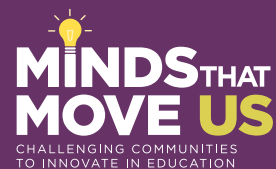# MINDS THAT MOVE US

TOOLKIT

A Collection of Place-Based Solutions for Future Adult Career Pathways Models

INTRODUCTION

Innovation Imperative

The U.S. education system has an equity problem. Learners' success or failure is predictable along the axes of race, class, ability, and English proficiency, among other factors. Individuals at the margins have lower rates of high school and college completion, higher rates of poverty, and limited pathways to stability. These gaps have a detrimental impact on communities and create bleak diminished prospects for the U.S. workforce. Approximately 36 million adults in the United States do not have the skills to get ahead, and they face barriers to accessing the education and training they need to move forward. While employers' demand for skilled workers grows, the number of qualified adults has been stagnant. Presently, only 35% of job opportunities are available to those with a high school diploma or less — and a smaller percentage of these job opportunities provide a living wage. For low-income adults, the pathways to success are limited, with many obstacles along the way.

We have the opportunity to bend the future toward greater justice and equity. Relevant, intentional career pathways can dramatically shift the trajectory for communities, particularly in low-income communities where adults without any postsecondary training or education lack access to programs that are structured paths to prosperity. However, despite the promise of career pathways, there are not many successful and cost-effective models that help low-income adults specifically. Yet there is a great need in the U.S. workforce for adults who have technical knowledge, skills, and hands-on experience.

In order to create a greater abundance of effective and affordable pathways for low-income learners, the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) created Minds That Move Us (MTMU). MTMU challenges the bright minds of communities around the country to design innovative education and training models that create social equity and economic mobility for all. The MTMU Adult Career Pathways Design Challenge was developed in partnership with the Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) and the National Association of State Directors of Adult Education (NASDAE), with funding from the ECMC Foundation. The challenge focused on the creation of bold, sustainable career pathways approaches for low-income adults (age 26+). The challenge engaged 10 community-based teams in a two-year process to design sustainable, innovative adult career pathways models for a chance to win $100,000 in prize money.

Why a Challenge?

Many innovation initiatives fail because there are no intentional opportunities available for the generation of new ideas, processes, and models. The MTMU methodology created the conditions for bold innovation through a balance of collaboration and competition. The issues and opportunities for career pathways programs are intimately understood by leaders, practitioners, and especially learners. Solutions to these problems can be unlocked by giving communities resources to bring their innovation to life.

To spark new designs, IEL, COABE, and NASDAE launched this challenge for community leaders to create career pathway approaches that support low-income adults in successfully transitioning into jobs in high-growth and high-demand industries. More than 115 teams around the country applied to participate in this challenge. Ten teams were selected to build and iterate on their designs. The 10 adaptable, place-based solutions highlighted in this toolkit serve as a guide for future adult career pathways models that close gaps and create greater mobility for low-income adults, especially in a climate of growing unemployment, deeper socioeconomic divides, and changing technology.

Key Experiential Elements of MTMU

1. **Design Camp –** The MTMU Design Camp was a 2 1/2-day event where the 10 design teams shared and iterated on their ideas. Teams met with coaches, learned from subject-matter experts (SMEs), and gained insights from other teams. Grounded in student experiences, the teams heard from adult learners about the impact of supportive educators, family members, and relevant curriculum. Meet the MTMU coaches and SMEs here.

2. **Community of Practice –** An online learning and communication platform facilitated a fluid exchange of ideas between teams, coaches, and project staff. Teams shared their wins, challenges, and supports as they iterated on their innovations and prototyped certain aspects of their designs.

3. **Expert Coaching –** Each team was paired with a seasoned career pathways expert, based on needs and preferences at the start of the project.

4. **Storytelling Support –** Significant resources were invested in helping teams to "tell their story" and to

document lessons learned throughout the project. Their lessons would be helpful to other practitioners and stakeholders looking to innovate within the career pathways space.

5. **The Festival –** This two-day event combined celebration, education, and competition. As the culminating event of the project, The Festival featured powerful speakers and panelists who unpacked the impact of technology, funding, mindset, and more on the future of adult career pathways. Additionally, each of the 10 MTMU teams pitched their innovative models to an expert panel of judges, as well as live and virtual audiences that scored the teams based on three key criteria: capacity, impact and ingenuity. In a unique fusion of in-person and virtual participation, the event brought together 4000+ attendees from around the country who tuned in for a one-of-a-kind event that allowed them to contribute real-time feedback. At its conclusion, three of the 10 teams were selected to win $100,000 each in prize money to support the implementation

of their ideas, while the remaining seven teams were provided with modest support post-festival to advance their concepts.

What to Expect in This Toolkit

In this toolkit, we will take a deep dive into the teams' innovations, insights and lessons learned, policy opportunities and tangible next steps to create or iterate on current adult career pathways models.

The teams' design processes offer rich insights around community-centered design.

Three core principles emerged to create the conditions for their success, both internally and with their adult learners:

1. **Being Adaptable –** When individuals and teams have the time, space, and resources to innovate, a mindset and process shift occurs that encourages more innovation in the future. This challenge had minimal restrictions on the innovative approach the teams devised. Programmatic features ranged from learner education to systemwide

networking. The focus on design processes rather than specific solutions allowed teams to imagine and push the boundaries of what currently exists.

2. **Removing Barriers –** Personal circumstances, such as lack of childcare, scheduling conflicts, housing instability, emotional health and other factors, often get in the way of adult learners and their studies. By having adult learners actively engaged, teams were able to more intentionally design models that accounted for common student barriers so as to achieve greater student well-being, educational success, and workforce navigation.

3. **Maximizing Potential –** Innovation is not simply the generation of wholly new ideas. It is the recombination of existing resources in a way that demonstrates a deep understanding of the individuals who will benefit from the innovation. Teams leveraged existing resources, often adding new processes and tools, to create models that would be sustainable beyond their engagement with the challenge.

COACHES

Todd Hunter • Team Drive to Thrive and Team D214
Debra Mills • Team Construye DC-Plus and Team PASS
Kathy Olesen-Tracey • Team Pathways to Prosperity and Team Woksape
Melissa Sadler-Nitu • Team HIVE and Team Piece of Cake Bakers
Suzi Shoemaker • Team ASCENT and Team HEARTACHE

MTMU Challenge Panel of Judges

» **Denine Torr,** Executive Director, Dollar General Literacy Foundation & Sr. Director, Corporate Community Initiatives, Dollar General

» **Whitney Smith,** Head of Regional Philanthropy - North America, JPMorgan Chase & Co.

» **Wendy Mendieta,** Former Adult Education Learner & Information Specialist, Miami Dade College

» **Newton Sanon,** President & CEO, OIC of South Florida

MTMU PARTNERS

IEL would like to acknowledge the partners that helped make this toolkit possible, including the Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE), National Association of State Directors of Adult Education (NASDAE), ECMC Foundation and Dollar General Literacy Foundation. These organizations are deeply committed to supporting adult learners and ensuring they have the education, tools and resources to be successful in the workplace, life, and their communities.

