



A SNAPSHOT OF COURSES TO EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Results from a National Survey of Nonprofit
Community College Collaborations



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Results from a National Survey of Nonprofit
Community College Collaborations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Millions of unemployed and underemployed workers are seeking opportunities for skills development and post-secondary education to improve their career prospects, and for many, the path runs through their local community college. Community colleges are one of the largest training delivery systems for today's workforce. Many lower-income workers, however, struggle to participate effectively in community college education offerings and often need more than skills training to be fully prepared for employment success. Students may lack career information and social networks that would connect them to career opportunities in their region. Their inadequate and often unsteady incomes leave them struggling to afford even the basics such as housing, food, transportation and childcare. These issues can make it far more difficult for students to succeed in education and connect to employment. Increasingly, nonprofit organizations and community colleges are partnering to help these individuals overcome hurdles to complete their educational goals, develop new professional networks, and find good jobs.

These collaborations use a range of educational, support and industry engagement strategies to help students increase their skills and obtain jobs, or advance in the workplace. The Aspen Institute Workforce Strategies Initiative (AspenWSI) has identified a set of these collaborations as Courses to Employment (C2E) partnerships. These partnerships implement the following strategies: combine the strengths of community colleges and local workforce nonprofit organizations; target a specific industry or cluster of occupations; support workers in improving their workplace skills; support students in persisting in an educational pathway; and provide labor market navigation services.

AspenWSI conducted a three-year demonstration project between 2008 and 2011 that studied six C2E partnerships. The demonstration project showed the collaborative approach to be a promising and effective strategy for serving low-income adult students in community college. High percentages of participants completed programs, and most graduates obtained employment after training and earned higher wages than they did prior to training.¹

In the fall of 2013, AspenWSI launched a survey of C2E partnerships to better understand how common this strategy is and to further explore what these partnerships look like. AspenWSI required that partnerships completing the survey have a goal of *helping students obtain or improve their employment*. The survey asked nonprofit and college partners about the benefits to each institution in their collaboration, the students they serve and the outcomes they achieve, the training and support services partners provide, their engagement with industry and businesses, the funding and resources partners use to support their work, and the challenges and successes they experience in their collaborations.

The survey was designed to match the responses from pairs of nonprofits and community college partners that work together. To do this, AspenWSI launched the survey in two stages, using two similar instruments. The first went to nonprofit organizations and the second went to the community college partners they identified. The majority of the questions asked of nonprofits and community colleges were the same, which allowed for analysis of overall partnership responses to describe results and findings. This approach facilitated the comparison of perspectives and opinions within these collaborations about the roles of each entity, as well as their partnership challenges and goals.

¹ For research findings from Courses to Employment, please see Maureen Conway, Amy Blair, and Matt Helmer, "Courses to Employment: Partnering to Create Paths to Education and Careers," 2012. <http://www.aspenwsi.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/C2E.pdf> (accessed 5 April 2014).

AspenWSI received survey responses from 177 nonprofit organizations and 88 of their community college partners. The responses from the 177 nonprofit organizations provide a national perspective on the scope of C2E partnerships. An analysis of the 88 responses from both sides of the partnership — nonprofit organization and community college — provides a deeper understanding of the partnership strategies and how the two entities work together.

Key Findings

OVERVIEW OF C2E PARTNERSHIPS: FINDINGS FROM THE INITIAL SURVEY OF NONPROFITS

The results from the initial survey of 177 nonprofit organizations show:

C2E Partnerships are Located throughout the United States and are a Growing Field.

The survey yielded responses from 177 nonprofit organizations across the United States, with fairly even representation in all U.S. regions. Nonprofit respondents represented a mix of both old and new partnerships. While about one-fifth of the C2E partnerships reported being more than 10 years old, more than half were less than five years old and more than a third of those were launched in the preceding three years. This result may indicate growth in the number of partnerships, and we believe that to be likely, based on comments from the field. Also we recognize that not all partnerships may endure over time. The survey did not ask whether any past partnership efforts had been discontinued.

C2E Partnerships Target Various Industry Sectors and Specific Populations of Students.

Nearly 80 percent of all nonprofit respondents reported a focus on preparing students for employment in a particular industry or set of occupations,² with health care, manufacturing, construction and information technology the most commonly cited. Seventy-eight percent of the 177 nonprofits reported partnerships focusing on serving low-income individuals; 40 percent focused on students with limited or no work history. Young adults (ages 18 to 26), minority groups and dislocated workers were also identified as top populations served by partnerships.

BENEFITS, CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES IN C2E PARTNERSHIPS: FINDINGS FROM SURVEYS OF PARTNERS

These findings are based on an analysis of surveys completed by 88 community colleges and their nonprofit partners (a subset of the 177 non-profit responses described above).

C2E Partnerships Reported Improved Student Educational and Employment Outcomes.

Both nonprofit organizations and community colleges reported that partnerships typically resulted in positive education and employment outcomes for students served. Seventy-two percent of nonprofits said a student served by the partnership typically obtains employment in a training-related field. Nearly half of the community colleges (48 percent) reported that the students served by the partnership are more likely to complete their educational goals than students in similar training programs at the college. Another quarter of community college respondents indicated that students served by the partnership are equally as likely to complete their educational goals as other students. Given that the majority of students served by C2E partners responding to this survey are from groups that may face barriers to success in community college, these findings indicate significant success.

² This finding can be partially attributed to our strategy to field the survey to the nonprofit workforce organizations, community colleges, public agencies, and other workforce and training entities with which we have worked over the years. Since the 1990s, AspenWSI has conducted extensive work with education and workforce development professionals to advance sectoral strategies, which are industry-specific approaches to workforce development.

C2E Partnerships Help Community Colleges More Effectively Serve Underserved Populations.

For community colleges, the most frequently reported benefit of their partnerships with nonprofits is the ability to better serve their student populations, including individuals the college may not otherwise reach or serve effectively. These populations can include older students, first-generation college students and minorities.

C2E Partnerships Help Community Colleges Provide Students with Support Services not Typically Offered.

Community colleges reported that the partnerships allow them to provide students with a range of additional supports and resources. Ninety-one percent of partnerships surveyed reported providing students with case management or other services to coordinate personal support services. More than 80 percent of the partnerships report they provide students with financial assistance, not including financial aid, and 70 percent provided assistance with transportation. Also, partnerships reported to a lesser extent that they provide assistance with child care (55 percent), training stipends (52 percent), housing assistance (44 percent) or legal assistance (25 percent).

C2E Partnerships Allow Nonprofits to Expand the Range of Training Available to Students.

C2E partnerships offer a range of training and credentialing opportunities. Three-quarters reported providing for-credit certificate programs, and two-thirds reported offering noncredit vocational or technical skills training. Other types of education and training provided by partnerships include college orientation, developmental education, associate degree programs, basic skills, General Educational Development (GED) certification and English language skills. These types of training are not mutually exclusive. Partnerships reported providing a median of four different types of training. Eighty percent of partnerships that offered noncredit vocational training also reported offering credit certificate programs.

C2E Partnerships can Leverage and Integrate Funding Sources to Provide More Resources to Serve Students.

Community colleges and nonprofit organizations noted using many different funding streams to finance the work of their partnership, allowing them to better address the needs of workers and industry partners. Nonprofit organizations more frequently reported receiving funding from the federal government, foundations and donations. Community colleges more frequently reported receiving funding from the state government and fee-for-service payments from businesses. Both community colleges and nonprofits reported that their partnerships created the opportunity to provide additional resources, such as college and career navigation supports to students.

C2E Partnerships Help Institutions Better Engage Industry and Business Partners.

Many of the nonprofits and community colleges reported that partnering helped them meet the hiring needs of employers. In general, community colleges and nonprofits noted they shared responsibilities in engaging businesses. Other findings related to business engagement include:

- 92 percent of partnerships reported that businesses inform their curriculum design or career pathways development;
- 90 percent reported that they engage businesses to hire program graduates; and
- 68 percent reported that they engage businesses to provide internships.

Businesses also contribute in other ways, including:

- 64 percent of partnerships reported that businesses provide in-kind resources, such as materials, equipment or training space; and
- 44 percent reported that businesses provide instructors.

C2E Partnerships Help Community Colleges Students Find Jobs, and Provide Post-Placement Supports.

Community colleges commonly identified nonprofit organizations as the entity primarily responsible for providing job placement services to students. The most common type of supports provided included resume building, job search assistance, and interview preparation activities. Other job placement-related activities included opportunities for students to meet with employers through networking and job fairs. In addition, partnerships provided students with supports after they were placed in a job, such as job retention and post-placement career counseling and navigation supports.

Challenges for C2E Partnerships include Lack of Funding, Barriers to Data Collection and Data Sharing, and Working across Institutions.

Nonprofit organizations and community colleges reported a number of challenges that hinder the work of their collaborations including:

- 84 percent of nonprofits and 88 percent of community colleges reported difficulty identifying and securing resources to expand their partnerships;
- 80 percent of colleges and 63 percent of nonprofits noted that collecting and sharing students' outcome data, especially employment data, is a continual challenge for partnerships; and
- 69 percent of nonprofits and 56 percent of community colleges reported challenges in working collaboratively across institutions.

College Bridge Programs, Career Navigators and Wrap-Around Services are Considered Best Practices and Innovations.

Nonprofits and community colleges bring different perspectives to C2E collaborations, which can help them develop new strategies for supporting the success of students. Both nonprofits and community college respondents cited the value of wrap-around support services to community college students. Some specifically identified the important role of career navigators in helping students enter college, get access to support programs, and find employment. Nonprofits, and to a lesser extent community colleges, reported that they consider pre-college bridge programs a best-practice strategy that they use.

Recommendations

AspenWSI's survey results indicate Courses to Employment partnerships are a growing field of practice in workforce development and are generating innovations to meet the needs of workers. Investment and support are needed to capitalize on this momentum. Our recommendations include:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INVESTORS AND POLICYMAKERS

Invest in and incentivize partnerships that help nonprofits and community colleges better serve students and employers.

Public and philanthropic dollars are an important source of funding for C2E partnerships. Survey results, as well as some of our earlier research, indicate these partnerships show promise in helping students achieve education and employment goals. Most partnerships operate at a relatively small scale, however, and the majority also noted that it is difficult to find resources to grow or expand their partnerships. Investment strategies to support partnership building would further build this field of practice and provide information on its potential to contribute to the success of the students and employers the partnerships serve.

Invest in opportunities for partners to learn from each other and to develop skills for creating and sustaining partnerships.

C2E partnerships also need opportunities to share their practices and to learn about the innovations and strategies of other partnerships. C2E partnerships' innovations around curriculum and instruction, support services, industry engagement, and blending and leveraging different types of funding and resources represent promising workforce practices and have potential applicability for the broader field. Supporting learning opportunities can accelerate the spread and growth of these innovations and can be essential for the field's continued development and success.

Build partners' capacity to collect and share relevant student data.

Educational and employment data can help partnerships plan and improve their programming. Good data can inform a partnership about what training approaches and programs are leading to the best employment outcomes, which students are struggling and which are succeeding, which businesses are hiring, and which students continue to pursue additional education. Collecting these types of data usually requires access to data from different sources and can be expensive and time-intensive. However, these data are vital to partners' being able to evaluate their work and to adjust their strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NONPROFITS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

Leverage additional resources to improve student outcomes and responsiveness to employers by partnering with other organizations and institutions.

The survey data makes a strong case for forming partnerships to help students succeed in school, obtain skills, and find jobs. It is clear that both community colleges and nonprofits can benefit by teaming up to develop more holistic approaches to serving students in employer-driven training and workforce programs.

Think beyond the short-term and build relationships that will last by developing well-articulated goals, roles and systems.

C2E partnerships are often complex and may involve numerous educational, support service and industry engagement strategies. Partnerships also can include various community college departments and staff from both institutions, as well as other community partners. Partners usually leverage and blend multiple funding streams and need to collect a lot of data to report on and inform their work. Managing all of this is not easy. Partnerships must ensure that the right infrastructure is in place to succeed. The buy-in and involvement of high-level leaders at both institutions, as well as a shared vision, clearly articulated roles, and data and other systems to support the work of the partnership are elements that can improve the likelihood of success.

Raise awareness of your partnership and its successes in order to gain support, attract resources and grow the field.

The survey findings indicate that partnering improves outcomes for nonprofits and community colleges. Sharing these successes and the strategies behind them with policymakers, investors, researchers and other workforce development stakeholders can attract support and resources for the partnership as well as grow this field. Nonprofits and community colleges should work together across their communities and across the nation to cultivate a community of practice that can support further development and continuous improvement of C2E partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

Millions of low-income unemployed and underemployed workers are seeking opportunities for skills development and post-secondary education to improve their career prospects, and, for many of them, the path runs through their local community college. Community colleges are one of the largest training delivery systems for today's workforce. Many of today's workers, however, struggle to participate effectively in community college education offerings. A report from the National Student Clearinghouse found only 36 percent of community college students who enrolled in a public two-year institution for the first time in the fall of 2006 completed a credential within six years.ⁱ Students attending exclusively part-time completed at lower rates than those attending exclusively full-time. Many students participate via a mixture of full-time and part-time enrollments, and these students complete at roughly the same rates as those attending exclusively full-time. Overall, this indicates that a variety of students are struggling on campus and are in need of more than training to be fully prepared for employment success.

