



Boston, Massachusetts

Boston, Massachusetts, is one of the six sites selected to participate in the *New Skills ready network*. This five-year initiative, launched by JPMorgan Chase & Co. in 2020, aims to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways.

In the first year of the initiative, the Boston, Massachusetts, *New Skills ready network* team identified data capacity gaps to measure career pathway experiences and outcomes, leveraged shared definitions of high-quality college and career pathways (HQCCP) and work-based learning, completed a COVID-19 (coronavirus) labor market analysis for the city, began the critical work of understanding equity and cultural wealth frameworks, and developed an equity-minded approach to call for and support pilot high schools that will serve as early models of HQCCP in high-priority

industry sectors. Alongside the local work in Boston, the state of Massachusetts invested in college and career readiness efforts. The state passed and fully funded the Student Opportunity Act, which includes enhanced core instruction around expanding access to Career Technical Education and HQCCP that reflect local labor market priorities.

In 2020-21, the Boston, Massachusetts, *New Skills ready network* team focused on two major priorities:



Building a systems-change mindset among the cross-sector team; and



Developing common and foundational definitions to signal their commitment to equity.

THE NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK



NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK SITES:

- Boston, Massachusetts
- Columbus, Ohio
- Dallas, Texas
- Denver, Colorado
- Indianapolis, Indiana
- Nashville, Tennessee

New Skills ready network, launched by JPMorgan Chase & Co. in 2020, bolsters the firm's efforts to support an inclusive economic recovery, as part of both their \$350 million, five-year New Skills at Work initiative to prepare people for the future of work and their new \$30 billion commitment to advance racial equity. Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group are working with sites to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways in six US communities.

The six *New Skills ready network* sites are formulating new partnerships between local school systems, higher education, employers, and government entities to develop pathways and policy recommendations that give underserved students access to higher education and real-world work experiences that lead to high-wage, in-demand jobs.

These snapshots provide an overview of sites' accomplishments in the first year of the *New*

Skills ready network initiative, including the development of priority objectives and action steps toward those objectives. While the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic presented challenges to launching the work, the sites demonstrated strong early progress toward developing high-quality career pathways through collaborative stakeholder engagement.

Through the *New Skills ready network* initiative JPMorgan Chase is looking to advance the following priority areas to prepare students for good careers and economic mobility:

- Strengthening the alignment and rigor of career pathways;
- Designing, implementing and scaling real-world work experiences;
- Building seamless transitions to support postsecondary success; and
- Closing equity gaps.

Partners engaged on the leadership team

- EdVestors (site lead)
- The Boston Foundation
- Boston Private Industry Council
- Boston Public Schools
- Bunker Hill Community College
- City of Boston
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Education
- University of Massachusetts Boston

Boston, Massachusetts' Vision for Success

During the summer 2020 planning process, the Boston, Massachusetts, *New Skills ready network* team collaboratively defined the vision for success. The team also established outcomes aligned to their vision to guide their work over the five-year initiative to develop and expand access to high-quality career pathways for all learners, which includes becoming:

- *A city where social, institutional, and systemic barriers to entry and success are removed so that all young people can access quality career learning opportunities that support their exploration, informed decision making, and preparation for their future opportunities and postsecondary paths.*
- *A transformed system that recognizes students of color as “holders and creators of knowledge” and values the cultural wealth they bring to schools through their knowledge, skills, abilities to navigate their context despite systemic barriers, such as structural racism which threaten equitable outcomes.*
- *A learning environment, inclusive of settings from the schoolhouse to the workplace, with connected systems across sectors that employ equity-minded and asset-based strategies and accountability measures which prioritize the inherent strengths of students, their networks, and community, while also eliminating immediate barriers and addressing systemic inequalities.*
- *A public-school district where every student can progress through pathways that are engaging and relevant, enhance their community, offer direct connections to postsecondary, and prepare young people to enter meaningful careers.*

Setting the Context



For the past several years, Massachusetts has been committed to supporting HQCCP and related experiences. One major way the state is advancing career pathways is through its [HQCCP designation process](#), which provides supports for districts and schools that adopt one of the state-developed models. The five guiding principles for these HQCCP are equitable access, guided academic pathways, enhanced student support, connection to career and effective partnerships.

On the local level, Boston Public Schools' newly approved [2020-2025 Strategic Vision](#) aims to improve learner experiences and accelerate outcomes, close opportunity gaps, and increase instructional quality and rigor over the next five years. It prioritizes the pursuit of educational equity and breaking down the historical conditions and barriers that have prevented opportunity and success in learning for learners based on their race, income and other social conditions. To operationalize the plan, the district is using the Racial Equity Planning Tool to actively insert racial equity into decisionmaking processes. The plan focuses on college and career awareness, including deepening career exploration through individualized student learning plans, known statewide as MyCAP (MyCareer and Academic Plan). The district is also focused on expanding HQCCP leading to postsecondary education, training, trades and other career opportunities as well as establishing partnerships with community, employer and higher education organizations to create pathways to college and career success.

The city is also well versed in providing work-based learning experiences for learners. The [Boston Private Industry Council \(PIC\)](#) is a work-based learning intermediary for the Boston area. It identifies workplace experiences for high school learners and provides coaching for Boston Public Schools graduates in local colleges. In summer 2020, Boston led nationally in summer youth work placements, receiving citywide support to sustain virtual internships, including \$4.1 million from the city of Boston to support youth employment opportunities. Leading up to the summer, Boston PIC generated 1,055 [direct placements](#) in public and private institutions across the city.

Approach to Systems Transformation

Boston's vision for systems transformation is focused around convening partners in the city that are already committed to advancing career readiness. Many of these leaders have had ample opportunity to work together on previous initiatives. In many cases, strong relationships were already established among stakeholders.

For a decade the city, led by The Boston Foundation; Bunker Hill Community College; the University of Massachusetts Boston; and the Boston PIC, has been collaborating deeply to help more learners earn a high-value postsecondary credential through the implementation of [Success Boston](#) – Boston's citywide college completion initiative. By braiding partner expertise, momentum, and the *New Skills ready network* framework, the leadership team is looking to build upon the city's existing foundation to establish a high-functioning, cross-sector system of career pathways that lead to high-value credentials and real work experiences connected to high-wage, high-skill, in-demand jobs.

PRIORITY 1
**Building a
Systems-
Change Mindset
Among the
Cross-Sector
Team**



The *New Skills ready network* systems-change work in Boston requires partners across the entire city to adopt a systems-level mindset and collaborate in new ways. For the Boston, Massachusetts, leadership team, cross-sector collaboration has been a guiding principle of the initiative and the impetus that brought the members to the table. As long-standing partners, the leadership team members have deep knowledge about the importance of collaboration for successful systems initiatives.

The leadership team meetings continue to be a key strategy for cross-sector coordination. The meetings ensure that partners are at the table for input on project development and that proposed work aligns with existing systems work. The meetings also provide an opportunity for partners to surface adjacent yet related bodies of work so that this initiative complements other citywide efforts.

Going forward, cross-sector collaboration will continue to be the foundation for accomplishing work that is sustainable beyond the lifespan of this initiative. Currently, collaborators are beginning to work in more nuanced topic-based workgroups with participation reflective of the leadership team partner organizations. This participation will ensure that the work of the Boston, Massachusetts, *New Skills ready network* is embedded within partner institutions and organizations and can occur concurrently so the leadership team can make progress toward their goals.

PRIORITY 2
**Developing
Common and
Foundational
Definitions to
Signal Their
Commitment
to Equity**



One major priority for Boston, Massachusetts, team in year one of the *New Skills ready network* was to ground the work in a common definition of equity and cultural wealth. Through the *New Skills ready network* needs assessment process, the leadership team identified the need to take a deeper look at equity and career pathway development. Bunker Hill Community College had recently launched the Center for Equity and Cultural Wealth and has been a citywide and national leader on the topic, particularly as it relates to practice and policy change within institutions. With the leadership of Bunker Hill, the team is deepening their understanding of equity and cultural wealth as a key framework and its applications for their systems-change work around career pathways in Boston.

While equity has been a focus for all partner institutions, “cultural wealth” was a new framework for many. The leadership team’s shared understanding was built by having partners participate in A Conversation About Equity and Cultural Wealth: Preparing Employers for Community College Interns. This conversation featured citywide perspectives on systems issues related to the Boston, Massachusetts, *New Skills ready network* as well as the expertise of several members of the leadership team who were organizers or panelists in the event. The director of the Center for Equity and Cultural Wealth also led two sessions on this topic for the leadership team and demonstrated its potential application in decisionmaking around the identification of pilot schools. The leadership team already sees this work moving forward in related initiatives such as Success Boston.

**Community
cultural wealth**

is an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and microforms of oppression.

As the group moves forward on the next action steps, the leadership team now has a framework to discuss issues of equity and continue to build shared understanding of equity-minded practices. This shared understanding will be critically important as the team discusses key career pathway design and implementation decisions, including their current work on the selection criteria to identify pilot schools in the city to participate in career pathway development.

**Looking
Ahead**

The Boston, Massachusetts, *New Skills ready network* team focused their efforts on these two priorities in the first year to lay the foundation for the work to come under this initiative. Within the year one objectives, the leadership team was able to choose industry areas for their new career pathways and create selection criteria to identify pilot schools to serve as the first cohort for these career pathways. The project team also worked collaboratively to understand equity and cultural wealth so that everyone involved could develop a common language to address the institutional barriers that exist for learners.

As the Boston, Massachusetts, team moves forward into year two of this initiative, they will be working to build on this foundation to implement their new career pathways and support the initial cohort of pilot high schools. They will also deepen their systems-focused work, creating data-sharing agreements and an implementation plan for a robust career and academic planning system that spans secondary and postsecondary education across Boston.