The ECMC Foundation funded the entire MTMU project, including support for this toolkit. The Dollar General Literacy Foundation served as the presenting sponsor for the MTMU Festival and also contributed to this toolkit. COABE and NASDAE provided thought partnership throughout the project and played a key role in creating the conditions in which bold innovation in adult career pathways could thrive.

Institute for Educational Leadership
Innovation. Equity. Leadership.

Founded in 1964, Institute for Educational Leadership's (IEL) mission is to partner with under-resourced communities to equip leaders to better prepare children, youth, adults, and families for post-secondary education and training, rewarding careers, and civic and community engagement.

IEL's Rise Up for Equity strategy improves opportunity and outcomes while closing gaps in access and achievement in education and workforce development through innovation and collaboration. By 2023, at least 2,000 leaders in IEL's more than 435 communities will report progress to identify and eliminate systemic barriers, structural racism, and other root causes of inequity. At least 100 communities with the highest needs will also achieve progress on equity measures. By co-designing ecosystems of opportunity, IEL will work with local leaders to eliminate systemic barriers in education and workforce development, and create conditions, capacities, cultures, and policies necessary for everyone to succeed.

The Minds That Move Us (MTMU) initiative at IEL advances our strategy by using "challenges" as a catalyst in the development and implementation of innovative, community-designed education and training models that create social equity and economic mobility for all.

COABE
COALITION ON ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

The Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) represents the system of 65,000 adult educators, administrators, and mentors working to improve educational outcomes for adults in the U.S. We work with the teachers and administrators who work with 1.5 million U.S. adults who possess low literacy skills. Across the nation, COABE members work tirelessly to help these underserved adults master the skills they need to compete and build careers — and better futures for themselves, their families, and their communities.
In every state, we support adult education programs that foster essential skills, family literacy, and workforce development. We are especially focused on growing the pipeline from adult education to the workforce. We partner with business and industry leaders to ensure that our students are able to join the workforce and contribute to the economy both today and in the future.

NASDAE
National Association of State Directors of Adult Education

Since its inception, National Association of State Directors of Adult Education (NASDAE) has established itself as a major force in the adult education community. The organization offers membership to 50 states and territories. NASDAE works with the Department of Education Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE), the Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE), the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), the National Governors Association (NGA), the National Center for Adult Literacy, the National Coalition for Literacy, and other national organizations in planning for programs and activities to support adult learning initiatives.

ECMC Foundation

ECMC Foundation is a Los Angeles-based, nationally focused foundation whose mission is to inspire and to facilitate improvements that affect educational outcomes—especially among underserved populations—through evidence-based innovation. It is one of several affiliates under the ECMC Group enterprise based in Minneapolis. ECMC Foundation makes investments in two focus areas: College Success and Career Readiness; and uses a spectrum of funding structures, including strategic grantmaking and program-related investments, to invest in both nonprofit and for-profit ventures. Working with grantees, partners and peers, ECMC Foundation's vision is for all learners to unlock their fullest potential. Learn more about the ECMC Group by visiting www.ecmcgroup.org.

DOLLAR GENERAL LITERACY FOUNDATION

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation is proud to support initiatives that help others improve their lives through literacy and education. Since 1993, the Foundation has awarded more than $182 million in grants to nonprofit organizations, helping more than 11 million individuals take their first steps toward literacy, a general education diploma or English proficiency. Each year, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation provides financial support to schools, nonprofit organizations and libraries within a 15-mile radius of Dollar General stores, distribution centers or corporate office.

IEL would also like to acknowledge the following organizations for their contributions to this toolkit:

» Business Innovation Factory
» Full Capacity Marketing, Inc.
» ValueUSA
» Jessica Brown

THE TEAMS

MINDS THAT **MOVE US**
CHALLENGING COMMUNITIES
TO INNOVATE IN EDUCATION

ASCENT
Milton, PA
Healthcare

Adult learners starting or advancing a healthcare career pathway

CARLOS ROSARIO CONSTRUYE DC-PLUS
Washington, DC
Construction

Latinx adults working on a GED, or who have completed their GED, seeking to improve their English-language skills and marketable skill sets as an adult immigrant

D214 FUTURE READY
Arlington Heights, IL
Advanced Manufacturing

Adults without industry skills, including parents of youth in a companion high school manufacturing program

DRIVE to THRIVE
Rhinelander, WI
Automotive Technology

Adults interested in automotive technology but who do not have the industry skills to succeed

HEART ACHE
Boston, MA
Healthcare
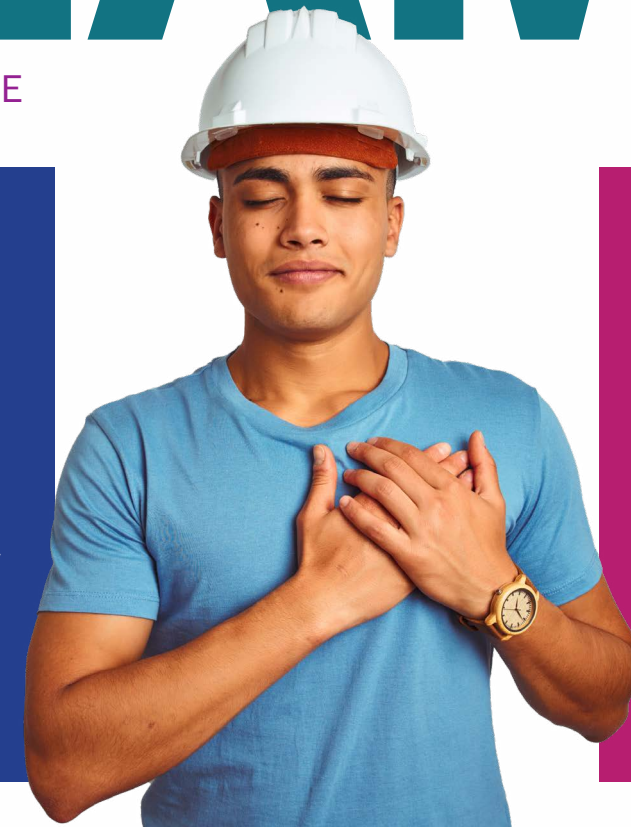
Boston residents of public or publicly assisted housing

HIVE
Taos, NM
Media, Hospitality, IT, Healthcare, Entrepreneurship

Residents of Taos, New Mexico, including rural Hispanic, Native American, and White adult learners interested in tech or entrepreneurial careers

PASS
Cincinnati, OH; Northern, KY
Healthcare (to start)

Adults with no postsecondary experience, especially adults in the PASS community who have less access to opportunity, such as low-income, African-American, and Latinx learners

PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY
Philadelphia, PA
Multiple Industries

Returning adult citizens with disabilities, including those on probation and those released from incarceration without supervision

PIECE OF CAKE BAKERS
Miami, FL
Baking

Adults with disabilities

WOKSAPE
Rapid City, SD
Multiple Industries

At-risk Native American adult students

CHALLENGING COMMUNITIES TO INNOVATE IN EDUCATION

ASCENT

Where:
Milton, Pennsylvania

Industry:
Healthcare

Target Population:
Adult learners starting or advancing a healthcare career pathway.

