

Lessons Learned from Communities Accelerating Pathways to Credentials

March 2023

Executive Summary

From March to December 2022, a dozen state teams from across the country – made up of leaders from across intermediary organizations, K-12, higher education, the workforce, and student-serving organizations - came together to form the Accelerate ED regional accelerator. Over the course of the nine-month design sprint, each team engaged in a process facilitated by Education Strategy Group (ESG) to create a Blueprint for expanding access to accelerated pathways to credentials for high school students, particularly students of color and students experiencing poverty.

This report details the lessons from the regional accelerator — as well as other leading states and communities — on strategies for successfully scaling accelerated pathway programs. This includes developing equity-driven programs with intentionally sequenced coursework, work-based learning opportunities, and targeted advising and student supports; identifying a set of key enabling conditions around policy, funding, and data that are necessary for scaling these programs; and building the capacity of intermediary organizations and partner organizations to foster alignment across systems.

Ultimately, with the right partners, a unified vision, and a plan for scale, the national movement around accelerated pathways to credentials has the potential to create seamless transitions for students from high school to college and beyond.

A postsecondary credential is a ticket to economic mobility.

If we want vastly greater numbers of individuals—especially those from communities experiencing poverty and Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous communities—to find upward economic mobility, the country needs to speed their journeys to positive destinations. We need to offer educational approaches that **accelerate** their paths to a credential with value in the workforce.

What if a low-income student from rural Appalachia Kentucky, a multilingual learner from Arizona, and a Black student who will be the first from their family to attend college in New York City could all be on a fast-track to complete an associate degree before they turn 20 years old? And what if that degree was directly connected to the workforce needs of their local community, as well as enabled them to easily transfer to four-year institution to continue their education?

This is not simply a vision for a better future, it is happening now in communities across the country. This report—and the approaches it describes—tells the story of possibility. Possibility that can and should grow over time as communities begin to scale their work, and new communities seek to replicate these models. We believe this will have deep and lasting impact on the face of education for decades to come—and, ultimately, on the faces of thousands more youth that will accelerate the transition of their own hopes and dreams into the reality of life with purpose and prosperity.

We have learned from communities across the country about what it takes to develop, pilot and scale accelerated pathways to credentials.

We have also integrated research from the field on related accelerated pathway models.

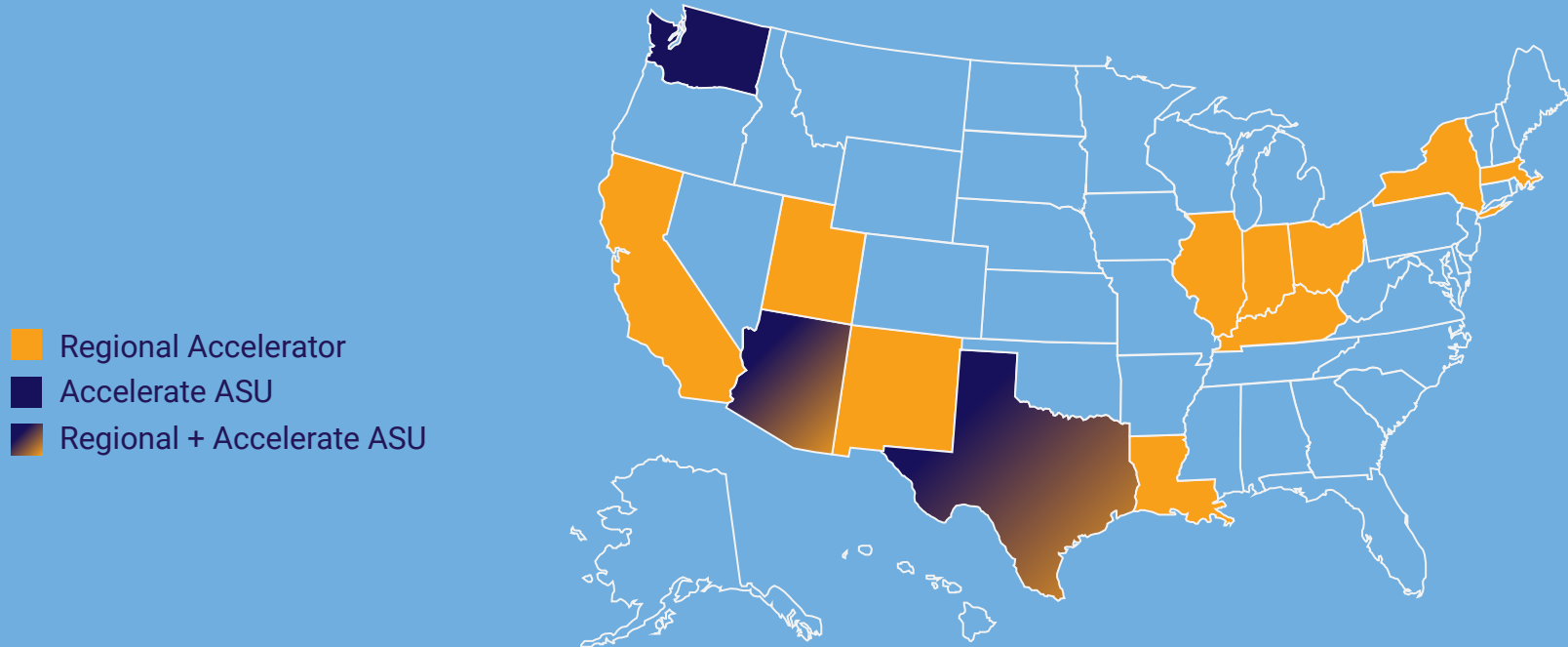
Accelerate **ED**

Regional Accelerator: With support from Education Strategy Group (ESG), 12 communities developed blueprints for scaling industry-driven accelerated pathways to credentials for students by their 13th year.



