



Forming a Local College Access Network

Recipe for Success Field Guide

FLORIDA
COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

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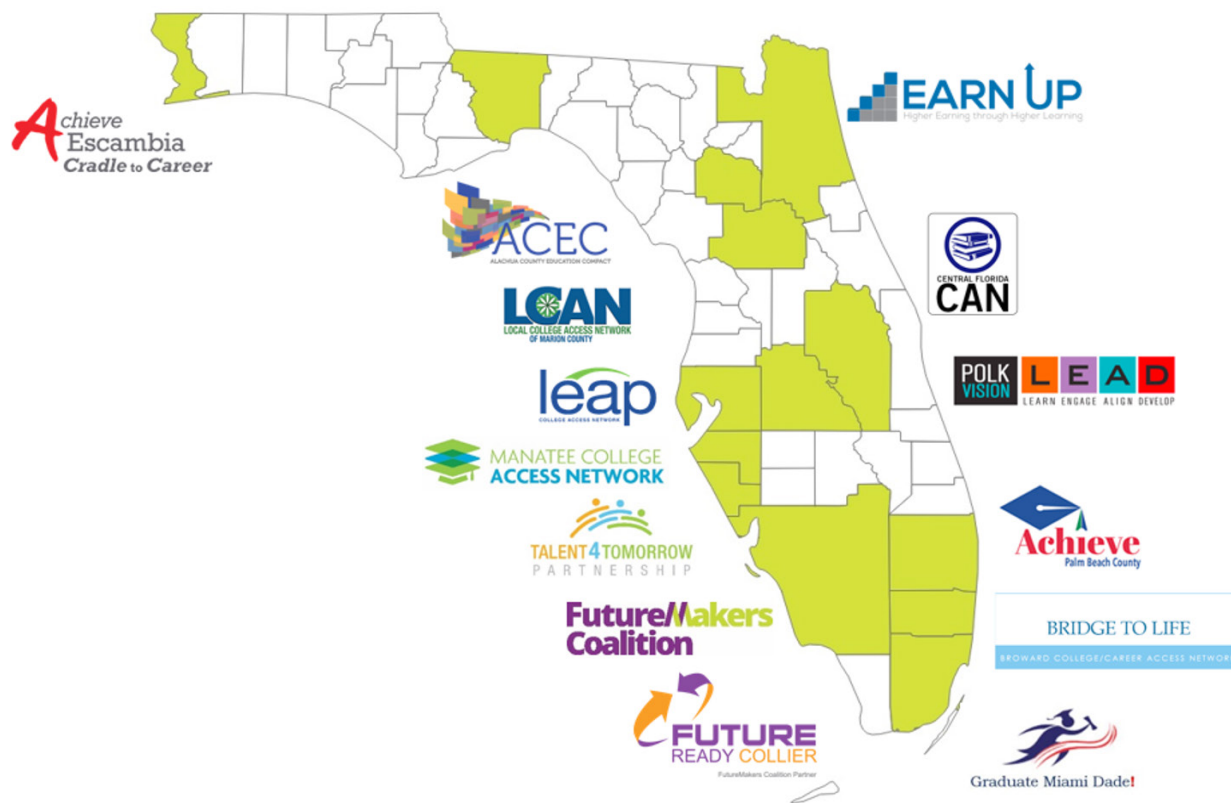
Introduction

Local college access networks (LCANs) throughout Florida have formed in response to the unique challenges and opportunities each community or region faces in helping students succeed beyond high school.

Often, education institutions find tremendous support from various community organizations to boost postsecondary access and completion. But without coordination, these activities can be disjointed. Organizations can risk duplicating efforts or missing students who need support the most.

The purpose of an LCAN is to unite stakeholders from various sectors around shared goals of boosting postsecondary attainment. By bringing these community organizations together, an LCAN can help create alignment around priorities and strategies for the region.

