

# Unit 1: Principles of Career and College Readiness

1. Creating A College and Career Readiness Culture in OST Programs
2. Framing College-Going Culture
3. Mentorship
4. Balancing Priorities and Resources
5. Creating an Evaluation Plan

## 1: Creating a College and Career Readiness Culture in OST Programs

### Background

Out-of-school time (OST) allows youth to further explore and develop skills related to career interests in more engaging settings. OST programs are a fantastic place to begin learning about different types of careers and the multiple paths that lead young people to a satisfying future. OST staff may have more opportunities for informal conversations and shared activities than a young person's own parents. (Herd and Deutsch, 2017)

Establishing a college and career (CCR) culture within an OST program is key to youth seeing themselves succeed in their future. The "college-going" culture, as defined by National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC), "refers to the environment, attitudes, and practices in schools and communities that encourage young people and their families to obtain the information, tools, and perspective to enhance access to and success in post-secondary education" (NACAC 4).

If youth are looking to enter the workforce, a recent Gallup poll offers this list of ten characteristics that define a 'good job.'

- Level of pay
- Predictability and stability of pay
- Stability and predictability of hours
- Ability to work remotely
- Job security
- Employee benefits
- Advancement opportunities
- Enjoyment of work
- A sense of purpose

- The power to change unsatisfactory aspects of the job

These criteria could be helpful in conversations with youth about what to look for in entering the job market.

Through OST programs and support of caring staff, young people have capacity to believe they can create a great future for themselves. Facilitators and staff can act as role models, provide activities for young people to explore careers and college in a safe space, and be a supportive ear. Just by acting as a positive presence in someone's life, staff can help a young person see themselves thriving with a productive and creative life after high school. While youth may have some indication about what they want in the future, their interests and aspirations will most likely change. It is important to foster an environment in which youth can explore different paths and cultivate skills that transfer to multiple careers and lived experiences.

Positive Youth Development is an intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.

*Inter-agency working group on youth programs -  
youth.gov*

## **How To**

Three elements from NACAC community can inform how you establish a CCR culture in your program:

1. Provide youth with opportunities to learn about options for their future, careers, and education. This can start as early, begin engaging elementary aged youth with open ended conversation, guiding questions, and visits from adults of varying professions. Adolescents can begin more intentional preparation through active learning, see example activities throughout this toolkit.
2. All young people can begin to prepare for their future today by modeling and practicing 21st century skills. Your program or organization can support their process, no matter the end result.
3. Consistent messaging among stakeholders, whether it is schools, families, and/or communities, is key for youth to see themselves thriving and set high expectations for their future.

(NACAC 5).

*Your 'you' language becomes their 'I' language, so they become what you tell them.*

OST programs play a vital role in a learning system where youth can practice and grow their academic, professional, and social and emotional skills. Youth can learn about themselves, their interests, and what excites them about the future along with you.

### **Jobs for the Future**

#### **Essential supports and opportunities:**

- Caring relationships
- Connections to expanding relationships and opportunities
- Culture of peer support for effort
- Cognitive challenges
- Community membership, voice and contributions

*Steinberg, A (2001)*

The Maryland Out of School Time (MOST) network offers these ten components of a College and Career Ready environment.

### **Ten Components of a College and Career Ready Environment**

1) **Be a champion for all youth** in your programs. Advocate that all youth can achieve and realize their full potential and clearly communicate this as an expectation.

2) **Set specific goals** related to college and career readiness for your programs and **measure the impact** of those goals over time. How will your program specifically address the topic of college and career readiness? How will you know if you're doing a good job?

3) To fully embrace a CCR culture, it is crucial to have buy-in at every level. Leadership, frontline staff, parents, youth, and other stakeholders must all be on-board and involved in setting and maintaining this culture.

4) **Create positive relationships** among staff and youth. Building trust and mutual-respect, and establishing supportive, encouraging relationships with youth could make all the difference for youth who may not have that type of relationship with other adults in their lives.

5) **Open opportunities and experience to all youth**, not just those who are "the best", have the most resources, or are likely college-bound.

6) **As early as elementary school**, begin having youth think about their future goals and seek out information about their aspirations. **Do not wait** until youth are in high school to begin talking about their futures. By starting early, you ensure that youth can be exposed to a wide variety of opportunities and experiences that could help them make more informed decisions.

