# School-to-Work Guide

This guide provides a roadmap for school-to-work parthways for any company, no matter the size of the business or the industry- whether you're just getting started or already have a school-to-work program that you want to expand for opportunity youth.

## Get Started

1. If this is a new effort, it's okay to start small. Regardless of scope, school-to-work opportunities can be a win for both your business and opportunity youth.

2. Partner organizations- which are defined in this guide as high schools and community colleges- can significantly help you develop successful initiatives in many key areas, such as curriculum development and needs assessments for training.

# School-to-Work Definitions and Benefits

Each year, approximately one million young people drop out of high school. Countless others do not have the resources to pursue post-secondary education. While the other employment pathway guides on this website (mentoring, internships and hiring) focus on re-engaging opportunity youth who are out of school and seeking work, school-to-work pathways are designed to help at-risk youth stay in school, develop valuable workforce skills, earn a degree and start a career.

## School-to-Work Definition

School-to-work pathways focus on collaborations between employers and education providers to develop 21st century workforce skills for young people. These models often link the professional and/or technical skills into curriculum that employers look for and provide young people with valuable workplace exposure.

### Examples of school-to-work pathways

- Career Technical Education (CTE) programs centered around employer skills and technical knowledge needs
- "Learn and Earn" programs that enable youth to develop on-the-job skills in a learning environment while receiving compensation for their work
- Accredited or customized corporate training
- Job training that goes toward achieving post secondary credentials or a degree

### Ways to take small and big steps

- Offer simple one-day workshops with career information
- Create a job-shadowing initiative
- Design a training curriculum in collaboration with an education provider to support current and future talent pipelines

## The Business Benefits of School-to-Work Pathways

School-to-work pathways are a win-win-win: they give employers a strategic way to build future talent pipelines while boosting employee engagement and loyalty; they help education providers increase retention and completion while preparing students for the real world; and they give young adults a chance to earn a degree and gain valuable skills for career success.

## Benefits to Business

**1** Cost-effective Talent Development

- "Try before you buy" by evaluating potential job candidates before making a full-time offer
- Build your pipeline with more qualified and motivated workers

**3** Higher Productivity

Improve your workforce quality with better-trained employees

**5** Enhanced Employee Engagement

Strengthen employee satisfaction and morale

**2** Increased Retention

Increase retention among newly hired and existing employees by developing loyal, more fulfilled workers

**4** More Diversity

Connect to a talent pool with diversity of experience, background and fresh thinking

**6** Stronger Community Impact

- Boost visibility with your community, your consumers, future leaders and potential talent
- Get your products and work in front of young, in-touch consumers

## Benefits to Young Adults

- Develop valuable workforce skills through practical curriculum linked to real-world job opportunities
- Earn income, a degree and/or other incentives to stay in school while receiving an education
- Build network opportunities that position them better for post-graduate employment
- Expand their hope and motivation for successful careers

# Step 1: Prepare From Within

Offering school-to-work pathways to opportunity youth doesn't have to be a huge investment. Like any successful effort, it involves careful preparation up front. The good news is that partner organizations can help jumpstart your efforts. Before choosing a partner, however, begin by taking inventory of your internal needs and readiness.

## Identify your internal needs.

Target consistent hiring needs and challenges so you can identify qualified applicants for entry-level positions.

Is your company ready?

Here are a few insights from employers who have successfully implemented school-to-work pathways. These insights will help you gauge whether you're ready to build your program and have the resources you need to get off to the right start.

Readiness

- A corporate culture that values professional growth and development
- Directional support from your leadership
- A corporate culture that values social responsibility and community investment
- A culture that is adaptable and readily experiences change
- A willingness to create systems that measure program outcomes
- A culture that values strategic talent acquisition
- Company involvement in some type of youth employment program (e.g., mentoring or tutoring)

Resources

- Employees to volunteer and work with education partners
- Identified skills needed for your company's jobs and the resources/bandwidth to teach these skills to a young person
- Activities through which youth can practice these relevant skills
- Incentives for youth (e.g., transit cards, graduation celebrations, raffle prizes)
- Paid work experiences, such as internships that include high school credit or postsecondary credential
- Onsite facilities that expose youth to a real work environment
- Mentors

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## Determine your scope.