Populations such as military veterans, immigrants, disconnected youth and ex-offenders may also struggle to complete coursework without adequate supports, such as help with housing, transportation and childcare. For many, the challenges of balancing work and school are too much to manage. Seventy-five percent of today's community college students are juggling family responsibilities, work and school.ⁱⁱ And, the primary reason that students drop out of community college and university is due to the stress of combining work and school, according to a national survey of college students ages 22 to 30.ⁱⁱⁱ

Increasingly, policymakers and others are turning to community colleges to deliver the bulk of the nation's workforce skills development. In addition to playing a bigger role in developing the skills of our workforce, community colleges are being asked to improve their completion and graduation rates, more effectively serve students with barriers, and build connections to businesses and industry to ensure students are being trained for in-demand jobs. Like all workforce development institutions, however, community colleges have finite resources and unique institutional strengths and weaknesses. Community colleges, as a result, cannot address the educational and employment challenges of the workforce alone.

Workforce development nonprofits also face new challenges and realities. The economic recession, growing income inequality and a weakening social safety net have left countless Americans with significant needs. While many nonprofits are adept at providing case management and support services to clients with major needs, few can provide the training that leads to credentials recognized by businesses. Nonprofit leaders are increasingly aware of the need for low-income clients to complete some level of post-secondary education if they are to obtain good jobs, but lack the resources to support their efforts.

More and more nonprofit workforce organizations and community colleges are leveraging their institutional strengths by developing partnerships that provide workers with the support they need to succeed in the classroom and connect to quality employment in their labor market. AspenWSI named these collaborations "Courses to Employment" (C2E) partnerships, and early research showed students served by these types of collaborations achieving promising educational and employment outcomes.

AspenWSI's Courses to Employment (C2E) demonstration project provided the framework for the types of C2E partnerships that were explored in the survey. The following section provides an overview of these partnerships.

Courses to Employment (C2E) Partnerships

C2E was a three-year demonstration project that concluded in 2011. The project was funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and implemented by AspenWSI. It was designed to learn how six partnerships between community colleges and nonprofit organizations were helping low-income adults succeed in post-secondary education and the workforce. The box below defines the C2E strategies that were explored in the demonstration project.

WHAT ARE C2E STRATEGIES?

C2E strategies are workforce development approaches that focus on non-traditional students, typically low-income, working adults and that:

- **Combine the strengths of community colleges and local workforce nonprofit organizations** to serve students more effectively than either could alone;
- **Target a specific industry or cluster of occupations**, developing a deep understanding of the interrelationships between business competitiveness and the workforce needs of the targeted industry;
- **Support workers in improving their workplace skills**, enhancing their ability to compete for higher-quality jobs;
- **Support students in persisting on an education pathway**, providing motivational support and counseling, as well as access to needed social services and academic supports, including basic skills development; and,
- **Provide labor market navigation services** that help students find jobs and build the professional networks and communication skills they need to retain jobs and succeed within a local industry.

C2E partnerships use a range of educational, support and industry engagement strategies, and the field of practice showcases a diverse set of approaches and strategies to support student success. Though all partnerships aim to improve their students' skills and education levels and connect them to better jobs, partnerships are often structured and organized in different ways. Some partnerships focus on basic skills development, and many others help students pursue short-term vocational skills training, credit certificates or associate degrees. While community colleges often assume most of the responsibility in curriculum development and training delivery, in some partnerships, the nonprofit provides the training and designs the courses. Despite differences in structure and approach, most C2E partnerships have three common elements as shown in Figure 1: a high-quality education program, a range of student academic and non-academic support services, and an industry strategy that focuses on meeting business needs and assisting students to enter and succeed in the local labor market.

The three strategies are often integrated. The support strategy is often connected to and informed by the education and industry strategies. For example, a partnership may customize its education and support strategies to meet employers' needs, which were identified through an industry engagement strategy. This information may inform curriculum and training design, recruitment and assessment of workers to meet industry requirements, and support service strategies such as the need for assistance with purchasing work tools, uniforms or equipment.

FIGURE 1: C2E APPROACH



SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND RESPONSE

AspenWSI conducted a web-based survey of nonprofit-community college partnerships in the fall of 2013. This survey was designed to answer a number of questions about this emerging field of practice including:

- How common are nonprofit-community college partnerships?
- What kinds of educational programming, support services and industry engagement do partners implement?
- What roles and responsibilities do partners commonly assume in implementing these activities and strategies?
- What populations of students are served through partnerships and what education and employment outcomes do they achieve?
- What funding sources and resources do partnerships use to support their work together?
- What are the challenges of these partnerships from both the nonprofit and community college perspectives?
- What innovative strategies support the work of partnerships?

We designed the survey to match responses from nonprofit and community college partners in order to learn about how their partnerships work. The survey was done in two stages through two similar survey instruments. During the first stage, AspenWSI sent an email invitation to nearly 10,000 nonprofit workforce organizations, community colleges, public agencies, and other workforce and training entities asking organizations partnering with a community college to *help students obtain or improve their employment* to respond to a web-based survey. AspenWSI received complete responses from 171 nonprofit organizations, including six that completed the survey twice based on two distinct partnerships. As a result, we received data on 177 distinct partnerships from nonprofit organizations. During the second stage, AspenWSI surveyed the community college partners identified by the nonprofit organizations that responded during the first stage of the survey. AspenWSI received complete responses from 88 of the 177 community college partners identified by nonprofits during the first stage. The surveys included closed- and open-ended questions.

AspenWSI used this staged survey approach for a few reasons. By merging the survey responses of partnering nonprofits and community colleges, we were able to use partnerships as the main unit of analysis and describe results about those partnerships. Also, having targeted questions for different sides of the partnership facilitated the comparison of perspectives and opinions within these collaborations about partnership challenges and goals. This approach had the downside, however, of limiting the response rate to some degree, particularly on the college side. Aside from some colleges not responding to the survey, there were instances of nonprofit respondents not sharing the college partners' contact information.

Finally, in the initial survey, nonprofit responses to questions about students' particular educational and employment outcomes yielded inconclusive results. To remedy this, AspenWSI sent a brief follow-on survey to the nonprofit respondents inquiring about the outcomes typically achieved by students served in the partnership. We received responses from 67 of the 88 nonprofit organizations represented in a C2E partnership. More details on these specific follow-on questions and the results are provided later in the report.

Survey Responses from Nonprofits on Partnerships in General

Overall, the survey yielded responses from partnerships across the United States, with fairly even representation in all regions. The 177 nonprofits responding in stage one of the survey represented 34 states and the District of Columbia. The nonprofits engaged in these partnerships varied in size, with almost half reporting an annual budget of \$3 million or more for their entire organization, and another quarter reporting a budget between \$1 and \$3 million. Finally, the nonprofits represented a range of organizational types, with 63 percent identifying themselves as community-based organizations. Table 1 provides details on the nonprofit survey responses about their partnerships.

TABLE 1: NONPROFIT SURVEY RESPONSE ON PARTNERSHIPS

	Nonprofit Response (n=177)
Geographic Location	
South	32%
West	27%
Midwest	22%
East	20%
Geographic Area of Service	
Urban or metropolitan	40%
Mixed region	29%
Suburban	4%
Rural	11%
Type of Nonprofit Participating in the Partnership	
Community-Based Organization	63%
Workforce Investment Board or One-stop Centers	20%
Union-affiliated Nonprofits	4%
Worker Centers	3%
Funder Collaboratives	2%
Other	9%
Size of Nonprofit Budget (n=159)	
Less than \$250,000	6%
\$250,000 – \$500,000	7%
\$500,000 – \$1 million	9%
\$1million – \$3 million	26%
More than \$3 million	52%

Over half of the C2E partnerships were less than five years old and over a third were launched in the three years before the survey in 2013. More than half (62 percent) of the programs reported serving less than 100 students in the preceding 12 months, almost one fifth (18 percent) served more than 200 students, and approximately one quarter reported serving 25 students or fewer. This result may indicate growth in the number of partnerships, and we believe that to be likely, based on comments from the field. We also recognize that not all partnerships may endure over time. The survey did not ask whether any past partnership efforts had been discontinued.

Figure 2 provides a break-down of the number of years of C2E partnerships, and Figure 3 summarizes the number of students served in the most recent 12-month period.

The survey found that the majority of partnerships serve a variety of student populations and target various industry sectors.³ In general, 78 percent of nonprofit organizations reported their partnerships focus on serving low-income individuals, while 40 percent focus on individuals with limited or no work history. Young adults (ages 18-26), minority groups and dislocated workers were also identified as top populations served by partnerships. Figure 4 shows a breakdown of the top student populations that partnerships were designed to serve.

FIGURE 2: LENGTH OF PARTNERSHIP (n=177)

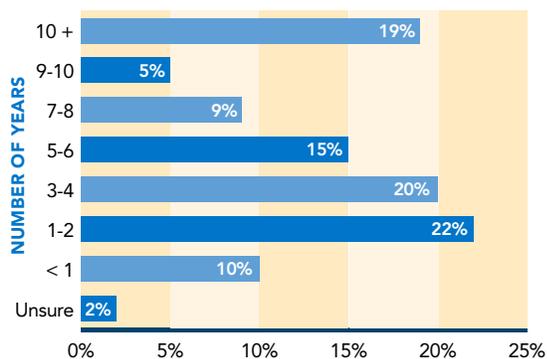


FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED BY PARTNERSHIP (n=177)

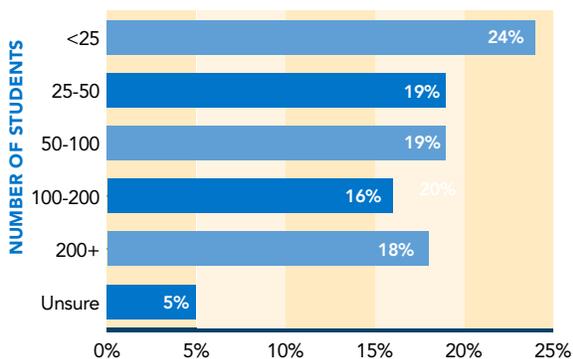
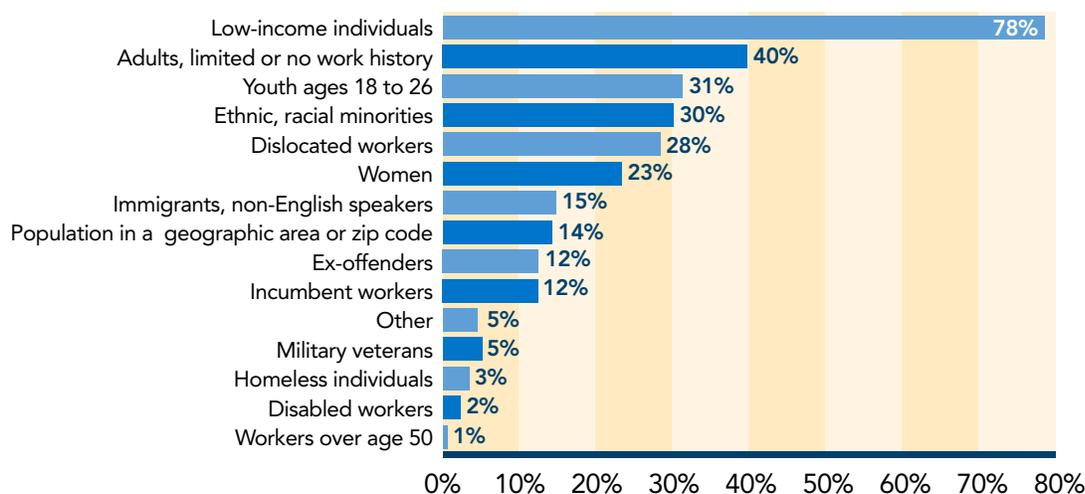


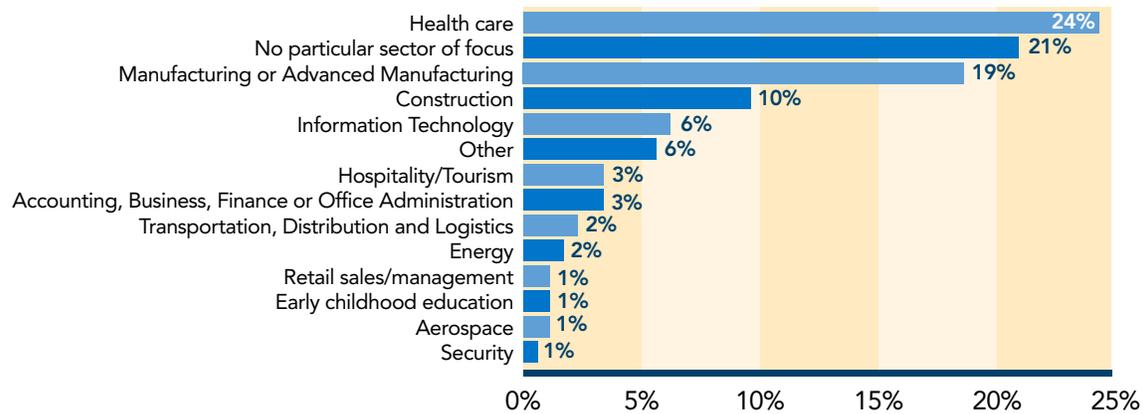
FIGURE 4: TOP POPULATIONS SERVED BY PARTNERSHIPS (n=177)



³ This finding can be partially attributed to AspenWSI fielding the survey to many of the nonprofit workforce organizations, community colleges, public agencies, and other workforce and training entities with whom we have worked over the years. Since the 1990s, AspenWSI has conducted extensive work with education and workforce development professionals to advance sectoral strategies, which are industry-specific approaches to workforce development.

