries evaluate whether job demand aligns with quality employment outcomes.

- From Labor Market Information to Pathways Designs: Foundational Information for Intermediaries this JFF resource provides best practices for using labor market data in pathway planning.

- Job Profiles A JFF resource that offers a snapshot of digital jobs roles, including key competencies and career pathways, that are especially helpful for young people to learn more about computer science occupations

Phase 2: Building Pathways and Strengthening Partnerships

With a strong understanding of the ecosystem and labor market, intermediaries can begin designing clear and inclusive digital jobs pathways. This section provides tools that can be used during Phase 2 of the pathways development process to build out pathway models, assign roles and responsibilities, and deepen partnerships—especially with employers. This section features three core resources:

- **Career Pathway Mapping Tool**
  This visual tool allows users to build clear, stackable digital career pathways by aligning occupations, credentials, and advancement opportunities. Ideal for workshops, cross-partner design sessions, or internal planning, it can help teams clarify career progression for learners while communicating shared expectations to employers and training providers. It can also be used to promote pathways to learners and workers.

- **Pathway Implementation Planning Worksheet**
  A comprehensive, step-by-step worksheet that turns strategy into action, this tool guides users through every aspect of launching a pathway—from defining goals and determining readiness to engaging partners and tracking progress. It includes sections for internal capacity, employer engagement, community feedback, and progress monitoring. Upon completing this worksheet, users will have a fully articulated implementation plan aligned with stakeholder roles and timelines.

- **Employer Engagement Maturity Model**
  This model helps teams assess the current level of employer engagement and chart a path toward deeper, more strategic partnerships. It clarifies the differences between transactional and co-ownership models, offering targeted strategies at each stage. Users can use it to prioritize outreach, tailor engagement strategies, and support long-term employer commitment to digital jobs pathways.

Together, these tools advance the digital jobs pathway priority areas of Strengthening Pathways and Partnerships, Building Employer Commitment, and Managing Programs Effectively. They help intermediaries ensure that pathway models reflect learner and employer needs, that implementation is coordinated across internal teams and partners, and that employer relationships evolve from transactional to strategic.

This section connects the insights from analysis to implementation, laying the groundwork for the sustainability strategies that are essential to Phase 3 of the pathways development process.

Career Pathway Mapping Tool

Use this template to build clear visual maps of potential digital career pathways in your region.

