



# THE CALIFORNIA CAREER PATHWAYS TRUST

Sustaining Cross-Sector Partnerships



Building a  
Future  
That Works

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b><u>I. Introduction</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>
<b><u>II. Round One Accomplishments</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>
<b><u>III. Sustainability for Round One Consortia</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>
Sustaining CCPT at the Local Level	3
Sustaining CCPT in the Region	7
<b><u>IV. Challenges to Sustaining Local and Regional CCPT Work</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>
<b><u>V. Supports for CCPT Sustainability</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>
<b><u>VI. Conclusion and Implications</u></b>	<b><u>19</u></b>
<b><u>Appendix</u></b>	<b><u>22</u></b>
<b><u>Endnotes</u></b>	<b><u>23</u></b>



# INTRODUCTION

The California Career Pathways Trust (CCPT), established in July 2014 by Assembly Bill 86 and administered by the California Department of Education (CDE), funded new regional consortia to establish career pathways that would lead high school students to a postsecondary credential or certification aligned with regional workforce needs.

CCPT pathways departed in significant ways from traditional K-12 career and technical education (CTE, or vocational education) programs through their partnerships with postsecondary institutions (primarily community colleges) and employers, integration of career pathway course work into high schools' academic programs, and adoption of a regional perspective on needs and opportunities.

The California State Legislature allocated \$500 million to finance two CCPT rounds for three years each, making it one of the largest CTE investments across all states. The Legislature also intended that new CCPT partnerships and programs ultimately would be sustained by grantees. The CCPT grant required recipients to identify and set aside funds within their own budgets, or secure funding from education and business partners, in order to underwrite program costs for at least two years beyond state funding.

This report considers the experiences of the 39 Round One grantees.<sup>1</sup> CCPT Round One funded 12 consortia at around \$600,000 (awards ranged between \$527,000 and \$875,000), 17 consortia at around \$6 million (awards ranged between \$1.2 million and \$9.9 million), and 10 consortia at approximately \$15 million (awards ranged between \$13.2 million and \$15 million), for a grant total of \$250 million. Consortia fiscal agents included K-12 school districts, community college districts,

county offices of education, and one charter school.<sup>2</sup> (See Appendix for details.)

Previous JFF reports examined Round One career pathway implementation—promising practices, issues, and challenges.<sup>3</sup> This report takes up questions of sustainability. Were grantees able to identify resources necessary to sustain CCPT work and relationships? To what extent were career pathways, partnerships, and regional relationships continued at grant’s end? Which elements remain in place? Which have been curtailed or eliminated? But first, what did Round One consortia accomplish?

## II. Round One Accomplishments

Round One CCPT consortia can point to many accomplishments. Every Round One consortium developed new or expanded career pathways or deepened existing ones. Across Round One consortia, grantees report increased student career pathway participation and increased district CTE expenditures. Some consortia built career pathways on standing relationships with community colleges and employers; most sought new ones. Where productive relationships existed among CCPT partners, many consortia developed successful dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, and articulated course agreements that enabled pathway

students to earn college credit and work-ready certifications.

Educators across Round One consortia remarked on career pathways’ benefits for students, especially those often alienated from school and likely to drop out. Learning theorists know that students’ engagement in school requires them to see the value in accomplishing what is being asked of them. By report, work-based learning (WBL, or Linked Learning) opportunities enabled many students to experience productive connections with school, community college, and employers, and to develop concrete, positive plans for their futures. A recent quantitative analysis of student dropout numbers for Round One and Round Two consortia provides strong support for these educators’ observations: it finds a substantial 23 percent reduction



in career pathway students' dropout rates, driven primarily by 11th- and 12th-grade white, female students.<sup>4</sup>

Although every Round One consortium could boast CCPT-related accomplishments, consortia varied substantially in their pathway work, outcomes, plans, and prospects for sustaining that work. "Sustainability" meant something different for every Round One consortium depending on its scope of work, prior pathway-related experience, social and economic contexts, and partners' buy-in to career pathway relationships, responsibilities, and goals.

### **III. Sustainability for Round One Consortia**

State-level CCPT proponents intended that the initiative would provide the vision and funding to build career pathways reflecting partnerships among participating districts, postsecondary institutions, and employers. Supporters expected that the grant would stimulate new ways of motivating and supporting high school students' successful paths to career and college, and, in the process, foster new local and regional relationships. In the ideal, post-CCPT grantees would see career pathways sustained by firmly established collaborations among schools and districts,

community colleges, and employers at both local and regional levels. Ideally, the resources and staff necessary to CCPT pathways and cross-sector collaborations would move from special funding status to become an established part of partners' budgets. CCPT's necessary infrastructure and intermediary supports would be institutionalized.

