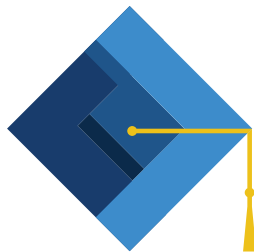


# New Skills for Youth Grant



OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**  
— CHAMPION EXCELLENCE —

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### Application Overview

The *New Skills for Youth* Initiative (NSFY) provides an opportunity for Oklahoma to accelerate and expand the current state-wide initiative, *Oklahoma Works*. *Oklahoma Works* is designed to increase the wealth of all Oklahomans by aligning education and training to produce a relevant workforce for Oklahoma's economy (Appendix B). *Oklahoma Works* is composed of a coalition of business leaders, educational leaders, state agency partners, and others. *Oklahoma Works* is fully aligned with both the federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) and a 14-state National Governor's Association (NGA) Policy Academy cohort. Through *Oklahoma Works*, a solid foundation for cross-sector leaders has been established to strengthen career-pathways and ensure alignment with the high skill, high demand needs of business and industry in Oklahoma. The NSFY initiative provides the framework to expand *Oklahoma Works* college and career pathways initiative.

Oklahoma proposes to accomplish the following with this grant:

- ▶ Build upon the *Oklahoma Works* plan to expand college and career pathways for ALL students.
- ▶ Partner with SREB to develop and implement a state-wide career pathways needs assessment.
- ▶ Communicate state-wide best practices and resources to connect cross-sector teams with secondary school students through a Career Pathways website [careerpathwaysonline.com](http://careerpathwaysonline.com).
- ▶ Develop a CCR Unified Plan to increase college completion; reduce college remediation rates; increase the number of associate degrees, industry certifications and bachelor degrees in the Oklahoma-identified wealth-generating industry sectors: Aerospace & Defense; Agriculture & Biosciences; Energy; Information & Financial Services; and Transportation & Distribution.
- ▶ Focus on key areas so Oklahoma students have opportunities for college and career pathways:
  - a. Provide access for all students (including underserved and under-resourced populations) to accelerated learning opportunities (e.g., dual credit & enrollment, AP/IB, career certifications).
  - b. Provide college and career readiness advising (Develop Individual Learning Plans) and use [OKCareerGuide.org](http://OKCareerGuide.org)
  - c. Create intervention programs to decrease dropout rate and increase graduation rates.
  - d. Develop high school transition courses beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade so that student remediation occurs at the high school and it reduces the percent of students who need college remediation.
  - e. Support career pathways that result in career credentials, certifications, associate degrees and/or college course completion (e.g., Oklahoma Career Readiness Certificates, concurrent enrollment, school district and community college partnerships for associate degrees).
  - f. Collect data for postsecondary college persistence and degree completion that documents the importance of accelerated learning opportunities begun in secondary schools.
  - g. Coordinate cross-sector teams focused on accelerating and expanding the current *Oklahoma Works* initiative through regional meetings and a Call to Action Summit.

Why pursue a career pathways transformed system? Career pathways provide present and future Oklahomans the opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to be productive and engaged citizens. What is the goal? We will increase the number of high school graduates who earn valuable credentials driven by the demands of high-skill industry sectors. Lastly, how will this occur? We will coordinate strategic priorities and plans across the sectors of education, policy, and industry; thereby increasing the wealth of all Oklahomans by providing employment and education opportunities for youth and ready availability of highly skilled talent.

This overarching goal is fueled by the six key objectives delineated in the NSFY initiative. The transformed system will be achieved by focusing on demand-driven and employer-led processes, ensuring that the career pathways are equitably accessible to ALL Oklahoma youth (especially those in underserved communities) developing an accountability framework aligned to overarching goal, scaling the pathways within the whole system, aligning funding streams, and aligning cross-institutional and cross-sector transitions.

In phase one, the Oklahoma cross-sector team will determine necessary change guided by the needs assessment. Oklahoma will develop a rigorous plan of action that identifies accountability indicators that measure student access and success in multiple pathways; provide ways to sharpen policy; ensure cross-sector team commitment; determine meaningful data use and innovative use of resource allocations.

## **Narrative Section 1: State Background, Project Goals, and Objectives**

**Current work underway in Oklahoma** The *Oklahoma Works* four-year Strategic Delivery Plan outlines four key objectives for the state: 1) Develop, align, and connect the education and training pipeline with the needs of the state’s regional economies by coordinating strategic priorities and plans across the education and workforce system. 2) Integrate and use workforce and economic development data to inform policy, track progress, and measure success. 3) Build partnerships between local industry and education at the regional level. 4) Optimize the use of resources and incentive to achieve the *Oklahoma Works* goal of wealth generation. (Appendix B). The plan delineates desired success, the workflow and milestones necessary to achieve each year, major metrics to measure success, and the resources necessary to ensure success. The objectives of the Strategic Delivery Plan align with NSFY grant objectives.

