

# Building High-Value Pathways: What the Research Shows and How Your Region Can Get Started

**WEBINAR**

**January 29, 2026 | 3:30 - 4:30 PM ET**

# Agenda

- Welcome & Overview
- National Perspective – Pathways Matter
- Florida Perspective – Career Pathways Baseline Assessment
- Q&A Session
- Announcing Talent Strong Florida High-Value Pathways Initiative

## **Our mission:**

We lead the statewide collaborative movement to strengthen Florida by ensuring every Floridian attains education beyond high school toward a rewarding career.

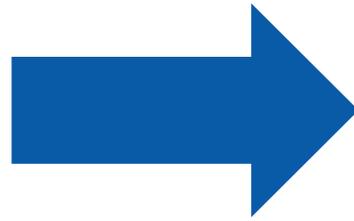
## **Our vision:**

A thriving Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility and a prosperous economy for all.

# SAIL to 60 Update – FL Degree Attainment

2023

46.9%



2024

47.4%

*For 2023, Industry Certification and Workforce Credential Attainment was estimated at 8.3%, and Florida's overall attainment rate at 55.2%.*

# SAIL to 60 Update – Degree Attainment

## Top 10 Counties (2024):

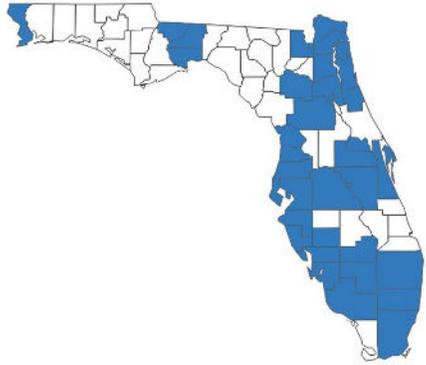
St. Johns	63.0%
Alachua	61.8%
Leon	58.8%
Seminole	57.6%
Orange	52.7%
Pinellas	49.9%
Hillsborough	49.9%
Sarasota	49.8%
Palm Beach	49.6%
Broward	49.2%

## Top 10 Gainers ('23-'24)

St. Johns	2.74%
Wakulla	2.72%
Washington	2.51%
Hamilton	2.38%
Gadsden	2.22%
Holmes	2.19%
Calhoun	2.05%
Bay	2.00%
Jackson	1.91%
Jefferson	1.81%

2024 5-YR ACS, B15001, Age 25-64

# FCAN's Work



**Research and Data:** FCAN publishes research and data on evidence-based practices and policy opportunities to strengthen Florida's talent pool.

**Advocacy:** FCAN engages with stakeholders, policy makers and community-based organizations to find ways for improving every students' postsecondary journey.

**Storytelling:** FCAN focuses on students and their communities to understand and share the impacts of Florida's education policy.

**Local college access networks (LCANs):** FCAN provides financial supports and technical assistance to local coalitions made up of community leaders who come together to create solutions and partnerships to support local talent development.



**Statewide Initiatives:** FCAN coordinates 4 College Ready Florida initiatives that provides schools and community organizations resources to help students continue their education after high school.

**Convenings for Collaboration:** FCAN hosts and facilitates data-driven, solutions-oriented conversations with student success leaders at the community-based, institutional, and statewide levels.

## 7 Conditions for Success

**Opportunity for everyone:** To build a talent-strong economy, all Floridians need access to a postsecondary education and the supports to complete it.

**Clear information and guidance:** Students and families need exposure and counseling early and often to make informed decisions about their futures.

**Affordability:** Postsecondary education needs to be within everyone's financial reach, regardless of household income or life circumstances.

**Multiple pathways to success:** Floridians benefit from multiple learning opportunities for academic achievement and career advancement.

**Lifelong learning:** No degree or credential is "one and done;" Floridians need to prepare for career changes through continuous learning.

**Effective use of data:** Transparent access to data on education and economic outcomes, especially for Florida's diverse populations, helps achieve our goals.

**Community collaboration:** When community partners work together toward a shared vision, they remove barriers, build a robust workforce, and improve the quality of life for their regions.

# Featured Speakers



Adriana Harrington  
Managing Director, Policy  
ExcelinEd



Dr. Carrie Henderson  
Managing Advisor  
TSG Advisors - Education



Dr. Kimberly Krupa  
Director of Network Engagement and Communications  
FCAN

# Questions & Conversation

- Submit your questions in the box
- Share on social media

X: @FLCollegeAccess

#FCAN

#TalentStrongFL

*This webinar is being recorded; all materials will be available within a week of recording*





# PathwaysMatter.org

2026

# Four Foundational Policies

**1. Governance** is the intentional and explicit alignment of state agencies, priorities and resources.

**2. ROI Analysis** of K–12 and postsecondary programs assesses program alignment to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage pathways and student outcomes.



**3. Statewide Definitions of Quality** define terms such as high-wage, high-demand and high-skill.

**4. Credentials of Value** are verification of a learner's qualification or competence issued by a third party. Credentials of value carry currency with employers in the labor market.

# Three Areas of Impact

## 3. Employer Engagement

Employer-related policies enhance authentic business partnerships and reduce barriers to participation in apprenticeships and similar experiences—for both individuals and businesses.

## 1. K-12 Schools

K–12 policies ensure all students receive the high-quality pathway advising, coursework and experiences that empower them to succeed in their next steps after graduation. Specific areas include:

- College Acceleration
- CTE Programs
- Industry Certifications
- Pathway Incentives
- Work-Based Learning

## 2. College

College policies maximize student credit and degree attainment at two-year, four-year, and technical colleges through systems alignment, funding, and rewarding outcomes.

