

GETTING STARTED GUIDE FOR COMMUNITIES

Through the initial Accelerate ED cohort, we have identified four essential components to help communities initiate successful accelerated pathways to credentials of value. These opportunities could be of great benefit to students, allowing them to save money, earn postsecondary credit, and gain valuable insight into the career field of their interest.

BUILD CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS.

Cross-sector partnerships are essential for the successful implementation and scaling of high-quality accelerated pathways to credentials. Each sector has an important role to play, from providing advising and wraparound supports to offering transferable coursework and paid work-based learning opportunities. Building cross-sector partnerships can help create more equitable, diversified, and sustainable results than any single sector could achieve on its own.

KEY STEPS:

- Convene K-12, higher education, workforce, and community partners to **codify a vision** for accelerated pathways to an associate degree, with a specific focus on serving students of color and those experiencing poverty.
- **Assess how the model fits into the state or region's broader pathways ecosystem** and attainment and workforce goals, and **analyze outcomes for existing programs** to have a better understanding of current assets and which students and geographies are being served.
- **Map industry-aligned programs of study** that include: opportunities to earn 60 credits by the end of a student's 13th year; personalized advising and wraparound supports; a continuum of work-based learning opportunities; and, cohorting to strengthen relationships and social capital.

LEVERAGE DATA TO INFORM ACCELERATED PATHWAYS TO CREDENTIALS OF VALUE.

Data can provide insight into which credentials employers value most and the most effective pathways to obtain them. More importantly, it can help shed light on the experiences of students, making it possible to create and target pathways programs that are tailored precisely to both employers' and students' needs.

KEY STEPS:

- Use labor market information to **ensure programs are aligned to in-demand occupations** and identify credentials of value.
- **Analyze disaggregated data** on student awareness, interest, participation, and success.

CONSIDER THE ENABLING CONDITIONS TO SCALE.

Access to adequate funding, policy alignment, and data collection and analysis are key enabling conditions for scaling programs and achieving long-term impact. Policy and funding must be considered when thinking about scaling accelerated pathways to credentials of value, and data can help inform decisions about the efficacy and sustainability of programs. By meeting these enabling conditions, programs can be better positioned to scale and have a greater impact.

KEY STEPS:

- Partner with local 2- and 4-year institutions to **ensure credits will articulate**.
- **Identify sustainable funding** mechanisms that eliminate cost barriers for students and enable scale.
- **Understand how policy and accountability structures promote or hinder scale** and work to develop policy and accountability structures that facilitate scale when possible.

CENTER STUDENT EXPERIENCES AND RAISE AWARENESS OF THE VALUE OF ACCELERATED PATHWAYS.

Student and family engagement is essential to creating an environment that encourages students to pursue accelerated pathways to credentials. Through increased awareness and engagement, practitioners can help identify and address any barriers that students and families may face in pursuing these pathways. By centering students' voices and raising awareness of the value of these pathways, more students can access the benefits they offer.



KEY STEPS:

- Meaningfully **engage students, families, and practitioners** throughout the design process by implementing empathy interviews, surveys, focus groups, and advisory councils to better understand and solve the barriers to accessing high-quality accelerated pathways.
- **Disseminate public narratives** to raise awareness and promote the value of accelerated pathways.

FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT **ACCELERATED PATHWAYS TO CREDENTIALS OF VALUE** BY VISITING:

