



# ILLINOIS Pathways

Illinois Pathways, funded through Race to the Top, is a new and innovative State of Illinois-led STEM education initiative designed to support college and career readiness for all students. Through partnership between the State of Illinois' education and economic development agencies, Illinois Pathways supports local programs that empower students to explore their academic and career interests. It is also creating new statewide, public-private partnerships known as Learning Exchanges that better coordinate investments, resources and planning for those programs.

## Why Illinois Pathways?

As Illinois' economy continues to recover it is critically important to understand how our economy is both growing and changing. More importantly, we need to make sure our education system is supporting students in developing the skills and knowledge that will ensure they are competitive in a 21st century economy. We know that the majority of job opportunities in the future will require some level of college education or training. As part of this effort, the State of Illinois' P-20 Council has established a goal to increase the proportion of Illinoisans with high-quality degrees and credentials from 44 percent to 60 percent by the year 2025.

**Illinois Pathways proposes a new and innovative approach to increasing credential attainment by supporting two strategies:**

1. Better support local schools, postsecondary institutions, and programs to enable learners to explore their academic and career interests in STEM fields; and
2. Improve coordination of public and private investment, including business and industry, in supporting the development of a workforce that can be competitive in tomorrow's economy.



Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity  
 Illinois State Board of Education  
 Illinois Community College Board  
 Illinois Board of Higher Education  
 Illinois Student Assistance Commission  
 Illinois Department of Employment Security



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## *Empowering Learners to Explore their Academic and Career Interests through Local P-20 STEM Programs of Study*

P-20 STEM Programs of Study are organized around a career cluster and feature a series of orientation and advanced pathway courses—including early college—across education institutions that are accompanied by opportunities for students to enrich their learning through work-based learning experiences as well as demonstrate their understanding through assessments and industry credentialing opportunities. Originally developed and implemented as part of Career and Technical Education, P-20 STEM Programs of Study serve as a model for bridging programs across P-20 education institutions and are demonstrated to improve academic achievement, increase graduation rates, and improve transitions to postsecondary education and employment. Also, P-20 STEM Programs of Study are designed to improve access and success for underrepresented populations in STEM fields, such as women, minorities, low-income, and disabled students.

Aligned to the National Career Cluster Framework, P-20 STEM Programs of Study enable the State's education institutions to align their curriculum, assessments and career counseling with the State's growing economic development sectors thereby ensuring successful transitions to employment and a stronger economy for Illinois.

## *Supporting Local P-20 STEM Programs of Study through Statewide Learning Exchanges*

STEM Learning Exchanges are a new, innovative public-private education partnership that is organized to support local implementation of P-20 STEM Programs of Study by coordinating and reducing the transaction cost among statewide networks of education partners, businesses, industry associations, labor organizations, and other organizations. Learning Exchanges are organized by career cluster and work to coordinate planning and investment, aggregate resources, and review talent supply-chain performance.

Learning Exchanges provide a new infrastructure by voluntary association that help coordinate investments at a statewide level to better connect and serve local programs in a similar career cluster while also tracking local and statewide performance. Each sector-based Learning Exchange is governed by a consortia of education, business and community partners with a specific entity serving as a fiscal agent to receive public investment. Learning Exchanges are required to have a state-approved strategic plan and have a state designation, but they operate as independent, voluntary public-private networks.

### **Contact**

To learn more about the State's STEM education efforts please email [ilpathways@illinois.gov](mailto:ilpathways@illinois.gov).



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