



**THE WORKFORCE PLAYBOOK:
TOOL FOR ASSESSING PROGRESS TOWARD ADOPTION OF
ESSENTIAL WORKFORCE PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

Institution Name: _____

Date: _____

Overview: These standards were designed to help you assess where your college is engaging in the strong practices and where it has room for improvement. The standards are part of *The Workforce Playbook: A Community College Guide to Delivering Excellent Career and Technical Education*, published in 2019 by the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program. These practices were identified based on research and interviews with leaders and practitioners at 30 community colleges as well as in-depth qualitative investigations of six colleges that deliver exceptional labor market outcomes for students.

The standards are organized around four categories: (1) advance a vision; (2) deliver high-quality programs; (3) support students; and (4) develop employer partnerships. Within the four categories, please use the following scale to rate how systematically each sub-practice is implemented at your college. **By “systemic,” we mean that the practice is implemented routinely and at scale, and that it is part of the regular operation and culture of the college.**

Scale of Adoption	Definition
(1) <i>Minimal</i>	The college does not engage in this practice in a significant way (i.e., routinely and/or at scale)
(2) <i>Beginning</i>	The college is beginning to engage in this practice, but has not moved toward systematizing it
(3) <i>Building</i>	The college engages in this practice and is moving toward systemic implementation
(4) <i>Systemic</i>	The college engages in this practice systemically

Once your core pathways team has completed the assessment together, members should then engage others at the institution in conversation about the results, including faculty, staff, and administrators. Ideally these discussions should help refine the assessment, build shared understanding of the ways your college does and does not meet these standards, and motivate college leaders to continue to engage the wider college community in planning and implementing improvements.

ADVANCE A VISION Elevate Labor Market Outcomes	Stage of Adoption	Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement
a. Student success goals include clear and measurable targets for graduates' employment and earnings outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
b. College wide reports to the president, cabinet, and board of trustees about student outcomes include data on graduates' employment and earning outcomes soon after graduation and overtime.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
c. The strategic plan and other documents that reference student success include significant goals and strategies aimed at improving graduates' employment and earnings outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
ADVANCE A VISION Understand the Regional Labor Market and Population	Stage of Adoption	Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement
d. The president and cabinet meet regularly to review data on changing demographics in the college's service area, with enough frequency-at least every other year-to enable changes in strategic direction to keep pace with changes in demography.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
e. The president and cabinet meet regularly to analyze data on employment trends, including data on educational requirements and wages associated with different jobs in the region, with enough frequency-at least every other year-to enable changes in strategic direction to keep pace with changes in the labor market.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

<p>f. The president and cabinet meet annually to review the employment demanded and wage outcomes for the college’s graduates and for career and technical programs overall.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>g. The college has set explicit goals for workforce development that include attracting, training, and graduating students from targeted populations, such as underemployed adults or racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in CTE programs.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>h. The college has developed a specific definition of the baseline living wage for graduates in its service area, which it uses to assess the success of graduates and updates periodically.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>ADVANCE A VISION Align Offerings to the Needs of the Region</p>	<p>Stage of Adoption</p>	<p>Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement</p>
<p>i. The college has processes in place to consider where and how programs may need to be expanded or developed to meet changing labor market demands.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>j. The college closes or redesigns programs due to low graduation rates or poor employment and earnings outcomes.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

<p>k. The president and cabinet have an annual process to review and refine the mix of programs offered-credit and noncredit, CTE and transfer-oriented-that enable students to access most of the good jobs in the region. This process considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional demographics • Trends in labor market opportunities, including careers with available good jobs now and in the future, and what credentials they require • Enrollment and completion by program, disaggregated by student group • Skills required for the changing job market • Employment and earnings outcomes for graduates at the college and program levels 	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>l. The president and cabinet meet annually to consider equity in program enrollment and outcomes, considering which students-by race, ethnicity, income level, age, and gender-enroll and graduate in the programs that result in the strongest labor market outcomes versus those that result in earnings below a living wage.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS Program Approval	Stage of Adoption	Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement
a. The program approval process considers whether a proposed credential is tailored to the specific technical and professional skills required for targeted jobs. Considerations include program length, whether the program should be credit-bearing or not, and whether it should end in certification, a technical associate’s degree, or an associate’s that leads to transfer towards a four-year degree.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
b. The program approval process requires that program design and delivery strategies address the needs of diverse students, through these considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time of day courses are offered • Program length • Program costs, including fees, tools, and other costs • Opportunities for students to earn income while taking courses • Program and course locations and ease of transportation 	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
c. Program proposals are only approved if they demonstrate the potential for strong labor market outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS Skills, Credentials, and Work-Based Learning	Stage of Adoption	Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement
d. Program heads and others engaged in program design are trained in and use DACUM curriculum design processes that engage employers and begin with identifying skills needed, before designing credentials to be awarded.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
e. Internal processes promote information-sharing between workforce and liberal arts programs and between credit CTE and noncredit workforce programs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
f. The program design process considers not just the credential under consideration but also the trajectory of credentials required for continued momentum in the field, for instance by embedding industry-recognized certifications and articulating to bachelor’s degrees.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
g. Programs define and assess the professional skills (“soft skills”) graduates will need, and use assessments to ensure that programs are teaching these skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
h. Programs include specific work-based learning requirements (such as internships, co-ops, clinicals, and apprenticeships) developed collaboratively with employers. The design considers whether employers have the capacity to provide supervision and mentorship and what resources and equipment the college needs to provide high-quality experiences.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

<p>i. Where appropriate, explicit pathways allow students to move between workforce and liberal arts programs, credit and noncredit workforce programs, and workforce programs and university-based bachelor’s programs.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS Hire and Empower Workforce Leaders</p>	<p>Stage of Adoption</p>	<p>Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement</p>
<p>j. The college sets goals and criteria for what makes an effective CTE faculty or staff member, such as technical knowledge and skill, a focus on student learning, and a customer services orientation.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>k. Tools and processes, such as hiring rubrics, teaching demonstrations, and annual professional development design sessions, ensure that those goals are embedded into the college’s approach to hiring, professional development, and evaluation.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>l. The college embeds goals for diversity into its decision-making processes for hiring.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>m. Professional development for all CTE faculty ensures that they have updated technical skills, including through training on up-to-date equipment, required site visits to employers, and/or opportunities to maintain part-time or intermittent employment in the field.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

<p>n. The college evaluates program quality and devises improvements in part through the results of student performance on third-party or industry certification examinations.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>o. CTE program review includes reliable and actionable data on participation rates (disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, age, and income), graduation rates, and employment and earnings outcomes.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>p. Advisory board meetings focus on problem-solving rather than updates and result in concrete next steps to improve programs' quality and equitable student participation and success.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>q. Between advisory board meetings, program heads and faculty proactively solicit feedback from employers, particularly frontline managers-through faculty visits to employer sites, employer classroom observational visits, monthly check-ins, and more.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>r. CTE program review includes active participation by all stakeholders with relevant perspectives, including faculty, program heads, students, advisors, graduates, and employers.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

SUPPORT STUDENTS Outreach	Stage of Adoption	Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement
a. Work with K-12 systems includes strategies for helping students explore careers during high school and align advanced coursework, such as dual enrollment, with likely college program choice.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
b. The college has scaled strategies to move students from noncredit programs associated with under preparation, such as GED and English as a second language programs, into workforce and CTE programs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
c. With community-based and other workforce organizations, the college provides information to adults on available programs aligned to good jobs and creates clear processes to easily connect them to the appropriate contact at the college.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
d. The college president, cabinet, and programs leads regularly collaborate with marketing and communications teams to recruit and enroll diverse populations in programs with the strongest labor market outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
SUPPORT STUDENTS Onboarding	Stage of Adoption	Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement
e. The onboarding process provides students with opportunities to think critically about their own interests, financial goals, and desired job characteristics (such as location, hours, and working climate).	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

<p>f. The onboarding process provides opportunities for students to actively explore program courses and career pathways through approaches like student testimonials, hands-on activities, and visits to work sites.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>g. The onboarding process provides students with clear information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The degrees, credentials or certifications, background checks, and other requirements needed for employment and career progression b. Program costs and time commitment c. Likely labor market outcomes of the program, including employment rates and entry-level and average wages 	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>h. Advisors are trained to understand programs with the strongest labor market and transfer outcomes, as well as gaps in participation in those programs by race, ethnicity, and gender.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>SUPPORT STUDENTS Career and Life Skills</p>	<p>Stage of Adoption</p>	<p>Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement</p>
<p>i. Multiple times throughout their college experience, all students receive advising on career exploration and have opportunities to practice key career skills, such as interviewing and networking.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

j. The college provides all students training in life skills directly tied to economic mobility, including financial literacy and security, navigating the job market, and interviewing.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
SUPPORT STUDENTS Job Placement and Post-Grad Transitions	Stage of Adoption	Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement
k. The college plays an active role in connecting all CTE students to job opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
l. The college collects feedback about the satisfaction of alumni and employers and proactively uses the information to improve program quality and inform employers' ability to transition and onboard new graduates.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
m. Students in workforce programs receive regular coaching and mentoring from someone within the industry sector or employer where they aim to work.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

DEVELOP EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS Select and Engage Employers	Stage of Adoption	Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement
a. The college president and cabinet conduct targeted outreach to important regional employers to maintain existing relationships and to develop new relationships with large and growing employers and sectors.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
b. The college president, cabinet, and program heads have routine ways to understand employers' perspective on their turf, such as by serving on industry advisory boards, regional workforce organizations, and trade and industry associations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
c. The college equips program leaders to approach employers and respond to employer requests, by providing training on how to collect data on job growth, turnover, and wages; how to approach engagement with questions about employer perspectives and incentives; how to make the business case for partnership; and what information is available from different actors within a company.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
DEVELOP EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS Business-Friendly On-Ramps and Management Processes	Stage of Adoption	Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement
d. Communication and materials from college are business-friendly. They are targeted to employer needs and incentives, avoid lengthy text and academic jargon, and have uncluttered designs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

<p>e. The college has strong staff capacity for employer outreach and relationship maintenance, both in numbers of employees and their skill sets (such as being able to negotiate and avoid academic jargon).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>f. The college has a system that enable people to be responsive to employers. The system stores employer contact and background information, prompts staff to respond quickly to inquiries, and helps schedule regular touch points.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>g. The college builds employer partnerships by emphasizing benefits to the employer’s talent pipeline, yielding long-term scaled employer investments rather than one-time or short-term corporate charity.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>h. College leaders are creative and flexible in brainstorming partnership and resource contribution options in line with employers’ varying capacities and the college’s existing needs.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>DEVELOP EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS Convene Partners to Scale Impact</p>	<p>Stage of Adoption</p>	<p>Next Steps: Easy Wins and Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement</p>
<p>i. The college collects and presents employers current data on the regional labor market, providing insights on topics like trends in skills gaps, demographic changes, and the trajectory to good wages.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	

<p>j. The college periodically convenes employers by sector in order to collectively solve problems faced by multiple employers.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	
<p>k. The college convenes other education providers to solve workforce challenges that the community college cannot solve alone.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic	