CCSSO's Career Readiness Initiative

State Team Self-Reflection Framework

Background

The recommendations of CCSSO's Career Readiness Task Force, released in December of 2014, articulate key action steps to help states better prepare students for the 21st century world of work and reduce the skills gap in high-wage, high-demand fields. Through CCSSO's newly-formed support effort known as the Career Readiness Initiative (CRI), states deeply committed to the recommendations have formed cross-sectoral teams to develop and implement a strategic plan to put those recommendations into practice.

CCSSO, in partnership with the Education Strategy Group (ESG), developed the following self-reflection tool to help state teams gain clarity around the strengths and gaps in their current career readiness strategies. This tool is part of a larger planning framework state teams will be provided with at the kick-off meeting in Austin in order to develop comprehensive career readiness plans to advance the recommendations of the task force in their states. CCSSO will provide states with access to national experts and state team coaches as part of its comprehensive technical assistance support.

CRI State Team Self-Reflection Tool Purpose and Use

State team leads are encouraged to use this self-reflection tool to prepare for the September 30-October 1 launch meeting. The recommendations of the CCSSO task force, expressed as "commitments" below, have been unpacked into specific targeted outcomes that CCSSO will support all state teams in reaching. Those outcomes are further clarified in the next section called "self-reflection questions" that will help state teams both assess the current status of their policies and practices, and think more clearly and specifically about what they seek to accomplish through the work ahead.

For each of the targeted outcomes below, state teams will use the self-reflection questions to assess the current status of their policies and practices and come to consensus about that work using a 1-4 rating scale:

- **1 = Limited Progress**: This outcome is not yet a priority within the state. There is very little activity and no significant effort to address this outcome yet.
- **2 = Emerging Practice**: This outcome is becoming a priority for the state. Early work has been done within the state to lay a foundation to reach this outcome.
- **3 =Established Practice**: This outcome is a priority for the state. Policies have been adopted and work is being implemented across the state that can be strengthened and scaled.
- **4 = Sustained Practice**: The state has fully met this outcome. Policies have taken root; programs have been scaled; systems are sustainable; and no major work is needed.

In addition, state examples related to each targeted outcome have been included to provide a sampling of how some states have designed policies and programs that address these goals.

Directions for Use

1. State team leads are encouraged to share this self-reflection tool with their team members in advance of the CRI launch convening as part of their preparation. Team members are encouraged to rate their state's current status using the tool, collect evidence to support those ratings, and be prepared to discuss that assessment at the convening.
2. During the CRI launch convening, members of each state team will gather with their assigned coach to discuss and probe the policies and practices already in place in their states using their ratings from this tool as fodder for the discussion. State team coaches will facilitate a group discussion regarding individual team members' ratings for each targeted outcome with the goal of reaching consensus on the ratings across the state team. Team members will be asked to provide evidence or rationale to support those ratings to help develop the full team's awareness of the different career readiness efforts happening across the state.
3. Following the launch convening, the ratings and evidence will be used to help state teams establish baselines, or starting points, for their CRI strategic plans.

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Career Readiness Initiative Vision

Through deep and sustained cross-sectoral engagement, the Career Readiness Initiative will align K-12 career pathways and programs with the high-skill, high-demand needs of business and industry to better prepare students for success in college and the 21st century world of work

Commitment 1: Employer Engagement

Establish a structured, sustainable process through which education and employer communities use real-time labor market data to set priorities to strengthen and scale career pathways and programs to prepare students for specific high-skill, high-demand employment opportunities.

Commitment 2: Quality Career Pathways

Design and implement policies and related strategies to strengthen and scale career pathways that span secondary and postsecondary levels, embed rigorous core academic and career-technical content, include high-quality work-based learning experiences, and culminate in credentials that open doors to high-skill, high-demand jobs.

Commitment 3: Accountability

Make career readiness a higher priority in state accountability systems by incorporating a more robust set of career-focused indicators that measure and value successful completion of meaningful pathways, work-based learning experiences, and credentials.

