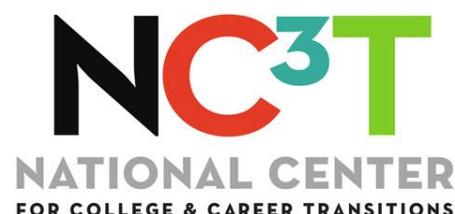


October 2018



# The Power and Promise of Building a Pathways System

*American communities are challenged by young adults who are not fully prepared for the demands of postsecondary education and training, skilled employment, and civic participation. As a result, individuals, families, educators, employers, and the community experience unemployment and underemployment, skill gaps in the workforce, slow economic growth, poor student achievement, low college completion rates, and a diminishing middle class.*

There is good news. Across the country, schools are engaging students in Career-Connected Learning strategies that clearly connect learning to career themes and offer real-world work experiences within the community. This approach fills a critical gap that much education reform ignores – the need to spark individual motivations and aspirations. As students regain a personal stake in learning, they experience higher rates of academic success and transition more effectively into postsecondary education and training and into high-demand careers. Thus, as a result of Career-Connected Learning and a broader Pathways System approach, individual and community prospects brighten significantly:

**Students** engage in courses and activities that connect directly to their future, gaining highly relevant academic, employability, and career skills needed for success in postsecondary education and the workplace.

**Parents and guardians** gain greater awareness of ways in which they can assist their children in making successful transitions into responsible and productive adults.

**Postsecondary and training educators** enroll students who have stronger academic and technical skills along with a clearer understanding of career demands and expectations.

**Employers** (private, non-profit, and government sectors) have access to a highly qualified, well-prepared workforce that is ready to contribute to company growth and effectiveness.

**Community and elected leaders** realize the many benefits of having higher rates of skilled employment and individuals earning family sustaining incomes.

**Educators** gain insight into and understanding of the workforce; they hone instructional practices that engage students and connects rigorous curriculum and activities to postsecondary and career expectations. Schools see improved graduation rates, an increase in postsecondary enrollment, an energized school culture, and staff members who work together rather than in isolation.

## *Every learner with a dream and a plan Every community with a capable, ready workforce*

NC3T has developed the Pathways System Framework™ that supports the effective development and implementation of career-connected learning strategies and pathway programs. The Pathways System Framework™ builds upon current education reforms including standards-aligned curriculum and assessments, literacy and technology across the curriculum, and use of research-proven instructional practices such as project-based learning.

NC3T recommends that a local Pathways Partnership, comprised of multiple stakeholders, be convened to oversee the Pathways System planning and implementation. Offering technical support, expert coaching, and proven resources leading to the development of a Pathways System Plan, NC3T helps keep Pathways Partnerships on track and making progress.

The framework focuses on six broad areas, all working together to develop learners who are Career and Life Ready:

1. **Career and Life Readiness.** Partners clearly define and communicate the mix of applied knowledge, technical skills, employability skills, and other competencies that prepare individuals for success in postsecondary education, the skilled workplace, and personal life.
2. **Career Development.** Learners gain the knowledge and skills to make informed choices about careers and related education and training.
3. **Pathways Programs.** Pathway programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels are aligned with workforce demands, and are structured to help develop academic, technical, and employability skills.
4. **Employer and Community Engagement.** Employers and community partners help students experience the workplace and build positive relationships with employer mentors.
5. **Dynamic Teaching and Learning.** Research-based educational practices engage learners in rigorous and active learning, and educators continue to grow in their skills and knowledge.
6. **Cross-Sector Partnerships.** Partnerships among K-12 education, postsecondary education, workforce systems, and other entities create sustained collaboration to develop the local Pathways System.



***NC3T has developed an effective process to implement the Pathways System Framework™. With support from a NC3T Pathways Coach, each locally convened Pathways Partnership moves through a Pathways System Development Process resulting in a system that is unique to regional needs and is sustained through local leadership.***

**Explore: Build**

**Awareness and Interest.**

During the Explore phase, stakeholders learn about and become interested in the Pathways System approach.