### **Overall goals and desired outcomes for the NSFY initiative**

**Key Objective 1: Demand driven and employer led processes.** At *Oklahoma Works*’ foundation are the state’s identified driver ecosystems (economic systems) and critical occupations within those ecosystems, of which all state strategic priorities are aligned (Appendix C). The analysis of the Oklahoma Workforce Gap from 2015 Job Attainment to 2025 New Jobs shows that: from 2015-2025, Oklahoma needs to move from 46% to 23% high school and less; 30% to 53% associates, certificate, credential; 16% to 19% bachelors; 8% to 5% Graduate credentials. These data clearly identify the need for increasing industry certifications and associates degrees to meet the industry demand.

**Key Objective 2: Rigor and Quality in Career Pathways for ALL.** To more actively engage ALL students, especially those in underserved populations, Oklahoma will provide equitable access to career-guidance and support services by providing a broader spectrum of career-counseling starting in sixth grade using the [OKCareerGuide.com](http://OKCareerGuide.com). The desired outcome of equitable access for all is the development of students’ awareness and self-reflection concerning their own career paths. To create pathways for all students, full advantage must be taken of cross-sector connections. The *Oklahoma Works* initiative focuses on improving cross-sector connections. This strategy ensures Oklahomans know how to enter and succeed in-demand occupations, better aligns the state’s assets, improves Oklahomans’ educational attainment, ensures employers have the skilled workforce they need, and invites more businesses to build and expand. There are educational programs across the state that can be highlighted on proposed Oklahoma Career Pathways website. Secondary Schools, Career Technology Centers, and Higher Education include the following examples: Oklahoma Career Guide, STEM communities, Mid-America Industrial Park, and Early College High Schools, National Academy Foundation with career academies in the Oklahoma City Public High Schools, concurrent enrollment and Early College centers (Appendix E).

**Key Objective 3: Career-focused accountability systems.** Metrics to target wealth generation across Oklahoma were developed by state agencies impacting career readiness. The Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) selected targets from these metrics which formed the foundation for the Governor’s Council Dashboard. The GCWED metrics are housed on [okstatestat.ok.gov](http://okstatestat.ok.gov), which serves as the performance framework for Oklahoma’s transparent performance-informed budgeting system. Correspondingly, the *Oklahoma Works* data objective utilizes data to decrease the gap between labor supply and demand by defining determinants and benchmarks along all levels of education and training that lead to employability in identified ecosystems, evaluating and utilizing competencies and assessments, and identifying and working to minimize existing data gaps.

Another goal is to set career-readiness as a high priority in both school and state accountability systems. Indicators will include career-readiness programs and courses in graduation requirements. The desired outcome for adapting accountability systems is to highlight career readiness as a school and state priority. With the passage of *Every Student Succeeds Act*, Oklahoma plans to use the allowed flexibility to identify metrics within the Accountability System to include Career Pathways indicators. Suggested indicators may include: percentage of students in grades 11 and 12 participating in AP/IB/dual enrollment; four courses in CTE Clusters; or two workplace experience “courses” in ecosystem areas. An additional indicator may include percentage of students in grades 11 & 12 achieving College Career Ready benchmark on at least one of the following: SAT or ACT or AP or IB or Industry Certification Exams or Work Keys Career Certification. A third indicator may



include data for postsecondary entrance. This would be the percentage of the graduating class who enrolled in a two or four-year postsecondary institution any time during the first year after high school graduation; signed up for military service or is enrolled at a CTE with a goal of completing industry certification. This data collection is not currently established.

**Key Objective 4: Scaled Pathways that culminate in credentials.** Scaling pathways suggests a dual purpose: first, successful local and regional initiatives should be scaled to the macro level; simultaneously, there is a need to develop and support existing micro-level initiatives. One exemplary initiative is the Mid-America Industrial Park which connects five local school districts, one Career Technology Education Center, two local universities in order to meet demands of local business (80+employers including five Fortune 500 Companies), seven community organizations, and six state and local resource providers. Every year more than 1200 students participate as prospective employees in the Mid America Delivers service area. Leveraging Resources for Career Readiness, the Mid America Career Center will open in 2017. By showcasing career opportunities, hands-on training, mentoring programs, and connecting community services, the Career Center will serve as a “One-Stop-Shop” for prospective employees from all across the region. This partnership and others align Oklahoma’s employer needs with education and training systems at the regional level. The *Oklahoma Works* postsecondary opportunities in high school strategy will increase AP courses and tests, dual enrollment in colleges, universities, and technology centers while attending high school and competency-based education platforms, among others, so more students can graduate from high school with specialized knowledge or credentials to enter in-demand occupations.