Targeted Outcomes: Employer Engagement

1a. **Identifying high-skill, high-demand sectors:** The state partners with the employer community to create a structured and dynamic process that uses current and projected labor market data to identify high-skill, high-demand sectors and occupations where career pathways should be prioritized and scaled.

1b. **Aligning skills and competencies with labor market:** The state enables and supports an employer-led, sector-based process to articulate the progression of skills and competencies required by each priority sector to ensure career pathways and programs are aligned with industry needs.

1c. **Dynamic review process:** The state and employer community create and support a formal process and feedback loop to review the impact of career programs and pathways to inform their continuous improvement.

Targeted Outcomes: Quality Career Pathways

2a. **Quality and rigor in pathways:** The state has policies and processes in place to ensure all career pathways and programs endorsed by the state develop the core academic knowledge, technical skills, and employability skills students need to be successful in college and the 21st century work place.

2b. **Expanded work-based learning opportunities:** The state develops and implements policies and programs to expand work-based learning for secondary students by making them an integral component of career pathways that connects classroom learning with the work place.

2c. **Credentials have value:** The state adopts and operationalizes policies that requires career pathways and programs to culminate in validated credentials with labor market value.

Targeted Outcomes: Accountability

3a. **Career-focused indicators:** The state has incorporated a robust set of career-focused indicators into its accountability system that reflects its career readiness goals.

3b. **Indicators have accountability weight:** The state drives change in school and classroom practice by making career-focused indicators count adequately towards school and district accountability metrics to better prepare students for success in college and the 21st century work place.

3c. **Student credit for career readiness:** The state has adapted graduation requirements and scholarship criteria to give students credit for meeting rigorous career readiness indicators.

Current Status: Employer Engagement			Current Status: Quality Career Pathways			Current Status: Accountability		
Outcome 1a:	Outcome 1b:	Outcome 1c:	Outcome 2a:	Outcome 2b:	Outcome 2c:	Outcome 3a:	Outcome 3b:	Outcome 3c:
□ 1	□ 1	□ 1	□ 1	□ 1	□ 1	□ 1	□ 1	□ 1
□ 2	□ 2	□ 2	□ 2	□ 2	□ 2	□ 2	□ 2	□ 2
□ 3	□ 3	□ 3	□ 3	□ 3	□ 3	□ 3	□ 3	□ 3
□ 4	□ 4	□ 4	□ 4	□ 4	□ 4	□ 4	□ 4	□ 4

1 = Limited Progress: This outcome is not yet a priority within the state. There is very little activity and no significant effort to address this outcome yet.

2 = Emerging Practice: This outcome is becoming a priority for the state. Early work has been done within the state to lay a foundation to reach this outcome.

3 =Established Practice: This outcome is a priority for the state. Policies have been adopted and work is being implemented across the state that can be strengthened and scaled.

4 = Sustained Practice: The state has fully met this outcome. Policies have taken root; programs have been scaled; systems are sustainable; and no major work is needed.

Self-Reflection Questions: Employer Engagement	Self-Reflection Questions: Career Pathways	Self-Reflection Questions: Accountability