Use the scoping worksheet below to learn how your company resources will help you build a successful pilot. If you already have a program in place and seek to expand your existing effort, use this tool to scope your expansion. If this will be a new effort, start with a modest pilot effort.

# Step 2: Choose an Education Partner

Partnering with an education provider is key to developing a successful school-to-work pathway, however big or small. It's critical that you work with your partner organization to clearly define your roles and responsibilities—and outline your communication protocol to ensure consistency and frequent contact.

## Identify a partner organization.

Begin by researching and connecting with local high schools and regional community colleges to find the right fit for your company. Provide education partners with a clear understanding of your environment, culture and characteristics. Education partners should have a firm grasp of what employers need from their new hires, the technical skills involved in entry-level positions and what it takes to be successful within the organization. Consistent, open communication before taking action is key.

## Make first contact.

Many colleges maintain a business development division or office that is the most appropriate initial point of contact. For high schools, try starting with the principal

### What should your education provider bring to the table?

- Connection to a target youth population
- Ability to select and support youth for the program
- Vibrant community network and existing relationships
- Experience with the challenges and best practices related to opportunity youth
- Stable leadership and infrastructure
- A successful track record of corporate partnerships
- Training resources (teachers, classrooms, equipment, etc.)

### What should your company bring to the table?

- Passion and drive to make the program a success
- A commitment to opportunity youth and at-risk youth
- Clear understanding of resources, desired goals and business benefits
- Defined scope, scale, model and management plan
- Defined roles & responsibilities
- Training resources (volunteer trainers, facilities, equipment, etc.)
- Work experience opportunities

"I got people from the school system together with people from government together with us around the table and said, 'Okay. Let's concentrate on this simultaneously…let's not just talk about it. Let's come up with a real program we can implement…that's customized to our community and our needs."

- Stu Thorn, president and CEO of Southwire, discussing his company's 12 for Life initiative for high school students.

# Step 3: Develop Your Initiative

Develop training content and validation of acquired skills (e.g., tests, industry certifications). Your education partner will be a significant source of support in this area. Work together to establish required learning outcomes and desired competencies. Consider what courses are currently available that could be leverages.

## Spotlight: Sample program models

Career Technical Education (CTE) programs across the nation offer the education and training that individuals, including at-risk youth, need to be competitive in today's labor market. CTE actively partners with employers to design programs centered on employer skills and technical knowledge needs that lead to industry-recognized credentials in high-demand fields. Through advisory committees, internships, workplace experience and other interactions, employers are able to share information about expectations, technical requirements and workplace behavior—driving innovation and world-class performance. Learn more about CTE in your state. (link to CTE state directory)

"Learn and Earn" partnership programs between employers and education providers—such as those at UPS (link to case) or Verizon (link to case)—build the talent pipelines that employers need. They also offer young employees the opportunity to gain tangible skills (definition pop out: Skills that include, but are not limited to, reliability, problem solving, critical thinking, conscientiousness, listening and observation, effective communication and teamwork), receive income and/or earn a post-secondary degree or credential—as well as a path to a brighter economic future. These models are especially critical to at-risk youth who often need to balance the dual demands of education while earning a wage.

## Two Successful Models: P-Tech and 12 for Life

Here are two examples of pioneering school-to-work partnerships to inspire you to adapt best practice models within your own company. Both examples are actively scaling their models.

### P-Tech

Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) is a highly innovative school-to-work model that bridges school-to-work transitions, improves the economic relevance of education and develops skilled talent pipelines for expanding industries.

 For the P-Tech pilot model, IBM played a key leadership role in developing a specialized curriculum for teaching workplace skills. From IBM's perspective, in addition to solving a compelling social problem, P-TECH helped increase the supply of skilled talent needed for its future operations and for the growth of the IT industry as a whole.