While there is no one “right” way to form an LCAN in Florida, there are ingredients that have proven to build a strong foundation and accelerate momentum. This field guide will share what LCANs in the state have found to be beneficial as they moved from concept to implementation – the Florida way.



Ingredient #1: Champions

LCAN Champions are local leaders with deep community connections who bring the credibility to motivate others to participate. These leaders are critical in bringing early players to the table. Champions keep enthusiasm and momentum going, even when leadership changes at key community organizations and institutions.

Broward Bridge to Life

The Champion

Ralph Aiello of Broward County Public Schools has been a tireless champion of school counselors. Ralph successfully brings together leaders from higher education, government agencies, nonprofits, direct services agencies, and philanthropy in support of students within Broward Bridge to Life's LCAN.



FAFSA Road Show

Under Ralph's leadership, Broward hosted a county-wide FAFSA drive that brought FAFSA completion assistance to the areas that needed it most.

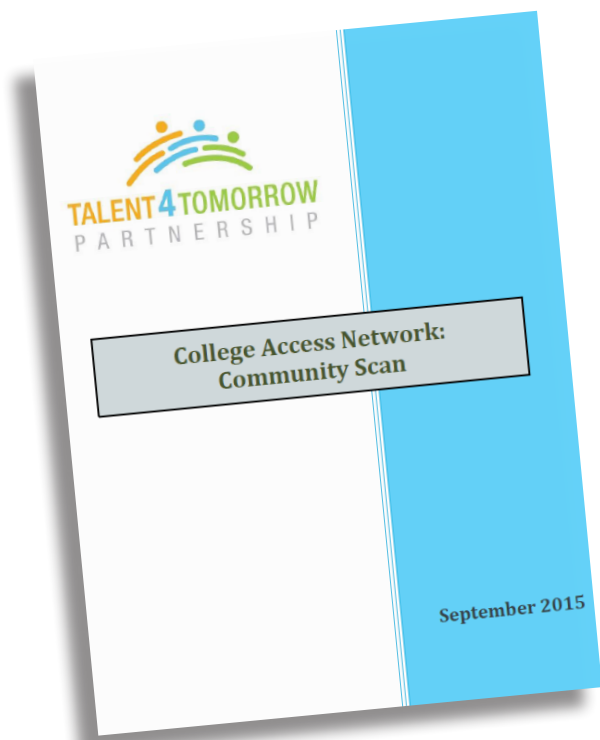
Ingredient #2: Consultant Facilitator

An experienced consultant versed in collective impact can help guide LCANs through the early stages of their development. Consultants can help LCANs establish the leadership team, develop a common agenda, and define where working groups are needed to tackle gaps in support.

Talent for Tomorrow

Hiring a Consultant

The Talent for Tomorrow Partnership in Sarasota benefited from a consultant who helped them develop a community scan.



Making a Plan

This community scan was instrumental in informing the leadership as they set priorities for their strategic plan.

Ingredient #3: A Quiet Phase

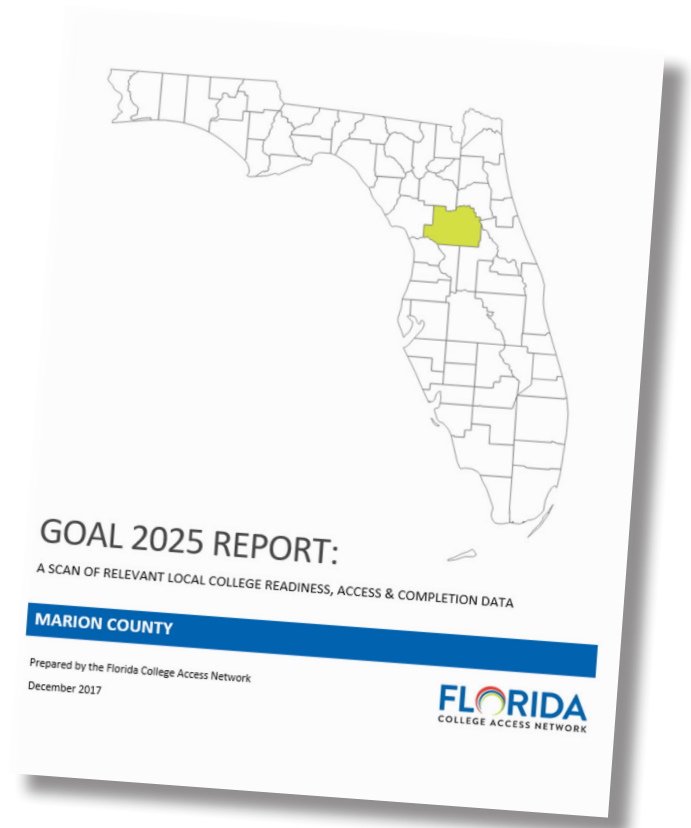
In the early planning stages, LCAN leadership teams find it helpful to operate in a “quiet phase” to allow time for relationships to build among the leaders and for the network to do the early planning work. During this phase, the LCAN has not publicly launched their vision to the community at large.

This phase often includes asset mapping, a community scan, will-building, and early data gathering to better understand the challenges and opportunities within the local context. By leveraging a quiet phase, the network has time to lay a foundation that facilitates setting priorities so that when the network publicly launches they can demonstrate leadership support from multiple sectors that garners engagement from the wider community.

Goal 2025 Reports

To help new LCANs understand the college access challenges facing their region, FCAN produces Goal 2025 reports.

These reports provide an overview of data relevant to college readiness, access, and completion.



Ingredient #4: Strong Partner Relationships

Building relationships and trust among community players across all sectors is essential for LCANs to achieve their common agenda. Communities often underestimate the importance of dedicating time and resources for this important activity, as well as the ongoing need to invest in relationship building if they are not starting with well-established relationships across sectors.

Some LCANs are fortunate to start in areas that already have strong community relationships. For instance, Achieve Palm Beach County was able to generate excitement around their college access initiatives by drawing on existing relationships built around other community improvement efforts.

LEAP Tampa Bay

Building Relationships

When LEAP Tampa Bay started, they did not have existing community relationships to draw on. To build this trust, they devoted over a year to building strong relationships among leadership in higher education, local government, business, and nonprofit sectors.



Making Progress

LEAP has since been able to accelerate progress toward its goals by continuing to cultivate these partnerships. Having existing relationships has made it easier for LEAP to respond quickly to potential grant opportunities.

Ingredient #5: Tiered Governance Structure

Strong LCANs have a tiered governance structure:

- A **vision council** of CEO-level community leaders (such as the school superintendent, college president, mayor, county commissioner, community foundation CEO, economic development CEO, United Way CEO, and business leaders) set a collective vision and common agenda for the LCAN and direct their staff to participate.
- A **leadership or guiding council** comprised of near-CEO leaders participates in the hands-on strategy setting, tracking progress through shared measurements, and holding their respective organizations accountable for outcomes.
- **Working groups**, often comprised of mid-level and front-line members of partner organizations, develop and mobilize strategies for action.

Achieve Palm Beach County

In addition to the tiers noted above, Achieve Palm Beach County chose to also create an advisory group and acknowledge their community forum in their governance structure that captures the voices of residents and students



Governance Structure



Ingredient #6: Strong Backbone Support Structure

Once the LCAN partners are ready to implement their collective goals to serve their common agenda, a strong backbone support structure is essential for success. A backbone organization dedicates staff to coordinate the LCAN activities and acts as the fiscal agent. In FCAN's experience, effective backbone organizations are those with strong social capital and a reputation for neutrality.



LCANs across the state are represented by a wide variety of backbone organizations.

Some LCANs are supported by community foundations, while others have nonprofit community organizations, local government, or chambers of commerce coordinating its activities.

Some use a shared backbone structure. For instance, a community nonprofit may provide the coordinating capacity, and the community foundation may serve as the fiscal agent. As an LCAN matures, the backbone function may shift from one partner to another as goals and priorities become clearer and as capacities within partner organizations change.

Ingredient #7: Shared Effort

The partners of successful LCANs understand that achieving lasting social change by increasing postsecondary attainment cannot be accomplished by a single individual or even a single organization. They engage partners in their network to take the lead on different aspects of the work rather than expecting the backbone to do all the heavy lifting.

Regular and continuous communications and meetings among working groups, the leadership team and a visioning council help to ensure all partners committed to the work participate in supporting the shared agenda.

Central Florida College Access Network (CFCAN)

CFCAN has established work groups with chairs that meet regularly to support their key priorities.

This collaborative effort has produced some handy resources for students in their community, such as FAFSA handouts to help students completing the application.

Financial Aid 101: Getting Started
What type of student are you?
Often times, the need to financial aid starts with defining what type of student you will be once you get there. For example: "I am a **ETC**, **undergraduate** student with **dependent** status and I will be attending school **full-time**."

Undergraduate	Graduate	Dependent	Independent
Refers to a student at a	Refers to a student at a	A dependent student	An independent student may file for federal financial aid based on their own income and assets and is generally one of the following: a high school senior, a veteran, a former foster child, or a student who is an orphaned minor.

Top 10 FAFSA Myths

MYTH #1 "My family or I make (or saved) too much money to qualify for financial aid."
FACT: There is no income cut-off for financial aid, and personal or parental income is one of many factors. Even if you do not qualify for federal dollars, many states, schools and scholarships use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine financial aid, so it is important to find out what else you may be eligible for!

MYTH #2 "Only students with good grades get financial aid."
FACT: Financial aid is based on need, not your grade point average (GPA). Once you are in college, as long as you are meeting "Standards of Academic Progress" (SAP) you will be able to continue to funding.

MYTH #3 "I submitted my FAFSA last year so I do not need to file again."
FACT: To remain eligible for federal student aid you need to file for every year you are attending school. If you applied last year, you do have the option of completing a renewal FAFSA, in which most of the questions are pre-filled with your prior information. Filing every year is in your best interest, as the award amount may vary due to changes in income or life circumstances.

MYTH #4 "The application is too hard to fill out."
FACT: The FAFSA is available online at www.fafsa.gov and easier than ever to complete. The form walks you through step by step, only asking questions that are relevant to you. If you need help, you can review the Help page (<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/help>), access real-time chat with a customer service representative, or call their toll free number at 1-800-4-FED-AID. Remember, the FAFSA and all the sources of advice are FREE.

MYTH #5 "I am too old to get financial aid."
FACT: You are never too old! Federal student aid programs do not take your age into consideration.

MYTH #6 "I have to wait until I (or my parents) file taxes."
FACT: The FAFSA allows you to use an estimated number to file early, and update once you and/or your parents taxes are filed. Just remember to check the "will file" box and the Department of Education will remind you in April to update your form.

MYTH #7 "The Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) on FAFSA is the final amount I have to pay."
FACT: Your EFC is not the final amount you will have to pay for college. The EFC is only used as an index to determine how much financial aid you are eligible to receive. The cost of the school and the aid formulae they use both work together to determine the final owed amount. Sites such as Collegeboard.org or the net price calculators on individual college sites can help you to determine your individualized, estimated cost.

Scholarships
State scholarships are merit-based and awarded by the state. These scholarships do not have to be repaid. The most popular example is the Bright Futures Scholarship program.

Grant
State grants are generally awarded to undergraduate students meeting certain criteria. These grants do not have to be repaid unless you withdraw from school or do not maintain the minimum criteria.

Ingredient #8: Clear Understanding of the Problem

Strong LCANs balance a sense of urgency with taking time to develop a collective understanding of the barriers to postsecondary access and success for students in their community. They do this by digging in to community level data to identify gaps or opportunities and select focus areas and goals to improve student outcomes.

Earn Up (Northeast Florida)



For instance, many adults have some college credit but no credential. Earn Up – which represents the six-county region of northeastern Florida including Jacksonville and five military bases – identified a need to help retiring service personnel transition to civilian life by helping them complete their education.

They collaborated with the armed forces, veteran’s services, and regional higher education institutions to form the Northeast Florida Military Veteran College Network (NFMVCN). As part of EarnUp, NFMVCN supports veterans – 14.5% of their population – transition to the civilian workforce using postsecondary education as the bridge.

Ingredient #9: Community Investment

By bringing together multiple sectors in the community and forming a common agenda, strong LCANs gain buy-in that motivates partners to support the work through investments in personnel, resources, and financial support.

Achieve Palm Beach County

Achieve Palm Beach County used a “blended” backbone strategy early on that included the school district, a private family foundation and the community foundation that provided leadership, coordination and financial management for the fledgling network.

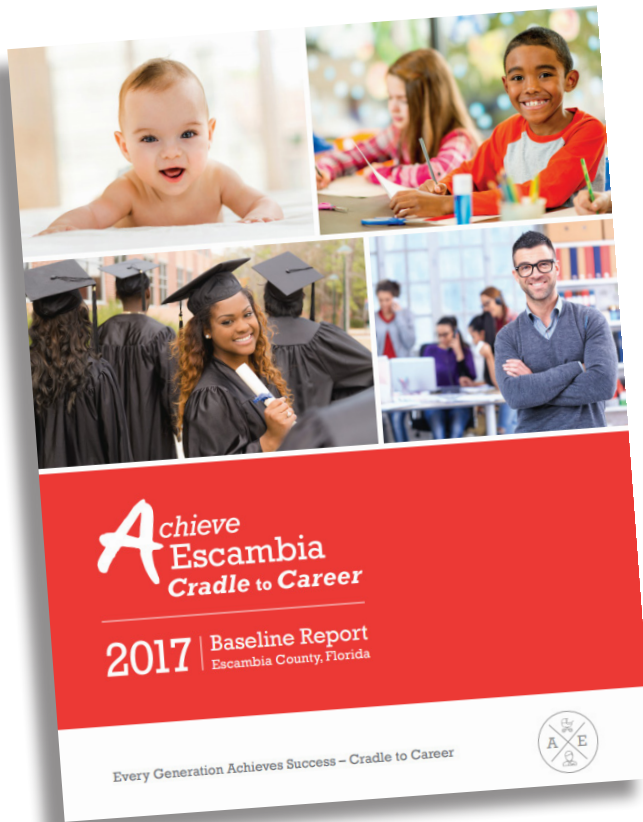
They brought together the leaders of several dozen organizations and institutions to develop a collective vision for their LCAN. They also leveraged well-established relationships among 11 local funders who participate as LCAN partners and who provided the funds needed to support its planning process and the first three years of implementation.



Ingredient #10: Shared Metrics

Strong LCANs define how they will measure progress and leverage trust among partners to share metrics, using those metrics responsibly – as a light, not a hammer – to mobilize partners into action.

Achieve Escambia



Achieve Escambia started with their current postsecondary attainment rates to determine goals for the students in their community.

Then they identified several key indicators they will measure to gauge their progress toward helping students reach higher levels of attainment.

Ingredient #11: Long-Term Focus

As much as local partners often want to see early results, strong LCANs manage expectations by balancing “quick wins” with reinforcing the message that lasting social change will take years to achieve.

Initiatives like improving FAFSA completion rates is an example of how LCANs can generate enthusiasm and maintain momentum while the partners are doing the hard work of addressing systemic barriers that can take years to address.

Future Ready Collier

Future Ready Collier manages expectations by keeping their community informed through periodic convenings, which allows them to share progress, while also reminding everyone of the long term nature of the work.



Ingredient #12: Community Engagement

Strong LCANs engage the communities they serve, including stakeholders like students and parents as important partners in identifying solutions and building on their strengths.