Targeted outcome 1a: Identifying high-skill, high-demand sectors
• Does your state have a formalized statewide structure or process, through which to regularly convene the K-12, higher education, and employer communities, including mega industry clusters, to review real-time labor market data and establish priorities for career pathways and programs?
• If not, are there entities already in place that could be repositioned to serve this purpose, or will new structures need to be developed and adopted?
• If so, is that structure codified in law or through an inter-governmental agreement between the SEA, the higher education system, and workforce development agencies to be sustained across leadership transitions?
• To what extent does that process use real-time labor market data to inform classification of industries that are high-skill, high-demand?
• To what extent does the state process identify statewide priorities for career pathways while also allowing for regional differentiation based on local economic needs?
• Are the results of that process used to inform state policy around career pathway implementation, program approval, and funding such that programs that lead to credentials in high-skill, high-demand industries get prioritized?
	Targeted outcome 2a: Quality and rigor in pathways
	• Has the state mapped the progression of skills and competencies required for entry-level success in priority industries and translated those into defined standards?
	• To what extent does the state use those standards to modify and/or design career pathways that span secondary and postsecondary levels?
	• Do pathways offer multiple entry and exit points to enable students to change paths as their interests and goals evolve?
	• Has the state supported the use of effective and scalable instructional models, like project-based learning, to ensure that rigorous academic and technical content is delivered in a manner that engages students and makes relevancy for their futures clear?
	• To what extent has the state helped districts and schools recruit industry professionals with sought-after technical knowledge and skills and demonstrated teaching ability to high school teaching positions? Has it removed policy barriers and streamlined certification procedures to make teaching more attractive to those candidates?
	• Does the state provide professional development opportunities and incentives to enable core academic and career-technical teachers to earn credentials in high-skill, high-demand fields and strengthen their instructional practices in related pathways?
	• Has the state identified and supported evidence-based, scalable career counseling models, beginning in middle school, to help students make sound, well-informed decisions about course and pathway participation?
	• Has the state made high quality, career-oriented opportunities, like career pathways, widely available in secondary settings, including comprehensive high schools, so that all students can gain a deeper understanding of how their coursework connects with postsecondary options and opportunities?
		Targeted outcome 3a: Career-focused indicators
		• What career-focused indicators are currently included in the state's accountability system? E.g.
		  ○ Completion of career pathways in priority sectors
		  ○ Completion of work-based learning experiences authentically assessed by employers
		  ○ Number and percent of students who earn college credit that transfers to a higher education institution
		  ○ Number of industry certifications and credentials earned in priority sectors as an outcome of career pathways
		• To the extent that career-focused indicators are collected, are they also publicly reported and built into the state accountability system?
		• If such indicators aren't currently a substantial component of the state accountability system, which indicators might be ripe for incorporation into the system? What strategy or process does the state have in place already, or could it create, to accomplish that? How would the higher education and employer communities be engaged in that process?

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Targeted outcome 1b: Aligning skills and competencies with the labor market • Have employers led an extensive and thorough process through which they've identified the progression of skills and competencies, i.e. academic knowledge, technical skills, and employability skills, needed in each priority sector/pathway? • Are there specific industries and/or regions within the state where this work has been done most successfully? If so, to what extent are they being used as models across the state? • Has that progression of skills and competencies been validated by employers through a formal process that's recognized, respected, and relied upon by business and industry? • Are these skills and competencies well reflected in the standards used within career pathways?	**Targeted outcome 2b: Expanded work-based learning opportunities** • Has the state ensured the alignment between applied or work-based learning opportunities, secondary curriculum, and prioritized sector needs? • Has the state supported the implementation of work-based learning experiences, either at work sites or within a simulated environment, making them an integral component of pathways aligned with sector needs? • Do those work-based learning experiences include authentic assessments of the experience by employers? • Do the experiences encompass the full continuum of work-based learning opportunities – from awareness and exploration to preparation and training - to give students insight into the range of careers available to them and entry requirements for each to help them make informed choices about their long-term career goals?	**Targeted outcome 3b: Indicators have accountability weight** • Of the career-focused indicators included in the state's accountability system, which are factored into the metrics used to measure school improvement? • To what extent has the state examined, or will it examine, the degree to which those indicators appear to help accelerate the number of students who complete high quality career programs and pathways? • What other career-focused accountability indicators might be factored into the metrics used to measure school improvement? How will the state engage higher education and business and industry to help make those determinations so that they are aligned with the needs of the postsecondary communities?
Targeted Outcome 1c: Dynamic review process • Does the state, in partnership with the employer community, continually assess real-time labor market needs and make adjustments to their classification of industries as high-skill, high-demand? • Has the state adopted new policies and adjusted existing policies and internal structures to remove barriers and facilitate the successful development and implementation of state career pathways? • Is there an inter-governmental process, agreement, or structure that facilitates cross-agency collaboration on the review and publication of data, especially related to career pathway participants' progress and success in earning credentials with labor market value? • Does the state use a consistent set of shared measures to determine the impact of the state's career pathways investments on labor market outcomes?	**Targeted outcome 2c: Credentials have value** • Does the state use funding and program approval processes to scale up pathways in high-skill, high-demand sectors and scale down or phase out those that don't lead to credentials of value? • To what extent does the state have a cross-sectoral process to operationalize industry-recognized credentials? • Has the state ensured that credentials, certifications, or degrees earned through pathways are "stackable" and articulate to progressively higher-level credentials, certifications, or degrees? • Has the state provided secondary students with access to postsecondary coursework, like dual enrollment, through which they can earn college credit? • Has the state created systemic articulation agreements between secondary and postsecondary schools to award credit to high school students who complete college coursework in priority sectors?	**Targeted outcome 3c: Student credit for career readiness** • Has the state offered a portfolio of opportunities for students to demonstrate career readiness– such as industry credentials, industry certificates, and CTE endorsements - that count for academic credit? • Has the state created diploma endorsements that award credit and provide extra recognition to students for fulfilling the requirements of high-skill, high-demand career pathways, including earning credentials of value? • Has the state recognized competency-based approaches to demonstrating student knowledge, such as work-based learning or capstone projects, that count toward graduation requirements?

