

New Skills for Youth

TENNESSEE

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Tennessee was one of 10 states selected to participate in New Skills for Youth (NSFY), an initiative enhancing state efforts to increase the number of learners across the country who are prepared for success in both college and career. Between 2016 and 2019, Tennessee strengthened its career readiness system through NSFY by:

Establishing a statewide career pathways certification program



In 2018, Tennessee rebranded and expanded Pathways TN, the strategy to expand high-quality regional career pathways across the state, to create Tennessee Pathways. Tennessee Pathways aims to ensure that learners are prepared with credentials to enter the workforce directly after high school or have already made progress toward a postsecondary credential by the time they arrive in college. To better communicate its vision, Tennessee established the Tennessee Pathways Certification, which recognizes career pathways that meet specific criteria for quality. Certified Tennessee Pathways must include relevant coursework, early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs) and work-based learning, cross-sector partnerships, and alignment to labor market needs.

Aligning regions and service delivery across state systems

Early in the NSFY initiative, Tennessee recognized that fragmentation of education, workforce and economic development regions and service delivery was a barrier to efficiency and effectiveness. To address this fragmentation, then-Gov. Bill Haslam directed the Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD), and the Department of Economic and Community Development (ECD) to work together to align their service delivery regions and improve coordination. As a result, the three departments now function within the same nine regions across the state. This approach allowed the Tennessee NSFY team to better coordinate with LWD and ECD to implement high-quality career pathways aligned to the needs of reach region.

“Through the use of NSFY funds, Jackson-Madison County School System was able to jump-start the Local Options and Opportunities Program that allows students to earn high school credits, industry certifications and postsecondary credits while working in a manufacturing setting. **Without the NSFY grant, we would not have been able to implement the industry certification** or [add the] postsecondary piece to the options and opportunities for our students. Students participating in this program **gained valuable work and life experience that might not otherwise have been possible.**”

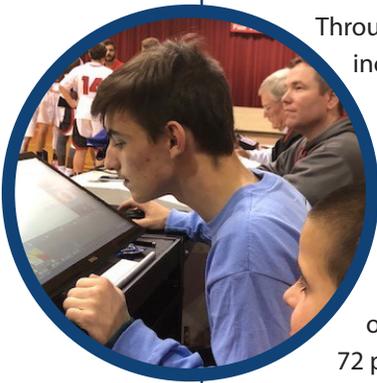
— Jennifer Barham, CTE Supervisor,
Jackson-Madison County
School System



Hiring and training regional coordinators

In 2018, the Tennessee NSFY team hired and trained nine [Tennessee Pathways regional coordinators](#) to support the planning and delivery of high-quality career pathways within each of the Tennessee Pathways regions. The coordinators connect area education and workforce professionals to align high school and postsecondary coursework with local labor market needs. They are responsible for supporting schools and districts as they create and expand cross-sector partnerships and opportunities for students. Regional coordinators work with LWD, ECD, regional Career Technical Education (CTE) consultants and local employers to identify priority labor market needs and align career pathways with high-wage, in-demand opportunities. Government and management of the regional coordinators are split between the secondary and postsecondary sectors, which ensures that Tennessee Pathways can effectively support learners as they transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

Expanding access to EPSOs



Throughout the NSFY initiative, Tennessee took steps to expand access to EPSOs for learners. To incentivize student completion of EPSOs, the [state's Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) plan](#) includes a new Ready Graduate accountability indicator that measures student readiness for postsecondary education or careers based on SAT/ACT scores, completion of EPSOs and attainment of industry credentials. The state also provides financial support for students so that each learner, regardless of economic background, can access EPSOs. Students can receive funding to cover tuition for their first two dual enrollment courses at community colleges or Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs) through the State Dual Enrollment Grant. As of October 2019, every district in the state offers at least one type of EPSO to their students, and 72 percent of districts offer at least four types of EPSOs.

MAJOR STATE POLICY WINS

Tennessee ESSA Plan (2017) [↗](#)

The Tennessee ESSA accountability system includes a Ready Graduate accountability indicator that measures student readiness for postsecondary education or careers based on SAT/ACT scores, completion of EPSOs and attainment of industry credentials.

Tennessee Pathways (2018) [↗](#)

In 2018, then-Gov. Bill Haslam announced an expansion and rebranding of Pathways TN to Tennessee Pathways and an investment of almost \$2 million in regional coordinators, who provide technical assistance to school systems and guidance on increasing the number of career pathway opportunities available to students. In addition, Tennessee Pathways recognizes exemplary districts and schools through a competitive certification process.

Senate Bill 805 (2019) [↗](#)

This bill enacted the Governor's Investment in Vocational Education (GIVE) Act, which was proposed by Gov. Bill Lee. The GIVE Act expands access to work-based learning through regional partnerships and increases the availability of dual enrollment opportunities in technical fields, with funding coming from state lottery proceeds.

Future Workforce Initiative (2019) [↗](#)

Gov. Bill Lee launched an initiative to strengthen career pathways in the technology sector. The goals for the initiative are to (1) develop 100 new middle school programs and triple the number of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)-designated schools by 2020; (2) grow the number of teachers qualified to teach work-based learning and computer science; and (3) expand access to STEM dual credit, Advanced Placement and dual enrollment. Gov. Lee has requested \$4 million from the Legislature to support the initiative.

Tennessee NSFY Impact *by the Numbers*

415

Number of applications submitted by 162 high schools for the inaugural Tennessee Pathways Certification

122

Number of career pathways that were awarded the inaugural Tennessee Pathways Certification, representing 74 high schools

100%

Percentage of high school students in Tennessee who have access to at least four early postsecondary courses

72%

Percentage of districts in the state that offer students at least four types of EPSOs

6

Percentage point increase in seamless college enrollment since 2014



“As a high school student preparing to enter the workforce, you do not know what options are out there. This program **helps students to realize and earn credentials to prepare for those options.** We highly encourage all industries to get involved in programs like these.”

— Erica Lasley, Human Resources Manager, Stanley Black and Decker





Sustainability Strategy



Throughout the NSFY initiative, Tennessee established an infrastructure and partnerships to support the sustainability of its work. Central to the state's sustainability efforts are the regional coordinators that were launched under Tennessee Pathways. These regional coordinators have strengthened collaboration and service delivery across the state's education, workforce and economic development systems. Additionally, the GIVE initiative will provide more funding for students' dual enrollment at TCATs and promote more public-private partnerships to increase student participation in skilled trades. Moving forward, Tennessee plans to leverage the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) to strengthen Tennessee Pathways.

Tennessee NSFY Local Impact: Jackson-Madison County School System

The Local Options and Opportunities Program (LOOP) is a partnership between Jackson-Madison County School System (JMCSS), TCAT Jackson and local industry partners. LOOP allows students to earn academic and early postsecondary credit with a modified school day by using an online learning lab model with teacher support and working in a manufacturing facility the remainder of the day. Students in the program are provided compensation for the workday, a teacher support coach in the online learning lab, and a work support coach to ensure on-the-job success. Through the use of NSFY funds, JMCSS was able to secure the equipment needed for students to complete the online learning and postsecondary industry certification portions of the program. This program has allowed special populations, especially those who are economically disadvantaged, to participate in work-based learning experiences and EPSOs that may have been too costly otherwise.



ABOUT NSFY

NSFY is a \$75 million national initiative developed by JPMorgan Chase & Co. As part of this initiative, the Council of Chief State School Officers, Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group worked with states to improve their career readiness systems. NSFY consisted of two phases. During Phase One (March-October 2016), states conducted a comprehensive needs assessment and developed action plans to examine and transform their career readiness systems and expand the opportunities available to learners. During Phase Two (January 2017-December 2019), states executed their three-year plans to transform their career readiness systems.