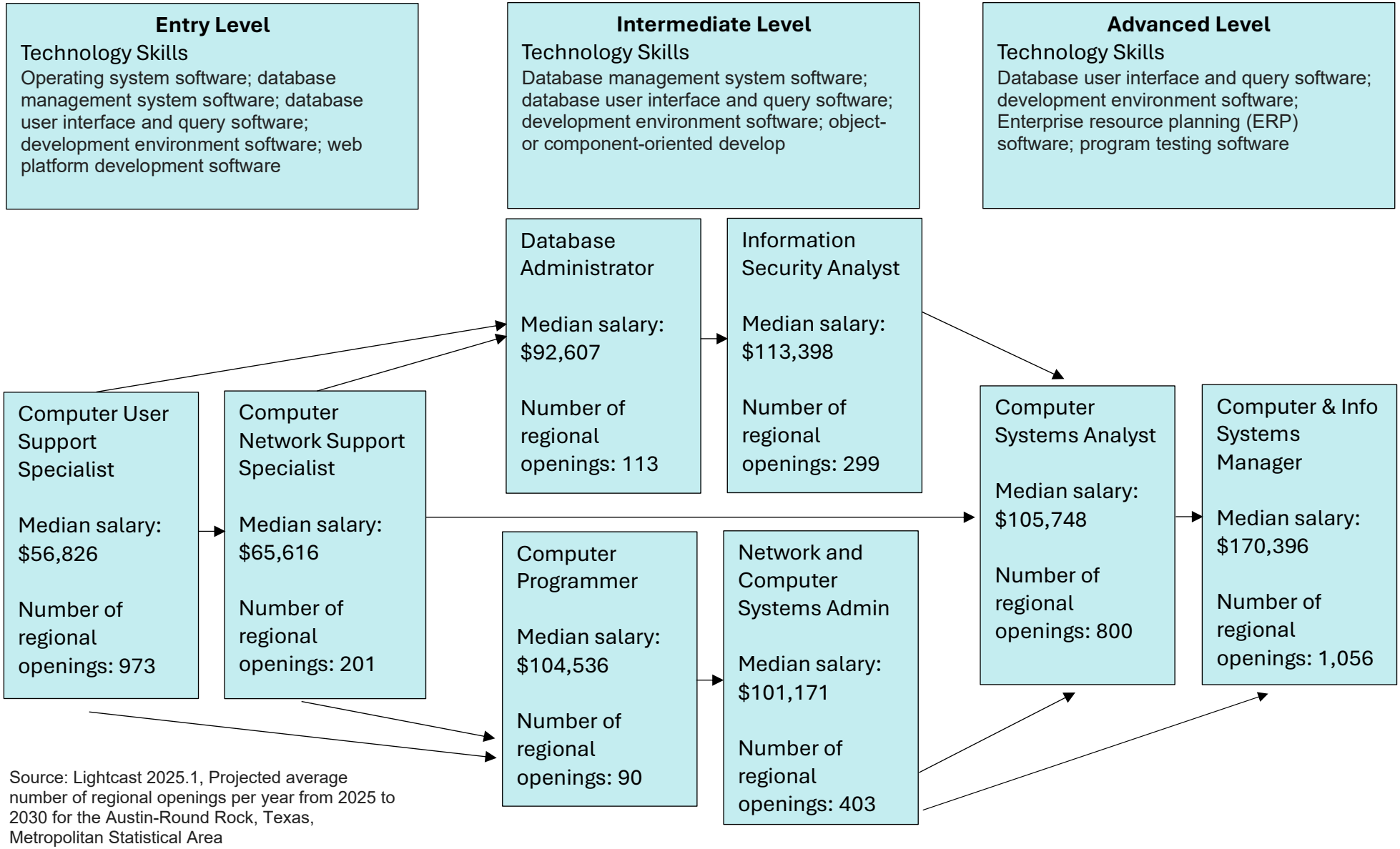
Instructions

- Add the title of the pathway you're building at the top.
- Use the three boxes in the first row to list the technology skills people will need to land jobs in the pathway at the entry, intermediate, and advanced levels.
- Then use the boxes below the first row to provide information about specific roles at each of those levels, including the job title, median salary, and number of openings in the region
- Organize the role boxes so it's clear how they relate to one another along the intended career path. To make it easier to place the boxes in the desired location in Word, you can turn on gridlines using the View drop-down menu: View > Gridlines. The grid will help you neatly position the boxes in rows and columns as desired. The gridlines won't print and can be turned off via the drop-down at any time.
- You can add arrows to clearly depict the indented career path. Use the arrow provided below the boxes and duplicate it as many times as you need to. See the mockup of a completed career pathway map on the following page for examples of how to position boxes and use the arrows.

Entry Level	Intermediate Level	Advanced Level
Technology Skills	Technology Skills	Technology Skills
Median salary: Number of regional openings:	Median salary: Number of regional openings:	Median salary: Number of regional openings:
Median salary: Number of regional openings:	Median salary: Number of regional openings:	Median salary: Number of regional openings:

Example Career Pathway Map

Computer User Support Specialist, Austin-Round Rock, Texas



Source: Lightcast 2025.1, Projected average number of regional openings per year from 2025 to 2030 for the Austin-Round Rock, Texas, Metropolitan Statistical Area

Pathway Implementation Planning Worksheet

This worksheet guides intermediaries through the critical phases of planning, launching, and sustaining regional digital jobs pathways. It outlines key steps, clarifies responsibilities, and sets timelines to ensure that pathway development efforts are actionable and aligned.

Pathway Overview

This section lays the foundation for pathway work. It clarifies the pathway's purpose, target occupations and populations, and the scope of implementation, creating a shared vision among partners. Fill in the basic details that define the pathway that you are building or improving.

Organization Name:

Pathway Name/Focus:

Time Frame:

Region:

Target Occupations:

Target Populations:

Goals (What change are you trying to create for learners, workers, and employers?):

Lessons Learned and Application

Pathway development should be grounded in prior assessments and stakeholder input. This section helps incorporate relevant findings from earlier work into the design and implementation plan. List key insights from assessments and planning activities and describe how they influenced the approach to building the pathway.

Source	Key Takeaways	How They Are Being Applied to Pathway Design
Labor Market Analysis	1. 2. 3.	
Regional Needs Assessment	1. 2. 3.	
Career Pathway Mapping	1. 2. 3.	
Cross-Cutting Learnings	1. 2. 3.	

Internal Readiness

Strong pathways require internal alignment across leadership, operations, instruction, and support services. This section helps ensure that intermediaries are prepared to support pathway implementation.

Internal Support

Identify the people and organizations or departments that support the digital jobs pathways work. Consider those that actively participate, such as training providers, as well as those that indirectly support pathways, such as an employer's human resources department. Next, document what types of additional support are needed and the plan for engaging partners who could provide those supports.

Supportive Partners	Strategies to Maintain Support
Example: Workforce development team	Share updates in meetings held every two weeks and provide stats and other data

Partners Needed	Outreach Plan	Owner and Timeline
Example: IT department (learning management system access)	Email request followed by a one-on-one meeting	Ops lead, one week

Internal Capacity

Indicate the resources you need in order to build, implement, and sustain digital jobs pathways, including but not limited to funding, people, policies, and time.