However, these goals proved overly ambitious for CCPT Round One grantees. After three to four years of CCPT funding, few if any of the 39 Round One consortia achieved sustainability in these ideal terms. In reality, sustainability for CCPT Round One grantees posed different incentives and challenges to school district, postsecondary, and employer partners. And sustainability took different forms at local and regional levels.

#### **SUSTAINING CCPT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

Consortia varied considerably in the extent to which local pathways and partnerships were maintained and in the resources that sustained them. All 39 CCPT Round One consortia continued local CCPT pathway activities in some form. However, consortia funded at the lowest grant levels generally needed little if any continued fiscal support because they allocated the bulk of CCPT funds to replacing aging

equipment or updating high school CTE facilities, adding such instructional resources as new labs, machinery, or digital technology. Examples of these targeted, equipment-focused pathways include manufacturing, public safety, health, and agricultural programs. Participants say that these smaller CCPT grants made significant contributions to the quality of existing district pathway programs and enabled curricular improvements that would have been impossible without them. But these grants generally did not raise the complex political or cross-sector relationship challenges seen in larger grants because sustainability, in these instances, did not implicate difficult goals of cross-sector collaboration.

In contrast, pathway efforts pursued by consortia funded at \$6 million or \$15 million levels aspired to significant change in partners' roles, responsibilities, and relationships. Many were successful because they could leverage established relationships and routines to advance career



pathway work. For instance, a Santiago Canyon College educator pointed to the community college's long-term relationship with Orange Unified School District and resulting confidence about collaboration, student support, and high school teachers' qualifications. "Our accomplishments are by definition sustainable—the curriculum [and] enrollment agreements are not going anywhere," she said. Where districts and community colleges successfully developed dual enrollment and other alignment strategies and established productive WBL opportunities, grantees generally expected that these pathway relationships would remain in place.

Confronted with funding uncertainties, some consortia cut back the number of pathways in order to ensure the quality of those that would continue. Several consortia experiencing rocky relationships with their designated community college partners decided to continue the pathway but eliminate the community college component altogether, or drop what they perceived to be uncooperative community colleges from the regional work. Stronger post-CCPT participation by community colleges tended to flow from substantive involvement with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office's (CCCCO) Strong Workforce and Guided Pathways programs, initiatives that

provided the clear incentives and lines of support for partnerships lacking in CCPT authorizing legislation.

In some consortia, educators' and employers' positive experiences with students' internships spurred pathway program expansion. Pathway work that was scaled up at local levels often represented CCPT investments in the growth of existing programs, especially Linked Learning. In consortia where high school and community college educators shared a vision of aligning pathway work, CCPT allowed for more resources (especially for K-12: personnel for leadership, advising, K-12 teacher release time, and equipment) that made it possible to increase collaborative agreements about coursework and student credits. For example, the result of one consortium expanding its education pathways was that, by 2018, the community college partners had created new classes for high school students that were easily transferable as credit toward a certificate or associate's degree in elementary education.

CCPT leaders report "braiding" funds from programs such as CCPT Round Two, the CDE's Career Technical Education Incentive Grant, the CCCCCO's Strong Workforce initiative, federal Perkins Career and Technical Education grants, and other outside funds to continue

pathway activities. However, while all of the larger consortia used outside funds to sustain aspects of pathway work, some achieved a measure of stability with the incorporation of career pathway support in the budgets of school districts or, in some instances, county offices of education. For instance, in their Year Three reports, 12 consortia point to new district funding for key staff positions, such as high school career advisors or pathway coaches, or absorbing the costs of WBL work. Incorporation of pathway operating expenses into Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP) or district general funds typically represented investments in proven models, rather than newer pathways or partnerships. Pathways preparing students for high-demand local employment opportunities such as agriculture or manufacturing often received support both from the district general fund and employers to sustain their career pathways. Few community college partners incorporated pathway support into their budgets. But, where they did, these investments strengthened partnerships with K-12 districts. For instance, Cuesta College, the lead for the San Luis Obispo Community College District consortium, supports dual enrollment with its own dollars.



## SUSTAINING CCPT IN THE REGION

CCPT supporters imagined not only a broadened conception of CTE as expressed in K-14 career pathways, but, just as important, a regional field of action to undergird and grow it as well. CCPT asked consortia participants to think beyond their own school, district, community college, or employer interests to imagine and build collaborations that could have regional consequence. In theory, a regional approach offers appeal for all partners. On its face, a regional approach holds considerable programmatic rationale for community college districts. It could reduce redundant investments in program offerings and specialized faculty, and it could expand the opportunities available to pathway students in terms of coursework, college credits, or WBL opportunities. As one community college leader said, “No one college can meet regional needs.” Likewise, employers and industry could benefit substantially from a regional strategy that based K-12 and community college career pathways on regional demands for workers in high-demand, high-wage fields rather than only local employer interests. K-12 districts could benefit from an expanded menu of career pathway options, and a regional perspective could help leaders monitor and manage issues such as teacher shortages,

facility limitations, and transportation barriers.

However, despite these hypothetical benefits, uptake on CCPT’s regional vision generally has been slow. If CCPT advanced a changed mindset in terms of ideas about goals and content of CTE pathway programs, the initiative’s regional strategy signaled an even more radical shift in thinking about collaboration both within and across institutional boundaries for all stakeholders. For instance, community colleges typically compete rather than collaborate with one another, even within the same community college district, and their relative autonomy perpetuates a local pathway vision dependent on faculty interests. Employers are more likely to train an eye on their own bottom line than respond to regional workforce needs; they can be a hard sell on the benefits of sponsoring WBL opportunities or internships for area high schoolers, especially in the absence of data demonstrating positive returns on their investments of time and resources. K-12 districts characteristically function in isolation from the broader regional economy or actors beyond the K-12 realm, and do not pursue relationships or opportunities outside district boundaries. CCPT partners had much to understand about one another, as well as about the “whys” and “how-tos” of regional collaboration.

Considering the many practical and strategic challenges facing Round One consortia and the entrenched attitudes about CTE or cross-sector partnerships existing in many regions, it's unsurprising that only a few of the 39 Round One consortia achieved and sustained significant momentum around regional pathway partnerships and collective action. In almost all instances, doing so required creating a compelling regional vision and developing an infrastructure to support regional collaborative work—a daunting task under any circumstances let alone within a three-to-four-year time period. And in California's context of tight resources for schools and higher education, few incentives existed for stakeholders—most especially community colleges—to invest scarce time and resources in regional collaboration. Further, even where consortia made headway in stimulating regional career pathway partnerships, these relationships have proved tough to continue absent dedicated funding to support the coordinators and infrastructure to sustain critical functions of regional collaboration and partner-to-partner work at any level. However, the consortia that have been successful in making a shift to regional pathways demonstrate their value to all partners. Some Round One grantees continued aspects of the regional work

begun under CCPT by weaving together other K-12 grant resources or funds received from collaborative participants. These consortia created new advisories or augmented existing governance structures to inform and strengthen cross-sector partnerships, arrangements that explicitly represented a transition from a grant-funded consortium to a partnership collaborative. For instance, the Executive Committee of the new Orange County Pathways (formerly OC Pathways: \$15 million), co-led by the Orange County Department of Education and the Los Angeles and Orange County Regional Consortium, frames career pathway goals in regional, not local, terms. For instance, the Executive Committee approved four regional priorities in March 2018, regional work that benefits from the strong support and practical resources of five Regional Occupational Programs (ROPs). A consortium leader said that Orange County's career pathway work is “firmly established as an ongoing part of the Orange County Department of Education,” and pointed to the success of its new Career Education unit, which is responsible for working with high schools, community colleges, and employers around career partnerships.

The Tulare-Kings CCPT consortium (\$15 million), led by the Tulare County Office of Education, was reorganized

and renamed as the TK College and Career Collaborative upon the ending of its CCPT Round One grant. It comprises 13 districts, three community colleges, and two Workforce Investment Boards; the steering committee is co-chaired by the chancellor of West Hills College and the superintendent of Visalia Unified School District. Members voluntarily committed around \$350,000 to support the new collaborative's regional work. The director of college and career for the Tulare County Office of Education (who was the former director of the CCPT grant) voiced enthusiastic support for the new collaborative and the strong partnerships it represents:



“Everyone volunteers; everyone really wants to be there and to build something really sustainable in the region.” The TK Collaborative Steering Committee approved 5 regional priorities in February 2018; 75 people are actively involved with workgroups focused on these 5 areas. “The workgroups are involved in really deep work. They have spent hours and hours on planning and consensus workshops.”

Across Round One grantees, several county offices (or departments) of education provided strong cross-sector leadership by embracing a neutral role of facilitating, connecting, and supporting education in their jurisdictions. School district and community college district consortia fiscal leads, on the other hand, often moved with difficulty outside conventional relationships or priorities. For many, CCPT’s regional goals bucked key institutional incentives and

practices, and made demands on skill sets and routines that many participants were not prepared for or open to. For almost all Round One consortia, relationships between K-12 districts and participating community colleges involved an ongoing tension between the persistence of past practices and adaptation to new ones.

