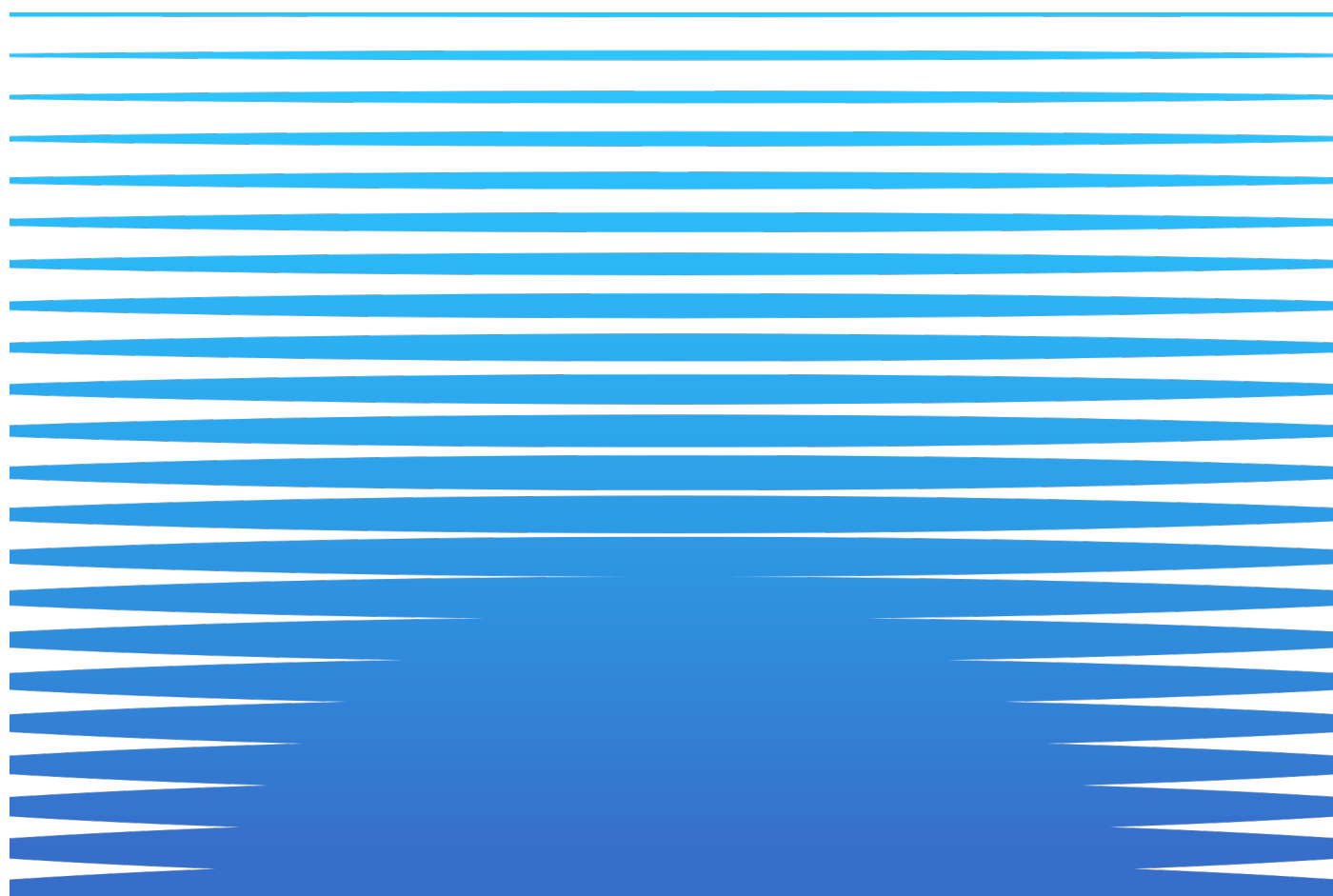


# Playbook for Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts

How to Design and Implement Statewide Pathways from Community Colleges to Independent Colleges

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# Executive Summary

Bachelor's degree attainment for community college transfer students is one underutilized but essential pathway for reducing equity gaps in higher education. One way to achieve this at scale is through state-level initiatives dedicated to supporting transfer from community colleges to not-for-profit independent colleges. The Teagle Foundation and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations' *Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts* initiative aims to create such pathways in 20 states in the next five years. This playbook draws on the experience of grantees building pathways in six states to design, implement, and sustain a successful statewide transfer initiative. Key steps are outlined below. Additional resources are [available here](#).<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Determine the Initiative's Collective Goals

In setting the initiative's goals, state associations and their partner independent colleges should:

- Examine the existing context at the regional, state, and institutional levels to find opportunities for transfer policy alignment
- Align goals to increase transfer access and transfer-in baccalaureate attainment with the priorities and interests of relevant stakeholders
- Develop guiding principles to shape the initiative's planning and implementation

## 2. Establish the Initiative's Infrastructure

To build a successful initiative, state associations and their partner independent colleges need to:

- Garner buy-in from key institutional stakeholders, including leadership, faculty, and staff in community colleges and independent colleges
- Decide on project management structures such as project leadership

## 3. Ensure the Initiative's Sustainability

When putting together a sustainable initiative, state associations and their partner independent colleges should:

- Market to potential transfer students and transfer counselors at community colleges
- Establish supports for community college transfer students once they reach campus
- Adjust policies and practices to best serve community college transfer students, including offering robust financial aid packages
- Update discipline-specific transfer pathways as courses and curricula evolve over time
- Evaluate the success of the initiative to determine whether goals have been met

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<sup>1</sup> Please see "Liberal Arts Transfer Pathways," on the Ithaka S+R website, <https://sr.ithaka.org/liberal-arts-transfer-pathways/>.

# Introduction

One oft-overlooked way to increase bachelor's attainment for community college students is to strengthen transfer pathways between two-year and independent not-for-profit four-year institutions. Such institutions often provide flexible degree options, personalized supports, and greater efficiency in credit transfer that can assist community college students looking to complete a four-year degree. Most offer a liberal arts education, which recent research has found to be associated with increased well-being and participation in civic life<sup>2</sup>, as well as improved long-term financial outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

Many independent institutions have taken steps to increase enrollment of community college transfer students, such as forming bilateral agreements with local two-year institutions.<sup>4</sup> While building these relationships is a necessary step, pursuing transfer work at the consortium level can help create impact at scale and move the needle on access and success for community college transfer students. A larger organizational body such as a state association can align the transfer-related goals of multiple independent institutions and provide direction and personnel needed to streamline transfer across the entire sector. Sector-level initiatives can also apply pressure on institutions that are reluctant to make changes to facilitate community college transfer. For example, when a large group of institutions sign on to reforms to enhance credit mobility, there is additional pressure on reluctant departments to accept comparable credits to remain competitive with their peers. These larger initiatives also allow for the development of resources such as websites and portals that may not be financially or logistically feasible at the individual institution level.

Pursuing initiatives at the consortium or sector level may also be more beneficial for potential community college transfer students. Such larger scale initiatives provide more options for students, who can utilize the same transfer pathways for multiple four-year institutions rather than having to customize their coursework for each independent institution they wish to transfer into. Simplifying GPA and other admissions requirements across institutions makes the transfer process much easier at the community college level. This is especially true for first-generation and low-income students who may be less familiar with the complex processes involved in advising and transfer. As well as standardization, community college students benefit from knowing precisely which courses will apply towards a bachelor's degree. Sector-wide initiatives make this information more readily available and visible to potential transfer students, which further simplifies the transfer process.

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<sup>2</sup> Carol D. Ryff, "Linking Education in the Arts and Humanities to Life-Long Well-Being and Health," *The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation*, January 2019, <https://mellon.org/news-blog/articles/linking-education-arts-and-humanities-life-long-well-being-and-health/>.

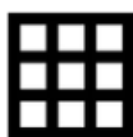
<sup>3</sup> "Summary," Center on Education and the Workforce, 2019, <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/collegeroi/>. For more information on the potential economic benefits of the liberal arts see Daniel Rossman et al., "Measuring a Liberal Education and its Relationship with Labor Market Outcomes: An Exploratory Analysis," *Ithaca S+R*, September 29, 2020, <https://sr.ithaca.org/publications/measuring-liberal-education-relationship-labor-market-outcomes/>.

<sup>4</sup> Meagan Wilson, Julia Karon, and Rayane Alamuddin, "Transfer Pathways to Independent Colleges: Strategies for Improving Community College Transfer-In and Bachelor's Degree Completion in the Private Sector," *Ithaca S+R*, June 11, 2020, <https://sr.ithaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SR-Report-Transfer-Pathways-to-Independent-Colleges-061120-1.pdf>.

The Teagle Foundation and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations (AVDF) have undertaken a five-year initiative to create statewide transfer pathways in 20 states and increase the number of community college transfer students earning bachelor’s degrees at institutions that emphasize the liberal arts.<sup>5</sup> To date, implementation grants have been awarded to eight states.

This playbook is meant to serve as a guide for independent four-year institutions—and their state or regional associations—seeking to increase community college transfer and completion on a sector-wide or consortial basis and in a manner that can be scaled to all community colleges in their state. It draws primarily on the experiences of six states participating in the Transfer Pathways initiative that are in various stages of implementation: North Carolina, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Minnesota, and Ohio. This playbook is designed to help independent colleges:

1. Engage in collective goal setting for the initiative.
2. Establish an infrastructure to support the initiative.
3. Adopt a strategy for sustaining the transfer initiative for the long term.



This playbook is accompanied by [online resources](#) from participating grantees, as well as other reports and materials produced as part of Ithaka S+R’s work on the *Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts* initiative.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “Arthur Vining Davis and Teagle Announce 7 New Grants to Create Transfer Pathways for Community College Students,” *The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations*, June 24, 2021, <https://www.avdf.org/news/arthur-vining-davis-and-teagle-announce-7-new-grants-to-create-transfer-pathways-for-community-college-students/>.

<sup>6</sup> Please see “Liberal Arts Transfer Pathways” on Ithaka S+R’s website, <https://sr.ithaka.org/liberal-arts-transfer-pathways/>.

