

# Building Ready for Work

## *Colleges and Students*

Technical Assistance Learning Lab · Application Process 2026

LOI & QUESTIONS (OPTIONAL)

June 25, 2026

SUBMIT TO

[readyforwork@ezrc.org](mailto:readyforwork@ezrc.org)

APPLICATIONS DUE

Rolling

## Call for Applications

*We invite community colleges committed to learning from and adapting effective sectoral program practices to apply to participate in a two-year community of practice where they receive tailored technical assistance services and supports to innovate and implement employment-focused sectoral program mindsets and practices across their institution.*

RESEARCH & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PARTNERS



This guide provides an overview of the Ready for Work Learning Lab initiative and instructions for applying. Full appendices — including the SWET Framework, review criteria, and advisor roster — are included at the end of this document.

## OVERVIEW

## Project Goals and Background

Wide variation exists in the completion rates and employment returns to short-term programs and workforce pathways. Recent employer surveys signal a continuing gap between the skills they seek in candidates and the skills that recent graduates possess. Meanwhile, rigorous randomized controlled trial (RCT) research studies on most college interventions show few statistically significant impacts on students' graduation, employment, and earnings.

At the same time, RCT studies have identified a handful of nonprofit sectoral programs — and the colleges that partner with them — that have had a remarkable impact on their participants' program completion, employment, and earnings with training that is often a year or less. These programs tend to focus heavily on their participants' employment outcomes and ensuring that they receive robust training and support services that develop the workplace skills employers most value.

### What is a Sectoral Program?

Sectoral programs provide employer-driven training in specific industry sectors, such as healthcare or manufacturing, along with intentional workplace readiness training and wraparound supports. Training is typically short-term — often a year or less — and is designed to move participants directly into high-wage, high-demand jobs.

The best programs place employers at the center of their work: employers shape curriculum, provide work-based learning experiences, and open direct hiring pipelines for graduates. Follow-up studies on leading sectoral programs have revealed that they have sustained impacts on participants' employment and earnings for 6-11 years post-program — among the strongest results in the workforce development field.

### PROJECT GOALS

- Enhance community college workforce programs through high-quality technical assistance supporting implementation of effective sectoral program practices
- Test the feasibility and facilitators for adapting effective sectoral practices in postsecondary settings
- Develop a community of practice among community colleges to strengthen students' work readiness
- Develop and test metrics to assess college workforce alignment and services

### EXAMPLES OF HIGH-IMPACT SECTORAL PROGRAMS FROM RESEARCH

#### Per Scholas

IT SUPPORT · CYBERSECURITY · CLOUD · SOFTWARE DEV

**13–15 weeks of training · Tuition-free**

- ✓ Direct employer hiring partnerships
- ✓ Professional skills & workplace readiness
- ✓ Career coaching & alumni network
- ✓ Stipends and social supports available

#### Project Quest

HEALTHCARE · MANUFACTURING · IT

**1–2 years of training · Subsidized tuition**

- ✓ Employer advisory councils shape curriculum
- ✓ Work readiness training integrated
- ✓ Financial aid navigation & stipends
- ✓ Case management & counseling

#### Year Up United

BUSINESS · IT · CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

**6 months training · Tuition-free + weekly stipend**

- ✓ 6-month paid corporate internship
- ✓ Top corporate partners (JPMorgan, Amazon, etc.)
- ✓ Professional skills embedded throughout
- ✓ Career coaching & alumni network

#### Outcomes Across These Programs

- ✓ 70-90% graduation rate
- ✓ 70-90% job placement
- ✓ 70-90% job retention at 6-12 months
- ✓ Earnings 3-4x pre-training
- ✓ Statistically significant earnings increases 6-11 years post-program

## Why a Learning Lab on Sectoral Practices?

Many colleges have dedicated staff, committed faculty, and industry partners — but not always the time, tools, and specialized expertise to translate employer needs into repeatable institutional practice. The Lab fills that gap by pairing each participating college with expert workforce practitioners who provide coaching and supports to help them learn, adapt, and implement evidence-based, employment-oriented approaches that are the defining features of effective sectoral programs.

### WHAT PRACTICES DO EFFECTIVE SECTORAL PROGRAMS EMPLOY?\*

#### LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY

- Employer-informed training is a primary mission
- Leaders see employers as dual clients
- Metrics track employer relationship quality

#### EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT

- Dedicated staff speaks the language of the sector
- Mechanisms to gather employer input
- Curricula updated based on employer feedback

#### WORKFORCE READINESS

- Employers co-develop work readiness norms
- Instructors model workplace norms
- Readiness documented and verified by employers

*\*See Appendices B and D, and Rutschow et al. (2024).*

### SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

## What Participating Colleges Receive

The Learning Lab is built for action and peer learning. Participating colleges receive coaching and guidance across all aspects of the SWET framework. **As a Learning Lab participant, your college:**

- **Embrace design thinking and innovative strategy implementation with peers:** Colleges work together to learn from, adapt, and design new employer- and workforce-oriented approaches.
- **Receive intensive coaching and ready-to-use tools:** Up to five hours of one-on-one expert coaching per month, schedulable virtually.
- **Join a community of practice:** Monthly virtual sessions with peer colleges to share promising approaches and solve common problems together.
- **Gain insights from national experts:** Engage directly with a senior advisory panel of 15+ scholars, sectoral program leaders, and college/system leaders. (See Appendix A.)
- **Attend quarterly webinars** featuring strategies, practices, and insights relevant to the full cohort.
- **Use data for improvement:** Work with the Lab's research team to identify, access, and analyze data on implementation progress and student outcomes.
- **Gain national visibility:** Participating colleges are featured on a dedicated webpage with their work amplified through newsletters and social media.
- **Receive a modest stipend:** Colleges receive a \$9,000 stipend. Up to two colleges sharing de-identified student-level data receive \$30,000.

## ELIGIBILITY

## Who Should Apply

- Community or technical college
- Demonstrated commitment to building and scaling workforce-oriented mindsets and practices
- Willingness to learn from successful nonprofit workforce programs and apply their success to the college context
- A designated team lead as the primary point of contact for the work
- A project team that will lead and support implementation, as demonstrated by signed letters of commitment
- Identified sectors, employers, and industry leaders of interest
- Strong institutional research capacity, as demonstrated by a statement from IR personnel

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** We are seeking colleges that have a demonstrated commitment to change and could benefit from the supports and services provided by the Learning Lab. Colleges do not need to have fully developed SWET-aligned programs to apply — only the commitment and willingness to grow. **Colleges with fully developed, large-scale, and mature sector-based programs will not be selected**, and priority will be given to colleges that are in developmental stages of building sector-aligned workforce programs.

## EXPECTED OUTPUTS

## Co-Designed With Your Team

- **Knowledge and Expertise in Adapting Effective, Employment-Focused Sectoral Program Practices:** Increased understanding of and experience in adapting the dual customer approaches of employment-focused sectoral programs that can be scaled across the institution.
- **Strategic Employer Plan:** A plan for proactive college-led engagement with local employers, mechanisms for gathering and using employer feedback, and systems to monitor relationship quality.
- **Revised Career Pathways:** Development of multiple short-term (3–8 month) multi-entry/multi-exit training pathways across sectors with defined credentials of value.
- **Student-Facing Work Readiness Services:** Creation or expansion of embedded, higher-intensity services helping students build and demonstrate the workplace readiness skills employers seek.
- **Labor Market Data Analysis:** Increased knowledge of, access to, and analysis of labor market and employment data to track students' employment outcomes



## KEY DATES

## Timeline

| ACTIVITY                                                        | ESTIMATED DATE                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Request for Applications Released                               | June 4th, 2026                   |
| Applications Due                                                | Rolling                          |
| Final College Selection Announced                               | Sept. 15th, 2026 (anticipated)   |
| Technical Assistance Learning Lab Begins                        | October 21st, 2026 (anticipated) |
| In-Person Cohort Meeting — Columbus, OH (please hold this date) | February 1st–2nd, 2027           |
| Technical Assistance Learning Lab Ends                          | October 31st, 2028 (estimated)   |

## HOW TO APPLY

## Application Process

To be considered for the Learning Lab, colleges should complete the **application packet**, which includes: (1) a brief survey about the college's current workforce programs and capacity, and (2) a narrative response using the provided template. Email the completed application packet as a single PDF to [readyforwork@ezrc.org](mailto:readyforwork@ezrc.org). Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis.

**Optional — Letter of Interest and Q&A (June 25th–July 2nd):** Colleges interested in applying are encouraged, but not required, to submit a brief Letter of Interest and any questions by **June 25th, 2026**. Questions and answers will be discussed during a live Q&A session with project leaders on **June 30th, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. ET**. Written answers to all submitted questions will be distributed by **July 2nd, 2026**. A recording of the Q&A session is available online at [readyforworklab.org](https://readyforworklab.org).

**Building a Diverse Cohort:** Selection prioritizes a mix of geographic diversity (rural and urban), institutional size (large and small), and at least two colleges willing to share de-identified student-level data

## RELEVANT RESOURCES

## Further Reading

- Fuller, J., & Raman, M. (2022). [The partnership imperative](#). Harvard Business School.
- J-PAL Evidence Review. (2022). [Sectoral employment programs as a path to quality jobs](#). Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab.
- Rutschow, E., Feygin, A., & Chavarria, M. (2024). [Building Ready for Work: Adapting High-Impact Workforce Training Models in Community College Settings](#). American Institutes for Research.
- Strohl, J., Mabel, Z., & Campbell, K. P. (2024). [Creating Credentials of Value in Community Colleges](#). Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce.

## CONTACT

## Questions?

General questions about the Learning Lab or application process can be sent to [readyforwork@ezrc.org](mailto:readyforwork@ezrc.org).

# APPENDICES

## Building Ready for Work *Colleges and Students*

Overview & Application Guide

CONTENTS

|   |                                                                                |   |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| A | Selected Scholar and Practitioner Senior Advisors                              | 6 |
| B | Sector-Based Workforce Education and Training (SWET) Framework                 | 7 |
| C | How Applications Are Reviewed                                                  | 8 |
| D | Examples of High and Low Implementation of SWET-Aligned Mindsets and Practices | 9 |

## APPENDIX A

# Selected Scholar and Practitioner Senior Advisors

Scholars include those conducting research at the intersection of education and workforce training. Practitioner advisors include leaders of effective nonprofit sectoral programs.

| NAME                                                | TITLE                                                                                         | ORGANIZATION                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SCHOLAR ADVISORS</b>                             |                                                                                               |                                                                             |
| <a href="#">Dr. Michelle Van Noy</a>                | Director & Associate Research Professor, Education and Employment Research Center (EERC)      | <a href="#">Rutgers University</a>                                          |
| <a href="#">Dr. Zack Mabel</a>                      | Research Professor and Director of Research, Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce | <a href="#">Georgetown University</a>                                       |
| <a href="#">Dr. Thomas Brock</a>                    | Research Professor & Director, Community College Research Center (CCRC)                       | <a href="#">Teachers College, Columbia University</a>                       |
| <a href="#">Dr. Kathy Hughes</a>                    | Principal; former lead of the Institute for Education Sciences CTE Research Network           | Edwordian                                                                   |
| <a href="#">Dr. Lindsay Daugherty</a>               | Senior Policy Researcher; Professor of Policy Analysis, RAND School of Public Policy          | <a href="#">RAND</a>                                                        |
| <b>SECTORAL PROGRAM ADVISORS</b>                    |                                                                                               |                                                                             |
| <a href="#">Bertina Ceccarelli</a>                  | CEO                                                                                           | <a href="#">NPower</a>                                                      |
| <a href="#">Chelsea Mills</a>                       | Principal (formerly at Towards Employment)                                                    | TCMG                                                                        |
| <a href="#">Pooja Tripathi &amp; Kelcie Richart</a> | Senior Director / Associate Director, Workforce Innovation                                    | <a href="#">Manufacturing Institute</a> (formerly at <a href="#">FAME</a> ) |
| <a href="#">Meghan Cressman &amp; Melinda Day</a>   | VP, Development and Partnerships / Chief Academic Officer                                     | <a href="#">Merit America</a>                                               |
| <a href="#">Claire Dennison</a>                     | Chief External Affairs Officer                                                                | <a href="#">Propel America</a>                                              |
| <a href="#">Felida Villarreal</a>                   | CEO                                                                                           | <a href="#">VIDA</a>                                                        |
| <a href="#">Francisco Martinez</a>                  | President and CEO                                                                             | <a href="#">Project QUEST</a>                                               |
| <a href="#">Melanie D'Evelyn</a>                    | Executive Director, Advisory and Capacity Building                                            | <a href="#">One Million Degrees</a>                                         |
| <b>LEADING COLLEGE ADVISORS</b>                     |                                                                                               |                                                                             |
| <a href="#">Ben McCumber</a>                        | Deputy Commissioner                                                                           | <a href="#">Georgia Technical College System</a>                            |
| <a href="#">Layla Merrifield</a>                    | President                                                                                     | <a href="#">Wisconsin Technical College System</a>                          |
| <a href="#">Dr. Lada Gibson-Shreve</a>              | Provost and Chief Academic Officer                                                            | <a href="#">Stark State College</a>                                         |
| <a href="#">Dr. Jayda Spillers</a>                  | Chancellor                                                                                    | <a href="#">Northwest Louisiana Technical College</a>                       |

\* Colleges identified through [Creating Credentials of Value in Community Colleges](#), which analyzed colleges most effective at translating workforce credentials into employment and earnings gains.

## APPENDIX B

# Sector-Based Workforce Education and Training (SWET) Framework

| LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS TRAINING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | WORK READINESS TRAINING AND SERVICES                                                                                                                                                   | SUPPORT SERVICES AND ADVISING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional culture committed to industry-alignment and growing relationships with employers</li> <li>• Emphasis on developing work-ready graduates</li> <li>• Clear metrics, data systems, and accountability measures to document industry alignment and graduates' readiness for work</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated department, staff, or partnership to cultivate and manage employer and industry relationships</li> <li>• Industry and labor market information informs programming</li> <li>• Committed relationships with employers and industry groups that build employer trust</li> <li>• Employer input into program and curriculum content and design</li> <li>• Employers interface with students, ideally through work-based learning experiences</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum aligned with employer and industry needs</li> <li>• Focus on high-wage, high-demand jobs</li> <li>• Focus on short-term to longer-term pathways with industry-recognized credentials of value</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive training in workplace readiness skills</li> <li>• Student demonstration of work readiness</li> <li>• Job search supports</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagnostic needs assessments paired with individualized support services</li> <li>• Supports for mental health and basic needs</li> <li>• Financial supports</li> <li>• Peer supports for learning workplace readiness skills</li> <li>• Post-program completion follow-up supports for students</li> </ul> |



## APPENDIX C

# How Applications Are Reviewed

Applications are reviewed by the Ready for Work Learning Lab team to understand each college's goals, readiness to participate, and alignment with the Lab's design and intent.

**Important Note:** Colleges with mature, fully developed, large-scale sector-based programs will not be selected. Priority will be given to colleges that are in developmental stages of building sector-aligned workforce programs.

The criteria below are provided for transparency and to support a consistent, holistic review. This is not a procurement-style scoring process.

| CATEGORY                                       | REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Statement of Need</b>                       | Application discusses rationale for how participation in the Lab will advance workforce alignment. The application clearly describes a strong need for Lab supports.                 |
| <b>Leadership and Accountability</b>           | Application provides strong leadership commitment and a project team with clear roles and responsibilities. Leaders demonstrate interest in participating and willingness to change. |
| <b>Employer Involvement</b>                    | Application shows a strong understanding of the value of employer partnerships and demonstrates commitment to developing or strengthening those relationships.                       |
| <b>Occupational Skills Training</b>            | Application shows a strong understanding of the need to align occupational skills training to employer and labor market needs.                                                       |
| <b>Work Readiness Training and Services</b>    | Application demonstrates a strong understanding of the need to develop students' durable workplace readiness skills and a commitment to implementing services to support that goal.  |
| <b>Support Services and Advising</b>           | Application demonstrates a strong understanding of how wraparound supports help students stay in and complete their programs.                                                        |
| <b>Potential for Future Growth and Scaling</b> | Application demonstrates strong interest in and commitment to developing SWET-aligned practices across the broader institution.                                                      |
| <b>Research Capacity</b>                       | Application demonstrates strong interest in partnering with the research team to identify, access, and analyze labor market and employment data.                                     |

## APPENDIX D

# Examples of High and Low Implementation of SWET-Aligned Mindsets and Practices

This table provides illustrative examples of low and high implementation for each component and element of the SWET framework. These examples are intended to help colleges self-assess their current state and identify areas for growth.

| 1. Leadership and Accountability                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ELEMENTS                                                                                                                            | LOW IMPLEMENTATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | HIGH IMPLEMENTATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>A. Institutional culture committed to industry-alignment and building and growing relationships with employers</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College has little to no vision for or focus on sectoral/workforce training.</li> <li>College leaders articulate academic and transfer programs as college's only/primary focus.</li> <li>Little knowledge of, interest in, or contact with local industry or employers.</li> <li>Employers are seen as external agents and end users to hire graduates.</li> <li>Advisory boards discussed as primarily meeting compliance needs with little to no employer representation.</li> <li>College has very few advisory boards and they are not differentiated by sector.</li> <li>Employers view college as disconnected from local labor market.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on workforce training imbued throughout college culture.</li> <li>Faculty, staff, and employers articulate college's workforce commitments and employers' needs.</li> <li>College strategy, goals, mission, and communications highlight commitment to workforce training.</li> <li>College leaders see employers as key informants and identify employers as clients.</li> <li>College has multiple advisory boards differentiated by sector with multiple employer representatives.</li> <li>Employers can describe how the college's services are meeting their hiring needs.</li> </ul> |
| <b>B. Emphasis on developing work-ready graduates</b>                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College leaders do not know what employers' hiring needs are.</li> <li>College leaders do not know how current programs or curriculum align with employers' needs.</li> <li>College has little to no articulation of their commitment to building work-ready students.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College strategy, goals, mission, and communications highlight developing work-ready graduates as a primary goal.</li> <li>College leaders can articulate key standards for workforce readiness overall or for different sectors.</li> <li>College's work readiness goals are highlighted in communications and guidelines to students.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>C. Clear metrics, data systems, and accountability measures to document industry alignment and graduates' readiness for work</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College has little to no definition of technical and durable work readiness skills.</li> <li>Few measures exist to assess students' work readiness.</li> <li>Little to no knowledge of or access to students' labor market outcomes.</li> <li>Little to no feedback from employers integrated into colleges' assessment of their services.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear definitions and metrics exist to document overall and/or sector-specific workforce readiness skills.</li> <li>College assesses and tracks students' occupational and work readiness skills.</li> <li>Multiple data collection methods for tracking students' work readiness.</li> <li>Accountability structures exist for measuring programs' workforce alignment.</li> <li>Employer/industry feedback built into metrics and performance measures.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                              |

## APPENDIX D

# Examples of High and Low Implementation

| 2. Employer Involvement                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ELEMENTS                                                                                                          | LOW IMPLEMENTATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | HIGH IMPLEMENTATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>A. Dedicated department, staff, or partnership to cultivate and manage employer and industry relationships</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little to no awareness of the need for employer liaisons.</li> <li>• Few to no staff employed to manage employer relationships.</li> <li>• Staff/partners have limited and infrequent contact with employers.</li> <li>• Employers do not know who they can contact at the college.</li> </ul>                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College has internal staff or external partners with industry experience that liaise with and manage employer relationships.</li> <li>• Liaisons speak the language of the employers/industry.</li> <li>• Liaisons have a regular cadence of communications with employers.</li> <li>• Employers and external leaders can specify who they speak with at the college.</li> </ul>                                                             |
| <b>B. Industry and labor market information (LMI) informs programming</b>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LMI is not seen as valuable input into programming and planning.</li> <li>• Colleges have little to no access to or review of LMI.</li> <li>• College faculty and staff unaware of current labor market trends.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College has internal staff or partnerships to access and review LMI.</li> <li>• Routine systems exist for gathering employer/industry leaders' input on veracity of LMI.</li> <li>• LMI is frequently used in program planning and development.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>C. Committed relationships with employers and industry groups that build employer trust</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College has little to no relationships with industry leaders or employers.</li> <li>• Relationships with employers are sporadic or exist only for a handful of programs.</li> <li>• Few employers see college as a strong resource for hiring.</li> </ul>                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College prioritizes quality of employer relationships along with quantity.</li> <li>• College has strong relationships with employers across multiple programs and sectors.</li> <li>• Employers demonstrate deep and lasting commitment to college and/or graduates.</li> <li>• Employers see college as valuable resource for talent and hiring.</li> </ul>                                                                                |
| <b>D. Employer input into program and curriculum content and design</b>                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few mechanisms exist for capturing and/or translating employer feedback into program planning.</li> <li>• Few advisory councils exist for informing sector-specific college programming.</li> <li>• Advisory councils do not meet regularly.</li> <li>• Advisory councils are discussed primarily as part of compliance with federal/state regulations.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College has multiple sector-based advisory councils or employer input collaboratives.</li> <li>• Substantial representation of employers and industry leaders on advisory boards.</li> <li>• Advisory board or employer input meetings occur regularly and provide critical information.</li> <li>• Advisory board members are active decision-makers in college leadership and programming.</li> </ul>                                      |
| <b>E. Employers interface with students, ideally through work-based learning (WBL) experiences</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little to no opportunities exist for interactions between employers and students.</li> <li>• Employer interactions with students are limited primarily to post-completion hiring.</li> <li>• Few programs offer WBL experiences.</li> <li>• Little to no metrics exist for gathering employer feedback on students' skills.</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College has multiple opportunities for students to interact with employers.</li> <li>• College has policies, procedures, and standards to ensure regular employer-student interactions.</li> <li>• WBL, hands-on training, or exposure to workplace environments integrated across multiple college programs.</li> <li>• Employers are committed to interacting with students and routinely foster student-employer interactions.</li> </ul> |

## APPENDIX D

# Examples of High and Low Implementation

| 3. Occupational Skills Training                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ELEMENTS                                                                                            | LOW IMPLEMENTATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | HIGH IMPLEMENTATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>A. Curriculum aligned with employer and industry needs</b>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrequent review of college programs and curricula to assess labor market alignment.</li> <li>• Little to no metrics exist to measure programs' alignment with employer needs.</li> <li>• Skills taught in programs are outdated or less relevant to current employer needs.</li> <li>• Curriculum and programming is rarely vetted with employers for relevance.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs and curriculum routinely reviewed to assess workforce alignment.</li> <li>• Employer and industry needs are strong elements in curricular and program development.</li> <li>• Skills taught and learning objectives tie directly to skills articulated in job descriptions.</li> <li>• Programs are routinely developed or adapted to meet changing employer needs.</li> </ul>                                                    |
| <b>B. Focus on high-wage, high-demand jobs</b>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College does not have a definition of high-wage, high-demand (HWHD) jobs.</li> <li>• College programming does not focus on training pathways that lead to HWHD.</li> <li>• Pathways leading to low-wage jobs dominate colleges' training options.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College has a definition for HWHD jobs.</li> <li>• College prioritizes the development of training pathways for HWHD.</li> <li>• College leaders can articulate program pathways that lead to HWHD jobs.</li> <li>• College faculty and staff are aware of HWHD jobs and can articulate how their instruction provides needed skills.</li> </ul>                                                                                           |
| <b>C. Focus on short-term to longer-term pathways with industry-recognized credentials of value</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College focused primarily on traditional, longer-term pathways.</li> <li>• Little to no shorter-term programs exist that align with local workforce needs.</li> <li>• Credentials offered do not align with current industry needs.</li> <li>• College has few alternative avenues for awarding credit for non-credit courses or prior learning.</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College engages with employers to define training pathways and credentials of value by sector.</li> <li>• College offers pathways that provide industry-recognized skills and credentials verified by industry leaders.</li> <li>• College has pathways with multiple entry and exit points with defined credentials for each.</li> <li>• College has alternative avenues for awarding credit for non-credit or prior learning.</li> </ul> |

## APPENDIX D

# Examples of High and Low Implementation

| 4. Work Readiness Training and Services                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ELEMENTS                                                   | LOW IMPLEMENTATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | HIGH IMPLEMENTATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>A. Intensive training in workplace readiness skills</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Few programs or training exist to support students' development of durable workplace readiness skills.</li> <li>Workplace readiness training is voluntary and offered sporadically.</li> <li>College leaders and students have little definition or awareness of workplace readiness skills employers are seeking.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct instruction is provided in workplace norms, expectations, and behaviors.</li> <li>Workplace readiness training is integrated within training pathways and occurs regularly.</li> <li>Workplace readiness training is required and accountability systems exist to measure readiness.</li> <li>Workplace readiness is modeled by college leaders.</li> </ul>                              |
| <b>B. Student demonstration of work readiness</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are not aware of and/or asked to demonstrate workplace readiness skills.</li> <li>Little to no metrics or accountability systems exist to measure workplace readiness.</li> <li>Employers do not see college graduates as workplace ready.</li> </ul>                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are aware and can demonstrate workplace readiness skills that employers seek.</li> <li>Demonstration of workplace norms and behaviors is a required part of students' training.</li> <li>Faculty and staff routinely assess students' workplace readiness.</li> <li>Students' mastery of workplace readiness skills is visible to employers.</li> </ul>                                |
| <b>C. Job search supports</b>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little to no emphasis placed on job search.</li> <li>Career services are nonexistent or understaffed.</li> <li>Job search support services provided are voluntary and depend on student agency to access.</li> </ul>                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intensive supports provided for job search and placement (e.g. resume preparation, interview prep).</li> <li>Supports for job search and placement are integrated into training pathways and curriculum.</li> <li>Case managers provide guidance on jobs available and monitor students' progress and placement.</li> <li>Employers are involved in supporting students' job search.</li> </ul> |

## APPENDIX D

# Examples of High and Low Implementation

| 5. Support Services and Advising                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ELEMENTS                                                                          | LOW IMPLEMENTATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | HIGH IMPLEMENTATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>A. Diagnostic needs assessment paired with individualized support services</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little to no systems or metrics exist for assessing students' support needs.</li> <li>• Supports are not tailored to students' individual needs.</li> <li>• Students' access to supports is voluntary and dependent on student agency.</li> </ul>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College has systems and metrics to assess student needs holistically.</li> <li>• College has developed plans that allow for more intensive supports for students.</li> <li>• College has multiple avenues for communicating the availability of supports to students.</li> </ul>                                                                                             |
| <b>B. Supports for mental health and basic needs</b>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little to no mental health or basic needs supports provided.</li> <li>• Access to supports is dependent on student agency.</li> <li>• Students do not know the supports available or how to access them.</li> </ul>                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple services or partnerships available to support students' mental health and/or basic needs.</li> <li>• Clear and frequent guidance is provided to students on supports available.</li> <li>• Students know supports available and how to access them.</li> </ul>                                                                                                      |
| <b>C. Financial supports</b>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little to no financial support is provided for students' training.</li> <li>• Little awareness or attention is paid to the role that finances play in student persistence.</li> </ul>                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningful financial supports provided to students during training.</li> <li>• Existence of and support for programs where students can earn-and-learn.</li> <li>• Accountability measures exist to support students' understanding and receipt of compensation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                  |
| <b>D. Peer supports for learning workplace readiness skills</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little to no attention or programming to support peer-to-peer learning.</li> <li>• Students have limited to no opportunity to interact with their peers.</li> <li>• College has little to no communications about the role of teams in workplace environments.</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College places a high value on peer-to-peer supports in learning workplace norms.</li> <li>• Multiple opportunities exist for students to learn from and demonstrate workplace skills to peers.</li> <li>• Students understand the role teams play in the workplace.</li> <li>• Students demonstrate effective team-building and communication skills with peers.</li> </ul> |
| <b>E. Post-completion follow-up supports for students</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College does little to no tracking of students after they leave the college.</li> <li>• College provides little to no supports for reengagement in training/education, job search, or placement.</li> <li>• Supports are voluntary, limited, or difficult to access.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College has systems and metrics for tracking students after they leave.</li> <li>• College provides easily accessible supports for training reengagement, job search, and placement.</li> <li>• Supports for work or educational advancement routinely provided and accessible post-completion.</li> </ul>                                                                   |