Some Round One community college district leads fostered productive regional, cross-sector work. For example, the Contra Costa Community College District (\$8 million) successfully developed and expanded regional pathway work and relationships. The consortium has continued monthly steering committee meetings as well as subregional efforts co-led by community colleges and school districts. This move allowed partners to provide opportunities to students in ways that accommodate the idiosyncrasies of partner high schools and community colleges. An active ROP provides important support and incentives for pathway programs, and helps teachers obtain their CTE credential. Because of the partnership between participating high schools and community colleges, dual enrollment increased from 79 students in fall 2017 to 180 students in 2018 in two pathways. In the belief that early college credit was the ultimate goal of collaboration with K-12, the community college district has hired an early college credit coordinator

to manage articulation and dual and concurrent enrollment.

For some Round One consortia, regional collaboration remains a work in progress. Elk Grove (Capital Academies and Pathways: \$6 million) and Sacramento (Capital Region Academies for the Next Economy: \$15 million) consortia continue to work together to build strong career pathways in the capital region. Participants in both consortia express commitment to partnering on a regional approach and have done so successfully in areas such as professional development and employer connections. Yet they viewed the regional work as incomplete at grant's end because, as they report, "we don't yet have regional alignment. But we are making progress. One regional system is still not in place; [there are] many organizations in this space." CAP and CRANE leaders recognize, as do others working to establish regional goals, that it is "all about relationships—supporting and sustaining them across sectors and locations."

From the outset, Round One consortia able to achieve a regional presence for career pathways saw CCPT's challenges and opportunities in system terms and conceptualized both vertical and horizontal relationships as fundamental to regional sustainability. They took a regional planning approach and invested in engaging middle managers

and developing their capacity to build pathway work and sustain collaboration over time. Conceptualizing sustainability as a system issue—not a “piece by piece,” “local,” or “special project” task—is, in the words of the former Tulare-Kings director, “incredibly impactful. If you have a regional collaborative, and people are working together to solve problems of environment and culture, to collaborate and learn from each other, you have a better chance to use the funding in ways that really make a big difference. And you also get peer accountability when people work hard for their own interests but also put the regional hat on to make decisions.”

## IV. Challenges to Sustaining Local and Regional CCPT Work

End-of-grant staff cutbacks by K-12 districts, community colleges, or employer partners challenged Round One consortia everywhere because cuts generally came to staff responsible for brokering and supporting pathway relationships within and across sectors. And staff turnover upset continuation efforts when initial educator, employer, or community college champions moved on and replacements had little knowledge of or interest in career pathways. For instance, several community

college leaders said that staff hired with CCPT funds would not be replaced. One lamented the loss of “someone to broker those relationships with employers [and schools]. I think every college needs that. . . . [R]ight now, it’s falling to the deans [or others].” In many school districts, these brokering responsibilities were transferred to already overworked high school counselors, many of whom did not see career pathways as part of their job. Though all consortia acknowledged the importance of the staff-brokering and coordination roles created with CCPT funds, few consortia were able to secure the resources to underwrite these vital functions at their CCPT-funded levels. As the executive director of a \$6 million consortium asked: “How do we institutionalize the wraparound support services that are so critical to our success?” Several consortia worked successfully with CCCCO-funded Deputy Sector Navigators or nonprofits such as ConnectED or the Berkeley-based College and Career Academy Support Network to leverage resources to underwrite continued pathways.<sup>5</sup> But the extent to which CCPT practices and relationships could be sustained remained uncertain at grant’s end because, with few exceptions, most continued to depend significantly on the availability of outside funding.

The presence (or absence) of influential

support for career pathways also affected sustainability. CCPT called for a significant rethinking about how high schools might best serve today's young people—centrally, a subscription to the idea that all youth, not just youth heading to a career after high school graduation, could benefit from hands-on employer engagement. As one K-12 district superintendent put it, “This is not your father’s voc-ed!” Because CCPT brought new ideas about CTE goals and content, buy-in to the program’s assumptions and educational perspective proved key. But even where it existed initially, many consortia leaders saw that support eroding with time. As one consortium leader wrote: “[A]nnual staff turnover is taking its toll as every year several partner districts bring a new person to the table who is unfamiliar with CCPT.” Likewise, another noted the challenge of “maintaining relevance to new [business] partners who are unacquainted with pathways.” Loss of original advocates mattered particularly in areas where negative or indifferent “popular culture” about CTE—what it offered, who it served—pushed against CCPT’s cross-sector, more comprehensive career pathway vision. In response to these concerns, several consortia set about “rebranding” CTE to showcase the benefits of college- and career-readiness support for all students. As one district leader

said: “We are working to change popular culture [about CTE] in our district. We have worked hard to show the rigor and [program value] to teachers, parents, and students.” However, the general lack of data to show the value of the program to students and area businesses hamstrung efforts to counter these perceptions and gain pathway advocates.