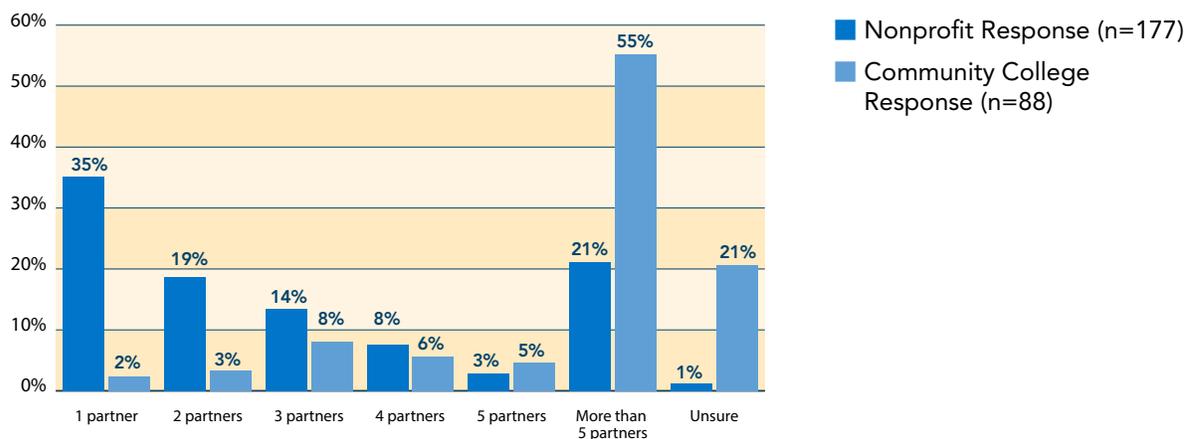
Almost four-fifths of the nonprofits reported targeting a particular industry or sector in their partnership, while 21 percent reported no sector of focus. Partnerships commonly cited health care, manufacturing, construction and information technology as industries in which they are preparing students for employment (see Figure 5).⁴

FIGURE 5: PARTNERSHIP INDUSTRY OR SECTOR OF FOCUS (n=177)



Finally, even though the survey instructed respondents to choose just one partnership on which to focus their responses⁵, AspenWSI asked both sets of respondents to report the number of employment-related nonprofit-community college partnerships with which they are involved. Survey results indicate that most of the nonprofits and community colleges have multiple partners, with more than half of community colleges and more than one-fifth of nonprofits reporting five or more partnerships with an institution of the other type.

FIGURE 6: NUMBER OF NONPROFIT OR COLLEGE PARTNERS



The remainder of this publication focuses on both the nonprofit and community college survey responses on their partnership. The survey asked similar questions to both respondents to understand their individual perspectives and to capture more information about what partnerships do and how they work together. The 88 complete responses from both sides of the partnership, the nonprofit and the community college with which it works, are reflected in the following analysis and findings.

⁴ Partnerships that selected “Other” identified their sectors as apartment maintenance, building services, customer service/telemarketing, engineering, green jobs, wild land and fire, and entrepreneurship or small business development.

⁵ The instrument suggested that nonprofit respondents focus their responses on the college partnership about which they are most knowledgeable. The instrument further suggested the focus college could be the one that serves the most students or that has the longest partnership history, or both.

WHY PARTNER TOGETHER: PERSPECTIVES FROM NONPROFITS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES ON THE BENEFITS OF PARTNERSHIP AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The survey responses help document the value of C2E partnerships and why nonprofits and community colleges work together. In addition to asking about benefits of partnership, the survey also asked respondents for details about the types of training and support services provided to students, and about the various ways that businesses are engaged in the work of the partnership. The survey further asked both community colleges and nonprofit organizations about their roles and responsibilities in implementing partnership strategies to identify trends in how C2E strategies are supported. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the benefits reported in open-ended responses by colleges and nonprofit organizations.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF THE BENEFITS OF PARTNERSHIP

BENEFITS REPORTED IN OPEN-ENDED SURVEY RESPONSES	
<p>Frequently Reported by Community Colleges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better ability to serve the wider community and populations that the college may otherwise not reach or serve effectively • Connect students to support services and community resources • Connect students to jobs • Improved education and employment outcomes for students • Additional funding and resources • Better ability to engage industry partners and meet their needs 	<p>Frequently Reported by Nonprofit Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased training and career opportunities for constituents. • Ability for constituents to earn college credits and credentials • Improved education and employment outcomes for constituents • Additional funding and resources • Better ability to engage industry partners and meet their needs

How Do Partnerships Benefit Community Colleges?

In open-ended responses, community colleges identified three main ways that partnerships with nonprofits help them serve students:

- Helping reach and more effectively serve underserved populations in the community;
- Providing students with links to services not traditionally offered by colleges; and
- Helping students find jobs.

Each of these is explored further in the sections below.

REACHING AND SERVING UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

In assessing the benefits of these partnerships, community colleges most often cited the ability to serve their community and student populations that may not typically be successful in a college setting. One community college representative said, “The partnership helps the college reach a population that may not otherwise make it to the campus.” Another college echoed this sentiment stating, “We are able to reach persons in the community that might feel intimidated about coming to the college on their own or for the first time.”

Community colleges further described these populations in a series of close-ended questions that asked how participants served were different or similar to other students on the college campus. Forty percent of the community colleges reported that students served by the partnership were older than the majority of students on campus.⁶ Almost 40 percent of community colleges reported that students served by the partnership are more likely to be first-generation college students than other students at their college.⁷ More than 30 percent described students served by partnership as more likely to be financially eligible for Pell Grants.⁸ Nearly one-fifth of community colleges said students served by the partnership are more racially diverse,⁹ and slightly more than one-fifth reported they are more ethnically diverse than other students the college serves.¹⁰ Overall less than 10 percent of community colleges reported that the students served through partnerships were younger, less likely to be first-generation college students, less likely to be Pell recipients, or less likely to be minorities.

CONNECTING STUDENTS TO SUPPORT SERVICES AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Community colleges often responded that their partnership provides students with additional supports and resources. One community college reported that “the nonprofit provides significant intensive services that the college cannot provide every student.” Community colleges reported that “navigation,” “barrier mitigation,” and “wrap-around services/case management” are important benefits the partnership with a nonprofit provides. Another community college representative said, “Our nonprofit partner also provides insight and awareness of other community resources and programs which colleges are not always aware of.”

These responses about nonprofits’ role in enhancing support service provision are supported by both community college and nonprofit organization answers to questions about who is responsible for providing support services to students in the partnership. Sixty percent of colleges and 76 percent of nonprofits reported that the nonprofit organization in their partnership assumes most or all of the responsibility in providing support services to students.¹¹ This is not surprising given that wrap-around supports are typically considered a key component of nonprofit service offerings, and community colleges are not typically able to provide non-academic support services to students on their own.

⁶ Six percent of colleges said students served by the partnership tend to be younger than other students at the college; 48 percent said they tend to be the same age; and 7 percent did not know.

⁷ Five percent of colleges said students served by the partnership are less likely to be first generation students; 33 percent said they are equally as likely to be first generation students as other students at the college; and 24 percent did not know.

⁸ Eight percent of colleges said students served by the partnership are less likely to be eligible for Pell Grants; 28 percent said they are equally as likely to be eligible as other students at the college; and 33 percent did not know.

⁹ Seven percent of colleges said students served by the partnership are less racially diverse; 60 percent said they tend to represent the same racial diversity as other students at the college; and 15 percent did not know.

¹⁰ Eight percent of colleges said students served by the partnership are less ethnically diverse; 55 percent said they tend to represent the same ethnic diversity as other students at the college; and 15 percent did not know.

¹¹ Twenty-five percent of colleges and 17 percent of nonprofits said the partners share equal responsibilities, and eight percent of colleges and five percent of nonprofits said the community college is responsible for providing most or all support services to students. Seven percent of community colleges and two percent of nonprofits reported they did not know which organization had the responsibility for provision of support services.

FIGURE 7: SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED BY PARTNERSHIPS (n=88)

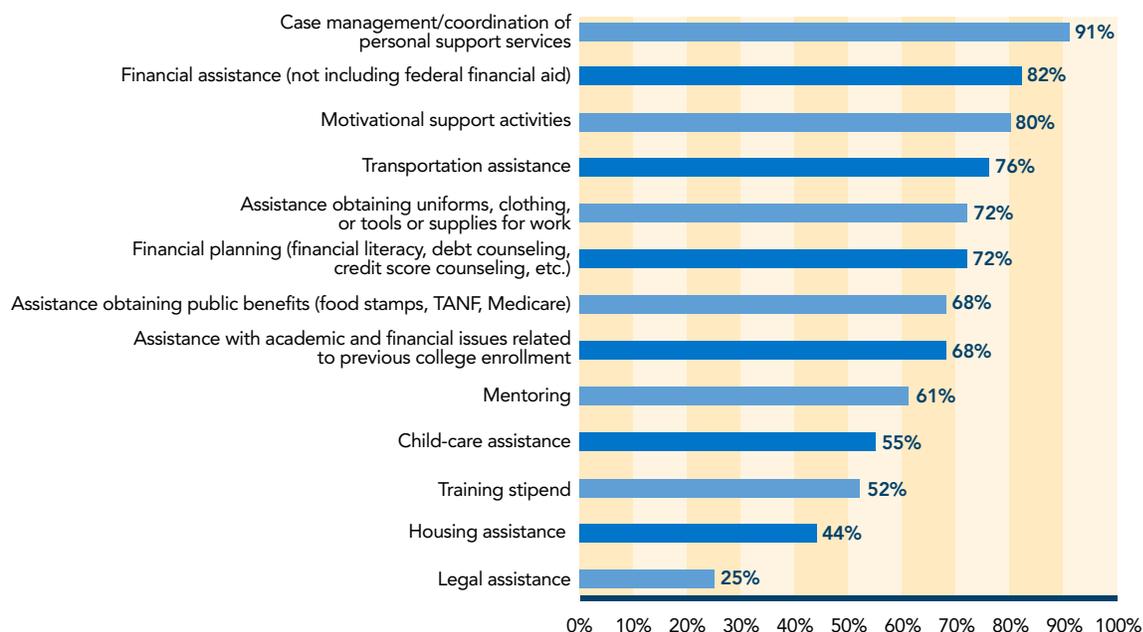


Figure 7 shows the comprehensive range of support services offered to students via partnerships, with case management or coordination of support services being provided most frequently. More than 80 percent of the partnerships reported providing financial assistance, not including financial aid, to help students, and 70 percent provide assistance with transportation. Also, partners reported to a lesser extent that they provide assistance with child care, training stipends or housing assistance.

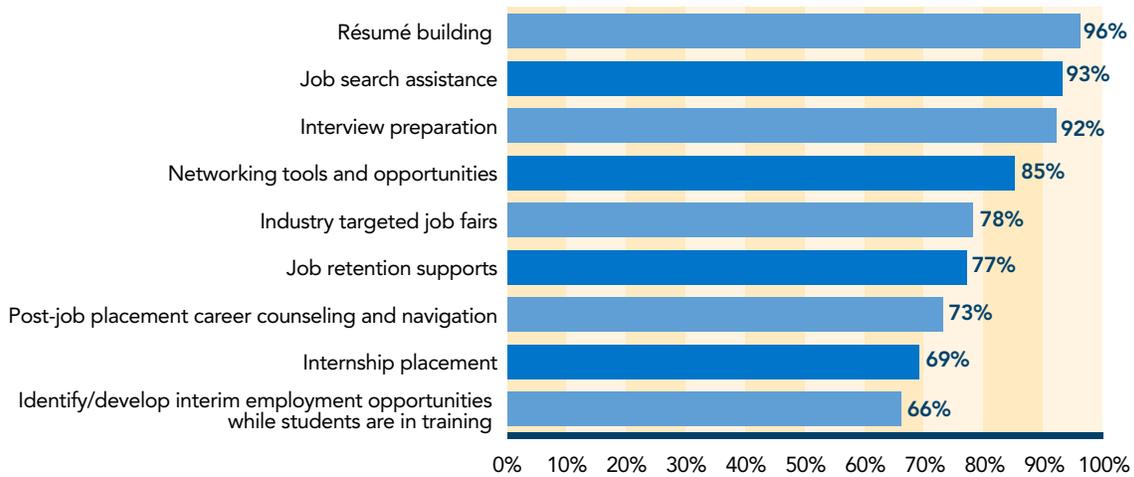
HELPING STUDENTS FIND JOBS

Many community colleges identified nonprofit organizations as the partner that provides job-placement services and supports to students served in the partnership. Forty-eight percent of the colleges and 67 percent of nonprofits indicated that nonprofit organizations assume most or all of the responsibility for job-placement supports.¹²

Figure 8 shows the types of job-placement supports provided by the partnership. More than 90 percent of partnerships reported offering résumé building, job search assistance and interview preparation services. More than 75 percent of partnerships also provide students with opportunities to meet with employers through networking and job fairs. In addition, partnerships reported providing students with supports after they are placed in a job, such as job retention and post-placement career counseling and navigation supports.