7) **Connect with and engage families early and often**. Include families in all steps of the process and host activities and events that provide knowledge, ease uncertainties, and build their confidence in supporting their child through the college and career readiness journey. Also take the time to get to know families and their hopes, dreams, and goals for their child(ren)'s future.

8) Offer youth opportunities to **demonstrate and practice leadership skills**, such as creating youth advisory boards or a youth leadership team. Invite all youth to participate in these opportunities and provide ways to practice learning, refining, and demonstrating leadership skills.

9) Establish a **regular practice of discussing the future** with youth and learning more about their thoughts and feelings about postsecondary options. Making these decisions can be intimidating and overwhelming, especially for first-generation college students who don't have models in their family to follow after. Regular check-ins can help youth navigate the wide variety of opportunities and decisions they will encounter throughout this process.

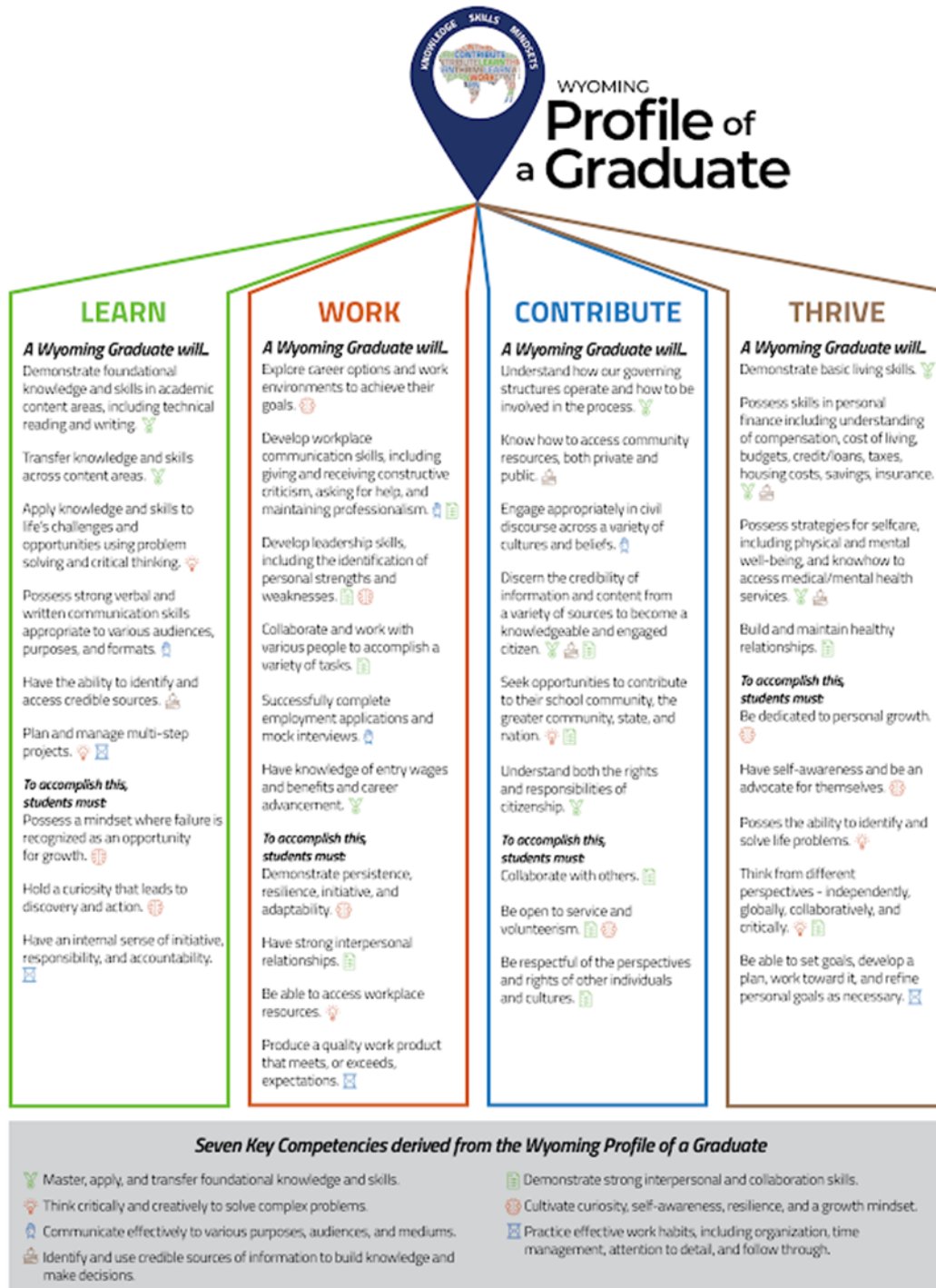
10) Ensure your **physical space looks, feels, and sounds like a place that promotes college and career readiness** and is a safe place for learning. What can you add to your space to achieve this goal? College brochures, career posters, college alma-mater insignia for your staff, etc. are a good start. Again, having regular, open discussions about future options and encouraging collaborative exploration among youth can be helpful in working toward this goal.