CCPT Round One grant’s end also found many consortia still grappling with concrete issues central to implementing or sustaining pathway work. Rural consortia wrestled with transportation challenges. Confusion in some consortia about activities allowable under the Education Code stymied planning. Dual enrollment or other articulation agreements between districts and community colleges remained incomplete in several consortia, and unresolved practical issues—incompatible high school and community college student schedules, seat time criteria, course conflicts, teacher availability, CTE certification hurdles—frustrated K-12 and postsecondary partners everywhere. The Orange County Department of Education offers a program that makes it easier for high school teachers to acquire the necessary CTE credentials, as do some ROPs, but many more are needed to meet high school career pathway staffing demands across the state. Most consortia struggled to make an evidence-based case

for pathway continuation or expansion in the absence of data to show the impact for students or the region of CCPT pathway investments. Missing longitudinal data and incompatible K-12 and postsecondary data systems meant inadequate evidence about student outcomes to make a persuasive case for pathway continuation, or inform pathway planning within and across sectors. As one consortium leader put it: “We can’t assess the impact or character of pathways without data.”

Cross-sector collaborations petered out with the grant’s conclusion in a few consortia. CCPT supporters across the state tried hard to retain community college involvement once the grant’s partnering requirements came to an end. But even when the community college district was the CCPT fiscal lead, district administrators could not commit faculty time to work on dual enrollment issues, frame new curricula, or partner with K-12 educators. And community colleges did not get much financially out of all the administrative and faculty time required to establish dual enrollment and other arrangements with K-12. As one consortium leader commented: “Without more overt [community college] faculty buy-in, institutionalizing work-based learning opportunities has proven difficult.” Although there are important exceptions, community college districts

serving as the CCPT fiscal agent generally had a hard time sustaining the pathway work and the required collaboration. Nearly all community colleges saw scant benefit but much new work for them in career pathways. As one community college leader put it, “The way our CCPT was written was very K-12-centric.”

## V. Supports for CCPT Sustainability

CCPT Round One’s experiences show the many ways in which questions about sustainability are complex ones shaped by a consortium’s social, demographic, and economic context. For instance, economic urgency fueled broad and committed cross-sector membership in regions such as Tulare-Kings. In the Central Valley, concerns about whether the region’s schools or postsecondary institutions were producing young people with the skills and interests needed by contemporary agriculture motivated supportive pathway coalitions. Round One’s experiences highlight other contextual factors that enabled consortia to continue or sustain their CCPT work. At all grant levels, consortia with substantive history and relationships fundamental to CCPT goals used funds to deepen existing pathway activities or extend them. For instance, the Long Beach consortium partners’

deep history with the Long Beach College Promise program cast CCPT as an opportunity to take next steps in the evolution of their partnership. Many consortia brought valuable relationships to CCPT because of compelling and successful Linked Learning experience and district commitment to that model.

Consortia with active ROPs benefited from their networks of employers, ability to serve students from different schools and districts, and CTE-equipped facilities and credentialed faculty. And employers' productive involvement with career pathway programs led them to value these partnerships as a way to grow a regional workforce and contribute to young people's development as 21st-century citizens. Community colleges' institutional contexts mattered. Those in CCPT regions with a higher ratio of high schools to accessible community colleges experienced stronger K-12-college pathway partnerships. For instance, Contra Costa College willingly partnered on dual enrollment with a district where many students were likely to view community college as a more accessible option than University of California or California State University campuses because of geography and eligibility requirements. The Tulare-Kings and Orange County consortia built on established Linked Learning programs and their high-functioning industry advisory boards.

But prior experience or regional context do not tell the whole sustainability tale. Many of the factors affecting CCPT sustainability go back to early planning, effective cross-sector leadership, and implementation choices; others reflect actions taken as the grant neared its end. Three stand out.

## **PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY FROM THE OUTSET**

Consortia continuing many if not most of their pathways addressed sustainability issues from the start. "We engaged the sustainability conversation with every action," wrote a director of a consortium in an economically stressed region. Planning for sustainability took different forms across consortia. Some consortia, especially those funded at the lower grant levels, spent their CCPT funds on the capital equipment needed to carry out their pathway program for the long term—to ensure, as one educator put it, that "after the grant expires, most of the program will be firmly in place." A rural consortium tackled transportation issues early on; it purchased a van to enable student and teacher travel to internships, WBL assignments, or regional pathway meetings.