Lead Organization:
Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit

Key Partners:
Central Susquehanna LPN Career Center, Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, and Geisinger Medical Center

WATCH PITCH VIDEO

A dvancing Social Capital through Enhanced Networks and Training (ASCENT) is an adaptive program that increases learners' healthcare expertise and connects them to opportunities to build their social capital skills, such as networking, navigation, and other soft skills.

Context

In rural Pennsylvania, adult learners often feel alone, disconnected, and unsure about how to advance beyond their current situation. Compounded with other disparities, learners in this community struggle to persist within adult education programs.

One of the biggest drivers of successfully completing an educational program is knowing which tools or people in your environment you can lean on to help you succeed. However, for lower-income adults, time and access to resources is very fragmented, leading to fewer chances to develop social capital skills. Since such skills play a significant role in an individual's ability to become socially mobile, there is an urgent need for integrated services that create opportunities for individuals to increase their social networks while learning necessary industry skills.

Their Solution

The ASCENT platform builds and fosters relationships between students, instructors, employers, and mentors through direct communications, reminders, and added support. These connections, over time, can increase students' social capital and access to resources that support their success.

The core components of ASCENT's platform include:

1. Providing a bridge between providers and learners.
2. Mobilizing peer ambassadors who can empathize with and provide support.
3. Utilizing a texting platform and social media to connect (a) peers to one another, (b) learners to other established networks, (c) learners to postsecondary healthcare programs and communities.

Where Are They Now?

Team ASCENT has now adopted a text message system (Signal Vine) as a communication resource for all adult education programs. Throughout their pilot study, ASCENT:

1. Onboarded four programs that are using the platform, including their adult education program, licensed practical nurse (LPN) program, and programs spanning 11 counties that operate with support from a federal Health Profession Opportunity Grant.
2. Surveyed students and received early indicators that the platform improves their experience.
3. Created plans for scaling to include other adult education and K-12 programs.

ASCENT's collaboration as a team provides a gateway for individuals entering at any level to realize they can continue on a pathway beyond obtaining a GED.

> "We heard so many stories where somebody would say all it took was that one person somewhere along the way that really helped them to succeed. We're trying to get that to happen earlier and systematically by providing opportunities for increasing networks."
>
> **Timothy Campbell, Team ASCENT**

The MTMU Impact

Working collaboratively with the other MTMU teams allowed ASCENT to gain a broader understanding of challenges they may encounter, as well as multiple ideas and innovations to overcome those challenges. ASCENT also received a $1,000 grant from the Women's Giving Circle, a local philanthropic organization.

Replication Tips

Lead technology, don't let it lead you. Based on student feedback, ASCENT knew that to increase persistence they needed to use the same technologies students use. This includes social media platforms, texting, and other web-based tools.

Adapt the concept. Recruit 10-15 adult learners willing to receive text messages for one month. Ask them what types of messages they would like to receive, such as informative messages with upcoming deadlines or referrals to local resources or inspirational messages designed to motivate. Then create a series of text messages – two to three per week is a good target – and send them to the group of participants. After one month, ask the group to complete a short survey about the number of and content of the messages. Document their feedback about what, if anything, changed about their experience as a result of receiving the text messages.

Prioritize the social aspects of learning. Student success is not only contingent upon what they learn but also the relationships they establish with their peers and educators. These relationships help to define their experience and can forecast their success. ASCENT connected with learners through a series of conversations that included questions such as "What do you need?" and "How can we help you succeed and complete training?" Having learners on their team and pausing to understand their perspectives allowed ASCENT to confidently move forward knowing their innovation would suit students' needs.

ASCENT

WATCH OUR PITCH VIDEO

Contact Us

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CARLOS ROSARIO
CONSTRUYE
DC+

Where:
Washington D.C.

Industry:
Construction

Target Population:
Latinx[1] adults working on a GED, or who have completed their GED, seeking to improve their English-language skills and marketable skill sets as an adult immigrant

Lead Organization:
Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School for Adults

Key Partners:
Turner Construction Company, DC Hispanic Contractors Association, Latino Safety Professionals Association, University of the District of Columbia and Baker DC

WATCH PITCH VIDEO

Carlos Rosario Construye DC-Plus (Construye DC+) creates pathways for English Language Learners to achieve financial stability in the construction industry. Construye has an intentional focus on upskilling Latinx construction professionals for career growth, with a focus on safety and creating a pathway toward earning sustainable wages or exploring entrepreneurship.

Context

Latinos account for nearly 30% of construction workers,[2] however lack of training, mismatched culture, and language barriers put Latinx construction workers at greater risk of injury. In 2017, the construction industry was responsible for the greatest number of Latino worker deaths (291).[3] This was a call to action for the Construye team. The team felt an urgency around workers having the ability to upskill not only for safety but also for career/wage growth.

Their Solution

Construye DC+ offers the only comprehensive dual-language construction training program offered between October and March (industry down time). The program offers credentials in OSHA safety standards, math for construction, blueprint reading and interpretation, as well as communication, goal setting and leadership skills. The core components that make up the Construye DC+ model are:

1. Resources to navigate apprenticeships, employer-sponsored training programs, higher education, job advancement, or entrepreneurial ventures.
2. A blended-learning, dual-language approach to support learners as they prepare for their careers.

The curriculum includes:

» OSHA in-person safety certification
» Employability skills
» Construction math
» Blueprint reading and interpretation
» Career planning
» Construction English
» Communication, goal setting and leadership skills

Construye DC+ focuses on Latino learners, allowing them to build community trust and develop a deep knowledge of learners' experiences. They create strong communication between the Latino community and the companies they work with to combat stereotypes and address and overcome cultural divides. Learners receive intentional training and support to become safety leaders and enter into upwardly mobile career pathways.

> "Our ultimate customer is our student. And then the stakeholders as well. I think that the lesson we learned was to listen very closely to the students' needs and what the industry wants and needs."
>
> **Raul Medrano,
> Team Construye DC+**

Where Are They Now?

Construye DC+ has successfully implemented the pilot phase of the program, as of October 22, 2019. Because of their proof of concept (spring 2019) and team structure, they were able to quickly stand up their model. The team:

1. Initiated, as of Feb. 22, 2020, the Construye DC+ Small Business Bootcamp (Saturday Workshop Series) for those interested in advancing their knowledge as entrepreneurs within the industry.
2. Iterated on their team structure to move from design to implementation.
3. Analyzed how effectively they met student needs, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

When COVID-19 guidelines were enforced, the school needed to transition into a distance learning platform on all fronts. Adaptable leadership allowed Construye DC+ to continue with class instruction via Zoom and other instructional teaching tools. The team celebrated the completion of online classes on June 12, 2020, noting that various participants had seen an increase in wage earnings. Some participants were compensated for their class time, and others applied for work within the industry to increase their income potential. Four participants legally registered their construction businesses.

The MTMU Impact

MTMU helped shape the Construye DC+ design team's mindset throughout the creative stages of program development. Institutionally, the Construye DC+ team caught the attention of their colleagues as they modeled how to foster cross-pollination of thought rather than working in silos. The design team has raised awareness of the value of the construction industry, sustainable wages and benefits, and opportunities for growth, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Construye DC+ also received additional funding in the amount of $15,000 from the D.C. Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs for the pilot phase and $25,000 from PNC Bank.

Replication Tips

Follow your blueprint but leave room for flexibility. An important mindset for anyone creating an innovative adult career pathway is to leave room for iteration and testing of your model. These tools simply create a foundation from which teams can be flexible and adaptable to their contexts, new learnings, and data.

Focus on the learners, not your ego. Students should be at the center of everything. From program design to retention efforts, keeping the focus on learners' needs – not what leaders think they need but what they've communicated – creates program models that have the processes and culture in place to withstand changing student needs.

Create a team that is diverse and flat. Construye's team was successful because they co-created a shared vision and distributed leadership throughout their journey. Their design team members consisted of individuals with expertise in curriculum design, entrepreneurship, construction, and community accountability.

CARLOS ROSARIO CONSTRUYE DC+

WATCH OUR PITCH VIDEO

Contact Us

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D214
FUTURE READY

Where:
Arlington Heights, Illinois

Industry:
Advanced Manufacturing

Target Population:
Adults without industry skills, including parents of youth in a companion high school manufacturing program

Lead Organization:
District 214

Key Partners:
D214 Wheeling High School, Symbol Training Institute, Golden Corridor Advanced Manufacturing Partnership (GCAMP), Technology & Manufacturing Association (TMA), and Harper College

WATCH PITCH VIDEO

D istrict 214's Future Ready program prepares adults for high-wage, in-demand manufacturing careers by providing hands-on experiences within learners' local communities.

Context

Although the U.S. manufacturing industry anticipates the addition of 3.4 million jobs over the next 10 years, more than half of those jobs will go unfilled due to the shortage of skilled labor. The demographics of District 214, home to Team D214, indicate there exists an opportunity to meet the labor needs of the manufacturing industry while putting individuals in that district on the path to family-sustaining wages in careers with high growth potential. In D214, 24% of adults have no high school diploma; 18% have only some college; 16% are immigrants; and nearly 10% live below the poverty level.

Their Solution

D214 provides hands-on, in-demand training that uniquely supports learners at every level, positioning them for success as their lives and their families develop. The team has begun to close the skills gap by being adaptive to the needs of students and industry partners in addressing the fast-paced nature of the industry.

D214's innovation emphasized accessibility and adaptability, and included the following core components:

1. Hosting training within neighborhoods and at schools that their adult students are familiar with to alleviate transportation barriers.
2. Providing for free classes that typically cost students more than $2,000.
3. Providing guidance for students to successfully transition from the classroom to their new career.

"If I had advice for other leaders, it would be to leave room in your mindset and your budget to pursue innovation. [Now] I'm not afraid to bring ideas up the ladder or to other departments."

**Karen Oswald,
Team D214**

Where Are They Now?

D214 launched their program in September 2019. Since then they have:

1. Taught 37 total participants including 18 who passed tests for NIMS credentials.
2. Reimagined their outreach efforts and collaborated with partners to offer learners models of possibility.
3. Began tracking reports from students and mentors.

D214's Manufacturing Bridge Career Pathway class ran two classes in fall 2019 and one class from February through June, with 37 adult education students participating in the program and 18 earning three National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS) credentials in Materials, Measurement & Safety and/or Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Lathe/CNC Mill Operations, and one passing one credential test. Students continued to participate in the classes when they transitioned to online learning and Zoom classes when buildings were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. D214 provided laptops and other equipment to students who didn't have their own.

Six students in the spring dropped due to COVID-19-related issues, including work schedule changes, illness, and the challenge of transitioning to online learning. The classes will be offered in fall 2020 and spring 2021.

The MTMU Impact

The formation of the MTMU team and groundwork done for the challenge prepared D214 to write and submit the Innovative Bridge grant proposal that ultimately funded the course.

Replication Tips

Create a culture of innovation. D214 believes in learning from successes and failures to iterate on existing programs or create wholly new offerings. They foster this culture by trusting their team members and their expertise, offering space to experiment, and encouraging risk-taking.

Meet partners in their environment. As a newer member to the manufacturing ecosystem, Team D214 took opportunities to learn about the needs from those closest to the issue. They approached leaders at manufacturing fairs, chamber of commerce events and other venues to create partnerships and make sure they were solving the right problem. Through conversations, they recognized the need for more mature workers, illuminating the possibility of using existing resources to add an adult manufacturing pathway as a complement to their existing program for high school students.

D214 FUTURE READY

WATCH OUR PITCH VIDEO

Contact Us

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DRIVE TO THRIVE

Where:
Rhinelander, Wisconsin

Industry:
Automotive Technology

Target Population:
Adults interested in automotive technology but who do not have the industry skills to succeed

Lead Organization:
Nicolet College

Key Partners:
Rhinelander GM, Eagle River Ford and American Family Insurance

WATCH PITCH VIDEO

D rive to Thrive (Drive) resolves two key issues: reducing barriers to credit completion and the need for reliable transportation.

Context

Drive is based in a rural area with few transportation options for those who don't own a reliable vehicle, including a lack of public transportation or ride-share options, such as Uber or Lyft. Adults in the area must contend with this lack and the impact it has on their ability to participate in career and education pathways.

Their Solution

Drive to Thrive addresses the challenge innovatively by offering adult education, technical training, and incentives, the latter most noticeably in the form of an automotive scholarship program that allows participants who complete the program to apply for a car. This solution has the potential to provide transportation for adults to start an automotive career that pays a life-sustaining wage and to make further education possible.

Nicolet College is the only college in the Northwoods of Wisconsin that offers an automotive pathway program. Drive's concept has the potential to transform students' lives in that they would gain access to education in a high-demand career path, earn a reliable vehicle upon completing the program, make in-person connections with employers, and receive wrap-around supports.

The Drive approach has a personal, social, and economic impact on families and the community. For learners who receive the scholarship vehicle, it would dramatically increase their ability to access other resources for themselves and their families, including facilitating career growth, further education, healthcare access and leisure activities. These previously out-of-reach resources support upward mobility from poverty to stability.

> "We found out there were a lot of things that other places were already doing. A lot of other toolkits and resources that were similar. So instead of reinventing the wheel, we called on a lot of partners. Then we ran through their downfalls — what stumbling blocks and barriers did they run into? We worked with them so we wouldn't have to go through that alone."
>
> **Toni VanDoren, Team Drive to Thrive**

DRIVE TO THRIVE

Where Are They Now?

Drive has used their plan to modify aspects of their current automotive programming, until they are able to implement their full innovation. They made significant changes to teaching to create greater flexibility for students as they pursue credentials in the automotive program. Making learning more manageable and adaptable put the Drive/Nicolet College team in a stronger position as they transitioned to remote learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Replication Tips

Meet the needs of students, regardless of where they are. Drive's concept creates opportunities for students to advance beyond remedial coursework so they have motivation to persist. By combining technical education with basic academic skills (math, reading, etc.), students are able to jump into participatory learning that connects with their goals.

Support the full learner. Drive deeply understands the intertwined nature of systemic barriers and their concept includes wrap-around supports that would create avenues for students to address the many factors that impede their education. Their model is built on a foundation such that removing some of those barriers (e.g., transportation) has a tangible ripple effect for participants as they pursue their credentials. In addition, their approach involves competency-based progression, which would allow students to complete the program at their own pace, rather than on a prescribed schedule.

WATCH OUR PITCH VIDEO

Contact Us

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HEART ACHE 💡

Where:
Boston, Massachusetts

Industry:
Healthcare

Target Population:
Boston residents of public or publicly assisted housing

Lead Organization:
Center for Community Health Education Research and Service, Inc./Northeastern University with HEART Consortium

Key Partners:
Home Care Aide Council, Partners HealthCare, Mass General Brigham and Women's, and Mother for Justice and Equality

WATCH PITCH VIDEO

[f] [t]

HEART ACHE (HEART) responds to the growing demand for jobs and the need for healthcare workers by creating systemic transformation to training for home health aides and certified nursing assistants (CNAs).

Context

As the U.S. population ages, there is a growing demand for home health workers. In Boston specifically, the healthcare system does not have the capacity to effectively care for individuals — hospitals discharge patients quickly and many patients would rather receive services in spaces that feel safer.

There is a need for job training to help individuals enter the healthcare workforce. Home care agencies typically do not invest in training home health aides, especially in job-readiness skills. There is a need to support home health aides in transitioning from unemployment or underemployment to successful employment, requiring them to build skills around taking initiative, entrepreneurship, and time management. There is no networked solution for home health aides to receive support, hone their skills, and chart a pathway toward career advancement and greater financial sustainability.

Their Solution

Team HEART ACHE creates opportunities for low-income unemployed and underemployed Boston residents, many of whom reside in public or publicly assisted housing, to secure and maintain jobs in the healthcare field as a pathway to higher wages, more stable schedules and better benefits.

Core elements of HEART include:
1. Training and experience as a home health aide.
2. Trauma-informed job readiness training and support.
3. Support for health aides who want to advance to more training or credentials.
4. A network that connects graduates to a community of healthcare workers who can provide support and guidance as they navigate other career opportunities within the industry. This support network is critical because the home health aide field is isolating.

HEART's goal is to connect people to resources on an ongoing basis, so they get the support needed to continue in the field and advance their careers.

"But first and foremost, our focus and our passion are on the community that we serve, which is the Southwest corridor of Boston. To make sure people who have been underemployed or unemployed have a way into the healthcare field."

Alison Simmons, Team HEART ACHE

Where Are They Now?

HEART is continuing their work training and supporting home health aides through a grant from the Senator Kenneth J. Donnelly Workforce Success Grants (Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund FY 2019 Appropriation) through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and is administered by the Commonwealth Corporation. This, and other support, allows them to:

1. Fund four additional home health aide training cohorts.
2. Launch a CNA* program in partnership with Partners HealthCare/Mass General Brigham. This program will provide an employment and training program for community members who, upon successful completion, will be employed at Mass General Brigham.
3. Expand their networking work with home health aides and include a leadership development program for students and alumni.

*While both CNAs and home health aides are allied healthcare professions with some overlapping responsibilities, one key way they differ is CNAs care for patients within a healthcare organization (e.g., a hospital), while home health aides care for patients in their homes.

Replication Tips

Work from a population standpoint. HEART focuses on the needs of their target population – those in public and publicly assisted housing. They focus on finding viable jobs for individuals in communities that have been underfunded and overlooked. HEART creates programming that goes beyond simply filling employment gaps, but that also equips learners with skills, competencies, and confidence to better succeed in work and in life.

Maintain long-term contact with learners. HEART created multiple mechanisms for engaging with students during training and post-training. Staff's continual engagement with students, from program to workforce, allows students to create meaningful relationships as they define their career interests and identify pathways to career progression and wage growth.

Show, don't tell. Our workforce systems don't allow new approaches to easily thrive. Modeling for employers and demonstrating value for initiatives creates a stronger network of support and pathways to sustainability.

HEART ACHE

WATCH OUR PITCH VIDEO

Contact Us

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HIVE

Where:
Taos, New Mexico

Industry:
Media, Hospitality,
IT Healthcare,
Entrepreneurship

Target Population:
Residents of Taos, New Mexico,
including rural Hispanic, Native
American, and White adult
learners interested in tech or
entrepreneurial careers

Lead Organization:
University of New Mexico-Taos

Key Partners:
Kit Carson Electric
Cooperative, Taos Community
Foundation, Town of Taos,
and FatPipe

WATCH PITCH VIDEO

The Hub of Internet-Based Vocations and Education (HIVE) is a future-facing, culturally adaptive co-working space that combines academics, career development, online work, and small-business entrepreneurship.

Context

The Taos community is primarily home to Latino, Native American, and Anglo communities struggling to transcend poverty, under-preparedness in K-12 education, and limited access to urban centers to achieve social mobility. The job opportunities that exist are often entry-level, with few opportunities for growth.

HIVE's work seeks to bring life-sustaining wages to their rural economy in ways that foster ambition while allowing individuals to work within their community. With their community behind them, HIVE created a solution that brought partners together to ensure the elimination of income gaps within their economy.

Their Solution

HIVE was born out of a vision from the Taos Education and Career Center, Taos' primary Adult Learning center, to modify a co-working office in order to bring job creation and education under one roof in a rural community. Joining forces with exceptional leaders from its small business development programs and the Chair of the Department of Professional Skills and Community Engagement at UNM-Taos, HIVE expanded to include small business development. HIVE is a hybrid solution to workforce development and job creation challenges.

Core components of HIVE's model are:

1. Blending co-working, small-business support services, and adult education/college classes in one location, allowing adults to earn academic credentials, build careers, and open small businesses.
2. Fostering natural relationships that cross class boundaries, allowing people to come together and support one another while dismantling the typically rigid line between mentor and mentee or educator and learner.
3. Offering a range of experiences for learners to obtain stackable career credentials that prepare them to enter the online workforce or open a small business.

"If non-traditional students are the growing number of students, the way we have to address them is not through traditional means. It's funny, we'll call them non-traditional, but we want to apply traditional measures. If they are non-traditional, maybe we ought to apply non-traditional approaches to their educational experience."

**Patrick Valdez,
UNM-Taos Chancellor,
Team HIVE**

Where Are They Now?

The HIVE team is bringing together critical pieces for their launch. They have:

1. Collaborated with Digital Promise, to share design and implementation of assessment metrics and indicators of success.
1. Strategic support from Rural Innovation Initiative. Taos HIVE was selected out of hundreds of applicants nationwide, a prestigious position in the Rural Innovation Initiative run by the Center on Rural Innovation (CORI).
2. With the support of Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, a Taos HIVE core partner, a building will be provided to begin the on-site Taos HIVE journey.

While the physical opening of the Taos HIVE has been delayed due to COVID, HIVE has taken an active role in bringing together community providers and supporting streamlined communication between entrepreneurial and online training programs. They are hosting weekly virtual office hours and also kicked off Taos Biz, a virtual zoom session, to support the small-business community. In response to the pandemic, they are building their capacity to provide virtual programming and a digital skills curriculum for both students and small businesses.

The MTMU Impact

1. The MTMU challenge allowed HIVE the opportunity to create long-lasting relationships and access to viable resources. For example, during the MTMU Festival the HIVE team connected with Digital Promise. The Digital Promise team went to Taos to do a recently published case study on HIVE's community partnership. Due to the pandemic, HIVE is working toward creating virtual programming that supports the student, jobseeker, and small business community.

Replication Tips

Faster alone, stronger together. HIVE represents collaborative partnerships with Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, University of New Mexico-Taos, Taos Community Foundation, the Town of Taos, the LOR Foundation, the Northern Area Local Workforce Development Board and many others. Their partnerships span from academic to business, and they were intentional about building relationships with strong communication and trust as core values.

Engage learners in design. The HIVE team engaged learners throughout the process to co-design the co-working space and its offerings. They went beyond simply saying a space is inclusive and challenged themselves to remove barriers.

> **How can you do this?** *HIVE asked questions such as: Are those who have been disadvantaged 1. part of the decision-making structure, 2. able to develop as leaders and hold leadership positions, and 3. offered opportunities for rich professional development?*

Amplify the community's superpowers.
Capitalizing on their key partnerships, HIVE was able to use existing resources to strengthen a network. For example, they were able to provide access to built-in structures for community building and collaboration, digital literacy skills, and professional development around emotional intelligence.

HIVE

WATCH OUR PITCH VIDEO

Contact Us

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PASS 💡

Where:
Cincinnati, Ohio and
Northern Kentucky

Industry:
Healthcare (to start)

Target Population:
Adults with no postsecondary
experience, especially adults
in the PASS community who
have less access to opportunity,
such as low-income, African-
American, and Latinx learners.

Lead Organization:
KnowledgeWorks Foundation

Key Partners:
Gateway Community &
Technical College, Brighton
Center, Kentucky Career
Center, Cincinnati State
Technical and Community
College, Northern Kentucky
Chamber of Commerce,
United Way of Greater
Cincinnati, The Health
Collaborative

WATCH PITCH VIDEO

P ASS (Purposeful Alignment Toward Self-Sufficiency) is a systems-wide online platform that supports adults in a multi-state region to navigate resources and programs to achieve academic success and sustainability in high-demand fields.

Context

Individuals within the Cincinnati Metropolitan Region live, work and play across the Tri-State, in which each state has differing policies, priorities, and initiatives. Adult learners, especially Black, Latina and low-income single mothers with no postsecondary experience, lack the information needed to make informed decisions about available options for education and career pathways. Even when learners have a plan to achieve self-sufficiency, they face hurdles and struggle to navigate the complex landscape.

Despite individuals in the region participating in the workforce and attaining education at increasing rates, gaps in poverty and equity persist. Team PASS believes a regional systemic approach is needed to understand the interconnected nature of the inequities that exist. Rather than recruiting individuals to participate in a broken system, they are finding ways to reimagine the system that involves aligning regional partners and dismantling barriers along the way.

Their Solution

PASS is an online, interactive system that will manage workforce development efforts through a holistic pathway model. This system will align regional workforce initiatives around common goals, projects, technology, and approaches so learners can more clearly understand the landscape. Having clarity and a high-level view of the ecosystem will create awareness of how the disparate parts function together and highlight gaps and opportunities for innovation. Learners will also have access to information and support that is necessary to make informed decisions when creating their educational and career journey.

The platform will be a hub for data and resources that support a healthy workforce pipeline. It contains these core components:

1. A regional blueprint for pathways that is organized by areas of interest.
2. Guidance for navigating learning pathways and career pathways.
3. Transparency and access to a transferable, valuable record of their credentials and competency-based achievements.

"

"Right now we are in a time of unprecedented need. Employers are desperate to come to the table and try things to change policy and practice and recruitment because they need the workforce. A tight workforce is something never to be wasted and we are there. The time is now."

**Hope Arthur,
Team PASS**

Where Are They Now?

PASS is designing a systems solution that involves a complex implementation plan. They have been focusing on:

1. Aligning supply and demand for Medical Assistants at the competency level using tools such as Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) from the U.S. Chamber and the Connecting Credentials Framework from Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW), to increase the efficiency of the talent pipeline.
2. Using competency alignment to frame and design regional microcredentials that provide greater opportunity for customization of pathways, allow for non-linear movement through those pathways, and establish the framework for articulation of competency across providers and state lines.
3. Exploring the potential for using blockchain technology in establishing interoperable learner records (ILRs) as a foundation for the creation of mobile 'learner profiles', with the ability to match individuals to job opportunities based on competency alignment.
4. Fostering partnerships to further iterate and improve on the PASS model and increase capacity for systemic change.

The MTMU Impact

During the MTMU Festival, PASS connected with Digital Promise, a nonprofit organization focused on spurring innovation and improving opportunity for all through technology and research. They are exploring how data interoperability can support frontline workers. PASS also is investigating a joint project with Digital Promise to create micro-credentials for women in healthcare.

PASS continues to draw upon the system design that was developed through the MTMU Challenge. As team members meet and actively participate in various initiatives throughout the region, they keep this broader system design in mind and consider how smaller initiatives fit into or feed into the bigger desired outcome.

Replication Tips

Incorporate technology to streamline processes. There are many processes organizations take on manually that can be made more efficient through the use of established and emerging technologies. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, and blockchain can be used to make systems easier for both providers and learners.

Show learners the full picture. PASS will offer learners a transparent and realistic look at their pathway options. Learners will be able to more fully understand the impact of their decisions on their academic trajectory, financial stability, and career growth. This shifts power to learners, giving them control over their own pathways.

Consider how your model can be commercialized. PASS created partnerships to understand how their platform might apply beyond their context. In complex systems, there is an imperative to integrate and align communities and organizations. The PASS model creates a blueprint for navigating and mending system-wide fragmentation – often an insurmountable barrier for adult learners. At scale, this model can smooth the path for adult learners by generating greater opportunities for partnerships with other regions and national organizations.

PASS

WATCH OUR PITCH VIDEO

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PATHWAYS TO
PROSPERITY

Where:
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Industry:
Multiple industries

Target Population:
Returning adult citizens with disabilities, including those on probation/parole and those previously released from incarceration and not under supervision

Lead Organization:
JEVS Human Services

Key Partners:
Philadelphia Department of Prisons, Temple University, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission, and JEVS hireAbility

WATCH PITCH VIDEO

Pathways to Prosperity (Pathways) brings visibility to a community that is often intentionally overlooked in policy decisions and service offerings. Their work creates access to behavioral health services, career preparedness, trade credentialing support, and employment placement support to help returning citizens with disabilities find a pathway to sustainability and success.

Context

Returning citizens, especially those with disabilities, face immense barriers when trying to find employment and create financial stability. These barriers — navigating a disconnected system; accessing assessment, treatment, services and support; and preparing for, finding, and maintaining stable employment — often push or pull individuals out of the workforce and increase their chances of recidivism.

Thirty-five percent of those incarcerated have a documented disability[1], and limited access to healthcare and other supportive services has left many more invisible. There is great need to support individuals as they navigate re-entry, so they are able to access living wages and find prosperity.