## Context

The Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts initiative, co-sponsored by the Teagle and Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, provides funds for each participating state to pursue a variety of strategies to improve transfer between community colleges and independent four-year institutions. The six grantees highlighted in this playbook are pursuing one or more of the strategies in the table below. The next iteration of the playbook, to be published in spring of 2024, will include strategies adopted by the broader base of grantees.

Strategy	Definition	States
Block transfer	Four-year institutions accept general education or core credits earned at community colleges	North Carolina Ohio Minnesota Connecticut Massachusetts Rhode Island <sup>7</sup>
Discipline-specific pathways	Allows students to count major-specific credits earned at a community college towards their degree at a four-year institution <sup>8</sup>	North Carolina (Psychology, Sociology) Ohio (Biology, English, Psychology) Minnesota (Biology, Chemistry, Communications, English, History, Psychology)
Transfer Guarantee	Guarantees admission for community college transfer students who meet certain criteria (such as a minimum GPA) to a set of four-year institutions	Connecticut Massachusetts Rhode Island Minnesota
Reverse transfer	Allows students enrolled at four-year institutions to transfer credit back to the community college and earn their associate degree. Studies show that students who pursue reverse transfer are more likely to earn their bachelor's degree <sup>9</sup>	Ohio

<sup>7</sup> The process of accepting block transfer of general education credits at participating independent colleges largely precedes the work undertaken during the current grants for all states but Ohio and Rhode Island.

<sup>8</sup> Connecticut also has 19 available standardized pathways through their Transfer Ticket program; see "Connecticut Guarantee – TAP Pathway Agreement Forms," *New England Board of Higher Education*, <https://nebhe.org/ct-guarantee-tap-pathway-forms/>.

<sup>9</sup> See "Top 5 Things Students Want to Know About Reverse Transfer," *National Student Clearinghouse*, August 7, 2018, <https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/nscblog/top-5-things-students-want-to-know-about-reverse-transfer/>; Lexi Anderson, "Reverse Transfer: The path less traveled," *Education Commission of the States*, May 2015, <https://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/18/77/11877.pdf>.

The grantees we profile have different timelines and grant structures. The project in North Carolina involves 14 independent colleges and is currently in the third year of its implementation grant. Minnesota and Ohio, on the other hand, have only very recently completed their planning grants and started implementing their strategies; those projects respectively involve 12 and 14 independent colleges. Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island recently enacted transfer admission guarantee policies to recruit community college associate degree completers in their respective states; the number of independent colleges participating in the guarantees range from three in Rhode Island to over 20 in Massachusetts. Each of these projects is being managed by the relevant association of independent colleges in the region: North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities (NCICU), the Minnesota Private College Council (MPCC), the Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges (OFIC), and the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) in collaboration with Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges, Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Rhode Island, and the public higher education systems in each participating state.<sup>10</sup> The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is also partnering with NCICU and OFIC to manage the initiatives in North Carolina and Ohio respectively.

Regardless of which transfer strategies the participating states decided to pursue, each grantee first needed to determine how their goals matched those of individual stakeholders and how they could best tailor their initiative to their state or regional context.

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<sup>10</sup> The New England Board of Higher Education's initiative is funded by the Teagle Foundation and the Davis Educational Foundation (<https://www.davisfoundations.org/def>).





## Step 1: Determine the Initiative's Collective Goals

The initiatives featured in this playbook have set a variety of short- and long-term goals for their states or regions but all are focused on strengthening the inter-institutional cooperation between community colleges and independent four-year colleges and universities, moving from individual articulation agreements between institutions to a broader, collaborative culture across the state that positions independent colleges as a visible destination for transfer relative to their public four-year peers. Some goals are more holistic, such as developing relationships between key stakeholders in the state or improving the culture of transfer at participating institutions. Other goals are tactical in nature, whereby project leaders aim to implement a particular transfer strategy, such as statewide pathways in high-demand liberal arts disciplines.

### Short-Term Goals

- Develop and promote liberal arts transfer opportunities at independent colleges for community college graduates (New England).
- Create a strong framework for transfer advising at both community colleges and independent colleges (North Carolina).
- Design discipline-specific transfer pathways in biology, psychology, and English supported by clear, collaboratively-designed articulation agreements, based on the Ohio Department of Higher Education Guaranteed Transfer Pathways for transfer between public institutions (Ohio).

### Long-Term Goals

- Significantly increase the number of community college students who transfer into all NCICU four-year institutions as juniors (North Carolina).
- Increased completion rates of community college transfer students at MPCC member institutions (Minnesota).

Setting the right goals is critical for the success of any transfer initiative. To do this, it is imperative to survey the existing transfer landscape in a state or region to determine which transfer strategies are most appropriate. When setting the goals, be sure to align the priorities of all relevant stakeholders at both independent colleges and community colleges to narrow down the exact course of action for the initiative. We also suggest using guiding principles throughout

both the goal-setting process and the entire planning process. In this section we provide a menu of tactics to get started.

## Appraise Existing State, Regional, and Institutional Context

Examining the existing context at the regional, state, and institutional levels is critical not only for deciding which transfer strategy to pursue, but also for determining the scope of a given initiative. For instance, independent colleges and associations should build off existing state-level policies to facilitate transfer to public four-year institutions when designing their own transfer pathways. At the institution level, knowledge of the transfer policies and agreements that are already in place as well as the transfer goals of individual institutions will help define the set of institutions that would benefit most from participating in a sector-wide or consortial initiative.

## Identify Institutional Transfer Policies

Understanding individual institutions' transfer contexts can help state or regional associations set goals that appeal to the largest number of independent colleges and universities, thus maximizing the reach and impact of the initiative. Associations should survey their member institutions to determine the policies they have in place surrounding transfer, the transfer-related data they are collecting (if any), their transfer enrollment rates, and what transfer-specific goals they may have that can align with the initiative's goals. Surveys can also help directly gauge institutional interest in participating in specific initiatives. Once institutions have been surveyed, associations can meet with institutions individually to confirm interest in participating in the initiative or convene their members to discuss the results of the survey and which institutions may be interested in moving forward with a given set of goals.

### Surveying Institutions

The project leaders in Ohio sent out a Google poll to the chief academic officers (CAOs) of all 36 Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges institutions to get a sense of their interest in pursuing a transfer initiative and then sent a follow-up survey to document existing transfer policy and enrollment. The Ohio project leaders also held individual virtual meetings with each independent college to discuss the importance of enrolling and supporting community college transfer students. These conversations allowed OFIC to build buy-in and determine whether their proposed goals matched the needs and environments of their member institutions. Equally important was surveying all Ohio community colleges to determine interest, assess existing bilateral articulations and identify academic areas of student interest for transfer pathways. In addition to the individual meetings with independent colleges, OFIC held a focus group with several community colleges and independent colleges in the state.

### **Surveying Institutions (continued)**

Similarly, the Minnesota Private College Council project team surveyed their 17 member institutions to determine which transfer policies they had in place, including existing transfer agreements, advising for transfer students, and transfer-specific financial aid.<sup>11</sup> MPCC also held several group conversations with its member institutions to learn about the common challenges posed by existing transfer practices and policies and celebrate success stories. These conversations, which spanned several months during the planning phase of the initiative, helped the project team determine what might be possible at the consortium level and which goals might be more appropriate for individual institutions to pursue separately.

## **Examine State and/or Regional Policies**

It is crucial to identify state or regional policies that may already be in place before selecting a transfer strategy. Many states have already established policies to facilitate transfer between community colleges and public four-year schools.<sup>12</sup> Independents can and should build off existing state and/or regional policies when designing their own transfer initiatives. This will save substantial time and resources as well as provide students with clear and consistent transfer pathways, whether they choose to enroll in a public or private four-year institution. Independent institutions and their associations need to understand the existing transfer landscape in their state and region, connect with representatives from the public sector, and base initiative goals off existing policy.

### **Building Off State Policy**

When setting their goals, the project leaders in Ohio knew they could model the pathways to independent four-year institutions based on what the Ohio Department of Higher Education had already established. This included subject-specific pathways in biology, psychology, and English, as well as a statewide general education agreement called Ohio Transfer 36, that outlined clear learning outcomes developed in concert by community college and public four-year faculty.

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<sup>11</sup> See "Survey of member institutions about own transfer practices," *Minnesota Private College Fund and Council*, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OsJcqDYTYkDVUYmwsIZC43rERluUrfUJ/edit>.

<sup>12</sup> Cassidy Francies and Lexi Anderson, "50-State Comparison: Transfer and Articulation Policies," *Education Commission of the States*, February 24, 2020, <https://www.ecs.org/transfer-and-articulation-policies-db/>.

## Building Off State Policy (Continued)

When selecting the goals for its initiative, North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities built off a state-wide transfer policy specifically for independent colleges, the Independent Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (ICAA). The ICAA was in turn designed to align with existing articulation agreements between community colleges in the state and public four-years.<sup>13</sup> The ICAA allows community college transfers to enter participating independent colleges with all general education requirements waived, provided they have completed their associate degree. Having this baseline of general education credit transfer has allowed NCICU to focus instead on developing discipline-specific pathways so students can arrive on campus with junior status in their chosen majors and further decrease their time to degree. The project leaders at NCICU emphasized the importance of starting with block transfer of general education credits before moving on to develop policies such as admissions guarantees and major-specific pathways.

The New England Board of Higher Education looked to an innovative state policy established in Massachusetts to inspire the rollout of a Transfer Admission Guarantee in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. In Massachusetts, associate degree completers are entitled to guaranteed transfer admission to public four-year institutions and access to financial aid depending on their grade point average. The participating independent colleges in the three states have chosen to adopt the same transfer admission guarantee framework, taking care to ensure that they also mirror policies for block transfer of credit in their states as appropriate (for example, Connecticut independent colleges participating in their state's Transfer Admission Guarantee also honor Connecticut "Transfer Ticket" curricula intended to facilitate transfer to Connecticut State College and Universities). By expanding the transfer guarantee to include participating independent colleges in the state, community college students can meet one set of requirements to transfer to a large number of schools, providing students with more options and a more straightforward path to a bachelor's degree.

