Unit 1:

Overarching Principles of College and Career Readiness

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1) CREATE A COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS CULTURE

Out-of-school time (OST) is an opportunity for students to connect with job skills and expand career readiness in authentic and engaging settings. **OST can be particularly beneficial for historically underserved students who don't have access to the same resources** through their schools or family connections as their more advantaged peers.

Establishing a culture of college and career readiness (CCR) is an essential component of programs aiming to set youth up for future success. According to the [Berkeley Center for Educational Partnerships,](#) this is typically called "college-going culture", referring to the environment, attitudes, and practices in schools and communities that encourage students and their families to obtain the information, tools, and perspective to enhance access to and success in post-secondary education. The big picture goal of establishing such a culture is for youth to believe that they can have a great future and that they can plan and prepare for many options following high school (NACAC 5). This type of culture sets high expectations for all students and generates important values such as appreciation for learning, desire to succeed, and motivation to become a lifelong learner.

Youth need a combination of academic, professional, and social and emotional skills to be ready for post-secondary opportunities. While schools typically bear most of this responsibility, out-of-school time programs can play an important role in teaching these skills, supporting youth, and providing additional learning experiences to youth. OST programs are often uniquely positioned to reach youth in ways that school personnel may be unable to and to offer a broader range of experiences beyond what their school makes available to them.

When working to establish a college and career readiness culture in your program, focus on **three main elements:**

1) Offer students opportunities to learn about a variety of options for their future (including careers and the education they require). You can begin this as early as elementary school, but it should definitely be a focus in middle school.

2) Your program and staff should convey the expectation that ALL youth can prepare for the opportunity to attend and be successful in a post-secondary experience - either college or other alternative.

3) All stakeholders (staff, families, community, etc.) are on the same page and communicate the same message of high expectations for the future of their youth (NACAC 4).

HOW TO CREATE COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS IN OST PROGRAMS:

1) **Be a champion for all youth** in your programs. Advocate that all youth can achieve and realize their full potential and clearly communicate this as an expectation.

2) **Set specific goals** related to college and career readiness for your programs and **measure the impact** of those goals over time. How will your program specifically address the topic of college and career readiness? How will you know if you're doing a good job?

3) To fully embrace a CCR culture, it is crucial to **have buy-in at every level.** Leadership, frontline staff, parents, youth, and other stakeholders must all be on-board and involved in setting and maintaining this culture.

4) **Create positive relationships** among staff and youth. Building trust and mutual-respect, and establishing supportive, encouraging relationships with youth could make all the difference for those who may not have that type of relationship with other adults in their lives.

5) **Open opportunities and experience to *all* youth,** not just those who are "the best", have the most resources, or are likely college-bound.

6) **As early as elementary school,** begin having youth think about their future goals and seek out information about their aspirations. ***Do not wait*** until youth are in high school to begin talking about their futures. By starting early, you ensure that youth can be exposed to a wide variety of opportunities and experiences that could help them make more informed decisions.

7) **Connect with and engage families early and often.** Include families in all steps of the process and host activities and events that provide knowledge, ease uncertainties, and build their confidence in supporting their child through the college and career readiness journey. Also take the time to get to know families and their hopes, dreams, and goals for their child(ren)'s future.

8) Offer youth opportunities to **demonstrate and practice leadership skills,** such as creating youth advisory boards or a youth leadership team. Invite all youth to participate in these opportunities and provide ways to practice learning, refining, and demonstrating leadership skills.

9) Establish a **regular practice of discussing the future** with youth and learning more about their thoughts and feelings about post-secondary options. Making these decisions can be intimidating and overwhelming, especially for first-generation college students who don't have models in their family to follow after. Regular check-ins can help youth navigate the wide variety of opportunities and decisions they will encounter throughout this process.

10) Ensure your **physical space looks, feels, and sounds like a place that promotes college and career readiness** and is a safe place for learning. What can you add to your space to achieve this goal? College brochures, career posters, college alma-mater insignia for your staff, etc. are a good start. Again, having regular, open discussions about future options and encouraging collaborative exploration among youth can be helpful in working toward this goal.

This [College-Going Culture Toolkit](#) from the Oregon GEAR UP program is a good resource for getting started with culture-setting in middle school.

2) RAISING THE BAR ON EXPECTATIONS

As part of creating a college and career readiness culture within your programs, **setting and maintaining high expectations for all youth** will be a key element. Research shows that when youth have supportive, caring adults in their lives - their parents, teachers, coaches, etc. - who hold high expectations for them, they will have higher self-esteem, perform better in school, be more determined and persistent, and believe they will have a good job.

To begin raising the bar on expectations, look at your current program offerings and evaluate what you are already doing to encourage and support great expectations for your youth and determine areas where you'd like to amp up your efforts. The goal here is to develop a specific plan of action for setting high expectations for ALL youth across your programs and identifying ways to support and encourage them to meet those expectations.

As you begin implementing higher expectations, you may experience resistance from the youth themselves, their families, staff members, etc. However, setting (even slightly) higher expectations will raise the self-esteem of your youth, show them their full potential, and teach them that they are more resilient than others might believe

Having a detailed and solid plan for how you intend to raise expectations and hold youth to higher expectations in your program will help ensure you are prepared to address concerns from stakeholders.

Youth are generally more capable than we give them credit for. If we set high expectations and they are unable to meet them, we can always make adjustments, but we should aim high to start. If we never give them the opportunity to show us how high they can soar because we've held them back with low expectations, they will never reach their full potential.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR RAISING THE BAR

- What are the **hopes and dreams** of the youth in our program? How do they plan to achieve them?

- What do our youth **expect of themselves?** What do their families expect of them?

- Are we **clear about the expectations** we have for our youth? Have we clearly and consistently communicated to youth, families, and other stakeholders about our expectations?

- Are the expectations set for **ALL** youth in a given program? What accommodations or additional supports are in place to meet the needs of each youth?

- Where are the expectations and supports built into our curriculum? How do we **organically provide support and encouragement** to youth as they work through our curriculum?

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR RAISING THE BAR

- Are we **consistent and fair** in communicating and upholding expectations? Do all stakeholders receive the same message regarding our expectations?

- Do we have a specific plan for what support looks like in our program? **How will staff know what to do** when a youth is frustrated or fails to meet expectations? How should staff respond?

- Do we meet each youth with **kindness, understanding, and positivity** when they struggle or encounter setbacks?

- How do we **make adjustments** when youth encounter roadblocks or setbacks? How do we make the most of the opportunity these circumstances present?

- What are the **specific goals and benchmarks** we want youth to reach at which intervals?

- Where do we need to make adjustments based on results? (This will likely come after implementation).

For more information on raising expectations, here are a few resources:

- How Afterschool Programs Can Most Effectively Promote Positive Youth Development as a Support to Academic Achievement, National Institute on Out-of-School-Time (NIOST), 2003
- Why Kids Thrive When We Set High Expectations, Parent.com, May 2017
- 5 Ways to Set 'High Expectations' without 'High Pressure', Melbourne Child Psychology

3) MENTORSHIP

Preparing for post-secondary opportunities can be stressful, overwhelming, and confusing for youth and their families. Having a mentor to help youth and their families work through the process can be beneficial, particularly if the mentor has experience with the process themselves. It is important to note that this can be especially true for youth who are first-generation college students.

Mentors do not specifically have to focus on college preparation, but can also be beneficial for those youth who want to take a different path. Mentors can provide information about their own career paths and share their experiences with youth who might be interested in pursuing a trade or employment alongside attending college.

Mentorship can play a pivotal role in college and career readiness for youth. As mentioned previously, youth benefit greatly from relationships with supportive adults in their lives and mentors can be crucial to some youth who may be lacking those relationships otherwise. You may already have mentorship as a component of your OST programs, which is great! If not, you might consider making this part of your plan for integrating more college and career readiness into your program offerings.

Finding mentors in your community can be as easy as posting a call for them through your established networks, online and in-person. However, in the case that you are not able to find mentors easily or are looking for more variety in your mentors, you may want to check out the [Maryland MENTOR Mentoring Connector](#), a free national database of mentoring programs. The site also provides additional resources about mentoring programs, starting a mentoring program, mentoring stories, and more.

ACTIVITY: FIVE POSSIBLE MENTORS

Have youth to participate in an exercise to identify five people whom they already know who might be a good mentor.

1. Ask youth: "Who are five people who might be able to help you on your journey toward college and career? Why did you choose each of these people?"

2. Help them to think of supportive and trusted adults or slightly older peers who would be able to offer advice, support, and generally be a cheerleader for them as they navigate their path to their future.

3. Guide youth through the process of identifying specific ways that each person on their list could be helpful to them and contacting them to ask for guidance, support, and mentorship for those specific things.

HOW TO SUPPORT A MENTOR

Supporting mentors is a very important aspect of a good mentoring program that is often overlooked. By following just a few simple steps, you will be able to create a solid mentorship relationship for students and mentors.

1) Make matches wisely to ensure that youth and their mentors get along, respect and appreciate one another, and can build a productive relationship. Consider expertise in the mentor, needs of the student, and general personality and interest in both participants.

2) Share tools and resources with mentors to aid in their support of their youth partner. This would include any resources students are using, information on mentorship, and tools to help them best help youth. The more you can share with mentors and trust them with information and resources, the more help they will be to students and, ultimately, to the success of your program.

3) Grant the same access to mentors as youth in order to maintain continuity across the program. If your program uses a specific tool to manage aspects of this process, make sure that you allow mentors to have similar access as students so that they can access information that will help them provide the best support and guidance to students possible.

4) Provide training to mentors to help them learn about youth development topics. You may create this as a separate training just for mentors who work with youth in your program or integrate this into staff training. Training topics such as how to work with youth, bias training, program details and goals, organizational culture, and common youth concerns will go a long way toward preparing your mentors and ensuring more success of the mentoring component of the program.

Additional resources that might be helpful as you consider how to use mentorship in your programs:

- College and Career Success Mentoring Toolkit, National Mentoring Resource Center
- College and Career Readiness Resources, MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
- The Role of Mentoring in College Access and Success, Institute for Higher Education Policy
- Upholding the Covenant: State of Mentoring in Maryland, Maryland Mentor

4) COLLECTING DATA RELATED TO COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

While the long-term goal for career and college readiness programs is clear — young people thriving in their chosen future work — we understand that it "takes a village" to support young people along this journey. No single person, program or institution can do it alone, so it is critical to understand the role your program has in the larger ecosystem of support for young people to be career and college ready. By being clear on your program's role in supporting young people, you can then **prioritize the information and types of data you need** to understand your program's progress and outcomes. In considering what data to collect, reflect on what data you need and why.

What is your program model and how do you most tangibly support young people in getting career and college ready? Do you primarily support young people directly, providing them with specific information, skills or experiences such as SAT/ACT prep, college visits, job internships or social emotional learning (SEL) supports? Or do you more directly serve their caregivers or provide trained mentors who support young people with specific academic needs or help complete college, financial aid or scholarship applications?

While your program contributes to many outcomes of career and college readiness, what aspects of career and college readiness can you attribute to your program? What framework or theory of change does your program follow or fit into?

► FOUR STEPS ◄

To support your ongoing learning, follow the next four steps. These steps will guide you to articulate your program strategy, prioritize your progress indicators, identify your data collection resources and sources and encapsulate all this into an evaluation plan.

STEP 1: DETERMINING YOUR FRAMEWORK

Review the frameworks on the following pages and see how your program model ties in. By leveraging an already established framework, your program:

1. Has a starting point for its own logic model and a stronger understanding and demonstration of your role in the larger career and college readiness process.

1. Can leverage lessons learned, research, and, possibly, data collection tools, provided by those frameworks.

Identify where in the larger ecosystem of supports your program is focused. Check out the following summaries of youth development ecosystems as described as "field frameworks" and "logic models" to better contextualize your program's role in a young person's future success.

As defined by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, a program logic model is "a picture of how your organization does its work — the theory and assumptions underlying the program. A program logic model links outcomes (both short- and long-term) with program activities/processes and the theoretical assumptions/ principles of the program."

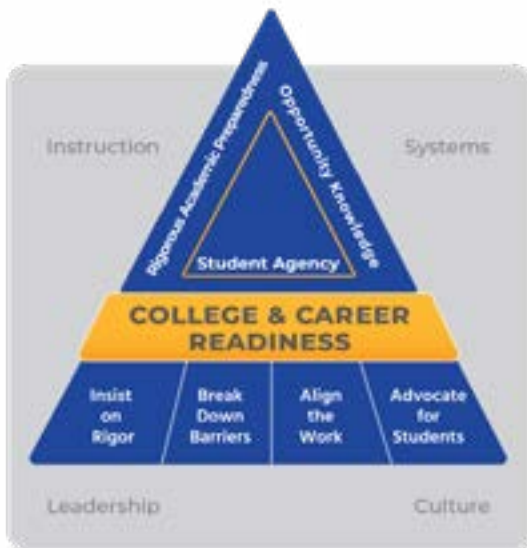# STEP 1: DETERMINING YOUR FRAMEWORK

Ready by 21: Getting Youth Ready

Ecosystems Logic Model Examples

AVID: College and Career Readiness Framework

P21 Frameworks for 21st-Century Learning
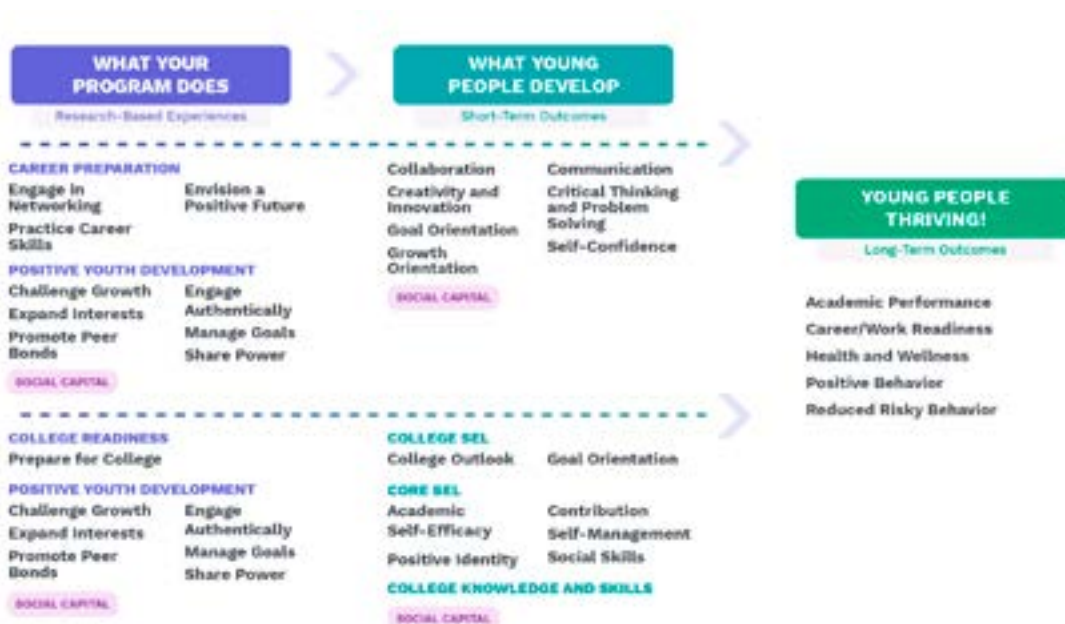
STEP 1: DETERMINING YOUR FRAMEWORK

U.S. Chamber Foundation CCR Framework

U.S. Department of Education Employability Skills Framework

Hello Insight Logic Model

STEP 2: BUILD YOUR LOGIC MODEL

In reflection of the field frameworks and sample logic models, answer the following questions:

1. What is your logic model, especially your most direct (attributable) results?
2. What components are most important to share information about? To whom and why?
3. What data do you already have?
4. What resources are available to invest in learning and evaluation?

Especially in prioritizing short-term outcomes, consider your program's emphasis. Is it...

- Motivating young people to consider different/new college and career options?
- Providing knowledge about the variety of college and career options?
- Building technical skills for college and career readiness?
- Giving specific opportunities to explore college and career options?
- Developing social, emotional, and learning capacities related to college and career options?

STEP 3: BALANCE PRIORITIES & RESOURCES

To balance your learning priorities with learning resources (staff time, funds for data collection and analyses, etc.), review the typical information sources and methods below. What information or data do you already have in hand and what data do you need?

	Example Indicators	Example Data Sources	Time-$ Range
Outputs Direct "outputs" of program activities, usually # of	• # youth participants • # ACT/SAT mock tests taken • # college visits • # hours of tutoring (hours per student) • # advisory hours • # trainings/workshops • # mock job interviews conducted • # scholarships awarded/ applied for • # individualized college/ career plans • # college applications • # internship placements	• Attendance sheets • Participant information systems	• $-$$
Short-term Outcomes Direct, tangible or attributable results of program activities, especially related to change in knowledge, skills, behavior, status, etc. Timeframe is usually immediate to one year or so.	• GPA improvements • AP/Honors course completions • ACT/SAT improvements • Broader knowledge of range of future pathways • College admissions/ financial aid knowledge • Workplace skill development (use of technology, SEL, life skills, etc.) • College/Career confidence	• Student scores/ records • Knowledge surveys • Skill surveys or observation rubrics • Youth surveys • Advisor or supervisor observations/ reports	• $$-$$$$

STEP 3: BALANCE PRIORITIES & RESOURCES

	Example Indicators	Example Data Sources	Time-$ Range
Long-term Outcomes Changes occurring after a longer timeframe, such as 2+ years, and supporting overall social impact.	• High school graduation • College admission or graduation • Transfer from community college to university • Lower college debt • Living wage / stable careers (hourly to salaried positions, part-time to full-time) • Self-sufficiency	• Longitudinal tracking of individual young people • Program alumni surveys • Comparisons with national norms (AECF, Kids Count)	• $$$-$$$$$

In collecting data from youth, measurement tool examples include:

▶ **Academic/Cognitive Tests**
- Academic knowledge and skills: OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) - PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment)
- Cognitive competencies: College and Work Readiness Assessment Plus (CWRA+)

▶ **Social Emotional / Youth Development**
- Research Collaboration: College and Career Competency Assessments
- Hello Insight: Career and College Tools

▶ **Workplace Scenario Testing**
- ACT WorkKeys: Assessments
- 21st Century Skills for Workplace Success: NOCTI Business Solutions

Also refer to the framework/logic models that best align with yours and see if they offer any tools or guides to evaluate progress.

STEP 4: CREATE AN EVALUATION PLAN

Finally, be sure to complement your logic model and your measurement/learning priorities with an **evaluation plan.**

Pull together your decisions above into your own evaluation plan and regularly revisit both your plan and your logic model to ensure you're making progress.

Use Exercise 4 in the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Logic Model Development Guide.

WORKS CITED

"College Going Culture." Berkeley Center for Educational Partnerships, cep.berkeley.edu/college-going-culture-2 . Accessed Sep. 17, 2020.

Falcon, Lauren. "Breaking Down Barriers: First-Generation College Students and College Success." League for Innovation in the Community College, June 2015, www.league.org/innovation-showcase/breaking-down-barriers-first-generation-college-students-and-college-success . Accessed Sep. 17, 2020.

"First Generation College Student Opportunities & Challenges." First Generation Foundation, www.firstgenerationfoundation.org/ . Accessed Sep. 17, 2020.

"First-Generation Students." Education Professionals, College Board, professionals.college-board.org/guidance/prepare/first-generation . Accessed Sep. 17, 2020.

"Logic Model Development Guide." W.K. Kellogg Foundation. https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resources/2004/01/logic-model-development-guide . Accessed November 1, 2020.

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). Creating a College Going and Career Ready Culture, Nov. 2018, https://edit.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/professional-development/step-by-step/indianriver--creating-a-college-going-culture.pdf. Accessed Sep. 17, 2020.

Statistics for First Generation College Students. Rise First, https://risefirst.org/ . Accessed Sep. 17, 2020.

MOST NETWORK
Leaders in Youth Development

The Career and College Readiness Toolkit is an initiative of the Maryland Out of School Time Network. To learn more and find more resources, visit www.mostnetwork.org/initiatives/CCR.