



Regional Alignment to Labor Market Demand

When education institutions and workforce development providers across the same region are able to “row in the same direction,” it is more likely that employers will have access to talent and that students and workers will know which careers to pursue for economic advancement. Creating incentives that encourage regional actors to collaborate with one another also can increase efficiencies by ensuring that programs reinforce and complement each other, rather than duplicate efforts or create gaps.

JFF recommends that states take an active role in fostering regional collaboration. State policies should encourage educational institutions and workforce development organizations to adopt unified messaging about which career fields are most in demand. If partners develop and promote their own separate messages regarding “hot jobs” or other labor market outlooks, students and their families will receive mixed signals while they’re trying to identify career paths. It’s especially important for low-income and first-generation college students to receive clear messages about labor market opportunities because they cannot afford to make any missteps as they choose their education and career pathways. Additionally, states should incubate and support sector-based talent development strategies, through which postsecondary and workforce development providers collaborate in addressing the specialized workforce needs of industries most critical to the health of their regional economies.

Findings from 15-State Study



On average, half of the three recommended regional alignment policies have been adopted per state.



Signs of progress: A majority of the states support industry-sector-based strategies for developing regional talent pipelines. Many states also are fostering regional collaboration among K-12, adult education, community and technical colleges, four-year institutions, and workforce development organizations to ensure that all parties align their programs and services toward in-demand careers.

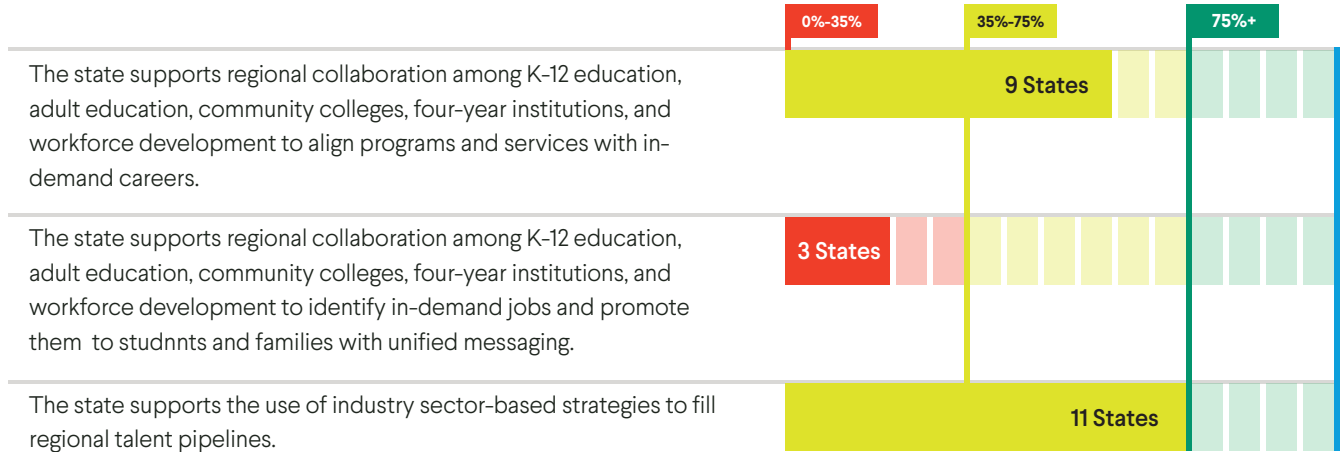


Critical gaps: Very few of the states have taken steps to encourage regional providers to take a unified approach to crafting and promoting messaging about in-demand careers.



Ahead of the curve: California, Hawaii, Michigan, New York, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin.

The state supports regional alignment among education and workforce development providers toward in-demand careers.



State Spotlight: **Wisconsin**

Wisconsin has a long history of supporting tight alignment between education and employer needs and is considered a national leader in deploying the career pathways model for addressing talent development and economic advancement aims. Career pathways equip students with industry-recognized credentials that help them gain footholds in high-demand occupations while also clarifying the path to postsecondary credentials and career advancement.

The Wisconsin Pathways Committee guides a systems- and state-level approach to career pathways by knitting together Wisconsin Technical Colleges, K-12 school districts, the workforce system, economic development entities, and other state and regional partners. The Pathways Committee ensures that career pathways are industry-driven and support students and jobseekers of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. The committee also leads the overall strategy and creates professional development resources. Furthermore, the state funds regional pathways coordinators and has established a 20-point “pathways scorecard” to guide and assess implementation.