“Mid America Delivers recognizes the intrinsic relationship between job creation and workforce preparation. Quite simply, the very future of employers is reliant on the ability to recruit and retain workers with necessary and specialized skillsets.”

David Stewart, Chief Administration  
Officer MidAmerica Industrial Park  
(Appendix F)

**Key Objective 5: Align state and federal funding streams.** The *Oklahoma Works* initiative resources strategy seeks to identify creative, cross-agency and cross-sector funding models that support similar workforce programs and include agency programs that potentially benefit from public-private partnerships. The strategy builds on Oklahoma’s performance-informed budgeting efforts and encourages agencies to create and/or expand pay-for-performance funding strategies. This work relies on the state’s newly created asset map of federally and state funded workforce programs (Appendix G).

**Key Objective 6: Ensure cross-institutional alignment.** The goal is to bring together multiple sectors—those of institutions of higher education, career tech education, common education, the business and industry sector, and the policy sector—through a structured process that involves meaningful communication, streamlined actions, and data sharing. This cross-institutional alignment produces the desired outcome of an efficient and effective configuration of information that produces career pathways for all of Oklahoma’s youth.

The *Oklahoma Works* alignment strategy seeks to develop the education and training pathways and align it to regional economies and workers’ needs. The success of this objective hinges on cross-agency collaboration to address identified priority issues for the state, including: career options exposure throughout the lifespan, postsecondary opportunities in high school, alignment of workforce readiness across programs to satisfy business’ needs, and transportation services to ensure access to training and work. Utilizing the existing commitment as well as identifying best practices, students will experience smoother transitions minimizing institutional barriers.

Additionally, the State Regents are investigating ways to expand dual enrollment by (1) offering more courses at the high schools to reduce students cost and transportation needs and (2) revising admission standards to increase access. Tulsa Community College and Connors State College have pilots with different standards and the State Regents are considering policy revisions to promote more offerings in the high schools. The State Regents fund a student information portal called OKCollegeStart.org at [okcollegestart.org](http://okcollegestart.org) that includes career planning. Regents staff visit the high schools and train counselors to use this tool enabling students to electronically send transcripts for college applications. Higher education continues to collaborate with Career Tech to award credit for college content as much as possible (Cooperative Agreement Programs).

## **Narrative Section 2: Commitment and Capacity of Cross-Sector Team**

Under *Oklahoma Works*, the state has made great strides in establishing the connection of cross-agency and cross-sector teams. Each month, the state's 16 Agency Workforce Partners and the State Chamber meet to discuss progress and challenges of *Oklahoma Works*. The cross-sector Core Team of *Oklahoma Works* also meets monthly to discuss strategy and alignment. The NSFY team will continue this tradition of collaboration with representatives from the Office of the Governor, State Department of Education, the Department of Career and Technology Education, Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education, state agencies, and businesses (Appendices H, I, J).

Competing interests, constraining policy frameworks, and financial limitations are just a few of the issues that make cross-sector partnering difficult to maintain. In the face of these challenges, however, equally strong demands of innovative solutions to weather a statewide severe budget crisis, demands, and enables cross-sector collaboration. These demands will drive the NSFY team to build its commitment and capacity for the implementation of phase one. The team is composed of highly accomplished, ambitious Oklahoma opinion leaders who bring energy, intelligence, a diverse set of perspectives, and dedication to this NSFY initiative.

To ensure capacity to deliver on the work needed for the NSFY grant, the Leadership Team will be organized to maximize efficiency. The leadership team will guide the vision for the work and lend their decision-making power and state-level influence to NSFY initiative. The Leadership Team will consist of the top decision-makers who are leaders in our state partnerships. The Leadership Team will be briefed regularly to guide the work, and meet bi-monthly to monitor progress. The Core Team will be the essential work group for moving the day-to-day grant work forward. This cross-sector team is composed of the core agency partners and additional business and community partners who are essential to the cross-sector work (Appendix K). The team will meet frequently to process map and collaborate on the work, and will be in constant communication with the Leadership and Executive teams. Finally, the Executive Team, or stakeholders, is the crucial network of practitioners and professionals regionally and across the state who will be utilized to offer guidance and their "boots on the ground" perspective. Representation will include educators and business and community leaders of local best-practices across the state. These stakeholders will be relied upon for their spheres of influence in communities across the State. As volunteers to the effort, they will be looked upon for guidance, feedback, and support as progress is made on the initiative. The NSFY initiative provides a powerful opportunity to engage these perspectives around a common cause.

