



# Career Pathways Mapping Toolkit

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## Introduction

Career pathways maps perform three main functions: They clarify and align programs and services; they link increasing levels of certification, education, and employment; and they support students in choosing among the opportunities that interest them. This toolkit is for community colleges, their K-12 partners, and—ideally—four-year institutions to use in mapping strong, seamless career pathways. Clear career pathways maps enable more students to advance through college, attain credentials with labor market value, and earn wages that sustain their families.

A pathway map is the product of a facilitated process where representatives of various institutions share their programs of study and collaborate to align them. Participants consider curricula in K-12 schools, community colleges, and universities, along with information about work-based learning, industry certifications, integrated student supports, and the local labor market. As they collaborate to align these threads, participants identify both weaknesses in the pathways and opportunities to strengthen them. Engaging in mapping career pathways deepens understanding and respect across each institution and among institutions, employers, and their other partners. Maps can and should be updated over time as programs and services improve and align, and as labor markets evolve.

Because career pathways maps show a progression of certificates, transfers, degrees, and career advancement, they clarify the connections among these elements and illustrate how students can move more efficiently beyond entry-level employment. Career pathways maps help build direct connections between institutions and employers and can be used to inform broader discussions on campuses about designing with students' career goals in mind. As Guided Pathways work deepens across California, career pathways maps also can inform the effort to develop more granular tools to guide students in their semester-by-semester course planning.

### How a career pathways map works

The information gathered in the mapping process is entered into high school and college mapping templates and then analyzed and used to create action plans. By identifying existing strengths and opportunities, the mapping process can lead to a better understanding of how programs align across institutions and can help those institutions create more seamless transitions for students. For more information on the evidence-based practices that support the mapping process, please view the presentation: [What is pathways mapping, and why do we do it?](#)

### How this toolkit can help you create career pathways maps

This toolkit is intended for community colleges and their partners in K-12 systems and four-year institutions who wish to collaborate on creating strong, seamless career pathways for their students, although all kinds of institutions looking to create career pathways maps with their community partners may find the toolkit valuable. The toolkit offers background on the mapping process and outlines five essential steps. Each step is supported with videos, presentations, and links to resources that can help move the process along. The presentations and videos are most helpful when used simultaneously.

## About Career Ladders Project and its mapping work

Career Ladders Project promotes equity-minded community college redesign. CLP has been working with California community colleges to map pathways for more than a decade, starting with the launch of the Career Advancement Academies in 2007. CLP has co-created more than 100 pathway maps with high schools, community colleges, four-year institutions, adult schools, employers, community-based organizations, middle schools, student support systems, and other partners.

With Design it-Build it-Ship it (a four-year, \$14.9 million initiative in the San Francisco East Bay funded by U.S. Department of Labor under the Obama Administration’s Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training program, or TAACCCT), CLP developed maps to ensure industry-driven workforce alignment. Under the California Career Pathways Trust, starting in 2015, CLP partnered with ConnectEd to expand pathways mapping to include K-12 partners.

## Suggested time commitments

This toolkit outlines a five-step mapping cycle. The table below suggests the time commitment each step can require. Both specific timing and the overall length of the career pathways mapping process will vary depending on participants’ previous collaborations and their other current partnerships.

| Step |   | Time  |
|------|---|---|
| 1    | <b>Pre-mapping work</b> - Leadership meeting to launch project and begin planning | Post-mapping work                                     |
| 2    | <b>Pre-mapping work</b> - K-12 and community college planning meeting             | Prep, then meeting 1 to 2 hours, in person or virtual |
| 3    | <b>Pre-mapping work</b> - Continuing preparation for mapping session              | 2 to 3 weeks  |
| 4    | Facilitated mapping session - Includes planning for next steps                    | Prep, then meeting takes about 3 hours, in person     |
| 5    | Post-mapping work   | To be determined by group                             |

# 5 suggested steps in career pathways mapping

## 1 Step 1: Pre-mapping work, project launch and leadership meeting

Pathways mapping begins with a series of conversations among leaders of partner institutions, with the goals of:

- assessing existing data and practices
- understanding partners' needs, visions, and desired outcomes
- agreeing upon a theory of change

It may take time to build momentum, depending on variables such as pre-existing relationships among institutional and industry partners. After the partners settle on their goals and objectives in mapping career pathways, they are ready for a leadership meeting of one or two hours, in person or virtual, to launch the project. In this meeting, the team will review the process to ensure clarity, identify who will take part, assign roles, and start planning.