While state policy often facilitates transfer to all four-year institutions in the state, policy changes can sometimes make it difficult for private colleges to align with the public sector. For instance, recent state legislation mandates that the public University of California and California State University systems develop a common lower-division transfer pathway by fall of 2025.<sup>14</sup> While proponents of the bill argue that this will simplify the process for students, many community college stakeholders as well as independent colleges worry that the law does

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<sup>13</sup> "Independent Comprehensive Articulation Agreement," *North Carolina Community Colleges*, <https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/independent-comprehensive-articulation-agreement>.

<sup>14</sup> Sara Weissman, "Law on Transfer Process Sparks Controversy," *Inside Higher Ed*, October 12, 2021, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/10/12/california-law-ease-transfer-process-sparks-controversy>.

not address some of the underlying problems with transfer in the state and will result in more confusion for students, or will result in students being put on a path that will not lead to transfer to their institution of choice. This bill is one example of a state prioritizing the interest of public systems and not necessarily taking independents into account, something that other independent colleges will need to be wary of when modeling initiatives off state policy.

## Evaluate Regional Opportunities

If states are part of a region that has developed more advanced transfer pathways, such as the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's Interstate (WICHE) Passport that applies to both publics and participating independent colleges,<sup>15</sup> building pathways at the regional rather than the state level provides an opportunity to create a much broader impact. A regional approach is also practical and warranted when there is clear interest among students to transfer across multiple states, such as in smaller regions like New England. The presence of a regional coordinating body such as NEBHE or WICHE with a history of working across state lines and merging policies may be a prerequisite to successful inter-state collaboration.

Developing regional initiatives, however, is not always possible as some states may be incentivized to keep their transfer students from crossing state lines. Concerns about declining enrollments in certain regions of the country may preclude states from agreeing to pursue a regional initiative, and in such cases a state level initiative may be more appropriate. In addition, students often need to remain in-state to maintain eligibility for state grant aid. This also creates an incentive for state-level pathways to independent colleges, as independent colleges may not want incoming students to lose potential grant aid.

## Align Interests of Relevant Project Stakeholders

Along with identifying the policies and practices in place at the state, regional, and institution levels, it is important to select a transfer strategy that aligns with those policies as well as with the priorities of relevant project stakeholders. These stakeholders include institutions and the associations themselves, but also state agencies, legislators, public systems, community colleges, and funders. Selecting a transfer strategy that appeals to all these actors will cultivate buy-in and set up the initiative for success during both the planning and implementation stages.

When setting the goals of their initiative, NEBHE made sure to collaborate and hold conversations with multiple actors across the region, including public four-year institutions, state associations of private colleges, state government officials, individual independent colleges, and students. Choosing project goals that appealed to public institutions and state agencies in particular alleviated some of the tension that might have arisen due to declining enrollments in the region and solidified the public sector's commitment to collaborating on the New England Transfer Guarantee.

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<sup>15</sup> "Interstate Passport," *Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education*, <https://interstatepassport.wiche.edu/>.

Goals should also be chosen to align with community college partners. Because reverse transfer helps more students earn associate degrees and boosts funding for community colleges, OFIC recognized that this strategy would encourage more community colleges to join their initiative. Increased community college attainment and funding can also be accomplished by linking guaranteed admission to independent four-year institutions to the completion of an associate degree. When designing their Guarantee, NEBHE chose to require students to complete their associate to boost associate degree attainment and increase buy-in from community colleges.

**| If building transfer pathways for particular disciplines, understanding the regional context is key to setting goals.**

If building transfer pathways for particular disciplines, understanding the regional context is key to setting goals. In North Carolina, NCICU sent out surveys to all ICAA members to determine which liberal arts majors were most popular. OFIC sent surveys to independent colleges to determine which majors needed students in upper-level classes. They also surveyed community colleges to understand which majors were most common among their students. From there, they examined national trends in enrollment and decided to pursue pathways for the three most popular liberal arts majors nationally and across the state.

Aligning project goals with potential funders is also key. When deciding on the goals for their initiative, MPCC held calls with chief academic officers of participating institutions as well as the full planning group to determine which goals most institutions would be interested in pursuing. From there, they narrowed down potential goals based on Teagle and AVDF's interest in the liberal arts. This allowed MPCC to set specific goals for the current initiative that were aligned with the current funders, while also pursuing additional funding to explore other priorities. In Ohio, pursuing reverse transfer also helped align the project with efforts pursued by Lumina Foundation in the state.

## Determine the Guiding Principles

Guiding principles serve to center the initiative around more high-level goals, such as addressing equity gaps in a state and incorporating student-centric philosophies throughout the initiative itself. Asking participating institutions to sign on to these guiding principles can also ensure that institutions work to address transfer supports at the campus level in a holistic manner, and not just around what may be included or mandated as part of the statewide initiative.

## New England Board of Higher Education's Guiding Principles

NEBHE developed guiding principles for the Transfer Guarantee to which all participating independent colleges agreed.<sup>16</sup> These principles ask independent institutions to provide specific supports to incoming community college transfer students, collect data on their outcomes, and allow them to transfer in and apply as much credit as possible towards bachelor's degrees. We call out four of the principles here:

- Institutions will acknowledge and value the rich perspectives, life experiences, persistence, diversity, and the academic preparation community college transfer students bring to their institutions.
- Institutions will honor the community college graduation audit, including credits from online coursework, CLEP, AP, IB, dual enrollment and more.
- Institutions will provide tailored pre-application and post-acceptance support services for transfer students, including intensive advising, academic guidance and counseling, academic support, peer advising, personal guidance and counseling, transfer student orientations, career services and supplemental services.
- Independent institutions will take into consideration the transfer slump many students experience and to develop academic good standing policies that wait until the end of the academic year to determine whether any transfer student (regardless of participation in the Guarantee) should be placed on academic probation.

## Target Underrepresented Students

As the ultimate purpose behind increasing community college transfer and completion is to confer more low-income students and students from historically underserved backgrounds with bachelor's degrees, reducing existing equity gaps should be a high-level goal for all community college transfer initiatives. While not every initiative may list this as an explicit goal, institutions and state associations should devote resources to understanding and reducing existing equity gaps in any way possible throughout the planning and implementation of the initiative.

In Minnesota, for example, MPCC brought in data analysts to determine which students in the state were more or less likely to persist and graduate. The team examined the proportion of

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<sup>16</sup> See "Massachusetts Independent College Transfer Guarantee Guiding Principles," *New England Board of Higher Education*, [https://nebhe.org/info/pdf/transfer/guarantee/massachusetts/B\\_Massachusetts\\_Guarantee\\_Guiding\\_Principles.pdf](https://nebhe.org/info/pdf/transfer/guarantee/massachusetts/B_Massachusetts_Guarantee_Guiding_Principles.pdf). NEBHE is in the process of developing updated guiding principles based on lessons learned during implementation, from which these examples are drawn.

BIPOC community college students receiving Pell grants. They then used those statistics to understand what barriers to success potential transfer students may face and how to address those barriers. Throughout implementation, the MPCC team intends to continue using data to examine barriers and solutions for students from historically underserved backgrounds. Institutions in the state are also committed to closing equity gaps in baccalaureate attainment and see community college transfer as a way to work towards this goal. Aligning the goals of institutions and state associations around equity and making that commitment explicit will ensure that equity considerations are front and center throughout planning and implementation.





## Step 2: Establish the Initiative’s Infrastructure

After setting goals, states and institutions need to establish the necessary relationships and processes that form the infrastructure of the initiative. Project leaders must be sure to build relationships with, and get buy-in from, key institutional stakeholders, including faculty and staff as well as leadership. Partnerships with external parties and the public sector are also essential. In the planning stage, state associations should select key project leadership and set other project structures such as meeting formats and funder reporting. In this section, we provide several tactics initiatives may want to consider.

### Garner Buy-In from Key Institutional Stakeholders

When assembling a set of institutions for an initiative, it is important to garner buy-in and commitment from stakeholders, including leadership and staff—particularly faculty members, as they often make the final determination as to which credits can apply towards a degree. Building trust between faculty at community colleges and faculty at four-year institutions is essential to getting faculty buy-in and designing transfer pathways that meet the needs of all institutions. In addition, ensuring that community college and independent faculty are involved in conversations around transfer at their respective institutions can provide the needed awareness and support for transfer initiatives. Commitment from leadership at independent colleges is also needed to ensure that transfer will be an institutional priority and that the needed resources will be devoted to the initiative and related transfer student supports. At the community college level, leadership buy-in ensures that transfer to independent colleges is promoted and that relationships can develop between community colleges and more independent colleges in a state or region. While involving faculty in curriculum-focused initiatives is clearly a priority, it is also important to involve other staff that will be involved in implementing any transfer initiative.

Commitment from leadership at independent colleges is also needed to ensure that transfer will be an institutional priority and that the needed resources will be devoted to the initiative and related transfer student supports.

## Independent College Faculty

Faculty buy-in at the independent college level is critical for supporting transfer initiatives and establishing a transfer-friendly culture at participating institutions. One potential barrier is the misconception that transfer students from community colleges are less capable or prepared than students who begin at their institution straight from high school or from another four-year institution.<sup>17</sup> In fact, community college transfer students at four-year institutions fare, on average, just as well or better than their “native” student counterparts.<sup>18</sup> There is also a misconception that community college curriculum is less robust than the curriculum at four-year institutions and taught by less qualified faculty members. This can lead to four-year faculty resisting institutional efforts to accept general education credits or pre-requisites for the major from community colleges, even when they share the same accrediting agency. Lack of awareness around transfer responsibilities is another barrier; faculty at independent colleges often do not feel accountable for adjusting their curriculum or teaching practices to better support transfer students.

In fact, community college transfer students at four-year institutions fare, on average, just as well or better than their “native” student counterparts.

The initiatives highlighted in this playbook have used several strategies to break down barriers and increase faculty buy in.

