

Interagency Pathway Development and Implementation Plan

MSDE, MHEC, GWDB CTE Committee

I. Introduction

Maryland is poised to advance a comprehensive strategy that integrates secondary education, postsecondary education, and workforce development into a seamless system of pathways that lead to high-quality and high-wage careers. This effort is grounded in the shared vision of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), and the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB). Together, these agencies seek to ensure that every Maryland learner has access to educational and career pathways that are rigorous, equitable, and aligned with the state's economic priorities. This work builds on significant progress already made through the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, dual enrollment expansion, the integration of advanced academics, and the ongoing modernization of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study.

This joint plan recognizes that in order to prepare students for success after graduating high school, the state must intentionally align systems that have historically operated in parallel rather than in concert. By leveraging the unique roles and strengths of MSDE, MHEC, and GWDB, Maryland can build a pathways ecosystem that supports learners from middle school through high school, and ultimately into family-sustaining careers.

II. Strategic Vision

The shared vision of this initiative is to create coherent, high-quality pathways that connect post-College and Career Readiness pathways (post-CCR pathways), including Career and Technical Education, Advanced Academics, Dual Enrollment, and Comprehensive Arts, to in-demand careers via postsecondary credentials (including apprenticeship opportunities). The strategy rests on three interdependent pillars:

- **Pathway Alignment:**
Focuses on creating transparent, articulated pathways that lead from high school programs to postsecondary degrees, industry-recognized credentials, and employment in high-demand fields.
- **Collaborative Governance:**
Ensures that policies, funding streams, and performance accountability systems are coordinated across agencies to support the design, implementation, and refinement of these pathways.
- **Equity:**
Ensures that all students—particularly those from historically marginalized communities—can access and succeed in pathways that lead to meaningful postsecondary and career outcomes.

Maryland's strategy deliberately integrates career coaching, early postsecondary opportunities, and rigorous academic instruction. It connects the promise of high-quality post-CCR pathways with the state's broader economic development agenda, ensuring that pathways are designed not only to meet educational goals but also to strengthen Maryland's workforce and economic competitiveness.

III. Strategic Goals

The joint plan advances three interconnected goals. First, it seeks to strengthen and scale high-quality post-CCR pathways that lead to credentials and degrees of value. This includes aligning all secondary CTE programs with postsecondary certificates and degrees, and industry-recognized credentials in high-demand sectors identified by the GWDB¹; expanding dual enrollment opportunities to accelerate postsecondary attainment; and integrating advanced academic coursework, such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, honors, and early college experiences, within each post-CCR pathway to promote both college and career readiness.

Second, the plan advances a coherent statewide pathways system through a cross-agency partnership coordinated by the GWDB and its CTE Committee, and engaging member designees from MSDE, MHEC, MD Labor, and Commerce. This partnership will serve as the central coordinating structure for pathway development and implementation, ensuring alignment across education and workforce systems. The agencies will collaborate to adopt shared pathway quality criteria, develop a Maryland Pathways Framework that defines expectations for program design, student supports, career-connected work-based learning, credential attainment, and labor market alignment, and promote the use of longitudinal data to track student progress from K–12 through postsecondary education and into the workforce. This data-driven approach will strengthen accountability, coordination, and continuous improvement across agencies and institutions.

Third, the plan seeks to advance equity and strengthen student support systems. It expands the role of career coaching and advising—dramatically expanded under the *Blueprint*—to help students and families navigate pathway options effectively. It focuses resources and technical assistance on local education agencies and postsecondary institutions serving large numbers of historically marginalized students, and it emphasizes the integration of Universal Design for Learning and culturally responsive practices to increase access and persistence for all learners.

IV. Agency Roles and Collaborative Structure

The implementation of this plan depends on clearly defined roles and sustained collaboration. MSDE will lead secondary CTE program development, ensuring alignment with academic

¹ The lists of priority sectors and high-wage, high-skill, and in-demand occupations will be modified in Winter 2025-2026, to be posted online and included in a modification of the following plan, where this information can currently be found: Governor's Workforce Development Board. (April 2024). *Maryland Statewide Workforce Development Plan: WIOA Combined Plan 2024-2028*. <https://www.gwdb.maryland.gov/pub/pdf/2024-2028stateworkforceplan-wioacombined.pdf>

standards and providing technical assistance and funding to local education agencies. It will coordinate dual enrollment strategies and the integration of early college models² with MHEC, and will continue to embed cross-cutting priorities—such as AI, STEM, and financial literacy, as well as other high-demand sectors for Maryland—into pathway design.

MHEC will focus on ensuring that the secondary educational opportunities are recognized by colleges and universities, such as: promoting credit transfer and articulation agreements specifically for college credit earned while in high school, and supporting instructor collaboration between high school teachers and college faculty to align curricula and expand dual enrollment offerings.

GWDB will play a central role in identifying priority industry sectors, engaging employers in pathway design, validating credentials and degrees, and ensuring that pathways are aligned with Maryland’s economic strategies.

Together, these sister agencies will ensure that policies, funding mechanisms, and accountability structures reinforce rather than compete with one another.

