LAUNCH

Redefining Responsibility:

How Regional Collaboratives Can Expand Pathways Capacity and Impact

ADVANCE CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

ESG Education Strategy Group

Jobs for the Future

New America

Executive Summary

States have set goals to increase high-quality, equitable pathways systems despite having limited resources to design and deliver programs. Pathways implementation is often hindered by fragmentation and institutional silos across K-12 education, postsecondary education, workforce, and employer systems, leaving responsibility diffuse, capacity uneven, and efforts disconnected from one another. This lack of coherence, amplified by misaligned infrastructure and scarce resources, makes aligning around shared goals; sustaining implementation; and delivering equitable, high-quality pathways at scale difficult for states and local partners.

This publication examines how cross-sector collaboration at the regional level is prompting better alignment between the state vision for and regional delivery of pathways by addressing the complex and nuanced challenges of aligning systems and stakeholders. First, it examines the common challenges states are facing and outlines the benefits of a regional collaborative approach. The publication then explores five key pillars that shape the structure and characteristics of effective regional collaborations: leadership, defined roles and responsibilities, shared ownership and decision making, shared goals, and aligned resources to build and sustain high-quality pathways over time. Examples in North Carolina, Texas, and Indiana provide concrete lessons, leading to recommendations on strategies for local, regional, and state leaders to make regional collaboratives work.

As key drivers of policy and program implementation, the pillars and lessons can be translated into actions that states can take to strengthen cross-sector collaboration and build the regional infrastructure needed to scale pathways.

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RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR STATES:

- **Articulate a clear, shared vision of responsibility for pathways.** Define how state agencies, intermediaries, and local providers collectively own student outcomes, and embed that vision in policy documents, guidance, and communications.
- **Align policy, funding, data, and accountability around collaboration.** Structure grants, allotments, outcomes bonuses, and accountability metrics to reward cross-sector work, shared goals, and high-quality implementation rather than isolated program counts.
- **Provide structured flexibility through clear frameworks and guardrails.** Set common definitions of quality, minimum participation expectations, and planning requirements, while allowing regions to adapt governance, delivery models, and sector focus to local context.
- **Define and cultivate intermediary readiness statewide.** Establish clear eligibility criteria for intermediary organizations or proactively identify organizations with the credibility, convening capacity, cross-sector relationships, and operational infrastructure to serve in this role so that regional collaboratives are anchored by entities positioned to coordinate and sustain the work over time.
- **Invest in intermediaries and regional infrastructure, not just programs.** Create and fund roles such as regional conveners and coordinating entities, with expectations for convening, coaching, data use, and employer engagement across multiple initiatives.
- **Support continuous learning across regions and agencies.** Sponsor peer-learning networks, technical assistance, and shared tools (e.g., templates, data dashboards, work-based learning guidance) so regional collaboratives can learn from one another and from early “bright spots.”

State Challenges to Implementing Coherent Pathways

Cross-sector collaboration and shared ownership of initiatives are crucial to the success of durable pathways. The need to deepen partnerships specifically through regional collaboration emerges from a basic challenge: Education and workforce systems are still largely organized in ways that make shared planning and coordinated action difficult. States face a set of interrelated barriers to scaling high-quality pathways: misalignment between state vision and local priorities, infrastructure misalignment, institutional silos, and constrained resources.

HOW IS A REGION DEFINED?

The definition of a region is different in every state. A region may be formally defined by a state legislature, board, or government agency, such as workforce development areas, educational service regions, or community college service areas. Regions may also be defined by economic linkages and commuter patterns (e.g., shared workforces and major industries) or by a metropolitan anchor. Other state criteria are also used to define a region for specific purposes (e.g., counties, legislative districts). The concepts and recommendations from this publication can be applied to however you define regions in your state or context.

State-level collaboration is essential to set a coherent vision, align policies and incentives, and signal shared responsibility for pathways. However, state tables are often too far from day-to-day implementation to design solutions that fit diverse local labor markets, institutional capacities, and community contexts. Discrete funding streams with distinct goals, policies, and compliance requirements channel K–12, postsecondary, workforce, and economic development actors into parallel, program-specific efforts rather than shared designs. Relatedly, separate governance structures and data systems further limit visibility into one another's work, making joint planning and implementation more difficult. These conditions not only create administrative inefficiency, but they also weaken coherence for learners who must navigate disconnected pathways systems.

These structural divides are compounded by a broader culture of scarcity and competition, as many states across the country project **flat or declining spending** while public sector funding at the federal and state levels faces ongoing pressure. In this environment, districts and institutions may perceive collaboration as a threat to enrollment, funding, or autonomy. Under these constraints, institutions understandably prioritize meeting their own accountability metrics, leaving little capacity to coplan or co-own outcomes. Without deliberate efforts to reframe collaboration as essential to progress and long-term capacity building, partners are likely to protect their own programs rather than invest in shared solutions.

State leaders and practitioners are also attempting to deliver high-quality pathways amid acute staffing constraints. **Chronic teacher shortages** limit the capacity of schools and colleges to expand or deepen pathway offerings. In this context, states need strategies to leverage existing expertise and capacity more effectively.

States can address these challenges through purposeful, multilevel collaboration strategies.

> Regional cross-sector teams are critical complements: They translate statewide priorities into an aligned regional strategy, broker relationships with cross-sector stakeholders, bridge the gap between siloed systems, and adjust designs in real time based on student and partner feedback.

Well-designed regional collaboratives, often led by intermediary organizations, reduce duplication and inefficiency and ensure that all students have equitable, navigable pathways to economic opportunity.

Benefits of Strong Regional Collaboration

Why States Should Focus on Regional Collaboration as a Part of Their Implementation Strategy

By focusing on regional collaboration, pathways efforts move from competing goals and priorities with a limited set of partners to expansive, robust, and opportunity-expanding programs and aligned goals for priority populations. Taking a regional approach translates statewide vision or policy into actionable implementation.

When regional cross-sector partners join together to advance state-level initiatives through a collaborative, they bring to the table an understanding of key populations and their needs so they can improve outcomes for all young people in the state, rather than a select few. The value of focusing regionally to advance pathways infrastructure and implementation includes:

- **Stronger cross-sector coordination:** Regional structures bring together education, workforce, and community partners in ways that state-level coordination alone cannot. A regional approach also gives employers access to a broader, more coordinated talent pipeline than any one district can provide on its own, making participation more efficient.
- **Greater relevance and responsiveness:** Regions can tailor strategies to local labor markets; employer demand; student populations; and local culture, traditions, and community values.
- **Expanded access and equity:** Regional collaboration can increase access to high-quality pathways, advising, and work-based learning for students in smaller, rural, or under resourced communities that may not be able to offer these opportunities alone.
- **Ability to align solutions to local needs:** Because regional actors are closer to schools, employers, and students, they are better positioned to identify barriers quickly, take action, and create stronger feedback loops between policy and practice.
- **Reduced duplication and resource strain:** Shared regional infrastructure reduces duplication of efforts and promotes collective problem solving and resource sharing. Collaborating regionally can also ease the workload on individual districts, schools, and partners.