Policy Areas include:

- Credit Articulation
- CTE Programs
- Financial Aid
- Industry Certifications
- Outcomes-Based Funding





## Return on Investment Analysis

A comprehensive return on investment (ROI) analysis of K-12 and postsecondary programs assesses program alignment to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage pathways and student outcomes. The analysis includes student access, enrollment and completion data as well as outcomes data such as enrollment, employment (including wage) and enlistment. The ROI occurs at least every three years, is published publicly and is used to develop and implement policy and program changes.

- ROI analysis is validated by a third party.
- ROI process/ methodology is validated by a third party (entity other than K-12, postsecondary or other participating state agency).
- State law requires a comprehensive, recurring ROI analysis of K-12 and postsecondary programs and publicly reports results and progress updates.
- State law requires a comprehensive analysis of the state's offered K-12 programs, postsecondary technical programs, and worker/adult (up)skills training programs at least every three years.
  - Analysis examines alignment of K-12 programs and postsecondary programs with statewide and regional industry and labor market demands.
  - Analysis includes student access, enrollment and completion data by education provider and student subgroup.
  - Analysis includes short- and long-term student outcomes data (i.e., employment, wages, government assistance).
- State law requires recurring analysis to include policy and program recommendations, and a progress update based on previous analyses.
- State law requires the analysis to be published publicly..
- State law requires a recurring analysis, but it is not comprehensive, fails to include recommendations, and / or it is not publicly accessible.
- State law codifies a recurring analysis, but does not require recommendations and actions based on findings.
- State law codifies a recurring analysis, but it does not require the inclusion of long-term student outcomes data (i.e., employment, wages, government assistance).
- State law codifies a recurring analysis of either K-12 or postsecondary—but does not require a comprehensive, aligned analysis across both systems.
- Comprehensive analysis is required through an executive order or a state agency rather than legislated.
- State law does not require a comprehensive, recurring ROI.
- Analysis and reporting of K-12 and postsecondary technical programs does not exceed Perkins requirements.

NOTE: Policy ratings are based on presence of state laws or regulations.

# Florida's State Overview

Out of 45 policies:

1 Exemplar

23 Green

13 Yellow

8 Red

## K-12 Policies

- ✔ Career Advising
- ⚠ Career Scholarship Accounts
- ✔ Data Connections
- ✔ Pathways Accountability

### COLLEGE ACCELERATION

- ✔ Access and Funding
- ⚠ College Core Credential
- ✔ Early College

### CTE PROGRAMS

- ✔ Adjunct Teacher Policy
- ⚠ K-12 Quality
- ⚠ Tiered Funding

### INDUSTRY CERTIFICATIONS

- ✔ Data
- ⚠ Funding
- ✔ Tiered List

### PATHWAYS INCENTIVES

- ✔ High School Experiences
- ⚠ Post-High School Success

### WORK-BASED LEARNING

- ⚠ Capstone Course
- ✔ Continuum
- ✔ Youth Apprenticeships

## College Policies

- ✔ Corequisite Remediation
- ⚠ Direct Admission
- ✔ Money-Back Guarantee (Two-Year)

### CREDIT ARTICULATION

- ✔ Assessments (AP/IB etc.)
- ✔ Common Course Numbering
- ✔ Guaranteed Transfer Pathways
- ✔ Industry Certifications
- ✔ Military Service
- ✔ Reverse Transfer

### CTE PROGRAMS

- ⚠ Quality

### FINANCIAL AID

- ⚠ Finish Line
- ⚠ Last-Dollar
- ⚠ Last-Mile

### INDUSTRY CERTIFICATIONS

- ⚠ Data
- ✔ Tiered List

### OUTCOMES-BASED FUNDING

- ⚠ Associate Degrees
- ⚠ Bachelor's Degrees
- ⚠ Sub-Associate Degrees

## Employer Engagement Policies

- ✔ Apprenticeships
- ⚠ Enhanced UI Wage Data
- ⚠ Industry Engagement
- ✔ Intermediary Funding

### LEGAL BARRIERS

- ✔ Work-Based Learning

## FOUNDATIONAL POLICIES

- ⚠ Statewide Governance
- ⚠ ROI Analysis
- ⚠ Statewide Definitions
- ⚠ Credentials of Value

# Florida Policy Opportunities

# Policy Opportunity: Direct Admissions

Direct admission automatically offers college acceptance to eligible high school students—no application, test scores, or fees required. Instead, states or institutions use verified data like GPA, coursework, or class rank to determine eligibility. Students receive admission offers, often with financial aid details and advising support, making college access simpler, clearer, and more attainable.

A Direct Admission Policy aims to:

- Notify students of the colleges where they've been admitted.
- Remove common application barriers.
- Build confidence and awareness, especially for first-generation students.
- Encourage FAFSA completion by linking admission offers to FAFSA prompts

Florida could expand out from the Florida's Talented Twenty Program which guarantees admission to one of the 12 state universities for students who graduate in the top 20% of their class at a Florida public high school.

# Direct Admissions: State Spotlight

Georgia MATCH is a statewide direct admission program that automatically matched 132,000 high school seniors to eligible public colleges based on their academic records in its first year.

Students receive a personalized letter and online portal showing where they qualify and can accept up to three offers. The program waives application fees and supports FAFSA completion.

Early results were strong: technical college applications rose 26%, enrollment 9%, and the University System of Georgia saw a 10% rise in applications and a 6% increase in enrollment.

