The Pathways to Prosperity Network

More than 50% of young Americans reach their mid-twenties without the skills and labor market credentials essential for success in today’s increasingly demanding economy. Despite the nation’s high unemployment rate, about 4 million jobs in the U.S. remain unfilled because public and private employers are unable to find qualified candidates. In 2011, the Harvard Graduate School of Education released a report, Paths to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century, that called for an intensive effort on the part of employers, educators, and government leaders to build pathways that link work and learning, are aligned with regional labor market demand, and help ensure that young people have the skills and credentials that they need to succeed. The goal of the Pathways to Prosperity (PtoP) Network, a joint initiative of the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) and Jobs for the Future (JFF), is to help states build a system of grades 9-14 career pathways that enable all young people to successfully transition from high school through a postsecondary credential to a high-skills, family-supporting career.

The 9-state Pathways to Prosperity Network convenes key stakeholders from the fields of education, business, and government to build grades 9-14 career pathways that are aligned with high-growth sectors of the regional economy and that combine rigorous academics with powerful technical education. In addition to building statewide political and policy leadership on these issues, the PtoP Network operates at the regional level to ensure that its work is responsive to local needs, including those of regional labor markets. Key sectors of the economy identified for building career pathways include STEM fields such as information technology, health care, and advanced manufacturing. Member states in the PtoP Network participate in a community of practice in which they identify common challenges, learn from each other’s strengths, and take advantage of resources provided by JFF and Harvard’s technical assistance teams. The goal is to create statewide systems of career pathways that ensure more youth complete high school, attain postsecondary credentials with currency in the labor market, and get launched on careers.

Asset-Mapping Process

The work of the PtoP Network in each region generally begins with an asset-mapping process, which is undertaken by education and workforce professionals from JFF and HGSE in collaboration with local leaders. JFF and HGSE staff will visit the region for several days, during which they will, through a series of interviews, tap the expertise of local stakeholders in order to gain a better understanding of the work already being done – and the resources available – in the region. Prior to their visit, JFF and HGSE staff will research regional labor-market needs and trends and existing state and local programs and policies relevant to the Pathways work. The JFF/HGSE team will then compile the information that they have gathered and share it with stakeholders in the region. By assessing gaps, strengths, challenges and opportunities to be considered by regional and state leadership teams as they plan and begin to build pathways systems, this process sets the stage for local collaboration in the development of strong career pathways for young people.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact us: Charlotte Cahill (ccahill@jff.org) • Amy Loyd (aloyd@jff.org) • Nancy Hoffman (nhoffman@jff.org) • Bob Schwartz (Robert_Schwartz@gse.harvard.edu)