The Architecture of Regional Collaboration

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS: The Five Pillars of Effective Regional Collaboratives

The core challenges help explain why strong regional collaboratives matter. Regional collaboratives create the structures, relationships, and routines needed to work through those challenges. The following pillars are practical responses to the barriers that often prevent cross-sector partners from moving from parallel efforts to coordinated action: leadership to sustain momentum, shared goals to build coherence, defined roles to reduce ambiguity, shared ownership and decision making to strengthen commitment, and aligned resources to support implementation over time.

Leadership

Effective regional collaboratives are anchored by a trusted, neutral organization that serves as an intermediary and can convene the right partners, translate state priorities into locally relevant action, and sustain momentum across institutions.

Defined roles and responsibilities

Formal agreements, clear routines, and explicit expectations help move collaboratives from ad hoc coordination to disciplined implementation.

Shared ownership and decision making

Regional collaboratives establish transparent decision-making structures, shared governance norms, and facilitation practices that help partners contribute meaningfully.

Shared goals

High-functioning collaboratives are organized around a clear, jointly defined purpose and a small set of shared, measurable goals.

Aligned resources

Regional collaboratives depend on aligned funding, protected staff time, data infrastructure, and implementation supports that make sustained collaboration possible.

These pillars help explain what makes regional collaboratives effective across different contexts. The case examples that follow show how these elements take shape in practice, illustrating the varied ways states and regions are organizing cross-sector teams to strengthen pathways infrastructure and implementation.

WHO IS INVOLVED: The Roles of State Agencies, Intermediaries, and Local Providers in a Pathways System

Deep, sustained cross-sector collaboration at the state level and within regions is key to driving quality outcomes by leveraging collective expertise, capacity, and resources. Each set of actors at different levels plays a differentiated and complementary role to advancing pathways progress. Understanding the intersection of these roles is critical as leaders consider the focus and composition of regional collaborative teams; how decisions are made; and how information flows among state, regional, and local actors.

State Agencies

Statewide leaders, such as governor's offices, policymakers, and education and workforce agency staff, lead the creation of the vision and goals for pathways in the state and help ensure that this vision comes to life. State agencies:

- Set a clear cross-agency vision for pathways in the state, including long-term goals, measurable objectives, and roles for collaboration. The vision should include a braided funding strategy to reduce silos in funding streams and adequately fund collaborative work.
- Implement federal and state policies and funding mechanisms that remove barriers to success and promote the development and implementation of pathways. Examples include sustainable funding for school districts and community colleges to develop or expand pathways, dedicated funding for implementation staff across agencies, ongoing support for work-based learning infrastructure, and the creation of clear credit transfer policies.
- Define requirements and create guidance for the implementation of policy, such as individual career planning requirements, high school diploma requirements, and industry-recognized credential offerings.
- Provide or endorse core tools and resources to support regional and local implementation, including state-supported data systems for career planning and training platforms for counselors and advisors.
- Create and/or update state accountability systems, ensuring that data systems are collecting and tracking relevant and up-to-date data and publicly reporting findings to encourage continuous improvement.

- Ensure that policy and policy implementation guidance (e.g., graduation requirements, grant guidelines, incentive structures) and accountability criteria align in support of long-term student outcomes such as credential or degree attainment, employment, etc. Common challenges for systems collaboration are rooted in misalignment of mandated activities and accountability systems.

Intermediaries

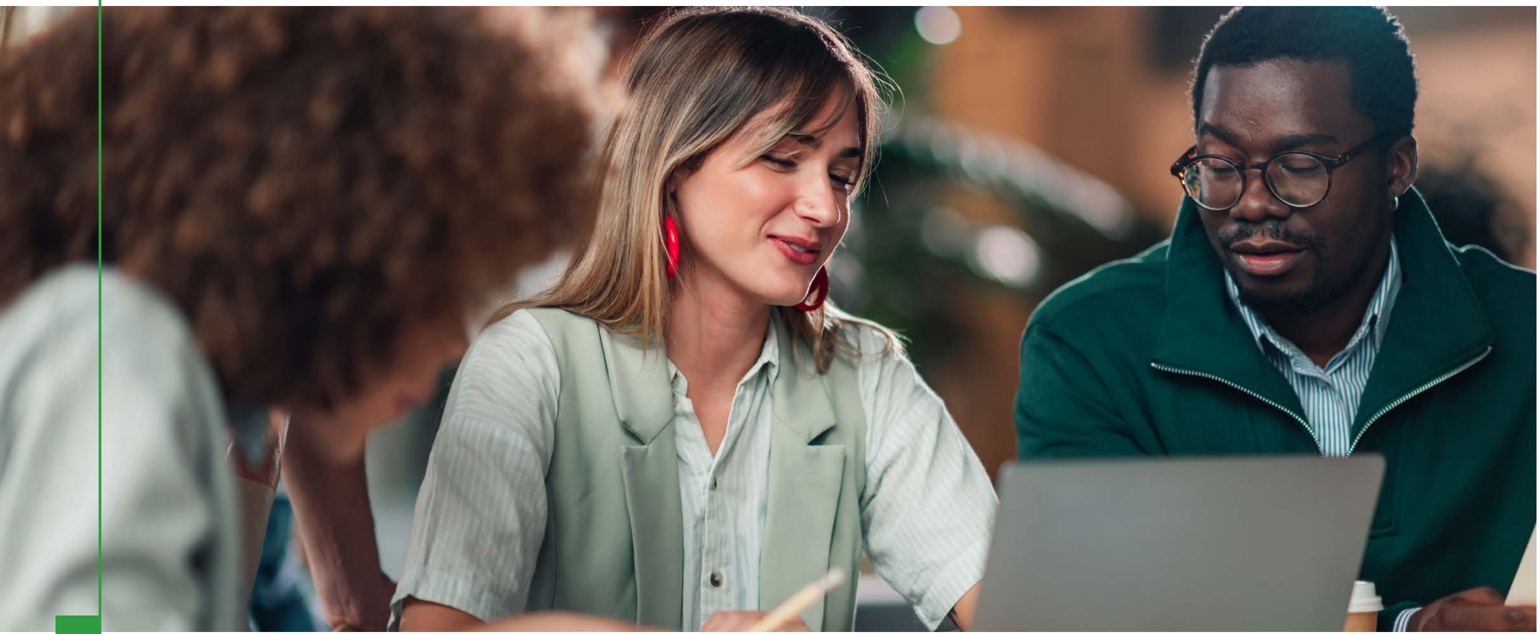
Intermediaries support the overall vision for pathways by developing relationships between cross-sector stakeholders, contributing to program design and support, and bringing state and regional groups together to advance shared goals. Several different kinds of organizations, including public agencies, could perform these functions, as long as they dedicate capacity to conduct the core functions. Intermediaries:

- Convene key stakeholders across sectors to build bridges between their pathways work. Intermediary-led convenings not only help align partners around key goals but also help leverage existing partnerships and work and avoid duplication.
- Establish and facilitate teams by coordinating roles and responsibilities across partners, formalizing partnerships through memoranda of understanding (MOUs), and planning and executing team meetings.
- Build regional implementation infrastructure by establishing communication channels and decision-making processes that turn high-level strategies into coordinated action.
- Develop, sustain, and scale a regional network of partnerships with employers, colleges, workforce boards, and community organizations to design and deliver regional pathways.
- Align stakeholders around shared outcomes by codefining goals and metrics and using simple scorecards and data reviews to advance collective learning and continuous improvement.
- Provide technical assistance, facilitation, and implementation coaching to partners across a region to help teams turn a vision into action, support capacity building, and troubleshoot implementation.
- Engage cross-sector partners as codesigners, clarifying value propositions and structuring their input into pathway design, curriculum, and work-based learning.

Local Providers

Local providers, such as K–12 school districts, community colleges and universities, and community-based organizations, are key to ensuring that pathways visions are implemented well. These providers are the ones implementing the components of programs and working directly with students. Local providers:

- Deliver pathways programs. Local providers must be on board with new opportunities, ensuring that staff are well trained to support program implementation. Additionally, these partners must work to recruit and engage students, prepare students to participate in new programs, and make connections to students' current and future experiences. Local providers should work together to find the best delivery methods for these programs, including work-based learning opportunities.
- Maintain local partnerships with employers, colleges, workforce boards, and community organizations to advise on pathway design and deliver core activities (e.g., career exploration, work-based learning, advising).
- Choose curricula, platforms, and assessment tools that align with state guidance while fitting the local context and implement them with fidelity to support delivery of pathways programs.
- Create feedback loops by sharing timely, ground-level data and insights with intermediaries to support program design, address barriers, and improve future offerings.



HOW IT WORKS: The Structure of Regional Collaborative Teams

Regional teams led by intermediary organizations carry out much of the work of expanding pathways. These intermediaries may be regional education service centers, community colleges, workforce development boards, or nonprofit organizations, and regional collaboratives may go by many different names—hubs, alliances, networks, or multisector collaboratives. Regional collaboratives are best understood as a family of related structures that sit along a continuum of defining features, rather than a single, fixed model. Four core dimensions make up the structure of regional collaboratives: how the collaborative was initiated, what resources are leveraged to support the collaborative, the structure and requirements for participation, and what elements of pathways the collaborative focuses on.

First, **initiation** can range from purely ground-up efforts—in which regional stakeholders organize themselves in response to local needs and opportunities—to collaboratives that emerge from state-level initiatives and investments, such as grant programs that seed regional pathways teams. In practice, many collaboratives blend these aspects over time, with successful regionally initiated collaboratives later supported by state policy and funding.

Second, the **resource** base varies. Some collaboratives are sustained largely through formal, state-funded grants, incentives, or allotments; others rely more heavily on braiding local assets—in-kind staff time, philanthropy, employer contributions, or regional initiatives—to support their work. Most sit somewhere in between, combining state and local resources.

Third, **structure and participation** exist on a spectrum. In some regions, membership and roles are flexible and locally defined by an intermediary or founding partners; in others, they are shaped by state or philanthropic requirements, such as who must be represented or how often teams meet.

Fourth, the collaborative's **focus** can range from narrow and thematic (e.g., work-based learning, a single sector) to broad and system oriented, addressing multiple elements of pathways infrastructure, design, and implementation.

Understanding these dimensions—and where a given collaborative sits on each—can help interpret the case examples that follow and consider design choices in your own context. There is no "right" model for organizing a regional collaborative; however, some essential key practices make collaboration effective within teams and in coordination with local and state partners.

INITIATION

Who influenced the creation of the collaborative?

Local or regional stakeholders — **State agencies**

RESOURCES

What resources are leveraged to convene and support collaboration?

Local and regional assets — **State-level grants, incentives, and allotments**

STRUCTURE & PARTICIPATION

What requirements are in place for who participates, and how the work of the collaborative is structured?

Flexible, determined by intermediary or team — **Set requirements or guidelines**

FOCUS

What elements of pathways does the collaborative focus on?

Specific element — **All elements**

Regional Collaboratives in Action

Collaboratives in three states in the Launch initiative are demonstrating how working together regionally is possible. These examples showcase collaboratives with different origins, focuses, structures, and key lessons learned in operating the models.

- In **North Carolina**, regional collaboratives bridge the gap between ambitious career development legislation and local implementation challenges such as limited advisor capacity. Regional backbone support is essential to ensure that state mandates translate into high-quality student experiences across all districts.
- Through two complementary models in **Texas**, the state incentivizes regional alignment among K–12, postsecondary, and workforce partners to create seamless education-to-career pipelines. Formalizing these partnerships through dedicated funding and shared metrics can turn disconnected local efforts into a powerful, state-aligned economic engine.
- **Indiana** provides promising examples of regional hubs that centralize employer engagement and work-based learning, reducing the burden on individual schools to find industry partners. Creating a single point of contact for businesses can dramatically increase the scale and consistency of student opportunities.

NORTH CAROLINA

Driving Career Development Planning Statewide Through Regional Collaboratives

Regional Collaborative Purpose: Advance quality implementation of new state-mandated career development planning through deliberate cross-sector collaboration within regions.

Initiation	Blend of state agencies and regional stakeholders
Resources	Primarily local and regional assets
Structure and Participation	Flexible, determined by regional teams
Focus	Specific element of pathways

North Carolina passed **legislation** in 2023 that requires all middle and high school students in public schools to complete a career development plan (CDP). CDPs empower students to explore career interests, align their education opportunities with career goals, and prepare for postsecondary education. Students are expected to create their CDP in Grade 8 and revise it in Grade 10 prior to completing a portfolio in Grades 11–12. The implementation of CDPs supports North Carolina's vision of career planning as a strategy for students' pathways experience, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the options available to them that are aligned with their interests.

Districts are accountable for meeting the requirements of the legislation without additional funding and have autonomy in the process of creating, implementing, and maintaining CDPs. As a result, the implementation of CDPs across the state is uneven. These implementation gaps stem from limited advisor capacity, which has prevented all students from receiving the same level of support in their career planning. Additionally, schools use a wide variety of career planning tools to support student exploration and planning, including **NCcareers, a free, statewide platform**. However, students across the state do not have the same experiences when using these tools.