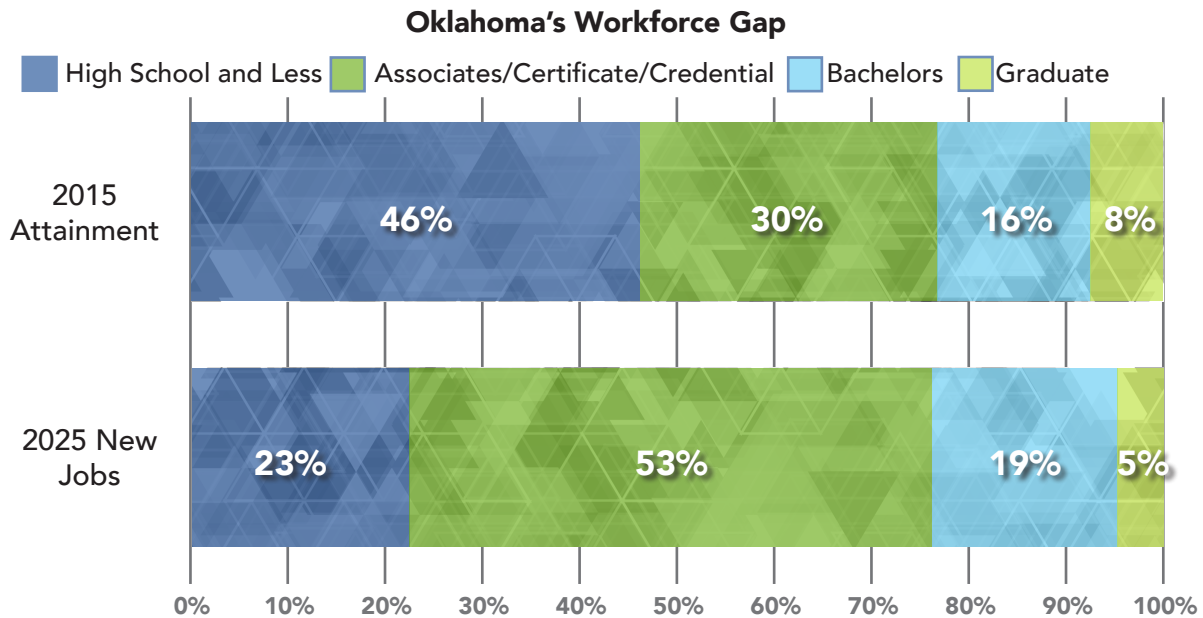
The team will be led by Dr. Cindy Koss, Deputy Superintendent for Academic Affairs & Planning at SDE. She is a passionate, committed champion for Oklahoma's youth. As the team lead for the NSFY grant, and an objective lead for *Oklahoma Works*, she will tenaciously pursue stakeholder input, the development of team norms based around trust and understanding, and results-driven actions that will galvanize successful outcomes. She is involved in multiple initiatives and organizations that further demonstrate her commitment and expertise. She serves on the CCSSO Deputy Executive Committee, the Governor's Workforce Council and the Oklahoma Education and Industry Partnership (Appendix H).

The NSFY grant team will leverage capacity from existing groups who focus the state's workforce system, including the Career Pathways Committee, which operates under the Governor's Council on Workforce and Economic Development, and works on WIOA Career Pathways programming, the State Department of Education's Red Tape taskforce, which has the goal of eliminating unnecessary administrative costs and actions in the institution, and the Youth Council, which also operates under the Governor's Council on Workforce and Economic Development, which focuses on workforce strategies that align with youth initiatives that center on disconnected youth in the state.

The Collective Impact Framework empowers cross-sector leaders to overcome constraints through five key elements: a shared understanding of purpose, consistent metrics of accountability, mutually reinforcing expertise, open and continuous communication, and a backbone organization to shoulder the collaboration management (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Oklahoma is well-positioned to continue a cross-sector Collective Impact model of collaboration for the NSFY initiative. While large-scale economic prosperity is a valid and powerful foundation upon which to align cross-sector visions, perhaps an even more compelling purpose for cross-sector collaboration is in the acknowledgement that more than 900,000 individuals in Oklahoma are under the age of 18. Every one of these youths has a unique story each of which can be positively affected by the creation of career pathways.

**Narrative Section 3: Intensive, Diagnostic Needs Assessment**

Oklahoma is committed to and has capacity for a comprehensive diagnostic needs assessment of the state’s career preparation system. Beginning in 2015, under the *Oklahoma Works* initiative, the Office of Management and Enterprise Services’ Delivery Unit was tasked with compiling an Asset Map of state and federally funded programs focused on education and workforce, in order to ensure resources are used in ways that maximize, strengthen, and support the education to workforce pipeline for all Oklahomans. Seventeen state agencies dedicated staff to participate in the rigorous process of identifying those programs and partnerships both within and across agencies that describe the current set of workforce resources and activities in the State. With support from the Education Delivery Institute (EDI), the state completed the initial draft of the asset map in December of 2015 (Appendix B).



