Creating a Career Pathways System in New Mexico

A Talent Pipeline Strategy

December 2020

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About JFF

JFF is a national nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems. For 36 years, JFF has led the way in designing innovative and scalable solutions that create access to economic advancement for all. Join us as we build a future that works. www.jff.org

Methodology

This report and its associated recommendations were developed after conducting qualitative and quantitative landscape analysis about the national and New Mexican context to inform the development of a strategic roadmap for creating a career pathways system in New Mexico. The key components of this analysis included: desk-based research and analysis; real-time and traditional labor market information (LMI) analysis; stakeholder interviews; review of national and within-state best practices; and a review of extant and forthcoming state and federal policy and funding opportunities.

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Introduction

Over the past ten years, the need to better integrate education and workforce development in order to prepare the workforce of the future has emerged as a key priority for state governments, regional entities, and nonprofit organizations. A key strategy for doing so is the creation of career pathways systems. The goal of such systems is to align resources at the state, regional, and local levels so that learners and workers—including lower-skilled adults, young adults, immigrants, workers needing to be retrained, and others—can choose a career area and follow a sequence of education and training opportunities that lead to a credential of value in their regional labor market. Pathways align resources, crossing institutions and education sectors, so that students experience their education or training program as seamless, moving from one level to the next without losing credits or momentum, and with the supports needed to succeed.

Like many states, New Mexico has programs and components of a pathways system in place and would now like to create more coherence across them and strengthen the state's career pathways system, bringing to life New Mexico's state and federal plans for education and workforce with a focus on high-quality, equitable implementation. Funded by a grant from the Adult Education Division of the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED), by design this project carefully examined the role of adult and corrections education in the state's career pathways landscape. However, NMHED sees a larger, systemic approach and envisions this project serving as a springboard for an even more comprehensive and longitudinal effort with key state agencies and other critical stakeholders to intentionally build career pathways systems that will serve multiple populations. Indeed, across the country, career pathways systems serve high school students in addition to a wide range of adults, from those enrolled in adult education programs to community college students enrolled in a variety of certificate and degree programs to working adults participating in apprenticeship and other work-based learning opportunities not associated with an institution of higher education.

To prepare this report, JFF conducted: 1) substantial desk-based research on the New Mexican and national contexts; 2) labor market information analyses; and 3) qualitative research through personal interviews with nearly fifty stakeholders from across the state. The JFF team also depended on regular check-ins and information-gathering with Michelle Ribeiro, Outreach Coordinator for the New Mexico Higher Education Department's Adult Education Division. Ms. Ribeiro was a critical point of contact, reaching out to stakeholders in higher education, business and industry, non-profits, and government to help map the state's workforce landscape.

The goals of this report are: 1) to make more visible the current status of New Mexico's policies and programming for educational career pathways connected to

workforce and economic development; 2) to examine the use of local, state, and federal resources and ensure they are well-deployed in service of pathways; and 3) to inform the design of a strategic roadmap for next steps in building comprehensive, high-quality systems of career pathways that can serve all New Mexicans. This report, together with the strategic roadmap it informed, provides insight into New Mexico's education, workforce, and economic development systems and shares a set of actionable recommendations that will result in a more inclusive, innovative talent pipeline and workforce development system in the state.

Foundational to this report is the assumption that New Mexico must focus on developing its middle-skill workforce. As New Mexico's federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) plan notes, the largest skills gaps existing in New Mexico are those required for middle-skill jobs.[1] Middle-skill jobs—historically the on-ramp to the middle class—require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year postsecondary degree. Prior to the economic recession brought on by COVID-19, middle-skill jobs accounted for 53% of the U.S. labor market, with only 43% of the nation's workers trained at the middle-skill level—a challenging skills gap across industries such as healthcare, sales and service, communications, artificial intelligence, information technology, and the trades. As economists struggle to forecast how long economic recovery will take, and what the (eventual) post-pandemic U.S. labor market will look like, critical questions remain: **Why has trained talent been so hard to come by? Why have current systems and conventions been failing both businesses and workers?**

All states, and particularly those, like New Mexico, that were struggling with large populations of lower-skilled adults and non-college-going youth, now need to answer these questions in the even more difficult and uncertain context of the COVID-19 pandemic. And New Mexico has a particularly challenging road ahead, since many jobs in the state's now rapidly shrinking oil industry paid living wages and did not require any higher education. In the recovery, as JFF's labor market analysis shows, many more jobs will require a more highly educated workforce.

It should be noted that this report and the development of a strategic roadmap were planned before the COVID-19 crisis, its corresponding economic crisis, and the nation's heightened focus on racial disparities and inequities sparked by the death of George Floyd. While the goals for the state in commissioning this work have not changed, like all states, New Mexico has been and continues to be tested in every way as our nation's crises have compounded. As multiple current studies show, **it is low-income workers, those with weak skills, and those who were already working in contingent employment who have been the hardest hit—both in health and in economic well-being—during the pandemic. Thus, the goal of strengthening New Mexico's career pathways systems focuses first on this**

population. Their well-being is critical to economic recovery. The situation in New Mexico calls for urgency and bold action beyond what is required in states that had more vibrant and inclusive economies before the pandemic. All New Mexico learners and workers—especially low-income and underserved youth and adults—were already being left far behind by the technology revolution, and neither they nor the state itself can succeed without stepping out in front of the technology-dominant future to create the workforce that will attract and grow New Mexico's economy, both in its short-term recovery and its long-term future trajectory.

The COVID-19 crisis presents an opportunity for New Mexico to double down on efforts to fundamentally change its existing systems and re-imagine how people—youth, young adults, and adults—experience and move through education and workforce programs to ensure they access the knowledge, skills, credentials, and capital critical to launch, re-enter, or advance in careers and realize their best possible futures. Now is the time for New Mexico to put in place a model for career pathways systems that can serve a variety of learners; importantly, the needs of those in rural and Native American communities must be considered. Specifically, this report outlines what bold actions New Mexico should take *now* to recover and rebuild its education and workforce systems and economy in a way that ensures that levels of educational and workforce attainment are not predictable by demography or historical performance in those systems.

Report Overview

This report begins by exploring career pathways, their features, and the work necessary to build them. For this, JFF drew on its 36-year history of leading national projects focused on career pathways strategies to inform the design of this project and shape recommendations. JFF has deep expertise in education systems (both K-12 and higher education, with an emphasis on community colleges), as well as extensive experience working with nonprofit education and training organizations, adult education programs, and formal workforce entities like workforce development boards and one-stop career centers to design and scale career pathways. Many of these pathways approaches over the decades have had as their goal improving the outcomes of lower-skilled adults.

The report continues with an analysis of New Mexico's labor market, followed by analyses of the assets, gaps, and opportunities in the state—with a particular focus on adult and corrections education programs and approaches—in regard to building a career pathways system and talent pipeline. New Mexico's challenges are similar to those in other states, but more dramatic due to the combination of complex conditions in the state: low educational achievement and high poverty rates among a large segment of the adult population; a K-12 education system that is in the fourth-lowest quintile in per pupil spending in the country and has been found unconstitutional;[2] and a rural, dispersed population, including the fourth-largest Native American population in the country. In addition, New Mexico has long experienced "brain drain" of the well-educated because there are too few jobs requiring a bachelor's degree and above and there exists a gap between the skills people have and the current and future needs of the economy. New Mexico has a large population of relatively low-skilled adults in need of basic literacy instruction (literacy, numeracy, digital literacy), English-language instruction, and additional training and upskilling. If New Mexico is willing to invest in serving more of these adults—and serving them better—then it will make a difference for a population that has greatest need and the most to gain, and unfortunately, has often received little attention.

Building Career Pathways

JFF has played a key role in shaping thinking and action around building career pathways at the regional, state, and national levels. An example of this is JFF's work with the U.S. Department of Labor on its Career Pathways Technical Assistance Initiative. Starting in 2010, JFF participated in a series of forums held nationwide that "looked at the development and implementation of career pathways for lower-skilled adults, successful strategies for meeting the needs of workers in transition, and successful strategies for increasing the attainment of industry-recognized postsecondary credentials."[3] What was learned in those forums and from the work they inspired

in nine states and two Native American communities was captured in JFF's *The Promise of Career Pathways Systems Change*, written by JFF on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor.[4] The 2012 piece identifies characteristics and defines key elements of career pathways and provides guidance for developing and implementing career pathways systems at scale.

Figure 1 below represents an Integrated Career Pathways Model that JFF designed for the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) and illustrates how career pathways can serve both adults and youth, while also promoting collaboration, alignment, and cross-system development of structured pathways toward recognized postsecondary credentials that build the economy. All pathways approaches share the same high-level characteristics, including: multiple entry and exit points; integrated academic and technical knowledge and skills, including professional skills; curriculum and supporting activities aligned across levels of education, including work-based learning opportunities; coaching and support to advance learning rather than repetition and remediation; and braided funding to mitigate fragmentation of efforts caused by disparate deliverables. These pathways incorporate rigorous academic and industry standards and culminate in industry-sought postsecondary credentials (e.g., certificates, certifications, and associate's and bachelor's degrees).

Figure 1. Integrated Career Pathways Model
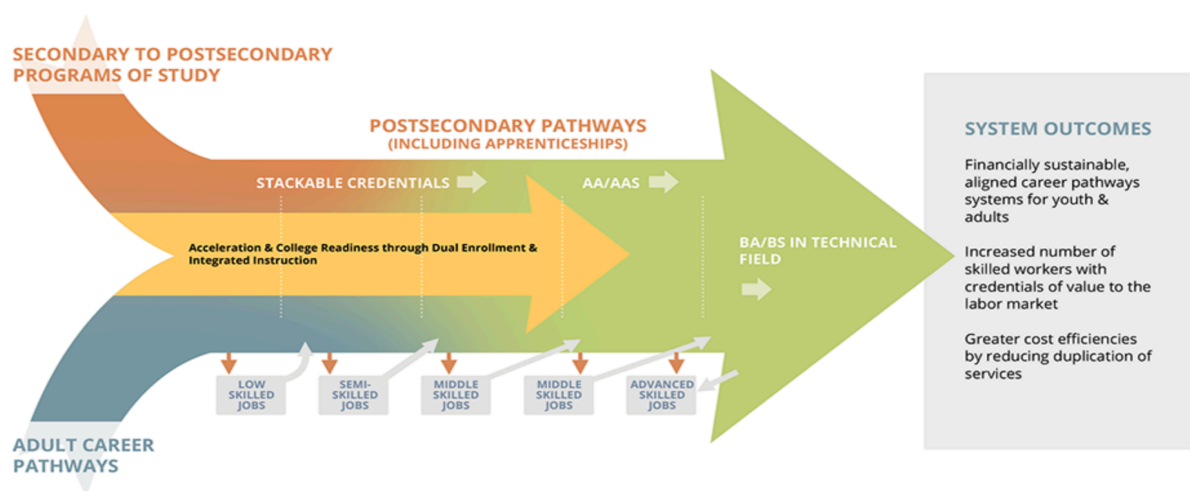
State and Regional Examples of Career Pathways Work

JFF works in 46 states and multiple regions within each. This work supports career pathways in a variety of ways, from convening stakeholders exploring pathways development to conducting landscape analyses ahead of pathways creation to providing technical assistance to help support and sustain pathways once they have been implemented. The following are both examples of state and regional career pathways work in which JFF has played (and continues to play) a

critical role, and the key features of those pathways that make each effective in connecting people to education and training opportunities that lead to meaningful employment.

The Texas Tri-Agency

In early 2016, Governor Greg Abbott established the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative, which brought together the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) in an effort to "assess local economic activity, examine workforce challenges and opportunities, and consider innovative approaches to meeting the state's workforce goals."[5] The governor's charge is aligned to *60x30TX*, a plan for seeing 60% of Texans earn a certificate or degree by 2030. The Tri-Agency work requires the three member entities to play to their strengths at the state level while collaborating with those engaged in secondary and postsecondary education and workforce development at the regional and local levels. Key to the Tri-Agency's work has been:

- Initial and ongoing support from Governor Abbot;
- Policies and legislation that support the Tri-Agency's efforts;
- Cross-sector partnerships at the state, regional, and local levels; and
- Career pathways that are reverse mapped from industry need to aligned secondary and postsecondary education that develop the knowledge and skills, and confer portable, stackable credentials, with value in the labor market.

Over the last four years, JFF has provided support for the Tri-Agency's efforts by convening stakeholders, providing strategic guidance, and delivering technical assistance.

Delaware Pathways

The *Delaware Promise* reflects a commitment by Delaware Governor John Carney to seeing that 65% of the state's workforce will earn a professional certificate or 2- or 4-year degree by 2025. The *Promise* is a response to the fact that, in a growing economy, employers often have difficulty finding local, qualified applicants. The goals of the *Promise* are consistent with the Delaware Pathways initiative. Launched in 2014 with support from JFF, Delaware Pathways connects education and workforce development and is organized around five core priorities:

1. Build a comprehensive system of career preparation that aligns with the state and regional economies;
2. Scale and sustain meaningful work-based learning experiences for students in grades 7-14;
3. Integrate education and workforce development efforts and data systems;

4. Coordinate financial support for Delaware Pathways; and

5. Engage employers, educators, and community organizations to support Delaware Pathways.[6]

Delaware Pathways has been sustained by and is effective because of ongoing support from Governor Carney and consistent attention to the tenets of the five priorities, lessons which can be applied to creating and supporting career pathways regardless of industry, location, or age and initial knowledge and skills of the learner.

Accelerating Opportunity

Accelerating Opportunity (AO) was designed and led by JFF "to transform how states work with their adult education programs and community colleges to provide training for underprepared adult learners."[7] AO was implemented in community colleges in Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, and Louisiana from 2012 to 2014 and provided underrepresented adult students access to college that they might not have had otherwise. A final impact report of AO found that:

The AO model is a promising approach to help students with low basic skills succeed in college: Over 4,300 AO students earned more than 79,000 college credits and nearly 6,800 college credentials. AO increased the likelihood of students earning a college credential over the matched comparison groups by between 11 and 20 percentage points. This represented an increase of 19 percent in Kansas, 35 percent in Illinois, 133 percent in Kentucky, and 622 percent in Louisiana. In most cases, AO students earned more credentials while taking fewer credits, possibly indicating more efficient course-taking and accelerated learning.

Mid- and long-term employment outcomes improved for some adults with low basic skills, but results are mixed: AO students' employment rates increased in Kansas, Kentucky, and Illinois.

- In Kansas, students recruited from career and technical education programs experienced large, positive, and persistent impacts on employment and earnings. The employment gains reached 33 percent over the similar students in the comparison group at two years after enrollment. AO participants saw increased quarterly earnings of $1,188 over the comparison group.

- In Kentucky, students recruited from adult education earned more than comparison group students, reaching a gain of 43 percent over the average comparison group earnings, an increase averaging $855 per quarter.
- Other students saw mixed impacts on earnings during the study period.[8]

What the AO initiative provides is a model for enrolling lower-skilled adults in pathways that offer, efficiently and effectively, the education and training that lead to meaningful employment.

The Pathways to Prosperity Network

The Pathways to Prosperity Network was launched in 2012 as a collaborative effort between JFF, the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and multiple states and regions across the country. As the name implies, the goal of the Network is to create and support college and career pathways that "expand economic opportunity for all young people and meet regional talent needs."[9] While the focus of the Network is on students in grades 9 through 14 in effective college and career pathways, the characteristics of those pathways are the ones common to all mentioned above.

What makes membership in the Pathways to Prosperity Network so valuable is not just access to the resources JFF has created, collected, and curated in its career pathways work with multitudes of states and regions since its inception but also the access that Network members have to each other. Formally, JFF convenes all members twice annually at Spring and Fall Institutes. Over the course of two days, participants listen to national experts as they share insights into current trends, challenges, and effective practices in education, training, and workforce development. In small groups, members attend breakout sessions that go deeply into what works—and what does not—for creating and supporting effective pathways. The most popular feature of Institutes might be Team Time, structured time that JFF facilitates for each Network member's team to discuss and plan the particulars of work needed to be done in its region or state, work that often incorporates lessons learned over two days of focus on effective career pathways systems.

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JFF's involvement in the projects highlighted above enabled it to both make observations that put New Mexico's adult education programs in a national context and craft recommendations with national best practices in mind. In the following sections, the New Mexico data that informed those observations and recommendations are presented in detail. These data should be referred to and reflected upon as New Mexico improves its adult and corrections education

systems and creates pathways that lead to new opportunities for people, provide employers with a talent pipeline of skilled workers, strengthen state and regional economies, and focus on the needs of communities.

Labor Market Analysis

Data on New Mexico's demographics, educational attainment, and labor market provide a clearer picture of the state's economy and workforce. JFF used this information to identify needs, surface challenges, and make recommendations for improvement informed by national experience and expertise. This analysis also establishes a baseline against which growth and improvement can be measured as the recommendations found in the strategic roadmap are implemented.

A key consideration for New Mexico is local labor market need. The economic identities of the various workforce development and metropolitan statistical areas differ from one another. Taking an exclusively statewide approach in career pathways and talent pipeline development could result in a mismatch between workforce talent and industry need at the regional level. Accordingly, local collaboration between government, industry, community, and educational partners will inform and shape the educational and training programs that develop the knowledge and skills for the jobs that pay in the places where New Mexican jobseekers live. The COVID-19 pandemic and related economic disruptions will likely have long-term effects on the labor market in New Mexico and nationally, reshaping workplaces and industries and changing the landscape of in-demand skills and credentials. Because labor market information is a lagging indicator, it is impossible for it to match the speed at which the economy is currently changing; nonetheless, it still offers valuable information to guide the development of career pathways.

Nationwide, an immediate consequence of the pandemic has been unprecedented levels of unemployment, both in terms of rate and rapidity. In April 2020, when this analysis was initiated, New Mexico's unemployment rate was 11.9%, or 109,000 of 917,000 people in the labor force.[10] Because of the pandemic, the state's economic future is uncertain, with industries shrinking and transforming, businesses closing, and unemployment figures changing in real-time. Each of these issues requires immediate attention, but *now* is also the time to think strategically about mid- and long-term approaches to New Mexico's economic recovery, approaches which hinge upon creating and supporting a talent pipeline that is responsive to today's needs and tomorrow's possibilities.
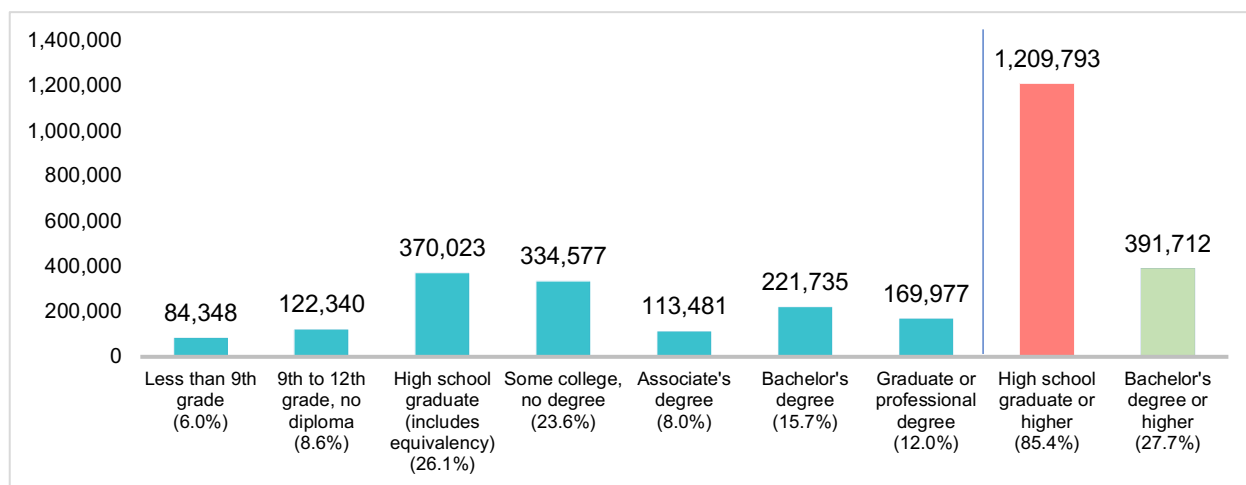
Educational Attainment and the Economy

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic health of New Mexico was already poor. In 2018, the state's poverty rate of 18.8% was the second highest among all states in the nation.[11] This statewide percentage, however, obscures the fact that poverty rates vary considerably by county, with a low of 3.9% in Los Alamos County, which encompasses 109 square miles, with predominantly White residents, and is home to Los Alamos National Laboratory; and a high of 32.3% in McKinley County, which encompasses 5,455 square miles, with predominantly Native American residents, and is largely rural. The state's median family income of $58,760 is slightly lower than the median family income nationwide ($60,293), while the per capita income of $26,529 is over $6,000 less than the national figure of $32,621.[12]

The connection between educational attainment, high poverty, and unemployment is clear. In New Mexico, a third of the population with less than a high school diploma or equivalent live in poverty, while only 7% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher do so. Of the nearly 12 million jobs created in the United States since the Great Recession of 2008, 11.5 million have gone to workers with postsecondary credentials. The number of jobs for graduate degree holders increased by 3.8 million, for bachelor's degree holders by 4.6 million, and for associate's degree holders by 3.1 million.[13]

Prior projections showed that, by this year (2020), 63% of jobs in New Mexico would require some education beyond high school.[14] New Mexico's "Route-to-66" initiative, launched in 2015 by the state Higher Education Department, set a goal "to have 66 percent of [individuals] ages 25 to 64 with a higher education credential by 2030."[15] However, according to 2018 American Community Survey data, 8% of New Mexicans 25 years old or older held an associate's degree and 28% held a bachelor's degree or higher. That same year, 15% lacked a high school diploma or its equivalent. Chart A (below) provides educational attainment figures for 2018.

Chart A. Educational Attainment of New Mexico's Population Age 25 Years and Over (2018)

Source: 2018 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimate

Chart B (below) shows the relationship between educational attainment and poverty status in New Mexico. As noted above, greater educational attainment is associated with less poverty. However, it is not difficult to imagine that, currently, highly qualified, highly educated individuals are also experiencing unemployment; no industry is being spared the economic impacts of the pandemic. **Now more than ever, then, there is a need for those who are not as qualified and educated to be upskilled and/or reskilled to remain competitive in the labor market**. A concerted focus on career pathways in adult education can provide entry to and deliver on this upskilling and reskilling, immediately and going forward.

Chart B. Poverty Status in New Mexico by Educational Attainment, Population 25 Years of Age and Over (2018)
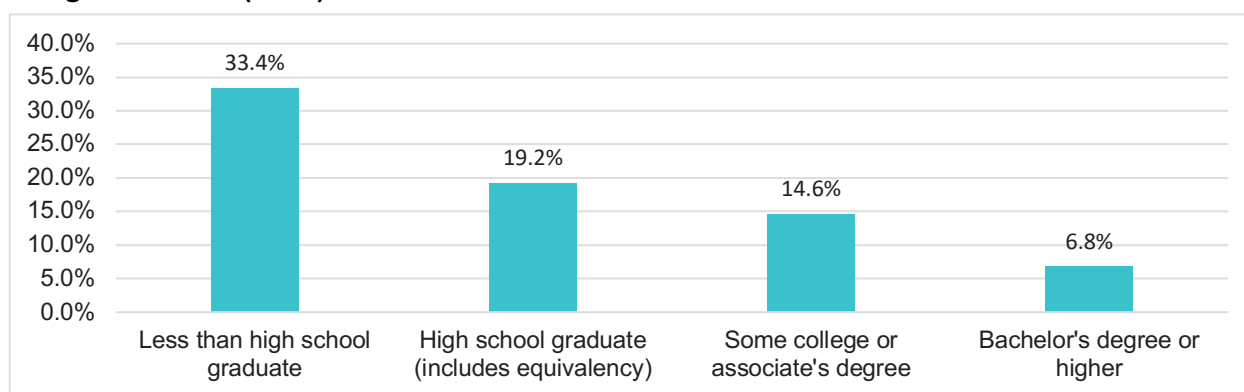
Source: 2018 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimate

Labor Market Information

Identifying pathways that can prepare people for careers in middle-skills jobs that pay living wages requires careful consideration of available labor market information. Career pathways should prepare people for industries with career ladders that provide workers with opportunities to advance within their chosen fields or transfer to other fields as they gain additional credentials, education, and experience. Beyond living wages, other considerations in identifying promising industries include strong projections for growth and/or large numbers of anticipated retirements in the next ten to twenty years, and low susceptibility to automation, outsourcing, offshoring, or other future of work considerations.

For this project, the target industries were already determined, aligning to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's priority sectors.[16] Initially, these priority sectors were the following: healthcare; aerospace/STEM; advanced manufacturing; agriculture; green industries; film and digital media; tourism; IT; education; and international trade. To increase reliability at a time when both traditional and real-time labor market are made suspect by the disruptions caused by the

pandemic, the data are recent (April 2020) and regional analyses are based on five-year projections instead of 10-year.

Methodology

State and Regional Labor Market Information. JFF analyzed labor market information at both the state and regional levels, with the regions being the four workforce development areas (Eastern Area, Northern Area, Southwestern Area, and Central New Mexico). The state-level analysis identifies those sectors that currently make up New Mexico's economy, provides a glimpse into middle-skills occupations, and provides an overview of 10-year change in each of the priority sectors. Given the differences in regions and influence of the regional workforce development boards, analyses of the workforce development areas provide a more focused view of the economic identities of and priority-sector potential in each of those areas. Together, state and regional perspectives should assist in prioritizing the efforts necessary to realize an inclusive talent pipeline and workforce development system.

Living Wage. JFF advocates for building pathways that lead to careers that are high-skill, in-demand, and pay at least a "living wage," which is a wage capable of sustaining one adult and one child. According to MIT's Living Wage Calculator, a living wage in New Mexico is $50,481.60 annually or $24.27 per hour.[17] JFF used these figures in its labor market information analyses, identifying industries and occupations that paid more or less on an annual or hourly basis. This is of note since, in its Perkins V state plan, the New Mexico Public Education Department "defines high wage careers for CTE programs of study as careers leading to a wage that can sustain a family" and that meet or exceed "185% of the federal poverty guideline for a family of three. For 2018-19, wages as defined by this standard are $38,443 annually."[18] While the difference in the terms "living wage" and "high wage" could be taken as semantic differences, in this case, there is a very real difference in amounts of money (the state's figure is $12,000 less per year) and the number of people this wage is expected to sustain. **Accordingly, JFF would not recommend building career pathways that pay less than a living wage.** It should be noted that opportunities for pathways development exist even within industries where the average wage is below a living wage, but pathways in these industries must be designed carefully to focus on occupations that offer wages above the industry average and to ensure that workers are able to climb career ladders within those industries, or into other industries.

State-Level Labor Market Information

Table A (below) sorts New Mexico's industries by number of jobs in 2019. Across the state, government jobs are the most prevalent. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, educational services, and arts, entertainment, and recreation are all growth industries, but fail to provide an

annual living wage of $50,481.60. Manufacturing provides more than a living wage but is projected to lose jobs over the next 10 years; a quarter of that sector's workforce was age 55 or older in 2019, so it is likely that there will be a substantial number of job openings in the industry over the next several years despite the slight overall decline in the number of available jobs.

"Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction" stands out for its high location quotient. The location quotient is a comparison of an industry's share of employment in a region compared to a national average. A location quotient above 1.0 indicates that an industry is more concentrated in a region and below 1.0, less concentrated. Industries with high location quotients are generally "export" industries that have economic significance because they bring money into a region.[19] While the oil industry in New Mexico was hard hit by the pandemic, it is slowly rebounding, but will likely take several years to reach its former peak.

Table A. New Mexico Industries Sorted by the Number of Jobs in 2019

Industry*	2019 Jobs	2029 Jobs	Change	% Change	2019 Location Quotient	Workers age 55+	Average Earnings Per Job**
Government	207,274	205,255	(2,019)	(1%)	1.48	24%	$65,596
Health Care and Social Assistance	120,442	142,007	21,565	18%	1.05	24%	$51,182
Retail Trade	90,516	88,932	(1,584)	(2%)	1.01	21%	$34,749
Accommodation and Food Services	88,151	95,956	7,805	9%	1.11	14%	$21,252
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	58,992	63,914	4,922	8%	1.09	29%	$94,270
Construction	49,058	52,151	3,093	6%	1.14	23%	$60,113
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	45,053	49,213	4,160	9%	0.85	23%	$43,928
Other Services (except Public Administration)	29,384	30,352	968	3%	0.85	29%	$33,981
Manufacturing	27,785	27,097	(688)	(2%)	0.38	26%	$68,200
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	25,637	31,755	6,118	24%	6.57	20%	$98,397
Finance and Insurance	24,341	26,202	1,861	8%	0.67	25%	$75,454

Transportation and Warehousing	21,217	23,153	1,936	9%	0.67	26%	$65,953
Wholesale Trade	21,188	20,109	(1,079)	(5%)	0.63	26%	$67,009
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	12,093	12,557	464	4%	1.51	28%	$38,083
Information	11,577	10,245	(1,332)	(12)	0.72	20%	$69,055
Educational Services	11,061	12,365	1,304	12%	0.49	29%	$45,967
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	10,659	11,280	621	6%	0.81	28%	$48,020
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	10,496	12,025	1,529	15%	0.77	23%	$27,818
Management of Companies and Enterprises	5,720	5,979	259	5%	0.42	25%	$84,377
Utilities	4,290	4,116	(174)	(4%)	1.37	32%	$114,062
** Earnings below a living wage of $24.27/hour ($50,481.60/year) for one adult supporting one child appear in red.							

Source: 2020.1 – QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed

Health care and social assistance ("healthcare" in priority-sector language) is the second-overall industry in terms of 2019 employment and thus should be given special consideration. With a location quotient of 1.05, the sector is slightly more concentrated in New Mexico than in other states. Average earnings per job are a little above living wage. The sector is projected to add 21,600 jobs by 2029. But what is not revealed by this high-level analysis is the degree of variability within healthcare, which is composed of over 40 industries, each with its own characteristics and projected changes. Education, global trade, and intelligent planning are similarly composed of multiple industries. Strategic planning that includes these sectors should take this into consideration, which requires prioritizing industries within sectors to better inform economic recovery and workforce development efforts.

The occupations in Table B (below) are the top middle-skills occupations sorted by projected growth in number of jobs by 2029. Coincidentally, four of the six occupations—personal care aides, home health aides, nursing assistants, and medical assistants—are all in the priority sector of healthcare. While each shows an increase in jobs over the next 10-year period, none offers a living wage. Echoing what was highlighted above regarding prioritizing industries, care should be taken when developing career pathways in the priority sectors. While there is immediate need to get people back to work, this need should be balanced by intentionally positioning middle-skills occupations as initial rungs on a career ladder as opposed to final destinations.

Table B: Top New Mexico Middle-Skills Occupations Sorted by Projected Growth in Number of Jobs by 2029

Occupation	2019 Jobs	2029 Jobs	Change	% Change	% of Workers Age 55+	Median Hourly Earnings*	Typical Entry-Level Education
Personal Care Aides	27,788	34,117	6,328	23%	30%	$9.57	High school diploma or equivalent
Home Health Aides	5,782	7,598	1,816	31%	25%	$10.59	High school diploma or equivalent
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	11,530	13,132	1,602	14%	29%	$19.86	Postsecondary nondegree award
Customer Service Representatives	20,577	21,525	948	5%	18%	$14.10	High school diploma or equivalent
Nursing Assistants	6,354	7,189	835	13%	21%	$13.41	Postsecondary nondegree award
Medical Assistants	6,175	7,010	834	14%	12%	$14.45	Postsecondary nondegree award

* Earnings below a living wage of $24.27/hour ($50,481.60/year) for one adult supporting one child appear in red.