To support quality implementation of CDPs, **myFutureNC**, a statewide nonprofit intermediary organization, convened a CDP State Collaborative. The collaborative engages state agency partners from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI), North Carolina Department of Commerce, North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority, and other key ecosystem partners to build regional capacity for CDP implementation by leveraging agency assets to create a consistent, student-centered advising system statewide. At the state level, a clear vision, policy alignment, and convening authority are essential. The state plays a critical role in setting expectations, aligning CDP work to broader attainment and workforce goals, and providing practical guidance and planning tools that districts can act on.

Driving the work of the state collaborative are three pilot regions where regionally based teams, or CDP Regional Collaboratives, are working to support school districts with the quality implementation of CDPs. The intention is to scale to all seven regions in the next 2 years. Each established regional collaborative team includes representation from school district leadership, counselors and/or advisors and instructional staff, regional directors from DPI, and key partners in the region. Kicking off in fall 2025, each regional collaborative anchored its work around a common set of activities, including establishing a shared vision

> "There is a noticeable shift from a traditional top-down model to a more bidirectional, iterative flow of information as a result of our regional collaborative structure. The state provides vision, policy guidance, tools, and convening structures. Regional collaboratives surface implementation challenges, best practices, and feedback that informs state-level decisions."
>
> *—Toni Blount, myFutureNC*

for quality CDP implementation and asset mapping. The asset maps provided a comprehensive overview of each school district within the region and each district's assets and gaps across career development activities, counselor and staff capacity, partnerships, tools, and family engagement. Each regional collaborative team then created a customized action plan for the region and works together during monthly meetings to execute the plan through resource development and coordination and capacity building. The collaboratives also lift up regional needs and develop recommendations for state leaders to enhance implementation supports, tool development, and resources. Regional pilots are informing statewide strategy, rather than the state prescribing a fully formed model upfront.

The regional collaboratives are already seeing early signs of progress toward more effective and scaled CDP implementation. Leaders in the pilot are framing CDPs differently—not as a requirement, but as a tool to help students see relevance in their education and make informed decisions. Anecdotally, leaders are also beginning to emphasize career development as a shared responsibility across district roles and partners. Stakeholders are emphasizing starting career conversations earlier in the K–12 continuum, helping students build awareness, skills, and direction over time rather than make late-stage decisions. Taken together, these signals point to three pilot regions that are beginning to move toward coherence, shared ownership, and a more developmental approach to career planning.

Lessons Learned From North Carolina

As of summer 2026, the regional collaboratives are in the early stages of implementing their regional action plans. Through the work to date, the regional collaborative teams found the following practices to be effective for establishing their teams and starting the work.

- Connecting CDP work to existing district priorities (e.g., graduation, career development coordination, school counseling practices, family engagement strategies, reducing chronic absenteeism, and workforce alignment) helped create buy-in to participate.
- Highlighting the scale of students affected (approximately 800,000 students in middle and high school statewide) and inefficiencies in current approaches created a shared problem statement and created urgency for partners to collaborate.
- Leveraging established networks (e.g., myFutureNC, state and regional DPI directors, and the College for North Carolina associate outreach directors) rather than creating a new structure enabled the teams to start quickly and align priorities.
- Granting participants access to information, tools (e.g., NCCareers.org), professional learning, and data insights were additional benefits that provided tangible value to new collaborative members.
- Engaging members in shaping tools (e.g., NCCareers.org platform), identifying best practices and gaps, and informing statewide strategy helped build ownership from the outset by creating early opportunities for voice and codesign.

TEXAS

State Infrastructure for Regional Pathway Teams

Regional Collaborative Purpose: Strengthen and scale pathways infrastructure and implementation across all regions of the state through structured, state-supported regional teams.

Initiation	State agencies
Resources	Blend of state investments with local assets
Structure and Participation	State requirements and guidelines for regional teams
Focus	All elements of pathways

In Texas, two complementary state-level initiatives are strengthening pathways infrastructure and implementation through regional cross-sector teams: the **Texas Regional Pathways Network** (TRPN) and the **Rural Pathway Excellence Partnership Program** (R-PEP). The TRPN creates the state and regional conditions for planning, coordination, and quality improvement for pathways broadly, while R-PEP creates a mechanism for small and rural districts to come together to share programs and expand student access. Together, they show how a state can create a shared vision for pathways and equip regional teams with the structures and resources to drive strategy and implementation for their unique contexts.

TRPN

Texas is expanding high-quality education-to-workforce pathways through the TRPN, a state-guided, regionally led initiative that strengthens cross-sector alignment in the large and diverse state. Rather than operating as a centrally managed program or a loose collection of local initiatives, the TRPN invests in regional coordination infrastructure so school districts, higher education institutions, workforce boards, and employers can build coherent, industry-aligned pathways that reflect regional labor market needs.

Launched in 2019, the TRPN advances Governor Abbott's **Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative**, through which the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission work together to link education and industry in support of economic prosperity. The agencies provide shared direction, quality expectations, and outcome targets for regions working to develop a skilled talent pipeline for high-wage, in-demand fields. The network is intentionally designed to operate at scale across urban, suburban, rural, and border regions by setting common expectations while allowing regions to determine how to meet them locally.

Texas has invested more than $17 million of Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V) Reserve and matching state funds in two complementary models within the TRPN: regional pathway teams and regional conveners. The regional conveners, funded through state dollars, serve as intermediaries in alignment with the state's workforce development areas (WDAs) while regional teams, funded through the Perkins Reserve, bring together regional conveners, an institution of higher education partner, at least two employers from the same industry, and at least three districts within a WDA. Together, they provide the backbone for building and sustaining high-quality pathways across the state. The TRPN has a definition for **high-quality pathways** grounded in seven components—labor market alignment, cross-sector partnerships, industry-recognized credentials, applied learning, advising, work-based learning, and postsecondary transition—and outlines clear expectations for how regional conveners and teams can advance each component.

Regional pathway teams are responsible for the design and implementation of a pathway into a targeted, in-demand industry. A facilitator from the grantee organization (e.g., education service center, school district, workforce board, nonprofit) leads a cross-sector team, ensures cohesive implementation of pathway components (e.g., advising, work-based learning, credential attainment) for a targeted industry, and plans for sustainability. Facilitators connect districts, postsecondary partners, workforce boards, and employers, surfacing gaps and addressing barriers quickly.

Regional conveners operate at the systems level within a WDA. Many types of organizations serve as conveners, including regional education service centers, higher education institutions, regional workforce boards, and nonprofits with a regional scope of work. Conveners develop and steward a region-wide pathways strategy; unite stakeholders around a shared vision; and coordinate education, workforce, and industry partners. Each regional convener must demonstrate proficiency across key leadership domains to earn and maintain a state-level designation. These domains include forming and sustaining a regional cross-sector leadership team, completing a regional asset map and gap analysis focused on in-demand industries and existing pathways infrastructure, developing and implementing a regional strategic plan aligned to targeted industries, building and using regional data infrastructure, and implementing a regional communications and technical assistance strategy that streamlines information across the region.