("College and Career Readiness" 3-4)

*"We must all work together to build a better Wyoming."* – Governor Stanley Hathaway

The 2022 Wyoming Profile of a Graduate demonstrates a great reason for youth to become college and career prepared. The state's vision demonstrates practical behaviors, knowledge,

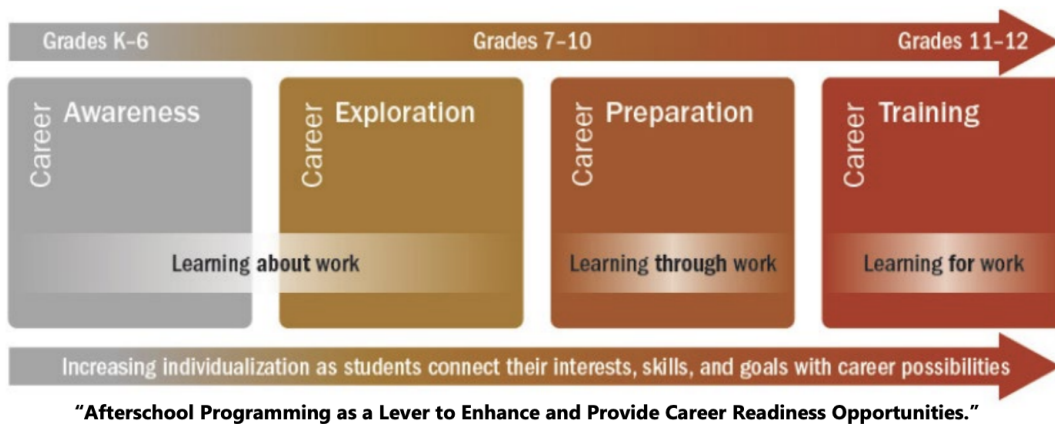
and actions that the future workforce requires. The profile can easily map to this toolkit and the associated activities.



**WYOMING STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The Wyoming Profile of a Graduate is an initiative led by the State Board of Education and developed in partnership with students, families, educators, community leaders, and employers from across Wyoming. The purpose of the Profile is to articulate the knowledge, skills, and mindsets students need to thrive after graduation; establish a North Star for state and local policies; and create a strongly aligned educational system for Wyoming. For more information, visit the Profile of a Graduate [webpage](#).

To create the continuous development of college and career readiness, the College and Career Readiness and Success Center (CCRS Center) at the American Institute of Research (AIR) has provided a diagram and information to help understand the stages, grade levels, and building blocks of the topics. Below are a few ways OST programs can contribute to young people’s college and career readiness at each stage in their lives.



**Activities:**

This table describes developmentally appropriate actions, specific activities for each developmental level can be found in the WYAA College and Career Readiness Toolkit Unit 2!

Grade Level	Incorporating College and Career Readiness
<p><b>Elementary-Aged Youth</b></p>	<p><b>Career Awareness:</b> The elementary years are a great place for youth to begin exploring the world outside their doors. Exploring different careers through play and field trips, positive role-modeling, and beginning to practice 21st century skills, even the youngest of our communities can establish a solid foundation for success. In an interview with Edutopia, career counselor Jonie Watanabe Tsuji describes career readiness as a sense of knowing who you are and being able to conduct a thoughtful conversation at this stage. Reading and reflection are also great ways to prepare for college and career readiness with elementary-aged youth. Wyoming’s Attainment Council set a goal to increase fluent 3rd grade reading levels as a way to strengthen the state’s economy and college going population.</p> <p><b>Career Exploration:</b> Teach young people conversational skills, talk about their dreams and goals. Most importantly, listen to their responses. Ask open ended questions about your young people’s interests and passions. Take field trips or</p>

	bring in people with diverse or interesting careers to talk with youth. Play and explore the future with curiosity.
<b>Middle School-Aged Youth, (pre-adolescent to adolescent)</b>	<p><b>Career Awareness:</b> Continue and expand upon career awareness activities and topics from elementary curricula. Pre-adolescence is a great time to help youth develop their talents and strengths through informal activities, aptitude and interest assessments, and facilitated discussion. Afterschool programs can offer youth a safe space to explore and try out different professions as well as practice a variety of soft skills that will translate to good professional and personal habits. This is a time developmentally when near peer mentoring can unlock a young person's potential in amazing ways.</p> <p><b>Career Exploration:</b> During pre-adolescence, young people benefit from continued exposure to professions and people that connect their interests and goals with diverse careers. Activities that prepare youth at this developmental state can include skill and personality assessments, independent learning projects, service-learning, and career exploration courses. To help youth with soft skills, consider activities that require teamwork, decision-making, and communication challenges.</p>
<b>Teen years</b>	<p><b>Career Awareness:</b> "Afterschool programs can provide youth with enhanced exposure to a broader set of career possibilities based on student interest and even provide them with employability skills by participating in real-world work experiences." (Cohen 4)</p> <p><b>Career Exploration:</b> As youth transition to high-school, it is beneficial for them to reflect on their connections and applications of learning through jobs. Building on the exploration activities begun with pre-adolescents, high school-aged youth benefit from internships, service-learning, problem-based learning activities, volunteerism, and mentoring to better understand how what they are excited about and learning can inform decisions about college and beyond. In addition, these activities engage youth in critical thinking and real-world experiences.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The teenage years are also a good time to continue learning about and developing youths talents and strengths, as well as professions of interest. Most importantly, this is a time for college-bound youth to begin taking required exams, researching interested schools and applying, and researching financial aid options.</p>

For more information on how to create a career and college ready program, here are some resources:

- [Career Pathways for Students You 4 Youth](#), online course
- [Fostering a college-going culture in elementary school](#), Edutopia blog post

## 2: Framing College-Going Culture

### Background

“We must look on children in need not as problems but as individuals with potential..I would hope we could find creative ways to draw out of our children the good that there is in each of them.”

Desmond Tutu, 1984 Nobel Laureate

As part of creating a CCR culture within your programs, **setting and maintaining high expectations for all youth** will be a key element. Research shows that when youth have supportive, caring adults in their lives - their parents, teachers, coaches, etc. - who hold high expectations for them, they will have higher self-esteem, perform better in school, be more determined and persistent, and believe they will have a good job.

## **How To**

To begin raising the bar on expectations, look at your current program offerings and evaluate what you are already doing to encourage and support great expectations for your youth and determine areas where you'd like to amp up your efforts. The goal here is to develop a specific plan of action for setting high expectations for ALL youth across your programs and identifying ways to support and encourage them to meet those expectations.

As you begin implementing higher expectations, you may experience resistance from the youth themselves, their families, staff members, etc. However, setting (even slightly) higher expectations will raise the self-esteem of your youth, show them their full potential, and teach them that they are more resilient than others might believe.

Having a detailed and solid plan for how you intend to raise expectations and hold youth to higher expectations in your program will help ensure you are prepared to address concerns from stakeholders.

Youth are generally more capable than we give them credit for. If we set high expectations and they are unable to meet them, we can always make adjustments, but we should aim high to start. If we never give them the opportunity to show us how high they can soar because we've held them back with low expectations, they will never reach their full potential.

## **Activities**

### **Guiding Questions for Raising the Bar**

- What are the hopes and dreams of the youth in our program? How do they plan to achieve them?
- What do our youth expect of themselves? What do their families expect of them?
- Are we clear about the expectations we have for our youth? Have we clearly and consistently communicated to youth, families, and other stakeholders about our expectations?
- Are the expectations set for ALL youth in a given program? What accommodations or additional supports are in place to meet the needs of each youth?



