Overview of Asset-Mapping Site Visits

Introduction

The Jobs for the Future (JFF) and Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) Pathways to Prosperity (PtoP) team generally begins its work in a region with an asset-mapping process. This document is intended to provide you with an overview of our thinking about that process, including stakeholders we might anticipate interviewing and what questions we'll want to ask. The questions and list of roles are generic. We expect to tailor the process to suit your needs.

Asset mapping will be conducted by a small (2-3 person) team from JFF and HGSE. In addition to conducting research on your state and region, we will schedule a site visit of 3-4 days to interview 15 to 20 key stakeholders, including educators, employers, non-profit leaders, and others you think will help you and us understand the work that needs to be done in order to build pathways from high school through a postsecondary credential to employment. (See the end of this document for our working concept of “a region.”)

The asset-mapping team will produce and share with you a report summarizing its observations and other materials, such as an executive summary of the report or a PowerPoint presentation based on it, that can be used to share the results of the asset-mapping process with key stakeholders. We will, of course, discuss with you the audience for these, and what materials should be shared and which kept confidential.

Purpose

The purpose of the exercise is to begin a collaborative process to assess gaps, strengths, challenges, and opportunities to be considered by the regional and state leadership teams and to serve as the foundation for the 12- to 18-month work plan that you will develop with support from the PtoP team. This preliminary work should also introduce the project to stakeholders, support the development of a local working group, and recruit additional local leaders, particularly employers, with the motivation, influence and resource “muscle” needed to implement the work plan.

Local Participation in Research

The asset-mapping process is intended to tap local expertise, build capacity, and open doors for additional partner buy-in. Thus, we highly recommend that a local person who will play a role in the ongoing regional effort join the JFF/HGSE team as an interviewer. Please identify a local person who will be involved in the regional initiative and who is available to participate in the majority, if not all, of the interviews.

We will also count on your assistance in gathering key documents for the JFF/HGSE team to review prior to the site visit. Please identify reports and data that you think will help us better understand your region and its dynamics as we conduct our desk-based research. We’re particularly interested in information on funding sources of CTE and other programs that support young people in preparing for the labor market, education-employer partnerships, and regional demand for young workers.
We will rely on your leadership in selecting interviewees and scheduling interviews. We are happy to hold a mix of group and individual interviews.

The HGSE/JFF team will make its own travel reservations, but welcomes lodging recommendations.

**Asset-Mapping Process Overview**

The JFF/HGSE asset-mapping process will capitalize on existing research and engage local partners in an iterative process to understand the landscape in which the Pathways work will take place. Steps for you will include:

1. Conference call with JFF/HGSE staff to orient asset-mapping team to local initiatives & mapping plan
   - Include state and/or local organizer
2. Gather secondary research reports and send to JFF/HGSE team
   - Include map of funding sources and uses
   - Include any recent labor-market data identifying growth sectors and demand for young workers
3. Gather additional LMI on demand and supply (see “Sector Demand for Young Workers” below.)
4. Discuss preliminary findings and interviewee list with JFF/HGSE team
5. Schedule interviews:
   - Schedule 3- to 4-day trip, 15 to 20 interviews (individual and group), 4 to 5 per day
   - Schedule interviewees, be prepared to add interviewees during the visit
   - It’s most efficient if interviewees come to central location, although in some cases you may recommend that we travel to the interviewee’s location due to scheduling issues or a need to get a feel for the site, their team, etc.
6. Debrief and findings discussion with HGSE/JFF mapping team
7. Review report written by JFF/HGSE team
8. Bring key stakeholders together to discuss findings and how they can be used as the basis for a work plan

**Identifying Interviewees: Stakeholder Interview Types**

The asset-mapping process will be most successful if it includes interviewees that represent a variety of sectors and groups in your region. We will count on you to identify the appropriate representatives from the groups listed below and to help to determine which interviewees can be interviewed in groups or should be interviewed separately.

Please begin to develop a list of recommended interviewees and share with us as soon as you can. We may make suggestions additions based on secondary research and look forward to refining a final list with you.

**Workplace Leaders**

- Current business-education partnerships
- Chambers of commerce and major employer-led organizations
- Regional and municipal economic developers
- Industry sector/professional associations
- State Apprenticeship coordinator
• Relevant labor unions

**Education (Post-Secondary/K-12) and Workforce Leaders**
- State education/higher education leaders responsible for career education
- Community college presidents, provosts, and deans
- Universities and research centers focused on employment & career education
- Local workforce investment boards
- Local education agencies and school districts
- High school principals with career academies/programs
- Secondary teachers and faculty

**Intermediary and Support Organizations**
- Foundations working on career education, workforce (NFWS if extant)
- P-20 education, economic development, and workforce agencies
- Organizations that provide learning resources (e.g. engaged museums, federal laboratories, research centers, other)
- Community-based CTE organizations serving at-risk students/job seekers
- Students and student organizations

**Other Organizations that Local Leads Consider Critical to a Pathways Effort**

**Assessment Topics and Research Questions**

The team hopes to answer the following questions. Protocols for each interview will include only a few of these questions based on the interviewee’s background and time available. Local partners should also add or adjust questions using their knowledge of the environment.

**Employer Champions**
- What initiatives have engaged employers in the region’s education and training systems (including non-profit and public sector employers)? What are their outcomes or current status?
- What business, civic, and non-profit organizations have played significant leadership roles?
- What individual leaders and companies have “led the charge,” recruited their peers, contributed resources, or otherwise shown a commitment to preparing young people for work and careers?
- What motivations drove these leaders and other employers’ participation in these initiatives? (Do any have a strong apprenticeship or internship heritage?)
- What challenges did the initiatives and employer champions encounter? What supports, policies, or conditions would have helped them succeed?

**Sector Demand for Young Workers (LMI-based questions)**
- What industry sectors and occupations have the potential to increase employment opportunities for youth and competitiveness for employers, according to labor market data?
- Industry and Occupational Demand:
  - What industries have the most potential for job growth?
  - What occupations are likely to be gained and lost in the future?
- Skills Demand:
  - How will the demands for skills change in the future? (e.g. skills for new products, technology, quality control, export requirements)
• Overall Workforce Supply
  o What are the demographics of the labor force?
  o What are the outputs of postsecondary education and training providers?

• Supply/Demand Dashboard and Analysis
  o How does supply compare to demand in the sectors that present opportunities for young workers?

Intermediaries
• What umbrella organizations represent the business community, how are they organized, and which are strongest (e.g. chamber, sector association, leadership group)?
• What organizations play roles as intermediaries between employers, secondary and post secondary education and training providers? Who is helping align programs with labor market demand?
• What is their experience working with community colleges and public schools? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What would they need to function more effectively?
• What intermediary functions are not being filled by anyone in your region? (e.g. employers to high schools, employers to community colleges or universities, high schools to colleges and vocational schools, educators to economic developers)

Current Education and Training Capacity: High Schools
• What is the kind and extent of career advising (including the provision of information about the labor market) and at what grade level does it begin?
• What technical and vocational training is offered high schools (career academies, separate vocational high schools, theme-oriented learning communities)?
• How do students interact with employers through internships, job shadowing, service learning?
• Are there dual enrollment and/or tech prep opportunities?
• What are the mathematics requirements for high school graduation?
• Are there explicit initiatives to integrate career readiness, career training and core academic competencies (as Linked Learning and High Schools that Work intend to do)?
• How widespread is participation in career-focused coursework (such as 3 courses in a single career area or exploration of a wide variety of careers)?
• What is the difference in high school completion rates for students in CTE versus other pathways? What are the differences in postsecondary entrance and completion?
• What political dynamics in the school board, community, and parent groups affect support for (or opposition to) career-oriented education in this region?

Current Education and Training Capacity: Community Colleges
• What educational institutions are particularly effective or committed to career-oriented education and alignment with labor market needs? Which ones have the strongest reputation for meeting employer needs?
• What information (e.g. age, gender, race/ethnicity, income) is available about who gets into and completes high-value certificate or associate-level career pathways?
• What is working well in terms of: a) designing and aligning training to meet employer demand; b) offering career guidance and recruiting students to career programs; c) creating work-based learning opportunities; and d) helping students to get hired?
• How do colleges monitor and respond to changes in which skills are in demand and how do they engage employers in training design?
• How do employers help or hinder colleges’ efforts to prepare young people for careers?
• What barriers do college staff members encounter in accomplishing these goals?
• What policies or resources help or hinder their efforts?
• How are institutions monitored and held accountable for quality and employment outcomes?

Cross-System Collaboration
• To what extent is each set of education and training institutions (or individual institutions) collaborating with other segments of the education and training pipeline? Is there a formal P-16 or K-20 council, and how is it functioning?
• Who are the leaders and champions for collaboration?
• What are the institutions’ challenges to collaborating across systems?
• What resources do each of these groups use now, and what is missing?
• How are employer or economic development groups supporting collaboration among the institutions that make up the pipeline?
• What political dynamics are affecting support for (or opposition to) career-oriented education as opposed to the transfer function of community colleges?
• What forms of leadership and resources would be needed to build strong collaboration between the stakeholders?
• What longitudinal data is being collected to study and link the high school, college, and workforce outcomes of students? What systems or resources are still needed to collect longitudinal data for these outcomes?

Funding and Return on Investment
• What sources of funding are supporting career-oriented training for high-school-age young people in this community/region (e.g. Perkins, dual enrollment)?
• How is that funding being spent, and with what organizations? How does the WIB spend its funding for youth?
• What are the major outcomes of that spending?
• How are these streams of funding aligned? (To what extent is information shared among funders, and are their strategies adjusted to complement one another?)
• In what ways are these funding streams oriented to the needs of employers in the region?

Policy and System Recommendations
• What are the major state, regional, or city initiatives to enhance job growth and opportunities for young worker training and advancement?
• How do policy, legal, and regulatory factors influence employers’ decisions to hire and train new younger workers?
• How can training organizations be encouraged to understand and meet employer demand? How can the LMI be improved?
• How do policies and financing systems affect training providers’ responsiveness to market needs? How can identified barriers be removed?
• How can the quality of career education programs be improved?
• How else can responsiveness and communication with employers be strengthened?
* Research Note: What Is a Region?

In colloquial terms, workforce and economic development professionals think of a region’s boundaries in terms of how far most business people or workers are willing to commute (usually by car) to attend work or conduct business in person in a day. That driving distance often crosses many legal or political jurisdictions. This colloquial definition can be translated to the more technically defined “commuting patterns” that statistical agencies use. Practical applications like the Pathways to Prosperity initiative usually need to draw on both statistically measured areas and the shared perceptions and priorities of regional leaders in defining a region.

Priorities of local leaders. Even within the field of economic development, local professionals may argue about defining their particular region’s boundaries. Since regions rarely adhere to clearly defined political jurisdictions, regional boundaries are often determined by the priorities of the initiative’s leaders and the issues they hope to address. For instance, regional transit, sewerage, environmental, or industry-cluster leaders define their regions differently based on the systems and funding streams with which they work. Even among those solely concerned with industry cluster development, the boundaries within which a “regional strategy” operates may shift based on the geography of key businesses or their suppliers in the cluster.

Labor market guidelines. A labor market-based definition of a region is particularly consistent with the human capital focus of Pathways to Prosperity. Commuting patterns lend themselves to this definition and are widely recognized (if not strictly followed) in the field. These are the patterns used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and by the Office of Management & Budget, which defines Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) in the United States. Outlying counties around a core urban area are included in the MSA if there is a high level of commuting between counties (i.e., the total share of workers in-commuting and out-commuting is 25% or more).

Jurisdictions as boundaries. Counties tend to be a key unit of analysis for determining a region since the majority of relevant statistics are most accessible at the county level. The process of determining a region, therefore, often centers on the question of whether to include or exclude particular counties. (In New England, counties have less political and economic significance than cities and towns; instead, New England City and Town Areas (NECTAs), which are areas similar to counties, are defined based on town units.)

The Pathways team may take into account additional want to include an additional element in determining a region by overlaying education and training districts -- school, community college or Workforce Investment Board -- over the regional map being considered.

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