V. Implementation Timeline

The joint implementation unfolds over four years, from 2026 through 2028. The first phase, starting in 2025 and going into early 2026, focuses on framework development. During this period, the Maryland High-Wage, High-Skill and In-Demand Jobs and Career Pathways Frameworks will be developed and adopted, the GWDB will initiate career pathways mapping, initial priority pathways will be identified, and data-sharing agreements will be formalized to enable cross-agency analysis. Additionally, MSDE will finalize and adopt course standards for 152 CTE courses across 48 programs of study, and will finalize the Career-Connected Learning system—providing structural support and guidance for the inclusion of apprenticeship, internship, school-based enterprise, and employer driven capstones to post-CCR pathways across the state.

In order to spearhead initial career pathways mapping, the GWDB, in collaboration with member agencies, will set a statewide definition and list of high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand occupations, as required under Workforce Pell and which will be applied as a unifying framework of occupational priorities. The GWDB will contract with an outside vendor who will spearhead mapping career pathways aligned to the Maryland Pathways Framework for the five top occupations within at least three priority industries on this list, focusing on occupations that are critical to overall industry growth and/or occupations that represent key transition points for career advancement. For each occupation in the Career Pathway Map, details will include: key skills/competencies; educational requirements; average salary information; typical/common job

² In Maryland, **early college** refers to programs—such as Pathways in Technology Early College High (P-TECH) and dual enrollment initiatives—that allow high school students to earn transferable college credits or an associate degree while completing their high school diploma.

description elements; years of experience required for advancement across entry-, mid-, and senior-level occupations in the career pathway.

The second phase, in 2027, focuses on piloting and capacity building. Four to six pilot regions will be selected to develop and test secondary–postsecondary–workforce pathway maps, expand dual enrollment, and support faculty/curriculum alignment efforts. These pilots will be designed to model effective collaboration and implementation at scale.

The final phase, through 2028, centers on implementation and scaling as well as evaluation and continuous improvement. Pilot pathways will launch in selected targeted regions, accompanied by enhanced career coaching, professional learning and peer-network collaboratives, and robust employer engagement. Funding streams from Perkins V³, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act⁴ (WIOA) will be strategically aligned to sustain these efforts. Pilot outcomes will be analyzed, pathway criteria will be refined, and successful models will be scaled statewide. By embedding pathway development into state accountability and budget systems, the initiative will ensure sustainability beyond the pilot phase.

Implementation Timeline Chart

Year / Phase	Major Activities
Phase 1: Framework Development Late 2025 – Early 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adopt statewide high-wage/high-skill/in-demand jobs framework and Maryland Career Pathways Framework.• Identify priority pathways using the high-wage/high-skill/in-demand jobs list and begin statewide career pathways mapping.• Establish cross-agency data-sharing agreements.• Finalize standards for 152 CTE courses across 48 programs of study.• Finalize statewide Career-Connected Learning system.• Define statewide high-wage/high-skill/in-demand occupations (Workforce Pell-aligned).• Vendor-led development of career pathway maps for top occupations in priority industries.

³ <https://cte.ed.gov/legislation/perkins-v>

⁴ <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa>

Phase 2: Piloting & Capacity Building 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select 4–6 pilot regions. • Develop and test secondary–postsecondary–workforce pathway maps. • Expand dual enrollment within pilot regions. • Support curriculum and faculty alignment.
Phase 3: Implementation, Scaling, & Evaluation 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch pilot pathways. • Provide career-coaching professional learning and peer-network supports. • Strengthen employer engagement. • Align Perkins, Blueprint, Workforce Pell, and WIOA funding. • Evaluate pilots, refine criteria, and scale statewide. • Embed pathway development into state accountability and budget systems.

VI. Intended Outcomes

By the end of 2028, the state expects to see measurable improvements in educational and workforce outcomes. Dual enrollment participation among CTE concentrators is projected to increase significantly, particularly in high-demand pathways. Postsecondary enrollment and completion rates for CTE students will rise, with strong gains anticipated in community colleges and certificate programs. Participation in work-based learning opportunities aligned with employer needs will expand, providing students with meaningful experiences that prepare them for the labor market. Labor market outcomes will improve, with higher rates of credential attainment and employment in priority industries. Perhaps most importantly, equity gaps in access to and success within high-quality pathways will narrow across racial, socioeconomic, and geographic lines.

VII. Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

The success of this initiative depends on embedding pathway development and implementation into Maryland's long-term education and workforce infrastructure. By leveraging existing funding streams and aligning them with shared goals, the state can sustain these efforts well beyond the initial implementation period. Incorporating pathway metrics into state accountability systems and agency strategic plans will ensure that this work becomes part of Maryland's educational and economic DNA, rather than a time-limited initiative.

Ultimately, this joint plan represents a shift from isolated programs to a coherent, equitable, and data-informed system that connects education and work. By aligning MSDE, MHEC, and GWDB under a shared vision and structured collaboration, Maryland can create pathways that not only

prepare students for postsecondary success but also strengthen the state's workforce and economy for generations to come.

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