Source: OK Office of Workforce Development EMSI Q2, 2015

**How is this foundational work being built upon?** Oklahoma will rely on the newly developed Key Economic Networks (KEN)—coalitions of businesses, education institutions, and local state agency partners in nine regions across the state—to supplement the assets identified at the state level. Each KEN has been tasked to identify local partnerships and programs that support workforce readiness, career pathways, and postsecondary opportunities, among other workforce issues. These particular issues were identified as state priorities by business leaders across the state, and are the focus of the state’s continued asset mapping.

With assistance from the NSFY grant, the state will be able to expand upon its early work, and move to the analysis stage to determine gaps and improve alignment, so that more students access, participate, and complete high-quality, demonstrated successful career pathways programs.

**What is Oklahoma currently working on in terms of assessing career preparation in the state?** Similarly, the state has also undergone assessment of its Workforce Ecosystems and Critical Occupations. Workforce Ecosystems, or economic systems, were developed by the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development. Utilizing a comprehensive quantitative analysis of variables and data points from the various industries in the state, the state ranked industries in terms of wealth generation and growth potential. From this analysis, five ecosystems that drive wealth in Oklahoma were identified, along with four complementary ecosystems which expand wealth. Oklahoma’s Ecosystems offer a systematic way of thinking about Oklahoma’s economy and guide policy discussions about how to prioritize local and state resources. A similar analysis identified Oklahoma’s 100 Critical Occupations for Ecosystems and revealed two analyses, combined with the



early work on the state's asset maps, are initial, crucial steps toward better alignment of our state's career preparation system.

As an SREB member state, Oklahoma will seek to partner with SREB to conduct a needs assessment which drills deeper into the work already begun through the asset mapping produced with the *Oklahoma Works* initiative. The needs assessment will be guided by the themes of access to, participation in, and completion of career pathways that are aligned to the Workforce Ecosystems.

In a comprehensive study of a whole systems transformation, there will be multiple areas of study in the needs assessment. These areas of study include: (a) the alignment of CTE offerings and workforce needs statewide and by economic regions, (b) college and career-readiness standards, (c) academic support provided by home high schools to tech center students, (d) articulation, dual credit and alignment of tech center programs with community colleges, (e) implementation of programs of study and individualized career plans, (f) rigorous assignments, (g) professional development for teachers and instructors, (h) continuous improvement, (i) advisory committees, and (j) facilities. The comprehensive study will collect data through faculty and student surveys, desk audit data, institutional reviews, focus groups, and individual reviews. The needs assessment will include a gap analysis of policies and procedures that address these issues.

In similar needs assessment studies, SREB has conducted statewide evaluations of the whole systems approach to career pathways by analyzing state workforce data and current secondary and postsecondary CTE program offerings and courses, conducting a literature review of current research on college and career readiness, surveying key stakeholders across the state — including parents, students, teachers, guidance counselors, principals, business leaders, community representatives, and administrators — to gain feedback about CTE in the state; completing an analysis of collected data, and generating a short list of core goals for building high-quality career pathways. One such study has been conducted in Oklahoma for Career Technology Centers. This study analyzed how to improve academic and industry related competencies of career and technical students. (Appendix L).

A whole systems needs assessment is an audacious undertaking that must encompass the complexities of many parts of the whole. Examples of the information that will be gained include:

- ▶ Determining multiple pathways which lead to career and college outcomes in each Workforce ecosystem
- ▶ Determining logistics which make pathways accessible to ALL Oklahoma youth including transportation and the geographic distribution of pathways
- ▶ Accounting for the number of graduates from programs of study who actually acquire relevant certifications which will lead to making recommendations about what certifications and pathways are not aligned with high-skill, high-demand labor market needs
- ▶ Determining the role of higher education and technology centers, community colleges, and industry programs that prepare graduates to acquire relevant skills
- ▶ Determining the alignment of PK-12 system with career pathways—which initiatives work and can be replicated, and which initiatives should be cut
- ▶ Accounting for the organization and structure of all systems of education and industry in terms of their openness to collaboration and alignment
- ▶ Identifying the gap between qualified applicants of positions in the defined Workforce Ecosystems
- ▶ Studying the features of high quality career pathways in order to establish best practices
- ▶ Studying the role and relevance of robust project-based assignments, assessments for credentials, quality instruction, focus on mastering relevant concepts and skills, the role of teachers and their ability to engage student in quality career pathways

These represent the elements of the whole system that will be explored and evaluated in the needs assessment. The outcomes of the assessment will be produced in a report that will serve to inform the decisions made in terms of the systemic transformational change process.



#### **Narrative Section 4: Collection of Data on Defined Set of Indicators**

One of the objectives of *Oklahoma Works* is to use data to integrate and use workforce and economic development data to inform policy, track progress, and measure success. Effective collection and utilization of education, workforce, and economic data is essential to Oklahoma's ability to decrease the gap between labor supply and demand and generate wealth for all Oklahomans. While numerous data collection mechanisms exist statewide, *Oklahoma Works* has begun to bring this information together and, where applicable, address gaps and identify leading indicators and benchmarks for success. The NSFY initiative serves as the catalyst to move this work forward.