[1] Nario-Redmond, M. R. (2019). Ableism: The Causes and Consequence of Disability Prejudice. Wiley-Blackwell.

Their Solution

Pathways provides an innovative and holistic approach to meet the needs of returning citizens with disabilities that focuses on reducing recidivism by addressing the diverse needs of this population and preparing them for post-release success. Building career preparedness, educational attainment, and vocational credentialing all work to reduce recidivism.

Core elements of Pathways' program are:

1. Assessment, mentoring, help navigating disability service systems, and employment services.
2. Guidance to in-demand careers, adult education support and vocational training partners to provide access to career credentials and pathways to success.
3. Support for learners from the prison system through their transition back into the community.

"What started the ball rolling was the realization that there was a group of people that needed support. And we needed, really, a concentrated effort to figure out how to provide better services to them. Once we had that target audience, MTMU enabled us to specifically target an area where we wanted to do something but weren't sure how to do it. It allowed us to collaborate across our entire agency to bring all these different partners to the table to say, 'This is the problem. This is our solution. Now, how do we make it a reality?'"

**Jeffrey Abramowitz,
Team Pathways**

Where Are They Now?

Pathways to Prosperity found a home in the largest homeless shelter in Philadelphia and began to service men and women who had a criminal history and were battling behavioral health issues. The team's existing re-entry program and the newly proposed Pathways program created partnerships and built a foundation to begin implementation. Since then, Pathways has become self-sustaining by:

1. Starting a program at a homeless shelter and offering behavioral health and re-entry support in one setting.
2. Hiring dedicated staff.
3. Creating a system for collecting data and analyzing metrics.

Pathways' workshops and other programming have begun to transition participants to employment and a life of stability.

The MTMU Impact

The structure of MTMU has supported Pathways to Prosperity and has had a dramatic impact on the men and women who remain Philadelphia's most vulnerable population for homelessness and recidivism. The Pathways team remains committed to seeing this project grow, and they have begun to secure braided funding to allow for the addition of support staff and desperately needed resources.

Replication Tips

Ground your leadership in active listening. The Pathways team valued listening to understand their learners' journeys. They dug into the challenges learners face through questions like: What do you need and how can we support you? They leaned on lived experience and sector knowledge to design a program that more holistically responded to learners' needs.

Empathize before you conceptualize. The Pathways team turned what they heard from learners into actionable principles for their design. They took responsibility as an organization to create change that was rooted in reflection and feedback from their target audience.

How can you do this?
List some meaningful comments and insights that emerge as you engage with learners and other stakeholders. As a team, brainstorm responses to fill in the blank: Any solution/offering/class/etc. must include collaborative and dedicated partners who provide support for your project's mission and goals. Pick three to five key design principles. The principles should be easy to remember and referred back to later to assess whether solutions that were implemented have meaningfully incorporated them.

Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate. The Pathways team has a strong viewpoint on how to solve some of the most pervasive issues in society, such as poverty and mass incarceration: meaningful collaboration. Collaboration means bringing into your circle people who do powerful work – or taking steps to join their circle. The Pathways model was built in partnership with local re-entry organizations, service providers, and governmental agencies united under a shared goal of sustainable employment and a career pathway to success.

PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

WATCH OUR PITCH VIDEO

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PIECE OF CAKE

Where:
Miami, Florida

Industry:
Baking

Target Population:
Adults with disabilities

Lead Organization:
Piece of Cake Bakers

Key Partners:
Pinecrest Bakery, Medina Baking and Powder Products, Total Public Relations

WATCH PITCH VIDEO

in

P iece of Cake Bakers (PoCB) masterfully blends technology and skill-building to create sustainable opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Their goal is to build business confidence and create a pathway to employment for the bakers in their program.

Context

For individuals with disabilities, there are separate and unequal educational systems. In the United States, youth and young adults with disabilities are less likely than their peers without disabilities to complete high school, enter postsecondary education, and enter the workforce[1]. As those youth become working-age adults, they are 17 percent less likely to be employed than their peers. They also face barriers that lead them to withdraw from the workforce. Limited employment and limited access to resources create an environment of unfulfilled potential and family anxiety, rather than a path to opportunity.

PoCB is working with a community that is often pushed out of educational and employment opportunities. By building individuals' soft skills; transferring industry knowledge; engaging individuals to set goals and reflect on progress; and focusing on safety, PoCB is transforming work experiences for adults with disabilities. There is an urgent need for industry-level skills to be accessible so individuals with disabilities can equitably participate in the labor market and be active participants in creating their future.

Their Solution

PoCB did not shy away from good instruction, but instead paired it with simple and new technological advances that could improve teaching and learning. They created an industry-specific augmented reality and color system platform that supports the training of people with disabilities and teaches skills needed to thrive in the baking industry. This technology creates an avenue for employers to better train individuals with disabilities, potentially leading to more individuals getting hired and persisting.

The core components of the PoCB model and technology are:

1. Merging custom-designed work-related behaviors into technical instruction.
2. Creating a family group to support instruction.
3. Creating a graduation group to support work-related behaviors.
4. Creating an industry advisory group to inform instruction and job placement.

For students with disabilities who did not believe they could hold a job, PoCB's model offers tools and guidance to help them be successful and increasingly independent.

"Adult training is not a magic wand. It doesn't make people different than who they actually are. It let's them be who they are in this space that allows them to go to work and change their own lives."

**Robin Matusow,
Team PoCB**

[1] Cheng, L., & Shaewitz, D. (2019). *The 2019 Youth Transition Report: Outcomes for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership

Where Are They Now?

The PoCB team is building a solid foundation to continue their work. They are:

1. Negotiating to secure a baking space.
2. Codifying their certification process to meet state and federal requirements.
3. Building a pipeline of funding sources. Developing a sample bakery training video using augmented reality.

The MTMU Impact

Participating in the MTMU Challenge allowed PoCB to dedicate more support to their project. Catalyzed by the challenge, they have expanded their use of technology and have developed additional partners to assist in their growth.

Replication Tips

Create multiple pathways for the diffusion of your innovation. PoCB creates a bridge to traditional postsecondary education, having given students transferable learning skills to apply. The model is also scalable in that it is designed to integrate into employers' training modules, K-16 curriculum, and/or serve as a stand-alone, independent offering.

How can you do this?
To follow their lead, other innovators might ask: how might we create multiple pathways for diffusion of our innovation?

Fall in love with the right problem (aka teach students the skills they will need to be successful). One of the core reasons PoCB is successful is because it focuses on teaching industry skills, in addition to other aspects of adult education. A barrier that learners with disabilities face upon entering the workforce is they have to be trained in industry knowledge, which often leads to frustration and lack of persistence. This two-fold approach gives learners the tools to gain deep knowledge and become more adaptable to the needs of employers.

Create a list of everything that has failed. While it may sound counterintuitive, creating a list of everything that has failed illuminates where gaps currently exist within an educational ecosystem. That provides a catalyst for partnerships to emerge between education, business, and social sectors to create solutions that might fill those gaps.

PIECE OF CAKE

WATCH OUR PITCH VIDEO

Contact Us

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WOKSAPE

Where:
Rapid City, South Dakota

Industry:
Multiple industries

Target Population:
At-risk Native American adult students

Lead Organization:
Career Learning Center of the Black Hills

Key Partners:
Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board, Technology & Innovation in Education, Prosperity Initiative- John T. Vucurevich Foundation, Bush Community Innovation Grant Team and the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation

WATCH PITCH VIDEO

W oksape builds community capacity to confront past traumas, amplify cultural awareness, and sustain successful career opportunities.

Context

In Rapid City, adult education students ages 26+ have the lowest completion rate in career pathways programs. Learners often carry within themselves scars from past incidents of trauma and abuse. Because of the impacts of their trauma, many learners do not complete their credentials. Students face stressors from their learning environment, home environment, and communities, such as health crises, food insecurity, and falling behind on coursework.

Many educators and employers are unaware of the struggles students face. Absent of this awareness, they often rely on unforgiving policies that favor negative outcomes for struggling learners.

Their Solution

Woksape invites learners, educators, and employers to collaborate in learning and implementing research-based trauma-informed practices (TIP) for long-term employment sustainability. In order to meet educational needs of struggling adult learners, educators must develop skills in TIP. Woksape's impact is multi-generational – there is greater equity for students impacted by trauma. The impact extends to the learners' family and the community, including businesses that have a more deeply engaged workforce. Core elements of the Woksape program are:

1. Offering professional development for employers to develop an awareness of issues and skills needed to better interact with students/ employees recovering from trauma.
2. Creating meaningful partnerships between learners, educators, and employers to provide the conditions necessary for students to thrive.
3. Including student perspectives in the design and implementation of the program through a student steering committee.

"When you look at it from a Lakota or Dakota or Nakota perspective, this is how we have always taught and learned: collaboratively, based on the learners' needs…. When we come back to what we call 'culturally responsive teaching,' for me, as a Dakota/ Lakota woman, it's nothing new, it's returning back to our ways. It's reclaiming a lot of our cultural ways."

Tamara Miyasato, Team Woksape

Where Are They Now?

Woksape has implemented their innovation, expanding the work and solidifying key resources. They have:

1. Received a $209,000 grant from the Bush Foundation to support further development.
2. Hired a program coordinator with a strong background in TIP and the community.
3. Created supports for students' well-being, such as an emergency fund for transportation, food, and housing needs.
4. Started tracking learners' progress using the Crisis to Thrive Scale.

In recent months, Woksape has partnered with several larger businesses and spent time learning their needs. The student steering committee has made some suggestions about how businesses can recruit and retain employees. This sets the foundation for employees who can advocate for their needs and workplaces that honor their employees' opinions.

The MTMU Impact

The impact of MTMU was apparent for Woksape, which had focused time and attention on the project, allowing them to think through processes, procedures, and idea iterations. They now have an adaptable structure that fits student needs.

One example of this impact is Woksape's evolving student steering committee. Learners taking the lead on this project have activated their peers to tackle and find new solutions for other issues impacting student success. This momentum is building capacity and excitement as student leaders gain power and recognize their peers are moving forward positively.

Replication Tips

Personalize learning and mentorship. Trauma- and healing-informed work can be intimidating. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and the leaders of Woksape took the time to meet with potential learners individually to assess their needs and gather insight on how the program could serve the diverse needs of students.

Change the environment, not the learner. Rather than changing the learner to fit the status quo, team Woksape believes it is time educators and employers make a shift to become more aware of and responsive to the challenges learners face. They worked with employers to create a deep understanding of the impact trauma can inflict on its victims.

Create a shared purpose. The Woksape team brought together their community in purposeful ways. They engaged elders, subject-matter experts (technologists, educators, psychologists and others), and learners in working meetings that were actionable, fun, and centered around a shared mission.

WOKSAPE

WATCH OUR PITCH VIDEO

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POLICY OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the 18-month MTMU competition, the 10 teams broke through barriers to celebrate successes. Their work has illuminated relevant lessons that can support policymaking, funding efforts, and further innovation.

> "We learned that innovation takes consistent work with partners on a very regular basis. We learned a lot about trying to create a great team feeling, recognizing that people are not always on the same page or feel that they can determine an outcome from the entire group based on one opinion. It takes finesse and effort to make all of the human assets work well together."

**Stephenie Rittberger,
Team Woksape**

> "The intensity of what people are going through — suffering, substance abuse, and mental health crises, and the lack of support and integration — is intense. Some people say, 'Well, you can't do education until all that's in place,' like Maslow's hierarchy of needs triangle. However, we've found that sometimes it's education and school that is motivating learners to succeed in other areas of their life."

**Nina Gonzales,
Team HIVE**

Lessons Learned

1. **Combat stigma around adult education.** People tend to think of adult education in limited terms, associating it only with its basic services, such as GED and English as a second language offerings. Adult education is only for high school dropouts, is how the thinking goes. This stigma keeps learners from participating in programs that could open up future opportunities. Adult education programs should instead be viewed, and potentially rebranded, as a vehicle to provide foundational skills that facilitate further skill and career development.

2. **Integrate programmatic support services while increasing accessibility and affordability.** Creating better experiences for learners requires solutions that take into account the many complex factors in their lives. A holistic approach must be employed to ensure learner success. Support services, ranging from childcare and transportation to food and housing, must be addressed to meet the basic needs of students entering programs.

In a field that can focus on technical solutions, there needs to be a shift to intentionally working with adult learners and educators to co-design cost-effective models that work for everyone. One example is moving to a competency-based model to increase student flexibility and decrease the focus on seat time. A second example is integrating paid, work-based learning opportunities into programs so that learners can earn income while enrolled.

3. **Foster systems-level collaboration, coordination, and cross-sector leadership.** For education to live up to its promise of resolving inequities, there must be more impactful and consistent collaboration with other critical systems, such as housing, criminal justice, workforce, food security, health and transportation. Leaders across various sectors and boundaries, including adult learners, must be at the table helping to design and implement innovative solutions. Upcoming reauthorizations, such as the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA); early lessons learned from implementation of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V); and lessons learned from the 10 MTMU teams illustrate the importance of and opportunity for collaboration across multiple systems.

> "You make sure the bonds are strong by communicating with partners, bringing them into the circle so that they are a part of regular meetings. Those are times when we can share our success stories with them, and they can share their success stories with us."

**Jeffrey Abramowitz,
Team Pathways to Prosperity**

Collaboration Checklist

"Collaboration is key to creating change."
Judy Hofer, Team HIVE

Things to consider when creating and maintaining a team focused on innovating:

- ✅ Create a shared vision.
- ✅ Have strong leadership — and empower team members to make decisions that keep the work moving forward.
- ✅ Gather members from across your organization, including adult learners who should be included in design and decision-making.
- ✅ Do the groundwork that it takes to have trusting relationships (e.g., retreats or meaningful one-on-one conversations).
- ✅ Consider and champion equity, especially along the lines of race and class, throughout team selection and vision crafting.
- ✅ Create shared ownership that allows everyone to have skin in the game.
- ✅ Generate as many ideas as possible.
- ✅ Celebrate small wins.

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