Source: 2020.1 – QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed

In Consideration of the Governor's Priority Sectors

In the report *Build New Mexico*, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham outlined a plan to stimulate and strengthen the economy by focusing on key priority sectors (eight in the original proposal, expanded to 11 according to data provided by the Department of Workforce Solutions). These sectors were envisioned as those in which New Mexico could lead the nation, supporting existing businesses and attracting employers to the state while stopping brain drain in the process. Per those interviewed, the priority sectors were anticipated to be high-growth and high-wage. However, due to a variety of factors, not the least of which is the pandemic, this is no longer the case.

Access to jobs in the priority sectors varies. For instance, the aerospace sector requires higher educational attainment for entry-level occupations. One of the industries that makes up the aerospace sector, space research and technology, posted *only eight available jobs statewide in May 2020*, all with one employer, geographically limiting the few positions to those with the right credentials who live in the region or are willing to move to take advantage of them. Occupations in other sectors, namely those that are state and federally funded, often require security clearance, rendering ineligible individuals with criminal records. **There is a need, then, to take into consideration how accessible jobs in the priority sectors are (or**

will be) given the geographic locations, education and skill levels, and life circumstances (and restrictions) of all New Mexicans.

In Table C (below) the priority sectors are sorted by projected growth in number of jobs by 2029. Overall, the priority sectors were growing pre-pandemic, but do not show sizeable growth in number of jobs by 2025, and almost all of the high-growth middle-skills occupations in the priority sectors fail to pay a living wage. Healthcare—which is expected to add nearly 22,000 jobs, far more than all other priority sectors combined—is a promising sector across the state. However, the occupations in that sector that show the greatest growth in terms of number of openings often pay the least and should be considered to be low rungs on a career ladder as opposed to career destinations. Global trade, aerospace, and cybersecurity will add jobs that pay living wages over the next decade but are concentrated in particular regions of the state. Education, sustainable and value-added agriculture, and outdoor recreation are projected to grow but will not offer living wages. Biosciences and intelligent manufacturing are projected to lose jobs over the next 10 years.

Table C. New Mexico Priority Sectors Sorted by Projected Growth in the Number of Jobs by 2029

Sector	2019 Jobs	2029 Jobs	Change	% Change	Average Earnings Per Job*
Healthcare	108,646	131,060	22,414	21%	$52,370
Cybersecurity	4,718	6,569	1,851	39%	$92,507
Aerospace	24,477	26,285	1,808	7%	$121,002
Global Trade	7,301	9,104	1,803	25%	$62,548
Education	11,062	12,363	1,301	12%	$46,396
Sustainable and Value-Added Agriculture	4,317	5,373	1,056	24%	$37,806
Film & TV	2,111	2,603	492	23%	$94,059
Outdoor Recreation	3,289	3,667	378	11%	$28,668
Sustainable and Green Energy	49	70	21	43%	$115,077
Biosciences	531	327	(204)	(38%)	$83,613
Intelligent Manufacturing	10,265	9,650	(615)	(6%)	$60,820

* Earnings below a living wage of $24.27/hour ($50,481.60/year) for one adult supporting one child appear in red.

Source: 2020.1 – QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed

Collectively, the priority sectors show promise in that most are projected to provide at least living wages. However, other than healthcare, the number of jobs they offer falls short when compared to non-priority sectors like accommodation and food services, which was significantly impacted by the pandemic and which offers predominantly low-wage jobs, and construction

which offers more than a living wage and is accessible to middle-skills workers. **At a time when the state is concerned with an immediate need to get its residents back to work, what role these sectors will play in near-, mid-, and long-term economic recovery and workforce development efforts will have to be determined.**

Adult Education in New Mexico

Historically, adult education programs nationwide have served as safe spaces for adults returning to school to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills, obtain their high school equivalency (HSE) credential, and achieve greater English-language fluency and civics education. Adult education has expanded to better prepare students for workforce and higher education advancement with the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). In the era of COVID-19, both traditional and innovative programmatic offerings for adult learners are needed now more than ever. The road to economic recovery will include upskilling and reskilling New Mexicans to take advantage of existing and emerging career pathways, something adult education is well positioned to deliver.

Fourteen percent of adults in the U.S. struggle with low literacy, writing, and basic math skills.[20] Seventy-eight percent of prospective adult education students enter programs with less than a high school education.[21] There is a clear need for quality English language acquisition programming, "designed to help eligible individuals who are English-language learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language;"[22] by 2030, nearly one in six U.S. workers will be a non-native English speaker.[23] Nationally, adult education programming continues to evolve in order to meet the needs of students, many of whom look to adult education as the opportunity to enter the labor market, advance in their careers, or enter postsecondary education.

In New Mexico, 46% of adults are functionally illiterate, with literacy levels of 2 or lower (equivalent to the literacy of children ages 7 to 9).[24] Nearly 25% of adults have less than a 12th-grade education[25] and over a third speak a language other than English at home. Additionally, disparities in educational attainment across the state are stark. The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy estimates that in "four New Mexico counties, the percentage of adults lacking a high school education exceeds 45% (Mora, Luna, McKinley, and Guadalupe counties)," which is disproportionately higher than the state rate of 25% for individuals 21 or older.[26]

There is conspicuous need in New Mexico for the education and training programs that adult education can provide. What JFF found is that there are exemplary efforts in the state that, were they to be scaled, would result in an adult education system that could deliver the services

necessary to upskill and reskill lower-skilled adults for the jobs that do and will exist. **What JFF also found, however, was that these exemplary efforts are localized and often unique, making for a statewide system that is, overall, inconsistent. This inconsistency affects access to the very programs that make up pathways leading to careers, as well as further education, and must be addressed if adult education is to be improved.**

An Overview of New Mexico's Adult Education and Workforce Systems

New Mexico's adult learners are served by 24 local adult education program providers authorized by the New Mexico Higher Education Department's Adult Education Division. The 24 programs cover every workforce region of the state and offer free instruction and training to eligible adults. Most of the state's adult education programs operate on a two- or four-year college campus or branch campus, while the remaining are based at nonprofits and community-based organizations. Typically, adult education services are provided on-site at the local provider locations via classroom instruction and offer small-group or even one-on-one tutoring services.

Most New Mexico adult education programs utilize the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE), an adult-education-specific academic assessment. Students are assessed through the TABE before and after class completion to adequately track their progress. The latest version of the TABE, TABE 11 & 12, is aligned to the most recent national College and Career Readiness Standards and has offered New Mexico adult education programs the opportunity to transition their assessments to an online testing platform.

In recent years, through the reauthorization of WIOA, the emphasis on career pathways and workforce readiness has grown as has the role adult education can play in preparing students for long-term careers. As a result, program providers are increasingly working with state agency, employer, and postsecondary partners to strengthen workforce preparation, including offering apprenticeships, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities. A review of the local adult education programs' annual reports for fiscal year 2019 revealed that a quarter of the state's programs listed improving access to career pathways and strengthening WIOA partnerships among their three priority goals.[27]

WIOA-sanctioned career pathway strategies like Integrated and Education Training (IET) and Integrated Basic Education Skills and Training (I-BEST) are utilized across most New Mexico adult education programs (each strategy is explored further below). Per the annual reports mentioned above, one adult education program was unable to offer an IET program due to low

interest and three other programs cited improvement in the area as a priority goal.[28] Santa Fe Community College's adult education program works closely with the college's Health & Science Department and School of Education to design and deliver I-BEST career training programs offered to students preparing for HSE. Eastern New Mexico University–Ruidoso's adult education program utilizes the I-BEST education model in the design and delivery of health-related college classes in biology, emergency medical services, and certified nursing assistance to enhance career readiness and study habits associated with continued medical studies. The I-BEST instructor works closely with the college, continuously discussing different strategies for incorporating reading, writing, and mathematics into curricula. University of New Mexico–Taos utilizes IET and "Pre-IET" programming to prepare adult education students for long-term career pathways in STEM, hospitality, childhood development, and solar/green industry fields.

Fourteen of the local adult education programs' annual reports listed improving student retention and/or increasing student enrollment as a top priority. Several reports included the suggestion that improving outreach to the community and awareness of program availability might mitigate poor attendance. In one report, it was noted that "even though students were required to sign an attendance … agreement at the beginning of each session, the [adult education] center leadership did not follow through by enforcing these policies." That report also made the observation that "an individual cannot reach their educational goals unless he or she attends class regularly …."[29]

The issues of attendance and retention associated with adult education programs reflect some of the sources of inconsistency JFF surfaced through research and, especially, interviews. Student interest in and commitment to adult education vary depending on the program. Awareness of programs offered varies, possibly a consequence of the rural reality of the state. Leadership was cited as a factor in the success of an adult education program; the more a leader champions adult education, the higher its status in relation to other programs and the greater its success. These variables—interest and commitment, awareness and ruralness, leaders as champions— and others contribute to inconsistency in New Mexican adult education that impact its potential systemic effectiveness and must be addressed if the system is to be improved and career pathways are to be strengthened or created.

Inconsistency in New Mexican Adult Education

There are bright spots in New Mexican adult education that JFF found that could serve as models of effective efforts to be scaled across regions and, ultimately, the state. However, many of these effective models currently exist in isolation. Some of this isolation is due to the rural reality of the state; two-thirds of the population live in seven counties, while the rest live in areas that were described, for the most part, as rural and some as "frontier." Some of this isolation is

due to infrastructure, affecting the way information is communicated and people collaborate effectively. Yet more isolation is a consequence of a difference in philosophy regarding adult education and its purpose. All of this isolation contributes to inconsistency in the adult education system, with a net effect of inconsistent access to quality programs across the state.

JFF's research and stakeholder interviews surfaced the following sources of systemic inconsistency in adult education:

- **The rural reality of the state is exacerbated by a digital divide** that geographically and technologically distances lower-skilled workers from in-person and online adult education. Geographic isolation leads to limited job opportunities. Some stakeholders shared a concern that because there are so few jobs available—many of which are low-wage—workers take these jobs and then pass up opportunities to learn skills relevant in new and/or more economically viable occupations.

  The digital divide is a consequence of a variety of factors, the most prevalent of which is the state's limited broadband availability. Even when available, internet service is something that some adults view as a luxury and forfeit in an effort to cut costs during the pandemic. This hints at poverty in the state, which impacts the ability to purchase not only internet service but also technology like computers and printers. While adult education programs have tried to supply laptop and desktop computers, not all are Wi-Fi capable, which frustrates efforts to increase connectivity by offering internet hotspots.

- **Communication and collaboration are compromised by infrastructure,** namely, a robust and comprehensive information system. Adult education programs and Workforce Connection Centers ("One-Stops") use different data systems, with LACES used for the former and the Workforce Connection Online System in the latter. Stakeholders shared that while these systems exist, some programs and One-Stops also use other systems (such as Google Drive and cloud-based services) in addition to these. Many interviewed also shared that third-party service providers' information was held separately and not incorporated into students' profiles. The result of these different information systems operating simultaneously is a lack of clarity as to what programs students have previously and are currently enrolled in, their progress in those programs, completion rates, placement after completion, and persistence in employment.

  Co-locating services was highly regarded as a way to encourage communication and collaboration between adult education and One-Stops, providing a single place where adults could be informed of a host of education and training options. Some interviewed envisioned opportunities for individuals to hear about adult education programs as they

filed unemployment insurance claims, increasing awareness while providing a critical service. Surprisingly, out of those interviewed, JFF heard of only two instances of co-location statewide, one of which is only occasional.

- **There are fundamental differences in the perceived role adult education should play,** impacting how it is valued and supported. While not perfectly mutually exclusive, JFF found that, from workforce and economic development perspectives, adult education is thought of as more aligned to the learning and training necessary for an individual to be gainfully—and rapidly—be employed. It is not hard to imagine these perspectives dominating during a pandemic, with unemployment at unprecedented levels. From an educational attainment perspective, adult education lies on continuum that includes secondary and postsecondary education; college representatives who were interviewed echoed annual report narratives, which expressed a desire to see adult education lead directly to further postsecondary education *and then* a career.

  A difference in the perceived role of adult education has led to differential valuing and support of it. When championed by someone like a college president, adult education flourishes. In at least two instances, JFF found adult education to be represented on a college's leadership team, with equal voice and involvement in long-term educational strategic planning intended to include all learners. This representation, voice, and involvement, however, are vulnerable to change in leadership; should the leader-champion leave, and if adult education is not protected by anything other than that person's interest, it is susceptible to the whim of a new administration.

  A regional workforce board representative shared that they were uncertain as to how think about and position adult education. They felt that, at the state level, adult education was more aligned to the goals of higher education, while at the local level, it was more aligned to workforce development. Why this uncertainty in perception is of concern is that workforce boards and their associated One-Stops sit at the intersection of education, workforce development, and economic development and are at least *theoretically* well-positioned to build layers of critical relationships (especially in rural areas), to support the expansion of career pathway system efforts, and to connect people to adult education and other education and training opportunities. A philosophical disagreement among those on workforce boards as to adult education's role, then, could compromise relationship-building, support of expansion efforts, and connections to opportunities, increasing inconsistency and decreasing effectiveness as a consequence.

Regardless of the source of inconsistency, the effect is that New Mexico's adult education system is not working optimally, diminishing access to education and training. This is particularly

important during the COVID-19 crisis, but immediate solutions should also lead to long-term success.

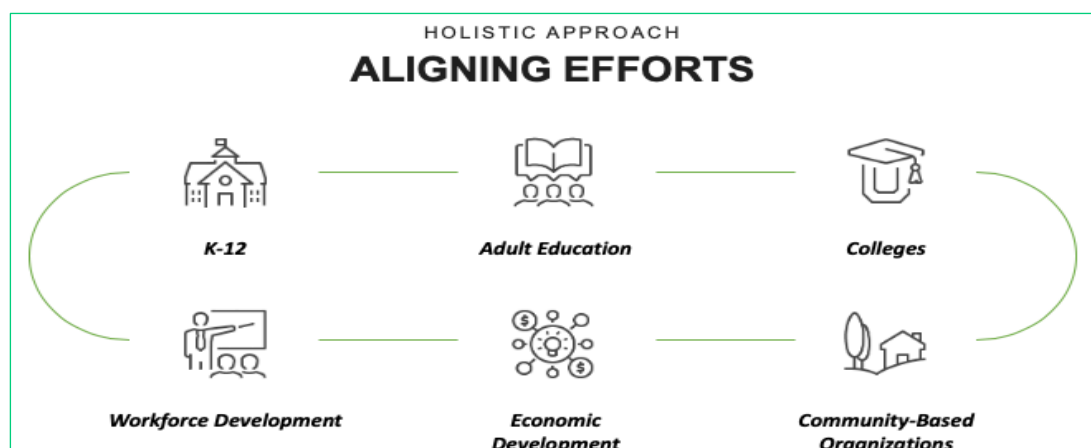# Federal Policy and National Best Practices in Adult Education

This section first considers the federal policy that makes adult education possible. It then explores national best practices for adult education, many of which are culled from JFF's experience and expertise. Together, a discussion of policy and practice help to frame what is possible for adult education in New Mexico.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

The signing of WIOA into law in 2014 reauthorized the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and marked the beginning of a new kind of investment in adult education, one that requires a closer look at how programs prepare adults for educational and career pathways and ensures long-term success. AEFLA expands adult education and literacy activities to include English language acquisition, integrated English literacy and civics education, workforce preparation activities, and integrated education and training (IET).[30] This expansion seeks to strengthen alignment between adult education, postsecondary education, and employers, and make clear the role that adult education plays as an on-ramp to postsecondary education, job training, and careers.