Other consortia paid early attention to securing commitment from K-12 district officials to maintain pathways when CCPT

funding ended. Some districts contributed facilities, provided general district funding for a staff position to coordinate pathways, funded a key pathway position such as a new college and career counseling slot, or included pathway supports in the district's LCAP budget. From the start, for instance, the Konocti Unified School District in Lake County contributed core courses for students in its Medical Pathway Program, and purchased and installed needed technology infrastructure. However, despite CCPT grant requirements, most Round One consortia focused on sustainability issues only near grant's end, sometimes despairing of future options. For instance, one Round One grantee wrote that "this [\$15 million] grant was a great way to start the pathway, but now [partners] are struggling with how to maintain it."

## **LEADERS' FOCUS ON COALITION BUILDING**

Reflecting on pathway outcomes, Round One CCPT leaders across the state agreed that "it's all about relationships." Consortia that continued CCPT programs and relationships post-grant intentionally approached the fundamental implementation task as one of coalition building. Successful coalition building among K-12 educators, community college

administrators, and employers required CCPT leaders with strong political skills and the abilities to draw disparate groups together and to present clear, direct benefits of the collaboration.

CCPT leaders successful in establishing trusting, productive relationships stressed the importance of making these cross-sector connections transformational, not transactional; defining an inclusive vision for the region; and identifying achievable objectives and assignments for all stakeholders. They were boundary spanners invested in an interagency scope of action. Collaborative arrangements that fail, one regional leader reflected, usually fail because organizers "forgot about transformation, about having a really general purpose and asking, 'What does business care about? What does K-12 education care about? Community colleges?' It's a longer time horizon. Most so-called collaborations fail because they begin in a transactional mode—calling out immediate needs and how to meet them." One consortium executive director used a dating metaphor to highlight the importance of relationship development with employers. "You need to not even try to engage them deeply at the outset. It's like when you're on a first date, it's better to pass a beer across the bar than pop an engagement ring. So, for employer involvement, the beer is a guest speaking

invite; the ring is the internship.”

CCPT experience shows that building significant cross-sector support requires leaders’ active attention to cultivating reciprocally beneficial relationships among partners. For instance, connecting the high school pathway capstone courses to the entry-level CTE programs promoted sustainability of CCPT work in ways meaningful to both community colleges

and high schools. CCPT experience also shows that coalition building requires consistent minding. “Networking and collaboration,” said a Round One leader, “requires a special skill set. You have to be able to navigate the environment, build trust among and across stakeholders. It doesn’t happen overnight. It takes time and constant attention.” For instance, the leader of the TK Collaborative put



hundreds of miles on her car as she touched base with every stakeholder group in the region in order to ensure a consistent message about regional goals and opportunities.

The dedication and persistence needed to build vigorous local or regional cross-sector coalitions cannot be overstated. Effective consortia leaders acted on the view that designing, supporting, and sustaining successful pathways presented an ongoing, evolving problem of adaptation and learning within and across partner institutions and communities. They held the conviction that no single organization, however innovative or powerful, alone could realize CCPT career pathway goals. One consortium leader underscored the importance of coalition building when reflecting on a visit to a Round Two consortium on the verge of collapse: “I can see why these large grants just crumble at the end—there’s nothing left because relationships were never built. They spent the money on small projects. The attitude [of the grant leader] was, ‘If they don’t want to do it [collaborate], I can’t make them.’ It’s a mindset. In the end, they all just walked away [from pathway work]. The [CCPT] investment is essentially all gone.”

As consortia transitioned from CCPT grant support, some leaders provided necessary infrastructure and sustainability supports.

For instance, some developed a shared-cost sustainability plan that detailed the responsibilities of each partner at the end of grant funding. To this point, both Orange County and Tulare-Kings describe their post-CCPT work as “moving from a grant-funded consortium to a partnership collaborative.” To support sustainability of career pathways, several consortia engaged educators in professional development activities designed to develop informed support and leadership for pathway programs in the future. Likewise, some consortia created opportunities to introduce employers and community members to career pathways, and the CCCCO has offered similar opportunities for community college leaders and faculty.

## **FOCUS ON SYSTEM CHANGE**

Policymakers know that how a problem is framed determines possible solutions. CCPT’s enabling legislation (AB 86) described the task of pathway creation and support in terms of broad, cross-sector action and regional collaboration. And Round One consortia effective in creating that broad coalition support for CCPT saw the grant in systemic terms of joint action, rather than the narrower frame of discrete programs or specific transactions. “If we want strong college and career readiness,” said a director, “we have to think in terms of system change and new relationships.”