- Where are the expectations and supports built into our curriculum? How do we organically provide support and encouragement to youth as they work through our curriculum?
- Are we consistent and fair in communicating and upholding expectations? Do all stakeholders receive the same message regarding our expectations?
- Do we have a specific plan for what support looks like in our program? How will staff know what to do when a youth is frustrated or fails to meet expectations? How should staff respond?
- Do we meet each youth with kindness, understanding and positivity when they struggle or encounter setbacks?
- How do we make adjustments when youth encounter roadblocks or setbacks? How do we make the most of the opportunity these circumstances present?
- What are the specific goals and benchmarks we want youth to reach at which intervals?
- Where do we need to make adjustments based on results? This will likely come after implementation.
- While test scores can predict academic success, self-management and relationship skills may better prepare youth to thrive and graduate.

**For more information on raising expectations, here are a few resources:**

### 3: Mentorship

#### Background

“The role of the mentor is unique, as it speaks to a relationship that is grounded not only in love, but also in common purpose and with an eye to the future. We *all* need mentors throughout our lives.” (Herrera and Garringer, 2022, p.4)

Preparation for postsecondary options can overwhelm families. Mentors can be tremendously helpful to youth and their families, especially if the mentor can speak to personal experience. Afterschool programs are relationship rich and, “having a mentor greatly increases a student’s potential for success. In fact, children and youth who have mentors experience improved self-esteem, greater academic achievement, increased motivation in school, and higher quality lifestyle choices. OST programs present an opportunity to integrate mentoring into young people’s lives in creative and diverse ways” (“Mentoring”).

#### How to work with youth in mentoring:

How to develop a “Mentor Mindset” tips and ideas about youth development at varying stages. all information is from the [Becoming a Better Mentor Publication](#), which you can check out!

**Mentoring Elementary-Aged Youth:** Help children develop people skills. Young children learn by doing rather than listening or reading (as older children can do), so they will benefit most from hands-on

learning through play, as a mentor play alongside these young people. This approach also supports their social and emotional development.

**Mentoring Pre-Adolescents:** Young people are growing into their abilities to have two-sided conversations and more dynamic interaction at this stage of development. They are exploring their sense of humor, banter, and engagement in the world around them. Peers and friends grow more important and youth may worry about fitting into their social structures. Mentoring with this in mind will help build trust. At this age, young people may just need a friend, ear, or consistent presence - don't forget the power of showing up for kids at this age and stage!

**Mentoring Teens:** Youth are beginning to form their own identities outside of family and school at this age. It is a great time to be supportive and present in their lives. They might be thinking about their future in more concrete terms. Here, follow the mentees lead—learn from their interests, schedules, and ways of relating and let them guide the relationship. This demonstrates how well you trust them and that their voice has power.

At every stage of mentoring, remember, this work is grounded in love and positive youth development. The service you provide is to our future!

While mentoring relationships can be formal or informal, it is crucial to include the components of care, empathy, consistency, and longevity in the relationship between the mentor and mentee. Research suggests that:

- 59% of youth who receive mentoring earn better grades in school.
- 27% of youth who receive mentoring are less likely to begin using alcohol.
- 52% of youth who receive mentoring are less likely to skip school.
- Youth mentoring increases the likelihood of youth going to college, increases social and emotional development, and improves self-esteem.

("The Value in Mentoring Our Youth").

## How to Support Mentors

Supporting mentors is an essential aspect of having a successful mentoring program, so take a look at these steps to create positive mentorship relationships between youth and the mentors you bring in.

1. **Make matches wisely:** To ensure that youth and their mentors get along, consider the mentor's expertise, the needs of the student, and the personality and interests of both participants.
2. **Share tools and resources:** Provide mentors with tools and resources to support their youth mentees. The more information you can provide to the mentor, the better they will support their mentee's success.
3. **Grant the same access to mentors as the youth:** If specific tools are used to help manage parts of the process, make sure that you allow mentors and youth to have equal access so that they can access information that will help them provide the best support and guidance.

4. **Provide training to mentors:** Training should help mentors learn more about youth development topics. Topics include: how to work with youth, bias training, program details and goals, organizational culture, and common youth concerns. These types of training will help prepare your mentors to ensure success with the youth in your program.

(College and Career Readiness Toolkit 11).