In the TRPN, regional conveners have flexibility to select target industries, occupations, and pathways based on their own labor market data and employer validation. District participation can vary by pathway, which reduces system burden while keeping offerings relevant to local needs. Regions also determine their own approaches to employer engagement and work-based learning, tailoring models to their existing relationships and capacity.

“By setting clear statewide expectations while allowing regions to lead implementation, the TRPN balances consistency with the flexibility needed to respond to local labor market demands.”

—Britina Pesak, Texas Education Agency

Lessons Learned From the TRPN

To date, more than 45 regional pathways teams and 22 regional conveners have formed under the TRPN. Across these two models spanning diverse regions statewide, key insights emerged and can inform similar state-supported regional collaboratives.

- The Tri-Agency structure has provided coherence and guidance for the TRPN, with common guidelines and levers that help standardize practices across regions but allow for regional adaptation. While the Tri-Agency sets common structures and expectations, regional conveners drive the strategy for their regions, and local collaborative teams retain flexibility in how they organize their teams and implement activities, allowing them to tailor approaches to regional needs.
- Regional success depends on complementary roles, not competition. The strongest examples are places where regional conveners and implementation partners each play their role and coordinate rather than compete for ownership. Regional conveners drive the strategy for the region and provide structure, focus, and technical assistance, and implementation teams are sector focused and inform the broader regional strategy.

R-PEP

The Texas legislature passed House Bill 2209 in 2023, which established **R-PEP** to help small rural districts, which often lack the staffing or facilities to offer comprehensive programs alone, work together to deliver high-quality college and career pathways aligned with regional workforce demand. The R-PEP model was inspired by the **Rural Schools Innovation Zone**, which was supported for many years through the TRPN. The state adapted the model to allow flexibility across regions, enabling each regional partnership to tailor the program to their unique environment, climate, and culture. The **goal** is to increase rural students' access to high-quality postsecondary pathways through multidistrict collaboration that offers advising; dual credit; work-based learning; and credentials of value in high-wage, high-demand fields.

The funding model has two components: an additional state allotment plus an outcomes bonus for designated districts and a grant program that supports planning and implementation. The allotment is tied to students in Grades 9–12 participating in R-PEP pathways, while the outcomes bonus is tied to graduates who earn a postsecondary credential of value within 5 years. Students are coded in the Texas Education Agency (TEA) data system as R-PEP participants based on reported R-PEP hours, enabling both funding and longitudinal tracking.

R-PEP allows eligible rural districts to enter into formal agreements with at least one neighboring district and a coordinating entity, such as an education service center, institution of higher education, workforce board, or nonprofit, to develop shared pathway programs. Participating districts must meet statutory criteria, including enrollment thresholds, and execute a performance agreement to receive an R-PEP designation and associated funding. The state provides a framework, playbook, and guidance for the design and management of an R-PEP, with each regional collaborative team given flexibility to determine the pathway focus, design, staffing, and implementation model.

The TEA initially designated three R-PEP collaboratives in 2024, and the model has since expanded to seven additional rural regions. Early implementation feedback points to R-PEP working as a rural pathways strategy with teams seeing growth in the state's college, career, and military readiness indicators.

Lessons Learned From R-PEP

This structure and the following lessons suggest that R-PEP works as a rural pathways strategy because it couples state-enabled structure with genuine local flexibility and because a coordinating entity helps small districts do collectively what none could sustainably do alone.

- Collaborations tend to be stronger and more durable when a superintendent helps initiate and recruit the partnership because board conversations and local buy-in are already underway before formal structures are put in place for the R-PEP designation process.
- R-PEP's core strength is flexibility. The model is workable for Texas because it can be adapted to different regional environments, cultures, transportation realities, and program types rather than forcing one uniform design. R-PEP arrangements can stay fluid over time: Districts can add programs and even add new districts as the collaboration matures.
- Effective collaboratives use advisory committees that include superintendents; district representatives; school board members; higher education; workforce; and where appropriate, industry partners. These advisory bodies are not symbolic—they take on real governance functions such as approving operation manuals, budgets, and the addition of new programs.

Texas's regional approach works because it combines state-enabled structure, regional flexibility, cross-system partnership, and durable coordinating capacity. The TRPN helps regions organize and improve the work, R-PEP helps rural districts share and expand high-quality pathways, and both depend on a shift from local ownership toward regional problem solving on behalf of students.

INDIANA

Regional Partners Organizing for Coherence, Scale, and Shared Impact

Regional Collaborative Purpose: Build infrastructure and shared responsibility for pathways within regions in response to new state expectations, shifting funding streams, employer needs, and student opportunity gaps.

Initiation	Local and regional stakeholders
Resources	Primarily local and regional assets
Structure and Participation	Flexible, determined by regional teams
Focus	Several elements of pathways

As Indiana advances high school redesign, new diploma requirements, expanded work-based learning, and an emphasis on stronger employer engagement, regions are building structures to make those priorities coherent and actionable. Several regional collaboratives in Indiana are emerging as bright spots by organizing scattered initiatives and funneling resources into concentrated, student-centered efforts. A number of regional collaboratives have formed in the state in response to on-the-ground needs and priorities identified by sets of cross-sector partners. These collaboratives are best understood as structured teams led by one or two intermediary organizations to facilitate decision-making systems that braid together K–12, postsecondary, employers, workforce boards, and civic actors.

The following examples in Indiana have created systems for ongoing engagement, not one-off programs, and moved toward shared infrastructure, interoperability, common metrics, and coordinated employer engagement.

Elkhart County Work-Based Learning Hub

The Elkhart County Work-Based Learning Hub, coordinated through a countywide partnership with the Northern Indiana Workforce Board serving as backbone organization and fiscal agent, brings together all seven public school districts, the Elkhart Area Career Center, the regional workforce board, the education service center, and employer partners to build shared work-based learning infrastructure. The Hub is especially timely as Indiana's redesigned diploma and readiness seals elevate expectations for career-connected learning, requiring districts to expand access to meaningful work-based learning while employers seek stronger upstream talent pipeline strategies. Rather than each district building its own small-scale effort, partners agreed on a single countywide work-based learning strategy that serves nearly 33,000 students.

Employer leadership was built in from the outset, with employers helping to shape priorities, signal demand, and define what success needs to look like inside their organizations. The Hub is also designed to connect employer-led collaboratives, including **Talent Pipeline Management**-aligned sector work, with education-led collaboration among districts—helping organize employer demand while reducing duplicative outreach and building more durable talent pipeline infrastructure. A key mindset shift has been moving from competition for employers and placements to a shared employer "portfolio" that students from all participating districts can access, creating efficiencies and expanding opportunities. The Hub helps employers engage at different levels—from lower-lift events such as job fairs or site visits to medium-lift experiences such as **Employer Provided Innovation Challenges** to high-lift models such as internships, youth apprenticeships, and work-learn-earn pathways.

Rural Alliance Zone 32

Rural Alliance Zone 32 (RAZ-32) in Randolph County is a rural bright spot that shows what collaborative pathways can look like at a smaller scale. One of Indiana's more rural and lower income counties, Randolph County created **RAZ-32** as a formal partnership that has grown to six school districts, Ivy Tech Community College-Richmond, and more than 30 employers. By sharing Career Technical Education programs, instructors, and facilities, districts give students access to a wider range of high-demand pathways, from precision machining and welding to health careers and precision agriculture. Students travel across district lines to attend programs where they are strongest. The collaborative has developed 11 career pathways for largely low-income and underserved students. A pivotal early win was securing more than $1 million from the Randolph County commissioners and other partners to support transportation and pathways infrastructure—an investment that reframed buses and cross-district student movement as a core workforce and economic-development strategy, not just an education expense. Districts also saw immediate increases in student engagement in career-connected learning and dual credit, followed by year-over-year growth.

Lessons Learned From Indiana

- State-level levers are critical for creating urgency and common framing; however, regions need autonomy to design the "how." They translate these priorities into workable systems tailored to local labor markets, institutional capacity, and community needs.
- Effective intermediaries attend to the wider ecosystem of stakeholders by bringing civic and economic development leaders (e.g., city and county commissioners) into the collaborative. This engagement deepens regional ownership and connects pathways work to broader community and economic priorities.
- Understanding and making direct connections to each employer's most important strategic goals and key performance indicators helps garner deeper commitment and action long term.
- The strongest regional collaboratives do not replace local assets; they connect them, reduce friction, and create shared infrastructure so partners can achieve greater impact together.
- Creating coherence and alignment across numerous existing efforts is critical. Effective collaboratives organize and sequence work so that policies, programs, and funding streams reinforce a shared regional strategy rather than compete for attention.

> "Regional collaboration is not a one-time agreement or another MOU to manage. It is ongoing trust building, facilitation, and shared decision making that help partners move through policy, funding, employer, and community change without becoming more fragmented. The strongest collaboratives create enough structure to protect partners and enough local ownership to turn complexity into real opportunity for students and employers."
>
> *—Lauren Hall Riggins, Braided Futures*

Translating the Pillars Into Action

The following recommendations are informed directly by the lessons from the featured states in designing and leading regional collaboratives. These recommendations can be used by state leaders as they look to define their vision for regional pathways implementation and invest in regional infrastructure and collaboratives. State leaders can also use these recommendations to set standards and guidance for regional collaboratives in the state, ensuring that the collaboratives are structured and led in ways that lead to deeper cross-sector alignment and quality pathways design and implementation.

LEADERSHIP

The effectiveness of a regional collaborative depends not only on having clear roles for states and regions but also on how intermediaries exercise leadership and build trust and commitment among teams. Intermediaries serve as the backbone for coordination, facilitation, and continuity across partners. These leaders should know which organizations to bring to the table to best drive outcomes and how to build strong relationships with them. The following recommendations highlight key features of intermediary leadership that support durable, high-quality regional collaboratives and help translate statewide priorities into coherent local practice.

- **Treat narrative change and communication as core implementation work.** Regional leaders, along with state partners, must actively explain why collaboration is necessary; how funding and governance work; and why cross-district and cross-sector sharing benefits students, employers, and communities—especially in strong local-control environments. Ongoing, transparent communication helps build local buy-in and shifts perceptions of pathways from isolated programs to shared public goods.
- **Locate leadership within a high-capacity intermediary, not a single individual.** Effective regional collaboration depends on leaders who are trusted, knowledgeable about the local ecosystem, and able to convene the right mix of organizations. Sustained collaboration cannot rest on a single charismatic leader; when that person leaves, momentum and relationships can quickly erode. Leadership should be embedded in an organization or institution serving in an intermediary capacity with clear structures, processes, and shared ownership.

- **Distribute leadership and build durable coordinating structures.** Regions should intentionally distribute leadership responsibilities within the collaborative across organizations and invest in a stable coordinating entity and advisory structure that can absorb turnover, navigate local politics and board dynamics, and sustain momentum.
- **Use facilitative leadership to build trust and alignment.** Intermediary leaders must be skilled facilitators who can read group dynamics, navigate challenging conversations, and know when to push for decisions or adjust course. This style of leadership helps partners feel protected, mitigates power imbalances, and creates the conditions for horizontal decision making.
- **Make facilitation a core decision-support function.** High-quality facilitation is essential to helping groups navigate trade-offs, conflict, and uncertainty. Strong facilitation is not merely administrative support; it is a core implementation competency that helps partners build trust, navigate competing incentives, and move toward shared decisions. Skilled facilitators read signals in the room, know when to surface tensions or press for decisions, and understand when to slow down for additional sense making and alignment.
- **Ground engagement in a clear, shared purpose and value proposition.** As new partners are brought to the table, the intermediary should consistently communicate the shared purpose of the work and the concrete value for each sector. This communication includes framing how the collaborative advances each organization's core priorities and metrics, which is essential for securing and maintaining authentic buy-in.

DEFINED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Defining how state and regional roles intersect is essential to making pathways work both scalable and sustainable. Without clear, complementary responsibilities, states risk either oversteering local efforts or leaving regions without enough direction, leading to fragmentation and uneven quality. When state leaders set a vision and conditions while regional teams design and operate the implementation systems, policy and practice reinforce one another. The following recommendations outline how to structure that balance so roles are distinct, aligned, and mutually reinforcing.

- **Clarify complementary roles between the state and region.** State leaders should drive the strategy for pathways work and address key policy levers (e.g., data, partnerships, funding, access) while regions design the "operating system" (e.g., which partners are involved, how decisions are made, how trust and accountability are built locally).
- **Anchor state action in "why and what" and regional action in "how."** States are well positioned to articulate the overarching vision, goals, incentive structures, enabling frameworks, and nonnegotiable quality expectations for pathways, but regions must determine how those expectations take shape in specific delivery models, governance structures, and program mixes that fit their labor markets and institutional capacities.
- **Provide coherence without centralizing control.** Multiagency leadership at the state level can create a more coherent pathways agenda when each agency contributes its distinct expertise across the student-to-workforce continuum and when no single agency dictates the full agenda. Regional collaboratives then integrate those signals into locally coherent, cross-sector strategies.
- **Design frameworks that combine structure and flexibility.** States should establish clear frameworks—application requirements, performance agreements, funding parameters, and role expectations—while intentionally preserving space for regional adaptation in delivery models, governance arrangements, and program portfolios to reflect local assets and needs.
- **Use accountability and guidance to motivate collaboration, not micromanage it.** State policy and guidance should set expectations (including for outcomes as well as participation) in ways that signal the need for cross-sector solutions, while avoiding overly prescriptive involvement in the internal work of regional teams. The aim is to catalyze collaboration that everyone recognizes they cannot achieve alone, not to run regional collaboratives from the statehouse.

