Convergence as Strategy and as Model

Linking P-16 Education Reform and Economic Development

by Dennis McGrath, Ph.D.
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About KnowledgeWorks Foundation

KnowledgeWorks Foundation is an Ohio-based public education philanthropy that provides funding and leadership for a wide range of education initiatives. The foundation’s work aims to create and improve educational opportunities for all learners, focusing primarily on high school reform, college access, adult and workforce education, and the future of education. Created in 1998, the foundation advocates for lasting, systemic change by identifying and sharing best practices and research-based approaches.
## Contents

Executive Summary ................................................................. 1  
The Trend Toward Convergence ............................................... 2  
Reconfiguring Public Policy for Collaboration and Innovation ................. 3  
The Benefits of Convergence ................................................. 5  
Types of Local/Regional Collaboration ...................................... 6  
Convergence Examined: Four Case Studies ..................................... 7  
Common Features Across Initiatives ........................................... 7  
Common Practices Promoting Convergence ................................... 17  
Policy Implications of Convergence .......................................... 18  
References .................................................................................. 19  
Appendix A: Strive “Framework for Student Success” ........................... 20  
Appendix B: Additional P-16 Councils in Ohio .................................. 21
A little-understood but vital trend developing in communities throughout Ohio could serve as a national model of the transformations needed to respond to the new shape of our economy.

This emerging model integrates educational reform and economic development in new and more powerful ways than ever before — a strategy that can be termed “convergence.”

Convergence is a strategic approach that forms networks of organizations linked by bonds of collaboration and interdependent action towards:

• pursuing a comprehensive vision of local and regional development
• maximizing resources by aligning and coordinating programs
• using data to set priorities
• bringing promising initiatives to scale

Convergence Examined: Four Case Studies

The trend toward convergence can be seen in four efforts in Ohio: The Stark Education Partnership, Inc, which established the P-16 Compact for Stark County; Southern State Community College and Southern Ohio Center of Excellence; EDvention, Dayton’s regional STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) initiative; and Strive of Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky.

By looking at common features across the four initiatives we can see the distinctive aspects of convergence, including:

• A lead institution, typically an intermediate organization, acts as a champion in forming and guiding comprehensive and coordinated efforts
• Education reform efforts are connected with local economic development
• Efforts involve partners from K-12 and higher education, business, government, nonprofits, faith, and community organizations.
• The sites leverage local resources to maximize their impact, and bolster these networks by taking a collaborative approach to new funding.
• Convergence incubates innovative programs and brings them to scale.
• Data is used strategically as a stimulus to action, to benchmark progress, for goal setting, for evaluation and assessment, and to establish credibility.

Policy Implications

State policy can support convergence and help communities meet the challenges of a knowledge-based economy by:

1. Developing a state approach to education and economic development that complements the innovative linkages of education and the economy exhibited at the community level.
2. Encouraging joint agency and department grant-making to support local and regional collaborative initiatives.
3. Bolstering regional workforce needs via developing local pathways that help workers to develop the competencies needed to move into skilled careers.
The Trend toward Convergence

A little-understood but vital trend developing in communities throughout Ohio has potential that extends well beyond local or even statewide concerns. It is a trend that could serve as a national model of the transformations needed to respond to the new shape of our economy. The job loss and declining income experienced throughout the state has stimulated innovative efforts at the local level to respond to the changing economy, revitalize communities, and improve the quality of life for residents by linking broad-based P-16 educational reform with local/regional economic development efforts.

This growing movement toward more comprehensive community-wide and regional action has deepened shared understandings, increased trust, broadened communication, and built strong working relationships among a wide range of groups in many communities, significantly increasing the capacity for problem-solving and collective action. What in the past were standalone activities and isolated programs are being drawn together into a model of well-planned, coordinated, community-wide strategies to strengthen the preparation of students, coordinates services, enhance the skills of adult workers, and attract and grow the types of jobs that provide good wages and economic security.

This emerging model integrates educational reform and economic development in new and more powerful ways than ever before — a strategy this paper terms “convergence.” To identify the distinctive concerns, approaches, strategies, practices, and organizational structures of this newly identified trend, this paper will examine its development through case studies of four representative initiatives in Ohio.

Building on Earlier Collaborations

The trend toward convergence as a strategy and model of economic transformation and community development represents something new in civic life, but builds directly on earlier collaborative efforts. It is a consequence of the maturing of well-established collaborations, public/private ventures, and service provider networks.

One of the earlier collaborative efforts that gave rise to this trend is P-16 (preschool to the baccalaureate degree) educational reform. The key insight of P-16 reform that has become shared among partner institutions in many localities is the need to bring together local stakeholders to connect every level of education into a seamless system that prepares and supports all the children of a community.

By bringing everyone to the table and coordinating the efforts of many groups throughout the community, P-16 councils (consisting of representatives from education, business, government, and the community) have achieved successes that no institution could have realized acting on its own. By taking a data-driven and student-centered approach, P-16 teams have implemented academically rich curricula and common approaches to professional development. They also have identified institutional barriers and formulated creative strategies to smooth the transition from elementary to middle school, middle to high school, and high school to college.

What in the past were standalone activities and isolated programs are being drawn together into a model of well-planned, coordinated, community-wide strategies.
P-16 councils have also better connected schools with social agencies, as when they work with providers to offer enhanced services to infants and families, promote better school readiness, and provide quality after-school activities.

Workforce development initiatives also have contributed to the trend toward convergence. The central insight of workforce development efforts is the need to create linkages among schools, employers, and other community institutions to help students develop needed skills and to retrain adult workers to provide avenues to further opportunities. Workforce development builds strong connections between educators and employers, ensuring that career education reflects the actual skills needed in the workplace. Many initiatives have also worked to create career ladders to move low-income students and adults out of poverty.

A third factor has been economic development efforts. The central insight of economic development is the need to identify and deploy the key assets of a community to maximize its comparative advantage. Increasingly, economic development and education efforts have drawn closer together as it has become recognized that key assets of any community are the skills and educational preparation of the workforce. To promote the transition to a 21st-century knowledge-based economy, economic development advocates are joining with educational and social service coalitions to create interlocking networks that draw together local government, the business community, educational institutions, social agencies, as well as civic and faith institutions into increasingly convergent efforts.

As groups have worked on these issues, many have come to recognize the interconnections among their efforts and the need to take a more comprehensive approach to the needs of their communities. Local stakeholders are recognizing that promoting entrepreneurship and strengthening the educational skills of residents are vital to the economic security and well-being of their communities and must be coordinated with workforce development, the creation of career pathways, and efforts at economic development. Adrienne O’Neill of the Stark Education Partnership calls the forming of representative networks of community groups, institutions, and organizations “convergence,” a term this paper borrows to describe this new level of collaboration. It is one that represents a vital effort to reposition our communities for the challenges of the 21st-century economy.

Reconfiguring Public Policy for Collaboration and Innovation

The trend toward convergence at the local level parallels new approaches being taken in public policy. The state of Ohio has been responding to the demands of global competition and the rise of the knowledge economy with public policies designed to strengthen education, increase the skills of its workers, and modernize its economy. Ohio is increasingly recognizing that, given the magnitude of the changes required, administrative structures and program initiatives must promote innovation and develop a collaborative approach to solving problems.

Ohio is in the forefront of state efforts to advance a P-16 approach by creating an integrated system of education from pre-school through the baccalaureate degree. It is promoting access to postsecondary education through collaborative approaches such as the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN), a consortium of KnowledgeWorks Foundation, the Ohio Board of Regents, and the Ohio Department of Education,
which provides early outreach to pre-college students and their families. In 1989 the state enacted the Postsecondary Enrollment Options policy, which supports collaboration between school districts and higher education by encouraging high school students to take college courses. At the same time, the state is preparing students for the skills required by the new economy by enacting the Ohio Core, which will raise standards and strengthen the curriculum for all high school students.

State policy also reflects the need to develop a more educated workforce, and to attract and grow new industries. The EnterpriseOhio Network provides Targeted Industries Training Grants to campuses and businesses for the training of employees in manufacturing and information technology. Adult Workforce Centers receive funding to promote K−16 collaboration in the provision of training. The Third Frontier Project aims to create high-paying jobs by building research capacity, supporting the development of new products, and financing advanced manufacturing technologies.

The Governor’s Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (2004) articulated the vision of using higher education to create more and better jobs for the state’s citizens, increase economic competitiveness, and fuel economic growth. To do so the commission identified three major goals: making Ohio competitive in the knowledge economy, promoting access and opportunities for all students, and delivering results for public investments. The commission also declared a goal for Ohio to increase higher education enrollment by 30 percent, or 180,000 students over the next ten years (Governor’s Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, 2004:21−22).

These efforts recognize the critical role of education in promoting economic growth, providing jobs, and ensuring the prosperity of citizens and the well-being of their communities.

developing an educated workforce and provide the conditions for new industry to incubate and develop (Feldman, 2000; Florida, 2002; Fogarty and Sinha, 1999; Uhalde, Strohl, and Simkins, 2006). The report of the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, Tough Choices or Tough Times (2006) emphasizes that to maintain a quality standard of living, the United States must successfully compete in the worldwide market for high-value-added products and services.

Doing so requires developing a creative, innovative, and well-educated workforce. However, the challenge of competing in a globalized economy is a daunting one. Murnane and Levy have shown that a set of “new basic skills” comprising a broader range of both cognitive skills and what they term “soft skills” such as the ability to work in groups, make oral and written presentations, and use personal computers to carry out basic tasks are increasingly essential (Murnane and Levy, 1996). The recent report America’s Perfect Storm (2007) emphasizes the challenge this poses by documenting the growing divergence among the American population in the skills needed to compete in the new economy.

The Brookings Institution report The Vital Center (2006) discusses the specific challenges posed by the globalized economy for the states of the Great Lakes region. The analysis of the region’s economy leads to the judgment that this is the time for a new state/federal public policy agenda that recognizes critical weaknesses and builds on the many strengths of the region. Further, the report rightly argues that states and communities must end their “beggar-thy-neighbor” economic development approaches. Instead
they must seek common ground through mutually advantageous policies such as implementing rigorous curricula and developing skilled graduates, enacting portable credit and credentialing policies, developing the training and education programs required to remake the reemployment system, and moving forward on needed transportation or urban development projects.

All of these reports are valuable in sketching the contours of the problem and emphasizing the need for action if the well-being of our communities and the standard of living of American families are to be maintained. But reports, however compelling the recommendations, don’t necessarily turn into action. Enacting necessary policies requires that key local public and private actors develop a shared analysis of the challenges to be faced and see common action as in their individual and collective interest. This task has been described in a number of ways. KnowledgeWorks Foundation’s *Map of Future Forces Affecting Education* (2006) refers to building “institutions for collective action.” Others describe it in terms of strengthening social capital (Putnam, 2000), developing the framework for public cooperation (Boswell, 1990), encouraging civic innovation (Sirianni and Friedland, 2001), or developing public policy collaboratives (McGrath, 2005).

However the task is conceptualized, it requires a deeper understanding of the processes required:

1) to develop a shared vision of the aims and strategies of development among state and local officials and private stakeholders,

2) to promote the culture change needed to build awareness among average citizens and raise expectations of students and their families, and

3) to build the organizational structures needed to coordinate the actions of government officials, business representatives, educational institutions, community foundations, local service and advocacy networks, and other key stakeholders into sustained public/private cooperation.

**The Benefits of Convergence**

Convergence is a new stage in the development of local and regional communities and a new form of civic organizing. As used in this paper, the term “convergence” describes a strategic approach that permits localities to pursue a comprehensive vision of local and regional development, to maximize resources by aligning and coordinating programs, to use data to set priorities, and to bring promising initiatives to scale. Convergence efforts act strategically by maximizing the collaborative advantage of educational reform, workforce, and economic development. Convergence promotes alignment and coordination by forming interconnected networks of organizations linked by bonds of trust, understanding, and interdependent action among key stakeholders.

Convergence is distinguished by a number of characteristics that represent an advance over earlier “standalone” actions and small-scale joint efforts. In communities moving toward convergence we find established institutional collaborations linking into “networks of networks” that include the full range of K-12 school districts, higher education institutions, business, local government, community groups, faith institutions, social agencies, and area foundations. Convergence efforts develop community-wide strategies that engage all key stakeholders, leverage a range of local and external resources, and have broad support among residents.

Convergence strengthens collaboration among institutions. As partners come to share a common strategic vision for the region, they begin to align their individual institutional priorities to support common goals. As one collaboration leader put it, “Communities
have many resources — schools, churches, foundations, public and private agencies, museums, and state or federally-funded programs that often are working toward similar goals...the task is to bring them together.” In examining convergence efforts, we find United Way Agencies refocusing their funding priorities, Chambers of Commerce emphasizing the importance of education and training, local foundations coordinating their giving, and higher education institutions and K-12 districts developing joint projects.

Communities pursuing a convergence approach have developed a variety of organizational structures and practices that:

- permit a wide range of groups to collect and review relevant data on social and economic trends affecting the community and the region
- develop the capacity for strategic thinking and action at both the local and regional level
- build common agreement on goals, benchmarks, and indices of success
- mount broad public engagement campaigns to inform residents of emerging issues
- leverage local and external resources to maximize their impact
- learn from successful efforts, share findings among community partners, and bring innovative efforts to scale
- build links between state and federal policy makers and local stakeholders and help communities implement public policies to maximize their local benefit

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<td>Mission</td>
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<td>Connections between organizations</td>
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<td>Means of coordination</td>
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<td>Barriers to coordination</td>
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<td>Capacity to promote change</td>
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<td>Organizational learning</td>
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<td>Scale</td>
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Convergence Examined: Four Case Studies

This paper reports on the trend toward convergence by examining four representative efforts throughout Ohio:

**The Stark Education Partnership.** The Stark Education Partnership, Inc., is a nonprofit organization in Stark County, Ohio. It was founded in 1989 through support by four foundations (Deuble, Hoover, Stark Community and Timken). The partnership serves as a catalyst for educational change and a support of school-based initiatives to improve the educational outcomes for all children, preschool age through twelfth grade. The partnership, in collaboration with educators from several Stark County school districts, the Educational Service Center, postsecondary education leadership, business representatives, civic leaders, and parents, established the P-16 Compact for Stark County in 2002.

**Southern State Community College and Southern Ohio Center of Excellence.** Southern State Community College serves a broad rural area of Ohio that includes Adams, Brown, Clinton, Fayette, and Highland counties. In 2005 Southern State served as the sponsoring agency for the Southern Ohio Center of Excellence (SOCOE) to become part of the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN). The Southern Ohio Center of Excellence is the first regional center established by OCAN to build collaborative relationships connecting school systems, community organizations, and higher education institutions to build community capacity and increase college access and student success.

**EDvention.** EDvention is a Dayton regional STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) initiative. Formerly known as the Miami Valley Math and Science Education Consortium, it was launched under its new name in 2007. It was formed to propel economic growth by invigorating math and science education and creating an education pipeline to dramatically increase science, technology, engineering, and mathematics talent throughout the region.

**Strive of Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky.** Established in 2006, the organization developed from the earlier College Access/Success Partnership of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. It takes a regional approach, which encompasses Cincinnati’s five-county nucleus of Clermont and Hamilton counties in Ohio and Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties in Kentucky and includes the region’s core cities of Cincinnati, Covington, and Newport. Strive is a very broad-based collaborative that now includes more than fifty community leaders from the education, business, nonprofit, philanthropic, faith, and civic sectors.

Common Features Across Initiatives

By looking at common features across the four initiatives we can see the distinctive concerns, approaches, strategies, practices, and organizational structures of convergence, as well as the public policies that support or impede convergence.

Place matters

Convergence builds on the importance of place in people’s lives. It recognizes that states are really a series of regions and smaller local communities. Convergence draws upon the bonds of place to strengthen a shared sense of concern and loyalty to one’s community by encouraging engagement and common action. In so doing, convergence creates a critical mass of people who care about and are committed to improving the quality of life in their communities. Convergence helps decision-makers, key stakeholders, and average citizens understand the critical role that education reform plays in growing the local economy and enhancing the quality of life of the community.

Groups engage in a variety of activities to clarify and dramatize the significance of promoting the health of infants and improving school-readiness, implementing curricula that inculcate 21st-century skills, raising the
high school graduation and college-going rates, decreasing the need for remediation for the students who enroll in college, increasing student persistence to a degree, and keeping graduates in the community once they complete their degrees.

Convergence activities also promote common action by clarifying the regional context of local communities. Convergence helps people recognize the significance of larger economic trends, the impact of public policies, and the interconnections among institutions that are necessary to their quality of life.

All four sites are distinctive in emphasizing two messages: that the majority of good jobs require postsecondary education or training and that their region must organize to provide opportunity to both children and adults to grow the talent and develop the workforce necessary to maintain a good quality of life.

EDvention defines its mission as “accelerating STEM talent development to grow the Dayton Region.” On June 25, EDvention and the Dayton Development Coalition jointly sponsored a Summit meeting on STEM education. A series of speakers emphasized the unique nature of the Dayton region, pointing to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, the Air Force Research Laboratories, the extensive research conducted by area universities, and the concentration of science and technology companies. As Steven Lee Johnson, president of Sinclair Community College, put it, “We are in a unique position in the Dayton area to tackle the creation of a pipeline that will inspire young people and turn them into the research scientists, engineers, and technicians that our regional businesses need.”

The Stark Education Partnership originally focused on the revitalization of the Canton City Schools. Over time the partnership, in collaboration with the P-16 Compact and the region’s higher education institutions, has defined its mission as “creating a world-class educational system” in the county and participating in the revitalization of the economy of northeast Ohio.

Southern State Community College and the Southern Ohio Center of Excellence define themselves as serving the Appalachian counties of Adams, Brown and Highland counties, as well as Clinton and Fayette counties. The two organizations view this area as a region with common challenges and opportunities. They work to provide access to higher education for the region’s low-income population and address the barriers created by poverty and isolation that inhibit young people and adults from furthering their education. They view their mission as improving access to higher education, enhancing the self-sufficiency of residents, and improving the quality of life in the community. Southern State has strong ties to local employers and both organizations work with partners such as OSU Extension, Workforce Investment Act Boards, and the Chambers of Commerce to provide the training needed by employers and to upgrade the skills of residents to stimulate the economy of the region.

Strive focuses on the entire Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky metropolitan region. It defines its mission as “ensuring that every child in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky is prepared for college, successful careers, and productive citizenship.” Strive has also come to emphasize the intimate connection between education and economic development, stating that “the success of our students directly impacts the quality of life in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky... by having successful students we will develop productive citizens, which in turn creates thriving cities.”

Culture matters too

Convergence efforts recognize that new approaches to solving local and regional problems require significant culture change. The attitudes of average citizens must be changed and the expectations of students and their families about the importance of education and the types of skills needed to prosper in the emerging economy must be raised as new school standards are established. At the same time, there must be significant culture change in the way that organizations function.
Schools, colleges, and training programs must raise their expectations about what students must and can accomplish, and they must learn to work collaboratively with one another and with organizations from other sectors of the community.

All of the sites emphasize that two of their greatest challenges are raising the high school graduation and college-going rates in their communities. These are two of the clearest goals of culture change in their communities. The Stark Partnership staff continually emphasize that only 17.9 percent of residents currently hold a bachelor’s degree. They see this figure as dramatizing the cultural dimensions of the challenge of improving educational performance and enhancing access, since almost all students who continue their studies will be first-generation college-goers. This recognition provides the context for their work with area school districts and the development of a P-16 collaborative approach.

The need for culture change is infused in all of their strategies. Programs such as enhancing career guidance, test preparation, support to students in preparing their college applications, and financial aid counseling are based on the recognition that first-generation college-goers and low-income students whose families have not attended college need extra support and encouragement. While these programs target students, they are also designed to engage and inform families in order to raise expectations and increase parental support for their children’s educational aspirations.

Each of the sites recognizes how difficult it is to change attitudes and raise expectations. As Brenda Martin of SOCOE puts it, “When you try to promote college access it takes everyone who touches the lives of students to make the changes that are necessary.” This insight has led to a common emphasis on collaborative efforts, so that the full resources of the community can be mobilized to promote culture change. For example, to insure student success, the Stark Partnership, in collaboration with OCAN, Canton South High School and Kent State University-Stark, has created “On Course for Success.” On Course is an on-campus freshman support program modeled on the “I Know I Can” program in Columbus. The partnership, along with the Stark P-16 Compact, also works extensively with area school districts to provide comprehensive advising and support programs for students and their families.

Southern State and SOCOE focus directly on the challenge that traditional Appalachian culture presents to raising the educational expectations of students and their families. While they acknowledge the many positive values of the region’s culture, they constantly experience the struggle involved in raising expectations and encouraging students to continue their studies. The SOCOE staff draw on the work of Ruby K. Payne, especially her analysis of how the long-term experience of poverty affects people’s mindset and willingness to accept their situation.

To promote culture change, the institutions take a broad, collaborative approach to culture change, working with the newly formed Highland P-16 Council and more than thirty other partners. This collaborative approach permits them to leverage their resources and work to raise expectations and promote the success of students at every educational level, and to assist adult workers as well. SOCOE has placed college access advisors in a high school in each of the five counties to help students navigate the pathway to college.

SOCOE and Southern State have joined with the Highland County P-16 Council to identify academically rich curricula to be implemented at all school levels. In collaboration with their partners, they are making efforts to raise expectations by focusing on a number of grade levels. In partnership with Ohio State University Extension, they are offering goal-setting workshops to high school students as well as “Reality Store,” an interactive workshop to prepare students for the world of work. Career Assessment Planning is provided at a number of schools, as well as both on-line and peer tutoring for eighth-grade algebra.
to ensure that students are prepared for the college-prep mathematics sequence in high school. There are also a number of parenting workshops and numerous opportunities to work with families.

At the same time, SOCOE, along with Southern State and other partners, also works with adult learners. The group partners with Your Place and AmeriCorps*Vista to provide GED classes for adults. Southern State has strong and well-established relationships with regional businesses and provides extensive job training services. It continually works with employers to encourage workers to continue beyond training experiences and enter degree-bearing programs. The college’s Center for Corporate and Community Service uses portable computer labs to provide training throughout the five counties. It has also established an entrepreneurship program at the Adams County Training Center.

EDvention is working closely with its industry, research, and higher education partners to find ways to strengthen STEM education in the region’s school districts. The newly formed collaborative recently convened its partners to respond to a state request for a proposal to establish a regional STEM school for grades 6–12. The idea of the school is to be a model of STEM education, with a project-based, integrated curriculum that is aligned with higher education and workforce standards, differentiated instruction, and authentic assessment of student learning.

While the STEM regional school is an exciting possibility, the primary focus of EDvventure is not to build new schools, but to transform teaching and learning in the average classroom. The partners plan to do this in a number of ways. They are developing plans to infuse the principles of STEM education in school district curricula. They are also working to develop comprehensive professional development activities to better support teachers and strengthen mathematics and science instruction throughout K–12. The collaborative is also drawing in its business, research, and higher education partners to provide practical, interactive, problem-solving experiences for students at all levels.

And so does data and how you use it

Convergence efforts put great priority on collecting and analyzing data, sharing it widely, and using it strategically. All four sites utilize data in extensive and sophisticated ways. Data is gathered to identify the dimensions of problems, establish goals, benchmark progress, conduct assessments and evaluations, and establish accountability. A serious commitment to data collection and analysis and the broad sharing of information also enhances the credibility of new initiatives and promotes common ground among partners.

Strive illustrates the ways that a commitment to collecting, analyzing, and using data advances a collaborative approach to community improvement. The organization developed out of a prior P-16 initiative, the College Access/Success Partnerships of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky (CAP), which served as a collector of data and coordinator of regional college access and success strategies. CAP initiated a new level of collaboration among Greater Cincinnati’s educational, civic, and business leaders. As Strive has added partners and provided a context for a wide range of institutional leaders from every sector of the community to talk about their concerns, it has broadened beyond the initial focus on grades 8–14.

Strive is now engaged in a regional effort to improve education and enhance the quality of life in the metropolitan area by pursuing large-scale strategies to systemically improve education, increase college-going, produce more college graduates, and retain graduates to live and work in the community. Through frequent meetings with partners and an extensive public engagement campaign, the group has developed five broad goals: every child prepared for school; every student supported inside and outside of school; every student succeeds academically; every student enrolls in college; and every student graduates and enters a career.
A commitment to a data-based approach has been critical in developing a broad regional framework in which numerous organizations and groups can coordinate and focus their efforts. The group initially grounded its work in the “Student’s Roadmap to Success.” Developed by the University of Cincinnati Center for Urban Education, the roadmap is a research-based sketch of the major developmental stages and transition points that a young person goes through along the P-16 educational pathway.

The commitment to the roadmap was a key strategic decision that has been critical to the success of such a large-scale collaborative. The roadmap has provided a strategic focus to the group’s efforts as well as a conceptual framework to coordinate and align the work of numerous organizations, agencies, and institutions throughout the region. Strive is now engaged in developing a region-wide database, drawn from data provided by area school districts, colleges and universities, the Ohio Board of Regents, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, the United Way, early childhood service providers, as well as other partners.

This large-scale commitment to data collection helps institutional partners agree on a common set of goals and identify specific data indicators associated with each goal and related to the success of students at each stage of the educational pipeline. So, for instance, under the goal of “every student is prepared for school,” the partners have identified measures such as standards for early childhood education and visits to high-risk mothers by trained early childhood professionals. Under the goal of “every student succeeds academically,” the Strive partners have identified measures such as aligning curriculum, standards and assessments across grade levels, and increasing the quantity and quality of professional development opportunities for teachers.

Strive also developed a “Framework for Student Success,” which provides further focus to its efforts and
infuses data-based decision-making into all aspects of the collaborative’s work. The “Framework for Student Success” has been validated by all the partners and helps guide decision-making and the coordination of efforts. The framework has five steps that support the endorsement process by which specific strategies are validated and agreed upon, ensuring that the time, energy, and resources of the community are focused on specific strategic impact areas. (See Appendix A.)

Working in a broad metropolitan region with the aim of ensuring the success of all students quickly led the group to begin to audit current programs, so that the collaborative can align and coordinate the work of partner organizations and leverage existing resources. This effort has expanded into the development of a broad set of regional data indicators that, along with educational data, include indicators of social and economic well-being. These data will be helpful in decision-making and in connecting educational reform efforts with the economic development of the region.

Strive, along with the other sites, has learned that a commitment to evidence-based approaches and data-based decision-making builds credibility and support with business partners. Corporate members have provided process engineers who, in collaboration with Strive staff and a group of retired business executives, work with service providers in utilizing the Six Sigma process. Six Sigma, initially developed by the Motorola Corporation, is a well-validated approach to problem-solving and quality improvement. With the consulting assistance of experienced process engineers, Strive staff work with service providers from a variety of partner organizations to develop common approaches. While some were skeptical that a business, process-engineering approach could work in the nonprofit sector, most have come to see its value. Participants note that the Six Sigma process promotes deeper collaboration among service providers by helping them identify shared goals, establish common benchmarks and standards of practice for their work, and identify best practices.

Strive is also engaged in conversations with area foundations and corporate funders to reach some common agreement about funding priorities as well as a new approach to grantmaking that better aligns resources. The aim is to develop networks of service provider groups that advance common goals for the success of students, and that, over time, will become the primary filter for funding decisions that support education in the region.

The Stark Education Partnership also illustrates the many ways that a commitment to data advances convergence efforts. Partnership staff, along with the Stark P-16 Compact, regularly collect, analyze, and disseminate a wide range of P-16 data on school performance and student educational progress, as well as economic data on the county and region. Stark staff have used these data to advance public awareness by contextualizing state trends and providing useful comparisons to benchmark the county’s current status and the extent of progress that’s being made. For example, Stark Education Partnership publications have noted that:

- From 1990 to 2004 Ohio saw a 6.3 percent gain in the percentage of people who have completed a bachelor’s degree or higher as compared to the U.S. gain of 6.7 percent. However, the gain in the top ten states ranges from 6.7 percent to 14.4 percent.
- Stark County ranks 48th in the state in number of associate degree holders, 209 in the nation on number of bachelor’s degrees, and 229 in the nation on advanced degrees.
- Stark County in 2002 exceeded the statewide percentage (52 to 49 percent) of high school graduates enrolled in Ohio colleges

Stark staff have used data to mobilize public support for initiatives by helping citizens understand the importance of education for their future earnings and those of their children, as well as the costs of inadequate education. For instance, staff have disseminated publications (Stark
Education Partnership, nd) that note: “By increasing Stark’s high school graduation rate to 100% and college going rate to 80% (1227 students) and keeping those graduates here, we can add a potential return of up to $20,000,000 in local income tax dollars alone over the lifetime of those students. If we continue to achieve these goals, this benefit will continue to multiple year by year for each succeeding class. This does not even count increases in sales or property taxes or other benefits to the community.”

The group also uses data to concretize goals to increase public support and the commitment of partners to common efforts. In a recent publication (Stark Education Partnership, 2007:9), staff noted that the Stark County P-16 Compact has a goal of increasing the college-going rate to 80 percent. To reach that goal for students going to college directly from high school, Stark County would need to send 1,200 additional students. The group conducted a cost/benefit analysis on the assumption that of those 1,200 additional students attending college, 600 enrolled in and graduated from associate degree programs and 600 from bachelor’s degree programs and all remained in Stark County upon graduation. The publication noted that 600 additional bachelor’s degrees would result in an additional 1 percent income increase every year.

The Stark Partnership releases periodic research studies and reports that highlight local issues and challenges that need to be addressed by the community and focus attention on potential solutions. For example, several years ago the partnership, in collaboration with the P-16 Compact, published and widely disseminated a report on the need for Stark County to improve the educational attainment of students (Stark Education Partnership, 2002). The report illustrated the benefits of taking a P-16 perspective on educational reform by assembling data from across the county’s school districts and higher education institutions, and offering comparisons with both the state and national patterns. The report, by identifying systemic problems, helped focus attention and stimulate collective action. As one of the district superintendents said, “When the 17 district superintendents looked at our graduate rates compiled in the document…we were appalled and all of us agreed that 100% is our goal. Each of us set out to improve the graduation rate — we shared our strategies at county meetings and here at P-16 meetings. We have moved the needle.”

The reaction of the district superintendents illustrates the benefit of a comprehensive P-16 perspective. As another collaborative leader once put it, “All data is good data.” Even data that documents poor performance, if carefully compiled and placed in proper context, can bring people together and spur common action. Accurate data also provides benchmarks to track progress.

Cooperation and coordination matter more

Convergence efforts recognize that traditional standalone bureaucracies cannot cope with the challenges presented to our states and communities by the transformation of the economy. Instead, they develop collaborative approaches and constantly look for ways to build additional connections among groups, draw in new partners, and leverage available resources. Convergence efforts view the process of development as necessarily beginning with an audit of existing local and regional community activities and resources. Sustained, large-scale action starts by identifying the extent to which programs and initiatives already are addressing important problems, and building collaborative relationships and structures that link ever more groups and existing networks of organizations. All

**Stark County Cost Benefit Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Associate</th>
<th>Bachelors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree median earnings in 2004</td>
<td>$38,597</td>
<td>$50,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>$31,075</td>
<td>$31,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference between high school diploma and college degree median earnings</td>
<td>$7,522</td>
<td>$19,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One year difference</td>
<td>$4,513,200</td>
<td>$11,591,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x 600 additional students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total benefit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$16,104,600</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of the sites look for additional resources, but begin with the assumption that “we have what we need right here,” if institutional resources are coordinated and leveraged in pursuit of agreed-upon common goals. This is the fundamental strategy of the collaborative approach to community problem-solving.

What makes convergence a new stage of civic organizing is 1) the explicit effort to develop a shared vision of local and regional development which guides collaboration and coordination, and 2) the ability to connect groups and community efforts that typically act independently. What is most striking in all four sites is the ability to develop large-scale collaboratives that connect and coordinate K-12 and higher education reform efforts with networks of groups engaging in workforce development and regional economic development. Each site has developed a distinctive set of strategies and practices that permit substantial collaborative planning and action and that encourage a constant flow of information and communication across every sector of the community.

Large-scale collaboration must be intentionally developed. At each of the four sites a lead institution acts as a champion in forming and guiding convergence efforts. In each case the lead institution has been an intermediate organization with the ability to build connections across every sector of the community. In Stark County a coalition of local funders created the Stark Education Partnership, while in Highland County the Southern State Community College sponsored the Southern Ohio Center of Excellence. In Dayton a long-standing group of institutional partners, including the higher education institutions, the Dayton Development Coalition, the county Education Service Center, and the USAF Laboratories, developed EDventure, and in Cincinnati KnowledgeWorks Foundation, along with a core set of higher education, business, nonprofit, and community partners, launched Strive. In each case the intermediate organization was effective because it had the ability to cross all sectors of the community, convene partners, provide the context for sustained discussion, and emphasize the importance of data and the need for an outreach and advocacy effort to engage the community.

Each intermediary has promoted convergence by supporting a P-16 approach, which encourages a comprehensive, systemic approach to reform. Each has also pursued strategies and developed practices to more explicitly connect education reform with regional economic development.

EDventure was founded with the intent to build those connections. The collaborative works very closely with the Dayton Chamber of Commerce, the Dayton Development Coalition, and with its higher education, school district partners, social service agencies, and area companies to ensure alignment between education reform and the regional economic development plan. The development plan, based on an analysis of the economic base of the region, focuses on four sectors as the key to future growth: aerospace research and development, information technology, advanced materials and manufacturing, and human sciences and health care. The P-16 metaphor of the “education pipeline” provides strategic direction for efforts to strengthen education at every level to produce the research scientists, engineers, and technicians needed to grow the four priority economic sectors so that the region can complete the transition to a 21st-century knowledge-based economy.

Southern State Community College has well-established relationships with area employers and works closely with business groups and state agencies to promote regional economic development. The college, through its Center for Corporate and Community Service, tailors training programs to specific employer needs and has established an entrepreneurship center in Adams County. Southern State and the Southern Ohio Center of Excellence also helped launch the Highland County P-16 Council, which brings together the Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturing Council, and the superintendents from all the county school districts to pursue a systemic approach to strengthening education.
The Stark Education Partnership and Strive exhibit practices similar to the other two sites. Both explicitly link improving education to the overall vitality and quality of life of their regions. Like the other sites, both utilize their intermediate institution role to bring together broad groups of partners across all sectors of the community. By bringing together business development alliances, school districts, higher education institutions, civic and faith institutions, and networks of service providers, they promote a regular flow of information and communication. This helps all the partners gain a fuller understanding of the economic challenges of the region, as well as develop agreement around development priorities.

Convergence efforts also maximize the influence of local communities in shaping appropriate public policies. Convergence groups arrange briefings of local and state elected officials and policymakers, invite public officials to significant community events, and ensure that local voices are heard when legislation is being formulated.

Convergence efforts of these intermediate organizations continually strengthen the mutual understanding and shared agreement about regional priorities among the ever more connected “networks of networks” they help create. In all four sites one finds a pattern of cross-membership on organizational boards and committees as institutional leaders and active members serve on nonprofit organizations, United Way agencies, planning commissions, Training Resource Centers, Chambers of Commerce, and other community groups. Such cross-membership furthers convergence by bringing leaders into frequent contact and helping them learn about the priorities and concerns of a wide range of groups.

The collaboratives created by Southern State Community College and the Southern Ohio Center of Excellence illustrate this common convergence practice. One finds leaders and active members filling multiple roles in all the major regional organizations. The same core group serves on county Chambers of Commerce, the Manufacturing Council, the Economic Alliance, school district boards, and other civic organizations. The Highland County Chamber of Commerce maintains an office at the Southern State campus, and the president of the Chamber also serves on the Highland P-16 Council. As the president of Southern State, Sherry Stout, notes, “With so much cross-membership people hear the same stories and become exposed to the same information…because of this people start to envision what can be done.”

In addition to building shared understanding, cross-membership also promotes trust that further enhances the capacity for collective action. As Stout further commented, “Three and four years ago people were so protective of their territory. Now we all know that collaboration can open doors that we could never open alone.”

**Strategic thinking and learning are vital as well**

Convergence moves beyond standalone programs and short-term interventions by encouraging participants to take a long-term and holistic perspective of their community and region. Convergence efforts draw on their sophisticated approach to data to promote shared learning and broad-based, collaborative planning that maximizes opportunities to leverage resources, act strategically, and learn from and institutionalize successful efforts. For example, the Stark Education Partnership published a study of the elements of quality afterschool programs that was a catalyst to bring providers together. The study led the Stark Community Foundation to convene the Stark County Afterschool Council to bring school personnel, parents, and providers together to discuss best practices and ways of tracking the outcomes of their efforts. After preliminary conversations, subcommittees began working on common sets of standards for all providers and to identify common staff development issues. This has led to greater coordination of services and greater agreement on standards of quality and common approaches to professional development.
There are many examples of strategic thinking among the sites, but perhaps the most striking example of the benefits of a long-term perspective for the development of communities is that each of the four has identified early childhood care and education as a priority. Each of the sites points to research that finds that large numbers of Ohio children entering kindergarten each year are not prepared to succeed as learners. At the same time, each community currently has large numbers of dispersed and uncoordinated early childhood and daycare programs that struggle to meet the demands of providing the high quality education and care that is needed. In each site, a strategic review of regional data has identified this mismatch between critical need and capacity and has led to the formation of new coalitions and collaborative efforts. All four sites have strategic initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood care and education, develop common professional standards, improve the education and training of providers, and ensure that early childhood care and education increases the school readiness of all children.

EDvention is part of a new coalition, the Montgomery County Early Care and Education Initiative, to work with the full range of providers in the county. The aim is to bring together all the stakeholders in Montgomery County to develop a common vision and action plan to ensure that every child in the county will be school ready. To do so the coalition plans to work with providers and to provide the technical assistance and financial resources needed to implement the state’s Step Up to Quality process in the county. The initiative will also leverage the articulation agreements among Sinclair Community College, Edison Community College, Central State University, and the University of Dayton to enhance professional development and facilitate the continuing education of providers. At the same time, materials and workshops will be developed to help parents understand and support their child’s early learning.

Strive drew on research conducted by Success By 6 on behalf of the Cincinnati Public Schools, which found that more than half of CPS incoming kindergarten students lag in literacy readiness, but that kindergarteners who attended preschool are better prepared to succeed. Strive used that research and similar data to bring partners together to define school readiness as a priority area. Success by 6 is serving as the convening organization to create a network of service providers and work with them to develop common standards of care and identify best practices. Strive is using these school readiness efforts as the first test of its endorsement process that will guide the development of additional networks of providers.

The Highland County P-16 Council also reviewed county data on school readiness and developed an initiative to provide training to all preschools in Highland County on the state Early Learning Content Standards. The council is also working on aligning preschool curriculum to kindergarten requirements to improve school readiness and is developing workshops and materials to support parents.

Convergence efforts are able to leverage a wide range of community resources and bring new initiatives to scale in part because of their commitment to shared learning. Typically, even the most effective new program is terminated when the initial grant runs out, because evidence of its effectiveness is not collected or is not shared with institutional decision-makers. Convergence efforts counter this tendency by building shared learning into all of their activities. Convergence involves a number of strategies and practices designed to engage a wide range of partners in examining innovative efforts, jointly learning from successes and failures, and reviewing promising and best practices.
There are many examples of this across the four sites. Each sponsors frequent convenings that bring institutional partners together to discuss emerging issues or reflect on recent efforts. Each regularly reviews the national literature to identify best practices and ensure that they guide local programmatic efforts. Each of the sites sponsors or conducts research on issues affecting the region. Each of the intermediate organizations also maintains a website that facilitates communication and the sharing of information.

**Common Practices Promoting Convergence of Education Reform and Economic Development**

One indicator that convergence is becoming an identifiable strategy and model in local communities is that a large number of shared practices can be found across the four sites. The most important common practices promoting convergence are:

- A lead institution, typically an intermediate organization, acts as a champion in forming and guiding a collaborative approach
- Explicit links are developed between education reform efforts and local/regional economic development
- Efforts are collaborative, crossing sectors to involve partners from K-12 and higher education, business, government, nonprofits, faith, and community organizations.
- New collaborative organizational structures are built to advance common work.
- A collaborative approach to funding is developed, and groups use grant writing as opportunities to deepen and extend institutional collaboration.
- Cross-board memberships deepen collaboration and allow sharing of information on community challenges and opportunities.
- The collaboratives share detailed information on the status and prospects for industries, jobs, training and education needs.
- Efforts promote a regional perspective on problems and opportunities.
- Sites emphasize the importance of place; build local loyalty and commitment.
- Both a “top-down” and “bottom-up” approach are used. Groups develop strong links to local, state, and federal decision-makers and engage in policy issues, while at the same time activating local groups tailoring actions to local conditions.
- Efforts promote a long-term perspective on action. They move beyond individual programs to develop comprehensive and coordinated efforts.
- The sites identify, coordinate, and leverage local resources to maximize their impact. Efforts begin with the assumption that “many of the resources are already here.”
- They coordinate multiple funding streams within a coherent vision of future progress.
- Efforts promote systemic thinking among partners and help people see the interdependencies among partner institutions.
- Convergence efforts incubate innovative programs and initiatives, and work to bring them to scale.
- They promote strategic thinking and action.
- Shared learning among partner institutions and throughout the community is emphasized Groups strategically use reports, studies, and convenings to promote shared understanding of issues, challenges, opportunities, and solutions.
- Frequent communication across sectors and among all community stakeholders is encouraged.
- Data is used strategically as a stimulus to action, to benchmark progress, for goal setting, for evaluation and assessment, and to establish credibility.
Policy Implications of Convergence

The potential of the move toward convergence to help communities meet the challenges of a knowledge-based economy is significant, and can be fully realized only if public policy similarly evolves to support collaboration. Among the possible policy considerations are these:

1. The most important public policy implication of convergence is the need to recognize the regional diversity of Ohio and develop a state approach to education and economic development that matches the entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity exhibited at the community level by an emphasis on promoting shared learning, incentives for innovation, and the priority of local efforts. This approach can be pursued by closely connecting local collaborative activities with the Partnership for Continued Learning. It is important to maximize opportunities for groups to learn from one another by promoting convenings where collaborative members from throughout the state can come together, and providing opportunities for local collaborative and convergence leaders to meet with state officials to share their ideas, so as to translate innovations and new approaches into policy initiatives. The experience of promoting effective collaboration and coordination at each of the four sites can offer valuable lessons for the restructuring and improved alignment of agencies and offices at the state level.

2. Public policy should encourage joint agency and department grant-making to support local and regional collaborative initiatives. Joint grant-making will encourage collaboration among state agencies and departments and will support the increasingly comprehensive, cross-sector collaborative activities at the local level.

3. A recent report (2007) finds that the Post Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) policy has limited participation by low-income and minority students. This, in part, is explained by the fact that PSEO relies on the “navigation skills” and “education literacy” of parents and students. Local collaboratives and P-16 councils should be supported in their efforts to promote student participation in PSEO since they are well positioned to develop outreach, information, and educational campaigns targeted to low-income and minority families.

4. The greatest limitation of current convergence efforts is the lack of sufficient programs for low-skill workers. There has been only a limited focus on creating career ladders that encourage low-skill workers to move from noncredit and certificate training programs into degree-bearing programs. Multiple and efficient pathways should be created for adult workers to develop the competencies needed to move them from ABLE, ESL, GED, noncredit, and credential programs into college-level studies and skilled careers.
References


Step 1: Data Analysis and Needs Assessment: Strive will work with the Center for Urban Education at the University of Cincinnati to collect relevant demographic, student performance, and community related indicators. Analysis of these data will reveal areas of strength as well as challenges. These areas will be referred to as potential Strategic Impact Areas. In addition, Strive will inventory current efforts to understand the scope of resources available.

Step 2: Student Success Networks Identify Strategic Impact Areas Based on Data: Student Success Networks of relevant providers, constituents, and funders in each goal area will convene and review the data, inventory, and initial needs analysis to identify Strategic Impact Areas. The Student Success Networks will establish outcomes and Operating Standards for implementation of initiatives across the Strategic Impact Areas.

Step 3: Support or Create Provider Collaboratives to Implement Best Practices: The Student Success Networks will endorse Professional Collaboratives to guide the implementation of efforts under each Strategic Impact Areas. These collaboratives identify benchmarks, common data indicators, and best practices.

Step 4: Align, Coordinate and Leverage Existing Resources: Providers working in each Strategic Impact Area, supported by the Collaboratives, will identify areas where they can work together to create efficiencies and leverage resources to provide more effective services within existing resources.

Step 5: Conduct Gap Analysis: Gap analysis will be conducted by the Professional Collaboratives and the Student Success Networks with support from the Strive support staff. Gaps may be addressed through reallocation of existing resources, policy changes, and/or additional support and funding.

Appendix A

Strive “Framework for Student Success”
Appendix B

Additional P-16 Councils in Ohio


Launching Comprehensive Education Reform profiles five P-16 Councils in Ohio through each site’s start-up and launching phase. Each case aims to help tell the story of what it takes to move a local/regional P-16 council from the drawing board into the world of local practice. These councils and others in Ohio hold potential for expanding convergence approaches throughout the state.

P-16 in Ohio

Realizing the potential of P-16 reform to increase student performance, reduce achievement gaps, decrease levels of postsecondary remediation, and prepare learners to enter the new century workforce, KnowledgeWorks Foundation invested in the development of P-16 efforts across Ohio. In Spring 2006, KWF invited proposals from local communities/regions to support start-up funding, technical assistance, and coaching for the development of P-16 councils. Five sites were selected and completed planning phases, formed or expanded P-16 councils, solidified priorities through extensive needs and resources assessments, and developed strategic plans and infrastructures to support implementation.

- **Clark County’s ASPIRE P-16 Collaborative**
  Two major goals drive ASPIRE’s P-16 work in Clark County:
  - 100% graduation from high school with 75% of graduates attaining a certificate, credential, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, and/or military rank
  - 100% of students entering kindergarten have skills to be successful.

- **Highland County’s P-16 Council**
  The mission of the Highland County P-16 Council is to provide assistance in creating the alignment from preschool to work and to help assure greater success and quality of life for the youth of Highland County.

  Two priority areas guide the Highland County P-16 Council’s work. One area focuses on ensuring children are ready for school through early childhood education strategies. The other focuses on readiness for college and work through supporting eighth graders in creating life and career plans.

- **The Ashtabula Partnership for Continued Learning P-16**
  The Ashtabula Partnership for Continued Learning P-16 Council’s primary goals include:
  - Improving student achievement at all levels and eliminating the achievement gap
  - Linking all education levels, from preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and higher education, to create a comprehensive, seamless system of student learning
  - Ensuring that all students have access to caring and qualified teachers
  - Increasing community awareness of the link between an educated citizenry and a healthy economy.

- **Greater Cincinnati’s Strive P-16 Council**
  The Strive P-16 Council has identified five key goals that pinpoint one strategic impact area:
  - Every child will be prepared for school from birth through early childhood education
  - Every child will be supported inside and outside the school walls
  - Every child will succeed academically
  - Every student will enroll in some form of postsecondary education
  - Every student will graduate and enter a career
Implementation of these goals relies on a data management system that allows for the ongoing, systematic collection of needs and resources information to support regional planning and implementation efforts across the P-16 pipeline.

• **The P-16 Alliance of Summit County**
  The P-16 Alliance of Summit County’s priority goal: *
  By 2017, the percentage of Summit County high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education will increase to 80%.* Two strategies were formulated to work toward the priority goal:
  – Strategy 1: From birth, every child in our community has repeated experiences that raise educational aspirations.
  – Strategy 2: Every student has access to postsecondary education programs.

**Findings**

Leaders and other stakeholders in the five local/regional councils have made great strides in identifying and implementing the competencies and organizational capacities needed to create P-16 councils. Key findings about what it takes to successfully launch local/regional councils and advance P-16 agendas include:

• **P-16 councils were created (or enhanced) to serve as the convening and planning structure for top-level local leaders in the community.** Together these stakeholders participated in strategic planning efforts that solidified local efforts for future collaboration related to P-16 reform.

• **P-16 councils developed and expanded more efficiently when certain conditions were in place prior to their launching.** These include factors such as histories of organizational partnerships and successful collaboration, shared commitments to education reform, key leadership qualities, and the overall value of P-16 in relationship to current priorities. These readiness indicators were instrumental in explaining why and how P-16 councils developed at different rates.

• **Initial planning efforts were fostered through several key practices and processes.** Key aspects were the use of intermediary organizations and leaders, data-based planning and decision-making processes, the recruitment of other local leaders based on identified priorities, strategic local investments and commitments, the establishment of consensus and vision, and strategic communications and marketing processes.

• **A local council’s ability to move to the next level hinged on several key factors.** The factors that helped councils progress (i.e., from an initial launching phase to an advanced operational phase) included organizational capacities, collaborative leadership structures, well-articulated implementation frameworks, “branding” (giving an identity to the council), and the internalization of P-16 priorities among members and their organizations. These levers signify differences in adoption and potential for sustainability within the P-16 work.

• **Local collaborative leadership matters in these P-16 councils, and many of the differences among the sites, can be traced to leadership differences.** A practical leadership checklist was developed from the data. This checklist instructs other leaders and policy makers on what to prioritize and do as P-16 efforts are undertaken and is available in the full report.

• **Supportive local, county, regional, state, and federal policy is needed for P-16.** Several policy priorities were identified by the grassroots leaders involved in this analysis. These priorities include the creation of a statewide P-16 vision, the need for technical assistance and consultation, data needs and priorities, and funding.