## Activities

Five possible mentors:

Have youth participate in an exercise to identify five people who they already know who might be a good mentor. Prompt youth through the following questions:

1. Ask youth to identify five people that might be able to help them on their journey towards college and career. Write those individuals names down and reflect on why they chose each of the people.
2. Help youth think of supportive and trusted adults or slightly older peers that could offer advice, support, and generally be a cheerleader for them as they navigate their future. Ask youth to list these individuals and how their support could further the youth's dreams and goals.
3. Guide youth through the process of reaching out the possible mentors. Offer them opportunities to contact the potential mentors to ask for guidance, support, and mentoring on specific topics.
4. Encourage youth to reach out and begin networking with these mentors.

**For more information about building a mentorship into your program check out the following resources:**

*Steve's stuff, UW paper, other tools for mentoring*

[Mentoring for Enhancing Educational Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors](#) National Mentoring Resource Center

[College and Career Readiness Resources](#), MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership  
[The Role of Mentoring in College Access and Success](#), Institute for Higher Education Policy

## 4: Creating an Evaluation Plan

### Background

When creating an evaluation plan for your program or organization, developing a logic model can help identify the factors that will affect your program and allow you to recognize the data and resources you will need to achieve success. When creating your logic model, your program will address these important planning and evaluation issues:

- Description of the strategy that your program is supporting.

- Definition of the problem you are addressing.
- Quantify the scope of the needs or assets of the problem you are addressing.
- Acknowledge the factors that could influence your ability to create change.
- Apply the best practice research that supports your solution strategies for the problem you identified.
- State your assumptions about why your selected strategies will work in your community.

(W.K. Kellogg Foundation 27).

**Balancing Priorities and Resources - how to:**

Use the chart below provided by the MOST Network to help balance your learning resources, such as time, funds for data collection, and analysis, with your priorities. What information have you already gathered, and what do you still need? As you progress through the chart for short-term to long-term outcomes, the cost and time of the data collection analysis will most likely increase. Practice makes perfect! As you gain more experience in data collection and analysis, it will become easier, more efficient, and effective. Having accurate and timely data on outputs and outcomes is very beneficial when applying for funding, such as grants.

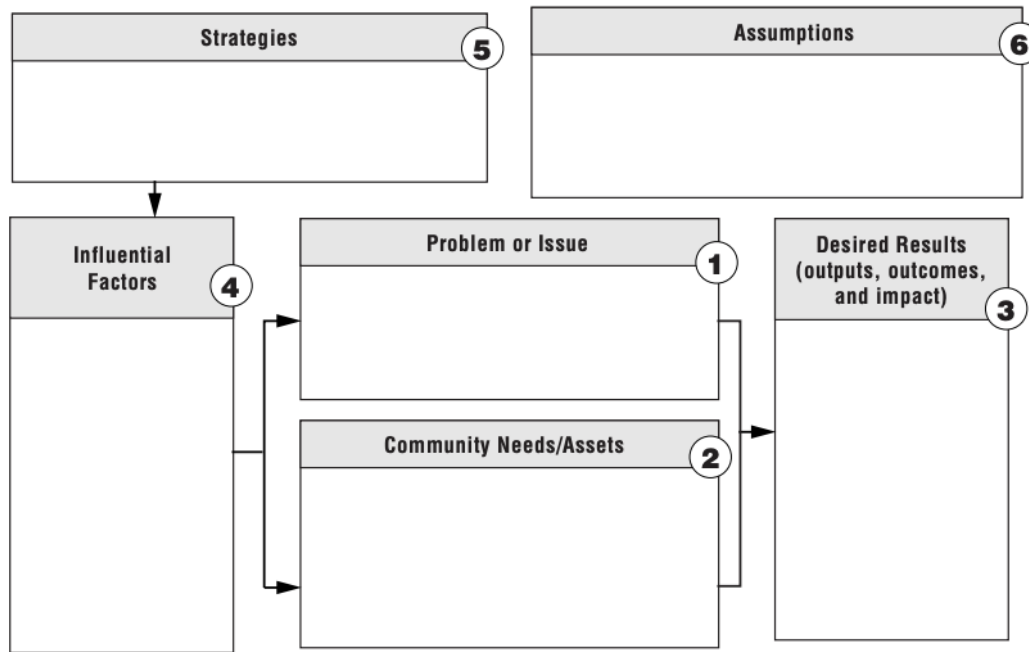
	<b>Example Indicators</b>	<b>Example Data Sources</b>
<p><b>Outputs</b> <i>Direct "outputs" of program activities, usually # of</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● # youth participants</li> <li>● # ACT/SAT mock tests taken</li> <li>● # college visits</li> <li>● # hours of tutoring (hours per student)</li> <li>● # advisory hours</li> <li>● # trainings/workshops</li> <li>● # mock job interviews conducted</li> <li>● # scholarships awarded/applied for</li> <li>● # individualized college/career plans</li> <li>● # college applications</li> <li>● # internship placements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attendance sheets</li> <li>● Participant information systems</li> </ul>
<p><b>Short-Term Outcomes</b> <i>Direct, tangible, or attributable results of program activities, especially related to change in knowledge, skills, behavior, status, etc. The timeframe is usually immediate to one year or so.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GPA improvements</li> <li>● AP/Honors course completions</li> <li>● ACT/SAT improvements</li> <li>● Broader knowledge of range of future pathways</li> <li>● College admissions/ financial aid knowledge</li> <li>● Workplace skill development (use of technology, SEL, life skills, etc.)</li> <li>● College/Career confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student scores/records</li> <li>● Knowledge surveys</li> <li>● Skill surveys or observation rubrics</li> <li>● Youth surveys</li> <li>● Advisor or supervisor observations/ reports</li> </ul>
<p><b>Long-Term Outcomes</b> <i>Changes occurring after a longer timeframe, such as 2+ years, and supporting overall social impact.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● High school graduation</li> <li>● College admission or graduation</li> <li>● Transfer from community college to university</li> <li>● Lower college debt</li> <li>● Living wage / stable careers (hourly to salaried positions, part-time to full-time)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Longitudinal tracking of individual young people</li> <li>● Program alumni surveys</li> <li>● Comparisons with national norms (AECF, <a href="#">Kids Count</a>)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-sufficiency</li> </ul>	
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(College and Career Readiness Toolkit 18-19).

### Activities

Use the template below provided by the Kellogg Foundation to begin constructing your logic model.



(W.K. Kellogg Foundation 28-31).

1. **Problem or Issue Statement:** Use box #1 to describe the problem(s) your organization or program is trying to solve.
2. **Community Needs/Assets:** Use box #2 to list the needs of your community that caused your organization or program to address those problem(s).
3. **Desired Results (Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts):** Use box #3 to identify your desired results for your organization or program. Describe your short-term and long-term outcomes and impacts.
4. **Influential Factors:** Use box #4 to list the factors that will influence change in your community.
5. **Strategies:** Use box #5 to list the strategies your organization or program identified that have helped other communities achieve the kinds of results you hope to accomplish as well.
6. **Assumptions:** Use box #6 to list the assumptions behind why and how the identified strategies will work in your community.

By creating a logic model framework, your organization or program will increase the effectiveness of your evaluation by focusing on questions that have real value to the stakeholders involved. There are two

types of questions when planning for evaluation: formative and summative questions. As stated by the Kellogg Foundation, “**formative** help you to **improve** your program and **summative** help you **prove** whether your program worked the way you planned” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation 35). These questions will help generate information that determines the success you wish to see in your organization and program and provide opportunities to learn ways to improve in the future.

**The following tools can help with data collection from youth and enable youth to explore career options and understand their interests:**

**Academic/Cognitive Assessments:**

- Academic knowledge and skills: [OECD \(Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development\) - PISA \(Programme for International Student Assessment\)](#)
- Cognitive competencies: [College and Work Readiness Assessment Plus \(CWRA+\)](#)

**Workplace Scenario Testing:**

- [Assessments - ACT WorkKeys](#)
- [21st Century Skills for Workplace Success - NOCTI Business Solutions](#)

**Social-Emotional / Youth Development:**

- [Research Collaboration: College and Career Competency Assessments](#)
- [Hello Insight: Career and College Tools](#)

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Wallace foundation SEL:  
<https://www.wallacefoundation.org/promos2/pages/navigating-social-and-emotional-learning.aspx>

EASEL Labs Social Emotional Learning: <https://easel.gse.harvard.edu/>