Reach Manatee

The Manatee LCAN's backbone organization, UnidosNow, excels at engaging whole families to support students, particularly in immigrant communities, by building strong relationships with community and faith-based leaders as well as private sector partners.



Thanks to the support of the United Way Suncoast, UnidosNow is beginning to implement its successful Families Together program at Booker Middle School, offering Latino families the tools they need to navigate through the education system, learn English and life skills, and empower their children early on to pursue higher education. In addition, parents will be able to access programs offered by Career Edge at the United Way Resource Center at Booker Middle School.

Ingredient #13: Championing the Student Voice

When doing college access work, it is important not to lose sight of the student. Strong LCANs give students in their community a platform to share their stories and challenges, ensuring that future programs are crafted with their needs in mind.

Alachua County Education Compact (ACEC)

A Student Coalition

When the Alachua County Education Compact (ACEC) was formed they were intentional about including the voice of the student in their work. One strategy they implemented was to support the formation of the Forerunners Coalition, a group of students serving Alachua County youth through city, county and state representation.



Career Discovery

ACEC also holds annual Career Discovery Days, so that participating students are exposed to a wide variety of careers that help them see possible future paths.

Ingredient #14: Commitment to Learn

Working toward lasting social change is complex and messy. If it were easy, the problem would have been solved already. Strong LCANs have partners with a hunger to learn, innovate, and use data to track progress and continuously improve. They are also eager to learn from other communities engaged in similar work, rather than needing to figure everything out on their own.

FutureMakers Coalition

The FutureMakers Coalition has built into their core values a rapid-test culture to identify strategies that demonstrate promise to scale across their 5-county region. Some approaches are more successful than others, and it's their willingness to try new approaches that allows them to learn and iterate.

For instance, FutureMakers worked to build excitement with students through a social media campaign, but did not see the engagement they had hoped for. This was due in part to changing social media habits and student privacy concerns.

Rather than abandoning the effort, FutureMakers instead considered what they would need to keep in mind for future initiatives.



Attention high school seniors! Have you filed your FAFSA? Are you ready to share that on social? If so, you're ready to enter the FAFSA first! contest! In addition to any scholarships, financial aid and work study funds you may be receiving through FAFSA, you have a chance to win a cool \$500 to put toward your college or career school expenses.

Your challenge: Share why #IFiledFAFSAfirst on social media. It's that easy!

ELIGIBILITY

Do you check all these boxes?

- Have you filed your FAFSA for the 2017-2018 school year?
- Are you a high school senior graduating in spring 2017?
- Are you a resident in Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry or Lee County?
- Do you like FAFSA first on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter?

Great! You're eligible to enter the contest.

HOW TO ENTER

- Create a unique and creative post on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, related to you filing your FAFSA
- Tag @FAFSAfirst and five friends in your post to challenge them to also file their FAFSA and enter this contest
- Include the hashtag #IFiledFAFSAfirst

We want you to use your creativity! Want more chances to win? Each post counts as a single entry.

Once you've posted on social, fill out this form.

PRIZES

Five winners (one from each county) will be chosen to receive a \$500 prepaid Visa card for use toward college and career school expenses. Winners will be notified in late March.

DEADLINE

All social media entries must be posted and the contest entry form must be completed on FAFSAfirst.org by midnight, March 17, 2017.

Putting it All Together

Each LCAN is unique, reflecting the local context of its community and leveraging the strengths that already exist. They seize windows of opportunity when the conditions are ripe for multiple sectors to come together, driving system-wide change that leads to better student outcomes.

With more support, students can realize their postsecondary goal that can lead to a more prosperous future for themselves, their families and the community.

Join the Movement!

If your community is ready to get started forming a local college access network in your area, FCAN is here to help. To schedule a call or meeting, please contact:



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About Florida College Access Network

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is Florida's first collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school and prosper in Florida's dynamic economy.

The FCAN mission: to create and sustain a statewide network that catalyzes and supports communities to increase college and career preparation, access, and completion for all Florida students.