Category	Current Capacity	Needed Capacity	Action Plan	Owner and Timeline
Example: Curriculum Delivery	Adjunct instructors	Guest speakers from local tech firms	Reach out via Tech Council	Curriculum lead, one month

External Partner Engagement

Digital jobs pathways thrive on strong partnerships with employers, training providers, and community organizations. This section helps identify key partners and strategies for engaging them effectively. First, list existing partners and their roles. Next, identify external partners whose support is needed and your plans for engaging them or deepening your current relationship.

Existing Partners	Current Role/Support	Additional Support Needed, If Any	Engagement Strategy	Owner and Timeline
Example: City Tech Council	Offers employer access	Organize site visits	Quarterly strategy sessions	Employer engagement lead, ongoing

New Partner	Support Needed	Engagement Strategy	Owner and Timeline
Example: Stack Education	Training curriculum	Invite to advisory board	Instruction lead, one month

Learner and Community Feedback

To design pathways that are accessible to learners and workers from a wide range of backgrounds, you will need to reach out to members of multiple communities and engage with them to understand their employment and education needs and goals. This section of the worksheet will help ensure that you're able to incorporate community feedback into the final pathway design by identifying the audiences you want to reach, the feedback you need from each group, and how and when you will collect it.

Audience	Focus of Feedback	Method/Location	Timing	Owner
Examples: Jobseekers, students, graduates	Program feedback on training and job placement	Online survey	After course	Job coach

Progress Monitoring

Monitoring the implementation of a pathway helps you evaluate its success; make midcourse corrections, if necessary; and demonstrate impact to stakeholders. To do this effectively, define what progress looks like, how it will be tracked, and who is responsible for reporting the relevant data.

How will progress be measured? What kind of data (assessments, observations, or surveys, for example) will be collected?

When will this data be collected? How often?

Who will be responsible for collecting and keeping track of the data?

What data collection systems are currently in place? Is the system automated? Will the current systems be sufficient to monitor implementation, or will a new system be needed?

What will the benchmark of success be? For example, should the goal be that at least 80% of the learners graduate from program? Or that a minimum of 75% of the graduates get jobs in the tech industry within six months of completion?

How will the data be shared and with whom?

Milestones and Timeline

Setting milestones keeps pathway implementation on track and allows partners to coordinate and stay aligned. Use this table to list critical steps, associated tasks, dependencies, and deadlines.

Milestone	Owner	Tasks	Dependencies	Target Completion
Example: Curriculum finalized	Instructional lead	Review modules and update with employer feedback	Partner feedback	Three weeks

Roles and Responsibilities (RACI)

Having clearly defined roles for all partners helps prevent confusion and delays in pathway implementation. A RACI chart—which clearly identifies who's responsible, who's accountable, who should be consulted, and who should be informed—can help ensure that everyone understands their role. Here's a breakdown of who should be assigned to each category in the RACI model:

- **Responsible:** This is the day-to-day project manager—the person who is most actively managing and contributing to the work. This individual would be the one most likely to know the answers to questions anyone has about the status of the project. Ideally only one person should be the project R.

- **Accountable:** This is the person who will ultimately be held accountable for the project's success. This might be a budget owner or sponsor. Ideally only one person should be the project A.

- **Consulted:** These are the people who should be consulted about the project's progress and status. They should be individuals who can provide expert input or advice about new developments. There can be more than one project C because every deliverable is strengthened when multiple people provide review and consultation.

- **Informed:** Project I's are people who need to know that the work is getting done, perhaps because they will be working on a related project later.

Task	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
Example: Launch learner survey	Community manager	Program director	Tech support	All staff

Shared Goals and Expectations

This section can be used to ensure that all stakeholders agree on what success looks like and how to communicate progress. It defines minimum thresholds for success and describes how expectations will be communicated and reinforced.

Success Criteria: What are the performance targets? Perhaps an 80% job placement within six months of the training program's completion date?

Communication Plan: How will goals be shared with internal and external partners?

Inspiration Strategy: How will partners remain engaged and enthusiastic?

Employer Engagement Maturity Model

Intermediaries can use this model to assess and advance employer engagement—from initial contact to full strategic partnership—to support the goal of building strong, sustainable pathways that lead to quality digital jobs. Strong employer engagement is essential for sustainable and relevant pathways. There are five levels of employer engagement, and each level represents a deeper form of engagement with corresponding strategies and desired outcomes. Each stage builds on the previous, requiring increased trust and collaboration. Intermediaries play a key role in facilitating this progression.

This resource can be used across the pathway development life cycle and is especially useful in understanding how to deepen existing employer relationships. Use this model as an assessment tool to identify the current stage of employer engagement, and as a strategic guide to plan the actions needed to advance to deeper levels of partnership. It can also be useful for partnership mapping to plot employer partners across the model to guide relationship management.

Engagement Stage	Level and Description	Key Strategies	Primary Objective
New Relationship	Level 1: Awareness Employers are unaware of or minimally familiar with regional digital jobs pathways efforts. Engagement is focused on building awareness and raising visibility.	• Share research and real-time labor market insights, such as trends in entry-level employment and digital skills gaps • Conduct employer roundtable discussions and industry listening sessions • Disseminate sector briefs and reports about digital skills that are in demand	Establish visibility and credibility by raising employer awareness of the initiative's value and relevance
Working Relationship	Level 2: Consultation Employers begin contributing feedback on their talent needs and the relevance of training. Engagement is focused on gathering input.	• Use surveys and focus groups to gather feedback on program design • Discuss hiring needs, skills, and competencies • Co-develop occupation-specific skills profiles or job descriptions • Host employer advisory meetings • Align employer feedback with labor market data in pathway planning	Ensure that pathway design reflects employer needs and begins aligning with regional hiring needs

Engaged Partnership	Level 3: Co-Design Employers participate in shaping curriculum and offer early-stage work-based learning opportunities. Engagement is focused on co-designing pathways and helping shape solutions.	• Partner with employers in competency and curriculum development • Co-develop co-branded training modules or boot camps • Organize guest speaking engagements, site visits, and job shadows • Secure formal commitments through MOUs or partnership agreements	Strengthen employer investment by involving them in content development and learning exposure
Strategic Partnership	Level 4: Integration Employers co-deliver training and invest in advanced, sustained work-based learning activities. Engagement is focused on collaborating for shared delivery and advanced work-based learning.	• Launch internships and apprenticeships as a talent development pipeline strategy • Coordinate mentorship from employer partners • Jointly manage training outcomes and participant readiness • Develop co-branded certification programs or capstones	Fully integrate employers into program delivery to improve authenticity, learner outcomes, and employment alignment
Institutional Partner	Level 5: Co-Ownership Employers take on shared accountability for long-term talent pipeline and economic development goals. Engagement is focused on employers as long-term co-owners of the strategy and is institutionalized across the employer operations.	• Co-invest in infrastructure, such as labs or training equipment • Collaboratively secure grants or co-sponsor funding initiatives • Create a joint governance structure or employer-led advisory board • Engage employers in long-term strategic planning and metrics tracking	Achieve lasting alignment and co-investment in systems that sustain digital jobs pathways

Key Takeaways and Reflection

Section 2 marks a critical turning point where analysis becomes an action. Designing and operationalizing digital jobs pathways requires detailed planning, relationship-building, and shared accountability among stakeholders. It sets the stage for the final phase to ensure regional ecosystems can adapt, scale, and continue to deliver opportunities.

Key Takeaways

- Clear pathway maps create transparency for learners, training providers, and employers alike—supporting informed decision-making and smoother transitions between roles and credentials.
- Thoughtful implementation planning ensures follow-through. Clear milestones, RACI charts, and feedback loops help keep initiatives on track and inclusive of all stakeholders.
- Employer engagement is not one-size-fits-all. The maturity model offers a framework to tailor outreach, deepen trust, and move employers toward co-ownership of the pathway vision.

Discussion Prompts

- Are regional pathway maps aligned with real-world hiring practices and advancement routes?
- Where in the regional implementation plan is risk or need anticipated?
- How can current employer partners be moved one level deeper on the maturity model?

Suggested Additional Resources

- Four Lessons from Developing Computer Science and Cybersecurity Pathways in Rural Communities a JFF blog post that highlights insights from pathway implementation in rural context with lessons on partnerships, learner engagement, and pathway design.

- Credentials that Pay: Designing pathways to tech careers This JFF resource supports the identification and selection of industry-valued credentials which is critical to career pathway design and curriculum development.

- Pathway Model- Computer Science This document is a practical example of a visualized regional pathway model focused on middle school through postsecondary.

- Computer Science Careers: preparing High School Students for Success This JFF guide supports educators, including high school teachers and counselors, in understanding computer science, an industry that has many high-wage jobs open across the country.

Phase 3: Sustaining Services, Systems, and Strategies

To be truly impactful, a digital jobs pathway must be designed for long-term sustainability. This section provides tools that intermediaries can use in Phase 3 of the pathway development process to embed support structures, secure funding, and cultivate partnerships to ensure that pathways are capable of enduring, adapting, and growing over time. Two tools anchor this section:

- Supportive Services Integration Guide
  This guide helps intermediaries build a robust, learner-centered ecosystem by embedding wraparound supports—like transportation or child care assistance, or access to technology devices and systems—into the core of their pathways. It includes tools to assess needs, build partnerships with community-based organizations, and design a coordinated service infrastructure. Intermediaries can use this to expand access to digital jobs pathways and help ensure that learners are able to persist and succeed in those pathways.