An Oklahoma Career Pathways committee has established and is evaluating the top occupations within the ecosystems. This committee has a two-part vision:

1. Oklahoma has a comprehensive system in place that provides students, adults, dislocated workers, and current workers with a full range of education and training opportunities that correspond to the needs of Oklahoma employers. This system leads to a pipeline of appropriately skilled and credentialed workers for Oklahoma's employers and an opportunity for wealth creation for Oklahoma families.
2. All Oklahoma Works partners have policies in place that align with Career Pathways. Additionally the committee has defined career pathways:

*Career pathway programs are an approach to education, training, and workforce development that assures learners come away with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to succeed in the workplace. Career pathways include a clear sequence of employer-validated education coursework and lead to industry-validated certifications and credentials.*

Oklahoma has multiple measures that align to the NSFY indicators (Appendix M).

**OKStateStat** <https://www.ok.gov/okstatestat/> communicates the progress Oklahoma is making to achieve statewide strategic objectives in priority areas categorized within **five statewide goals**. Oklahoma is implementing **Performance Informed Budgeting** which considers performance data when allocating financial resources. In the future, OKStateStat will report data and resources side-by-side for Oklahomans to assess the effectiveness of state government. These goals include 1) Educated Citizens and Exemplary Schools, 2) Prosperous Citizens and Thriving Economy, and 3) Effective Services and Accountable Government.

One goal of *Oklahoma Works* Objective 2 is to define economic determinants and benchmarks throughout education and training leading to employability in identified ecosystems. The Data Team developed key employability determinants: high school graduation rate; Work Keys levels; degree completion (AA, AAS, BA); college remediation rates; industry credentials; and postsecondary credit earned in high school. These indicators will be collected, analyzed and used to make data-driven decisions in implementing actions necessary to help Oklahomans achieve the American Dream.

Current indicators included in the K-12 accountability system recognize schools for student enrollment and passing scores in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses, graduation rate for cohorts, drop-out rate, concurrent enrollment, and industry certifications. Other indicators will be included to bolster career pathways as a priority in K-12 accountability systems. These will be aligned with the economic determinants.

Oklahoma currently has joint partnerships between the Oklahoma State Department of Education, the Oklahoma Department of Career Technology Education, and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (Appendix N) to develop a data-sharing arrangement and system to track student progress from Pre-K through postsecondary. A state law was passed preventing K-12 schools from collecting Social Security Numbers. While Career Tech and OSRHE can collect this number, not all high school graduates enter postsecondary education, and therefore it is not possible to match these individuals with Oklahoma Employment Security Commission for employment information. However, most of Oklahoma students can still be identified through this system with the partnership of Career Tech and OSRHE as they continue to collect the Social Security Numbers of their students.

**Narrative Section 5: Development of Career Readiness Action Plan**

The *New Skills for Youth* Initiative (NSFY) provides an opportunity for Oklahoma to accelerate and expand the current state-wide initiative, *Oklahoma Works* (Appendix B). In addition, Oklahoma has several successful initiatives based on cross-sector collaborations (Appendix E). It is our intent to bring these local initiatives to the macro level. Part of this planning grant will be to create a robust Communication Plan that outlines the **Oklahoma Career Pathways A, B, C's: Assuring Accountability, Building Bridges, and Calling to Action.**

***Assuring Accountability***

- ▶ **Incentivize** schools to provide opportunities for students to earn Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze Certificates based on Work Keys performance and earning Career Readiness Certificates.
- ▶ **Encourage** community colleges and technology centers and school districts to double the percentage of students who earn certificates, credentials, and degrees by setting state-wide readiness standards and aligning assessment and placement measures with those standards.
- ▶ **Determine** the Career Pathways based on an inventory of the Oklahoma's top 100 occupations within the wealth-generating ecosystems.
- ▶ **Track** data in OK STATE STATS website to determine career pathways progress.
- ▶ **Continue** current indicators included in the K-12 accountability system that recognize schools for student enrollment in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses, graduation rate for cohorts, drop-out rate, concurrent enrollment, and industry certifications. Other indicators will be included to bolster career pathways as a priority in accountability systems based on ESSA flexibility.
- ▶ **Develop** an inventory of current initiatives that serve the goals of creating and sustaining career pathways (e.g., Mid America Industrial Park, Project Lead the Way, CASMEO, and others). (Appendix E)
- ▶ **Increase** Postsecondary Opportunities in High School, including increase AP courses and tests, dual enrollment (i.e., cooperative agreements and concurrent enrollment, among others) in colleges, universities, and technology centers while attending high school, and competency-based education platforms. This is a state priority so more students can graduate from high school with specialized knowledge or credentials to enter in-demand occupations, start businesses, or continue education with less time to completion.
- ▶ **Assess** community connections for out-of-school time.