By expanding education and training options to increase access to quality jobs and career advancement, WIOA also encourages the implementation of career pathway approaches that support postsecondary education and training. There exists a real opportunity for adult education, along with One-Stops and social services partners, to work toward a more holistic and aligned effort, with stakeholders engaged in developing a cross-sector approach to building career pathways (Figure 2, below).

Figure 2. Holistic Approach to Building Career Pathways

HOLISTIC APPROACH
ALIGNING EFFORTS

K-12   Adult Education   Colleges

Workforce Development   Economic Development   Community-Based Organizations

WIOA specifically outlines career pathways as a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that

> align with the skill needs of industries; prepares an individual to be successful in secondary/postsecondary options; includes counseling; includes education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities/training; organizes education, training and other services to meet particular needs and support acceleration; enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma; and helps an individual enter or advance.[31]

New Mexico's vision for developing its workforce and meeting employers' needs, laid out in the State's 2020-2023 WIOA plan, is "human-centered, inclusive, and innovative" and "demonstrates a shared commitment to a more resilient, responsive, and results-oriented workforce development system that moves New Mexicans toward greater economic prosperity."[32] The goals for achieving this vision are the following, **all of which are foundational components of establishing and scaling a career pathways system:**

- Make lifelong learning a reality so that New Mexico's workforce is able to attract economic development that results in high-paying jobs
- Grow apprenticeship opportunities across sectors to systematically build and sustain a high-skilled workforce
- Identify and remove barriers to employment and training
- Stop New Mexico's brain drain by creating viable economic opportunities for youth and young adults
- Work across public and private partnerships to create a workforce development system that builds sector strategies that are responsive to employers
- Cultivate community colleges as a driver of workforce and economic development[33]

Many programs nationwide have turned their attention to partnership development in order to make connections for students and provide contextualized instruction related to specific careers or industry sectors.[34] In these partnerships, adult education programs work closely with postsecondary institutions and employers to better align curricula with college and career readiness standards *and* to better prepare students for family-sustaining jobs in the local labor market. Similarly, in New Mexico, adult education programs are building stronger, more intentional relationships with postsecondary and employer partners alike, on college campuses and through the aforementioned workforce boards and One-Stops, to better understand what employer needs are and how programs can best prepare students for a future career with that employer or in that industry.

Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V)

In its *Strengthening CTE for the 21st Century: Perkins V*,[35] the New Mexico Public Education Department outlines "an aspirational vision whereby business and industry engage in collaboration with K-12 and postsecondary educators, guided by relevant state agencies including Public Education, Higher Education, Workforce Development, and Economic Development" to develop career pathways. Of note is that "Perkins V now requires states to include their adult education state director as part of the planning process … to ensure that their postsecondary CTE planning reflects the abilities, needs, and interests of adult learners."[36] While the state's plan does not explicitly detail how adults would be serviced, it does note that representatives for adult education have participated in discussions with the Departments of Workforce Solutions and Public Education to consider the latter department's plan for Perkins funding with regard to adult learners. This suggests the possibility of career pathways work that spans government agencies and supports a holistic approach to education, workforce development, and economic development.

National Best Practices

In *What Works for Adult Learners: Lessons from Career Pathways Evaluations*, JFF analyzed the evaluations of 16 large-scale career pathways initiatives, summarizing what works best in adult education and training. Three areas of best practice that were surfaced and that apply to the New Mexico context are online and digital learning, work-based learning, and IET.[37] Each of these practices is highlighted here, ideally inspiring thinking about how, collectively, they could decrease inconsistency in and increase access to adult education in the state.

Online and digital learning. Access to online education is imperative as the country continues to navigate social distancing amidst a novel pandemic. Employers are increasingly expecting their prospective candidates to be digitally literate, to be comfortable with the use of technology in the workplace, to understand how to use online systems and navigate a variety of platforms, and to work remotely if possible (potentially post-pandemic). Given that most job interview processes begin online, it is that much more critical that learners are prepared for online engagement.

Offering high-quality online learning is a step programs can take to ensure accessibility for prospective learners of all ages. Many states have been experimenting with exclusively online programs for their learners, including online HSE courses,[38] and have seen early success. A meta-analysis of online learning conducted by the U.S. Department of Education found that, on average, online students performed better than those in in-person learning and that online learning is effective across different content and learner types, including adult learners.[39]

Work-based learning. Work-based learning is a proven strategy for accelerating and deepening career pathways strategies and connections between education and training programs and the labor market. When integrated within career pathways, work-based learning supports successful completion of pathways by providing opportunities for hands-on and applied learning. Numerous work-based learning models—such as internships, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, transitional jobs, and on-the-job training (OJT)—provide for flexibility in the design of adult education and career pathways strategies that integrate work-based learning.[40]

Work-based learning has gained national recognition as a highly effective strategy for supporting the success of learners in career pathways. Both WIOA and Perkins V direct significant federal funding and other support to the adoption and scaling of work-based learning strategies. Across the country, promising approaches to the integration of work-based learning with adult education have been developed that could serve as models for New Mexico:

- Aligning with WIOA guidance, adult education programs in Illinois allow for simultaneous completion of pre-apprenticeship programs, ensuring that students are fully prepared to enter and succeed in apprenticeships.[41]

- In Indiana, the Department of Workforce Development supports a pathways model that combines adult education and on-the-job training. Participants in the WorkINdiana program earn their high school equivalency while simultaneously earning one of more than 30 industry-recognized certifications in high-demand fields.[42]

- The Texas Workforce Commission has exceeded its pathways enrollment goal, thanks to its effort to support adults without a high school diploma in leveraging the Ability to Benefit (ATB) provision for Pell grants to enroll simultaneously in adult education and career and technical education (CTE) courses that include work-based learning. The initiative is designed to support and accelerate the completion of career pathways in in-demand industries and has engaged over 20,000 adult learners across the state.[43]

Integrated education and training (IET). AEFLA elevates IET, an evidence-based instructional approach rooted in adult learning theory, as an allowable and strongly supported Adult Education and Literacy activity. IET models pair foundational skill building with career readiness and training for in-demand occupations. While there are many possible variations on the IET theme, perhaps the most widely known is the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model developed by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges in conjunction with their community college network. The central goal of I-BEST is to increase the rate at which Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English Language Acquisition (ELA) students advance to college-level occupational programs. These models have

been replicated in many states and it has become a gold standard of an effective model for increasing the success of ABE students entering postsecondary occupational education.

JFF would suggest the following for strengthening and scaling IET models in New Mexico:

- Collaborate with relevant stakeholders on the development of IET programming that is based on current labor market information, employer need, and student need;

- Work with postsecondary partners to encourage use of multiple measures placement systems that better assess students' college readiness and limit adult education students from being directly placed into developmental education courses;

- Create a braided funding strategy that shares the costs of supporting IET (including training, materials, and student support services), lightening the financial load one partner would have to bear while also committing all partners to a shared cause;

- Design appropriate IET curricula, with employer input, that utilize instructor expertise and meet both students' need and employers' expectations; and

- Provide employer-sponsored workplace experiences for instructors—externships—that keep them informed of industry trends and expectations that they can incorporate into programming.

State Examples of Effective Adult Education Efforts

The following are specific state examples that profile innovative adult education practices that encompass a range of the approaches outlined above. They are offered as examples to draw on and adapt to fit the New Mexico context and efforts to build out a robust adult education system.

Examples of Effective Adult Education Efforts from Various States

Accelerating Opportunity Kansas (AO-K)—Kansas. In 2012, the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR), the governing board of the state's six universities and the statewide coordinating board for the state's 32 public higher education institutions, began the implementation of Accelerating Opportunity Kansas (AO-K) in partnership with the Kansas Department of Commerce to transform the delivery systems for adult education and career and technical education. From 2012-2015, AO-K enrolled over 3,000 students in 30 career pathway programs, earning over 3,000 industry-recognized credentials, with over 800 students self-reporting employment upon completion.[44] AO-K made significant strides to leverage state funding to support and sustain their career pathways efforts and provide more access to adult learners, which included:

- The **AO-K Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** scholarship program with the Department for Children and Families, which provided tuition scholarships for TANF-eligible students who enrolled in approved AO-K pathways.[45]
- The **GED Accelerator** incentive program funded by legislative appropriations (House Bill 2506) to reward institutions for assisting students to concurrently achieve their GED and industry-recognized credential. Colleges had to verify that the student was enrolled in ABE or was pursuing a GED but was not attached to any specific program model.[46]
- The **AO-K Proviso** tuition reimbursement program, also a part of HB2506, which provided technical education tuition for adult students enrolled in AO-K specifically.[47]

Through demonstrated success with the AO-K model, in 2019 KBOR received a grant from Walmart.org to develop customized training programs branded as **Accelerating Opportunity: Kansas @ Work (AO-K @ Work)**. AO-K @ Work brings together adult education providers and businesses in the retail and service sector, focuses on employer and employee needs, and provides staff development in order to retain a more skilled workforce. Employees can access ESL instruction, skills for the workplace, and a GED. Classes are held at the workplace and at times compatible with employees' schedules, allowing them to work closely with an Adult Education Career Navigator for academic support.[48]

Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS)—Illinois. In 2012, the Illinois Community College Board launched the official implementation of *Accelerating Opportunity: A Breaking Through Initiative* at eight community colleges across the state. With a focus on recruiting entirely from adult education programs or similar populations, ICAPS sought to integrate technical training and basic skills education, delivered in a team-taught environment.[49] The AO Final Impact Report found that AO students in Illinois earned 25% more credentials than the comparison group and were 35% more likely to earn any credential than the comparison group.[50] These eight colleges piloted and paved the way for marketing, implementing, and expanding AO to an additional 17 community colleges across Illinois. In addition, during the implementation of ICAPS, the state implemented a performance-based funding system to allot a portion of community college funding based on student progression along their path to graduation. Adult education was incorporated into these measures to incentivize and reward colleges that helped ABE students transition into postsecondary classes.[51] This created clear investment for sustaining integrated career pathways programs, like AO, in the state.

Retraining the Gulf Coast through Information Technology Pathways (GCIT)— Louisiana & Mississippi. With funding from the Department of Labor's Round 2 Trade Adjustment Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program, nine community colleges across the states of Louisiana and Mississippi came together to create a new

core IT curriculum and build out integrated career pathways using I-BEST to target their large number of adults with low educational attainment. Because of the focus on IT, GCIT combined foundational literacy and math instruction with college-level technical instruction for anyone testing below college-level. As the colleges saw the successful retention and completion of ABE students in the program, lower-skilled adults became a priority.[52] Both states have leveraged TAACCT funding and lessons learned to reshape their educational programming. In Mississippi, the five colleges that participated in GCIT became models for the Mississippi Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (MI-BEST). MI-BEST was able to leverage additional grant support from the Kellogg Foundation to expand to all 15 community colleges across the state and other disciplines such as welding and culinary arts.[53]

PluggedInVA (PIVA)—Virginia. PIVA is an intensive, six-month career pathways bridge program that provides adult learners with a contextualized GED curriculum, industry specific technical training, a Career Readiness Certificate, online and technology-enabled learning, and an array of evidence-based support services. On average, students earn at least 12 postsecondary credits upon completion.[54] The PIVA project started in 2009 by the Virginia Adult Learning Resources Center (VALRC), was expanded across Virginia, and in 2012 received TAACCCT funding at the Southwest Virginia Community College (SWCC) site program. As a part of this TAACCCT-funded work, SWCC partnered with the Virginia Department of Education's Office of Adult Education and Literacy to expand the program to at-risk, unemployed, low-skilled, and disadvantaged populations accepted into one of four career pathway programs (Pharmacy Technician, Phlebotomy Technician, Paraoptometric, and Crime Scene Technician). It should be noted that program eligibility preference is given to students without a high school diploma or GED. A key feature of the model is the cohort-based design, which facilitates peer group support and increases retention.[55] Through FY2012-13, 70% of completers continued with at least one additional semester at the community college level—four times the rate of general adult education students.[56]

PACE Career Pathways: Instituto del Progreso Latino, Carreras en Salud—Illinois. Instituto del Progreso Latino launched *Carreras en Salud* (Careers in Health) in 2005 to address both the academic and non-academic needs of low-skilled Latinos in Chicago. *Carreras* is a career pathway program in nursing occupations for low-skilled and English-learning Latinos and progresses from a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) degree, to Pre-Licensed Practitioner Nurse (LPN), to LPN, and ultimately to Registered Nurse (RN). *Carreras* is currently a part of the Pathways for Advancing Careers in Education (PACE) evaluation, which is the first-ever randomized trial of nine career pathways programs in the country. It includes both an implementation and impact study; data for these trials will be tracked through 2021.[57]

New Mexico-Specific Promising Efforts

As New Mexico strengthens existing pathways and builds new ones, it can draw on not only national and state experiences but also its own. Following is a collection of past and current adult education efforts in the state that research and stakeholders referenced and found effective.

New Mexico's Skill UP Network: Pathways Acceleration in Technology and Healthcare (SUNPATH). New Mexico is a former awardee of the U.S. Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community and Career Training Initiative (TAACCCT) grant, which provided nearly $15 million to support the development of technology and healthcare career pathways, increase credential attainment, and create strategic alignment between education and workforce systems to improve employment outcomes.

In particular, the TAACCCT grant launched the formation of the Skill UP Network: Pathways Acceleration in Technology and Healthcare (SUNPATH). SUNPATH operated as consortium of 11 participating community colleges, as well as partnering state agencies including the New Mexico Departments of Higher Education and Workforce Solutions. SUNPATH served nearly 8,000 participants across the state with over 6,000 credentials obtained within the IT, healthcare, and energy fields.

Two key features of SUNPATH included the adoption of the I-BEST model for program delivery and the creation of job coaches—Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS) staff co-located on the college campus—who played a critical role in supporting career readiness and job placement activities. While there were challenges to sustaining the SUNPATH model without grant funding, stakeholders shared that there is ample opportunity to build on this investment and the partnerships that were developed. Many of the original SUNPATH community college campuses still utilize job coaches to assist their students and it continues to serve as a model worth replicating to meet the needs of adult learners.

Success Emporium and ENMU Pathways. The South-Central Mountain Adult Education Program, home of the Success Emporium, operates on the ENMU–Ruidoso campus. The Success Emporium serves as a community space, providing services and resources to advance the personal development and academic achievement of all students. By collaborating with constituents and stakeholders in the greater Ruidoso learning community, the Success Emporium offers a robust array of support, such as walk-in tutoring and academic workshops, to meet varying needs. Additionally, the Success Emporium operates at various locations across the Ruidoso campus to widen their reach and expand accessibility.

It is important to note that the Success Emporium is open to *all* students. Adult learners are eligible for the same services that 4-year ENMU students receive through the Success

Emporium, thus increasing adult learner visibility on campus and opening new doors for career pathways into ENMU–Ruidoso following HSE completion. Additionally, ENMU has worked with South-Central Mountain adult education to eliminate barriers to postsecondary, such as eliminating developmental education courses that many adult education students are filtered into before entering actual college-level, credit-bearing courses.

Taos Hub of Internet-Based Vocations and Education (HIVE). The Taos Education & Career Center, the adult education program within UNM–Taos, recently won a national award for their IET model, Hub of Internet-based Vocations and Education (HIVE). Taos HIVE is a co-working office and small business support center offering on-site adult education classes and IET college classes. HIVE includes public-private collaboration between the Town of Taos, UNM–Taos, the Northern Area Local Workforce Development Board, local employers such as Electric Cooperative, and other small business development support programs. HIVE's mission stems from a nationwide movement to generate internet-based employment as a key economic development strategy for rural and under-resourced communities. Classes prioritize support for those working toward their HSE, with limited academic, technical, and professional skills, as well as those with disabilities.