- Sustainability Planning Worksheet
  This tool supports long-term thinking. It helps intermediaries design for sustainability across core pathway functions—funding, partnerships, data, and delivery. Whether a team is launching a new initiative or scaling a proven model, this worksheet helps identify what to sustain, who to involve, and how to braid funding streams or build collective ownership. It's ideal for use with funders, backbone teams, or cross-sector working groups.

- Digital Jobs Pathways Case Studies
  These examples show how organizations can act as regional hubs that align employers, training providers, and community partners to build coherent, locally rooted digital career pathways, expanding access to quality digital roles and demonstrating measurable outcomes in youth engagement, employer participation, and completion of employer-informed credentials.

Together, these tools support the priority areas of Advancing Regional Supportive Services, Managing Programs Effectively, and Facilitating Network Building by helping intermediaries embed a long-term infrastructure into digital jobs pathways. They provide practical guidance to coordinate wraparound supports, align resources across partners, and establish shared strategies that sustain impact over time. By focusing on both systems and services, this section ensures that pathways remain broadly accessible, resilient, and responsive to evolving regional needs.

This section builds on the implementation work of the previous section and is designed to equip intermediaries to embed quality-driven programs into the fabric of regional systems for lasting impact.

Supportive Services Integration Guide

This guide is designed to help intermediaries identify, assess, and integrate supportive services—such as transportation and child care assistance—into digital jobs pathways. Effective integration of supportive services starts with intermediary leadership in convening partners and designing accessible systems. Services for learners and workers must be embedded across the pathway life cycle—from intake to employment. These services are essential to reducing barriers so that learners and workers can access, persist in, and complete education and workforce programs.

An intermediary's role is to:

- Lead a cross-sector efforts to identify participant needs
- Build and manage partnerships with community-based organizations
- Integrate services into pathway infrastructure
- Monitor service impact and ensure sustainability

Understanding Supportive Service Needs

Identifying the barriers learners and workers face is foundational to building effective pathways to digital jobs. A clear understanding of these challenges enables partners to develop participant-centered solutions. Consider the strategies below to better understand learner and worker needs.

Conduct a Survey of Participants

In close collaboration with program partners, develop a short, anonymous survey to identify learners' and workers' needs and the most pressing barriers they face. Include questions on the ease of accessing the program's location, the convenience of the schedule, transportation needs, and access to childcare, housing, food, and internet service.

Host Focus Groups or Listening Sessions

Convene small groups of current and former program participants for conversations in which they discuss their experiences. Facilitate open dialogue to capture qualitative insights that build on survey findings. Record and analyze feedback to highlight root causes of barriers that limit their ability to access, participate in, and complete training programs.

Develop a Community Program Inventory
Identify existing services in the community using internet research, local directories, and partner referrals. Document service type, contact information, eligibility criteria, intake process, and service capacity. Create a visual map or database to identify both existing assets and service gaps.

The documented list of top learner and worker barriers mapped to available community services can guide strategic partnership-building.

Build Strategic Partnerships With Community Based Organizations

Strong formal partnerships with community-based organizations (CBO) with shared goals are key to scaling and sustaining pathways. CBOs can provide the services that enable learners and workers to overcome barriers limiting their ability to participate in pathways, and these relationships significantly increase the capacity of regional education and workforce systems to serve workers and learners holistically.

Use Data to Establish Priorities
Focus initial efforts to forge new CBO partnerships on efforts to address two or three of the most pressing needs of workers and learners identified in the survey and in focus group discussions.

Evaluate Potential Partners
Screen CBOs based on their alignment with a pathway's goals, the geographic regions they serve, and their capacity to scale. Seek partners that have the experience, infrastructure, and resources to serve pathway's participants.

Meet With Potential Partners and Formalize Agreements
Hold one-on-one meetings with potential partners to discuss pathway goals and the needs of learners and workers. Explore strategies for embedding services into pathways. Formalize agreements using a memorandum of understanding that defines responsibilities, data-sharing protocols, communication cadence, and evaluation measures.

Integrate Services Into Pathways

Learners and workers are more likely to access and benefit from support when it is embedded into the day-to-day program experience rather than offered as an optional add-on. Intermediaries can coordinate an integrated service delivery system that is seamless and accessible to all participants.

Include Information About Supports in All Pathways Resources and Documentation
Update existing pathway maps and curriculum outlines to include supportive service touchpoints. Define when and where participants are introduced to available services. (For example, during orientation or upon completion of a specific milestone.)

Designate Support Staff and Implement a Clear Referral Protocol
Assign a staff member to help participants navigate available support options or create a new role with those responsibilities. Establish clear guidelines for how staff should conduct outreach to participants to provide information about services, coordinate referrals to service providers, track usage, and provide one-on-one support. Train all staff in referral procedures and the principles of trauma-informed care and ensure that they're aware of support resources in the local area.

Sustain and Evaluate Integration

Relationships with institutional partners must be based on trust to ensure that wraparound supports are built for the long term so the pathway can maintain ongoing impact. Intermediaries should design a sustainable and adaptable service model that evolves as community needs evolve.

Track Service Utilization and Outcomes
Create a dashboard to log referrals, services accessed, and participants' feedback about their satisfaction with services. Analyze trends over time and by demographic subgroups to determine enrollment and completion rates and identify areas for improvement.

Meet Regularly With CBOs to Assess Gather Feedback
Meet with CBO partners quarterly to review the progress of service delivery efforts, assess impact, and troubleshoot problems. Discuss learner and worker feedback and review aggregated data to inform decision-making.

Incorporate Services Into Sustainability Planning
Include partners that provide supportive services in discussions about long-term regional plans and strategies. Identify all available funding sources, including federal programs like WIOA and TANF, local grants, and philanthropic partners. Explore ways to braid funds from multiple sources. Co-apply for grants with CBOs when appropriate to strengthen collective funding.

Reflection Questions:

What are learners' and workers' most significant barriers, and what is currently being done to address them?

Which CBOs could be more deeply integrated into regional pathways?

How can we use data systems better track service usage and outcomes?

Sustainability Planning Worksheet

This worksheet supports intermediaries in building long-term sustainability strategies across services, systems, and partnerships to ensure that regional digital jobs pathways are resilient, inclusive, and impact-driven. The template promotes collaborative planning with stakeholders to integrate sustainability into all core phases of pathway development.

Vision Statement

Describe the long-term vision for sustaining and evolving digital jobs pathways in the region.

What long-term outcomes do you desired for learners, workers, and employers in the region? (Could the goal be 80% of digital jobs pathway graduates obtaining a quality job within six months of completing their training, for example?

What pathways are most critical to build, strengthen, and sustain in the region? (For example: A pathway for entry- and midlevel cybersecurity specialists)

What combination of strategies will support sustainability? (Braided funding and employer-led consortia, perhaps?)?

Stakeholder Engagement Planning

Identify the internal teams and external partners critical to sustainability. Include partners from all sectors, such as community-based organizations, employers, funders, workforce agencies, and policy advocates.

Stakeholder Name	Type (Internal/External)	Role in Sustainability	Engagement Strategy
Example: Local tech council	External	Drive advocacy, host meetings and events, link employers	Quarterly check-ins and state workforce roundtables

Strategic Sustainability Focus Areas

The following sections lead you through the process of identifying effective approaches to successfully completing five important steps in the process of planning and building sustainable digital jobs pathways. They open with guiding questions and include tables that you can use to document at least one tactic and associated implementation activities.

Strengthening Pathways and Partnerships

Guiding questions: Which partnerships are most essential for long-term impact? How can articulation agreements or MOUs promote sustainability?

Tactic	Activity	Desired Outcome	Responsible Parties and Timeline	Key Resources or Barriers	Progress Metrics
Example: Formalize a career ladder that starts at an IT support role and leads to a position as a cybersecurity specialist	Create articulation agreement between the local community college and workforce board	Seamless learner transition and credit stacking	Workforce board and community college, Q2 2026	Resources: Shared learning management system Barrier: Transcript alignment	MOU signed

Building Employer Commitment
Guiding questions: Where do employers fall on the engagement maturity model? What shared value opportunities or co-investments could deepen buy-in?

Tactic	Activity	Desired Outcome	Responsible Parties and Timeline	Key Resources or Barriers	Progress Metrics
Example: Develop a regional cybersecurity apprenticeship consortium	Align job requirements, share curriculum needs	Collective buy-in for talent development	Intermediary and employers with tech jobs, Q2 2026	Resources: HR reps at employers with tech jobs Barriers: Legal coordination	Four employers commit

Facilitating Network-Building
Guiding questions: What formal and informal networks are well positioned to support regional support pathway work? How can peer learning or governance structures (such as advisory councils) support sustainability?

Tactic	Activity	Desired Outcome	Responsible Parties and Timeline	Key Resources or Barriers	Progress Metrics
Example: Establish a digital jobs pathway advisory roundtable	Hold quarterly meetings with representatives of training providers, CBOs, and employers	Shared vision and streamlined programming	Intermediary, ongoing	Resources: Skilled staff and a tech platform that enables remote meetings Barriers: participant availability	Four meetings per year, 80% retention

Advancing Regional Supportive Services
Guiding questions: Which community-based organizations are integral partners for services like childcare, transportation, and housing? How can services be integrated directly into the pathway infrastructure?

Tactic	Activity	Desired Outcome	Responsible Parties and Timeline	Key Resources or Barriers	Progress Metrics
Example: Embed tech-specific wraparound supports into the pathway	Bundle wireless internet access, loaner laptops, and digital literacy support	Boost retention among underserved learners who lack access to tech devices and services	CBO and the local workforce agency, Q2 2026	Resources: Local tech grant program Barriers: Device inventory	90% of learners complete tech access intake

Managing Programs Effectively

Guiding questions: What funding streams (WIOA, TANF, or Perkins, for example) can support sustainability? What level of investment will be necessary to support the implementation of tech systems and tools such as data dashboards, customer relationship management systems, and learning management systems?

Tactic	Activity	Desired Outcome	Responsible Parties and Timeline	Key Resources or Barriers	Progress Metrics
Example: Map sources of federal funding that can be used to support digital training programs	Analyze grants that can be used to offset the cost of CompTIA and AWS courses	Targeted applications and shared strategy	Intermediary, Q3 2026	Resources: Grant researcher Barriers: Time limitations	Funding inventory completed

Collaborative Funding and Resource Strategies

Complete the activities below to identify collective resources needed to sustain digital jobs pathways while identifying gaps and aligning funding strategies across partners.

Resource Mapping by Function

Identify who contributes what and how across core pathway functions.

Pathway Function	Existing Contributors (Organization, Role)	Contribution Type (staff, in-kind, funding)	Current Gaps	Potential Funding or Partners
Instruction	Example: Community college faculty	Adjunct hours	Limited expertise in AI	Coursera
Support services				
Employer engagement				
Technology and equipment				
Program coordination				
Evaluation and reporting				

Funding Streams Inventory
Track current and potential funding sources supporting the regional digital jobs ecosystem.

Funding Source	Lead Entity	Status (Active, Lapsed, Potential)	Timeline	Notes
Example: WIOA	Workforce development board	Active	Ongoing	Supports eligible learners' tuition

Sustainable Funding Strategies
Use this table to develop actionable next steps to strengthen financial sustainability.

Priority Area	Action Steps	Lead Partner/Owner	Timeline	Notes
Diversify funding streams				
Strengthen cost-sharing agreements				
Explore co-investment opportunities				
Build shared grant infrastructure				

Reflection Questions:

Can agreements about responsibility for shared costs and/or infrastructure be formalized through MOUs with partners?

How can data and impact metrics be used to make the case to funders?

Are there philanthropic or public funding programs focused on supporting digital jobs initiatives?

Monitoring and Adaptation Plan

Quarterly Review Process: Who will review and update this plan each quarter?

Data Collection: What key performance indicators will be used to track pathway success and partner engagement?

Plan Revisions: How will insights be captured and reflected in evolving strategies?

Wrap-Up

What does success look like in three years? Five years?

What circumstances or conditions could jeopardize sustainability? How will they be addressed and mitigated?

How will successes be celebrated and publicized to sustain momentum?

Key Takeaways and Reflection

Sustainability is a continuous commitment. Section 3 helps intermediaries anchor pathway efforts in long-term strategy, equitable support systems, and shared accountability with partners.

Key Takeaways

- Supportive services are essential infrastructure. Embedding wraparound supports into the core of pathway delivery boosts completion rates.
- Sustainability planning must be cross-sector and proactive. From braided funding strategies to shared metrics, the work of sustaining pathways requires collective stewardship and aligned resources.
- Ongoing data and feedback loops drive adaptation. Intermediaries must track usage, outcomes, and partner engagement to evolve services and funding approaches over time.

Discussion Prompts

- What are the biggest barriers learners face to completing digital jobs programs—and are those needs being fully addressed?
- Which partnerships are most critical to sustain regional digital jobs efforts in the long term?
- What systems or funding strategies need to be developed or formalized to ensure pathway continuity?

Suggested Additional Resources

- The MOU: A Tool for Formalizing Partnerships - this JFF tool can be used and adapted by intermediaries to formalize partnerships and commitments among pathway partners.
- Computer Science Overview for High School Students - this JFF resource supports learner navigation and persistence in digital jobs pathways.

Digital Jobs Pathways Case Studies

Translating Demand into Opportunity: MassHire Boston's Approach to Digital Career Pathways

MassHire Boston Workforce Board illustrates how a regional workforce intermediary can add value in a market where digital opportunity is abundant, but difficult to navigate. Across the greater Boston metro area, employers across technology, healthcare IT, finance, clean energy, and professional services are actively hiring for digital roles, yet jobseekers, particularly those without four-year degrees, encounter a fragmented landscape of credentials, training providers, and unclear hiring signals. The central challenge is not a lack of activity, but a lack of alignment.