### Five steps to Breaking Down Barriers

#### ***Build trust between community college and independent college faculty***

- Provide face-to-face time for faculty at both schools. Baldwin Wallace University in Ohio conducted joint faculty development to strengthen ties between their faculty and faculty at nearby community colleges. This connection has helped Baldwin Wallace faculty gain insight into the strong qualifications and credentials of community college faculty.
- Schedule class visits. One university in Minnesota arranged for faculty to sit in on their counterpart’s STEM classes and labs, helping to demonstrate the high quality of coursework at the community college level.

<sup>17</sup> A couple of surveyed faculty noted that this perception can lead faculty members to be less willing to participate and/or endorse transfer initiatives

<sup>18</sup> Di Xu et al., “Are Community College Transfer Students ‘A Good Bet’ for 4-Year Admissions? Comparing Academic and Labor-Market Outcomes Between Transfer and Native 4-Year College Students,” *Community College Research Center*, February 2018, <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/are-community-college-transfer-students-good-bet-4-year-admissions.html>; Tania LaViolet et al., “The Talent Blind Spot: The Case for Increasing Community College Transfer to High Graduation Rate Institutions,” American Talent Initiative, July 11, 2018, [https://americantalentinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Aspen-ATI\\_Vol.1\\_The-Case\\_07112018.pdf](https://americantalentinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Aspen-ATI_Vol.1_The-Case_07112018.pdf).

## **Five steps to Breaking Down Barriers (continued)**

### ***Encourage state associations to play a role***

- OFIC plans to convene working groups for each discipline-specific pathway, each populated by faculty members with curriculum or program authority from both independent four-years and community colleges. This collaborative process is intended to cultivate trust between four-year and community college faculty, assuring four-year faculty that their colleagues at community colleges are qualified and invested in ensuring their students are transfer ready.
- NCICU established a peer-to-peer learning program, where two faculty from an independent four-year are paired with two faculty from a partner community college, with the goal of building the trust and collegiality necessary to establish common lower-division preparation for discipline-specific transfer pathways that apply for all North Carolina community colleges and all participating independent colleges.

### ***Use data***

- Thanks to its data collection processes, Capital University in Ohio was able to demonstrate that many of its high-performing students had transferred from community colleges. Sharing these data with faculty can help dispel common misconceptions around transfer student performance.
- An admissions staff member in a Minnesota university highlighted the new high-performing community college transfers in the lists that she sent to department chairs each term.
- National data can also provide evidence about how transfer students perform just as well as “native” students.

### ***Highlight enrollment***

- Administrators at the College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University in Minnesota inform faculty about declining enrollments and the need to admit more transfer students to support the sustainability of the institution
- Surveyed faculty list enrollment increases, especially enrollment in their upper-level courses, as a major benefit of undertaking work on transfer pathways.

### ***Showcase diversity***

- When surveyed, faculty noted that improving transfer pathways increased their institution’s ability to enroll strong students from a multitude of different socioeconomic and racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- In surveys, faculty express excitement about increasing the diversity of the campus population as a whole.
- Initiatives can foster understanding that a variety of perspectives enriches campus and classroom experiences through professional development and workshops.

## Community College Faculty

While the current transfer literature focuses on the importance of involving four-year faculty in the transfer process, it is also worth investing time in securing buy-in from community college faculty. Community college faculty interact with students early in their postsecondary journeys, which is when they would ideally start thinking about transferring and their specific transfer pathways. Community college faculty are also involved in curriculum design at their colleges and need to be kept informed as to how their curriculum can best align with current transfer initiatives.

Getting community college faculty invested in transfer is a challenge, as they often have a large set of responsibilities and are sometimes not made aware of the role they can play in helping students to transfer, particularly in disciplines that place less emphasis on the completion of a four-year degree. A transfer staff member at a community college noted that Arts and Sciences faculty are often less involved in transfer because of the way their departments are structured. Arts and Sciences faculty do not serve as advisors for students and as such are less knowledgeable about preparing them to transfer compared to faculty in fields such as nursing, who do serve as advisors and are dependent on their students transferring to four-year institutions to complete their educations. To address this, the staff member has been participating in the Arts and Sciences' departmental and curriculum committee meetings to bring the issue of transfer to the attention of the faculty, in the hopes that it will encourage faculty to consider transfer pathways when making key decisions around course structure and curriculum.

State associations should offer some financial compensation and their institutions could temporarily decrease faculty load to allow them to fully immerse themselves in transfer work.

At both the community college and independent college levels, project and institutional leaders should dedicate resources towards providing financial and time incentives for faculty to participate in transfer work. When surveyed, community college faculty noted that their teaching loads are high, and their limited capacity can prevent them from participating in any external initiatives. Covid has exacerbated existing concerns around faculty time and has left many feeling overwhelmed with their current responsibilities. To address this, surveyed faculty suggested that state associations should offer some financial compensation and their institutions could temporarily decrease faculty load to allow them to fully immerse themselves in transfer work. Community college faculty also suggested that their time should be used as efficiently as possible. This could involve employing virtual meetings rather than requiring travel time and having very targeted inquiries for faculty whenever possible.

## **North Carolina's Peer-to-Peer Program**

To meet their sector-wide goal of designing pathways in Psychology and Sociology that would allow community college students to transfer in with junior status, the NCICU project leaders relied on relationship building between faculty and staff at individual two- and four-year campuses in the state. These connections were facilitated by the peer-to-peer learning program, which allowed NCICU to combine learnings from multiple bilateral meetings to inform the broader initiative.

NCICU's peer-to-peer learning program was designed as a series of in-person meetings between faculty, chief academic officers, and advisors from one community college and a partnering independent college. Pairs of institutions were selected based on partnerships that already existed, typically based on location within the state. Prior to the pandemic, NCICU staff members planned on traveling to every campus over a year long period and hosting meetings for participating faculty and staff to discuss the details of the pathway agreements NCICU was developing in psychology and sociology. The hope was that faculty would be able to determine which courses students should take at the community college level, and NCICU would then take the results from all the meetings and combine them into the final version of each pathway.

While many of the peer-to-peer meetings ultimately ended up happening remotely, they still accomplished the sector-wide goals set by NCICU. Faculty members were able to delve into the details of the pathways such as which biology course students would take at each participating community college. In addition to moving the pathways forward, these peer groups fostered faculty cooperation and interaction at an entirely new level, and faculty reported that they had gotten to know their counterparts at the partner institution even better than they had before the pandemic. CAOs also reported that connecting with their counterparts at community colleges reinforced that NCICU members were committed to the success of community college students, which likely increased buy-in from community college administrators.

The project leaders at NCICU reflected that it would have been preferable to conduct the meetings in person as planned, but they were impressed with the commitment shown by their institutions during a global pandemic. Despite staff shortages, illness, and institutions having to transition to remote instruction, every campus volunteered to participate in the peer-to-peer groups and faculty were able to set aside enough time to meet with their community college counterparts. This high level of engagement despite limited capacity underscores the importance of building connections between faculty at different institutions.

## Independent College Leadership

High-level support for transfer initiatives from independent institutions will ensure that the goals of the initiative are prioritized and that work on the initiative will progress as needed. Even if staff are ready and willing to undertake work on transfer pathways, if institutional leadership is not actively participating in the transfer initiative it is unlikely that the needed changes to policies and practices will take place. State associations must ensure buy-in from presidents and provosts as well as any high-level administrators who may influence institutional decision-making. Helping institutional leaders envision how they can retain their institution's uniqueness, building off prior conversations around transfer, and citing transfer as a strategy for addressing enrollment declines are effective strategies to that end.

Overall, it is important to communicate to independent college stakeholders that they will not be sacrificing what makes their institution and curriculum unique even as they become more transfer-friendly institutions.

State association leaders shared that when starting conversations around transfer initiatives, it is important to emphasize that independent colleges will still be able to provide a unique and tailored education to their students. Each independent college offers their own type of coursework, student supports, and campus culture, and independents are often concerned that standardizing their curriculum and/or accepting more community college transfer students will necessitate sacrificing what makes their campus unique. One commonly cited example is in graduation requirements—independent colleges may have longstanding requirements such as theology coursework that they want all students to experience. These requirements may be threatened by a general education block transfer from community colleges. State associations can encourage institutions to shift these special courses from general education requirements to graduation requirements so that community college students can still transfer all their general education courses and experience specialized courses at the independent college, provided community college transfer matriculants may be assured timely degree completion. Overall, it is important to communicate to independent college stakeholders that they will not be sacrificing what makes their institution and curriculum unique even as they become more transfer-friendly institutions.

Enrollment declines can serve to motivate institutions in regions where the population of traditional-age students is declining.

A history of working with institutional leadership around transfer and other issues can help associations direct their members towards their transfer initiative. State association leaders in Minnesota, for example, already had strong relationships with presidents of their member institutions, with whom they had engaged in conversations around transfer student admissions. This made participation in their transfer initiative a natural next step for members. Similarly, in North Carolina, NCICU's history of working with institutions in the region around transfer

policy helped cement buy-in from institutional leadership. Enrollment declines also can serve to motivate institutions in regions where the population of traditional-age students is declining. Transfer enrollment can be a key source of revenue for tuition-dependent private institutions and may also drive independent leadership to join broader transfer initiatives.

## Community College Leadership

Successful transfer initiatives also require buy-in from community college leadership. Community college administrators have extensive knowledge around what pathways their students often utilize and what needs to be done to improve transfer from their institutions to private four-year institutions. They will also be responsible for ensuring that students at their institution are best prepared to take advantage of transfer pathways by ensuring access to needed coursework, transfer advising, and other relevant supports. Involving community college leadership early in the initiative will ensure that all these requirements are met and that students will be ready and able to transfer to independent four-years.

Community college administrators we surveyed noted that they are less likely to partner with independent institutions that expect community colleges to make significant curricular changes.

Community colleges' need to align their curriculum with public four-years' transfer policies may serve as a barrier to participating in transfer initiatives with private institutions. One transfer staff member at a community college noted that leadership is often chiefly concerned with how their courses line up with the most popular public institutions in the region. Community college administrators we surveyed also noted that they are less likely to partner with independent institutions that expect community colleges to make significant curricular changes. This is yet another reason why independent colleges and associations should strive to align and build off existing policy in the public sector [see "Examine State and/or Regional Policies" above]. By aligning with existing transfer pathways, independents can assure community college leadership that they will not have to sacrifice existing connections to public four-year institutions in the state.