¹² Thirty percent of colleges and 21 percent of nonprofits said the partners share equal responsibilities, and 16 percent of colleges and nine percent of nonprofits said the community college is responsible for providing most or all job placement services to students. Six percent of community colleges and three percent of nonprofits reported that they did not know which organization had the responsibility for provision of job placement services.

FIGURE 8: JOB PLACEMENT SUPPORTS AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY PARTNERSHIP (n=88)



How do Partnerships Benefit Nonprofit Organizations?

As shown in Table 2, nonprofit organizations reported multiple benefits from these collaborations. Increased training and career opportunities for constituents was the top response. This section explores nonprofit organization responses regarding training and the different types of training offered, which is typically dependent on what students need and the career pathways that may be available.

PROVIDING TRAINING AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

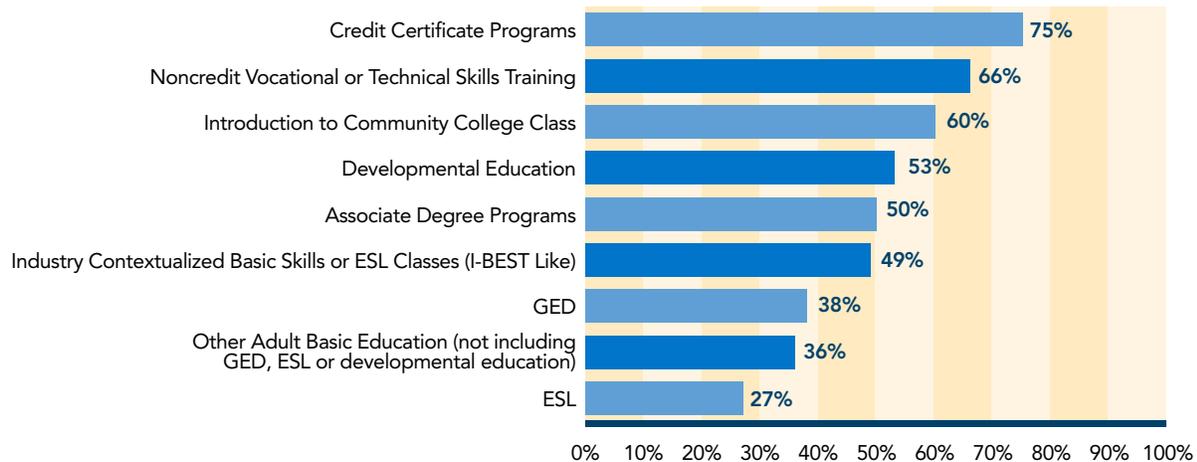
Most nonprofits and community colleges identified the community college as primarily responsible for providing training. Sixty-three percent of community colleges and 51 percent of nonprofit organizations reported that the community college provides all or most of the training to students served by the partnership.¹³ In open-ended responses, nonprofit organizations reinforced the value of partnering with a community college to offer training services. One nonprofit leader commented, “We are located in a very high-poverty neighborhood, and the partnership has really enhanced access to training by neighborhood residents.” Another nonprofit respondent said, “Partnering with the college allows our students to earn college credentials.” Many nonprofits also reported that their partnership is beneficial because it improves the education and employment outcomes for their participants. “Partnering with the college provides our participants with additional educational resources, opportunities to increase their skills, and greater chances of finding substantial employment,” reported one nonprofit.

Figure 9 summarizes the types of training programs offered to students. Partnerships reported providing a median of four training types. Three-quarters of the partnerships provided for-credit certificate programs, and 66 percent reported offering noncredit vocational or technical skills training. Eighty percent of the partnerships that offered noncredit vocational training also reported offering credit certificate programs, and 50 percent reported providing training leading to an associate degree. Also, partnerships that reported offering credit certificate or associate degree programs often connect to developmental education, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, or training for a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Thirty-eight percent of the partnerships supporting

¹³ Twenty-two percent of colleges and 25 percent of nonprofits said the partners share equal responsibilities, and 15 percent of colleges and 20 percent of nonprofits said the nonprofit organization is responsible for providing most or all training services to students. One percent of community colleges and three percent of nonprofits reported they did not know which organization had the responsibility for provision of training services.

students in credit certificate or associate degree programs also reported supporting students to earn their GED, 62 percent said they support students in developmental education coursework, and 31 percent said they support students in ESL education. Forty-nine percent offered industry-contextualized basic or English language skills education.

FIGURE 9: TYPES OF TRAINING PROVIDED BY PARTNERSHIPS (n=88)



How do Partnerships Benefit both Community Colleges and Nonprofit Organizations?

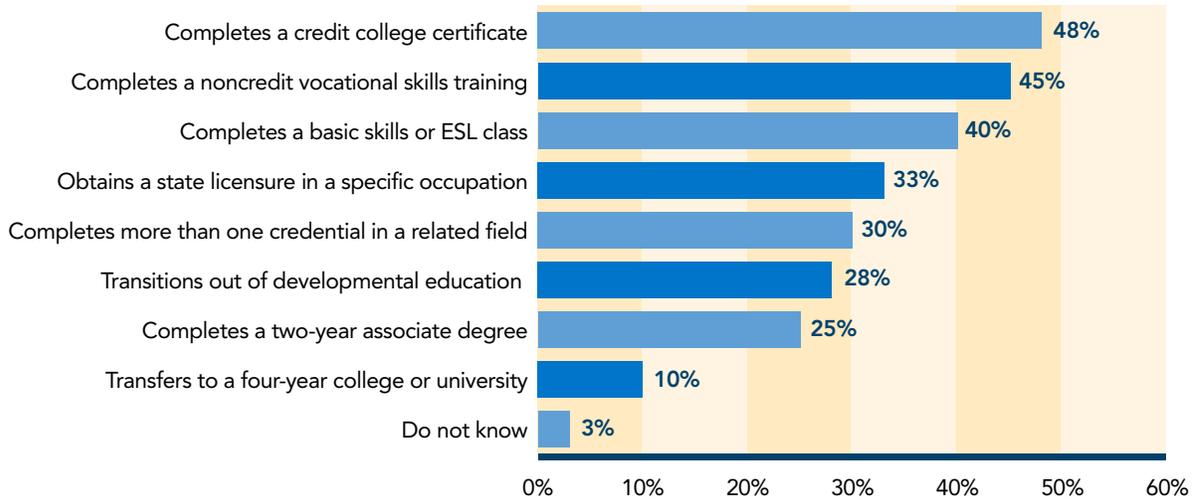
Community colleges and nonprofits commonly cited the improved outcomes they are able to help students achieve by partnering together. Another common benefit cited was an improved ability to leverage different funding streams and generate additional non-financial resources to support students' educational and employment needs. Respondents from both organizations also noted that partnerships improved their ability to engage industry partners and meet their needs. This section details how community colleges and nonprofits benefited from the partnerships. The funding streams and resources to support the partnerships' work are discussed in greater detail later in the report.

STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

AspenWSI asked nonprofit organizations and community colleges questions about the types of education and employment outcomes typically achieved by students served by the partnership. The two entities were asked different questions in an effort to capture their overall perspectives on student outcomes. The stage one survey of nonprofits yielded inconclusive responses regarding student education and employment outcomes. Therefore, AspenWSI sent a short follow-on survey to the

nonprofits.¹⁴ Sixty-seven of 88 nonprofit organizations responded to a question about the types of educational outcomes typically achieved by students. As seen in Figure 10, the nonprofit organizations reported a diverse mix of educational outcomes for their students.¹⁵ Nonprofits reported that completing a noncredit vocational program or a credit certificate were the two most typical outcomes for their students. Fewer nonprofits reported outcomes related to the development of basic skills or academic remediation, and even fewer reported that completing an associate degree or transferring to a four-year college are typical outcomes for their students.

FIGURE 10: NONPROFIT REPORT OF STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES (n=67)



AspenWSI also asked the 88 community colleges about the educational outcomes of students served by the partnership compared to other students in similar training programs at the college. Forty-eight percent of community college respondents reported that students served by the partnership are more likely to complete their educational goals than students in similar training programs at the community college, while 25 percent said they were equally likely (See Figure 11). Taking into consideration these partnerships generally focus on serving low-income students who can struggle in a college setting without adequate supports, the reported outcomes represent positive results.

¹⁴ During the initial survey, AspenWSI asked nonprofits to provide the approximate percentage of students that achieved a particular outcome. For example, we asked what percentage of students served by the partnership in the last 12 months completed a credit certificate program, providing respondents with the option of choosing 0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, more than 75%, or “Do not know.” AspenWSI received an overwhelming percentage of “I don’t know” responses to these types of outcomes questions. This is not surprising given the range of outcomes students achieve in these partnerships and given that data may not be readily available to survey respondents. As a result, AspenWSI sent out a follow-on survey to nonprofit organizations that initially completed the survey asking them to provide information about outcomes for the “typical” student they serve. We received responses from 67 of the 88 nonprofit organizations represented in a C2E partnership. The findings on outcomes are based on those 67 responses. The additional question was limited to nonprofits to collect data on as many partnerships as possible and to avoid conflicting information on outcomes from community college partners. AspenWSI’s previous research indicates nonprofits, because of their closer connection to the student population served, are more likely to be aware of the specific outcomes students achieve. AspenWSI also asked community colleges a different set of questions about outcomes, also discussed in this section.

¹⁵ The nonprofit organizations were asked to select all outcomes that apply for the “typical” student they serve.

STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

AspenWSI also asked nonprofits and community colleges questions about the employment outcomes of students served by their partnerships. Once again, the two entities were asked different questions in an effort to capture their overall perspectives on student outcomes. Seventy-two percent of nonprofits said a student served by the partnership typically obtains employment in a training-related field.

FIGURE 11: COLLEGE REPORT OF STUDENTS' LIKELIHOOD TO ACHIEVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES (n=88)

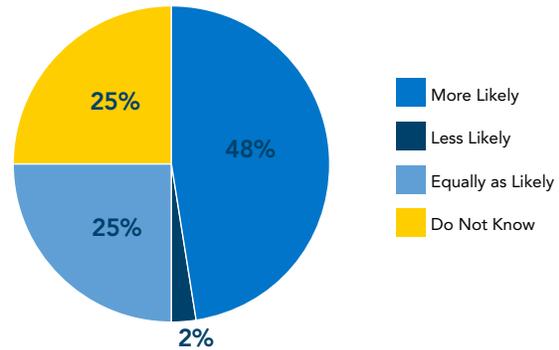
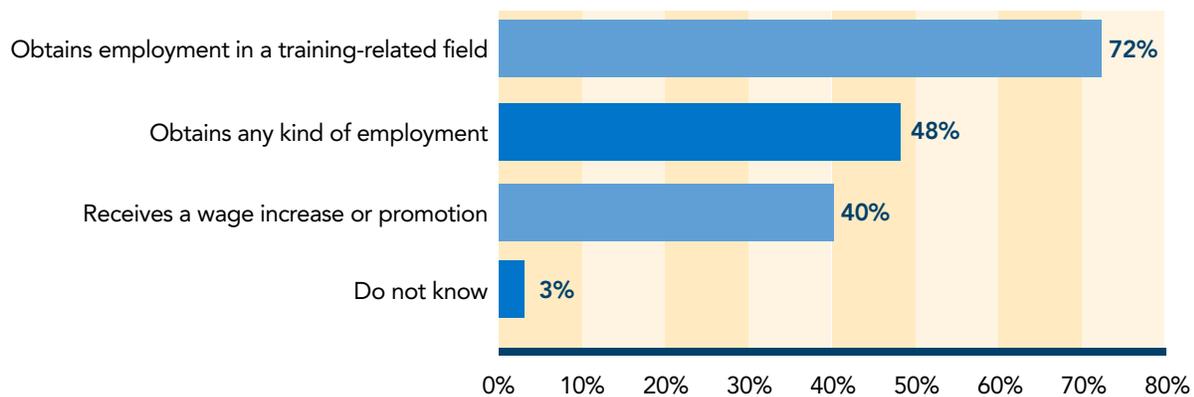
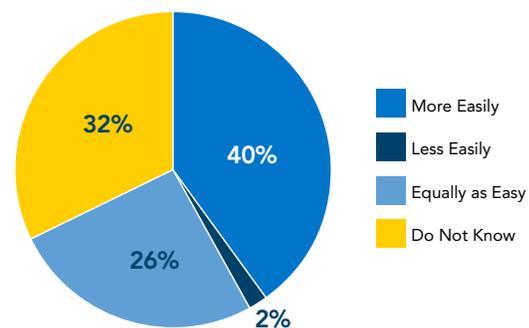


FIGURE 12: NONPROFIT REPORT OF STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES (n=67)



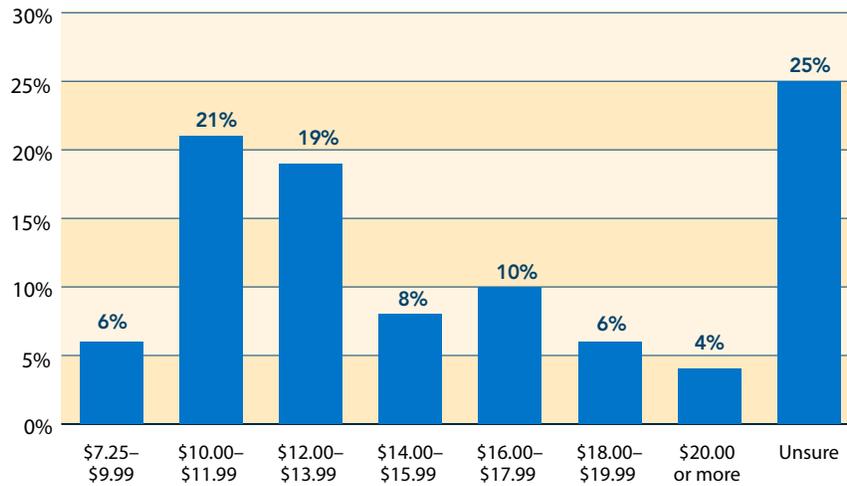
We also asked community colleges whether students served by the partnership find employment in a training-related field more easily or less easily than students in similar training programs at the college. Forty percent of community college respondents said students served by the partnership find training-related jobs more easily. Only a little more than 2 percent said students served by the partnership find training-related employment less easily.

FIGURE 13: COMMUNITY COLLEGE REPORT OF STUDENTS' LIKELIHOOD TO ACHIEVE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES (n=88)



Finally, we also asked nonprofit organizations about the average hourly wages of students placed in training-related employment. As shown in the chart below, the highest percentage of nonprofits that identified a wage reported hourly wages between \$10.00 and \$11.99 per hour.

FIGURE 14: AVERAGE HOURLY WAGES OF STUDENTS PLACED IN TRAINING-RELATED EMPLOYMENT
As reported by a subset of nonprofit partners (n=67)

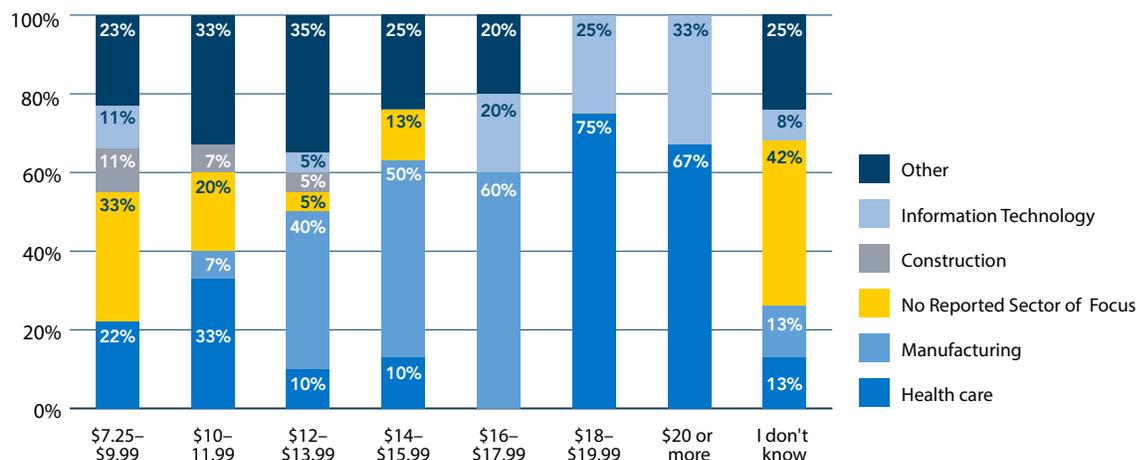


Reported wages differed by the partnerships’ sector of focus. Of the partnerships that reported placing students in jobs paying between \$7.25 and \$9.99 per hour, 22 percent were in the health-care field. Partnerships that reported no sector of focus tended to place students in jobs with lower hourly wages (below \$12 an hour). The partnerships that reported placing students in hourly wages of \$18 or higher focused on health care and information technology, although there were still students placed in lower wages in those sectors as well. The partnerships that focused on manufacturing mainly reported wages between \$12.00 and \$17.99 per hour. Figure 15, below, depicts the average hourly wages for the top reported sectors of focus and for the partnerships that reported no sector of focus.¹⁶

¹⁶ Other sectors include hospitality, accounting, business or office administration, transportation, distribution and logistics, energy, retail sales or management, early childhood education, aerospace, and security.

FIGURE 15: AVERAGE HOURLY WAGES IN SECTORS

Average Hourly Wages in the Top-Reported Sectors of Focus (n=88)



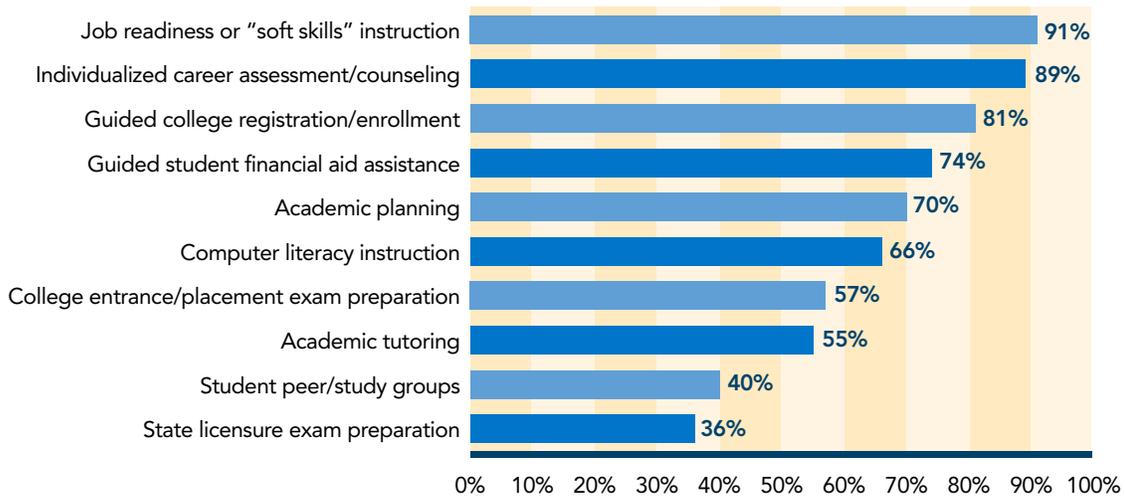
PROVIDING A WIDER ARRAY OF RESOURCES TO STUDENTS

Both community colleges and nonprofit organizations provided responses about how they were able to provide students with more resources as a result of the collaboration. One nonprofit organization reported that their partnership “leverages resources, and provides benefits to our program participants that we couldn’t provide if we were completely separate.” One college noted that the additional resources from the partnership helped in achieving a “high success rate on student completion and employment.”

Among the primary resources referred to by the partners are college navigation supports and other supplementary educational activities. A little more than a third of nonprofits and community colleges, 39 percent and 34 percent respectively, reported equally sharing responsibilities in providing these services.¹⁷ The vast majority of partnerships reported providing students with job readiness or “soft skills” instruction, as well as individualized career assessments and counseling. Eighty-one percent of partnerships said they provide guided college registration and enrollment, 74 percent provide guided assistance with financial aid applications, and 57 percent help prepare students for college entrance or placement exams. Career and academic planning are another key part of what many partnerships provide to their students. Eighty-nine percent of the partnerships provide individualized career assessment and career planning, and 70 percent provide academic planning services.

¹⁷ Thirty-four percent of nonprofits and 27 percent of colleges said the nonprofit organization is responsible for providing most or all supplementary education services, and 22 percent of nonprofits and 34 percent of colleges reported that the community college is responsible for providing most or all of these services. Five percent of community colleges and nonprofits reported they did not know which organization had the responsibility for provision of supplementary education services.

FIGURE 16: TYPES OF COLLEGE NAVIGATION AND SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES PROVIDED BY PARTNERSHIPS (n=88)



ENGAGING EMPLOYERS TO HELP MEET THEIR BUSINESS NEEDS

Many of the nonprofit organizations and community colleges reported that the collaborations increased their ability to engage employers and help meet business needs. One nonprofit described the top benefit as “the ability to work together to build relations with companies.” Colleges noted benefits such as “access to the resources they (the nonprofit) have, as a result of building strong partnerships with businesses” and “linkage to more employers.”

In order to better understand industry engagement strategies, AspenWSI asked partners about the various ways businesses participate in the work of the partnership. The survey asked questions about businesses’ participation in curriculum and training design, in financing or providing resources to support students’ training, and in helping students connect to education and employment opportunities. In general, community college and nonprofits noted a shared responsibility and role in engaging businesses in all of these services.¹⁸

FIGURE 17: WAYS BUSINESSES ARE ENGAGED IN TRAINING AND CURRICULUM DESIGN (n=88)

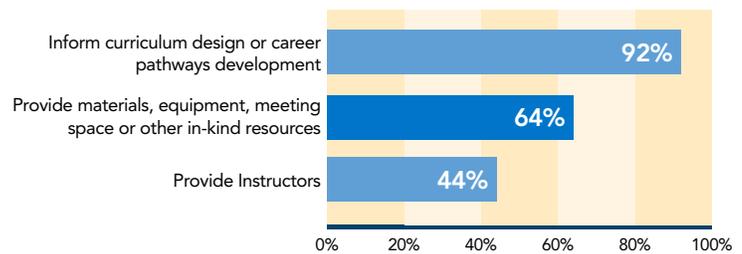
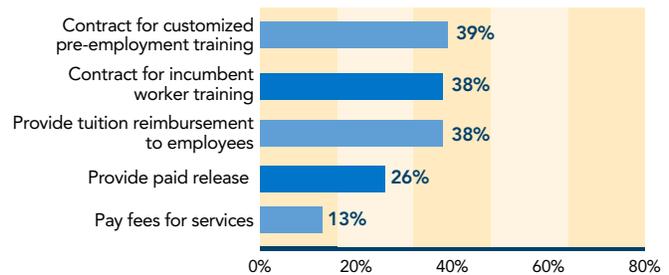


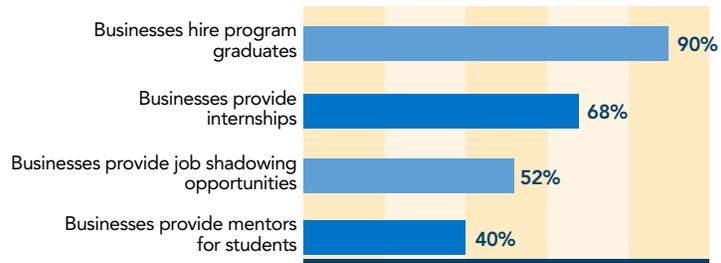
FIGURE 18: WAYS BUSINESSES ARE ENGAGED IN PROVIDING RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS’ TRAINING (n=88)



¹⁸ Thirty-three percent of nonprofits and 39 percent of community colleges said the organizations shared equal responsibilities in engaging businesses in curriculum and training design. Twenty-four percent of nonprofits and 22 percent of colleges said each organization shared equal responsibilities in engaging businesses to provide resources for student training. Thirty-one percent of nonprofits and 38 percent of colleges said each organization shared equal responsibilities in engaging businesses to connect students to employment and additional learning opportunities.

Many of the partnerships said businesses help guide their training design. Ninety-two percent of the partnerships said businesses inform their curriculum design or career pathways development. Businesses also participate in training in other ways. Sixty-four percent of partnerships said businesses provide in-kind resources, such as materials, equipment or training space to the partnership, and 44 percent said businesses provide instructors.

FIGURE 19: WAYS BUSINESSES ARE ENGAGED IN CONNECTING STUDENTS TO EMPLOYMENT AND ADDITIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES (n=88)



To a lesser extent, partnerships reported that businesses provide financial resources to pay for students' training. Thirty-nine percent of partnerships said businesses contract for incumbent worker training, and 38 percent said businesses contract for pre-employment training. Thirty-eight percent of partnerships also said businesses provide tuition reimbursement, and 26 percent of partnerships said businesses provide paid release for their employees to attend training. Some partnerships commented that businesses provide donations, tours and field trips, transportation assistance, or scholarship funds.

As seen in Figure 19, 90 percent of partnerships reported that businesses hire program graduates, and 68 percent said businesses provide internships. Some partnerships stated that businesses provide students with clinical placements in the health-care field, that they provide guest speakers or tours, or that businesses participate in mock interview sessions or career fairs.

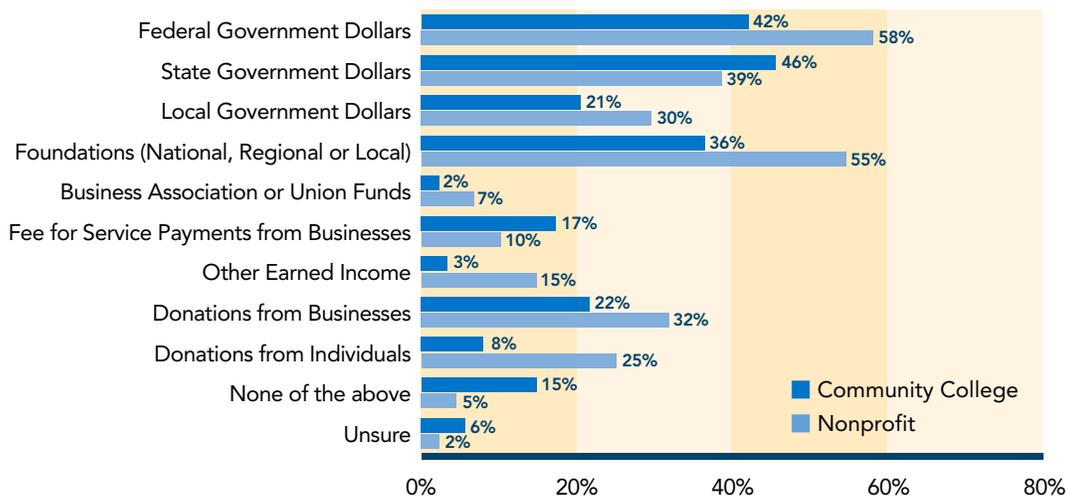
PARTNERSHIP FUNDING AND RESOURCES

Partnerships draw on a variety of funding streams and resources to support their work together. When asked about their contribution to the partnership’s work, nonprofits reported contributing a median of \$75,000 and a mean of \$174,393 to their partnership in the previous 12 months. Community college respondents reported contributing a median of \$20,000 and a mean of \$84,294. Sample sizes for responses to this question were relatively small, with findings based on 50 nonprofit and 37 community college responses.

Unsurprisingly, nonprofits and community colleges leverage different funding streams. As discussed earlier, this is one of the primary benefits partners see in their collaborations. As seen in the chart below, nonprofit organizations more frequently reported receiving funding from the federal government, foundations and donations, while community colleges more commonly reported receiving funding from the state government and fee-for-service payments from businesses.

FIGURE 20: SOURCES OF FUNDING TO SUPPORT WORK OF PARTNERSHIP

Sources of Funding Received in Last 12 Months to Support Work of Partnership (n=88)



AspenWSI also asked nonprofits and community colleges to specifically name the top three sources of funding¹⁹ they used to support the work of the partnership in the most recent year. Overall, nonprofits reported a wider variety of funding sources. The top funding sources for both nonprofits and community colleges were the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)²⁰, state government funding and foundation funding, but each entity ranked each funding source differently (see Table 3). Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grants also seem to play a relatively strong role in these partnerships, with almost 20 percent of community colleges reporting a TAACCCT grant as a top-three funding source.

¹⁹ The answer choices for top three sources of funding were not mutually exclusive

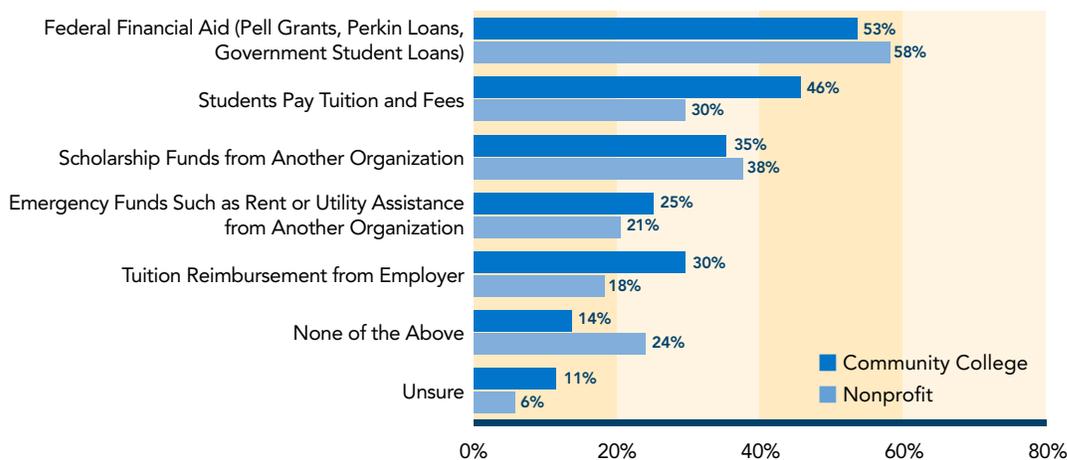
²⁰ In July 2014, Congress passed and the President signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). It reauthorized the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and provided updates to the federal government’s core workforce programs. Because WIOA is similar in many aspects to WIA, it is likely to be a top funding source, but further research will be necessary.

TABLE 3: PARTNERSHIP FUNDING SOURCES 2122

What are the three largest funding sources your institution used to support the work of this partnership during the most recent year?	
Nonprofit (n=84) ²¹	Community College (n=73) ²²
1. Foundation (46.4%)	1. Workforce Investment Act Funding (38.4%)
2. Workforce Investment Act Funding (28.6%)	2. State Government (35.6%)
3. State Government (26.2%)	3. Foundation (26%)
4. Other Department of Labor Funding (13.1%)	4. TAACCCT Grant (19.2%)
5. Local Government (14.3%)	5. Other Federal Government (13.7%)
6. Other Employer Contributions (8.0%)	6. Fee for Service from Business (12.3%)
7. Other Federal Government (4.8%)	7. Other Department of Labor (8.2%)
8. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (9.5%)	8. Local Government (8.2%)
9. Earned Income (9.5%)	9. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (6.8%)
10. Individual Donations (8.3%)	10. Other Employer Contributions (6.8%)
11. Fee for Service from Business (6.0%)	11. Other (26%)
12. Social Innovation Fund (7.1%)	
13. United Way (3.6%)	
14. TANF/SNAP Funding (6.0%)	
15. Business Donations (3.6%)	
16. TAACCCT Grant (1.2%)	
17. Other (13.1%)	

AspenWSI also asked nonprofits and community colleges about the sources of funding used by students served by the partnership that were independent of the resources raised by the respective organizations. Unsurprisingly, many nonprofits and community colleges reported use of federal financial aid to help students cover the costs of their education. In some instances, students may pay their own tuition and fees, or other organizations outside of the partnership may provide scholarships or emergency funds to help cover rent or utilities.

FIGURE 21: SOURCES OF FUNDING STUDENTS USE (n=88)

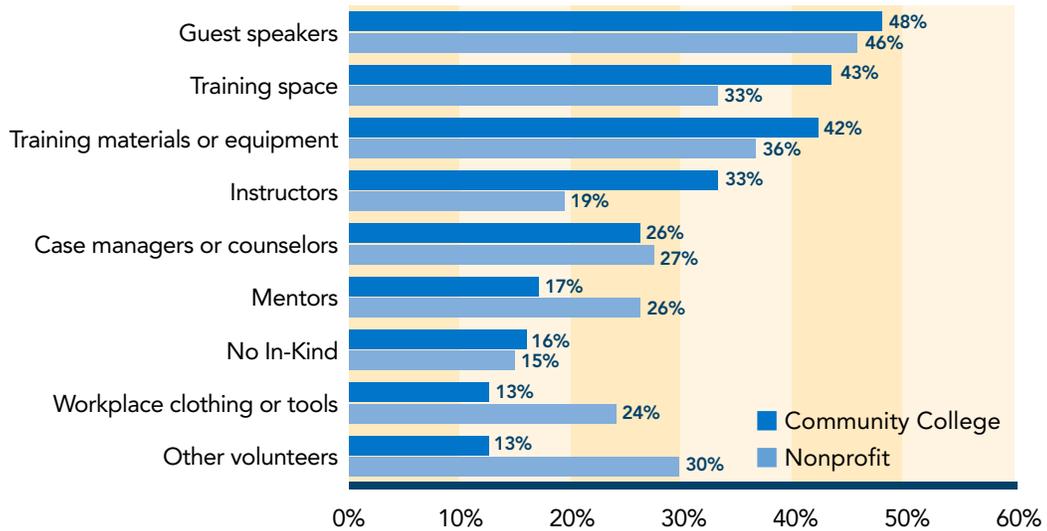


²¹ Eighty-four nonprofits specified at least one of their top three funding sources

²² Seventy-three community colleges specified at least one of their top three funding sources.

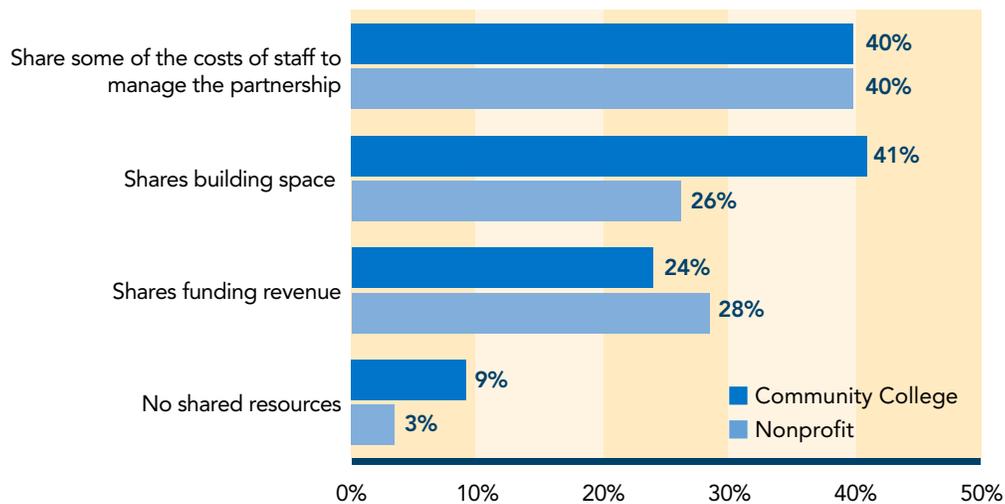
In addition to cash resources, partnerships also reported receiving a variety of in-kind resources to support their work. The top three resources identified by both nonprofit organizations and community colleges were guest speakers, training space, and training materials or equipment. About a quarter of the nonprofits and community colleges also noted case managers or counselors as an in-kind resource that supported the partnership's work.

FIGURE 22: IN-KIND RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE PARTNERSHIP (n=88)



About a quarter of both nonprofits and community colleges reported sharing funding revenue with their partner, and 40 percent of nonprofits and colleges said they share staffing costs. Community colleges more frequently reported sharing their building space.

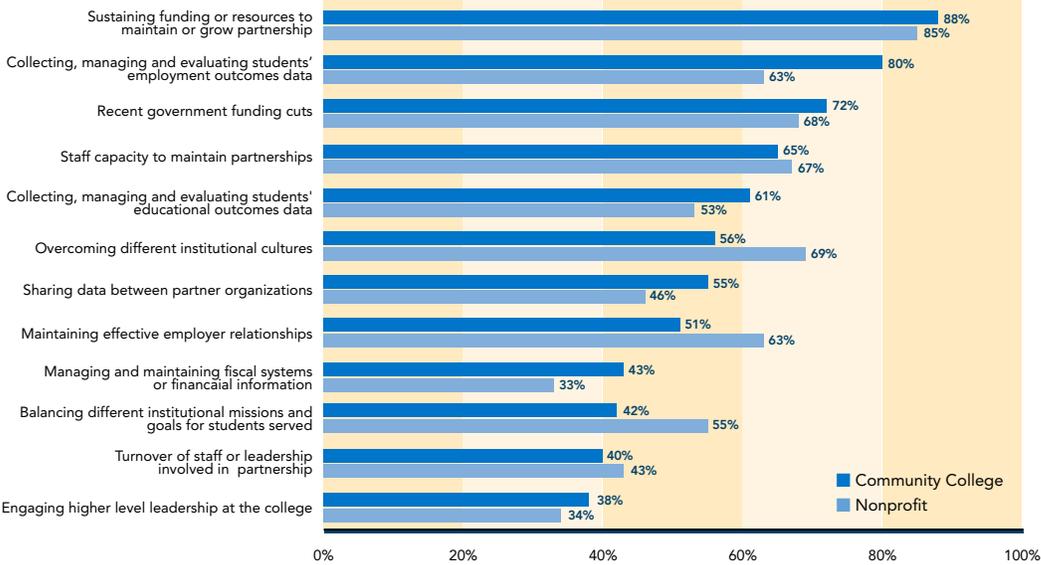
FIGURE 23: RESOURCES SHARED BY PARTNERS (n=88)



PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGES

Nonprofit organizations and community colleges can face a variety of challenges in their work together. In open-ended questions, nonprofits and community colleges commonly identified issues with funding, data collection and data sharing, and working across institutions among their top challenges. To lesser degrees, partnerships also reported facing challenges in engaging industry partners and community college leaders, attracting and retaining skilled staff, and maintaining effective communication across the partnership. Figure 24 summarizes responses to close-ended questions about the challenges partnerships face.

FIGURE 24: CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY PARTNERSHIPS (n=88)

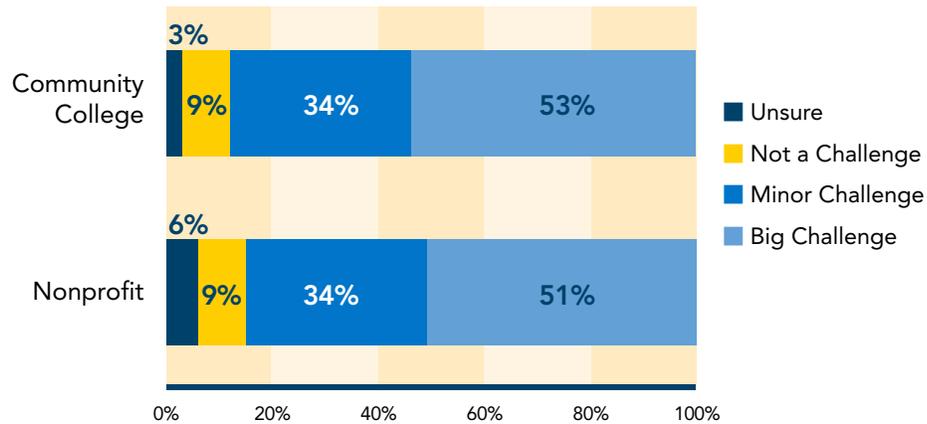


Similar to their open-ended responses, partnerships identified top challenges related to funding, data collection and sharing, and working across institutions in close-ended questions. These are explored in more detail in the sections below.

Funding Challenges

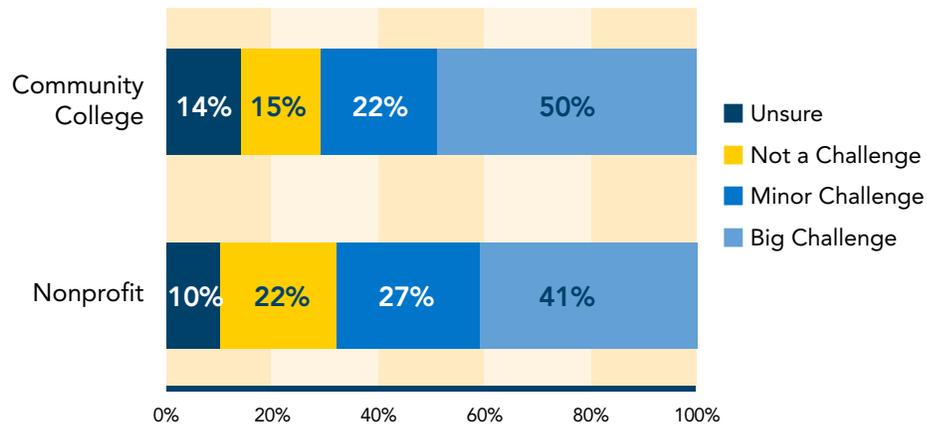
In both open- and close-ended questions, nonprofits and community colleges most commonly described a challenge related to funding or financing the partnership. In open-ended responses, one nonprofit representative said, “One of the major challenges has been to increase funding to continue and move forward with the partnership.” Community colleges described similar frustrations. “Finding funding to support our work can be challenging at times, especially given that we’d like to increase our capacity to serve more people,” reported one college representative. As seen in the chart below, 34 percent of nonprofits and community colleges identified funding to maintain or grow a partnership as a minor challenge, and 51 percent of nonprofits and 53 percent of community colleges identified it as a big challenge. Only 9 percent of both entities reported this is not a challenge.

FIGURE 25: SUSTAINING FUNDING OR RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN OR GROW THE PARTNERSHIP AS A CHALLENGE (n=88)



The majority of nonprofits (68 percent) and community colleges (72 percent) commonly agreed that recent government funding cuts are a minor or big challenge to their partnership and considered these recent government funding cuts to be harmful to their efforts. One college reported that “funding shortfalls due to government shutdown and sequestration” is the top challenge facing their partnership, and a nonprofit said, “The top challenge is maintaining the partnership in light of budget cuts, sequestration and government shut downs.”

FIGURE 26: RECENT GOVERNMENT FUNDING CUTS AS A CHALLENGE (n=88)

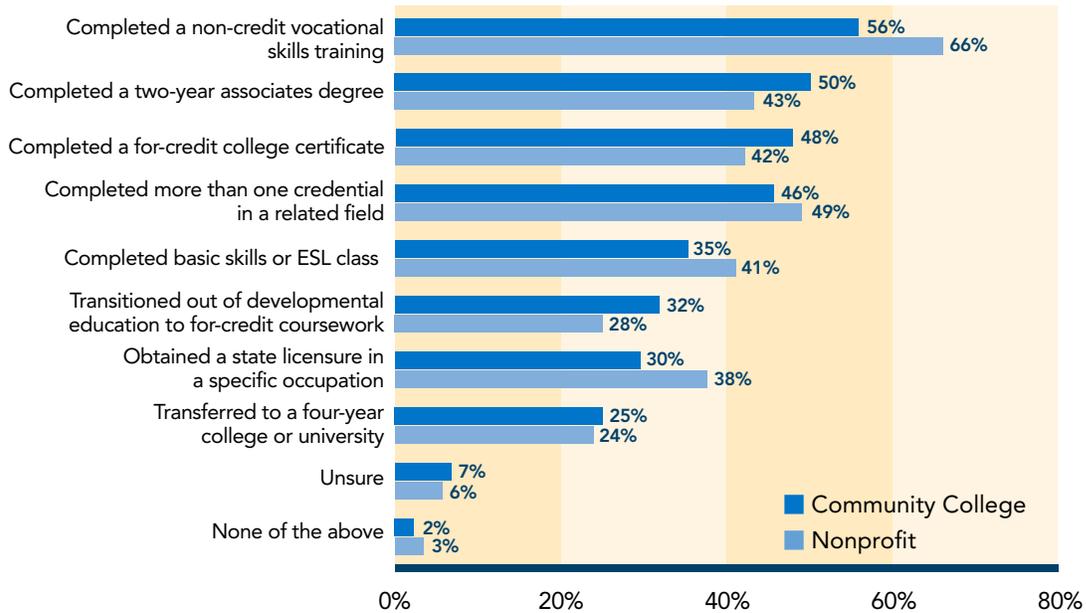


Some partners also described the negative impacts of these funding shortfalls. One nonprofit reported a challenge in keeping the training free for students, and another said the lack of necessary funding drives competition between partners and harms trust. Other nonprofits said they could not adequately fund instructor wages or training equipment, and one said funds are simply not adequate to serve participants with multiple barriers. College respondents noted that funding challenges can prevent the partnerships from expanding to serve more students, and could cause issues with financing staff and instructor salaries.

Data Challenges

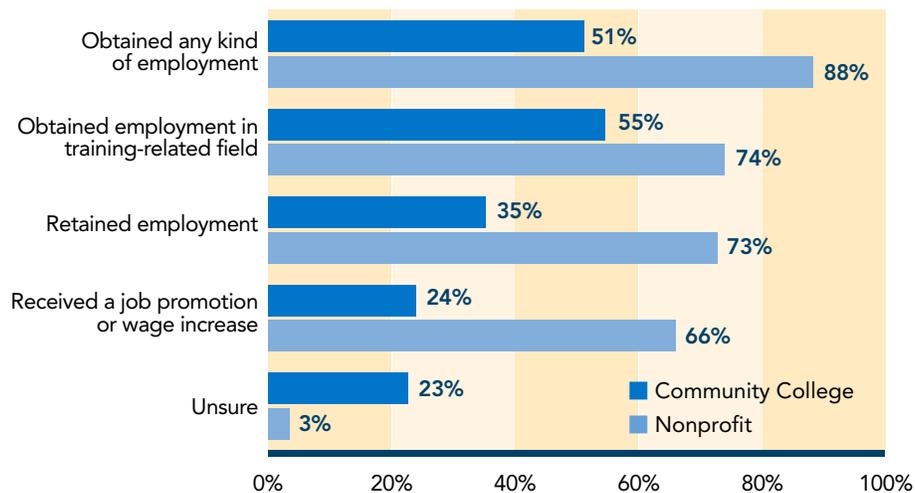
Nonprofits and community colleges track a variety of educational outcomes data on their students as seen in the chart below. In most cases, particularly when college credit is awarded, this type of data rests within the community college data systems.

FIGURE 27: STUDENTS EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES TRACKED (n=88)



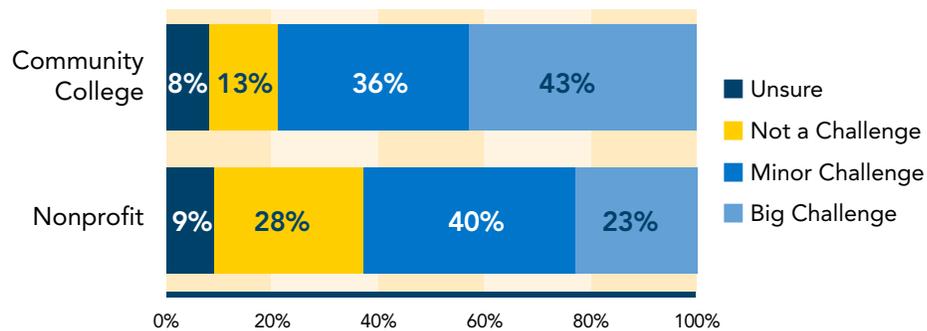
Nonprofits, on the other hand, are often funded to deliver employment outcomes and are, unsurprisingly, more often the organization collecting that data.

FIGURE 28: STUDENT EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES TRACKED (n=88)



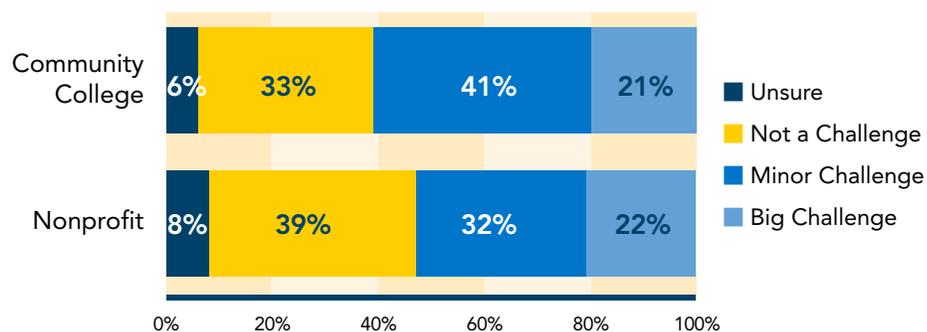
A commonly cited challenge by both nonprofits and community colleges relates to collecting, managing and sharing students' employment and educational outcomes data. From the community college perspective, collecting data on students' employment outcomes after training can be particularly vexing. As one community college representative explained, "Employment outcomes data and tracking is a large challenge. Currently, we must rely on students to report back to us regarding employment. We are working on a data sharing agreement between our college district and partners to access more partner data, but community colleges do not have easy access to employment data." Eighty percent of community colleges agreed that collecting, managing and evaluating students' employment outcomes data is a challenge. Nonprofits also commonly expressed concern about employment data. Sixty-three percent of nonprofit organizations agreed that employment data, in particular, is a challenge for their partnership.

FIGURE 29: COLLECTING, MANAGING AND EVALUATING STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES DATA (n=88)



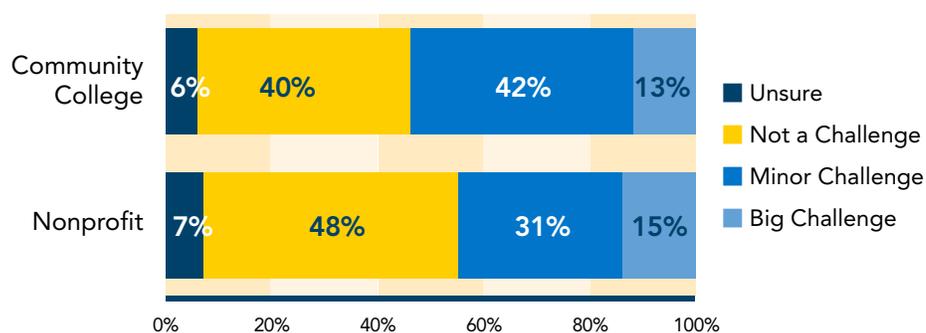
Collecting and managing students' educational outcomes data seems less of a concern to nonprofits and community colleges. About one fifth of community colleges and nonprofits said educational outcomes data present a big challenge. Thirty-two percent of nonprofits and 41 percent of community colleges noted educational outcome data as a minor challenge, and 39 percent of nonprofits and 33 percent of colleges said this did not present a challenge. However, no nonprofits or community colleges specifically mentioned educational data as a concern in open-ended answers to questions about challenges.

FIGURE 30: COLLECTING, MANAGING AND EVALUATING STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES DATA (n=88)



Sharing data between institutions also arose in the open-ended responses about challenges. One nonprofit identified “sharing student information between our data collection systems” as a top challenge. Almost half of nonprofits (46 percent) and slightly more than half of community colleges (55 percent) said data sharing between their two institutions is a minor or a big challenge (see Figure 31). This challenge may be partly attributed to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which protects the privacy of student educational records and could limit the sharing of data between partnership entities.

FIGURE 31: SHARING STUDENTS’ OUTCOMES DATA BETWEEN PARTNER INSTITUTIONS (n=88)



The Challenges of Working Across Different Institutional Types

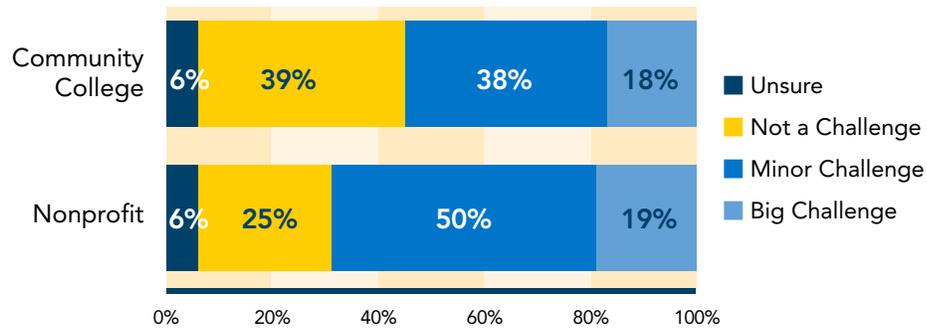
Community colleges and nonprofit organizations have different missions, goals, values, work styles and institutional systems. At times, these differences can pose significant challenges for these partnerships. Both nonprofits and community colleges commonly reported challenges associated with working across their different institutions in their partnerships.

Many nonprofits described the challenge of working with a community college system and bureaucracy. Some nonprofits expressed frustration at the slow pace of change on the community college side, and others found working with a large institution to be challenging. One nonprofit representative remarked, “Working within huge educational systems can be very challenging, and many times they are slow to implement systems change.” Another said, “The college operates in silos, so when we want to work across departments, it can be challenging.” Community colleges and nonprofits also have different goals, which can come into conflict when creating strategies for student success. One nonprofit said, “We have slightly conflicting priorities that sometimes come into conflict. The college is more concerned with enrollment numbers; we’re more concerned with employment numbers.”

Community colleges echoed many of these challenges in their survey responses. Community colleges stated that “differences in institutional cultures,” “agreeing on how to manage staff,” and “establishing shared goals” can pose challenges in their partnerships. These differences can lead to a lack of understanding, as well, about the different challenges and situations partners face. As one community college noted, “We operate in different spheres, with different reporting requirements and language. Sometimes people do not adequately understand the challenges faced by the other members of the partnership.”

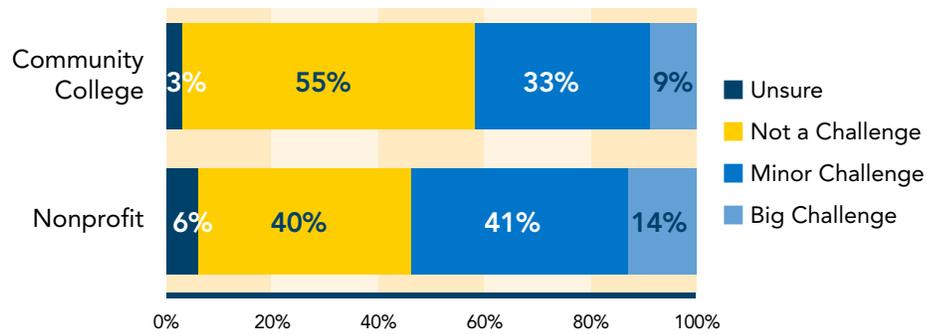
In close-ended questions, nonprofit respondents in the survey reported these cultural issues to be a bigger challenge than their community college counterparts. As seen in Figure 32, almost one-fifth of nonprofits and community colleges identified different institutional cultures and work styles as a big challenge, while 50 percent of nonprofits and 38 percent of community colleges identified it as a minor challenge.

FIGURE 32: OVERCOMING DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONAL CULTURES AND WORK STYLES (n=88)



Nonprofits and community colleges also responded that different missions and goals for students can be a challenge in implementing the work of the partnership. Fifty-five percent of the nonprofits and just over 40 percent of community colleges identified this as a big or minor challenge.

FIGURE 33: BALANCING DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONAL MISSIONS AND GOALS FOR THE STUDENTS (n=88)



PARTNERSHIP PERSPECTIVES ON INNOVATIONS OR BEST PRACTICES

While having different institutional goals, missions and cultures can be a challenge for some partnerships, having those differences in perspectives and approaches likely helps these collaborations develop ideas and strategies. AspenWSI asked nonprofits and community colleges to explain any best practices or innovative strategies in their partnerships.²³

The innovation or best practice most commonly cited by nonprofits and community college respondents related to support services for community college students. A nonprofit respondent explained the goal as, “Adopting and ensuring low-income adults receive a range of services, including support services, from the time of entry through job retention.” Both community colleges and nonprofits also commonly identified the use of college or career navigators as a best practice of their partnership. One nonprofit explained their partnership’s use of navigators as “a shared staff member between the college and the workforce system who acts as a navigator and helps guide students into appropriate programs, access resources, and place them into employment,” while a community college respondent added, “Industry navigators assist low-income adults in identifying career paths and accessing resources.”

Nonprofits and, to a lesser extent, community colleges pointed to pre-college bridge programs as a strategy they view as a best practice. A nonprofit respondent describing their partnership’s bridge strategy said, “The college readiness component is designed to help adults prepare for a successful transition into the nine-month Biotechnology and Compliance certificate program at the college. The pre-college component includes math and science, in addition to ongoing coaching and tutoring support.” As stated earlier in this report, about half of the partnerships reported helping students prepare for community college entrance or placement exams, and exactly half said they provide an “introduction to community college” class, which often serves as a bridge strategy to help students prepare for the academic setting.

Finally, community colleges and, to a lesser extent, nonprofits stated that the partnership’s ability to engage businesses more deeply than either institution could alone is a best practice or innovation of their partnership. A few community colleges also mentioned contextualized learning and alternative remediation strategies as best practices, and some nonprofits described best practices related to using cohort models, sharing revenues and expenses among the partners, and the provision of financial literacy and education to students served by the partnership.

²³ One hundred, twenty-three nonprofits and 64 community colleges provided responses to this question.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Developing partnerships between nonprofits and community colleges to support student success represents an innovation and best practice in and of itself. With support, the Courses to Employment field of practice can continue to develop new and exciting innovations for the workforce and education fields. In this section, we discuss how policymakers, investors and leaders at community colleges and nonprofit organizations can help partnerships to grow and become more effective.

Through the survey, we learned that C2E partnerships are a growing field of practice in workforce development that is helping workers gain the skills, knowledge and networks necessary to succeed in the classroom and the labor market, while also helping businesses find the skilled workers they need. The C2E partnership field represents a diverse mix of approaches and strategies. Partnerships are working in a variety of industries, serving a diverse mix of student and worker populations and employing various sets of educational, support service and industry engagement strategies. As discussed in this report, these partnerships represent a mix of both old and new collaborations. The field has some maturity, but this collaborative strategy is really just starting to take root around the country. Finding ways to support these initiatives could not come at a better time for these partnerships and, more importantly, for the workers and businesses they serve.

For policymakers and investors, we recommend:

- Invest in and incentivize partnerships that help nonprofits and community colleges better serve students and employers.

Nonprofit and community college survey respondents reported that C2E partnerships help them work better and produce better outcomes for students and businesses. Developing, growing and sustaining such partnerships, however, takes resources. Partners need time and financing in the initial stages to develop and plan their strategy. They need ongoing support to maintain effective communication with businesses, community partners and each other. Building and maintaining a system of wrap-around support services can also be complex and costly, but is critical to students' success. As partners fine-tune their strategies, they often run into funding hurdles that prevent them from expanding their services to more students. In some instances, funding cuts can severely disrupt or end a partnership's efforts. Both community colleges and nonprofits reported that obtaining funding to maintain or grow their partnership is a significant challenge. Partners also cited recent government funding cuts as a big challenge. Investors and policymakers should provide resources that effectively support partnerships at all stages from start-up through sustainability. Moreover, building and sustaining partnerships takes time and experience working together to understand each other's organizations, assets and limitations. Partnerships also need time and resources to carefully develop shared goals, strategies, roles and responsibilities, trust, and data agreements. Investments to support these key partnership strategies and sustaining activities are essential.

- Invest in opportunities for partners to learn from each other and to develop skills for creating and sustaining partnerships.

The emerging field of C2E partnerships needs opportunities to share their practices and to learn about the innovations and strategies of other partnerships. Courses to Employment partnerships' innovations around curriculum and instruction, support services, industry engagement, and blending and leveraging different types of funding and resources represent promising workforce practices. Partnerships need opportunities to share these innovations and to learn about the practices of other collaborations. Supporting these kinds of exchanges can accelerate the spread and growth of partnership innovations and can be essential to the field's continued development and success. Investors should also create opportunities for Courses to Employment leaders to develop the skills and knowledge they need to more effectively build and manage their typically complex collaborations.

- Build partners' capacity to collect and share relevant student data with each other.

Educational and employment data can help partnerships plan and improve strategies and services. Accurate data on student outcomes are vital to partners' being able to evaluate their work. The data can help inform a partnership about what training approaches are leading to positive education and employment outcomes, which types of students are struggling and succeeding, and what the local labor market needs are. Without good data, partnerships lack the information they need to adjust their strategies to meet the needs of workers and businesses. Developing systems, processes and strategies to collect, analyze and share data, however, is also resource and labor intensive. Many partnerships do not have the staff capacity or resources they need to collect or manage outcomes data. Partnerships are also often hindered by the limitations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. It is also difficult for partnerships to access public data sources to obtain employment and earnings information about the students they serve. This results in many nonprofits and community colleges relying on ad hoc systems to track their participants' employment outcomes.

Fortunately, there have been recent efforts in the field, through organizations such as the Workforce Data Quality Campaign (WDQC) and projects supported by the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Education to encourage the sharing of education and workforce data. As learning partners, investors should build on these efforts and provide resources and technical assistance to partnerships to aid their data and evaluation efforts.

For community colleges and nonprofits considering or involved in partnerships we recommend:

- Leverage additional resources to improve student outcomes and responsiveness to employers by partnering with other organizations and institutions.

The survey results make a strong case for forming partnerships to help workers succeed in school, obtain skills, and find jobs. They indicate that more community colleges recognize the value of a good nonprofit partner. And, more nonprofits recognize the value of partnering with community colleges to improve educational, skills development and career opportunities for their worker constituents.

There is great potential for C2E partnerships to be developed and expanded. Community colleges that have never worked with a nonprofit to provide support services to their students or to connect to employers should consider seeking them out. Nonprofit organizations that have never connected with a local community college to provide clients with additional education and training opportunities should consider the possibilities shared by peers in this survey report. Community colleges and nonprofits that already participate in such partnerships should consider how to move them beyond project-by-project transactional relationships toward long-term ones with a vision and strategies that leverage institutional strengths and resources.

- Think beyond the short term and build relationships that will last by developing well-articulated goals, roles and systems.

Courses to Employment partnerships are often complex in nature. C2E partnerships may involve numerous educational, support service and industry engagement strategies. Partnerships can also include various community college departments and staff from both institutions, as well as many other community partners. Partners usually leverage and blend multiple funding streams and must collect a lot of data to inform their work. Managing all of these relationships, activities and resources is not easy.

Partnerships need to build a strong and flexible infrastructure to help manage their collaborations. The involvement and buy-in of high-level leaders at both institutions is often needed to move from a relationship to a true partnership where goals, resources and information are shared. Clear and defined roles and responsibilities can ensure that partners' efforts are not redundant or working

at cross-purposes. Memoranda of understanding or other written documents that provide details about partners' work together can be a guiding framework for partners to reference as they start or deepen their engagement. Partners should assign dedicated staff and established points of contact to managing these collaborations. Set lines of communication and concrete processes for ensuring that communication is occurring regularly are also necessary.

Strong data management systems, for both financial record keeping and the tracking of student data, labor market information and business engagement, are also critical, as good data are needed to steer resources in the right direction and to accurately evaluate partnership efforts.

The collection of students' educational and employment outcomes data is a clear challenge for Courses to Employment partnerships. Such data are critically important for partners to assess their efforts. Good data can inform a partnership about which training approaches and programs are leading to the best employment outcomes, which types of students are struggling and succeeding, which businesses are hiring, and which students continue to pursue additional education. Partners from the outset of their collaboration should focus on developing and implementing strategies to collect, store, manage and share data on students' progress and outcomes. Partners should also work with their funders to develop the resources and capacities needed to track this data effectively.

- Raise awareness of your partnership and its successes in order to gain support, attract resources, and grow the field.

We also recommend that C2E partners communicate their successes and challenges to policymakers, investors, researchers and other workforce development stakeholders. Many partnerships have developed effective strategies to address the challenges discussed in this report, and the field would benefit from learning about them. Sharing information about these collaborations will help expedite the field's development, create and spread additional innovations and best practices, and help attract the resources and support the field needs to grow.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Chen, J., Ziskin, M., Park, E., Torres, V., & Chiang, Y. (2013, February). Completing College: A State-Level View of Student Attainment Rates (Signature Report No. 4a). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. <http://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport4-statesupplement/#Sig4State-Results-10> (accessed 10 June 2014).

ⁱⁱ Complete College America, "Time is the Enemy: The Surprising Truth About Why Today's College Students Aren't Graduating...And What Needs to Change," 2011. http://www.completercollege.org/docs/Time_Is_the_Enemy_Summary.pdf (accessed 20 March 2014).

ⁱⁱⁱ Public Agenda, "With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them," Report prepared for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, December 2009, <http://www.publicagenda.org/theirwholivesaheadofthem> (accessed 28 December 2012)



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