Rather than building new programs and duplicating efforts, MassHire Boston focuses on strengthening pathways and employer commitment by serving as a coordinating hub. The organization works directly with employers to clarify skill needs and expectations, then aligns training providers, community partners, and recruitment efforts around those shared signals. This approach has been especially visible in how employer-facing events and career fairs are used to surface common hiring expectations, helping employers, training providers, and jobseekers operate from a more consistent understanding of digital and AI-enabled skill requirements.

A defining feature of the Boston model is its emphasis on system coherence. In a region with many parallel initiatives, MassHire Boston prioritizes reducing duplication, elevating effective training options, and encouraging employers to engage earlier and more consistently with talent pipelines—through internships, experiential learning, and skills-based hiring approaches. This model is reinforced through MassHireBoston's partnership with Boston Public Schools and the Boston Private Industry Council, which connects high school students to employer-paid summer jobs and internships, including in technology and other high-growth sectors. Career Specialists embedded across Boston Public high schools work closely with students, schools, and employers to translate labor market demand into early work-based learning opportunities. By focusing on alignment over expansion, the organization helps ensure that digital pathways lead to real hiring outcomes and are accessible to residents who have historically been excluded from Boston's tech economy. By focusing on alignment over expansion, the organization helps ensure that digital pathways lead to real hiring outcomes and are accessible to residents who have historically been excluded from Boston's tech economy.

Why This Matters
MassHire Boston demonstrates that in opportunity-rich markets, workforce impact comes from clarifying demand and coordinating systems, not creating more programs. By serving as a regional hub, the organization engaged more than 400 young people in just over a year, more than double its original participation goal, while aligning employers, training providers, and schools around shared hiring signals, making digital career pathways easier to understand, navigate, and access for both employers and jobseekers.

Growing Digital Talent Locally: MassHire Central's Regional Approach to Digital Careers

MassHire Central Region Workforce Board offers a strong example of how digital career pathways can be built in a regional economy where demand is growing, but infrastructure is still emerging. In Central Massachusetts, digital skills are increasingly required across healthcare, manufacturing, education, and business services, yet digital roles are often embedded within broader occupations. This creates a need for clearer pathways, stronger employer engagement, and practical tools that help residents and employers navigate digital career options locally.

MassHire Central's approach centers on building regional capacity. The organization focuses on developing accessible entry points into digital and IT-adjacent roles, particularly within healthcare IT—while pairing training with wraparound supports to improve persistence and completion. Career fairs and employer convenings have played a key role in this work, helping validate pathway design with employers and making digital career options more visible and concrete for local residents.

Employer engagement in the region is intentionally relationship-driven and developmental. By working through trusted regional partners and sector-based collaborations, including healthcare IT employers, higher-education institutions, and regional IT services firms, MassHire Central helps employers articulate digital skill needs, participate meaningfully in pathway development, and gradually adopt skills-based approaches to hiring. This strategy supports not only entry into digital roles, but retention and advancement, ensuring that digital talent development strengthens the local economy rather than preparing workers to leave it. This approach is reflected in MassHire Central's role as a regional hub for IT talent development, coordinating training providers, employer demand, and job opportunities through long-standing relationships. Rather than operating a single centralized program, the workforce board convenes and aligns regional partners to deliver employer-informed IT credentials, including CompTIA A+ training,

that prepare residents for entry-level IT and cybersecurity roles. Ongoing employer engagement helps ensure these pathways stay responsive to real hiring needs, strengthening a locally rooted digital talent ecosystem.

MassHire Central shows that building digital pathways in regional labor markets requires sustained investment in capacity, trust, and shared infrastructure, not just short-term training programs. Through this approach, the region engaged **50+ employers**, attracted **100+ applicants** to CompTIA A+ training, and supported **61 residents** to complete employer-informed credentials, in over a little more than a year demonstrating how locally rooted digital pathways can translate employer demand into durable career opportunities that strengthen long-term regional growth.

Conclusion

Building inclusive, resilient digital jobs pathways is a long-term endeavor—one that demands collaboration, adaptability, and a deep commitment to equity. As regional ecosystems evolve and new challenges emerge, intermediaries play a vital role in keeping pathways aligned with both labor market shifts and learner needs.

This toolkit is just one piece of a broader movement to ensure digital jobs are accessible to all. For more resources, examples, and updates on emerging strategies, we invite you to visit JFF's Digital Jobs Strategy page and sign up for the newsletter. Stay connected with the growing network of changemakers working to create high-quality digital opportunities for every learner and worker.