Clarifying roles and responsibilities within regional collaboratives turns goodwill into effective, sustainable practice. When partners know why they are at the table, what they are accountable for, and how they will work together over time, collaboration can move beyond ad hoc coordination toward shared ownership of outcomes.

The following recommendations outline core design elements for structuring that work.

- **Define a shared purpose and domain-specific roles.** Regional collaboratives should begin by codeveloping a clear, shared vision for pathways with a theory of action.

Teams should define what "quality" looks like related to the collaborative's focus and specify what success looks like for learners, communities, and key stakeholders. Within that common purpose, each partner—K–12, postsecondary, workforce, employers, and civic actors—should have defined roles and contributions aligned to their unique expertise and authority.

- **Use formal agreements to clarify and evolve responsibilities.** Intermediaries should facilitate the development of formal agreements (e.g., MOUs, compacts) that articulate roles, responsibilities, decision-making processes, and shared metrics. These agreements should be treated as living documents that can be adjusted over time as trust deepens, capacity grows, and the collaborative takes on more ambitious joint work.
- **Structure collaboration around disciplined routines, not ad hoc meetings.** Effective collaboratives establish a regular cadence of meetings with clear agendas, decision points, and follow-up actions. A predictable calendar of keystone events (e.g., annual planning retreats, employer summits, data reviews) should anchor the work and create moments for reflection and decision making. Emphasis should be placed on action planning, mutual accountability, and monitoring progress, rather than on sharing information alone.
- **Empower intermediaries and engage cross-sector partners together.** Intermediaries should be recognized as true partners with authority to coordinate, broker, and problem solve across institutions. They must invest time in understanding each partner's needs and constraints, while also convening cross-sector groups around regional infrastructure and pathway strategies so that solutions are designed collaboratively rather than in silos.

SHARED OWNERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING

Expanding pathways through regional collaboration not only is a technical challenge but also requires fundamental mindset shifts toward collective goals and action. Effective regional teams must move from single organization or district ownership toward shared problem solving, seeing pathways as a shared responsibility rather than a competitive asset. Cross-system partnership among K–12, postsecondary, workforce, employers, and civic actors is nonnegotiable yet difficult to realize, particularly in strong local-control environments in which state signals alone are insufficient to change behavior.

These shifts require both robust tools and deeply relational work: common frameworks, processes, and structures on one side and trust, cultural change, and new habits of collaboration on the other. When those elements are absent or underdeveloped, predictable pitfalls emerge—overreliance on a single champion, competition for ownership rather than shared stewardship, and scopes of work so broad that they diffuse focus and stall progress. This section examines how to develop shared ownership to make pathways real.

- **Shift from competition to shared value using partners' own success metrics.** To move beyond scarcity mindsets, collaboration should be framed in terms of how it helps each partner advance its highest priority key performance indicators—whether those indicators are enrollment, retention, hiring, or economic development targets. Instead of competing for students or employers, regional teams ask, "How can we help you do this piece faster or better?" Then they design shared strategies that create visible value for all.
- **Reframe pathways as everyone's job across a cross-system "trifecta.**" Regional leaders must make explicit that pathways are not the responsibility of a single program or office but of teachers, advisors, administrators, employers, workforce boards, and community partners together. The most effective regions cultivate genuine cross-agency buy-in, with education, workforce, and employers jointly owning design, delivery, and continuous improvement rather than treating collaboration as an add-on.
- **Recognize "small wins" to build belief in collaboration.** Large, multiyear goals can feel distant; early, visible wins (e.g., a new shared employer event, an improved work-based learning placement process, a course sequence aligned across two districts) demonstrate that collaboration produces tangible benefits. Intentionally designing for and communicating these early wins helps partners internalize that working together is worth the effort and risk.

Effective regional collaboratives require not only the right partners and roles but also clear, trusted ways of making decisions together. When decision-making structures are intentional and transparent, partners are more likely to share ownership of outcomes, stay engaged through difficult trade-offs, and sustain the work over time.

The following recommendations outline key design features for shared decision making and responsibility.

- **Design decision making.** Shared responsibility does not emerge organically; it must be intentionally designed through written agreements, shared metrics, and interlocking roles that specify who decides what, when, and on what basis. Horizontal decision-making structures signal that authority is distributed, not concentrated in a single institution.

- **Center student and family voice in regional decision making.** Mindsets shift more quickly when partners hear directly from the young people and families pathways are intended to serve. Building regular mechanisms for student and family input (e.g., youth advisory groups, focus groups, surveys) helps move adults from abstract commitments to concrete, shared responsibility for addressing real barriers and aspirations.
- **Create processes that protect and equip partners.** Decision-making routines should help partners feel both protected and well informed—for example, by ensuring that everyone has access to relevant data, tools, and definitions (e.g., for quality work-based learning) before major decisions and by clarifying how concerns can be raised and addressed.
- **Codify clear rules for proposals, approvals, and shared ownership.** Regional teams should maintain transparent rules for how proposals are developed, how approvals are granted, and how responsibilities are shared across institutions. When these rules are explicit and consistently applied, partners are more likely to view decisions as legitimate and to sustain their commitment to collective action.

SHARED GOALS

Shared goals, aligned metrics, and purposeful data use are central to moving regional collaboratives from good intentions to measurable impact. When partners codefine what success means, how it will be measured, and how evidence will inform decisions, they can move beyond compliance reporting toward genuine shared accountability for student outcomes and continuous improvement of pathways quality.

- **Start with shared goals and explicit success metrics.** Regional collaboratives should begin by agreeing on a small set of measurable goals—typically three to five—linked to core pathway components such as attainment, career-connected learning, and equitable student outcomes. These goals should be accompanied by clearly defined indicators and targets so partners understand what success looks like and how their contributions will be assessed.
- **Normalize shared data and transparency as a collective learning tool.** Moving from blame to learning requires partners to see data as a shared mirror rather than a scorecard for individual institutions. Establishing norms for joint data

review—celebrating bright spots, naming inequities, and codesigning responses—helps shift mindsets from defensiveness and compliance to collective problem solving.

- **Align data definitions and collection routines across partners.** Consistent data definitions aligned to state definitions and collection requirements (e.g., what counts as work-based learning or postsecondary enrollment) as well as agreed-upon collection processes are essential for comparing progress across institutions and over time. Early alignment on these technical details prevents fragmentation and enables partners to aggregate evidence in meaningful ways.
- **Conduct an asset map to establish a common baseline.** Regional asset and gap analyses help partners build a shared understanding of current capacity, participation, and outcomes across districts and sectors. These scans inform where to focus energy, which gaps to prioritize, and how to tailor strategies to regional conditions.

Additionally, anchoring early conversations in "what we already do well" and "what impact we want to see for students and communities" lays the groundwork for shifting from single-organization agendas to whole-ecosystem responsibility.

