



# NJ PATHWAYS

Aligning Education to Build an Innovative Workforce



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

### Data Strategy: *Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative*

#### I. Overview

The New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development, an entity of the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, is releasing this Request for Proposal to identify a firm or organization to provide strategy, guidance, and planning in the use of data and information to support the *Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative*. The firm or organization should have expertise and experience in the use of data and information to drive decision-making, an understanding of data and information sources in higher education, and experience in using economic and labor market data to inform planning and strategy. This initial engagement, which will be completed during a four-month period starting on September 1, 2022, will result in concrete and actionable strategic steps that can be taken to ensure that this Initiative will be informed by and driven by usable, reliable data and information.

#### II. Background

New Jersey's Community Colleges and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association are joining together with employers, industry associations, labor unions, education institutions, and workforce development partners to provide students and residents with the career pathways they need to find new careers and opportunity, and to ensure that employers have access to a highly skilled workforce to meet critical labor market needs.

This initiative is firmly connected to the education and economic priorities of the Governor and the New Jersey Legislature. New Jersey's Community Colleges, uniquely rooted in their local communities and with the statewide reach of few other institutions, and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, the state's largest employer organization, are uniquely positioned to lead an inclusive statewide effort.

The three main goals of this collaborative effort are

1. To build strong industry-driven education and training pathways that will be the foundation of New Jersey's economy for years to come.
2. To build a skilled workforce that can adapt to the changing economy.
3. To provide adults the opportunity to obtain new skills and careers.

This dynamic and inclusive initiative will expand stackable credential pathways for individuals at all stages of their lives and careers and build and sustain an innovative workforce.

COLLABORATIVES are statewide inclusive groups of Industry Leaders and educational partners across the state focused on four key industries, that will build statewide and inclusive talent ecosystems based on collaboration and information to expand economic mobility opportunity and drive economic growth.

CENTERS OF WORKFORCE INNOVATION are focused on ten essential career areas and will build pathways with aligned curriculum shared across educational partners to serve the learning lifespan of students and workers to build an innovative workforce.

### III. Project Description

The mission of the *New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities* initiative is to ‘build a talent ecosystem based on collaboration and information to expand economic mobility and opportunity and to drive economic growth.’ In addition to New Jersey’s eighteen Community Colleges and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, this initiative includes employers, labor unions, workforce development boards, state government, community-based organizations, adult literacy training providers, vocational technical school districts, private career schools, and four-year colleges and universities. This effort will ultimately result in greater student and worker access to career pathways to better prepare them for the workforce and align their training with the needs of the state’s economy. More information on the Pathways Initiative can be found at [www.njpathways.org](http://www.njpathways.org).

The long-term success of this initiative is dependent on the ability of community colleges and their partners to access data and information from a wide variety of sources to inform the development and expansion of career pathways. The Consortium recognizes that this effort can only be successful with access to data and information concerning

1. Current Educational Capacity – Current capacity of educational institutions and training providers in New Jersey.
2. Demographics (Current and Future Students) – Description of current students being served by career pathway programs AND the demographic characteristics of residents of New Jersey in need of career pathway programs in the future.
3. Labor Market Demand – Current hiring needs of employers by occupation, credential and degree requirements, skills and competencies by industry and region.
4. Student Progress – Understanding of the movement of students along career pathways AND the education and labor market experiences of students participating in career pay programs.

The goal of this engagement in support of the *New Jersey’s Pathways to Career Opportunities* initiative is to create a *Value Vision* and a high-level roadmap for the use of data and information to drive initiative decisions. This engagement will:

1. Create a unified understanding of the vision, capabilities, and priorities of all project stakeholders concerning the use of data and information.
2. Follow a structured, inclusive process to identify priority needs for data and information that can summarize the goals of the Pathways initiative in quantifiable terms.
3. Review existing sources of data and information that can be leveraged and used to address priority needs.
4. Develop a strategic approach to quantify ROI (in terms of real dollars or other success criteria) for pathways programs.

5. Develop actionable recommendations and suggested timelines for implementation of a data and information strategy.

Further, this engagement should confirm data readiness, confirm direction is in line with goals, and confirm executive buy-in.

The engagement should result in an Initiative Data Roadmap that

- a. Is based on data and organization readiness
- b. Guides activities to achieve desired goals
- c. Groups activities into short term initiatives to achieve early successes
- d. Establishes desired capabilities and who they benefit
- e. Prioritizes initiatives
- f. Aligns all stakeholders to set realistic expectations
- g. Proves value quickly through iterative short-term activities, and
- h. Provides guidance and support to ensure this effort avoids common risks.

The suggested methodology and approach developed through this engagement should

1. Demonstrate the business value of data and information solutions
2. Focus on people and their experience with using data and information as a critical component of project success.
3. Ensure that all partners and stakeholders have a shared vision of success.
4. Deliver value early and often to foster joint ownership.

#### **IV. Deliverables**

The final deliverables from this engagement will consist of a formal presentation and document outlining the *Value Vision* and capabilities captured, a list of initiatives that these capabilities have been grouped into, a high-level roadmap of how the initiatives should be incorporated to bring value and recommendations on staff and data readiness, and a clear understanding of next steps.

#### **V. Proposal Requirements**

Proposals should be no more than ten pages in length, excluding appendices and attachments, and should be submitted by Wednesday, August 17<sup>th</sup> at 5pm. Proposals should be submitted to Megan Swieconeck, Business Manager, at [mswieconeck@njccc.org](mailto:mswieconeck@njccc.org). Decisions will be made on the proposals by Monday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Expertise – Understanding of the initiative priorities and data and information needs and sources
- Approach – methodology to complete the deliverables that is inclusive, strategic and efficient
- Experience – Extensive experience in assisting complex organizations with their data and information needs
- Budget – Ability to complete the deliverables in an efficient and high-quality manner