**Convene: Bring Partners Together.**

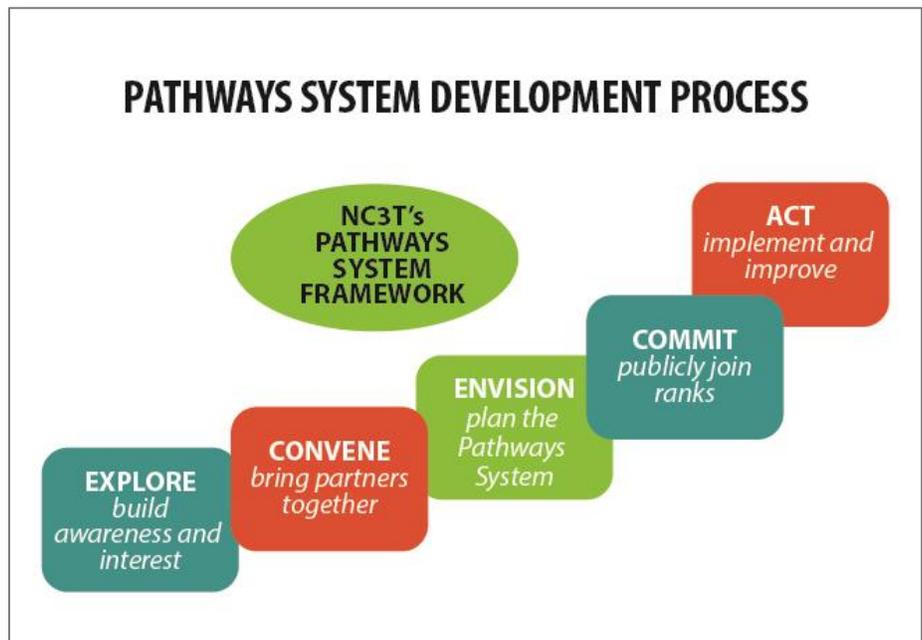
During the Convene phase, partners create the initial leadership structure for the Pathways System.

**Envision: Plan the Pathways System.**

During the Envision phase, the partners identify specific outcomes, set goals, strategies and action steps, assign responsibilities to organizations and people, and establish timelines. Partners create and update Pathway Programs, based on the sample Academy and Pathway Structure (seen on the next page).

**Commit: Publicly Join Ranks.** During the Commit phase, all the Pathway Partners formally commit themselves to the vision, goals, strategies and action steps identified for the Pathways System.

**Act: Implement and Improve.** During the Act phase, all stakeholders carry out the day-to-day work called for in the Pathways System Plan, and regularly report on progress among the Pathway System Partners.



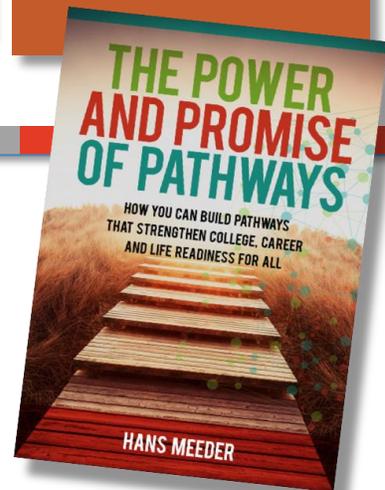
In the Pathways System design, partners agree upon a pathways structure like the one below to give consistency to all efforts relating to career exploration, employer engagement, and pathway programs design. The model below uses five career sectors, but each community can design their model to address local needs and preferences.



#### NC3T PATHWAYS SYSTEM SUPPORT & SERVICES

- ✓ Onsite and Virtual Coaching
- ✓ Meeting Facilitation and Planning
- ✓ Technical Assistance and Resources
- ✓ Customized Research and Reports
- ✓ Keynote Addresses & Workshops

LEARN MORE AT [NC3T.COM](http://NC3T.COM)  
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The Power and Promise of Pathways, authored by Hans Meeder, NC3T President and Founder, is available at: [www.NC3T.Com](http://www.NC3T.Com) and [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).