Here are a [presentation](#) and [video](#) that provide more context for Step 1.

### Meeting preparation resources for Step 1

1. Gather executive leaders of career pathways partners and complete a [pathway partnership assessment](#)
2. Review synthesized goals and outcomes to [develop vision and a theory of change](#)
3. Commit to regular communication and an accountability system for a strong partnership
4. It can help to share an introduction to the career pathways mapping process ahead of time. Two valuable resources are:
  - a. [Core Elements for Career Pathways Development](#)
  - b. [Career Pathways Toolkit: Six Elements for Success](#)

### Objectives of the meeting in Step 1

1. Option to review [What is pathways mapping and why do we do it \(presentation\)? \(Video\)](#)
2. Review agenda for the career pathways mapping session and co-develop objectives
3. Identify key stakeholders to invite to Step 2
4. Assign roles and responsibilities:
  - a. Lead facilitator(s): Creates presentations, guides mapping and planning processes, facilitates sessions.
  - b. Main mapper: Creates and manages pathway maps. Early in the process, the main mapper chooses a diagramming tool to create, edit, and share maps that

include shapes and text. It is important that they be comfortable with the tool. It must create documents that are easily shared and have low barriers to adoption. CLP has used Lucidchart because it provides [free accounts to education providers](#). Other technology may work better for others.

- c. Logistical coordinator: Manages meeting invitations, finds suitable meeting space, shares online resources, prints and collates materials.

### Follow-up to the meeting in Step 1

1. Schedule Step 2, a planning meeting including representatives from K-12, community college, and four-year institutions.
2. Invite attendees (Sample [pathways mapping invitation](#)).

### Key consideration for Step 1

Decide which stakeholders to include in the pathways mapping process. Some examples:

- a. Instructional faculty: Ideally, full-time faculty from program departments, including members of the curriculum committee.
- b. Dean or department chair: It is important to have decision-makers at the table.
- c. High school partners: Principals, teachers, and counselors can identify opportunities to create fully integrated career pathways connecting K-12 and post-secondary programs of study.
- d. Counseling faculty: College counselors bring broad knowledge about requirements for program completion, graduation, and transfers.
- e. Industry: Representatives of employers, or faculty who come directly from industry and understand the skills needed for the pathway, are key.

### Resources for Step 1

- [Presentation](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Executive Self-Assessment of an Effective K-14 Pathways Partnerships](#)
- [Strategic Partnership Dashboard](#)
- [Core Elements for Career Pathways Development](#)
- [Career Pathways Toolkit: Six Elements for Success](#)
- [Community College Pathway Map Template](#)
- [High School Pathway Map Template](#)
- [Components of a Combined High School and Community College Pathway Map](#)
- [Pathway mapping invitation](#)

# 2

## Step 2: Pre-mapping work, K-12 and college planning meeting

This meeting is an opportunity for the leadership team to discuss the why and how of mapping with the larger group and to align their goals. Purposes of this planning session include:

- engaging in information norming about the career pathways mapping process
- reviewing the process and the map templates
- determining the logistics of scheduling
- clarifying what materials participants need to share ahead or bring to the session

Here are a [presentation](#) and [video](#) that provide more context for Step 2.

### Objectives of the meeting in Step 2

1. Option to review: [What is pathways mapping, and why do we do it?](#)
2. Engage in the information norming of evidence-based practices by reviewing and considering opportunities for pathway design or redesign via research tools and case studies.
3. Review and adapt [mapping session agenda](#) and set objectives for the session.
  - a. Answer any questions attendees have regarding the career pathways mapping process
4. Plan Step 4, the three-hour, in-person career pathways mapping session.
  - a. Ask participants to share information about their program ahead of time, or bring it to the session. Examples of program information that can be helpful to partners:
    - i. Community college catalog, including information that's not yet public about certificates and degrees that have been approved
    - ii. High school programs of study
      1. High school calendar and bell schedule
    - iii. Example of proposed curriculum
    - iv. Dual Enrollment agreement or MOU
    - v. List of work-based learning opportunities now offered
    - vi. Labor market information

### Follow-up to the meeting in Step 2

1. Choose a time and secure a location for the mapping session. It is important to find a space where participants can tape posters to walls and gather in groups.
2. Send a reminder to attendees asking them to share materials with the main mapper ahead of the session, or to bring them in person on the day of the mapping session.

## Resources for Step 2

- [Presentation](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Mapping session agenda](#)
- [Community College Pathway Map Template](#)
- [High School Pathway Map Template](#)
- [Components of a Combined High School and Community College Pathway Map](#)
- [Considerations for High School and Community College partnerships in the mapping process](#)



# 3 Step 3: Pre-mapping work, continuing preparation for mapping session

In this step, the logistical coordinator and the main mapper prepare for the mapping session, and the lead facilitator will create an accompanying presentation. This is the final opportunity to adapt the agenda. If institutions have provided information about their programs (e.g. current program maps, labor market information, high school master schedule), the main mapper enters it into the template. The logistical coordinator assembles the materials to share at the session, including research and case studies, existing maps, and examples of outreach materials created using the pathways mapping process.

Here are a [presentation](#) and [video](#) that provide more context for Step 3.

## Checklist for Step 3 (for logistical coordinator)

1. Finalize the mapping session agenda.
2. If relevant, ensure the main mapper pre-populates the pathways maps with information partners have provided.
3. Ensure the facilitator creates presentation slides for the mapping session to illustrate the why and the how of mapping and give the session structure.
4. Select relevant [pathways map examples](#) to share (may be chosen by sector, region, or institution).
5. Select relevant resources to share ([sample resource packet](#)).
6. Print all necessary posters, and gather materials to support meeting participants.

## Printing lists and materials list

- Print posters for group work, 36" x 48" if possible (most neighborhood copy and printing shops can print at those dimensions).
  - Pathways maps: one per institution
    - [Community College Pathway Map Template](#)
    - [High School Pathway Map Template](#)
  - Blank pathways maps
  - Action plans: one per institution
    - [Action Planning Document](#)
  - Blank action plan posters
- Print resources for mapping session participant packets (if you plan to provide them):
  - Agenda
  - Printout of presentation slides

- [Pathway map examples](#)
- Relevant resources ([example resource packet](#))
- Materials to bring to the session:
  - Markers
  - Small sticky notes
  - Painters tape for affixing posters to the wall
  - Name tags for all participants
  - Sign-in sheet: include contact information for follow-up

## 4 Step 4: Facilitated mapping session, planning next steps

In this facilitated three-hour session ([sample agenda](#)), participants explore career pathways concepts, map pathways, and create an action plan. During the mapping activity, teams (broken out by institution) map their current pathways (using the printed mapping posters), analyze them for gaps, and begin strategic planning for increased collaboration. Teams appoint a note-taker to record their work and photograph each poster (to be sure the writing is legible in the photos, take close-ups). And they encapsulate it in action plans (on the printed planning posters) that they share with the larger group.

Afterward, the main mapper enters the data from the posters into the mapping tool and shares the resulting maps and plans with the group. Each team's notes and photos should be shared with the main mapper to help in the process of adding information to the maps.

Here are a [presentation](#) and [video](#) that provide more context for Step 4.

### Key Consideration for Step 4

Pathways mapping is an opportunity to create a community of practice with students at the center so participants should be encouraged to get to know one another and reach out after the session to ask follow-up questions and explore new ideas.

## 5 Step 5: Post-mapping work

The mapping session is over! Now, it's time to gather the results and share the maps and plans that emerged from the session. First, the main mapper will synthesize and format the collected notes and data into the mapping template chosen in Step 1. It is useful to do this as soon as possible to ensure content is fresh (and doesn't get lost). Then, participants should have an opportunity to review the content of the resulting new maps and confirm its accuracy. It can be helpful to create a shared folder for the notes, pictures, and updated maps. And, then the final versions should be shared with all participants, along with the sign-in list from the mapping session so the teams can stay in touch.

Here are a [presentation](#) and [video](#) that provide more context for Step 5.

### Checklist for Step 5 (for logistical coordinator)

1. Incorporate edits and additions into the pathways maps.
2. Incorporate edits and additions into the action plans.
3. Create a shared folder, or digital repository, that the whole group can access and include:
  - a. Digital versions of the pathways maps (clearly labeled by institution and sector).
  - b. Digital versions of the action plans (clearly labeled by institution and sector).
  - c. Photos of the pathways mapping posters from the session.
  - d. Sign-in sheet from the session: this is important as it will allow attendees to reach out to each after the mapping session.
  - e. Any materials and notes that were shared during the session.
4. Email participants to thank them for their time, and attach an updated map.
5. This iteration of the partnership's career pathways map or maps is complete. But it's important to keep updating career pathways maps so they reflect the most current services, programs, and labor market information.

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