# Policy Opportunity: Return on Investment Analysis

An [ROI](#) helps states determine whether investments of taxpayer dollars and student time are paying off for students, the economy and employers. In other words, do postsecondary programs prepare students for what's next? An ROI occurs in the three main buckets of:

- **EMPLOYMENT:** When students enter the workforce, what wages are they earning? Do the programs or industry-recognized credentials offered/earned in postsecondary match with high-demand, high-skill, high-wage occupations?
- **ENROLLMENT:** If students go on to the next level of education (associate to bachelor's program), do they enroll and earn the degree?
- **ENLISTMENT:** If students go into the military, do they qualify as an officer or for specialty programs?

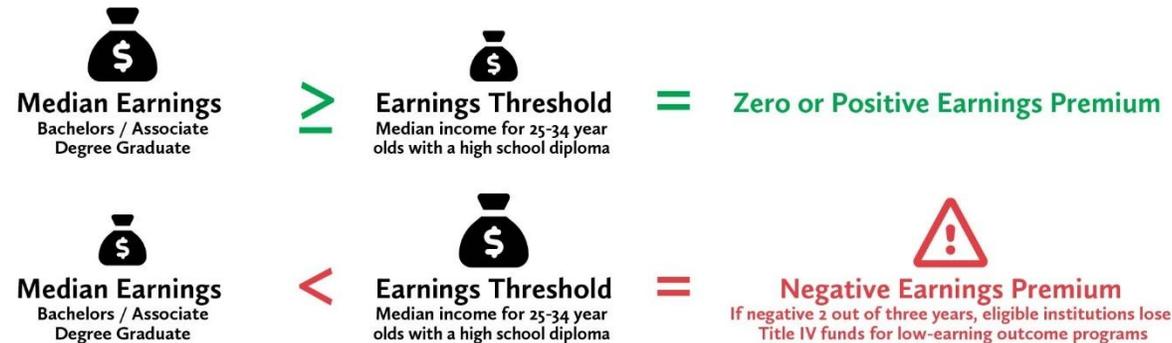
# 2024 Statewide CTE Audit Findings

Secondary Metric Number	Secondary Metric Name	Statutory Metric Target	Number of Secondary CTE Agency Programs Assessed	Number of Exempt Secondary CTE Agency Programs	Number of Secondary CTE Agency Programs Meeting Metric Target	Number of Secondary CTE Agency Programs Not Meeting Metric Target	Number of Secondary CTE Agency Programs Not Meeting Overall Metric
1	12th Grader Concentrator Graduation Rate	80%	1,792	985	805	2	2
2	12th Grader Concentrator Industry Certification Rate	33%	1,792	985	735	72	2
	<b>OR</b>						
	Secondary Continuing Education or Employed Rate	80%	1,711	1,018	676	17	

Postsecondary Metric Number	Postsecondary Metric Name	Statutory Metric Target	Number of Postsecondary CTE Agency Programs	Number of Exempt Postsecondary CTE Agency Programs	Number of Postsecondary CTE Agency Programs Meeting Metric Target	Number of Postsecondary CTE Agency Programs Not Meeting Metric Target	Number of Postsecondary CTE Agency Programs Not Meeting Overall Metric
1	Retention Rate	50%	3,686	1,497	2,145	44	17
	<b>OR</b>						
	Success Rate	50%	3,686	1,920	1,218	548	
2	Postsecondary Continuing Education or Employed Rate	70%	3,686	2,341	1,315	30	30
3	In-Demand Occupation	N/A	3,686	80	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available <sup>3</sup>

Transparency	Structural	Incentives	Enforcement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide transparent information to high school students or entering freshman before they make decisions on their major.</li> <li>• Provide transparent information to institutions so they can evaluate and make changes/improvements to their existing programs with weak outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create new or expand existing K-12 or postsecondary programs that align with high-demand, higher-wage, higher-skill (H3) occupations.</li> <li>• Remove barriers for higher education to offer new programs in H3 areas.</li> <li>• Retire programs that do not show a positive ROI, acknowledging that some programs serve a critical need.</li> <li>• Eliminate postsecondary programs with low enrollment or graduate numbers (e.g., &lt;10 students).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide tiered FTE funding or supplemental startup funding for programs that align to H3 occupations (the better alignment, the more the funding).</li> <li>• Implement outcomes-based funding based on success of students within six months of graduation (employment, enrollment, or enlistment), with higher amounts for higher-need students (e.g., low-income, English learners, students with disabilities).</li> <li>• Student Focused: Offer a buy one get one (BOGO) free course funding model for H3 aligned majors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove state funds or state scholarships for degrees/programs that do not show a positive ROI.</li> <li>• Provide a money-back guarantee from the institution.</li> </ul>

# Federal Higher Education Accountability



On January 9, 2026, the Higher Education and Access Through Demand-driven Workforce Pell ([AHEAD](#)) [committee](#) reached [final consensus](#) on the rules. OBBBA establishes a new **earnings premium** accountability measure that applies broadly across programs.

Programs with a negative earnings premium in two out of three consecutive years will lose eligibility to participate in most Title IV HEA aid programs for that program, subject to appeal rights and statutory protections.

[Title IV HEA](#) (Higher education act of 1965) funds include Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, TEACH grants, direct subsidized/unsubsidized loans, Direct PLUS loans (for parents or graduate students) and Federal Work-Study (FWS). **Importantly, under the AHEAD consensus language, programs that fail the earnings premium measure do *not* lose eligibility to receive Pell Grants.**

# ROI Transparency: State Spotlight

Virginia's College and Career Outcomes website is leveraging UI data and professional social profiles. The data also includes a graduate's initial industry and job placement, career and industry progression after 1, 4 and 8 years of employment, and skills graduates disclose.