New Mexico Distance Education & Learning Technologies (NMDELT). New Mexico Distance Education & Learning Technologies (NMDELT) was a comprehensive, longitudinal professional development initiative supported by the NMHED's Adult Education Division. The initiative evolved as it progressed over the years, but the original and central mission remained the same—using a coalition of teachers and administrative leaders from around the state to provide local programs with the support and training they needed to increase the volume and efficacy of blended learning and distance education programs offered to adult education learners. NMDELT has been cited by many adult education programs as a consistent and effective form of professional development as more and more programs seek to infuse technology and distance learning intentionally into their programming. While the NMDELT initiative was recently dissolved as a separate "entity" as it becomes part of a larger, more integrated statewide professional development system for adult education, the intentional targeted support of technology and distance education remains critical, especially in the current COVID-19 context.

New Mexico C3 Initiative. The New Mexico C3 was a field-driven longitudinal professional development initiative supported by the Adult Education Division. In essence, the central mission of C3 was to help local adult education programs evolve and align their efforts more squarely with both the letter and the spirit of WIOA, including the adoption of a more comprehensive program service delivery model oriented around career pathways. Many local adult education programs noted this initiative's role in advancing the efficacy of their programs.

As with NMDELT, the C3 Initiative is no longer supported as a discrete professional development effort, but key aspects of this intensive work are being carried forward as the state works to design a more comprehensive, integrated professional development system for adult education.

Corrections Education in New Mexico

There is large body of research that shows that education helps to reduce recidivism rates, particularly important in New Mexico where that rate is 57%. Reducing recidivism not only leads to safer communities but the resultant decrease in crime has a positive economic impact. Per a 2018 study by the Council of Economic Advisers, "educational programming needs only to achieve a modest impact on recidivism rates (about a 2 percent reduction) in order to be cost effective."[58] Between decreasing recidivism and increasing the employability of returning citizens, there is a clear need and return on investment for corrections education.

New Mexico's returning citizens—formerly incarcerated individuals—are a priority population for this project. Implicit in this focus is the consideration of how corrections education can meet the needs of individuals who are in the state's prison system and have the potential of being released, as opposed to those that are either court-involved but not incarcerated or serving life sentences without the possibility of parole. **This distinction is important because it means building a corrections education system that leads to reentry, preparing individuals to return to their communities, integrate into the workforce, earn a living wage, and be productive citizens.**

Consistent with its regional, state, and national work, JFF took a systemic, as opposed to programmatic, approach to understanding and analyzing corrections education in New Mexico. Desk-based research and interviews revealed a corrections education system that is, on the whole, affected by variability, with intermittent bright spots but inconsistent success. Accordingly, the following description of, analysis of, and recommendations for corrections education proceed under the assumption that improving the system will facilitate effective programming, resulting in learning and training that prepare formerly incarcerated individuals for reentry into their home communities and participation in an equitable talent pipeline and workforce development system.

Overview of The New Mexico Corrections Education System

The New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) is one of the largest state departments in New Mexico, overseeing the operation and management of 11 public and private facilities spread

throughout the state (Table D, below). Each facility is unique in its capacity, population served (some facilities are specific to gender and type of offense), security level, and programmatic offerings.

Table D. Correctional Facilities of New Mexico

Facility	Type	Location	Security Level(s)	Population
Central New Mexico Correctional Facility	Public	Las Lunas	I & II	1,000+
Guadalupe County Correctional Facility	Private	Santa Rosa	III & IV	600
Lea County Correctional Facility	Private	Hobbs	III	1200
Northeast New Mexico Correctional Facility	Public	Clayton	III	625
Northwest New Mexico Correctional Center	Private	Grants	II & III	700+
Otero County Prison Facility	Private	Chaparral	II & III	1420
Penitentiary of New Mexico	Public	Santa Fe	II, IV/V, and VI	750+
Roswell Correctional Center	Public	Dexter	II	340
Springer Correctional Center	Public	Springer	I & II	430
Southern New Mexico Correctional Facility	Public	Las Cruces	II	330
Western New Mexico Correctional Facility	Public	Grants	III & IV	350+

Targeted funding and policy allow New Mexico to offer a variety of education and training programs in the state's correctional facilities. NMCD offers adult education programming in all of its prison facilities. Adult education is funded in part by federal WIOA Title II (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) dollars, making it one of the Higher Education Department's largest AEFLA subgrantees in the state. NMCD also receives state general fund allocations to support reentry programming, with reentry falling under Inmate Management and Control. Education programming is also supported by IDEA B and Title I funds from New

Mexico's Public Education Department. Corrections education is overseen by NMCD's Recidivism Reduction Division, which is committed to providing evidence-based programs that equip individuals with the skills necessary to transition back to their communities smoothly after incarceration.

In an effort to serve the large number of incarcerated individuals in need of such services, adult education students are primarily served by full-time instructors via contract with NMCD. Instructional hours vary by facility and respective security level, with Levels I & II typically allowing for 8 to 12 scheduled hours per week, Level III 12 to 15 hours per week, and Levels IV through VI typically allowing one to three hours. Staffing and security issues can modify scheduled programming considerably. Open enrollment is the norm, with students assigned by classification to all education programming based on a variety of factors. Currently, it is not known exactly how many people who qualify for adult education services are actually being served at any given time.

All students assigned to adult education programming are assessed through the TABE during intake to better understand their current educational functioning levels, document progress through pre- and post-testing, and meet guidelines for HSE credential exam preparation. Apart from the TABE, NMCD does not currently consistently use additional evidence-based needs assessments that would further help identify the kind of programming and unique educational needs of incarcerated individuals. NMCD is currently working to fully implement use of the COMPAS Risk, Needs, and Responsivity (RNR) assessment across the continuum of care at NMCD facilities; consistently appropriate use of this assessment would assist staff to build an evidence-based case plan with referrals to programming anchored in each individual's identified needs. As highlighted in a 2018 Legislative Finance Committee Evaluation Unit report (*Corrections Department – Status of Programs to Reduce Recidivism and Oversight of Medical Services*),[59] NMCD purchased this tool in 2008 and actually began administering it to all inmates at intake in 2017. But as the report notes, NMCD was not able to provide data for overall results and was unaware how often COMPAS assessment recommendations are actually assigned, attempted, or completed; it is not clear how the results of the assessment are used to connect inmates with services. To address this, the report recommended a gap analysis of needs assessed versus services provided to improve overall resource allocation, but it also acknowledged that until NMCD rolls out the new data collection system scheduled for implementation in 2021, it will not have the tools required to accomplish such efforts.

Historically, education and training program availability and execution in New Mexico's correctional institutions has broadly depended on many variables, including: (1) level of administrative and institutional leadership support; (2) staffing levels; (3) capacity of classrooms and designated space within the institution; (4) statutory and federal funding source

requirements; (5) security levels and needs of the institution (for example, inmate job assignments); (6) disciplinary history and scheduled release date of the incarcerated individual, along with related internal institutional policies and practices; and (7) funding availability and related allocation decisions. Many inherent challenges exist with respect to offering programs in a prison setting, and they should not be underestimated. Without the experience of working in a prison environment, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to appreciate the magnitude of these challenges.

Documented widespread basic skill and workplace credential deficiencies for the incarcerated in New Mexico and nationwide underscore a pressing need to more effectively strategize and close the large gap between the people who need and would benefit from education and workplace training, and the people who actually receive it, as well as "how" they receive it. First and foremost, this will require consistent levels of increasingly dedicated prioritization. It will also require enhanced strategic resource allocation paired with an increase in resource investment, since substantially increasing education and training availability would require, among other things, increased staff capacity. It will involve continuing to examine the nature, quality, intensity, and duration of education and training opportunities and removing any unnecessary internal barriers in policy and practice that might contribute to preventing incarcerated individuals from accessing the opportunities they need to succeed and support their families upon release—and to help keep them from returning to prison. As noted earlier, in concert with an upgraded data collection system, fully implementing the targeted use of the COMPAS assessment across the continuum of care at NMCD facilities and balancing focus on risks and needs will be an important step to help guide these efforts.

Adult education is an evidence-based program with well-documented high rates of return, a fact reinforced by NMCD's partnership with the Pew-McArthur Results First Initiative and associated 2015 program inventory.[60] In addition, it is a critical "gateway" program, since adult education works to strengthen weak core numeracy, literacy, English language, and workplace readiness skills which are essential foundations for success not only in academic and career/technical postsecondary education classes and training programs, but also in the workplace itself. They are equally essential in wider life spheres. Core basic skills are required, for example, for any New Mexican to effectively navigate systems, to support children's education, and to exercise civic rights and engage in civic responsibilities. It is important to note that, as compared to the population as a whole, a higher percentage of incarcerated individuals lack basic skills and secondary credentials. Higher still is the percentage of incarcerated individuals who lack postsecondary credentials.

According to Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) data reported by the National Center for Education Statistics, an estimated 29% of all New Mexicans

fall within Level I literacy and numeracy levels, the lowest possible.[61] An estimated 60% of all New Mexicans fall at or below Level II, placing New Mexico at the bottom of nationwide comparative rankings. And according to the Federal Bureau of Justice, while an estimated 18% of the national adult population as a whole lacks a high school diploma or its equivalent, that percentage climbs to over 40% for incarcerated individuals.[62] Considering education levels are strongly correlated with labor force participation, income, health, children's success in school, and a host of additional critical indicators, adult education and other education and training programs are essential priority investments for the New Mexico Corrections Department and the state as a whole.

New Mexico state statute currently provides some measure of structural support for adult education programming in New Mexico prisons via the Inmate Literacy Act, though this support is not without noted levels of complication. The stated purpose of the Inmate Literacy Act is "to require the Corrections Department to adopt certain regulations to require inmates to meet specified educational levels under certain circumstances."[63] The Act stipulates that for incarcerated people who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent; and who have 18 months or more remaining to serve on their sentence; and who aren't exempted due to a medical, developmental, or learning disability: "The Corrections Department shall adopt regulations for all adult correctional institutions operated by the department for the implementation of a mandatory education program for all inmates to attain a minimum education standard as set forth in this section" of the Act, which since 1991 has meant the attainment of a high school diploma or equivalency credential. The Act states that regulations "may exclude" any inmate who has been incarcerated for less than 90 days in an institution controlled by the Corrections Department; it "may exclude" any inmate assigned to a minimum custody classification; and it "may defer" educational requirements for inmates with sentences longer than ten (10) years. Given earlier data presented in this report, the statute *intention* seems clear. Nonetheless, statute *language* raises many questions. Why, for example, would it would be advisable for NMCD to choose to exempt persons assigned to minimum custody classification? What are the implications and ramifications of compulsory education of this nature for adults, both inside the institutions and more broadly? Related, the Act goes on to stipulate that while an incarcerated person who is not otherwise exempt shall be required to participate in the mandated education program for 90 days (why just 90 days?), after that point s/he may choose to withdraw. If that choice is made, however, the Act states that the person "shall not be eligible for monetary compensation for work performed or for meritorious deductions [as set forth in Subsection D of Section 33-2-34 NMSA 1978]."[64] This raises additional questions New Mexico may wish to address which are beyond the scope of this report.

Additional NMCD policies related to education and germane here include the following:

- **Returning Citizen Program:** "Depending on eligibility requirements, individuals may participate in outside work experience with Corrections Industries and/or host employers, including a Corrections Industries Work Release Program."[65]

- **Literacy and Pre-Literacy Programming:** "The NMCD shall provide pre-literacy and literacy programming to meet the unique needs of individuals incarcerated who may not be ready for ABE courses. Career exploration and workplace skills are emphasized as being integral to literacy education instruction."[66]

- **Adult Basic Education:** "The Education Department of NMCD shall provide a program of Adult Basic Education for inmates evaluated as benefiting from such a program for the purposes of developing those skills necessary to earn a GED, developing workplace competencies, and improving basic life skills."[67]

- **Career Technical Education Programming:** "The NMCD's Recidivism Reduction Division (RRD) shall provide industry specific CTE programming to qualified incarcerated individuals. Specifically, these programs shall … provide for technical skills attainment necessary to secure employment and meet industry demand, yield livable entry-level wages, be consistent with the needs of incarcerated individuals, and lead to industry-recognized credentials or certificates."[68]

- **Postsecondary Education Policy:** At the RRD's discretion, the NMCD will provide postsecondary education to qualified individuals. Programs shall be recognized, certified, or licensed by the state department of education and lead to a college degree.[69]

Regarding career pathway and vocational programming, some facilities have been able to partner with postsecondary institutions and/or local state departments to design and offer curricula that lead to industry-recognized certificates. For example, the Penitentiary of New Mexico (PNM) works with Santa Fe Community College to offer automotive programming leading to a credential. Additionally, PNM partners with DWS to offer a "Building New Futures" pilot program focused on OSHA requirements, first aid, and construction industry safety.

Through Community Corrections, a segment of NMCD, individuals can work with a transitional coordinator to help with important educational transitions and workforce planning. Six months prior to release, the transitional coordinator works with individuals to help with a reentry strategy and plan. Smooth transitions to postsecondary remain difficult as some postsecondary institutions may require disclosure of a previous record, which could lead to exclusion. Additionally, many postsecondary institutions cannot pre-enroll a student unless they have officially exited the prison system, which ultimately causes enrollment and financial aid delays.

The barriers to reentry post-incarceration remain significant in New Mexico and across the country, with nearly 60 percent of individuals recidivating within three years of their release,

just above the national average.[70] Reentry education, including career readiness, continues to serve as an evidence-based practice that has shown to ease post-release transitions and lower recidivism rates. In fact, a recent New Mexico Prison Population Forecast from the New Mexico Sentencing Commission revealed that individuals who participate in reentry education programming while incarcerated are less likely to re-offend.[71]

Despite the partnerships, policy, and processes that exist, the current systems in place are not consistent or widespread enough across all facilities to adequately and equitably prepare individuals for future education and workforce opportunities. Inconsistent offering of programs, lack of professional development for correctional education staff, limited access to technology because of historical security concerns, and inconsistent implementation of programs are sources of systemic variability that are preventing more widespread success of corrections education overall. Addressing this variability will be critical to improving the corrections education system as a whole and improving returning citizens' inclusion in a talent pipeline and workforce delivery system.

New Mexico Correctional Facilities and Systemic Variability

Correctional facilities in New Mexico present systemic variability that must be taken into account when building for reentry education. JFF's research suggests that there is ample need to improve consistency within and across facilities. Doing so will increase the effectiveness of New Mexico's corrections education and training, leading to incarcerated individuals being more appropriately prepared to reenter their communities and join the workforce.

JFF's research and stakeholder interviews surfaced the following sources of systemic variability:

- **Lack of a shared, robust, comprehensive information system** means no consistent way to track how individuals are assigned to and progress through corrections education programs. NMCD indicates it has an ongoing project to implement a new web-based Offender Management System to address this issue.

- **Inconsistent implementation of programs in facilities of the same security level** leads to different learning experiences and levels of preparedness for incarcerated individuals. This is a noted area for targeted improvement.

- **Not offering the same programs at different facilities or within a facility from year to year** delays or halts progress in those programs, especially for those who transfer. This is a noted area for targeted improvement.

- **The education programming offered is inconsistently aimed** at the seamless integration of strengthening core basic skills and workplace readiness skills (adult

education), academic postsecondary education, and career and technical training (CTE) for in-demand occupations with industry-recognized credentials that would be available to the incarcerated individual after release and that would support opportunities for stable employment with family-sustaining wages. This is a noted area for targeted improvement.

- **Security concerns have historically led to severely restricted access to technology as a vehicle for learning,** thereby limiting digital literacy acquisition, content delivery options, and capacity for time on task. At the time of this report's publication, efforts were being made to mitigate security concerns and introduce new technology, in line with national trends. American Prisons Data System tablets had been provided to a small group of college students, for example, and ATLO software was being piloted in several facilities. Opportunities still remain to address the limitations of limited access to technology and content online and should be pursued.

- **Lockdowns, schedule changes, administrative removals, transfers, and insufficient time before release to complete programs** disrupt education and training continuity. Acknowledging that safety and security must remain a top priority in prison settings, such disruptors should be minimized where possible.