***Building Bridges***

- ▶ **Expand** programs of study, which may include but are not limited to, articulation agreements, across the education system and create a system that provides seamless transitions with multiple entry and exit points in career pathways.
- ▶ **Establish** partnerships to collaborate and eliminate barriers for the college admissions process.
- ▶ **Provide** structured opportunities for counselors to have individual career conversations with all students.
- ▶ **Initiate** a statewide expectation that every secondary student have an Individual Career Pathways Plan that sets a career pathway goal.
- ▶ **Provide** time and opportunity for students to access and use the OKCareer Guide.
- ▶ **Provide** all districts/secondary schools intervention program opportunities for students (including bridge programs) based upon 10<sup>th</sup> grade assessments, ACT, and Work Keys benchmarks.
- ▶ **Create** online credit recovery courses for all courses considered as minimum graduation requirements.
- ▶ **Review** dual credit agreements across secondary and postsecondary institutions including a cost benefit analysis, student eligibility requirements, and assessment processes will be conducted.
- ▶ **Establish** open enrollment policy for AP/dual enrollment.
- ▶ **Provide** professional development, along with shared resources and information on best-practice examples for advising transitions, for all postsecondary institutions and educators statewide.

*Calling to Action***State (OSDE, ODCTE, HE)**

- ▶ **Research** best practices and model programs that exist both within Oklahoma and nationally. One such example is the Ohio Transfer to Degree (T2DG) program which streamlines credit transfers by helping students meet general education requirements and guaranteeing transfer-to-degree pathways. The program encompasses all of Ohio's public institutions of higher education including two year, four year, CTE, and military training and experience.
- ▶ **Develop** an external communications plan for the public that includes students, parents, educators, business leaders, and other community partners to communicate not only the importance of career pathways, but also the career options and opportunities available.
- ▶ **Form** a collaborative college and career advising approach among regional postsecondary institutions, career partners and secondary schools.
- ▶ **Provide** support and training that prepares counselors to provide advising that reflects a shift to a career pathways focus.
- ▶ **Assess** the needs for career pathway accessibility to under-resourced, under-served, and disconnected youth, particularly focusing on alternative education students, high-poverty students, pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers, and minority students.
- ▶ **Adopt** strategies to address the needs of low-performing high schools with rigorous, relevant, real-world applications to accelerate learning and culminate in certificate, degree, or industry credential.
- ▶ **Create** transitional courses for all students in core subject areas. These courses will be delivered through multiple options.
- ▶ **Establish** collaborative partnerships to eliminate barriers for the college admissions process.

**Business**

- ▶ **Create** meaningful professional development for teachers including teacher externships to broaden their understanding of student career options (e.g. Oklahoma Education and Industry Partnership Summer Opportunity for Teachers).
- ▶ **Engage** parent and community partners in focus groups as part of a needs assessment.
- ▶ **Establish** regional teams to work with local leaders to bridge the gaps between business and industry, ecosystem development, and the efforts of communities and local economic development entities. The regional approach serves as the intermediary and acts as the conduit of knowledge and resources in support of ecosystem stability and continued growth within geographic regions.
- ▶ **Provide** fast-track induction program for teachers who will teach a Career Pathways class so that they have access to industry and technical foundations and the pedagogical skills necessary for real-world applications.

***How do career pathways span secondary and post-secondary education culminating in credentials with labor market value?***

The **Oklahoma Career Pathways A, B, C's: Assuring Accountability, Building Bridges, and Calling to Action** lay the foundation for creating a career pathway system that spans secondary and post-secondary education. This systemic approach will improve Oklahomans' exposure to Career Pathways and career options, along with the education and training required for entry into and advancement within a career. More Oklahomans will be aware of viable paths to career entry and career building, as they are exposed to careers at an earlier age. This knowledge, then, empowers citizens with the information needed to best use valuable resources and become workforce ready faster through alignment with Career Pathways and career options exposure. State agencies will be able to prioritize resources to support those in pursuit of high-demand occupations, and businesses will have the skilled workforce they need to succeed through this alignment.



***What are the primary barriers that would complicate the achievement of the objectives in the action plan?***

Primary barriers that may prevent achievement of objectives identified in *Oklahoma Works* Strategies include infrastructure issues, data-sharing arrangements, decreases in revenue streams to support the strategies, outside influences pressuring the legislature to resist change, overcoming the status quo and implementing a system of transformational change to move the Oklahoma education and workforce pipeline forward. These barriers can be overcome by keeping a laser focus on the vision of *Oklahoma Works*, the goal being to “Implement wealth-generating policies across the state by coordinating the alignment of private and public strategic priorities so all Oklahomans can achieve the American Dream.” It will be through this avenue that state and local agencies and entities must work together for the common good of Oklahoma.