Accelerate ASU: Arizona State University (ASU) is partnering with high schools in TX, WA, and AZ to pilot the use of online Universal Learner courses to create equitable postsecondary pathways to stackable certificates, associate, and bachelor degrees.

Participating Sites for the Regional Accelerator and Accelerate ASU



What does it take to build and scale accelerated pathways to credentials models?

What defines a high-quality, accelerated pathway model?

Fast-track to a Credential of Value

Enables young people to attain an associate degree through an additional year of formal education beyond high school — year 13 — leading directly to good jobs and/or further education towards a bachelor's degree.

Integrated Set of Courses, Experiences, and Supports

Provides an industry-aligned program of study that integrates work-based learning experiences, student advising, and wrap-around supports.

Equitably Available to All Students

Minimizes transitions for students and ensures opportunities are equitably accessible for all students.

At Minimal or No Cost to Students

Covering all aspects of the programmatic model through sustainable public funding.

Successful accelerated pathways to credential models leverage the following building blocks:



■ **Cross-Sector
Partnership**

■ **Intermediary
Leadership**

■ **Equitable
Design**

■ **Enabling
Conditions**

Policy

Funding

Data

Cross-Sector Partnership

Each sector has a role to play to implement and scale high-quality accelerated pathways to credentials.

While shared vision and leadership commitment is necessary, it is not sufficient to operationalize an accelerated pathways model. Partners from each sector need to clearly define each of their roles and dedicate the necessary capacity to make meaningful changes to policy and practice. Below are some of the typical roles that each sector plays:

- **K-12:** serve as the primary point of contact for students and families, helping to ensure that students meet course requirements aligned with the educational and career goals and provide additional advising and wraparound supports.
- **Higher Education:** offer dual enrollment coursework that is transferable and provide navigational support to students.
- **Workforce:** offer high-quality paid work-based learning opportunities to students and advise educators on pathway development and skill prioritization.
- **Community-Based Organizations:** provide a network of support and guidance to help students and their families navigate the educational system, identify resources to support their goals, and build a sense of community.

What It Will Take to Scale: To successfully scale, accelerated pathways to credentials models should be intentionally integrated into a community and/or state's broader pathways ecosystem, with clear cross-sector partnership to communicate to the field about who can access these models, how they can access them, and what supports will be available to ensure success.

Intermediary Leadership

Intermediaries provide valuable capacity for expanding pathways.



Partnership Building: Intermediaries build trust, credibility, and strong working relationships with sector partners. Serving as a convener, intermediaries set the table with partners across K-12, higher education, workforce, funders, policymakers, and other key stakeholders.



Pathway Design & Delivery Support: Intermediaries support the development, refinement, and delivery of pathway programming by sector partners. Having a birds-eye view, they are able to look across systems to build connections and foster stronger alignment. And they can add much-needed capacity for partners, including leading project management, conducting trainings and workshops, conducting research and analyzing data, developing tools and resources, and engaging stakeholders.



Data Collection & Use: Intermediaries use data to inform pathway programming and assess learner outcomes. This can include analyzing local labor market data to identify in-demand industries, engaging partners to identify credentials of value, and leveraging longitudinal data to assess the impact of programming on students' educational and career outcomes.



Policy & Funding: Intermediaries help to cultivate a policy and funding environment that promotes equitable pathways. They steward relationships with funders and advise on how to leverage existing funding across sectors to support the work, as well as build field awareness and buy-in with key decision makers.

For additional information, see Education First, "How Do Intermediary Organizations Support Stronger Pathways Systems?,"

<https://www.education-first.com/how-do-intermediary-organizations-support-stronger-pathways-systems/>

Intermediaries can leverage their unique structural advantages to support scale.

Intermediary Structure	Example	Potential Benefits to Scale
Business-Led	Greater Phoenix Chamber (Arizona)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deep employer engagement can increase the value of the model and lead to expanded work-based learning opportunities.• Eases expansion to other industry sectors.
Collective Impact	E3 Alliance (Texas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cross-sector convener can help align ecosystem of actors around a shared vision and action plan.• Eases expansion to other districts within a region.
State Advocacy	Massachusetts Alliance for Early College	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocacy group can help build field awareness, document lessons learned, and increase buy-in across stakeholders to improve policy and funding structures.• Eases expansion in multiple communities within a state.
National Pathways Partner	Linked Learning Alliance (California)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set common quality expectations and provide resources, tools, training, and implementation support to ensure consistency.• Increases efficiency of replication.

There are three primary models of acceleration.



Whole School: All students in a school are on a path to complete an associate degree in their 13th year of schooling, whether creating a new program or transforming an existing program, such as P-TECH.



Individual Acceleration: Individual students have the option to complete an associate degree by earning early postsecondary credit, approved and supported through a specific program or tapped into on their own.



Cohort Acceleration: A group of students, within or across schools, work collectively to obtain an associate degree, taking courses together and receiving supports designed for the full group. A mature version would include multiple pathways from which students are selecting.

What It Will Take to Scale: For both cost and equity considerations, the cohort acceleration model will present the greatest opportunity to scale for most communities. In states with specific financial structures in place (e.g. TX, MA), whole school models present an efficient way to reach large numbers of students.

Examples of accelerated pathways models from around the country



Whole School

New York City's Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management is structured to support all enrolled students at the high school as they work toward an associates degree in Paramedicine.



Individual Acceleration

New Orleans's Bridge Year Program provides open access to learners as they work independently toward employer-valued credentials in Nursing, Software Development, or Business Services.



Cohort Acceleration

Accelerate ASU offers a cohort of learners within a high school in Yakima, WA the opportunity collectively engage in set of courses and experiences that lead to stackable credentials and associate degrees in the information technology field.

Having a clearly mapped pathway is an essential first step.

An effective course map should include:





- An **intentional sequence of courses**, including those offered for postsecondary credit;
- Opportunities for students to participate in **work-based learning**, ideally paid and/or for-credit;
- Opportunities to earn **credentials** that are stackable and have been validated by employers; and
- **Advising** touchpoints connected to students' academic and career goals.

In order to earn an associate degree by the 13th year, students will likely—though not always—need to earn 30 credits by the end of 12th grade. The need to consider other course requirements for high school graduation, college entry requirements, and state exam schedules can make it difficult to incorporate and align dual credit courses for students in the traditional high school schedule. As such, many communities are integrating college-level coursework as early as 9th and 10th grade.

What It Will Take to Scale: For students to have the best chance at completing an associate degree in the 13th year, engagement in college-level coursework needs to start before 11th grade, and may need to also take place during the summer. As another solution, programs may consider how to build in additional flexibility through virtual or hybrid delivery models, such as through the Accelerate ASU model. The Accelerate ASU model utilizes Universal Learner Courses (ULCs) to provide students with hybrid postsecondary pathways to stackable credentials.

Regional Accelerator Example: Illinois Accelerated Model Pathways in Information Technology

Chicago Public Schools Coursework Map

Subject	Pathway/Track	Intro Courses	Intermediary Courses	Advanced/Capstone Courses
 Career-Focused	Pathway 1: Programming	CIS 101: Intro to Computer Science or AP Computer Science Principles	CIS 103: Fundamentals of Programming	CIS 142: C++ Object Oriented Programming I or CIS 144: Java Object Oriented Programming I or CIS 245: Principles of Software Development
	Pathway 2: Web Development		CIS 181: Web Development I	CIS 182: Web Development II or CIS 103: Fundamentals of Programming or CIS 113: Human Computer Interaction
	Pathway 3: Networking / Cyber-Security		CIS 116: Operating Systems I	Compsfi 101: Networking Essentials or CIS 255: Operating Systems II or Compsfi 102: Networking Essentials II
 Math	Pathway 1:		Math 140: College Algebra & Math 141: Plane Trigonometry or Math 143: Pre-Calculus	Math 207: Calculus and Analytic Geometry I
	Pathway 2 and 3		Math 125: Statistics	Math 140: College Algebra
 English			English 101 & 102	Speech 101
 General Education			Psych 201: General Psychology Afro AM 101: Intro to Afro-American Studies Bio 121: Biology I	SOC 201: Intro to the Study of Society Art 103: Art Appreciation Chem 121: Basic Chemistry I

Illinois' Accelerated Model Pathways in Information Technology (AMP-IT) provides students with the opportunity to earn at least 30 transferable college credits by the end of their high school career, including a number of career-focused and general education courses.

Students can begin taking introductory IT college courses in the 9th grade.

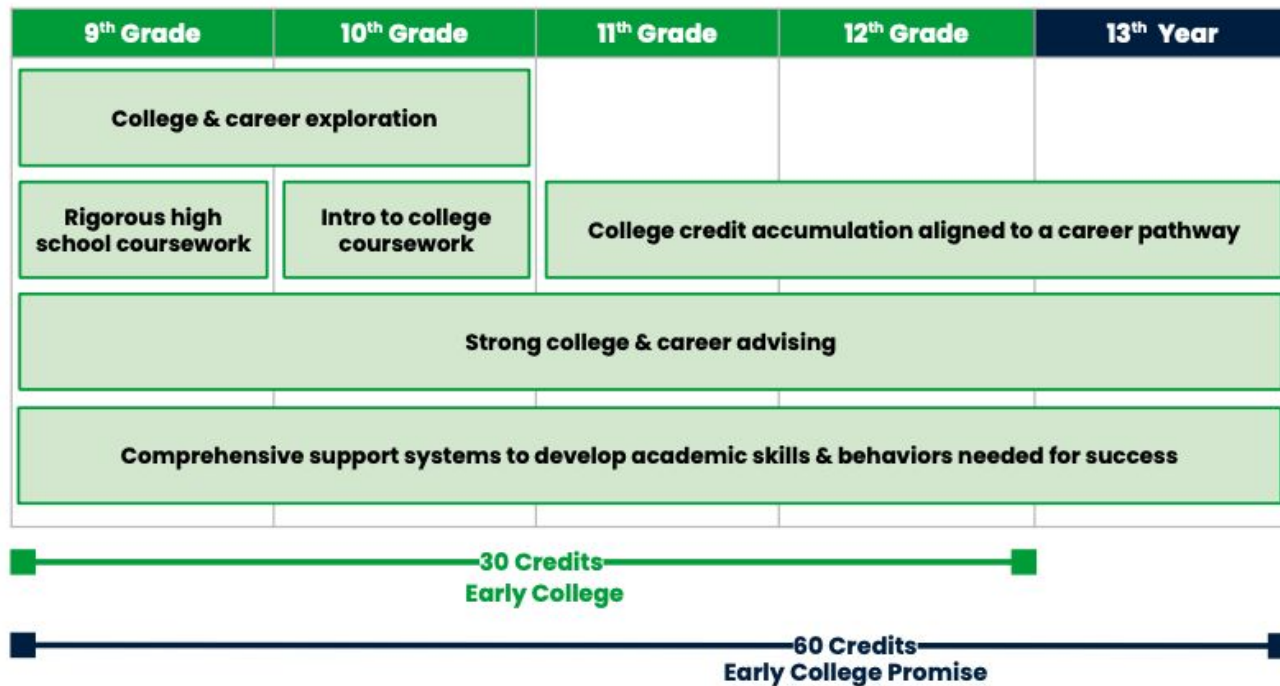
Example: Accelerate ASU

Accelerate ASU is utilizing Universal Learner Courses (ULCs) to pilot flexible online programs to three high school partners in three different states. Participating high schools can access a broad range of asynchronous, online courses that lead to stackable certificates, associate, and bachelor degrees.



Grade	9th			10th			11th			12th		13th	
Semester	S1	S2	Summer	S1	S2	Summer	S1	S2	Summer	S1	S2	S1	S2
Period 1	English 9	English 9		English 10	English 10		ENG 101 (English 11)	HST 109 (US History)		ENG 102 (English 12)	COM 225 (Elective)	Career Stack 5	Career Stack 6
Period 2	Math	Math		Math	Math		Math	Math		MAT 142 (College Mathematics)	Career Stack 4 (Elective)	MAT 142	ASU Elective
Period 3	P.E.	HEP 100 (Health)		CHM 101 (Chemistry)	CIS 105 (Elective-ABDA Stack 1)		Science	Science		Science	Science		
Period 4	BIO 100 (Biology)	Language/ Art/ Elective		HST 100 (World History)	PAF 112 (Elective)		Career Stack 1 (Elective)	Career Stack 2 (Elective)		Government	Economics		
Period 5	Language/ Art/ Elective	Language/ Art/ Elective		P.E.	P.E.	ASU 101 (Elective)	Language/ Art/ Elective	Language/ Art/ Elective		Language/ Art/ Elective	Language/ Art/ Elective		
Period 6	ASU STUDY HALL	ASU STUDY HALL		ASU STUDY HALL	ASU STUDY HALL	UNI 194 (Elective)	ASU STUDY HALL	ASU STUDY HALL	Career Stack 3 (Elective)	ASU STUDY HALL	ASU STUDY HALL		

Regional Accelerator Example: Massachusetts Early College Promise



In MA, the majority of Early College programs exist within large, comprehensive district high schools. While exact program design varies, there are common design elements.

Programs should be intentionally career-focused and industry-aligned.

Career connection comes through for accelerated pathways to credentials models in a number of ways:

- Leveraging **local labor market information** to identify industry sectors that are high-demand and pay a sustainable wage and connecting those to the identification and mapping of course pathways.
- Developing a systemic approach to offering accessible, high-quality **work-based learning** opportunities (e.g. internships and apprenticeships) that are paid and/or offered for postsecondary credit.
- Routinely partnering with employers to **define credentials of value** that are specific to each pathway. This has historically been easier for some industry sectors, such as healthcare, where employers have aligned around a set of credentials, and more challenging for others, such as IT.
- Actively **engaging industry partners** to build relationships and create clear goals, involve them in the development of industry-aligned pathways and work-based learning opportunities, and solicit their feedback and involvement in program monitoring and evaluation to ensure it meets the needs of industry partners and students.

What It Will Take to Scale: In certain fields, like IT, the skills and credentials necessary for workforce success change rapidly. Communities will need to establish and maintain processes for recurring review of programmatic elements alongside employers.

Regional Accelerator Example: Indiana's Cybersecurity Work-based Learning Opportunities

WBL Phase	Participation		Activity	Ideal Timing						Activity in Place Already	
				8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	IPS	Warren
Awareness / Exploration / Exposure	Required	100%	General Career Fair	✓	✓	✓	✓			Yes	Yes
			Tech Career Fair		✓	✓				Yes	Yes
	Optional / Advanced	50%	Guest Speakers		✓	✓	✓	✓		Yes	Yes
Preparation / Engagement	Required	100%	Workplace Tour		✓	✓				Yes	No
	Optional / Advanced	50%	Job Shadow			✓	✓			No	No
			Challenges / Competitions			✓	✓	✓		Yes	Yes
Training / Experience	Students expected to take part in one of four of these advanced opportunities	50%	Catapult		✓	✓	✓			Yes	Yes
		25%	Paid Internship				✓	✓		Yes	Yes
		20%	Youth Apprenticeship				✓	✓	✓	Yes	No
		5%	Adult Apprenticeship						✓	No	No

Students need academic, navigational, and wraparound support.

A student's journey to a postsecondary credential is often not linear and may include post-secondary credits earned in high school, work-based learning credits, Advanced Placement credits, and two- and four-year college credits. A student's experience should be as seamless as possible and require little effort to ensure credits are earned and transcribed.



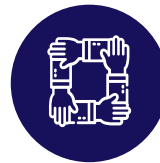
Academic Supports

Tutoring, online learning resources, study groups, academic advising



Navigational Supports

College and career advising, mentorship, bridge programs, application assistance, enrollment workshops, orientation sessions



Wraparound Supports

Financial education and assistance, mental and physical health care, food and housing assistance, transportation, childcare, and family support services.

What It Will Take to Scale: To ensure that students are able to receive needed academic, advising, and wraparound supports to succeed in accelerated pathway programs, the hand-off between the K-12 and higher education systems needs to be more clearly mapped, with an expanded set of responsible actors, including workforce and community-based partners.

Regional Accelerator Example: Ohio's PACCE Student Supports

PACCE programming begins in Kindergarten with career-connected project-based learning, skills development, and exploration and builds in middle school with career experiences, YouScience, electives, and learning about high school career-connected programming. Below shows the supports in 9th grade through the 13th year once students choose a pathway.

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- Begin working with pathway navigator to develop Individualized College and Career Plan (ICCP)
- Track progress in Transeo
- Weekly advising homeroom with pathway cohort
- Meet with Sinclair Transition Advisor
- If necessary, take college prep Math and English
- Electives aligned with pathway
- Connection to summer or afterschool programs
- Work-based learning facilitated by WBL coordinator

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- Updates to ICCP
- Weekly advising with pathway cohort
- Track progress in Transeo
- YouScience and Naviance career planning
- Get paired with PACCE mentor and meet/participate monthly in network activities
- Electives aligned with pathway
- Connection to summer or afterschool programs
- Work-based learning facilitated by WBL coordinator

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- Updates to ICCP
- Weekly advising with pathway cohort
- Track progress in Transeo
- PACCE mentor & meet/participate monthly in network activities
- Meet with Sinclair Transition Advisor quarterly to track progress and make updates to ICCP
- Financial literacy course
- Connection to summer or after school programs and other CBO services
- Work-based learning facilitated by WBL coordinator

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- Weekly advising with pathway cohort
- Track progress in Transeo
- Meet with Sinclair Transition Advisor quarterly to track progress and make updates to ICCP
- Participate in PACCE Mentorship program as mentor
- Support with FAFSA completion
- Connection to summer or after school programs and other CBO services
- Participate in HS transition seminar
- Work-based learning facilitated by WBL coordinator

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- Continue meeting regularly with Transition Advisory
- Participate in monthly PACCE study groups
- Participate in PACCE alumni mentorship program
- Track progress in Transeo
- Connection to community supports for transportation, housing, or other needs

Regional Accelerator Example: Eastern Kentucky's Student Success Pipeline Supports

All Students in the EKYSSP Can Access *Customized* Wraparound Supports

Available Support	Provided By	Age Range
Economic Mobility/Career Planning	Future Forward Coaches via Teach For America Appalachia	9 th Grade - Year 13
Near-Peer Mentoring	Peer Forward Mentoring via PeerForward, Teach For America Appalachia, CTCs and Prosper Appalachia	11 th Grade - Completion of Associate's Degree
Paid Summer Internships	Prosper Appalachia	Ages 16-24
Academic Support & Remediation	Teach For America Appalachia, 21st Century Programming , GEARUP	9 th Grade - 12 th Grade
Job Shadowing	Employer Partners and Prosper Appalachia	Starting in middle school
Financial Consulting/Resourcing	Community partners (e.g. Redbud Financial Alternatives)	Available to all families & any student age 18+

Student and family engagement can be transformational for programmatic design.

Student and family engagement is critical to understanding and solving for barriers to scale. As part of the Regional Accelerator experience, Design Teams leveraged an equity-driven, user-centered design approach to center the needs and experiences of students and families, with a particular focus on students of color, students experiencing poverty, and rural students. This engagement served to broaden their perspectives and, in some cases, counter recurring narratives within their communities.

Approaches employed by teams in the regional accelerator to capture student and family voice:

- **Empathy interviews**
- **Surveys**
- **Focus groups**
- **Youth advisory councils**
- **Video testimonials**

“Career pathways allow students to explore different possibilities for their future careers that they may not get the chance to with the standard academic curriculum. We don’t know what we don’t know, meaning students can’t possibly prepare for the new up and coming, in demand careers if they aren’t aware that they even exist.”

– High School Senior in Ohio

“I felt more prepared for college and my career path because these exposure opportunities sharpened my motivation, determination, and confidence to realize my passion, while giving me the sense of what it would take for me to reach my ultimate career goal.”

– High School Student in New York City

What It Will Take to Scale: Communities should embed ongoing processes for collecting student and family feedback and co-designing with them. As models expand, the student population will likely shift, meaning the approach for support will also likely need to shift.

Enabling Conditions

Key enabling conditions unlock scale.

In general, common challenges related to dual credit are exacerbated by accelerated pathway models, such as: ensuring a sufficient number of qualified educators; revising academic entry requirements to expand access; and ensuring students are academically prepared for rigorous coursework.

There are specific elements of accelerated pathway to credentials models that create additional challenges, including:

- **Designing industry-aligned programs**, with embedded work-based learning, that appeal to large numbers of students
- **Creating a funding approach** that can follow students into their “first year” of college
- **Aligning course schedules** across sectors to enable students to earn sufficient credits towards an associate degree
- Creating policies to ensure seamless **credit articulation and transfer**

Putting in place a set of enabling conditions—around **policy, funding, and data**—can help to overcome some of these challenges. And the conditions in some states make it easier for communities to launch and scale these models.

Enabling Condition #1: Policy

Accountability and graduation requirements can limit or incentivize scale.

The focus on four-year graduation rates in state high school accountability systems can hinder the growth of models that allow students to remain enrolled for an additional year to complete an associate degree. To integrate into statewide accountability systems, states should consider:

- How are **students counted** if they defer high school graduation en route to earning an associate degree in grade 13?
- Do policies **incentivize earning an associate degree** in high school and **accumulation of coursework** within a pathway?

To integrate into high school graduation requirements, states should consider:

- Do students have **flexibility within course schedules** to count certain CTE and dual enrollment courses to satisfy graduation requirements, particularly if enrolled in a 13th year program?



In **Texas**, students can meet the College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) indicator by earning an associate degree in high school, which in turn provides financial incentives to local districts.



In **Louisiana**, fifth-year students who are participating in Extension Academies are counted in the graduation cohort after their fourth year of high school. And schools earn additional “points” for students who earn an associate degree in the accountability system.

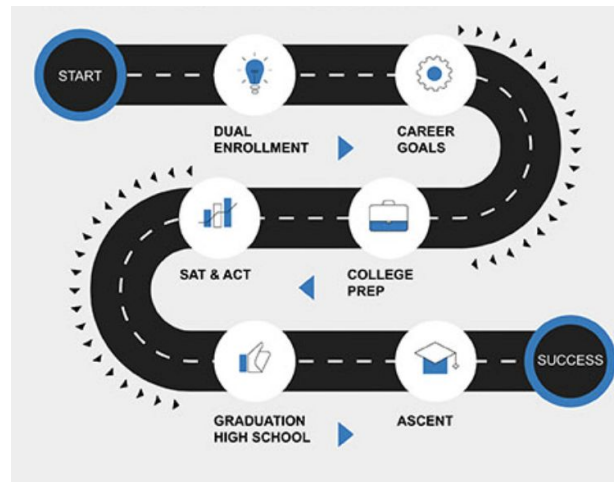
What It Will Take to Scale: States should review how the high school accountability system includes graduation rates to ensure it does not create perverse incentives for students pursuing an associate degree in high school.

Example: Colorado's ASCENT Model

ASCENT (Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment) is a Colorado program where students finish high school but stay enrolled as high school students. The state accountability system recognizes these students as a success for high school graduation calculation purposes. During this additional year, qualified students can attend one of the eight participating colleges tuition-free. To be eligible for the program, students must earn nine college credits before completing their 12th grade. These college credits stay with the student.

Colorado's 13th-year program model features:

- Guaranteed credit transfer to any public institution within the state.
- Sustainable funding approach to provide students with tuition-free college course credit during the 13th-year.
- Recent scale and expansion to all students (from 500 statewide cap).
- Strong communications and marketing of the value of the ASCENT program to students and families.



Programs must ensure seamless credit transfer to postsecondary.

In assessing whether dual credit policies maximize the acceptance of students' earned postsecondary credit, states and communities should consider:

- To what extent does the state leverage **statewide articulation agreements**?
- Are there **memoranda of understanding (MOU)** between high schools and community colleges? How are both two-year and four-year partners engaged?
- Are the prioritized pathways reflected in existing **transfer agreements**?
- Have **transfer “blocks”** of coursework been established?



The **Indiana** College Core is a block of 30 credit hours of general education college-level coursework that transfers seamlessly among Indiana's institutions. All courses in the block are freely available to students virtually. **Arizona** and **Utah** also enable high students to complete a block of fully-transferable general education courses and use them at any 2- or 4-year institution in the state.



What It Will Take to Scale: Building accelerated pathways to credentials models off state-defined credit transfer blocks can speed along the program development process and facilitate the replicability of the models in new communities, given that students can apply the credits at any 2- or 4-year institution.

Enabling Condition #2: Funding

Identifying sustainable funding is critical to enabling scale.

The following methods were identified across communities as potential or existing funding sources:

- State agency grants
- CTE funding within the state per pupil formula and Federal formula (e.g. Perkins and Direct Student Services)
- Federal competitive funding (e.g. 21st Century Community Learning Center and Education Innovation & Research Grant)
- State-sponsored innovation grants
- Philanthropic funding sources
- Private/matching capital
- Scholarship programs
- Workforce/economic development funds
- Family and youth services funding
- Higher education funding



For **Louisiana's** Bridge Year Program, the pathway is provided for free due to braided public funding and industry funding sources, including state per pupil funding formula, federal Perkins dollars, 21st Century Community Learning Center and Education Innovation and Research Grant competitive funding, state TOPS Tech Early Start scholarship, and SNAP.

What It Will Take to Scale: Programs need to be able to decipher how to braid public funding to ensure that dollars follow students as they transition to the 13th year. Doing so necessitates coding enrolled students appropriately for both the K-12 schools and postsecondary patterns and creating aligned incentives where partners are “rowing in the same direction,” not competing.

Sustainable Funding Progress and Highlights

- **California's** most recent budget contain \$700M in investments designed to support this work: Golden State Pathways and Dual Enrollment Expansion. These dollars, supplemented with other state-level investments, can be used to launch and scale college and career pathway experiences that including a minimum of 12 postsecondary pathway-aligned credits.
- In **Indiana**, the design team is working with the state's general assembly to expand the successful Next Level Jobs – Workforce Ready Grant (WRG) to provide a sustainable and scalable option for funding the Grade 13 coursework. The Office of CTE is also proposing to expand the program to allow individuals that have earned a postsecondary certificate or a combination (technical and general education) of 30 college credits while in high school to utilize the funding to complete a qualifying associate's degree program. This option would not exclude or limit populations the way some other programs do with eligibility requirements.
- In November 2022, **Arizona** voters approved Prop 308 which allows undocumented students access to in-state tuition and state-funded financial aid. Additionally, Mesa Promise and Phoenix Promise, which both provide funding from the city governments and local business partners to cover the costs of tuition and fees for any qualified high school graduates who demonstrate financial need to attend Mesa Community College (in the case of Mesa Promise) or Maricopa Community College (in the case of Phoenix Promise), were expanded to include dual enrollment.

Example: Michigan's Early Middle College (EMC)

Early Middle College (EMC) is a five-year high school program that provides students with an opportunity to earn a high school diploma and obtain transferable college credits, a credential of value, and/or participate in a registered apprenticeship program. Throughout the five-year program, the cost of tuition and fees are paid for by the local school district, and students have access to support services.

Michigan's Early Middle College model features:

- Cost of tuition and fees are paid for by the local school district.
- Michigan legislature allocated \$8 million for early middle college and CTE dual enrollment programs in SY 2022-2023.
- Students can obtain one or more of the following: 60 transferable college credits, an associate degree, professional certification, The Michigan Early Middle College Associate (MEMCA) technical certificate, or participate in a registered apprenticeship program.
- Partners with higher education institutions to ensure seamless transitions from high school to college.
- Equitable student supports, including academic support and navigational supports (e.g., mentorship from dedicated EMC staff, required college advising meetings twice a year, and some transportation support for participating schools).

Understanding a program's true cost is necessary, but complex.

Programs need to understand not just their current budget, but the actual costs of implementing and sustaining their model. This can be difficult to calculate, as many youth-serving organizations provide wraparound and advising support, but are often fundraising on their own.

Common costs to integrate into model:

- **Course materials:** books, supplies, specialized materials, transportation
- **Equipment and space:** expensive equipment that requires large spaces that schools may need to renovate or build - and that may need to be replaced as technologies change
- **Student supports:** alumni mentorship programs, cohorted high school and college advisorship, program coordinator stipends
- **Work-based learning:** transportation, staff training, stipends, and other related costs
- **Communications, marketing, and advocacy:** professional branding to aid student recruitment, collateral creation
- **Educator credentials:** funding educators' teaching credentials required to teach dual credit courses
- **Data:** systems to manage data and tracking inputs and outcomes

Regional Accelerator Example: Massachusetts Average Cost Model

	High School	College	Notes
Course Costs			
Course faculty		\$90,000	\$6K / section for adjunct per bargained rate
Total Course Costs	\$0	\$90,000	
Staffing Costs			
Administration		\$90,000	1 FTE split across campuses; \$70K + 30% benefits
Student supports		\$31,500	1 Tutor/section x 10 hrs/wk x 14 wks/semester x \$15/hr
Total Staffing Costs	\$0	\$121,500	
Operations Costs			
Transportation	\$19,200		MBTA pass per student (\$320 / 4 months, for 8 months)
Books	\$36,000		\$120 / course
Technology	\$30,000		\$1K / student
Events	\$1,500		\$50 / student
Supplies	\$15,000		\$50 / course
Total Operations Costs	\$101,700	\$0	
Total Costs (by campus)	\$101,700	\$211,500	
Total Costs	\$313,200		
Cost per student	\$10,440		
Cost per credit	\$348		

An average pilot program costs \$10K per student; costs will decrease with scale as efficiencies increase.

This per-student cost of \$10K is within what the five pilot communities receive in per-pupil state funding for participating students.

Enabling Condition #3: **Measurement and Data**

Sectors need to align on collecting, analyzing, and acting on key data.

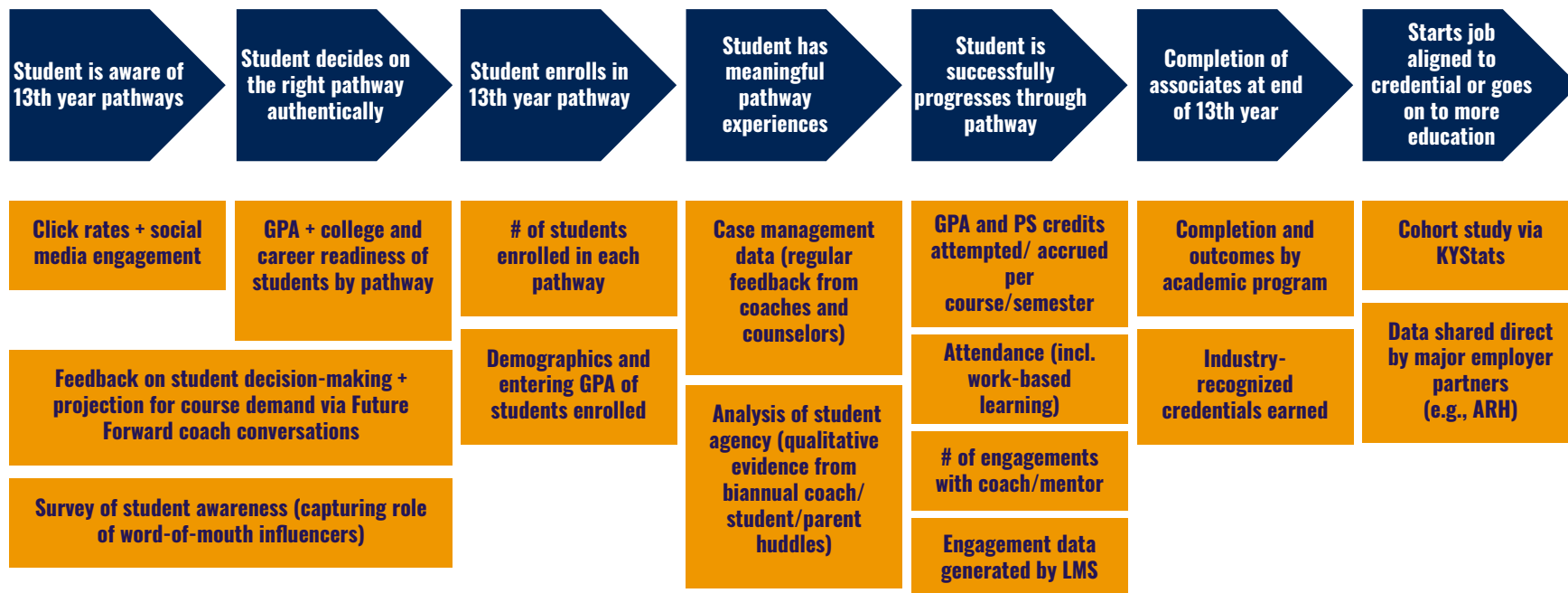
Data are critical to ensuring equitable access and student, educator, and program outcomes; to understanding program baselines, establishing goals to scale the program, and setting trajectories to reach those goals; and, to establish proof points to justify and scale 13th year programs. Currently, very few states report on the number of students leaving high school with an associate degree or provide detailed information about the intensity of dual credit accrual (i.e., % of students earning 9, 15, 30 credits). And even when data are reported publicly, they are rarely disaggregated by student groups or geography. Among the design teams, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Ohio, and Texas report data on the number of students earning an associate degree by high school graduation. Notably, Texas is the only state that disaggregates this data by district, school, and subgroups.

Key Considerations for Programs:

- Identify which partners are responsible for data collection, housing, and reporting.
- Understand whether and how indicators are defined across partners, how they can be disaggregated, and what data sharing agreements exist and/or may need to be created or modified.
- Consider how routinely data are reviewed and analyzed to be able to know when something is working and should be scaled more quickly, or for early warnings that something is not working to make mid-course corrections.
- Decide on how student, family, and practitioner voice will be captured.
- Consider how to build a broader understanding around data - and capacity to meaningfully use it - across stakeholders.

What It Will Take to Scale: Communities should track and publicly report on a variety of implementation and outcome indicators, including: student interest, participation, persistence, completion, perceptions, and programmatic outcomes (i.e., work-based learning experiences completed). All of the data should be disaggregated to ensure equitable scale.

Regional Accelerator Example: Eastern Kentucky Student Success Pipeline



Regional Accelerator Example: Eastern Kentucky Student Success Pipeline

Evaluation objectives

- Demonstrate the early impact and value of this program for students, families, schools and employers to enable scaling
- Tell the story of how the cultural and social capital of Appalachia was leveraged to change attitudes toward higher education and enable economic transformation
- Capture a rich body of data on the student experience to enable continuous improvement, and set clear expectations for adults to review and act on that data

Leading indicators for students

GPA and postsecondary credits attempted/accrued

Kentucky Postsecondary readiness

Case management data on student engagement levels (from Future Forward coaches)*

Year-to-year persistence and attendance on course components (include work-based learning and in PeerForward mentoring)

Student self-efficacy (measured by a validated questionnaire)*

Student future planning*

Leading indicators for program

Course quality:

- Instructor evaluations
- Student perceptions*
- Student progress observed by other adults (e.g., coaches, counsellors)*
- Students referring friends*

Student and employer perceptions (Prosper Appalachia annual survey and pathway inventory)

Lagging indicators

of students enrolling in associate's degrees (2-3 year lag time)

of students persisting to associate's degrees and industry-recognized credentials (3-5 year lag time)

Degree and employment outcomes

Using data from the National Student Clearinghouse and KYStats we would aim to compare outcomes for students on the program with past performance and control groups of students in comparable schools and districts

*Indicators for which we would need to create a new data collection process

Moving to Scale

As communities work to scale, there are “many ways to many.”



Add more students to an existing program within a school year-after-year



Add an additional career pathway to an existing school or within an existing program



Replicate a pathway program in additional schools or nearby communities



Expand regionally or statewide through policy or funding changes

Communities are considering all of these paths to scale.

**We hope to see
significant
growth in the
next five years.**



**Communities are working
diligently to ensure that over
10,000 students can access
accelerated pathways within
the next five years.**

Additional Resources to Help Communities Launch and Scale Accelerated Pathways to Credentials Models



Learn from Leading Communities

**Click to explore
mini case studies
about the work of
each community.**

Accelerate ASU	Arizona	California
Illinois	Indiana	Kentucky
Louisiana	Massachusetts	New Mexico
New York	Ohio	Texas
Utah		

Leverage Key Resources: Elevating Student and Family Voice

As programs look to build student and family engagement opportunities into their work, they can prioritize strategies along a spectrum of engagement.

- **Empathize:** Try to deeply understand the experiences, perspectives, and feelings of students and their families, and apply what they learn.
- **Involve:** Engage youth and families in events and processes with adults to share their unique needs, priorities, and perspectives.
- **Share Decision-Making:** Students and families play a leadership role in decision-making and have some decision-making power.
- **Youth-Led Improvement Efforts:** Student groups lead their own improvement efforts, sometimes separate from adult efforts.

For more information on approaches for engaging families, access this [resource](#) developed by Community Design Partners.



Leverage Key Resources: Approaches for Calculating Costs

As accelerated pathways to credentials models seek to expand, it will be important to better understand costs of the model. A deep cost analysis can be beneficial in a number of ways:

- **Equity:** Ensuring that students with additional needs have the necessary supports to be comparatively successful, is a central goal for these models. A comprehensive look at resources can reveal inequities in how resources are being accessed by students.
- **Scaling:** Expanding to new populations, whether it is by growing the number of students, or adding more sites, requires a deep understanding of resource use. A cost analysis allows leaders to understand the cost implications of scaling in different ways.
- **Impact and Continuous Improvement:** Maintaining and refining program design and implementation is key to ensuring success through scale. A cost analysis is important for understanding variation in implementation in differing program contexts. This information is crucial to any impact analysis and continuous improvement effort seeking to reliably achieve success in new contexts and at a larger scale.
- **Sustainability:** Ensuring longevity of programs with sustainable funding streams requires accurate cost expectations.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Understanding costs and resource use in programs allows leaders to effectively advocate with policymakers and funders to help cover the cost of current and future programs.

Join the Accelerate ED community.



**Learn from and
connect with peers**



**Co-develop
strategies to scale**



**Receive relevant
resources and
assistance**



**Share your story with
community and state
leaders**

Contact Education Strategy Group to learn more about how to join this growing movement.

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