Another way to address this barrier is by communicating to community college leadership that developing pathways to independent colleges will give their students more options and enhance the transfer process. Community college leaders that we surveyed noted that they want to set their students up for success in transfer and make the process as seamless as possible. When cultivating buy-in from community colleges, independent associations need to emphasize that building out these pathways is in the students' best interests as they will be able to use their degree to transfer to any participating public and private institution. This is especially important in cases where the community colleges and public four-year colleges are part of the same system, and the latter may be reluctant to relinquish transfer students to the private sector.

Building out these pathways is in the students' best interests as they will be able to use their degree to transfer to any participating public and private institution.

Staff at the community college level also highlighted the importance of using data to demonstrate the importance of expanding transfer pathways to private institutions. A staff member at the Connecticut State Colleges and University System Office (CSCU) noted that independent college associations should collect data on how students fare at independent four-years in their state, including how many extra credits students must take on, how much it costs to earn a degree, and how long it takes students to graduate compared to their peers at public institutions. One state that has experienced success in this regard is North Carolina. NCICU leaders noted that community college leaders are willing to partner with their institutions because they have demonstrated that community college transfer students are successful at NCICU member schools. Building out a data infrastructure and using that data in communications with potential community college partners is a key way to ensure buy-in from more community college leaders in a state. Collecting information on cost of attendance and institutional grant aid can also help dispel the misconception that independent colleges are overly expensive for community college students.

## Staff

Independent college staff in offices related to transfer are the people most often tasked with executing policy and are therefore essential stakeholders in any transfer initiative. Institutions and/or associations should engage and garner buy-in from staff whose offices engage with or impact potential and current transfer students. This includes registrars, who examine and determine preliminary credit; financial aid offices, which award aid to transfer students; and admissions counselors and advisors, who directly assist transfer students throughout the transfer process. Often, there are staff in these offices eager to expand transfer pathways and ensuring buy-in across the institution may simply require involving as many offices as possible in early conversations. Reflecting on the implementation of their Transfer and Articulation Policy (TAP) between community colleges and public four-years, a CSCU staff member noted that involving staff early in the conversation would have made the implementation process much easier. TAP also involved developing transfer pathways between two- and four-year institutions, and while faculty voices were certainly incorporated early on, staff who would be charged with implementing the needed changes were only involved towards the end of the planning process. To avoid challenges and delays in implementation, independent college associations should make efforts to include multiple institutional offices in the planning process and include staff voices early in the initiative.



## Engaging Institutional Offices

- When OFIC planned their transfer initiative, they conducted interviews with staff in academic affairs, admissions, and enrollment at each of their 16 member institutions. The interviews revealed that despite varying capacity to support transfer students, staff were particularly interested in enrolling community college transfer students from underrepresented parts of the state. This willingness to enroll more transfer students helped OFIC secure buy-in from key offices at their member institutions.
- MPCC has made an effort to involve offices they already have relationships with, such as registrars and financial aid offices, and plans to use those connections to involve staff from offices they may not have interacted with thus far. They extended invitations to all offices to join their meetings during the planning phase and are continuing to engage staff from a variety of offices that interact with transfer students at both independents and community colleges.

Independent colleges and associations should also make efforts to build relationships with transfer counselors and advisors and involve them in early conversations to ensure that their needs and voices are represented in the planning process. Cultivating buy-in from community college advisors and transfer counselors ensures that students are made aware of and ultimately follow the transfer pathways set up as part of the initiative. As one staff member at Springfield College in Massachusetts noted, if transfer counselors from community colleges are not supportive of transfer initiatives, they are less likely to direct students towards those institutions or associations.

## Find Thought Partners and Subject Matter Experts

Developing a transfer initiative requires an understanding of complex issues such as transfer-specific student supports and pathway maintenance for those pursuing discipline-specific transfer pathways. Project leaders can bring in external subject matter experts and learn from those who have already pursued similar transfer initiatives. State associations can build relationships with and learn from state associations who have already undertaken transfer work. Institutions and state associations can also learn from external subject matter experts, especially when it comes to topics such as community college advising. Project leaders should also engage public institutions and systems in a given state or region, as they likely have expertise on transfer issues that can be applied to independent college transfer initiatives.

Institutions and state associations should engage subject matter experts around multiple areas of transfer policy, especially advising and student supports. Professional organizations such as the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) can be excellent thought partners when examining key issues in the transfer process. State associations found that inviting subject

matter experts to present to participating member institutions during the planning phase and involving these experts throughout the implementation process helped member institutions consider how to adjust their supports for community college transfers. These experts provide decades of experience in their field as well as an outside perspective that can help campus leaders examine their policies and practices and determine what changes need to be made in order to participate fully in the initiative.

Although each state is unique and strategies may not be implementable across different contexts, it is still worthwhile learning from state and regional associations who are further along in their transfer initiatives.

At the state association level, project leaders should also learn from associations in other states. Although each state is unique and strategies may not be implementable across different contexts, it is still worthwhile learning from state and regional associations who are further along in their transfer initiatives. When MPCC was starting their planning process, they made sure to engage NEBHE as well as state associations in California, Washington, Texas, and Michigan. They also used the network developed by their funder to reach out to additional states and glean any relevant lessons learned.

## Engage Public Institutions

Public institutions and systems have extensive experience developing transfer pathways between community colleges and four-year institutions. While not all practices will be transferable between the public sector and independent colleges, project leaders should be sure to include state system stakeholders as well as state offices in the planning process. It is important to garner buy-in from state systems but also to learn from their experience implementing transfer pathways in order to improve the transfer process across the board.

State association leaders shared that emphasizing a shared commitment to student success facilitated the forming of partnerships with public institutions. The project leader at NEBHE underlined the importance of using a student-centric perspective when interacting with public four-years and recognizing the work that has already been done in that sector. Rather than see the independent colleges as competition, public institutions and state officers of higher education across all participating states acknowledged that contributing to expanding transfer pathways benefited students and as such was a goal worth pursuing. This shared perspective has allowed NEBHE to rely on resources from the public sector for their own initiative—each independent college transfer pathway is listed on each state’s website, making it easier for students to access that information in one place and understand their transfer options.

Public institutions can also serve as excellent thought partners, even if they are not willing or able to provide direct support. MPCC has had great success engaging the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, which includes public four-years as well as all the state’s community colleges. The project leader at MPCC noted that Minnesota State has shared

accomplishments and challenges and has been a very willing thought partner throughout the planning phase of their transfer initiative. Similarly, project leaders at OFIC noted that the Ohio Department of Higher Education has been very willing to share learnings from its transfer pathway work. ODHE is committed to expanding transfer pathways across the state and has been an excellent resource for OFIC as they thought through their own transfer pathways to independent colleges.

## Decide on Project Management Structures

When planning a transfer initiative, it is essential to outline how the project will be organized and funded. Project logistics such as the meeting location and schedule should be determined and budgeted for accordingly. Project teams, whether at the state association or regional organization level, should select someone with the necessary expertise and capacity to lead the initiative. Locating and deciding on potential funders is also a key step which may take place before any other project logistics have been established, as the final selection of a funding source may impact project goals as well as the details of implementation.

## Establish a Core Leadership Team

At the outset of the project, it is essential to determine a project leadership team. Project leaders are responsible for deciding how to structure the team, who to hire, and what their roles and responsibilities will be. State association leaders described that it is important to identify one member of the project team whose primary responsibilities will be to communicate and liaise between institutional partners and the state association and to ensure that there is continued interest and momentum around the work. Leadership continuity throughout both the planning and implementation phases of a project is also key to ensuring the initiative proceeds as planned.

Some state associations have relied on internal staff, while others have found success hiring a consultant to lead or co-lead their transfer initiative. When hiring a consultant, state associations should consider selecting someone with a variety of skills and experiences, such as a former academic advisor at a community college or a former faculty member at an independent institution. Familiarity with the context and environment of two-year to four-year transfer in a state is also a key consideration. State associations can also prioritize hiring a consultant with expertise in non-traditional student populations, as many independent colleges recruit transfer students for their evening or online programs oriented towards adult learners.

The development of project leadership teams should also be heavily informed by organizational structure. This point is best encapsulated by the New England project. Because NEBHE serves as the backbone coordinating body for an entire region, the initiative's organizational structure requires additional coordination between NEBHE, state associations, and institutional partners rather than between just one state association and multiple institutions.

## Set Meeting Guidelines

It is important at the outset for project leaders to establish norms and guidelines around meetings and communications, including their mode, frequency, and structure, and to ensure they are compatible with the project timeline and key milestones. Given the continuing effects of the pandemic, project leaders should consider the feasibility, cost, and benefits of conducting meetings in person compared to virtual meetings. While in-person meetings can be high-risk depending on local public health conditions, they can yield better relationship building which can facilitate collaboration in a virtual form later in the project. On the other hand, projects that started during the pandemic have found ways to conduct successful virtual meetings without relying on in-person connections.

**Project leaders must make a concerted effort to hold meetings that encourage and facilitate communication and participation.**

Regardless of format, project leaders must make a concerted effort to hold meetings that encourage and facilitate communication and participation. For instance, MPCC shared in their progress report that most of their Zoom meetings included breakout sessions to create intimate settings in which smaller groups could interact and share ideas with project managers, something staff and faculty may be less likely to do in front of a larger audience. Similarly, prior to the pandemic, NCICU had planned to host large in-person meetings to finalize discipline-specific agreements. When they were forced to transition online, the state association leaders decided to host smaller meetings among individual project teams because they believed they would foster greater collaboration among participants than larger virtual meetings. The project leaders also noted, however, that faculty and staff from participating institutions in North Carolina had already built relationships in person prior to the shift online, which made online meetings much more productive.

## Locate a Source of Funding

Institutions or state associations should identify a funder with the resources to support their transfer initiative and a mission that aligns with the strategies the project leaders wish to pursue. As many foundations have worked extensively on transfer and can provide insight and recommendations that can help to narrow down project goals and define implementation processes, they can be invaluable partners in this work. Project leaders should be sure to apply for any relevant grant funding, keeping in mind that the mission and aims of the funder may narrow down the exact scope or focus of the work.

**Project leaders should be sure to apply for any relevant grant funding, keeping in mind that the mission and aims of the funder may narrow down the exact scope or focus of the work.**

All states mentioned in this playbook are partnering with both the Teagle Foundation and The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, who are funding the Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts Initiative. The foundations are looking to partner with 20 states to improve pathways between community colleges and independent institutions that focus on the liberal arts.<sup>19</sup> While no other foundations are supporting this specific work, OFIC is hoping to draw on the Credit When It's Due initiative on reverse transfer, funded by Lumina Foundation and the Kresge Foundation. Both Lumina and Kresge are currently pursuing degree attainment initiatives, including through getting more transfer and adult students to earn bachelor's degrees.<sup>20</sup> In the past, they have funded projects at the county and state level aimed at improving transfer pathways for low-income and other historically underserved students.<sup>21</sup> Project leaders should be sure to consider these and other foundations with a history of funding transfer work and a clear interest in improving transfer pathways.

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<sup>19</sup> "Transfer Pathways Partnership with the Teagle Foundation," *The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations*, October 25, 2020, <https://www.avdf.org/news/transfer-pathways-partnership-with-the-teagle-foundation/>.

<sup>20</sup> "Kresge's Education Program's five 2021 grantmaking priorities," *The Kresge Foundation*, February 16, 2021, <https://kresge.org/news-views/kresges-education-programs-five-2021-grantmaking-priorities/>; "A Stronger Nation," *Lumina Foundation*, <https://www.luminafoundation.org/our-work/stronger-nation/>.

<sup>21</sup> "\$450,000 awarded to Oregon's public colleges and universities by Lumina Foundation for 'reverse transfer' degree program," *Daily Emerald*, October 9, 2012, [https://www.dailymerald.com/news/450-000-awarded-to-oregons-public-colleges-and-universities-by-lumina-foundation-for-reverse-transfer/article\\_eb39490e-481f-59cd-b544-22ba1eff4909.html](https://www.dailymerald.com/news/450-000-awarded-to-oregons-public-colleges-and-universities-by-lumina-foundation-for-reverse-transfer/article_eb39490e-481f-59cd-b544-22ba1eff4909.html); "Reverse Transfer," *Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development*, <https://dhewd.mo.gov/ReverseTransfer.php>.



## Step 3: Ensure the Initiative's Sustainability

During both the planning and the implementation stages, project leaders will need to consider how the initiative will sustain itself even after the initial funding has expired. Key to the sustainability and success of any transfer initiative is marketing to potential transfer students, since no project will meet its goals if students are unaware of the transfer pathways that have been made available to them. Participating institutions will also need to set up supports for community college transfer students once they arrive on campus and adjust their policies and practices to best serve this student population. Project leaders must also consider any project maintenance such as updating discipline-specific transfer pathways as courses and curricula evolve over time. Evaluating the success of the initiative is also an important step that can both determine whether the initiative has met its goals and inform future implementation.

### Market Independent Colleges as a Transfer Destination

While transfer pathways and policies are being developed, project leaders should devote time and resources to publicizing their efforts to potential community college transfer students. Pathways to public institutions dominate the current transfer landscape, and students are often less aware of their options at independent colleges despite those pathways being broadly available.<sup>22</sup> Effective marketing is key to reducing this gap. Websites and portals have become a key part of the transfer landscape, and institutions and associations should consider integrating their pathways into an existing resource or creating a new platform to meet their advertising needs. Although technology can reach a wide array of students, project staff noted that nothing can replace face-to-face contact with community college students. Bringing students in contact with the four-year campus early on is key to increasing transfer enrollment. State associations or individual campuses can also provide admission incentives to encourage students to take advantage of new and existing pathways. In addition, initiatives will need to invest resources into building advising supports at the community college level, as community college advising is where students are often first exposed to transfer pathways to independent colleges.

### Utilize Relevant Technology

Online resources such as transfer portals are an essential part of any transfer initiative. While transfer pathways and agreements can be advertised through press releases and individual outreach attempts to students, listing the information online ensures that students will always be able to access relevant information on where their credits will transfer. This is especially pertinent for community college students who often question how much of their credit will transfer to any given independent institution. Project leaders should be sure to budget enough

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Keane, Thomas Gutto, and Emily Decatur, "Sustaining Successful Transfer Pathways," *TransferTalk*, 2021, [https://read.nxtbook.com/nacac/the\\_journal\\_of\\_college\\_admiss/fall\\_2021/transfertalk.html](https://read.nxtbook.com/nacac/the_journal_of_college_admiss/fall_2021/transfertalk.html).

time and resources across the planning and implementation phases to successfully develop and roll out whichever online solution they choose.<sup>23</sup>

### **Leverage Existing Resources**

Since building a new transfer website or portal is often prohibitively expensive, state associations should try to integrate their online presence into existing resources. In New England, NEBHE was able to leverage its partnerships with participating state offices of education to put their transfer pathways on the state website along with transfer pathways to public four-years. NEBHE contracted with the states of Connecticut,<sup>24</sup> Rhode Island,<sup>25</sup> and Massachusetts,<sup>26</sup> and devoted a large percentage of their budget towards developing the necessary web infrastructure. The site will allow potential transfer students to view how their courses will transfer as well as minimum GPA and course grade requirements across all independents in each state. NEBHE also had their member institutions update their transfer websites to include information about the Guarantee.<sup>27</sup> Adding information to state and institutional websites saves resources for independent associations but also provides a one-stop-shop for students who are looking to see where their courses will transfer across a state.

Institutions and/or associations should also explore the possibility of adding their information to existing transfer portals maintained by for-profit vendors or advocating to ensure they are represented on state-run websites intended to promote transfer. Entering and maintaining course-level transfer equivalency data into such platforms is important to ensure that students across the state and region can determine how their courses will transfer. Staff at St. Catherine University and College of St. Benedict and St. John's University in Minnesota noted that adding their information to such platforms is vital, but it requires an immense load on the part of any individual institution, at least in the "start-up" phase. Multiple offices from IT to Academic Affairs must work together to ensure that the correct information is uploaded and updated on a regular basis and adding information to the portal often involves the hiring of a new staff member which is a huge lift for independent institutions. Participation in transfer portals will pay for itself if sufficient revenue is generated through transfer student recruitment. State associations should consider with their member colleges how to ensure participation in such portals in a financially sustainable way.

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<sup>23</sup> "Transfer Explorer," *The City University of New York*, <https://explorer.cuny.edu/>.

<sup>24</sup> "CT Guarantee," *Connecticut State Colleges and Universities*, <https://www.ct.edu/transfer/guarantee>.

<sup>25</sup> "Rhode Island Guarantee," *Community College of Rhode Island*, [https://www.ccri.edu/advising/transfer\\_information/riguarantee/index.html](https://www.ccri.edu/advising/transfer_information/riguarantee/index.html).

<sup>26</sup> "MassTransfer," *Massachusetts Department of Higher Education*, <https://www.mass.edu/masstransfer/maguarantee/home.asp>.

<sup>27</sup> See "Massachusetts Community College Students," *Regis College*, <https://www.regiscollege.edu/admission-and-aid/undergraduate-admission/transfer-students/massachusetts-community-college>.

When building off existing resources is not available or perhaps not the best option, state associations can develop their own transfer portal. MPCC is exploring a new transfer resource for independent colleges in Minnesota. The Council plans to develop a website where students can search by combinations of area of study, participating four-year institution, and sending community college to see how their courses will transfer. Project leaders hope that this web resource will help students plan their transfer journey and see the benefits of both a liberal arts education and continuing their education at an MPCC member institution.

## Create Personalized Connections between Campuses

Marketing to potential community college transfer students requires both centralized sharing of information through online platforms and more personalized outreach through face-to-face or other direct contact. State association leaders and institutional staff alike noted the importance of developing relationships between independent institutions and community college transfer counselors and students. Community college students often seek information from sources closest to them, whether that be their own community college website or their counselor and transfer advisors. Having direct contact with community college students and staff will ensure that independent college transfer pathways are top of mind when students are examining their transfer options.

State association leaders and institutional staff alike noted the importance of developing relationships between independent institutions and community college transfer counselors and students.

Many independent colleges with strong transfer pathways have dedicated transfer staff in their admissions department that spend time directly at community colleges. In Minnesota, staff from various independent colleges work together to set up booths at community college events. Transfer staff would hand out paper guides featuring various programs and would even advertise programming from other institutions that might be of interest to students. While information is posted on individual institutions' websites, transfer staff are looking forward to returning to community colleges in person since this is often the best way to reach potential transfer students. Similarly, schools such as Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina have dedicated transfer counselors with knowledge of relevant transfer pathways visit community college campuses in person. Administrators at several independent colleges in North Carolina emphasized that transfer staff having face-to-face time with students is essential for marketing transfer pathways.



## Bringing Students to Campus

Some campuses have taken this marketing strategy a step further and invited potential transfer students to spend time on campus. Wingate University in North Carolina not only sends representatives to community colleges but also invites potential community college students to spend time on campus. Inviting community college students to campus helps them feel like part of the campus community before they enroll. A staff member at Brevard College, also in North Carolina, also noted the importance of students having direct contact with the campus itself. Students who are interested in applying to Brevard can participate in both curricular and extracurricular activities and are invited into the classroom so they get a sense of what their experience would be like at the four-year institution. This can encourage students to apply and potentially overcome some apprehension around applying to an independent college rather than a public institution.

## Communicate the Benefits of Independent Colleges

Institutions and state associations alike need to demonstrate to community college students that transferring to independent institutions in the state is financially feasible and beneficial. Community college students and staff often assume that attending a private institution will be too costly, and so limit their focus to public institutions. However, many independent institutions offer tailored financial aid for low-income students and accept enough credit that students can complete their degree in two years instead of three. Independent colleges also offer flexible programming for adult students that might appeal to community college transfers looking for something outside of the traditional four-year experience. Demonstrating that these benefits exist will encourage community college students to apply, as will providing financial and other incentives throughout the application process.

“I’ve appreciated the flexibility and involvement that my private partners have brought...to our students. I think some of the publics I work with could learn from our private partners.”

When communicating to students the relative benefits of attending an independent institution, transfer counselors and staff should highlight the flexibility that many four-year private schools pride themselves on. Project leaders in Ohio noted that independents offer a more unique and personalized experience compared to public institutions and that this can be used to encourage students to apply. A staff member at a community college in Ohio echoed this sentiment, saying “I’ve appreciated the flexibility and involvement that my private partners have brought...to our students. I think some of the publics I work with could learn from our private partners.” Independent institutions and associations across all states should advertise the more tailored educational experience that independents can provide their transfer students.

Institutions should also consider which incentives may encourage transfer students to apply. Using unofficial transcripts is one way to streamline the application process and allow transfer students to quickly determine how many of their credits will transfer to any given institution. Dean College in Massachusetts accepts unofficial transcripts for admissions purposes and preliminary credit evaluations and also uses a simplified application for community college transfer students. Institutions in New England are also offering financial incentives for students to apply as part of the transfer guarantee. While the amount varies across participating institutions, NEBHE is mandating that institutions to offer financial aid to entice community college students to enroll in independents in the region.

## **Build Best Practices for Community College Advising**

While four-year institutions will need to dedicate resources to connecting with community college students, much of the marketing of any initiative depends on community college advisors. Advisors are often the most important source of information for community college students when it comes to transfer. Community college advising is an issue being considered by all the state associations represented in this playbook and remains one of the toughest challenges to any transfer initiative.

One challenge is reaching students very early on, often before they even register for their first community college classes. Project leaders at NCICU noted that students who want to transfer into majors with certain math requirements will need to register for courses such as statistics and not take the general math pathway offered to community college students in the state. This means that students need information even before registration and delivering this information has proven difficult if not impossible. Community college advisors also need information about financial aid at independent colleges—many state associations are still hoping to develop guidelines to assist with this process.

Capacity concerns at the community college level can also prevent advisors from being able to provide necessary information on transfer pathways to students. A staff member at CSCU shared that their student to advisor ratio is approximately 600 to 1; while they are working on reducing that to closer to 250:1, there are still huge capacity challenges. To support community college advisors, NEBHE plans to offer professional development around the transfer guarantee. Budgeting for and providing resources to assist participating community colleges will likely be necessary if they are to successfully coach students towards independent college transfer pathways.

## **Set up Campus Supports**

Institutions and state associations need to consider how transfer students will be supported once they arrive on the independent college campus. Independents must be sure to create a culture that celebrates transfer students, respects their past experiences, and supports their often-unique needs. Financial supports such as scholarships are also essential, as many transfer students have exhausted a portion of their federal aid and require additional assistance paying for college. Accepting transfer students also means ensuring that they can transfer in as many

credits as possible and can start their experience with a shorter time to degree. Independents can also integrate supports and policies for transfer students with existing policies for adult learners or other non-traditional populations.

It is worth noting that many of these supports must be provided by individual college campuses. That does not mean that state associations or other project leaders cannot intervene to encourage institutions to pursue such policies. As part of the guiding principles for their transfer initiative, NEBHE is requiring that institutions examine their policies in place to support transfer students and will be tracking institutional progress via a survey. This survey will then inform professional development that is offered to campuses to help them improve their student support structures. While NEBHE cannot mandate that every institution adopt a particular policy, they hope that this initiative will encourage institutions to look inward and better support their incoming community college transfer students.

### **Create a “Transfer-Friendly” Culture**

One barrier to community college transfer success is the disorientation that arises from the vast difference in culture between community colleges and independent four-year liberal art colleges. This phenomenon, sometimes referred to as “transfer shock,” can lead to a dip in performance among students who have recently transferred. While community college transfer students can recover from this shock and perform just as well as their counterparts on average, there is a risk that this temporary drop in performance can lead to students being put on academic probation which can delay or prevent degree completion. Institutions tend to address transfer shock by taking steps to make transfer students feel welcome on campus and part of the campus community. One key consideration is registration; transfer students often register late due to delays in determining which credits will transfer which can lead to a less desirable schedule. Institutions should be sure to provide credit reviews early on and allow transfer students to register for courses at the same time as their ‘native’ peers. Transfer-specific orientation, introductory coursework, and tailored academic and other supports can also help with the transition from community college to the four-year institution. Institutions should also consider providing more holistic supports to address students’ basic needs, since many community college students come from low-income backgrounds and may need more wraparound services.

## Managing Transfer Shock

Transfer orientation and advising can ameliorate transfer shock. Schools such as Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina have developed sections of their orientation courses specifically for incoming transfer students. Staff at Johnson C. Smith note that they let students participate in orientation seminars before they even transfer, making it easier for potential transfer students to imagine their experience as a four-year student. Campbell University in North Carolina also offers a new student seminar specifically for transfer students and provides dedicated advisors that specialize in working with transfer students. Transfer-specific advisors ensure that incoming community college students can register for the right courses and have the assistance they need when designing their path to a four-year degree. These can be paired with other academic supports to even better serve transfer students—Brevard College in North Carolina, for example, offers transfer-specific academic advisors as well as success mentors that are paired with incoming community college transfer students.

As well as providing academic support, institutions should take steps to address every aspect of the transfer student experience. Staff at St. Catherine University in Minnesota noted that institutions should adjust residency policies which often require that students reside in on-campus housing. While inviting transfer students to experience dorm life can incorporate them into campus culture, transfer students should also have the option to commute and reduce their cost of attendance. Providing a dedicated space on campus for transfer students is another way to make transfer students feel like they belong on campus. Institutions such as Baldwin Wallace University in Ohio have an office where transfer students can ask any questions they may have and retain a point of contact with the university. Dedicated space for transfer students can create a sense of community amongst transfer cohorts and housing many transfer-specific supports in one office can also reduce the burden of navigating complex college structures.

Often creating a space that welcomes community college transfer students involves expanding holistic supports for all students. Capital University in Ohio partnered with nearby Columbus State Community College and the Gardner Institute to examine their transfer processes and came up with a long list of more holistic student supports that are now being implemented. One of these programs allows for Columbus State students to utilize housing on Capital's campus. Since Columbus State does not have the resources to provide affordable housing, Capital is currently allowing several students and their families to reside on campus less than three miles from their community college. Even if collaborating with local community colleges is not an option, independents should provide holistic supports such as housing and childcare for transfer and other students with higher levels of need.

## Commit to Fair Credit Transfer

Part of making transfer students feel welcome on campus is honoring their past experience, including accepting credit for prior coursework. Accepting credit not only demonstrates to transfer students that their past academic experience has value but also reduces time to degree. Minimizing the number of additional credits that transfer students must take before graduating is essential, especially since community college transfers may only have a limited amount of state or federal aid left to dedicate towards pursuing their degree. Independent colleges that wish to include unique graduation requirements should balance these needs with the need to ensure that incoming transfer students can complete their degree in two years.

Honoring past credit can sometimes involve reimagining the curriculum structure at an institution. College of St. Benedict and St. John's University in Minnesota has recently redesigned their general education curriculum and in doing so is taking strides to honor as much previously completed coursework as possible. A staff member from CSB/SJU noted that if transfer students are not able to transfer in credits and complete their degree in two years, colleges risk students' willingness to come, so adjusting the curriculum to allow for more credit transfer is essential. Capital University in Ohio also made substantial changes to its general education curriculum. Capital switched from a goal-centric framework to a learning outcomes framework which better aligned with coursework that transfer students wanted to bring from their community colleges.

Independent institutions should be flexible about accepting transfer credits and communicate that flexibility to potential transfer students. However, it is also important to provide specific information so community college students know what is expected of them and exactly which of their credits will transfer to a given independent institution. While flexibility is key, it needs to be paired with transparency around exactly which courses will transfer and what community college students need to focus on in order to set themselves up for a successful transfer to the four-year institution.

## Integrate Transfer with Initiatives around Adult Learners

Project leaders and institutional staff members across states noted that strategies around encouraging adult learners to return and earn their degrees often align with strategies to increase transfer enrollment. This includes accepting different types of credits and credentials, including PLA and credit for military learning. At the institution level, offices and programs that support adult learners should consider policies that will support transfer students as well.

Institutions can consider merging supports for transfer students with those for adult students or other student populations. Baldwin Wallace University in Ohio has an office that focuses on nontraditional student populations such as veterans and adult learners that also dedicates time towards issues relevant to transfer students. Merging these offices might be an option if institutions lack the space or resources to open a dedicated transfer office. Institutions in North Carolina like Gardner-Webb University also offer professional advisors for adult and transfer students who enroll in their online coursework. These advisors contact students twice a semester and ensure that they are on track to meet their academic and career goals.

## Provide Dedicated Financial Aid

While cultural change is certainly a barrier to transfer success, the direct financial burden of attending an independent college is often an even greater challenge for community college transfer students. The shift in cost from community college, with tuition in the hundreds of dollars, to independents with tuition in the thousands of dollars can be daunting. Even with grant aid from the federal government or other sources, community college transfer students can struggle to afford their four-year degree. Institutions should dedicate financial aid specifically for community college transfer students and take steps to reduce fees for these students, such as eliminating residency requirements as described above.

Many independent institutions offer institutional scholarships for incoming community college transfer students. Institutions like Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina offer merit scholarships for students utilizing their articulation agreements who maintain a certain GPA at the community college level. Suffolk University in Massachusetts offers 20-30 percent off tuition for students transferring from a community college with a 3.0 GPA and offers a few additional transfer-specific merit scholarships.<sup>28</sup>

Independent institutions can look to their peers in the public sector for additional ideas around transfer-specific aid. Public institutions and state systems have been implementing various award structures across the country. The state of Maryland, for example, has implemented a 2+2 Transfer Scholarship aimed at students who earn an associate degree, have a GPA of at least 2.5, and have attended a community college in the state. The program also offers higher awards for those pursuing degrees in fields with workforce shortages such as teaching and STEM fields.<sup>29</sup> While the state only offers up to \$2000 per year for eligible students, this is one model that private institutions can pursue if they wish to encourage community college transfer and align with workforce needs in their state.

## Assess and Evaluate the Efficacy of the Initiative

Determining whether the initiative has achieved its goals is perhaps just as important as setting the goals and implementing the various aspects of an initiative. Evaluating the initiative will provide project leaders with a sense of what progress has been made, what challenges lay ahead, and what changes can be made to move more quickly towards meeting the initiative's goals. Evaluations should focus on key outcomes such as increased enrollment and graduation and should examine how the initiative has reduced equity gaps in a state or region. Breaking down outcomes by race/ethnicity, gender, household income, and other characteristics will inform project leaders how the initiative has addressed equity gaps and whether the implementation of the initiative might need to shift to meet the needs of various populations.

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<sup>28</sup> "Undergraduate Scholarships & Grants," *Suffolk University*, <https://www.suffolk.edu/student-financial-services/types-of-financial-aid/undergraduate-students/scholarships-grants>.

<sup>29</sup> Barbara Schmertz, Emily Dow, and Yuxin Lin, "Maryland's 2+2 Transfer Scholarship: A Preliminary Analysis," *Inside Higher Ed*, October 14, 2021, <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/tackling-transfer/maryland%E2%80%99s-22-transfer-scholarship-preliminary-analysis>.

In addition to the evaluation being conducted by Ithaka S+R, states have contracted separate evaluators to examine the impact of their initiatives. NCICU is working with an external evaluator that is developing a survey to allow project leaders to measure progress against their goals. The evaluator is also collecting data on enrollment and will be working with campuses to identify challenges and successes during early implementation. OFIC in Ohio is also engaging an evaluator from the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), who assisted them in applying for their initial grant from Teagle and AVDF. The evaluator will be conducting a qualitative evaluation of the early years of the initiative in Ohio and measuring how much progress has been made against project goals. These more granular evaluations can supplement information from initiative-wide evaluations and provide key insights that can inform future years of implementation.

Both community college and independent colleges should also collect data on transfer students and their outcomes to measure progress against both initiative-wide and institutional goals. At the four-year college level, institutions should collect data on metrics such as enrollment, application completions, financial aid awards, credit transfer figures, persistence rates, time to degree, cost, and bachelor's degree completion. These should ideally be broken down by student subgroup as well as major at the four-year school, as this will provide insight into the impact of discipline-specific pathways. At the community college level, data on transfer-out can be collected to assess take-up of various transfer pathways and policies. Collecting data on the success of community college transfer students will also help persuade reluctant community college administrators that their students do thrive at independent colleges and that pursuing pathways beyond the public sector is a worthwhile effort.

## Address Needed Project Maintenance

State associations and independent colleges must commit to maintaining the various aspects of transfer policy established by the initiative, whether that be disciplinary pathways or block transfer of general education credit. Institutions should convene relevant transfer staff periodically to ensure that incoming community college transfer students are able to bring in as many credits as possible and that pathways are not made obsolete by changing curricular requirements or course titles. At the state association level, time can be dedicated either in project-specific or general association meetings to check with each participating institution and verify that transfer pathways are working as planned.

Maintenance of pathways may require additional resources beyond what has been budgeted for the initial transfer project. When undertaking similar initiatives, state associations or other project leaders should ensure that there is funding available, either through a funder or internally, to cover the maintenance of pathways. This could include resources to convene relevant transfer staff or conduct audits of transfer pathways. Requiring or encouraging that institutions collect and submit data on which courses community college transfer students are and are not able to transfer in will also help in this regard.

## Looking Ahead

This playbook has laid out some initial recommendations based on the planning and early implementation of grants in New England, Minnesota, Ohio, and North Carolina. We hope that the information provided here will serve as a first point of reference for states and institutions interested in pursuing similar transfer work. It is worth noting that the outcomes of these initiatives are still uncertain and there will certainly be more lessons learned as states progress through the implementation phase, especially around sustainability and supports for students.

As part of our role as the independent evaluators of the Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts initiative, we are supplementing this playbook with a quantitative evaluation of states' progress towards their goals. We have already contracted with the National Student Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) to provide state associations and participating institutions with baseline reports of community college enrollment, transfer, and completion. The next phase of the quantitative evaluation involves developing a template that will allow institutions to submit this and additional data, such as the number of credits transfer students are bringing in, to both state associations and the foundation partners. All these resources will be published on the [landing page](#) for Ithaka S+R's work on the Transfer Pathways initiative.<sup>30</sup>

As the initiative progresses, we will also supplement the recommendations in this playbook with findings from additional states as well as findings from the ongoing evaluation of the initiative. These findings will be included in a final version of this playbook, which will be published in early 2024.

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<sup>30</sup> Please see "Liberal Arts Transfer Pathways" on Ithaka S+R's website, <https://sr.ithaka.org/liberal-arts-transfer-pathways/>.



## Appendix A: Data Collection

To gather information on the progress of the initiatives included in this playbook, we began by reviewing documentation submitted to the Teagle Foundation and Arthur Vining Davis Foundations. For Minnesota and Ohio, this included proposals for their implementation grants as this work had not yet begun. We also reviewed planning grant updates submitted by the Minnesota Private College Council. Since North Carolina and New England were further along, we were able to review both their implementation proposals and Year 1 and Year 2 update documents detailing the extent of their progress thus far. This documentation review was supplemented by desk research on the current transfer landscape and a review of our previously published report on community college to independent college transfer.<sup>20</sup>

To supplement our review of the documentation we conducted a series of interviews with state association leaders and institutional staff members. In total, we conducted seven interviews with seven state and regional association members and 15 institutional staff members across the four grantees covered in this playbook. Interviews were semi-structured and covered topics related to grantees' experience planning and implementing their transfer initiatives. Each interview was followed by an email with additional questions for each interviewee. Responses to these emails were also used to inform the contents of the playbook.

In addition, we developed and deployed a survey for independent college faculty, community college faculty, and community college administrators to better understand their role and willingness to participate in transfer initiatives. A total of 33 independent and community college faculty and six community college administrators participated in the survey and their insights were incorporated into the relevant sections of the playbook. We also gleaned information on the use of technology in transfer initiatives from a Transfer Tech meeting held by the Teagle Foundation.

# Appendix B: Acknowledgements and Organizational Information

We thank the Teagle Foundation and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations for their generous support of this work. We would also like to thank the following individuals for contributing to this playbook through interviews and email correspondence:

Steve Brooks, Stephanie Davidson, Emily Decatur, Arielle DelFino, Jody Fournier, Winnie Gerhardt, Mark Hammond, Ben Leslie, John Manning, Steve Marcelynas, Barbara May, Melita Mitchell, Rhonda Moses, Judy Johnson, Jennifer Searles, Scott Sheffield, Bill Spiker, Steve Stahl, Kate Stano, Travis Teague, Amy VanSurksum, Mary Whitt, A. Hope Williams.

In addition, we would like to thank Kimberly Lutz and Christy McDaniel for their contributions to the playbook and the data collection processes.

## Organizational Information

### Council of Independent Colleges

The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is an association of nonprofit independent colleges and universities that has worked since 1956 to support college and university leadership; advance institutional excellence; and enhance public understanding of private higher education's contributions to society. CIC is collaborating with North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities and the Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges to manage their transfer initiatives.<sup>31</sup>

### Ithaka S+R

Ithaka S+R is a non-profit research and advising organization that is serving as the independent evaluator for the Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts initiative. In addition to publishing this playbook, Ithaka S+R has developed baseline reports for participating grantees based on National Student Clearinghouse data and will be developing templates for participating institutions to report detailed information on transfer students and their outcomes. This playbook will also be followed by a final version incorporating lessons learned from additional states, to be published in early 2024.

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<sup>31</sup> See "CIC Announces Teagle Grant for Community College Transfer Pathways Project," *The Council of Independent Colleges*, February 28, 2019, <https://www.cic.edu/news-information/press-releases/community-college-transfer-2019>; "CIC and OFIC Launch Consortium for Transfer Pathways in the Liberal Arts in Ohio," *The Council of Independent Colleges*, July 9, 2021, <https://www.cic.edu/news-information/press-releases/transfer-pathways-2021>.

## Minnesota Private College Council

MPCC has recently completed its planning grant and will be working to establish a transfer guarantee of admission for students who complete the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, develop six shared discipline-specific transfer pathways, and develop student-friendly transfer-focused web-based resources. This will build off MPCC's existing work to connect community college students with independent four-years across the state.<sup>32</sup>

## New England Board of Higher Education

NEBHE is developing systematic transfer pathways between community colleges and four-year independent colleges in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, with a focus on the liberal arts.<sup>33</sup> NEBHE is partnering with the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts (AICUM), Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Rhode Island (AICURI) and community colleges in the three states to establish admission transfer guarantees.

## North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities

NCICU is in the second of three years of a \$400,000 CIC grant from the Teagle Foundation for a project to develop private college pathways in North Carolina which can be used as a model in other states.<sup>34</sup> Fourteen NCICU institutions are paired with 14 two-year colleges, to develop pathways in in Psychology and Sociology.

## Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges

OFIC, in partnership with the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), will bring together 14 independent colleges and universities and 11 community colleges in Ohio to establish three pathways to a baccalaureate degree in English, psychology, and biology for students at community colleges.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "Transfer students," *Minnesota Private College Council*, <https://www.mnprivatecolleges.org/college-planning/transfer-students>.

<sup>33</sup> "New England College Transfer Guarantee," *New England Board of Higher Education*, <https://nebhe.org/policy-research/key-initiatives/transfer-initiatives/the-guarantee/>.

<sup>34</sup> "Grant-funded Programs," *North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities*, <https://ncicu.org/grant-funded/>.

<sup>35</sup> "Consortium for Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts in Ohio," *The Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges*, <https://www.ofic.org/transfer-pathways>.