## Instructional Program

Detailed breakout based of CIP selections above

Sample Size: 648,362

## 1st Occupation

Broad Occupation Group





# Thank you!

Foundation for Excellence in Education  
P.O. Box 10691  
Tallahassee, FL 32302

# PATHWAYS WITH PURPOSE:

## Findings from Career Pathways Baseline Assessment

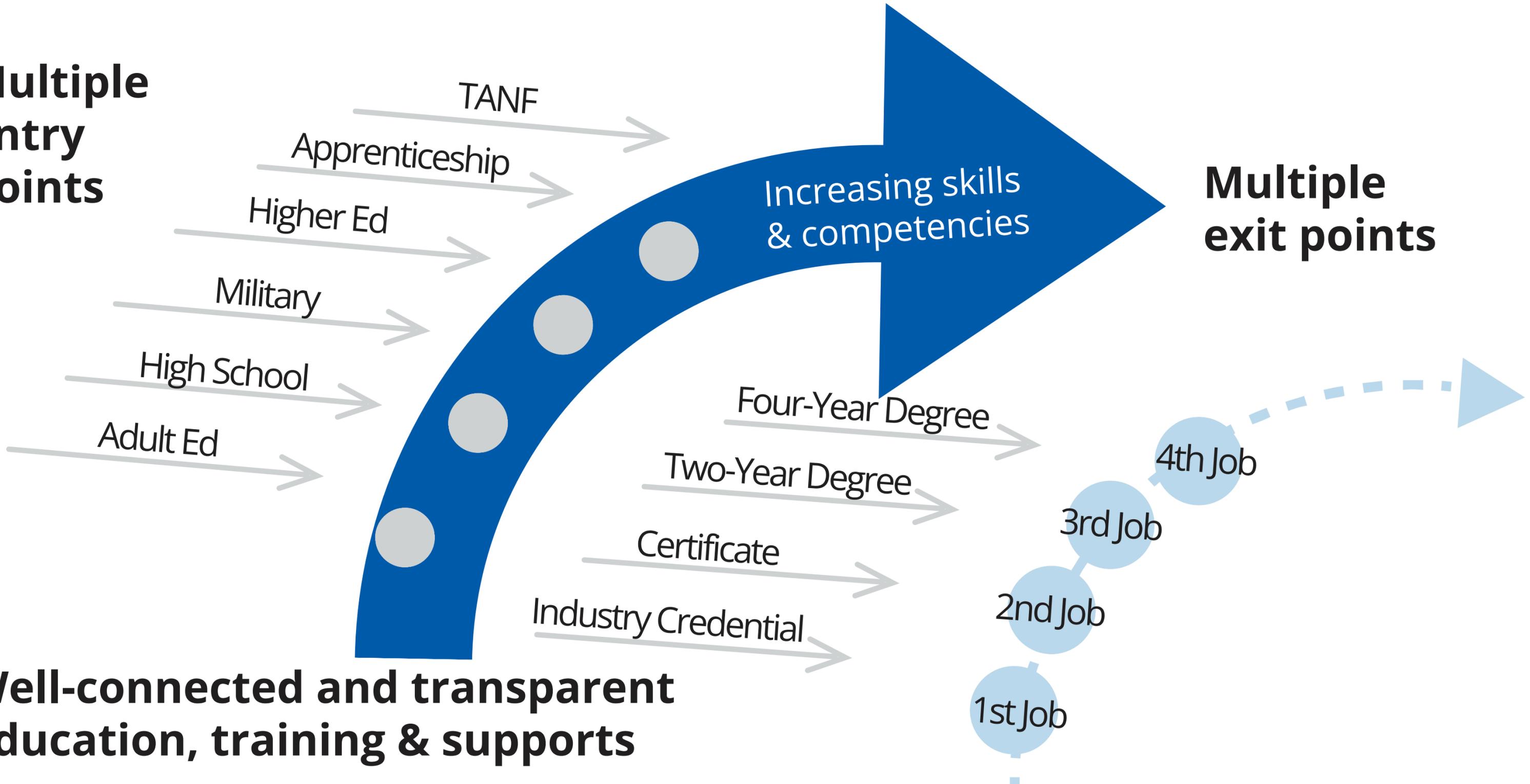
Talent Strong Florida High-Value Pathways | January 29, 2026