At both district and regional levels, consortia defining their challenges in terms of system change created new positions at the end of the CCPT Round One funding to coordinate, inform, and sustain career pathway work. Consortia leaders focused on system change worked hard to put stable funding under key staff positions. Western Placer (\$4.4 million), for instance, now supports a college and career counseling position. Los Angeles and Tulare Offices of Education similarly



added staff positions in college and career education. The Orange County Department of Education created a position in career education. The primary responsibility of these new positions is to support and maintain key pathway partnerships and pursue the new relationships within and across implementing systems. And where robust cross-sector coalitions were built to support CCPT Round One, key stakeholders revised their individual or organization's specific agenda to incorporate a collective approach to pathway work, commit to a shared career pathway agenda for youth in their region, and invest in systemic action to sustain it.

## **VI. Conclusion**

CCPT Round One experience highlights the factors affecting career pathway implementation processes, outcomes, and sustainability prospects. And it contributes important understanding about what it takes to keep cross-sector collaborations strong over time. The challenges confronted across Round One consortia raise several interrelated opportunities for state-level policy and grantmaking to better support career pathways and the cross-sector collaboration CCPT assumed.

## **ADDRESS DATA ISSUES**

All CCPT leaders identified the lack of longitudinal data to track students' pathway progress and the incompatibility of existing data from K-12 and postsecondary metrics as major issues. These data shortfalls frustrated efforts to make an evidence-based case for sustaining or expanding pathway efforts and to conduct program review. Consortia leaders called for collaboration between CDE and CCCCCO in developing common metrics with which to measure student outcomes across K-12/postsecondary pathways and CTE success. Several school district CTE supporters also championed the addition of CTE program and outcome measures in the state accountability dashboard.

## **DEVELOP A STATEWIDE MESSAGE AND SUPPORT FOR CAREER PATHWAYS**

CCPT legislative advocates purposely left program goals open-ended so that consortia could build pathway programs responsive to their regions. But the absence of state-level articulation of what career readiness means, how to measure it, and implications for collaboration among partner institutions created confusion among Round One pathway participants across the state. Collaboration between CCCCCO and CDE around this articulation

could bring needed state-level messaging about these questions, as well as inform the on-the-ground support needed as career pathway participants moved through new experiences, relationships, and systems.

## **BUILD CAPACITY ON THE GROUND**

CCPT presented consortia with complex problems of adaptation and learning, and the on-the-ground capability needed to advance career pathway goals varied substantially across grantees. That necessary capacity took three forms. Organizational capacity comprised the staffing and infrastructure necessary to carry out career pathway work. Technical capacity involved the availability of data, analytic expertise, and CTE-credentialed teachers. Political capacity signaled the influential will to get behind career pathways and the cross-sector collaborations that mattered especially for the larger Round One consortia. Round One's experience underlines the significance of these interrelated on-the-ground capacities to CCPT implementation, outcomes, and sustainability. Distinguishing among these interconnected capabilities could inform the technical assistance, coaching, or other kinds of implementation supports offered by state or nonprofit agencies.

## **ALIGN GRANTMAKING TO GRANTEE CAPACITY AND CHALLENGES**

Round One experience finds a three-year grant period insufficient to bring about significant, systemic change in participants' roles, responsibilities, and relationships, or to cultivate a new mindset about career pathways, cross-sector collaboration, and regional work. Excepting consortia that used their small CCPT grants primarily to purchase equipment and consortia with deep Linked Learning experience, Round One grantees said they had inadequate time to build the coalitions, develop the programs, or create the strategies essential to continued career pathway success and sustainability. CCPT aimed not at incremental or purely technical change, but at radical change in norms, values, and relationships—change that takes time to bring about. Some mature consortia could build on strong collaborative foundations; those without these assets had to develop their CCPT work effectively from scratch. These fundamental capacity differences suggest state grantmaking strategies that acknowledge the developmental arc of local and regional pathway work, and the different nature of the tasks and challenges involved, most especially those of relationship building.

## SUPPORT INTERMEDIARY FUNCTIONS

Coordination of the sort CCPT intends takes time and resources, and participating organizations have little to spare. As CCPT staff at one community college noted, “Faculty don’t have the bandwidth to do this outreach or negotiation work.” And fostering the necessary depth of interaction is not a one-time undertaking. Round One experience shows that achieving collective, meaningful commitment among partners requires dedicated people and infrastructure. Lack of an effective intermediary, research shows, is one of the most frequent reasons why cross-sector initiatives fall apart. Unlike collaborations that involve one-time or intra-sector relationships, initiatives such as CCPT require an intentional structure, staff committed to enabling continuous communication, securing the commitment of important actors from different sectors, and supporting mutually beneficial activities among all stakeholders.

Round One CCPT consortia experienced some disappointments, missed some milestones, and wrestled more or less successfully with the complex issues inherent to cross-sector partnerships and new roles and responsibilities. Nonetheless, every Round One CCPT consortium could point to significant achievements at grant’s end. These accomplishments highlight the tremendous potential of career pathway programs in terms of productive regional relationships and the benefits to pathway students as well as local and regional economies. Round One experience also underscores the need for supportive leadership at all levels—state, regional, and local—and a long-term commitment of time and brokering resources.

# Appendix

## California Career Pathway Trust Cohort One Grants

FISCAL AGENT	AWARD AMOUNT	GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION
Tehachapi Unified School District	\$526,789	Central
Centinela Valley Union High School District	\$578,968	Southern
Campbell Unified School District	\$600,000	Northern
Ceres Unified School District	\$600,000	Central
Coronado Unified School District	\$600,000	Southern
Inglewood Unified School District	\$600,000	Southern
Madera Unified School District	\$600,000	Central
Mariposa Unified School District	\$600,000	Central
Public Safety Academy	\$600,000	Central
San Luis Obispo County Community College District	\$600,000	Central
W.E.B. DuBois Public Charter School	\$600,000	Central
Fullerton Joint Union High School District	\$875,000	Southern
Konocti Unified School District	\$1,211,175	Northern
Los Angeles County Office of Education	\$1,703,509	Southern
Antelope Valley Community College District	\$2,681,760	Southern
Western Placer Unified School District	\$4,438,152	Central
Yosemite Community College District	\$4,910,041	Central
Butte-Glenn Community College District	\$5,867,662	Northern
Vallejo City Unified School District	\$5,994,107	Northern
West Valley-Mission Community College District	\$5,999,999	Northern
Elk Grove Unified School District	\$6,000,000	Northern
Glendale Unified School District	\$6,000,000	Southern
John Muir Charter School	\$6,000,000	All
Long Beach Unified School District	\$6,000,000	Southern
Montebello Unified School District	\$6,000,000	Southern
Oxnard Union High School District	\$6,000,000	Southern
Rancho Santiago Community College District	\$6,000,000	Southern
Contra Costa Community College District	\$7,998,000	Northern
Paramount/Wonderful Academy	\$9,936,979	Central
Ventura County Community College District	\$13,195,744	Central
Tulare County Office of Education	\$14,790,007	Central
Victor Valley Community College District	\$14,943,433	Central
Long Beach Community College District	\$14,980,760	Southern
Peralta Community College District	\$14,990,966	Northern
Pasadena Community College District	\$14,990,966	Southern
Sonoma County Office of Education	\$14,999,690	Northern
Los Angeles Unified School District	\$15,000,000	Southern
Orange County Department of Education	\$15,000,000	Southern
Sacramento County Office of Education	\$15,000,000	Northern

Information is from the California Department of Education: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/pt/>.

# ENDNOTES

1. This report draws upon multiday site visits or telephone interviews with all 10 consortia funded at the highest levels (\$13-15 million); multiday site visits to 2 consortia funded at mid-levels (\$1.2-9.9 million), and telephone interviews with 8 other grantees at this level; telephone interviews with 2 consortia funded at the lower levels (\$527,000-875,000); and a review of all 39 Round One Year 3 reports submitted in fall 2017.
2. Round One consortia partnerships involved approximately 167 school districts, 371 high schools, 35 middle schools, 22 elementary schools, 22 adult/continuation/community schools, 13 county offices of education, 17 charter schools, 8 Regional Occupation Program centers, 85 community colleges, 845 business organizations, and 20 universities.
3. Milbrey McLaughlin, Valerie Lundy-Wagner, and Barry Groves, Two Years into CCPT: Many Challenges and Great Promise (Boston: JFF, 2017), <https://www.jff.org/resources/two-years-ccpt-many-challenges-great-promise/>.
4. Sade Bonilla, “Articulated Career Pathways between High School, Community College and Careers: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from California,” Stanford University, October 2018. Bonilla suggests that the effects for females may be driven by design choices that created pathways focused on traditionally female-dominated sectors such as health care.
5. Deputy Sector Navigator grants target investment at priority and emergent sectors as chosen by each of the 10 regions of the state, and meet the intent of specific objectives of the Economic and Workforce Development Program and the Career Technical Education Pathways Program.



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