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State Examples: Employer Engagement	State Examples: Quality Career Pathways	State Examples: Accountability
1. **Louisiana's Jumpstart Initiative** seeks to improve the economic outlook of local communities by aligning career programming in secondary schools with the specific needs of labor markets in order to prepare high school graduates for entry level work in those high-skill, high-demand areas. Collaboration between K-12, higher education, and business and industry is imperative to this work. Louisiana has created the Workforce Investment Council through its Jump Start initiative to provide a mechanism for business leaders to set the direction for career pathways in the state. The Council, made up of business executives and education leaders in K-12 and higher education, uses workforce data to identify high-wage careers that offer the best opportunity for employment and continued education. From this information, they establish an approved list of pathways and credentials that districts can offer. The state also approves an additional set of pathways designed regionally by teams of educators, businesses, and postsecondary faculty to meet regional workforce needs. Only districts and schools offering these approved pathways can receive state funding for implementation. 2. **North Carolina** passed Senate Bill 402 in 2013 requiring school districts, local industries, employers, and workforce development boards to assess specific state and local workforce needs and identify industry certifications and credentials to meet those needs. It also requires the Department of Commerce to annually assess and update the State Board of Education on the high-need, high-skill occupations that exist within the state so that districts and schools can continually prioritize career pathways aligned with those needs. 3. **Kentucky** passed Senate Bill 38 in 2012 to strengthen career readiness of secondary students by aligning the work of high schools more tightly with the needs of higher education and business and industry. SB38 calls for the creation of career pathways and wall-to-wall academies to help all students, but especially at-risk	1. **Kentucky's Senate Bill 38**, that links the work of high schools more tightly with the needs of the postsecondary community by legislating career pathways, sets a high standard for the quality of those pathways: "Career Pathway means a coherent, articulated sequence of rigorous academic and career-related courses, commencing in ninth grade and leading to an associate degree, an industry-recognized certificate or license, or a baccalaureate or higher degree. A career pathway is developed, implemented, and maintained in partnership among secondary and postsecondary education institutions, businesses, and employers. Career pathways are available to all students, including adult learners, and are designed to lead to rewarding careers." **2. California's $500M Career Pathways Trust** provides competitive grants to LEAs, charter schools, community colleges, or regional occupation centers that create K-14 career pathways that employ work-based learning specialists who act as intermediaries between schools and business; establish collaborative regional cross-sectoral partnerships; embed rigorous academic core and technical skill core into coursework aligned with priority sectors; articulate pathways with postsecondary institutions; and create resource efficiencies by aligning work with federal requirements such as Perkins. **3. New York's career-technical program approval and re-approval process** has served as a model to strengthen career pathways and programs. The state requires all career programs to offer high school students the opportunity to gain real-world work experience, earn college credit, and obtain an industry-recognized or postsecondary credential, certificate, or degree. As part of the program re-approval process, school district officials and third party experts conduct site visits to schools to assess the quality of curriculum, especially the extent to which rigorous academics are integrated in coursework; ensure faculty are certified in their respective academic or technical fields; assess student results on industry-recognized technical skills assessments; and examine the extent to which students	1. **Virginia's state report card** includes an extensive breakdown of career-focused indicators. It reports the number of credentials earned by students passing occupational competency assessments, earning state licensures or industry certifications, or completing dual enrollment courses. It disaggregates and reports results on its Work Readiness certificate, which measures students' employability skills. And it reports attainment levels on its Advanced Studies diploma, which requires students to complete a college preparatory course of study as well as earn an industry credential. 2. **Kentucky's accountability system** includes both college-ready and career-ready indicators, the latter of which is broken down into career-ready-academic and career-ready-technical indicators. The academic indicators measure benchmark rates on WorkKeys or the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. The technical indicators consider industry-recognized credential attainment or meeting benchmarks on the state's technical skills assessment. Schools are able to earn an extra point in their accountability score for meeting prioritized career-technical requirements, signaling that high-quality career pathways and programs are valued as much as high-quality academics. 3. **Georgia's accountability system**, known as the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), awards schools based on the percentage of students who earn postsecondary credit through dual enrollment, Early College, AP, and IB as well as the percentage of students completing a CTE pathway and earning an industry credential or an IB career-related credential. Bonus points are awarded based on the percentage of students who complete a work-based learning program, a capstone project, or who enroll in a college and career academy. 4. **Indiana's CTE endorsement** known as its "Core 40 Technical Honors Endorsement" on its college and career-ready diploma requires students to achieve

students, graduate prepared for the demands of postsecondary education or the workforce. 4. **Colorado's Talent Pipeline Working Group,** passed as legislation in 2014, consists of representatives from the State Workforce Development Council, the Colorado Office of Economic Development, and the State Departments of Higher Education, Education, and Labor and Employment. Their charge: to collaboratively identify critical occupations and growing industries in the state; to determine specific talent needs of those industries; and to create the necessary infrastructure – including career pathways - to meet those needs by growing relevant talent pipelines and improving systems alignment and inter-agency communication. Add-on legislation passed in 2015 requires the same collaborative group to design integrated career pathways, based on recommendations from a task force of local superintendents and SEA officials, for any growing industry and critical occupation currently without an articulated pathway.	have access to and participate in work-based learning opportunities. **4.** A dozen states, including **CA, WI, IL, OH, and TN, participate in the Pathways to Prosperity Network** that helps states build career pathways that span grades 9-14, linking and integrating secondary and postsecondary curricula in tight alignment with skills and competencies needed in high-skill, high-demand industry sectors. The Network focuses on four strategies to accomplish their goal of helping more students graduate high school with a certification, credential, or degree that has labor market value: early and sustained career advisement, authentic engagement of business and industry partners, using intermediaries to facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration and communication, and enabling state policies to sustain and scale the work. **5. Vermont's Flexible Pathways Initiative,** legislated in 2013, seeks to better prepare high school students for postsecondary success through the expansion of dual enrollment and Early College programs; increased access to work-based learning opportunities in the work place or in simulated environments; increased access to career pathways and programs; and the implementation of personalized learning plans.	beyond the standard set of diploma requirements. Not only must students satisfactorily complete all Core 40 academic course and credit requirements; they must also earn 8 or more career-technical credits, and demonstrate two additional competencies from a menu of options: a) minimum score on WorkKeys, b) dual high school/college credit in a technical area, c) a professional career internship course or cooperative education course, d) work-based learning experience, or e) state-approved, industry-recognized certificate. 5. **Rhode Island's graduation requirements** allow districts to choose between EOCTs, senior projects, digital portfolios, or Certificate of Initial Mastery to demonstrate proficiency on grade level expectations. 6. **Virginia's standard diploma** requires students to earn a board-approved career-technical credential for graduation.