- **Translate data into joint action plans.** Data collection is useful only if it leads to decisions. Regional teams should use findings from landscape scans and ongoing monitoring to codevelop action plans that assign responsibilities, timelines, and resource commitments for addressing identified gaps and advancing shared goals.
- **Create simple, transparent tools to monitor collective progress.** Evaluation protocols or scorecards that track a small number of agreed-upon indicators can make progress visible and support continuous improvement. When these tools are regularly reviewed in cross-sector meetings, they reinforce shared accountability and help partners adjust strategies based on evidence rather than anecdote.

ALIGNED RESOURCES

Effective pathways initiatives require dedicated funding streams and resources from stakeholders at all levels. For regional and statewide initiatives, states must provide stable funding to bring partners on board and assure them that regional and state leaders are aligned with their goals. Stable funding is necessary to sustain the work long enough to produce results and to provide adequate resources to replicate programs that show positive outcomes.

Funding might be through structured, direct investments from a state agency, or set of agencies, or braided funding from a range of local and regional sources to ensure sustainability. Partners must be willing to share resources to advance collective efforts. This work may include leveraging local funds from a school district, philanthropic grants and in-kind supports, and employer or industry group sponsorships, for example.

- **Pair funding with explicit quality expectations.** Regional collaboratives need predictable, flexible funding and targeted incentive dollars, especially in small and rural districts, to expand opportunities and share programs. However, funding alone is insufficient; incentives should be tied to clear, shared definitions of high-quality pathways so that ambitious participation targets do not devolve into low-quality, compliance-oriented activity.
- **Pair multiyear implementation funding with outcomes-based and reinvestment strategies.** Regional collaboratives are more sustainable when they have multiyear planning and implementation support up front, combined with longer term mechanisms such as outcomes bonuses, county or public investment, or reinvestment tied to demonstrated value.
- **Protect time for collaborative work in institutional schedules.** Even well-funded collaboratives falter when partners lack protected time to plan, coordinate, and reflect. Ensuring that participating organizations can allocate staff time through release time, stipends, or position redesign is a critical, often overlooked investment that makes sustained collaboration feasible rather than purely additive.
- **Invest in dedicated intermediary capacity for coordination and facilitation.** High-functioning collaboratives require staff whose primary responsibilities are to convene partners, manage workflows, facilitate complex conversations, and monitor follow-through. Treating coordination and facilitation as explicit roles—rather than add-ons to existing jobs—supports consistent implementation and continuous improvement.
- **Invest in leadership development across sectors and levels.** Regional work depends on leaders in districts, colleges, workforce boards, and employer organizations who understand both pathways content and collaborative practice. Dedicated leadership development—focused on change management, data use, equity, and cross-sector partnership—helps build a wider bench of leaders who can carry the work forward as roles and individuals change.

- **Build data and governance infrastructure that enable shared accountability.** Effective collaboratives rely on interoperable data systems and accountability frameworks that surface quality and equity, not just participation counts. Formal agreements and decision protocols—defining roles, metrics, and shared governance—provide the structure needed for partners to use these data collectively, monitor progress, and adjust strategies based on evidence.

- **Support ongoing peer learning and communities of practice.** Sustaining regional collaboration is easier when leaders and practitioners can learn from one another. States and intermediaries should invest in structured peer-learning networks (e.g., regional convenings, learning labs, communities of practice) through which collaboratives can share tools, surface problems of practice, and adapt successful models.

AVOIDING PITFALLS

Even in strong examples, organizing and leading regional collaboratives brings persistent challenges that leaders should anticipate. Confronting these pitfalls demands intentional work to shift both infrastructure and mindsets.

- **Balancing centralization and flexibility.** Overly centralized approaches can become rigid and slow to innovate, while overly decentralized models risk patchwork quality and inequities. Regional collaboratives cannot tackle every regional challenge at once. The tendency is to set goals that are unrealistically broad, such as attempting to build programs to cover all possible in-demand industries, rather than establishing focused, achievable targets that can build early wins and credibility.

- **Planning for sustainability from the outset.** Sustainability requires attention to how intermediary roles will be funded over time; how leadership and staff turnover will be managed; and how cross-agency alignment will be maintained as state, regional, and local priorities and conditions evolve. Without deliberate planning for these issues, collaborative activities may stall, and progress toward regional goals may slow.

- **Demonstrating impact in the short and long term.** Regional collaboratives face pressure to demonstrate impact to state leaders, especially as initiatives mature and state agencies seek more specific goals and accountability metrics. Clearly articulating the short- and long-term impact is also essential for sustaining partner engagement and investment over time.

Advancing Regional Collaboratives in Your State

States across the country are seeking to deliver high-quality pathways for their students, even as they face a variety of constraints and conditions that make alignment and integration challenging. Taken together, the examples from North Carolina, Texas, and Indiana suggest that strengthening and scaling pathways is not simply a matter of adding programs; it requires redesigning how roles, responsibilities, and infrastructure are organized across systems. Regional collaboratives offer a promising approach for doing so by connecting state vision to local implementation, aligning partners around shared goals and resources, and building the structures and processes needed to work together effectively. While no specific structure is best or will fit every context, the five pillars and actions in this publication apply to all states and regions aiming to strengthen pathways implementation. The lessons in this report underscore a common conclusion: Durable, equitable pathways depend on intentional collaboration and continued investment in the relationships and structures that make shared responsibility possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Launch team would like to thank our Launch project partners in North Carolina, Texas, and Indiana for sharing their experiences and insights to help shape this publication. A special thank you to the following partners for their guidance and review:

- **Toni Blount**, regional impact manager, myFutureNC
- **Lauren Hall Riggins**, founder and principal, Braided Futures (Indiana)
- **Vicki Hayhurst**, career and technical education lead, Region 14 Education Service Center (Texas)
- **Britina Pesak**, statewide coordinator, Texas Regional Pathways Network, Texas Education Agency

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Building Cross-Sector Partnerships to Support Career and Technical Education Pathways
- Conditions for Sustainable and Equitable Pathways Systems
- Governance Strengthens Pathways
- Keys to Scale: How to Grow the Impact of Education-to-Career Pathways Intermediaries
- Strengthening Career Pathways Through the Power of State and Local Partnerships
- Systems Alignment Through the National Career Clusters® Framework

The Launch Initiative is a national initiative that envisions a future where every learner is able to access and succeed in high-quality college and career pathways. The national partners, philanthropic organizations, and site teams who are part of the initiative believe that every young person deserves a high school diploma, a postsecondary credential with labor market value, and to be engaged in full-time employment or continued training toward a family-sustaining career in an economically strong community.

Since its inception in 2022, national partners Advance CTE, Education Strategy Group (ESG), Jobs for the Future (JFF), and New America have worked with leaders across 14 states to assess their pathways systems and develop plans for improving those systems to ensure they meet the needs of today's learners and employers.