- **Professional development for corrections instructors is, for the most part, facility-based,** which while essential given the correctional setting, nonetheless means some instructors may not receive the tools and support they need for optimal efficacy in their positions. This is a noted area for targeted improvement.

- **Mismatch between actual and prospective student need and availability of instructional and other staff** results in large numbers of people not being served or served inadequately relative to need and long-term individual and community benefit analysis. This is an area of concern and suggested targeted focus for future data collection and program design efforts.

- **Lack of strong systemic coordination and structural support** for a returning citizen's reintegration into the community are likely having an adverse effect on success rates. Individual Transitional Coordinators and Parole Officers are heavily relied upon to act as bridges between prison and community for returning citizens, but larger systems challenges remain with respect to employment, housing, social services, etc. This is a noted area for targeted improvement.

- **Employers' hesitation in hiring individuals with criminal records** further limits access to jobs for those who already have more limited options because of a felony record. This is a noted area for targeted outreach and improvement.

- **Being incarcerated far from an individual's home community** can impact the value or applicability in the local labor market of the education and training people

receive in prison, a factor which must be taken into consideration when designing education and training programs.

- **Frequent changes in key agency leadership positions** in recent years have contributed to systemic variability and inconsistency.

This list of sources of systemic variability is most likely not exhaustive but does highlight inconsistencies that are conspicuous and must be addressed when building for reentry. In the section below, corrections education data and the process for collecting that data are analyzed, both descriptively as presented and through a lens of systemic variability.

New Mexico Corrections Education Data: A Reflection of Systemic Variability

To better understand New Mexico's corrections education programs, JFF requested data relatively early in the project. It took two months to fulfill that request, which, it should be noted, was expected; it was communicated that securing the requested data would be challenging. The delay was a consequence of an information system incapable of providing information in a timely manner, as well as the person initially assigned to collect the data leaving NMCD. However, much of the data was provided, albeit with some acknowledged difficulty, within two to three weeks of a new data analyst being hired and assigned to pursue the request.

JFF's analysis can only responsibly consider and comment on the processes by which data were originally collected, reported, and shared, which appear to be unreliable. In keeping with the emphasis on the corrections education *system*, this analysis is not about the programs that are reflected in the data or the people who endeavored to provide the data. Until a consistent process is put in place to track these programs and a new information system allows users to easily extract data, determining either the quality of programs or the efficiency and impact of people and their efforts will continue to be difficult.

There are a variety of issues with the existing corrections education information system that are of concern. The following are issues that were shared with JFF to explain the difficulty in pulling the data and sources of error in the data set:

- Until very recently, there was no data manager or analyst responsible for maintaining NMCD's information system. All readily available reports were older, reflecting earlier requests made for specific (not systemwide) data. Data sources were often unknown and data integrity uncertain.

- A student may have breaks in class participation or stop participating completely during the fiscal year being reported, which is not necessarily reflected in the data.

- Incarcerated individuals may transfer to another facility and re-enroll in the same program during a fiscal year. Although deduplicating and assigning the inmate to their current facility is an option, NMCD indicated this practice would mean that the data would not reflect how other facilities impacted their education. Consequently, program participants may be counted more than once during the fiscal year. Individuals are often counted across more than one fiscal year due to assessed low literacy levels and the need for continued instruction.

- TABE scores are a key adult education program success metric. The Higher Education Department requires TABE scores and additional metrics to be tracked in an information system called LACES; data is reported annually to the U.S. Department of Education to support adult education funding. In part because LACES is not linked in any way to NMCD data systems, there have been historical issues with consistent data entry practices, oversight, and broader meaningful use of this potentially valuable data.

- Postsecondary course credits are not properly tracked. The data provided were calculated by reviewing NMCD's Offender Management Program (OMP) and cross-referencing entries with online college course catalogs. Problematically, an assumption was made that a status of "complete" meant the credit hours had been earned. (It should be noted that even if the grades were tracked in the system, some of the postsecondary institutions are very slow in providing grades. In July 2020, the Fall 2019 grades had not been provided for some college classes.) In a few cases, it was not possible to even identify the college that offered a particular class.

- Completion of degrees should be in the Offender Management Program (OMP) under the incarcerated individual's education profile, but there is no existing report available that extracts this information, leaving open the question whether this and other relevant education data had been entered at all.

- Some incarcerated individuals may be a few classes short of completing postsecondary degrees but must wait until the missing classes are offered by the facility and/or the postsecondary provider. There appears to be no way to reliably track those missing classes or streamline offerings to facilitate degree completion.
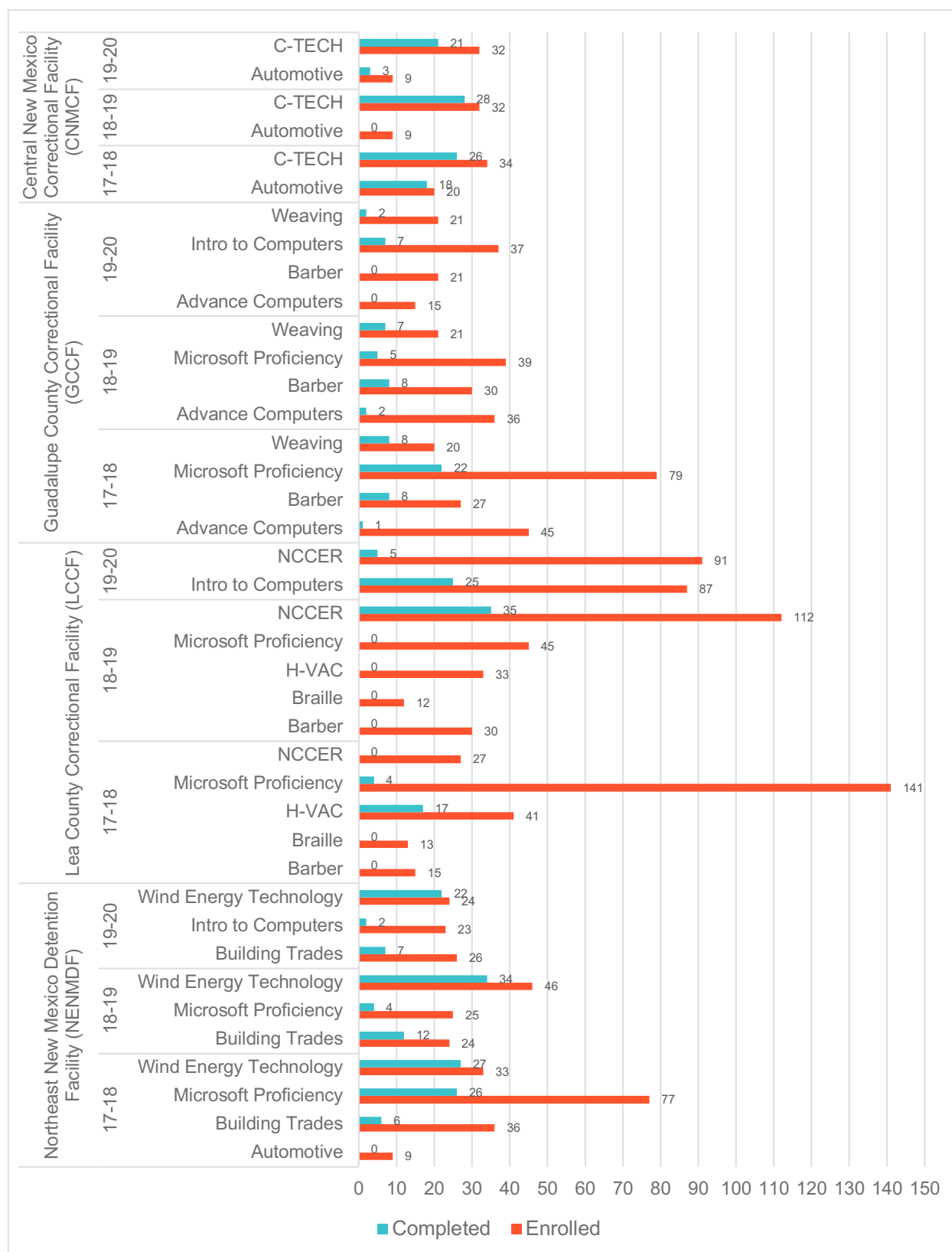
Each of the issues above is a source of variability in the corrections education information system.
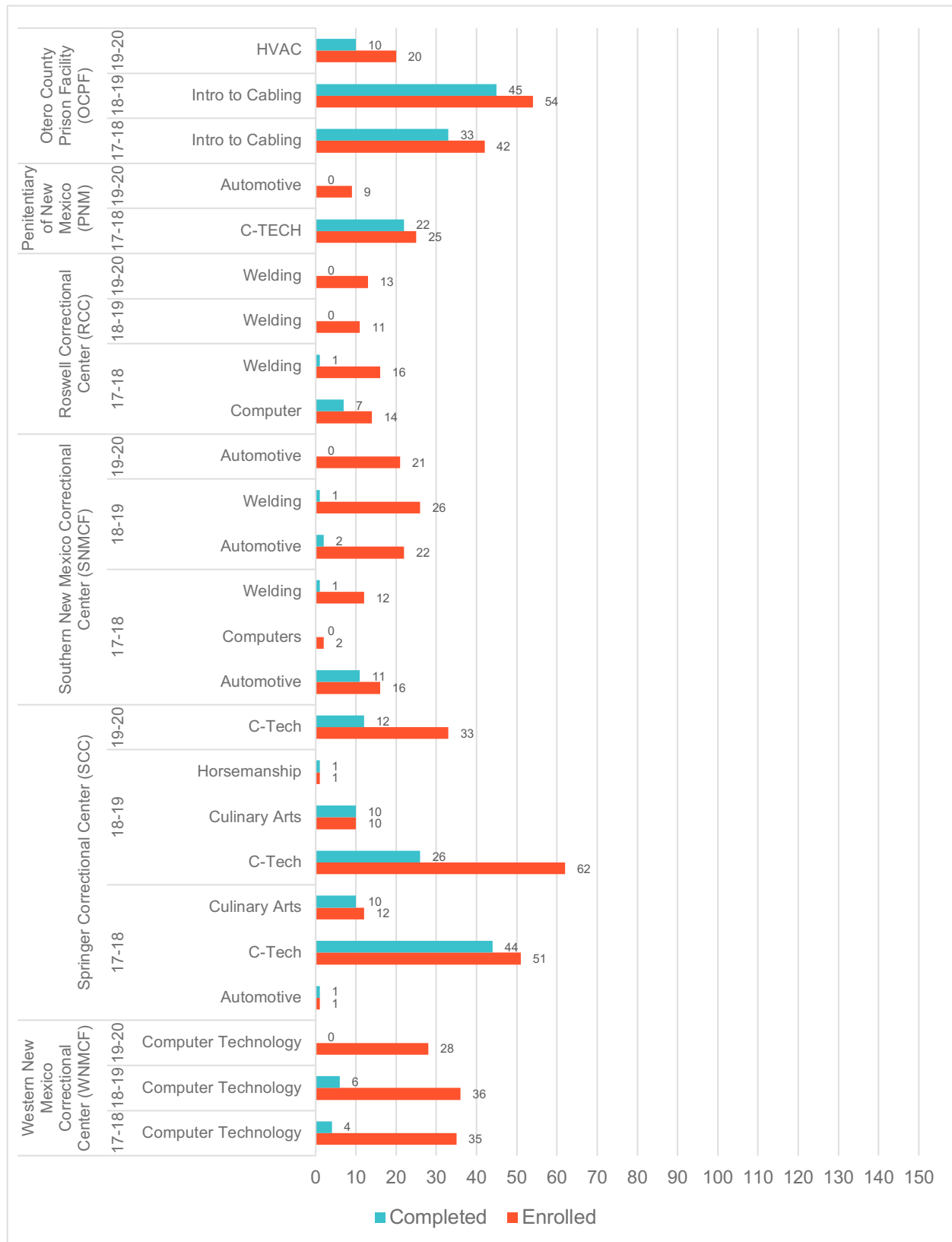
Charts C(i) and C(ii) below (pages 45 and 46) provide corrections education data for enrollment and completion of career and technical education (CTE) and vocational programs for years 2017 through 2020. The data are presented for consideration; the likelihood of error means that, at

best, a descriptive analysis is the most appropriate. (Note: Blue lines with an adjacent "0" indicate that while incarcerated individuals enrolled in the program, none completed it.) Accordingly:

- Within facilities, the same or similar programs are offered for all three years, although five facilities offered fewer or different courses than in 2019-2020 than in previous years

- Across facilities, programs vary for the most part. Notable exceptions include automotive and computer-related programs.

- Completion rates for C-TECH programs ranged from 36% to 88%; rates of enrollment and completion were consistent and high at Central New Mexico Correctional Facility

- Across facilities, 17 programs were completed by zero individuals

- Some facilities had 77 or more incarcerated individuals enrolled in programs, but only a third or less completed those programs. Of note is that, in 2017-2018, only four individuals out of 141 enrolled completed a Microsoft Proficiency program at Lea County Correctional Facility (LCCF). LCCF also had low rates of completion for three highly enrolled programs in the subsequent two years.

The reader is encouraged to consider all sources of variability when further reviewing these data and drawing their own conclusions.

Chart C(i). 2017-2020 Corrections Education CTE and Vocational Data (Part 1 of 2)

Central New Mexico Correctional Facility (CNMCF)

Year	Program	Completed	Enrolled
19-20	C-TECH	21	32
19-20	Automotive	3	9
18-19	C-TECH	28	32
18-19	Automotive	0	9
17-18	C-TECH	26	34
17-18	Automotive	18	20

Guadalupe County Correctional Facility (GCCF)

Year	Program	Completed	Enrolled
19-20	Weaving	2	21
19-20	Intro to Computers	7	37
19-20	Barber	0	21
19-20	Advance Computers	0	15
18-19	Weaving	7	21
18-19	Microsoft Proficiency	5	39
18-19	Barber	8	30
18-19	Advance Computers	2	36
17-18	Weaving	8	20
17-18	Microsoft Proficiency	22	79
17-18	Barber	8	27
17-18	Advance Computers	1	45

Lea County Correctional Facility (LCCF)

Year	Program	Completed	Enrolled
19-20	NCCER	5	91
19-20	Intro to Computers	25	87
18-19	NCCER	35	112
18-19	Microsoft Proficiency	0	45
18-19	H-VAC	0	33
18-19	Braille	0	12
18-19	Barber	0	30
17-18	NCCER	0	27
17-18	Microsoft Proficiency	4	141
17-18	H-VAC	17	41
17-18	Braille	0	13
17-18	Barber	0	15

Northeast New Mexico Detention Facility (NENMDF)

Year	Program	Completed	Enrolled
19-20	Wind Energy Technology	22	24
19-20	Intro to Computers	2	23
19-20	Building Trades	7	26
18-19	Wind Energy Technology	34	46
18-19	Microsoft Proficiency	4	25
18-19	Building Trades	12	24
17-18	Wind Energy Technology	27	33
17-18	Microsoft Proficiency	26	77
17-18	Building Trades	6	36
17-18	Automotive	0	9

Legend: ■ Completed ■ Enrolled

Chart C(ii). 2017-2020 Corrections Education CTE and Vocational Data (Part 2 of 2)

Facility	Year	Program	Completed	Enrolled
Otero County Prison Facility (OCPF)	19-20	HVAC	10	20
	18-19	Intro to Cabling	45	54
	17-18	Intro to Cabling	33	42
Penitentiary of New Mexico (PNM)	19-20	Automotive	0	9
	17-18	C-TECH	22	25
Roswell Correctional Center (RCC)	19-20	Welding	0	13
	18-19	Welding	0	11
	17-18	Welding	1	16
		Computer	7	14
Southern New Mexico Correctional Center (SNMCF)	19-20	Automotive	0	21
	18-19	Welding	1	26
		Automotive	2	22
	17-18	Welding	1	12
		Computers	0	2
		Automotive	11	16
Springer Correctional Center (SCC)	19-20	C-Tech	12	33
	18-19	Horsemanship	1	1
		Culinary Arts	10	10
		C-Tech	26	62
	17-18	Culinary Arts	10	12
		C-Tech	44	51
		Automotive	1	1
Western New Mexico Correctional Center (WNMCF)	19-20	Computer Technology	0	28
	18-19	Computer Technology	6	36
	17-18	Computer Technology	4	35

Legend: ■ Completed ■ Enrolled

The data below (Table E) are for corrections postsecondary education. Given the variability and sources of error described above and the consequent uncertainty, there is no accompanying analysis other than to say that the data appear to be those that would be of value were they reliable.