Carrie Henderson, Ph.D., Managing Advisor, TSG Advisors - Education



# ESSENTIAL FEATURES

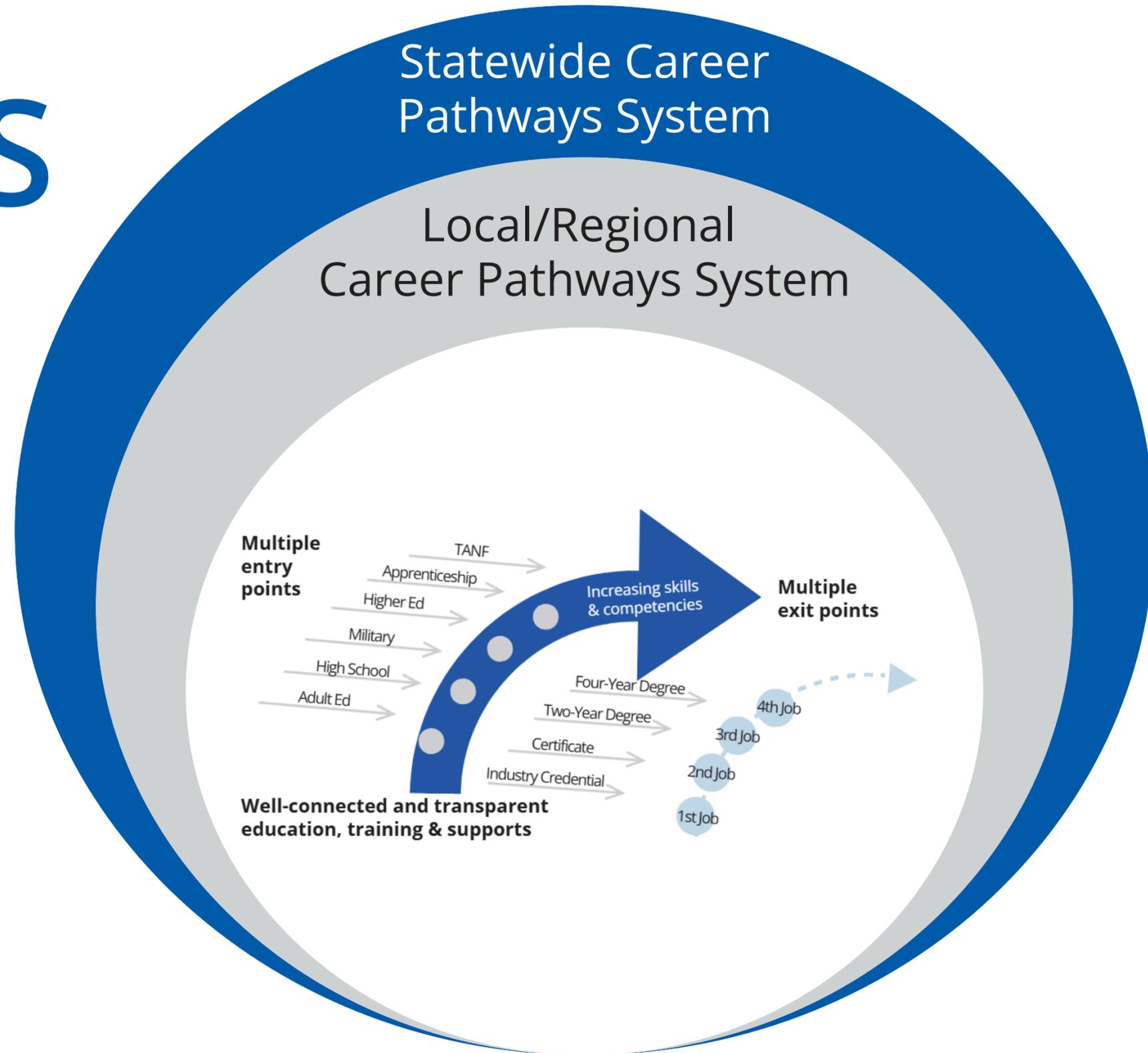
**Multiple entry points**



**Multiple exit points**

**Well-connected and transparent education, training & supports**

# CAREER PATHWAYS SYSTEMS



# CAREER PATHWAYS ELEMENT: WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT

Education and training must be nimble, data-informed, and industry-aligned to ensure learners are prepared for opportunity and the workforce remains competitive.

- **Driven by Demand** | Programs are built around labor market data and employer input, not institutional convenience.
- **Aligned to Industry Skills** | Curriculum, credentials, and competencies reflect the real skills required for employment and advancement.
- **Flexible and Adaptive** | Pathways evolve as industries change—integrating new technologies, roles, and credentials.
- **Connected to Work-Based Learning** | Internships, apprenticeships, and job placements give learners hands-on experience and create pipelines for employers.
- **Collaborative** | Ongoing dialogue between education, workforce boards, and employers keeps programs relevant and outcomes measurable.

# CAREER PATHWAYS ELEMENT: COLLABORATION

## Education System

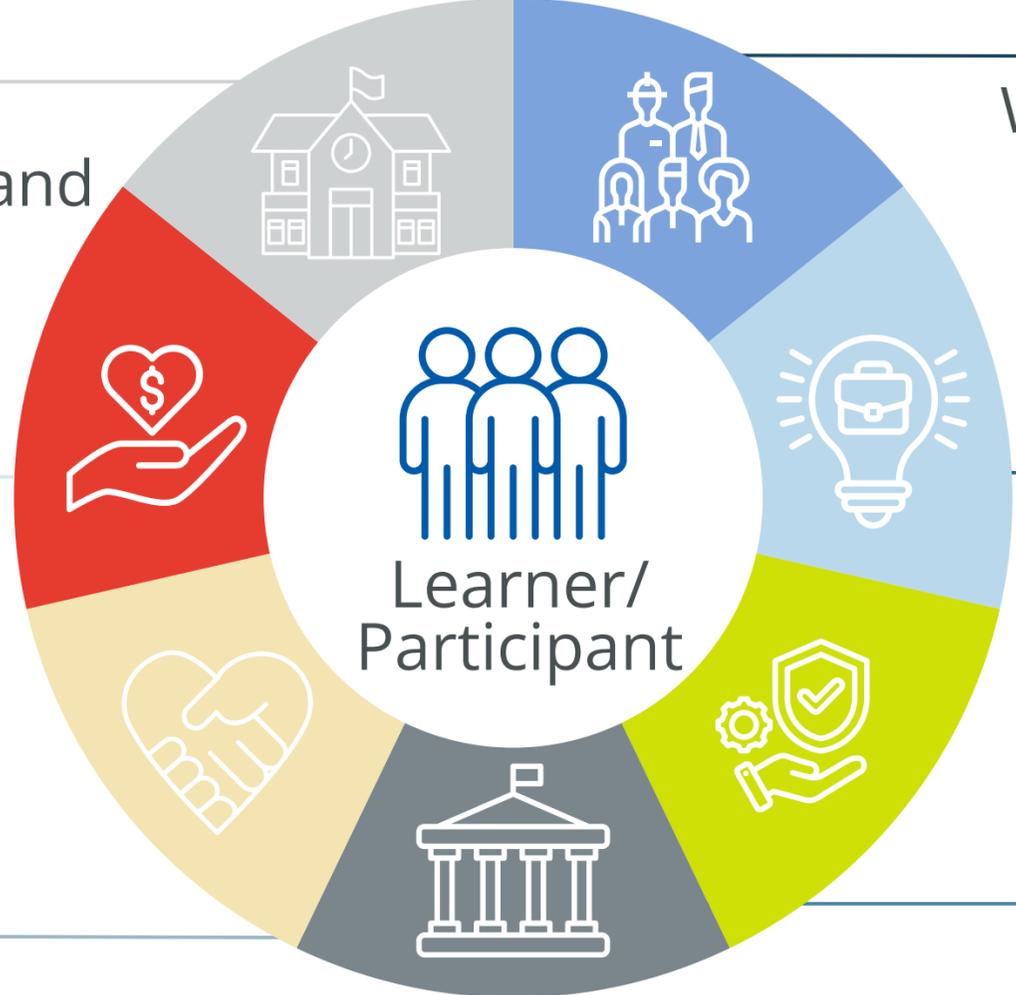
K-12 systems, adult education programs, community colleges, and universities