The first P-TECH school opened in Brooklyn, New York, in September 2011. As the nation's first vocational school to connect high school and college with the world of work, P-TECH teaches an intensive computer science curriculum in addition to a traditional high school plan. The program also includes workplace skills and mentoring. Students start at grade nine and graduate at grade 14, completing two extended years of college-level work before receiving an associate's degree in computer science or engineering. The concept has since been replicated in five additional secondary schools in Chicago. IBM continues to implement P-TECH as an employment pathway by providing mentors for every student at its two schools and supporting mentoring relationships with an online platform, MentorPlace.

"Businesses and school leaders can create powerful public/private collaborations that will help meet the state's need for skills."

-- Stanley S. Litow, IBM vice president of corporate citizenship and corporate affairs and president of the IBM Foundation

### 12 for Life

Wire and cable manufacturer Southwire's commitment to improving the communities in which it operates has put it on the leading edge of education initiatives for decades. With high school dropout rates nearing 30 percent around its western Georgia facilities, Southwire wanted to create a pool of work-ready talent in its community. The company created 12 for Life in partnership with the local school system to invest in young adults at risk of dropping out of high school and provide them with practical real-world experiences.

"We're benefitting. The school system is benefitting. Their graduation rate has gone up from 60 to 70 percent largely as a result of this program."

- Stu Thorn, president and CEO of Southwire, discussing his company's 12 for Life initiative for high school students

The program allows students to combine a four-hour shift at a specially designed manufacturing plant with an additional four hours of educational classes needed to graduate high school. Graduates are encouraged to stay on as interns and attend college. This gives at-risk students a pathway to success while meeting Southwire's high production standards, fills the company's talent needs and increases the community's long-term earning potential.

Once you've developed the curriculum and credentials of your school-to-work initiative, consider investing in a pilot program.
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# Step 4: Pilot your program

## Start a pilot.

Consider using a prototype curriculum with a small group of potential working learners. That way, you can make any necessary changes before a full rollout.

## High school partnerships in action.

These partnerships (including Genesys Works, Urban Alliance, Cristo Rey Network) increase the population of ready, skilled workers in America by aligning educational systems with industry-created opportunities.

### Successful Models

### Genesys Works

Not-for-profit organization Genesys Works helps inner-city high school students succeed as corporate technology professionals by enabling them to intern at major corporations during their senior year. Businesses that use Genesys interns, including 3M, AT&T, Blue Cross/Blue Shield and Target, receive "work-ready" young people who are highly motivated, have the personal and social skills to be effective on the job and have a solid technical foundation for further training.

### Urban Alliance

Urban Alliance empowers under-resourced youth to aspire, work and succeed through paid internships, formal training and mentorship. As a year-long employment program with sites in Washington DC, Baltimore, and Chicago, Urban Alliance's goal is to provide youth access to professional growth and experiences via paid internships, formal training and mentorship.

**Successful Models** (Continued)

### Cristo Rey Network

The Cristo Rey Network is comprised of 26 Catholic college preparatory high schools for underrepresented urban youth. Its innovative Corporate Work Study Program gives students real-world work experience by allowing each student to work five full days per month in a professional setting to help fund his or her education.

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## Community college partnerships in action.

For companies, success is largely based on close engagement with the public education and training system, which operates in virtually every community across the country and is dedicated to helping employers match job applicants with employment opportunities.

**Successful Models**

### Pacific Gas and Electric

PG&E's PowerPathway™ is a network of education and training programs that partners with community colleges to prepare, educate, advise and support potential job applicants. It has generated a 3-to-1 return on investment.

# Step 5: Evaluate and Expand

## Measure and evaluate.

What does success look like for your company? Work with your partner to determine a strategy to collect simple metrics.

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## Expand and grow.

Look across the partner organization to determine if similar partnerships in other departments would benefit your company as a whole.