Table E. 2017-2020 Corrections Postsecondary Education Data

Facility	Year	Inmates Enrolled	Total Classes Enrolled	AVG # Classes	Completed Classes	% Not Completed	Credits Hrs Earned	# Inmates with Nil Credits	ENMU Ruidoso	Mesalands	Ashland	NMSU	U of Southwest	Bachelor's Degrees	Associate's Degrees
Central New Mexico Correctional Facility (CNMCF)	17-18	26	122	5	107	12%	349	1		26					
	18-19	21	84	4	75	11%	210	1		21					
	19-20	15	27	2	24	11%	69	2	6	2		7			
Guadalupe County Correctional Facility (GCCF)	17-18	130	569	4	357	37%	905	31		130				1	4
	18-19	144	712	5	493	31%	1200	33		144				0	0
	19-20	81	250	3	111	56%	354	29		83				0	0
Lea County Correctional Facility (LCCF)	17-18	116	584	5	520	11%	510	16		83			31	0	0
	18-19	147	541	4	429	21%	1321	30		128			19	0	0
	19-20	151	645	4	276	57%	829	85		124			35	0	0
North Western New Mexico Correctional Center (NWNMCC)	17-18	2	6	3	4	33%	16	0		2				0	0
	18-19	4	24	5	22	8%	62	0		4				2	0
	19-20	3	11	4	10	9%	32	1		3				0	0
Northeast New Mexico Detention Facility (NENMDF)	17-18	132	684	5	515	25%	1607	24		131			1	10	
	18-19	123	385	3	286	26%	899	37		123				8	
	19-20	53	87	2	59	32%	184	23		53					
Otero County Prison Facility (OCPF)	17-18	74	122	2	95	22%	285	13		122				0	0
	18-19	90	158	2	136	14%	417	8		131			5	0	0
	19-20	62	81	1	34	58%	102	32		81				0	0
Penitentiary of New Mexico (PNM)	17-18	31	52	2	38	27%	114	4		31				0	0
	18-19	41	85	2	71	16%	205	6		37			3	0	0
	19-20	70	168	2	56	33%	171	29	1	36	31	1		0	0
Roswell Correctional Center (RCC)	17-18	13	60	5	56	7%	177	1		13				0	0
	18-19	12	27	2	24	11%	72	0		12				0	1
	19-20	15	28	2	19	32%	60	5		11		4		0	2
Southern New Mexico Correctional Center (SNMCF)	17-18	22	51	3	23	55%	72	9		22				0	0
	18-19	31	64	2	43	33%	115	9		29				0	1
	19-20	39	130	3	58	55%	176	16	4	21	11	3		0	1
Springer Correctional Center (SCC)	17-18	18	34	2	24	29%	76	5		18				0	0
	18-19	37	86	2	78	9%	202	3		23		11	1	0	0
	19-20	38	97	3	55	43%	167	15	2	16		20		0	0
Western New Mexico Correctional Center (WNMCF)	17-18	41	83	2	67	19%	196	4		15		26		0	0
	18-19	41	154	4	140	9%	419	1		10		27		0	0
	19-20	31	112	3	86	23%	260	2		3		28		0	0

Despite noted variability and uncertainty, the data shared in this section are examples of what could be collected and considered as part of a systematic approach to reviewing and improving the effectiveness of education programming within a complex set of systems. This report has described many challenges that NMCD is committed to addressing, both internally and with its state agency and community partners.

Federal Guidance on Reentry Education

In 2012[72] and again in 2016,[73] the U.S. Department of Education published guidance on reentry education, defining components of effective programs and providing resources to assist in

implementing those components in corrections facilities nationwide. The components were designed to support the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education's Improved Reentry Education (IRE) initiative, [74] for which JFF provided technical assistance through a contract with the Office of Correctional Education. Below, those components and some of their salient features are shared in Table F for consideration when building a corrections education system focused on reentry in New Mexico.

Table F. Reentry Education Components and Salient Features

Component	Features
Program Infrastructure	• Multiple sources of funding, including private donations in addition to federal and state sources • Between corrections facilities and education partners, shared data to avoid duplication of services provided • Split salaries of personnel shared between facilities and education and education providers • Dedicated, sufficient space within correctional facilities for classes and learning experiences • A well-trained, dedicated staff trained in techniques, such as motivational interviewing,[i] that are shown to be effective when working with corrections populations • A centralized information system for the collection, storage, and sharing of accurate, complete, and timely data on program participation as well as short- and long-term outcomes. These data are critical to program evaluation, another critical feature of program infrastructure.
Strategic Partnerships	• Clearly defined common goals and objectives that partners can agree upon while delivering services consistent with those of their respective organizations • A plan for consistent, regular in-person, video, and electronic communication

[i] Per the referenced 2016 U.S. Department of Education publication, "Motivational interviewing (MI) is a communication method drawing on client-centered counseling and self-perception theory. Staff work to help individuals develop internal motivation for change by exploring and overcoming their ambivalence. The main goals of MI are engaging clients, focusing conversation on habits or patterns in need of change, evoking motivation for positive change, and planning for change."

	• Common definitions of program intent and outcomes, with plans for evaluation and improvement
Education Services	• A commitment to a seamless connection of education services between those offered in correctional facilities and those found in the community • Articulation agreements that mitigate transfer issues between correctional facilities and other correctional facilities as well as community-based service providers, minimizing disruptions in education and training. • Programs and career pathways that: align to need in the labor market; span secondary through adult and postsecondary education; provide contextualized instruction combining academic, technical, and employability skills training; provide opportunities to earn industry-recognized credentials; provide academic and career counseling and support; and prepare individuals for jobs without criminal history restrictions • Use of technology to enhance and expand program access. Realizing there are restrictions on the use technology in correctional facilities, the U.S. Department of Education recommends using an isolated local server, a point-to-point secure line, and a restricted internet connection. (See: Educational Technology in Corrections 2015) • Recruitment efforts that focus on identifying students most likely to benefit from educational programming, an acknowledgement that demand for such programs is high, but space is often limited
Transition Process	• Processes and procedures that take into account that, when incarcerated, individuals are removed from the labor market and have limited access to educational programs and college and career counseling • Intake and prerelease processes that assess students' knowledge, skills, and career interests • At intake, development of education and career plans that are revisited and revised regularly • Connections to community-based service providers that facilitate sharing student data, such as education records and educational and career plans, in a timely and consistent manner
Sustainability	• An overall strategy that: determines organizational readiness and capacity for sustainability, i.e., that each of the other four reentry education components are in place; maximizes resources, such as staff, volunteers, and internal and external partnerships; engages partners and key stakeholders and develops communication strategies to ensure widespread support of the program; and takes federal and state sources and private donations into consideration when developing funding strategies

	• A process for collecting data to improve programs and inform stakeholders of program successes and challenges

Together, the components make up the Reentry Education Framework,[75] represented graphically in Figure 3 below. These components, their salient features, and the state examples found in the next section will inform recommendations for how New Mexico can build a corrections education system focused on reentry.

Figure 3. The Reentry Education Framework

Reentry Education Framework

Incarcerated Individuals

Outcome: Long-term Employment in Living-wage Occupation Without Recidivating

Transition Into and Out of Correctional Facility Program

Education Services in a Career Pathways Context

Adult, Career and Technical, and Postsecondary Education

Transition Into and Out of Community-based Program

Moment of Release

Individuals with Criminal Histories

Strategic Partnerships

Program Infrastructure

Program Capacity, Resources, Data and Evaluation, and Policy

Sustainability

State Examples of Effective Reentry Education Efforts

The following vignettes are national examples of effective reentry education efforts. Four of these examples are found in JFF's "Voices of Reentry" series, which capture lessons learned while the organization served as a contracted technical assistance provider for the U.S. Department of Education's Improved Reentry Education (IRE) initiative mentioned above. This

section concludes with promising examples, past and current, found in the New Mexico corrections education system that could be leveraged when building for reentry in the state.

Examples of Effective Reentry Education Efforts from Various States

Building Academic Skills in Correctional Settings (BASICS)—Great Bend, Kansas. Through a memorandum of understanding with the Kansas Department of Corrections, Barton Community College works with two correctional facilities to provide adult basic education, high school equivalency preparation, postsecondary, and CTE programming.[76] Barton Community College uses its Promoting Reentry Success Through the Continuity of Education Opportunities (PRSCEO) grant funds to document and improve its administrative processes (recruiting, advising, enrollment, and retention). Students receive career counseling and attend informational meetings related to educational programming. Additionally, college staff work with facility staff to identify students most likely to benefit from program participation and screen students based on test scores, career interests, program needs, and time remaining on their sentence.

CareerLink—Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Intermediate Unit 13, an education service agency, provides educational services to the Lancaster County Prison in Pennsylvania. The agency used PRSCEO grant funds to strengthen local partnering between the prison and CareerLink, their local one-stop career center. Intermediate Unit 13 was able to increase the number of adult education classes offered at the prison and established reentry-focused education classes at CareerLink. Additionally, the PRSCEO funds were used to provide case management services, develop student orientation processes, and allow instructors with additional time to work with students one-on-one, and follow up with students who dropped out of classes.[77]

Certified Production Technician Program—Topeka, Kansas. The Certified Production Technician Program (CPT), offered through the Washburn University in partnership with the Topeka Correctional Facility in Kansas, is designed to provide an accelerated pathway to gainful employment for women who are incarcerated. Through Washburn's CPT program, students are eligible to earn eight nationally recognized certificates, such as Nationally Certified Production Technician, CPT Safety Certificate, CPT Quality Practices & Measurement Certificate, CPT Manufacturing Processes & Production Certificate and OSHA 10 Certificate. Students who do not yet have their HSE are able to take ABE courses to prepare them for the test. The instruction is integrated with the CPT training, so students learn skills that prepare them to enter the full CPT training program.

The CPT Program also offers students the ability to work with job-readiness coaches and services through the local workforce development board, KANSASWORKS, to get feedback on their résumés and interview style. The program's "alternative workforce specialist," a position

funded by KANSASWORKS, works directly with local employers to develop employment opportunities for CPT Program graduates. Graduation rates for the CPT Program are high, with 88% to 96% of women graduating with nationally recognized certificates ready for employment.[78]

Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary—Michigan. In 2013, the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC), in partnership with Jackson Community College, launched the Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary program through the Vera Institute of Justice.[79] Prior to the Pathways program, MDOC offered a wide range of CTE, associate's, and bachelor's programming designed to prepare individuals for employment post-release. What makes the Pathways model so unique is its "two-year-in, two-year-out" model for currently incarcerate students, allowing them to participate in postsecondary programming for two years inside correctional facilities and two years in the community.[80] In order to best prepare students and staff, MDOC conducted a series of academic, vocational, and college-readiness assessments, as well as college plans for each incarcerated student. Jackson Community College provides on-site academic advising, including transcript review, assessment of credits needed to complete a certificate program, and finalization of course schedules needed for the upcoming semester.[81] Additionally, MDOC has designated employment counselors at each of the facilities involved with the Pathways model. These counselors are equipped with tools and resources to help students understand local industries with the greatest growth and need in the communities they would be returning to.[82]

Postsecondary Participation and Admissions Policy—New York. New York has worked tangibly to remove harsh restrictions for individuals navigating life post-incarceration as well as establish policies that make transitioning easier to navigate. Currently, New York does not have any statutory restrictions on educational participation for incarcerated individuals. Since 2017, the State University of New York policy for admissions has stressed that it is "in the best interest of the state to admit students with previous criminal convictions to improve access to education and to enhance public safety by reducing recidivism and facilitating successful reintegration into society".[83] All state universities in New York have "banned the box," eliminating any questions related to an applicant's criminal history, with written policy protecting students from bias or abrupt disclosures.

The Prison Entrepreneurship Program—Houston, Texas. Established in 2004, the Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP) seeks to reduce recidivism and increase economic opportunity for incarcerated individuals through "entrepreneurship training and reentry services." Specifically, PEP utilizes an entrepreneurship-driven curriculum in four facilities across Texas, providing workforce training for participants and reentry services for graduate, including transitional assistance, post-release employment, temporary housing, and more. PEP

has been a noteworthy model for lowering recidivism. Currently, PEP delivers a 380% reduction in recidivism compared to nine other rehabilitation programs. Nearly one in four PEP graduates have started a business and 100% of PEP graduates are employed or self-employed within 90 days of release, with average wages 137% greater than the Texas minimum wage.[84]

Project Proven—La Crosse, Wisconsin. Project Proven, an educational program operated through La Crosse County Jail and Western Technical College, offers incarcerated individuals a variety of job-readiness courses designed to address employment barriers that individuals with a criminal record face upon release. Courses include "Barriers to Obtaining Employment," "Conflict Resolution on the Job," "Cover Letter and Statement of Change," and "Behavior-Based Interviewing."

Project Proven courses are offered both in the La Crosse County jail and on the college campus, allowing students to continue working on their certificates even if they finish their sentence (as many cycle in and out quickly within the county jail). Project Proven certificates are recognized by local employers, which helps when seeking employment upon reentry. Additionally, students are encouraged to continue on with Western Technical College to pursue higher degrees. Project Proven has designated staff to support students throughout their entire time in the degree program, often helping students enroll who may still be incarcerated, supporting students who need help acquiring textbook, or providing general encouragement. Project Proven also has a designated business and community coordinator who works directly with the business community to raise awareness about reentry, build relationships, and cultivate employment opportunities for students.[85]

Project Rebound—California. In order to address college application and enrollment deadlines that keep many incarcerated individuals from applying, California established Project Rebound. This program offers admission to individuals who may not typically qualify for university acceptance due to strict application deadlines. Project Rebound, which exists on nine of the California State University system's 14 campuses, provides individualized assistance to students previously incarcerated with the application and enrollment process, as well as ongoing campus support and connections.[86]

New Mexico-Specific Promising Corrections Education Efforts

Behavioral Health Services. Behavioral Health Services provide essential diagnostic assessment, treatment, and programming utilizing analysis of physical, psychological, and social factors that impact the well-being of incarcerated individuals. Behavioral Health counseling and addiction treatment services in particular support all education program and reentry efforts, including Recidivism Reduction Division evidence-based cognitive-behavioral programs like Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT) to help individuals better prepare for release.

Building New Futures. Building New Futures, a pilot program offered through NMCD in partnership with DWS, trains individuals for employment in the construction industry. The program focuses on OSHA certification, first aid, and the construction industry. Building New Futures also helps individuals prepare for interviews with companies for future employment post-release.

Corrections Industries. The Corrections Industries Division of the NMCD is responsible for the maintenance and expansion of work training programs for individuals who are incarcerated. These training programs focus on developing learning skills, as well as preparing the individual for a future in the workforce post-release.

Corrections Transitional Coordinators. Transitional Coordinator positions were created by NMCD and currently operate regionally to support individuals as they prepare for release. Transitional Coordinators work closely with treatment providers, transitional living, postsecondary institutions and more to support the transition incarcerated individuals will make. Increasingly dedicating staff resources to this complex function is a solid investment in desired success outcomes for individuals and communities.

Postsecondary Education Policy. New Mexico is currently only one of 17 states that use key federal and state funding streams to support and maintain postsecondary education within corrections facilities.[87] New Mexico has clear policy that provides for postsecondary education in correctional facilities, without which correctional facilities across the state cannot offer any form of postsecondary programming for incarcerated individuals. This is noteworthy because such a connection is not named, and therefore not protected, in most other states.

Project SOAR. Project SOAR (Success for Offenders After Release) was a reentry program offered within facilities and focused on job training, education, addiction services, and life skills to facilitate job placement and help individuals successfully reenter the community. The partnership involved working closely with DWS, who played a vital role in helping prepare individuals for job placement. The success of Project SOAR led to a 30% recidivism rate among those who completed the program, compared to the 48% recidivism rate among the general incarcerated population.[88]

Reentry College Support Services. In order to offset some of the barriers that many returning citizens face while transitioning to postsecondary institutions, some community colleges have been working to establish reentry support services and programs. These services are aimed specifically at guiding new students post-release as they continue into degree programs and navigate campus life. For example, Central New Mexico Community College

offers a Re-entry Resources Center specifically designed for incoming and currently enrolled students with a criminal record.

Residential Drug Abuse Program. Per 1990 policy, NMCD provides substance abuse programs for incarcerated individuals addicted to drugs and alcohol. One such program is the Residential Drug Abuse Program (RDAP), which calls for a variety of flexible approaches, licensed and trained staff, coordination with community programs, and the setting of realistic goals for rehabilitation when meeting the needs of incarcerated individuals with substance abuse problems.

Returning Citizens Collaborative. The Returning Citizens Collaborative (RCC) is a collaboration of community-based, faith-based, and government agencies that work with individuals previously incarcerated and their families to support their transition back to community.[89] Specifically, the collaborative works to find solutions that help individuals who are being released from prison reintegrate more successfully, and reduce regional and statewide recidivism rates as a result.

Addressing the Need for Funding

Early signs suggest that the pandemic has the potential to deeply impact an already-scarce resource: funding. JFF has approached this project with the dual understanding of the state's need to tend to immediate matters like the health, safety, and financial well-being of its residents *and* plan for mid- and long-term economic recovery. Temporary federal assistance like the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) will only go so far for so long.

Ultimately, New Mexico will need to utilize a variety of federal and state funding sources to provide adult education services but must do so in a context of a greater number of unemployed individuals and fewer available jobs. Making the most of funds in this context will require state-level and regional collaboration, especially to determine which services—and therefore which costs—can be shared. To do this, JFF suggests a braided funding approach (explored in detail in the Appendix). As the name suggests, braided funding refers to "weaving" together funding streams, including those from federal, state, private, and philanthropic sources. This strategy is more than simply bringing funding streams together to form a collective pool of assets. Braided funding involves the development of an aligned strategy to create more funding opportunities independent of specific streams, including how to reduce costs, raise new revenue, and redirect existing revenue to attain strategic goals. Braided together, funding streams and funding strategies lead to sustainability.

Federal Funding

Table G (below) provides examples of federal funding sources that are germane to the creation of a talent pipeline and workforce development system and should be considered for New Mexico's braided funding strategy.

Table G. Federal Funding Sources

Policy	Description
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)	The Adult Education Division oversees targeted educational services outlined by AEFLA. During the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the Adult Education Division served a total of 10,960 students, supported by $5,235,900 in state funding and $4,415,516 in federal funding from the U.S. Department of Education.[90] The New Mexico Corrections Department is one of the state's largest AEFLA subgrantees.
Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V)	While New Mexico's Perkins V budget does not explicitly name adult education in its budget, it does make the following allotments:[91] - Postsecondary recipients: $3,804,876 - Non-traditional training and employment (for occupations in which one gender comprises less than 25% of the employment in the respective field): $65,000 - Correctional institutions: $10,000
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E & T)	SNAP E & T supports education and training activities for SNAP recipients and can pay for the costs of operating education and training programs, including basic skills instruction, as long as the program or service is not available to the participant at no cost through another government programs or private sources. Reimbursement can also include tuition, mandatory student fees, and case management that include job retention services for up to 90 days.
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	TANF work activities can include participation in a career pathway program and be counted as either "vocational education training" or "job skills training directly related to employment." Basic education can only be counted as vocational education training if it is a "necessary and regular part" of a vocational program.
National Dislocated Worker Grant	In May 2020, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded a $3 million National Dislocated Worker Grant to the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, which will provide employment recovery for displaced workers significantly affected by the spread of COVID-19.

Ability to Benefit	The Ability to Benefit (ATB) provision in the Higher Education Act (HEA) allows lower-skilled individuals without a high school diploma or equivalent to qualify for federal financial aid for postsecondary education when they participate in an eligible career pathway.
USDA ReConnect Program	The USDA ReConnect Program awarded three internet providers a total sum of $23 million in grants to connect 2,200 homes in rural New Mexico to broadband.
Medicaid Appendix K Amendment	In response to the pandemic, New Mexico's Medicaid Appendix K Amendment allows participants up to $500 to ensure they have access to a computer, tablet, or other smart device necessary for remote videoconferencing, training, or monitoring by clinicians.
Incentives for Employing Returning Citizens	The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), out of the U.S, Department of Labor, offers employers workforce tax breaks to hire returning citizens, incentivizing their employment. This incentive is authorized through December 31, 2020.[92] Fidelity bonding protects employers from employee dishonesty. A fidelity bond "insures the employer for any type of stealing by theft, forgery, larceny, or embezzlement."[93]

State Funding Opportunities

Examples of state funding sources that can be used directly or braided—including with federal sources outlined above—for the creation of a talent pipeline and workforce development system in New Mexico are outlined in Table H (below).

In 2019, House Memorial 58 (HM 58) requested that the Public Education Department and the Higher Education Department, along with adult education directors, legislators, and other relevant stakeholders, study the number of adults over the age of 22 served annually through public secondary schools. Specifically, HM 58 sought to understand whether those adults would be better served in ABE or other equivalency programs within New Mexico. A committee formed to address HM 58 ultimately recommended that adult students 22 years of age and older would indeed be better served by NMHED's adult education programs, both because of the programs' design to meet the needs of adults and their better cost-effectiveness from a dollars-per-person perspective. This is of note because it clearly determines the age at which secondary education—and therefore secondary funding—can no longer be used for adult learners.

Table H. State Funding Sources

Policy	Description
Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP)	JTIP funds education and training for newly created jobs in expanding or relocating businesses for up to 6 months. The program reimburses 50-75% of employee wages. The program is open to: companies that manufacture or produce a product; non-retail service companies that export a substantial percentage of services out of state (50% or more of revenues and/or customer base); software development companies; and certain green industries. JTIP received an additional $9 million for fiscal year 2021.
Local Economic Development Act (LEDA)	LEDA provides grants to local governments to assist expanding or relocating businesses that will stimulate economic development and produce public benefits. Of note is that LEDA gives further consideration to rural and underserved areas of New Mexico (the prevalent geography) and environmentally sustainable outcomes (which aligns to the priority sector of sustainable and green energy). The LEDA allocation for fiscal year 2021 is $40 million, including $10 million for rural infrastructure projects.
Local Economic Assistance & Development Support Program (LEADS)	LEADS provides funding for economic development projects that produce sustainable outcomes, aligning to the priority sector of sustainable and green energy. Awards range from $5,000 to $15,000 per year through a cost reimbursement contract. When first implemented, 91% of the funding benefitted rural and frontier areas of the state.[94]
New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship	Beginning in Fall 2020, the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship will provide fee and tuition assistance for students enrolled in two-year college programs; $35 million is earmarked for the scholarship in the 2021 budget. Eligibility requirements state that applicants must be 18 years or older at the time of enrollment, be a resident of New Mexico, enroll full-time in a credit-bearing, 2-year program, complete a Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) (or another form of income verification), and maintain at least a 2.5 grade point average. The scholarship is available for recent high school graduates, HSE earners, as well as undocumented students. It is important to note that this particular free college plan is a "last-dollar program," in that the scholarship, once awarded, will only cover tuition and fees *after* students have expended federal and state aid, including the New Mexico Legislative Lottery Scholarship Program.

Priority Sector-Related Investments	Priority sector-related investments include: • $1 million for the four flagship Centers of Excellence (Bioscience, Sustainable Agriculture, Cybersecurity, and Renewable Energy) • $989,000 for outdoor recreation, a $900 million sector • Funding for eight additional full-time employees at Spaceport America • Two new full-time employees in the New Mexico Film Office

Conclusion and Recommendations

As leaders in New Mexico pivot from responding to the immediate effects of the COVID-19 crisis to developing strategies that lead to economic recovery, they have the opportunity to reorient state systems to support the development of career pathways that create a talent pipeline for today's economic crisis and the state's future economic growth and vibrancy. While the full education and economic impact of COVID-19 remains to be seen, JFF has, through this report, identified numerous programs and strategies—in New Mexico and nationally—with proven track records of success. Bringing these strategies to scale would have significant benefits for New Mexicans and the state's economy.

In New Mexico's new economy and labor market, the strategies pursued by state leaders will need to balance the immediate need for re-employment with the reality that, in many industries, postsecondary education leads to higher wages and career advancement. Career pathways will need to prepare participants for jobs in industries where opportunities exist now and in the short term, but attention should also be paid to the development of a skilled talent pipeline for the governor's priority sectors as they grow and offer increasing numbers of job opportunities for skilled workers. Cross-sector partnerships that include business and industry leaders can help to identify opportunities to expose workers and learners to new and emerging occupations while also addressing talent pipeline challenges. As these strategies develop, cross-sector partnerships can design programs intentionally to meet the needs of both participants and evolving workplaces.

Leaders across education, workforce and economic development, and industry must all play a role in ensuring all New Mexicans have access to the education, skill development opportunities, and employment necessary for the state to flourish during and after this unprecedented recession. State and regional leaders have the opportunity to collectively incentivize, fund, and partner to commit to the strategies needed for stabilization, recovery, and growth of an economy

in which all citizens have access to education, family-sustaining wages, and economic advancement.

As New Mexico considers how to build a strategic talent pipeline, the state must grapple with the complexity of designing a system for many different types of learners, while also taking into account the barriers that many New Mexicans face. While JFF recognizes that there need to be multiple approaches to meet the diverse needs of New Mexicans, the findings in this report suggest nine recommendations (outlined below) that will be foundational for New Mexico to develop state and regional capacity to better meet the needs of employers and build a stronger and more inclusive statewide talent pipeline in the state's in-demand industry sectors. A full description of each recommendation and its relevant action items for career pathways systems-building can be found in the *Roadmap for Creating a Strategic Talent Pipeline in New Mexico.*

Recommendations

Recommendation One: Career Pathways Systems

Plan and create career pathways systems that lead to careers in both the governor's priority sectors *and* those that provide family-supporting wages and benefits.

Recommendation Two: Cross-Agency and Cross-Sector Partnerships

Formalize a partnership between the Departments of Public Education, Higher Education, Workforce Solutions, Economic Development, and Corrections at the state level, and strengthen relationships across education, workforce development, economic development, and community corrections at the regional and local levels.

Recommendation Three: A Place-Based Approach

Coordinate across sectors to increase opportunity for economic advancement in communities and regions to produce sustainable economic growth for all and deploy educational strategies with a focus on equity and inclusion.

Recommendation Four: Work-Based Learning

 Create and scale equitable work-based learning opportunities that are integrated within career pathways and that deliver clear benefits for both participants and employers.

Recommendation Five: Policy and Funding

Ensure that policy and funding are appropriate and aligned with statewide goals, and that systems are in place to collect, manage, and leverage data.

Recommendation Six: Information Systems

Create comprehensive information systems that allow stakeholders to efficiently and effectively collect, share, and analyze data.

Recommendation Seven: The Digital Divide

Address the digital divide and provide resources to address differential access experienced by lower-skilled and low-income New Mexicans.

Recommendation Eight: Raising Collective Awareness

Develop and deploy an awareness campaign that informs New Mexicans about, and connects them to, education and training opportunities.

Recommendation Nine: Recommendations Specific to Corrections Education

Address the sources of variability in corrections education to build a reliable system that offers pathways to gainful employment for returning citizens.

Appendix: Braided Funding

Braided Funding

New Mexico has people in the right positions with the energy, experience, expertise, and, most importantly, authority to get the state back to work and thrive in a post-COVID era. Conversations among state leaders must be strategic and coordinated to ensure that New Mexico can build a strong talent pipeline. As needs are assessed and budgets are written or revised, how to make the most of limited resources will be a key consideration.

What is Braided Funding?

As the name might suggest, braided funding refers to "weaving" together funding streams, including those from federal, state, private, and philanthropic sources. This strategy is more than simply bringing funding streams together to form a collective pool of assets. Braided funding involves the development of an aligned strategy to create more funding opportunities independent of specific streams, including how to reduce costs, raise new revenue, and redirect existing revenue to attain strategic goals. Braided together, funding streams and funding strategies lead to sustainability.

Funding Strategies

JFF has partnered with numerous regional and state workforce development and adult education initiatives across the country to develop braided funding strategies to support their pathways system building efforts. Although context and emphasis might differ, there are common strategies used to achieve braided funding, summarized below in Table AA.

Table AA. Funding Strategies[95]

Strategy	Description
Prioritize funding	Braiding requires a commitment from institutional and state leaders to align long-term strategic priorities, as reflected in funding priorities, in support of improved educational programs for low-skilled adults. Alignment improves efficiency as a state pulls together various programs under the umbrella of a particular strategic priority and different funding streams provide complementary services to stretch each dollar further.
Engage private foundations	Many private foundations, including national, regional, and community-based foundations, make grants to support innovation in the fields of workforce development, employment, and education. Foundation support is rarely more than a short-term strategy, but it can be critical for filling specific needs such as scaling efforts or providing extra support, including financial support for tuition and fees costs, for high-need students. JFF recommends that leadership in all agencies and organizations at all levels work to identify and reach out to foundations that support education and workforce programs.
Provide fee waivers	Many states, institutions, and programs allow fee and tuition waivers for students ineligible for federal financial aid. Although this strategy may have short-term financial challenges, evidence suggests that many students enrolled using fee waivers persist in programs and then in college after they become eligible for financial aid. Thus, long-term, this becomes an enrollment strategy that ultimately generates tuition revenue.
Form additional partnerships	Partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) provide yet another opportunity to augment the social and academic supports available to students. CBOs might provide, at minimum, basic student services (e.g., career counseling and assessment testing). In other cases, CBOs are funding partners that support students financially as well.
Encourage employer support	Employers provide funding for pathways in a number of key ways, including tuition reimbursement for incumbent workers, direct financial contributions to programs, and in-kind use of facilities and equipment. To negotiate these types of agreements, workforce partners must conduct extensive outreach efforts to local employers, industry associations, and local workforce investment boards. Like all braided funding conversations, it is critical that all involved understand how they benefit from the relationship and clearly articulate what they can contribute.
Align state initiatives	Institutional, organizational, and state teams should conduct audits to identify both linkage points between different initiatives (target populations, shared outcomes, etc.) and funding overlap, and then consider braided funding opportunities.

Explore state funding allocations	State allocations to support pathways are among the most effective funding sources to ensure sustainability for pathways models. Some states (e.g., Washington, Minnesota, and Illinois) have had success in getting legislative funding support for pathways students and programs, but the process for building this support took considerable time and ongoing engagement. To make this process more effective, state teams should build cross-agency, public/private partnerships and be prepared to engage legislative staff armed with data to support why state investment is necessary and valuable.
Explore additional federal sources	Explore applying for federal programs that either are or have the potential to career pathways. Examples include H-1B Technical Skills Training Grants, College Access Challenge Grants, and the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP).
Document impact	Documenting the impact of public and private funding of programs can be a powerful tool for advocating for investment in career pathways. Collecting data may also help identify ways to reduce the costs of programs while maintaining their effectiveness.

Endnotes

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