## Funding

Investments from federal, state, and local governments, philanthropy, industry, etc.

## Community Partners & Service Providers

Reduce barriers to participation by offering wraparound supports



## Workforce System

Workforce boards, public agencies, and training providers

## Business/Industry

Identifying skill needs, validating credentials, and supporting curriculum and work-based learning

## Employers

Hire participants, offer on-the-job training, and provide feedback on program effectiveness

## Government Agencies

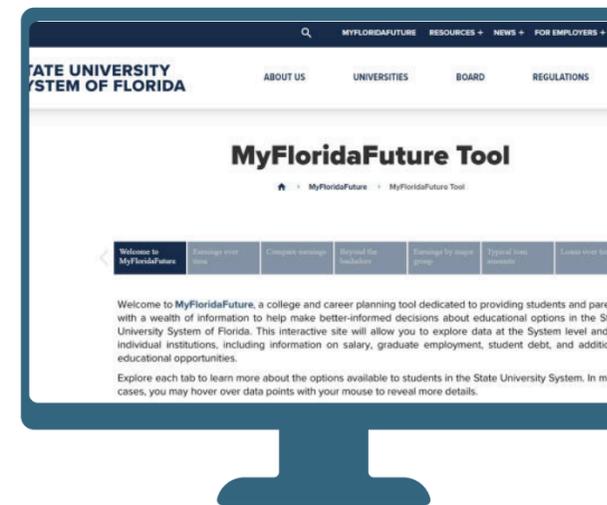
Provide leadership and coordination through state and local workforce, economic development, and human services agencies

# CAREER PATHWAYS ELEMENT: USE OF DATA

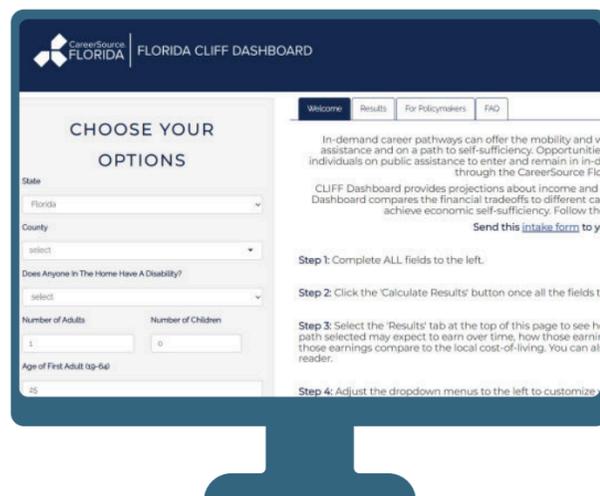
Effective career pathways depend on strong data sharing between education and workforce systems. Data connects what students learn to what employers need, guiding program design, policy decisions, and investments in talent development.



## FLORIDA INSIGHT DASHBOARD



## MYFLORIDAFUTURE



## CAREER LADDER IDENTIFIER AND FINANCIAL FORECASTER (CLIFF)



## LOCAL TARGETED OCCUPATIONS LIST

# CAREER PATHWAYS ELEMENT: STACKABLE CREDENTIALS



Vertical stacking follows a linear path, allowing students to move from a certificate to an associate and then a bachelor's degree (e.g., certificate → associate → bachelor's).



Horizontal stacking combines multiple related credentials to qualify for a specific job (e.g., CompTIA + Microsoft + Cisco = IT Systems Administrator).

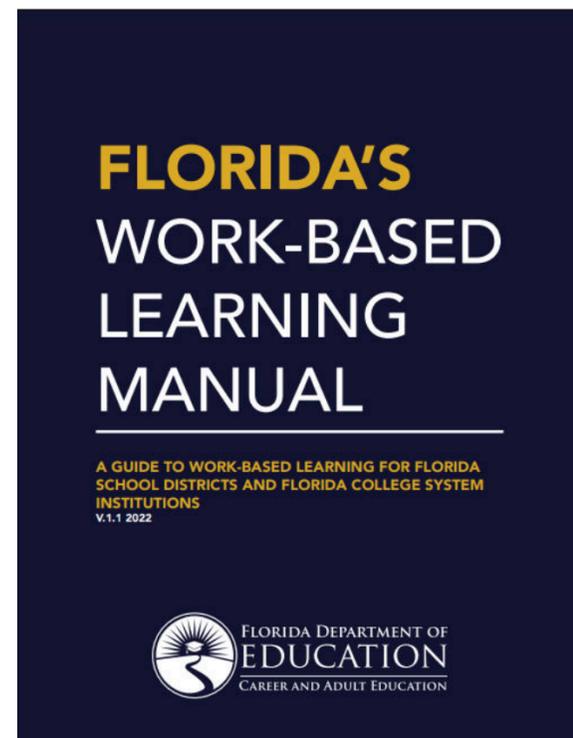


Value-added stacking adds specialized credentials to existing degrees for targeted roles (e.g., bachelor's degree + Education Preparation Institute = credentialed to teach).

# CAREER PATHWAYS ELEMENT: WORK-BASED LEARNING

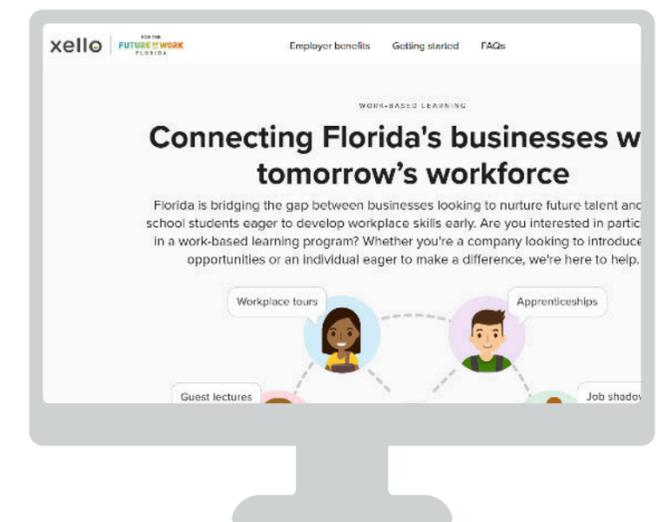
## FLORIDA'S WBL MANUAL

Florida's Work-Based Learning Manual is a statewide guide that helps educators, administrators, and employers design and manage high-quality work-based learning programs aligned with educational standards and workforce needs.



## FLORIDA'S STATEWIDE WORK-BASED LEARNING NETWORK

Through a partnership with Xello, employers can interact with K-12 students, promote career pathways, support workforce development, and access guidance to design meaningful, work-based learning experiences.



# CAREER PATHWAYS ELEMENT: SUPPORT SERVICES

Career pathways work best when learners have comprehensive, coordinated supports that help them overcome barriers and stay on track.

Support Type	Examples & Purpose
<b>Basic Needs</b>	Child care, transportation, housing assistance   <i>Addresses nonacademic barriers that often prevent enrollment or cause attrition.</i>
<b>Well-Being</b>	Mental health and counseling services   <i>Promotes stability, focus, and persistence, particularly for learners navigating stress or trauma.</i>
<b>Skill Development</b>	Personal success and workplace readiness skills   <i>Builds problem solving, adaptability, teamwork, and digital literacy needed for both learning and employment success.</i>
<b>Academic &amp; Career Supports</b>	Advising, tutoring, learning communities, and career navigation   <i>Helps students choose the right pathway, stay on track, and connect education to employment outcomes.</i>

# BASELINE ASSESSMENT: WHAT WE LEARNED

- Florida's career pathways ecosystem has become **more complex as investment, policy attention, and workforce-alignment initiatives have expanded** statewide.
- Longstanding **emphasis on "college" access** and attainment may unintentionally **signal a narrow definition of postsecondary success**, reducing engagement from employers and workforce partners focused on technical training, short-term credentials, and apprenticeships.
- Stakeholders **apply the term "career pathways" differently**—ranging from comprehensive systems to individual programs—leading to fragmented efforts, inconsistent expectations, and challenges in coordination and measurement.
- Although Florida offers robust labor market tools, many **organizations struggle to interpret and apply the data consistently**, resulting in pathways that may rely on anecdotal input or legacy programs rather than regional workforce demand.

# BASELINE ASSESSMENT: OPPORTUNITIES

- **Strengthen LCAN capacity** through training, coaching, and peer learning focused on workforce policy, cross-sector partnerships, labor market data, and high-value pathways advising.
- **Link K-12, postsecondary, workforce, industry, and community partners**, while bridging local efforts with state policy and funding priorities.
- **Clarify the purpose and language of career pathways** to reduce fragmentation and support more consistent, aligned implementation across systems, including how students are guided and supported through pathways.
- **Support access to and application of labor market and education data** to inform regional strategy, pathway design, and student-facing advising and decision-making.
- **Identify and amplify high-impact regional models** that improve pathway navigation and student progression into high-value opportunities.

# CONTACT

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# Talent Strong Florida High-Value Pathways Initiative



Announcing a [competitive grant opportunity](#) for Local College Access Networks (LCANs) to strengthen regional education-to-career ecosystems and expand access to high-value credentials for Florida's learners.