## **Narrative Section 6: Prior and On-going Work to Enact Key Policy and Programmatic Reforms and Build Sustainability**

### **Programmatic Reform**

Oklahoma has identified three major areas of programmatic change. First, provide equitable access to career pathways for all students by empowering students, teachers, and counselors. Second, create postsecondary partnerships to streamline student access to programs. Third, develop a communication plan to produce public investment in career pathways, thereby producing sustainability of the initiative.

#### **Equitable Access to Career Pathways**

**Incentivize** schools to provide opportunities for students to earn Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze Certificates based on Work Keys performance and earning Career Readiness Certificates.

**Provide** all districts/secondary schools intervention program opportunities for students (including bridge programs) based upon 10<sup>th</sup> grade assessments, ACT, and Work Keys benchmarks.

**Adopt** strategies to address the needs of low-performing high schools with rigorous, relevant, real-world applications to accelerate learning and culminate in certificate, degree, or industry credential.

**Create** transitional courses for all students in core subject areas. These courses will be delivered through multiple options.

**Create** meaningful professional development for teachers including teacher externships to broaden their understanding of student career options (e.g., Oklahoma Education and Industry Partnership Summer Opportunity for Teachers).

**Provide** fast-track induction program for teachers who will teach a Career Pathways class so that they have access to industry and technical foundations and the pedagogical skills necessary for real-world applications.

#### **Create Postsecondary Partnerships**

**Establish** partnerships to collaborate and eliminate barriers for the college admissions process.

**Form** a collaborative college and career advising approach among regional postsecondary institutions, career partners and secondary schools.

**Research** best practices and model programs within Oklahoma and nationally. One such example is the Ohio Transfer to Degree (T2DG) program which streamlines credit transfers by helping students meet general education requirements and guaranteeing transfer-to-degree pathways. The program encompasses all of Ohio's public institutions of higher education including two year, four year, CTE, and military training and experience.

#### **Develop a Communication Plan**

**Develop** an external communication plan for the public that includes students, parents, educators, business leaders, and other community partners to communicate not only the importance of career pathways, but also the career options and opportunities available.

**Engage** parent and community partners in focus groups.

### **Policy Reform for Sustainability**

Oklahoma has identified three areas of policy change. First, systematically bridge high schools with postsecondary institutions. Second, include career pathways indicators in the K-12 accountability system. Third, increase postsecondary opportunities in high school so that students can earn college and career credentials.

### Bridge High Schools to Postsecondary Institutions

**Expand** programs of study, which may include but are not limited to: articulation agreements, across the education system and create a system that provides seamless transitions with multiple entry and exit points in career pathways.

**Initiate** a statewide expectation that every secondary student has an Individual Career Pathways Plan that sets a career pathway goal.

**Establish** open enrollment policy for AP/dual enrollment.

### Career Pathways Indicators in Accountability System

**Continue** current indicators included in the K-12 accountability system that recognizes schools for student enrollment in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses, graduation rate for cohorts, drop-out rate, concurrent enrollment, and industry certifications. Other indicators will be included to bolster career pathways as a priority in accountability systems based on ESSA flexibility.

**Track** data at [okstatestat.ok.gov](http://okstatestat.ok.gov) to determine career pathways progress to inform policy.

### Increase Postsecondary Opportunities in High School

**Provide** time and opportunity for all students to access and use the OKCareer Guide.

**Increase** Postsecondary Opportunities in High School including an increase of AP courses and tests, dual enrollment (i.e., cooperative agreements and concurrent enrollment, among others) in colleges, universities, and technology centers while attending high school, and competency-based education platforms. This is a state priority so more students can graduate from high school with specialized knowledge or credentials to enter in-demand occupations, start businesses, or continue education with less time to completion.

The state is committed to optimizing the use of resources and incentives to identify and recommend creative, cross-agency, and cross-sector funding models that support similar workforce programs and include agency programs that potentially benefit from public-private partnerships. The strategy will build on Oklahoma's performance-informed budgeting efforts.

The notion of sustainability suggests that the NSFY whole systems transformational change is a long-term endeavor with long term investment and long term returns on investment. In other words, career pathways will be developed as an enduring transformation with continual improvement. Implementing programmatic sustainability is much more than taking into account the financial, political, and technical issues—sustainability is a change in culture. However, sustainability of the initiative cannot rest on one person or even a few individuals; it must be able to weather the transitions of leaders. It relies on the collective impact of a committed Leadership Team.

Oklahoma's greatest resource is its people. Providing career pathways is an opportunity to invest in our greatest resource.