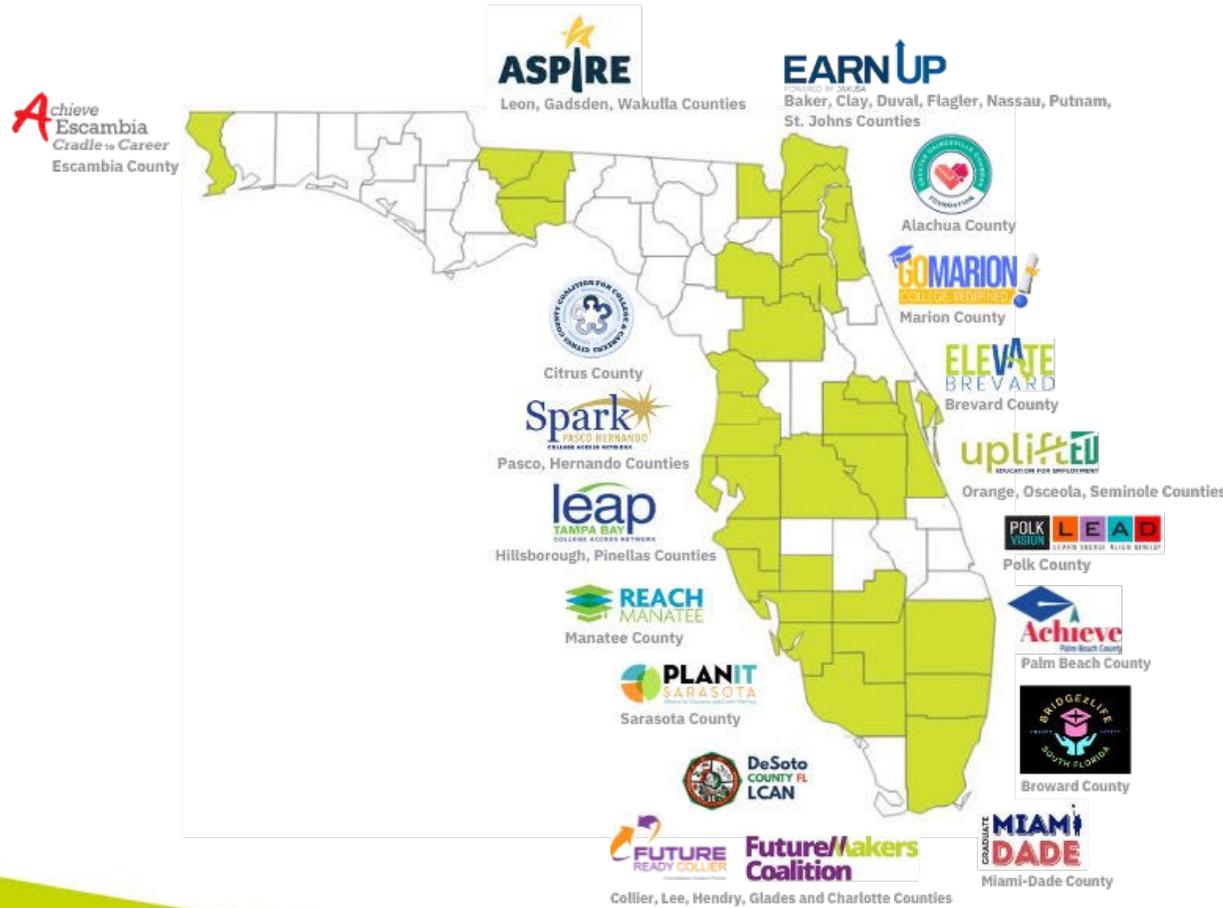
*Supported by Lumina Foundation*



# Talent Strong Florida High-Value Pathways Initiative



Higher *Education*, Higher *Rewards*.



**19**  
LCANs  
represent

**18.6**  
million  
Floridians

**34**  
out of 67  
counties

**85%**  
of the state's  
population

*\*as of January 2025*



# Talent Strong Florida High-Value Pathways Initiative



## *At-A-Glance*

**Funding:** Up to 6 grants of up to \$50,000 each with an 18-month project period (April 2026 – September 2027)

**Purpose:** Strengthen regional ecosystems to connect education to careers through high-value credentials

Application Deadline: March 27, 2026 at 11:59 PM ET

## **Required**

-  Cross-sector partnerships (K-12, postsecondary, workforce, employers)
-  Participation in Community of Practice and Technical Assistance
-  Focus on systematically embedding pathways information at district and community levels

# Talent Strong Florida High-Value Pathways Initiative



## *What We're Looking For*

### **Project Focus: What Will You Do?**

Selected LCANs will design and implement strategies to:

1. Inform & Guide Students and Families
2. Strengthen Regional Partnerships
3. Increase Credential Enrollment

### **Target Populations**

-  Students attending schools with >50% economically disadvantaged enrollment
-  Students in rural communities
-  Students who are first in their families to pursue education beyond high school

# Talent Strong Florida High-Value Pathways Initiative



## Key Dates

January 29, 2026	Public announcement webinar (recorded)
February 18, 2026	<a href="#">Register for the application information session</a> from 1-2 p.m. Application will open on this page following the information session.
February 25, 2026	Q&A Session #1 at 1 p.m. <a href="#">Link to Zoom session.</a>
March 4, 2026	Q&A Session #2 at 1 p.m. <a href="#">Link to Zoom session.</a>
March 2026	TA available by appointment for support completing the self-assessment
March 27, 2026	Application deadline (11:59 PM ET)
Early April 2026	Award notifications
May 6, 2026	Cohort kickoff at Talent Strong Florida Summit in Tampa

# Talent Strong Florida High-Value Pathways Initiative

*What You Should Do Now*



- Explore the full opportunity
- Start identifying partners and having exploratory conversations
- Map your regionour Region's Need
  
- Which schools/communities would benefit most?
- What programs exist? Where are gaps?



fcansummit.org

JOIN  
US!



Talent **Strong**  
FLORIDA  
2026 SUMMIT



May 6 – 8, 2026

Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay

*\*Early Registration Available Through 1/31/26\**

FLORIDA  
COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK