



Developing a College-Going Culture

Toolkit

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Intro

Why This Matters

Less than one-third of West Virginians currently hold an associate degree or higher, yet 60 percent of working-aged West Virginians will need a certificate or degree in order to meet future workforce demands. To build a bright and prosperous future in the Mountain State, we must increase the number of students who are going on to pursue higher education – and help set them up for success as they work toward a postsecondary diploma.

That's why the State of West Virginia has set a statewide goal to equip at least 60 percent of West Virginians with a certificate or degree by 2030. This initiative, dubbed "[West Virginia's Climb](#)," is a collaborative effort amongst educators, business leaders, policymakers, and community members to support the educational attainment of ALL West Virginians.

What We Mean by “College”

Throughout this toolkit, we are using the word “college” as a catchall for any form of postsecondary training or education. That includes apprenticeships, certificate programs, two-year degrees, four-year degrees, or military service and training.

What is a College-Going Culture?

[UC Berkeley](#) defines a “College-Going Culture” as “the environment, attitudes, and practices in schools and communities that encourage students and families to obtain the information, tools, and perspective to enhance access to and success in post-secondary education.”

So what does that look like? It can vary from school to school or community to community, but some characteristics stand out as consistent indicators. [The College Board](#) observes that, within a College-Going Culture, pursuing postsecondary education is seen as the norm, not the exception. They go on to note that College-Going Cultures are centered around three key values:

1. Appreciation of academics
2. Desire to succeed
3. Drive to attend college and become a lifelong learner

But they also note that for a College-Going Culture to exist, these values must not only be present but deemed applicable for ALL students, including those that have traditionally been underserved by higher education such as

1. Low-income students
2. First-generation students
3. Minority students
4. Lower-achieving students

While we encourage all schools and communities to strive toward building a strong College-Going Culture, it is important to note that this is not an endeavor you can complete or ultimately “check off your to-do list.”

In fact, those communities that demonstrate the highest levels of maturity when it comes to supporting college-going are those that recognize that ongoing innovation and continual improvement are critical to long-term success.

How to Use this Toolkit

This toolkit is organized around the four levels of what we're calling the Change Maker's Pyramid: **Awareness**, **Mobilization**, **Collective Impact**, and **Sustained Innovation**. You can think of these as levels of maturity, with each level building on the one prior. We've designed this toolkit to allow you to work at whatever level you feel best reflects your community's current culture and needs.



To begin, complete the [College-Going Culture Assessment](#). From there, feel free to jump around to the sections of the toolkit that best meet your community's needs.

For each of the four maturity levels, we've identified goals to aim for, strategies that may help you achieve those goals, practical action steps or tactics you can implement, and methods to evaluate your progress.

We've also included a **workbook (Download [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#))** to help you think through your ideas and develop a strategy for creating, strengthening, or sustaining a college-going culture in your school community. You may want to recruit a team of individuals from your community to work through the workbook together. Or you can start alone and recruit additional support along the way.

Finally, we've provided several resource sections including

- [Discussion Guides](#) for critical issues in college access and success
- [Implementation Guides](#) to assist you in launching proven initiatives and best practices

- [Templates](#) to help you in your day-to-day work such as crafting a communications plan, developing a social media calendar, or creating a dashboard to track your community's progress
- An alphabetical [Index](#) listing all resources included throughout the toolkit.

Assessment

Assess

The first step to making cultural change is understanding where you are now and where you want to go. To help you assess your school community's level of maturity when it comes to building a college-going culture, we have developed an assessment tool. Keep in mind, this tool offers a framework for driving change in your community – but it is NOT a one-size-fits-all solution.

Each school's strengths, needs, and opportunities will vary. You should feel empowered to develop a model and a culture that best serves your students, families, and community.

To get started, download the [College-Going Culture Assessment](#) and review it on your own or with your GEAR UP team. Once you've reviewed the assessment, is it clear which level most closely represents your school community?

It's ok if it's not. Sometimes, when we seek to drive change, we can be a little "all over the place" when it comes to developing and implementing our strategies and tactics. If that sounds like your school, don't worry! That's exactly the problem this College-Going Toolkit was designed to address.

Reflect

Use this toolkit to develop a more comprehensive and strategic plan to drive change in your community. We recommend starting at the bottom of the **Change Maker's Pyramid** to ensure you establish a strong foundation. Then, at your own pace, continue tackling strategies higher up the pyramid and moving toward long-term cultural change.

But before you dig in, be sure to take time to write down your thoughts and ideas in your **College-Going Culture Workbook (Download [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#))**. This type of reflection can help you organize your ideas and gain valuable perspective to guide you along the way.

Awareness

Building awareness for your cause is the first step toward driving cultural change on any issue. You can think of the **Awareness** stage as your opportunity to build the foundational understanding needed to engage your community.

The companion **Workbook** ([MS Word](#) or [PDF](#)) for this toolkit provides space and exercises for you to think through these foundational elements of your strategy. We encourage you to work through these exercises with your GEAR UP team or on your own.

The Awareness level is a great place to start if you have limited support for your college-readiness efforts or even if you're the only one focused on this issue right now. By building awareness, you can start to capture the attention and interest of your school community. Then, in the **Mobilization** stage, you can begin to engage their support.

Goals

For school communities at the **Awareness** stage, we recommend focusing on three goals:

1. **Importance:** Establishing why attending college is important
2. **Visibility:** Increasing visibility around college-readiness activities and topics
3. **Access:** Providing students' and families' with greater access to information

Strategies

Goal 1: Establishing Importance

To establish the importance of postsecondary education, we recommend two overarching strategies: 1) signaling and modeling and 2) informing and persuading.

Signaling and Modeling

Signaling and modeling is accomplished through demonstrating to the school community that developing a college-going culture is a top priority for leaders. However, leaders do not necessarily have to be administrators. While having your school or district administrators on board can be hugely helpful, leadership can come from any level. What's important is communicating a passion for and commitment to helping all students pursue and succeed in some form of postsecondary education. Remember, [as this video illustrates](#), you only have to get one person to join in to begin building a movement.

Key messages:

1. Postsecondary education is a prerequisite for lifelong success
2. All high school graduates should complete some type of postsecondary program
3. Elite academic achievement is just as exciting (and attainable) as athletic achievement
4. All high school graduates have the potential to succeed in postsecondary programs
5. Preparing students for postsecondary success is central to the mission of K12 education
6. Graduates' rates of postsecondary success are key indicators of the success or failure of K12 schools in fulfilling their public mission

Informing and Persuading

Signaling and modeling can capture individuals' interest by alerting them that there's something worth paying attention to. But to keep their attention and build their buy-in, you must also show and convince them that there's something in it for them.

Communicating the value of postsecondary education is critical here. But the same message will not resonate with every audience. For example, parents and grandparents may be motivated by the idea of helping their children build a better future, while local business leaders may be more affected by stats regarding higher education's positive impact on the economy.

Key messages:

1. Individuals who pursue postsecondary education earn more over their lifetimes
2. In general, higher levels of education equate to higher earnings
3. Individuals with postsecondary education or training are less likely to be unemployed
4. The willingness and ability to be a lifelong learner is critical to individuals' long-term economic and career success
5. Communities with higher educational attainment rates are better positioned to compete in the modern, global economy
6. In addition to teaching students career-specific skills, higher education programs help students develop soft skills such as communication, emotional intelligence and regulation, and self-efficacy that will benefit them in every aspect of their lives
7. Higher education offers students time and structure for self-discovery. It can help them find their purpose and become their best selves.

Goal 2: Increasing Visibility

Increasing visibility for college-readiness initiatives helps keep college-planning top of mind within your community. Additionally, research has shown that [visual and environmental cues can subconsciously shift behaviors](#).

Focus your visibility efforts on informing students about college options, modeling and highlighting academic success, and encouraging students to reach higher.

Key messages:

1. There are a wide variety of postsecondary options to meet the diverse needs and interests of students
2. Individuals in your community have achieved success and fulfillment through higher education
3. Postsecondary planning begins early and is ongoing
4. Your community expects postsecondary education to be the norm, not the exception, for its students

Goal 3: Providing Access to Information

[Research has demonstrated](#) that increasing students' and families' level of "college knowledge" is a critical factor in encouraging postsecondary enrollment and success. School communities should therefore aim to teach and convey information about postsecondary options and processes much as they would core subjects such as English and math.

As you continue to strengthen your community's college-going culture, you may want to focus on integrating college-planning within your curriculum and day-to-day instruction. (More information on this is available in the **Mobilization** section.) However, a good starting point is to increase students' and families access to and interaction with key information through extracurricular offerings or visibility efforts.

Key messages:

1. The average cost of college attendance
2. The types of postsecondary education opportunities available
3. The availability of financial aid and how to secure it
4. How to explore, evaluate, and select colleges and postsecondary programs
5. How to apply to college

6. How to complete the steps of the enrollment process
7. How to prepare academically for postsecondary and career success
8. How to apply for highly selective or elite programs, universities, or scholarships

Tactics

The following are practical, actionable ideas you can use to increase awareness in your school:

Establishing Importance

- Share facts about the impact attending college can have during morning announcements, on your school's website, through social media channels, or before or during school events. A list of [College Facts, a Social Media Calendar](#), and [Social Media Graphics](#) are included in the [Templates](#) section of this toolkit.
- Discuss your school's current college-going rates during faculty senate meetings or in-service days. Share information about the variety of postsecondary options and the impact increasing the state's number of postsecondary graduates can have on our communities. Visit wvclimb.com for statistics and information to share.
- Post a banner outside the school or in a common area that declares your goal to have 100 percent of graduates pursue some form of postsecondary education.
- Prior to class scheduling, host an Academic Planning Workshop for students and parents. During the workshop, inform participants of the advanced classes the school offers and provide information on why taking more challenging classes is important.
- Share the [College is Necessary](#) and [College is Worth It](#) flyers with students, families, school personnel, and community partners.

Increasing Visibility

- Hang college pennants or posters in hallways, classrooms, and common areas around your school.
- Participate in [National College Colors Day](#). Encourage students, teachers, and staff to wear the colors and gear of their favorite college or university.
- Put up a state map and label all two-year and four-year public and not-for-profit colleges. Or distribute [CFWV's map of colleges and universities](#) to students.
- Set the homepage on all school computers to CFWV.com.

- Create a bulletin board highlighting the names and/or photos of students that were accepted into postsecondary programs. Be sure to include career and technical programs, apprenticeships, and military training.
- Try to find a college for every letter of the alphabet. Create a “College: A-Z” bulletin board or hallway display.
- Make announcements and hang flyers for upcoming college entrance exams and test-preparation classes.
- If you are located near a postsecondary institution, include information about public events and activities at the college in your school newsletter or on your social media channels. For example, share art shows, free concerts, guest speakers or lecture series, or other community activities.

Providing Access to Information

- Host at least one “College Planning Workshop” for students and families at each grade-level each year.
- Host College Planning Workshops for all grade levels specifically to help students compete for highly selective programs, universities, or financial aid opportunities. For 9th and 10th graders, focus on helping them to prepare academically and to participate in meaningful high school experiences. For 11th and 12th graders, focus on helping them complete applications to highly selective colleges or programs, write strong essays, and prepare for interviews.
- Host at least three financial aid workshops or events for 12th graders and their families each year. A toolkit to help you promote your [Financial Aid Workshops](#) is available in the [Implementation Guides](#) section of this toolkit.
- Host a college fair annually for all students at your school (not just seniors). Invite a diverse range of schools and programs including two-year institutions, four-year institutions, career and technical education centers, and the military branches.
- Include a copy of the [Financial Aid Infographic](#) folded within event programs, church bulletins, or other materials. Or post the infographic on social media.
- Provide ALL school and district administrators, teachers, and staff with key information such as local [College-Going Rates](#) and [FAFSA Completion Rates](#).
- Dedicate part of the counselors’ office to college resources. Provide information on scholarships, financial aid, and specific colleges.
- Hold a majors and career day, presenting different areas of study, career paths and employment forecasts.

- Distribute a college-planning newsletter to students and families detailing relevant and timely college information. Segment articles by grade level and provide tips for younger students in addition to seniors.
- One day a week, feature a “College of the Week” during the school’s morning announcements. Share some basic information about the college including its location, the types of programs offered, and some [interesting trivia or facts](#).
- Encourage or assist 12th grade students in signing up for [CFWV’s Txt 4 Success](#) program. Through the program, students receive college-planning reminders and support via text message.

Evaluation

To effectively evaluate your efforts, be sure to tailor your measures and key performance indicators (KPIs) to your community’s specific goals and objectives. The **Workbook (Download [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#))** that accompanies this toolkit offers detailed guidance on this process.

Additionally, to help you think through your evaluation strategy, we have listed below some outcomes to aim for when striving to increase awareness within your community.

Outcomes

1. Students and families can accurately identify the average cost of attendance for a four-year college or university and a two-year college.
2. Students and families can name at least ten postsecondary institutions in our state.
3. Students and families can name and accurately describe the various types of postsecondary learning including bachelor’s degrees, associate degrees, certificate programs, apprenticeships, and military training.
4. Students and families know how to evaluate the quality of postsecondary programs including demonstrating an understanding of accreditation, career placement rates, student life and experience offerings, and average return on investment (ROI).
5. Students and families can articulate the benefits of pursuing higher education.
6. Students and families can describe the college application process and timeline.
7. Students and families believe that it’s never too early to begin planning for college.
8. Students and families can list sources of financial aid and describe the basic financial aid application process.

9. Students and families believe they can afford postsecondary education with the help of scholarships, grants, and loans.
10. School personnel agree with the statement that every high school graduate has the potential to succeed in postsecondary education and with the statement that all graduates should pursue some form of postsecondary education.

Resources

Admissions 101: A guide provided by CFWV to help students explore and apply to colleges.

CFWV.com: West Virginia's free college- and career-planning web portal.

Creating a College-Going Culture Guide: An informational guide created by The College Board

College-Going Culture Toolkit: A toolkit of ideas provided by Oregon GEAR UP

College Scorecard: A tool to help students and families evaluate the quality of higher education programs.

Common App Ready: A guide for counselors to help students complete the Common App.

Federal Financial Aid Outreach Toolkit: A toolkit provided by the federal office of financial aid that includes training for counselors, materials that can be shared with students and families, and details about federal financial aid programs.

Financial Aid 101: A guide provided by CFWV to help students and families secure financial aid for college.

Financial Aid Infographic: An infographic outlining the average amount of financial aid West Virginia students receive.

Financial Aid Road Map: A resource provided by CFWV that outlines steps students and families should take to apply for financial aid.

Financial Aid Toolkit: A toolkit with a variety of financial aid resources provided by CFWV.

Road Map to College: A resource provided by CFWV that outlines steps students should take throughout high school to prepare for college.

Senior Year Road Map: A resource provided by CFWV that outlines steps high school seniors should take to prepare for college.

Supporting First-Generation Students: A guide for high school counselors created by The College Board.

Mobilization

While one or two dedicated individuals can do a lot to increase awareness of an issue, true cultural change can't happen until you establish critical mass. The **Mobilization** level is where we begin to build the broader support and engagement needed to drive and sustain meaningful change. And the best place to start is with those audiences at the center of your school community: educators, students, and families. These groups are typically the best — and most impactful — advocates to support a college-going culture.

To reach them, you'll need to get clear on your goals and develop a strategic outreach plan. One way to begin is to consider the "6 Basic Questions": Who, What, Where, When, Why, How?

1. **Who:** Who does this issue affect most? Who can help you make the largest impact?
2. **What:** What are you asking them to do or support? What do you want to achieve?
3. **Where:** Where can you reach or connect with them?
4. **When:** When is the best time to reach them? For example, when is the best time to talk about exploring colleges vs. applying to colleges?
5. **Why:** Why does this matter to them?
6. **How:** How do you plan to achieve your goals? What action(s) do you want others to take?

The companion **Workbook (Download [MS Word](#) or [PDE](#))** for this toolkit will help you answer these questions and, in the process, develop a strategic outreach plan.

Goals

For school communities at the **Mobilization** stage, we recommend focusing on two goals:

- **Collaboration:** Encouraging educators, students, and families to collaborate to build and strengthen a college-going culture
- **Integration:** Integrating college-planning and awareness initiatives into the day-to-day work and activities of your school community

Strategies

Goal 1: Collaboration

To encourage collaboration among educators, students, and families, we recommend three strategies: 1) providing professional development for educators, 2) empowering students, and 3) building strong school/family partnerships.

Professional Development

There are a myriad of resources available to assist you in providing professional development opportunities related to postsecondary access and success. Finding the time and resources to offer these opportunities is often the greater challenge. One of the most important factors is securing buy-in and support from your building and district administrators and leaders.

One tactic is to keep it short. It may be difficult to convince leadership to devote an entire day to training, but they may allow you half an hour or an hour to conduct mini workshops during in-service days or faculty meetings. The [Discussion Guides](#) included in this toolkit are designed for these short-form training sessions.

If you are asking your administrators and colleagues to commit to a longer-term training event or course, try to ensure that continuing education credits will be offered. And it's even better if you can find a sponsorship or grant program to fund travel expenses, the cost of a substitute teacher, or stipends.

We've listed below some great sources of professional development related to college access and success:

- [Prichard Committee](#): A group that provides numerous in-depth resources and training programs for facilitating stronger school/family engagement
- [National College Attainment Network \(NCAN\)](#): A group providing college readiness and success resources and training.
- [National Council for Community and Education Partnerships \(NCCEP\)](#): A group providing college readiness and success resources and training as well as support for GEAR UP programs across the country.
- [Study Lab](#): Online professional development courses provided by NCCEP related to college access and readiness issues
- [West Virginia Student Success Summit](#): An annual conference convening educators and partners from across the Pre-K through postsecondary continuum.

Empowering Students

Students are often THE best advocates for supporting a college-going culture, not only because they are likely to be a strong influence on their peers but also because they bring a passion and enthusiasm to the cause. A great deal of [research](#) has shown that Gen Z, or the generation of students born between 1995 and 2010, is motivated by having a higher purpose – particularly when it comes to making the world more inclusive, just, and fair. The mission of helping ALL students (particularly underrepresented groups like first-generation, low-income, and minority students) is likely to resonate deeply with them.

You may want to create a student club or organization devoted specifically to this mission. Groups like “[HEROs](#)” or “Higher Education Readiness Officers” have proven successful in West Virginia schools in the past. Or you could enlist existing student clubs or organizations and ask them to devote some of their time and attention to supporting college access.

School/Family Partnerships

How to better engage parents and family members has been the source of much consternation for schools (particularly high schools) for decades. But it can be particularly challenging when you’re attempting to engage families from underserved populations. Individuals from these groups face numerous barriers when it comes to getting involved in their students’ education, including:

- Lack of time and resources
- Unpleasant or negative personal experiences with the education system
- Lack of confidence in helping their children navigate the often unfamiliar territory of postsecondary education

To overcome these obstacles, schools must go above and beyond to make families feel welcome. Adding signs, language, or other visual cues to school settings or materials explicitly inviting families can help. But, often, success in this area requires a more personal touch.

Making personal phone calls inviting family members to school events, reaching out to families in settings where they feel safe (such as church), and reminding families that their support and encouragement is of real value to the school community are all effective tactics. The [Family Engagement Toolkit](#) provided by the GEAR UP program at Appalachian State University is a great resource, as is Oregon GEAR UP’s [Parent Engagement Toolkit](#). Kentucky’s [Prichard Committee](#) also offers numerous valuable resources including a certificate program to help educators master best practices in family engagement.

Goal 2: Integration

To more fully integrate college readiness and planning efforts into the day-to-day activities of your school, we recommend two strategies: 1) launching collaborative co-curricular programs and initiatives and 2) integrating college planning and awareness into your school's academic curriculum.

Co-Curricular Programs and Initiatives

Milestone Events

When it comes to developing co-curricular programs and initiatives, West Virginia schools are fortunate to have strong leadership and support from the College Foundation of West Virginia or CFWV. Each year, CFWV provides guidance and complete implementation guides for three major college-focused co-curricular programs: [College Application and Exploration Week](#), the [FAFSA Completion Campaign](#), and [College Decision Day](#). Schools that participate in these three milestone events can even apply for recognition as a [Champion of College Access and Success](#).

These efforts are most successful when you get the entire school community involved. Comprehensive [Implementation Guides](#) for all three events are included within this toolkit.

College Visits

Providing college visits for students can go a long way toward helping them become more comfortable on a college campus. And, for students who may have limited transportation or financial resources, school-organized college visits may be their best opportunity for completing this crucial step in the college exploration and planning process. A complete guide to coordinating a college visit is included in the [Implementation Guides](#) section of this toolkit.

If in-person visits simply aren't feasible for your school, you may want to set aside time for "virtual visit" activities. Virtual options include:

- [West Virginia College Road Trip](#)
- [YouVisit](#)
- Amazon Prime's [College Tour](#) series

Integration Within the Academic Curriculum

Integrating college planning and awareness content within your academic curriculum is a great way to achieve multiple goals at once. And there are many creative ways to do so. Check out the "Tactics" section below for ideas.

Additionally, partnering with colleges and universities to offer dual enrollment courses can help students get a sense of the academic demands of college while earning college credits while in high school.

Tactics

The following are practical, actionable ideas you can use to increase awareness in your school community:

Goal 1: Collaboration

- Launch a school club focused on college access and success
- Ask an existing school club to make college access and success a focus of their work
- Ask all teachers to include visual cues to encourage discussions about their college experience with their students. Examples include posting information about their alma mater or hanging copies of their college degree.
- Collect photos of teachers and school staff from when they were in college. Make an analog “Facebook” by posting the pictures on a bulletin board. Include facts about the colleges they attended.
- Host a college-themed door decorating contest among home rooms. Choose judges to select a winning door and offer the homeroom that created it a prize.
- Encourage members of student media organizations such as newspapers or TV stations to do stories or segments on college-focused issues. Interviewing teachers, family members, or community representatives about their college experience can make for a great story.
- Coordinate a college visit for each grade level. A complete guide to organizing a college visit is included in the [Implementation Guides](#) section of this toolkit.
- During college visits, make sure to take a photo of each student on a college campus. Print copies for the students to take home, and, with their permission, post copies on a school bulletin board or the school’s social media pages.
- Include parents and guardians on college tours.
- Research summer programs focusing on academic or career exploration. Promote these events and programs heavily in your school. Personally encourage students to apply — particularly those who may need an extra nudge or are at risk of being overlooked.

- Encourage school clubs to create college-planning bulletin boards to be displayed in local elementary and middle schools.
- At graduation time, have students do a “grad walk” wearing their caps and gowns through the hallways of the elementary and middle schools they attended.
- At graduation time, work with feeder elementary and middle schools to create bulletin boards featuring graduates from that school. Include their postsecondary plans.
- Provide teachers and staff with professional development on how to write compelling letters of recommendation.
- Create a committee for postsecondary access and success as part of the PTA/PTO.
- Create a Family Council for College Success led by parents and other family members. Ask them to find ways to support a college-going culture in your school and consult them for input when making decisions regarding the school.
- Host school activities and college planning workshops at various time frames to accommodate parents’ and families’ diverse schedules. For example, some parents may be able to attend meetings before school, whereas others may need evening windows.
- During parent and family meetings or events, provide activities to engage students’ younger siblings.
- Check to see if colleges in your region have TRIO programs. Reach out to TRIO program leaders to discuss opportunities for collaboration.
- Make sure your school offers clubs that focus on academic exploration in addition to leadership, service, and athletics.
- Create a staff newsletter for teachers and personnel. In each edition, share one of the ideas listed in this toolkit.
- Work with a school staff member or a trusted student to build out a college-focused social media campaign on your school’s social channels. The [Templates](#) section of this toolkit includes social media graphics as well as a 90-day sample calendar of posts.

Goal 2: Integration

- As a class project, take a special item (such as a school pennant or sign) and send it on a cross-country college road trip. Start by choosing three or four colleges in various regions across the U.S. Mail the item to their admissions staff along with a letter, asking them to take a picture with the item and email it back to your class. Then ask that they kindly forward the item onto another college, and so on. As emails come in, take time to learn about each of the colleges the item visits.

- As part of a class assignment, ask students to write a persuasive letter to a college admissions office requesting information and/or gear. Make sure each student is assigned a different college.
- Partner with faculty at local colleges to provide “guest lectures” at your school or in organizing a field trip.
- Ask students to interview someone who completed some form of postsecondary education. Then have them write an essay about that person’s experience. Encourage students to think beyond the traditional four-year degree when choosing their interview subjects.
- Watch an admissions video in class. Ask students to journal their impressions and develop questions they might ask the admissions office for that school. The [West Virginia College Road Trip](#) and [The Amazon Prime College Tour](#) websites are great resources for finding video segments.
- Ask students to research a college, university, or postsecondary program and create an admissions video or webpage for it.
- Go to the [West Virginia College Road Trip](#) website and have students complete the Scavenger Hunt and College Trivia activities for each college.
- Participate in West Virginia’s annual [College Application and Exploration Week](#) initiative. A complete Guide to Hosting College Application and Exploration Week is included in the [Implementation Guides](#) section of this toolkit.
- In junior and senior English classes, practice writing essays for college and financial aid applications.
- Use the [CFWV English Curriculum](#) guide to incorporate college-planning resources available on CFWV.com within your school’s English and Literature curriculum.
- Incorporate college facts within learning vignettes, scenarios, or problems. For example, you might create a math question that reads: If seven percent of students at West Virginia University are in the School of Engineering and WVU has 29,933 students, how many engineering students are there?
- Ask the art, design, or media department to work with students to develop a college-themed coloring or activity book for elementary school students.
- Ask the art/design and English departments to collaborate to create a college-themed children’s book.
- As a field trip, visit the radio or TV station of a local college and do a show.

- In math class, ask students to create budgets for life as a college student. Make sure they incorporate expenses such as food, housing, tuition, fees, and books and resources such as scholarships, grants, and loans.
- In English class, ask students to write a letter from their future selves describing their college experience.
- When discussing historical or public figures, offer students extra credit to research and discuss or write about the college or training programs the person completed.
- Look at essay questions included in past years on the Common App or on applications for elite schools and programs. Use these as prompts for essay assignments in class.

Evaluation

To effectively evaluate your efforts, be sure to tailor your measures and key performance indicators (KPIs) to your community's specific goals and objectives. The **Workbook (Download [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#))** that accompanies this toolkit offers detailed guidance on this process.

Additionally, to help you think through your evaluation strategy, we have listed below some outcomes to aim for when striving to mobilize your school community.

Outcomes

1. At least one professional development opportunity focusing on college access and success issues is offered to teachers, counselors, and administrators in your school each school year.
2. College-related materials and messaging is visible in the majority of classrooms, hallways, and common areas within your school.
3. Each year, your school is participating in the three milestone events required to be recognized as a Champion of College Access and Success: 1) College Application and Exploration Week, 2) the FAFSA Completion Campaign, and 3) College Decision Day.
4. Most departments at your school have identified and implemented ways to integrate college information and planning into their academic curriculum.
5. Your school coordinates at least one college visit per grade level each school year.
6. A formalized group of parents and family members focused on college access and success issues exist either in the form of a committee of an existing organization or a separate organization focused exclusively on college readiness issues.

7. At least one student group at your school has committed to and undertaken initiatives focusing on college access and success issues.
8. Numerous students from low-income, minority, and first-generation college families are helping lead college access and success initiatives.
9. Parents and family members from low-income, first generation college, and minority groups report feeling welcomed and valued at your school.
10. Students can clearly articulate why postsecondary attainment is important and believe that all of their peers are capable of achieving postsecondary success.

Resources

[Amazon Prime College Tour](#): A streaming TV series featuring information about colleges and universities across the country.

[CFWV English Curriculum](#): A curriculum guide for integrating college-planning resources into English classes.

[Champion of College Access and Success](#): A designation to recognize schools in West Virginia that are committed to students' postsecondary success.

[College Application and Exploration Week](#): A statewide program to help elementary, middle, and high schools increase awareness of postsecondary opportunities.

[College Decision Day](#): A statewide program to celebrate students who choose to pursue some form of postsecondary education.

[FAFSA Completion Campaign](#): A toolkit of resources to increase FAFSA completion rates, tailored for West Virginia students.

[Family Engagement Toolkit](#): A toolkit provided by Appalachian State GEAR UP

[Parent Engagement Toolkit](#): A toolkit provided by Oregon GEAR UP

[Prichard Committee](#): A group that provides numerous in-depth resources and training programs for facilitating stronger school/family engagement

[National Association of Secondary School Principals College Access Guide](#): A guide for principals for supporting college access and readiness

[National College Attainment Network \(NCAN\)](#): A group providing college readiness and success resources and training.

[National Council for Community and Education Partnerships \(NCCEP\)](#): A group providing college readiness and success resources and training as well as support for GEAR UP programs across the country.

[Study Lab](#): Online professional development courses provided by NCCEP related to college access and readiness issues

[True Gen: Generation Z and Its Implications for Companies](#): A report by McKinsey on the characteristics of Gen Z

[West Virginia College Road Trip](#): A website featuring virtual tours, videos, and interactive activities to help students explore colleges in West Virginia.

[West Virginia Student 'HEROs' Inspiring Their Peers to Reach Higher](#): An article about a college-access-focused youth group formed in West Virginia

[West Virginia Student Success Summit](#): An annual conference convening educators and partners from across the Pre-K through postsecondary continuum.

[YouVisit](#): A website housing virtual tours for numerous colleges and universities across the country.

Collective Impact

Although strengthening the college-going culture within your school building is a powerful way to support postsecondary attainment, the old adage “it takes a village” rings true when it comes to ensuring true cultural transformation.

Educators know that the environments, attitudes, and events that students experience outside of school hours don't disappear when they enter the school building. So, we must expand our efforts to include cross-sector and community partnerships that can help us provide holistic and ongoing support for students and families.

At the **Collective Impact** stage of building a college-going culture, stakeholders and organizations from across sectors and throughout the community must come together in a formalized way to support students' educational attainment.

But this level of coordination requires thoughtful planning and strategic implementation. One model for accomplishing that is the **[Collective Impact Model](#)**, which was first outlined in the Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR). The Collective Impact Model offers a framework for ensuring that organizations seeking to drive positive social change are collaborating rather than competing, and that their efforts are complementary rather than duplicative.

The companion **Workbook (Download [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#))** for this toolkit can help you think through how you might apply this model within your own school community.

Goals

For school communities looking to make a Collective Impact, we recommend starting with the following goals:

- **Recruitment:** Identifying organizations and individuals who can help impact students' educational attainment and securing their commitment to collaborate.
- **Formalization:** Identify and create a formalized structure or organization for your collaborative college attainment efforts.
- **Vision Setting:** Articulating and gaining consensus on your shared goals and objectives.
- **Quick Wins:** Identifying short-term goals you can accomplish collaboratively to build momentum, trust, and support.

Strategies

Goal 1: Recruitment

To help you identify and recruit organizations and individuals who can help make a long-term positive impact on students' educational attainment, we recommend three strategies: 1) thinking holistically, 2) seeking "changemakers," and 3) focusing on your "why."

Thinking Holistically

Educators understand all too well that today's students are in need of more than academic instruction. Teachers, counselors, and school staff often find themselves working to support students' physiological, emotional, and spiritual needs in addition to their intellectual development. And while their efforts are often heroic, we can't rely on our school teachers alone to provide this level of care.

When you begin thinking about the groups and people who will make up your larger team, think about bringing together a wide variety of players who can support students' and families' total wellbeing. You may want to frame your recruitment efforts within the [8 Dimensions of Wellness](#), which include 1) Emotional/Mental, 2) Financial, 3) Environmental, 4) Intellectual, 5) Social, 6) Occupational, 7) Physical, and 8) Spiritual.

Potential Partners to Consider

Emotional/Mental

- Community counseling centers and professionals
- Trauma-informed care specialists
- Addiction recovery specialists

Financial*

- Community banks and credit unions
- Financial literacy groups
- College saving plan advisors
- Financial planners
- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) members

*Note: to support the financial wellbeing of your college access and success collaborative, you may also want to consider recruiting grant writers. Additionally, you'll want to consider identifying a partner who can serve as a fiscal agent for any grants or donations you secure to support your collective efforts.

Environmental

- Groups focused on [placemaking](#)
- Community development organizations
- Artists and art centers

Intellectual

- College admissions officers
- College professors and instructors
- Groups focusing on academic development (such as STEAM or robotics clubs)
- Libraries
- Tutoring centers

Social

- Community youth organizations such as Scouts or 4-H
- School-based student clubs
- Leadership development experts
- Youth leaders such as team captains or student government association members
- College student groups such as student government, clubs, sororities, or fraternities
- Mentorship organizations such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters
- Coaches for high school or community sports teams

Occupational

- Career counselors
- Business leaders and professionals
- Major employers in the area
- Apprenticeship program directors

Physical

- Community health centers
- Fitness instructors or coaches
- Nutrition specialists

Spiritual

- Faith-based leaders such as pastors or rabbis
- Experts in mindfulness or meditation

One note: as you recruit additional individuals from the community, don't forget to include the educators, students, and family members who are already advocates for your college attainment efforts. .

Seeking “Changemakers”

Have you ever been on a committee that has the best of intentions, but never manages to accomplish anything? Oftentimes, this is because the wrong people are involved.

When you start recruiting for your college attainment organization, be thoughtful and intentional in determining which individuals you invite to serve as members.

You're looking for “changemakers,” people who represent that sweet spot between having the *authority* to make decisions and the *time and ability* to follow through on them.

For example, it may be incredibly valuable to have the support of the local bank president. But s/he may not have the time to attend numerous meetings or to volunteer hours completing tasks that need done. Instead, ask the bank president to nominate a person on their team whom they trust to make decisions and who has the ability to give your cause the time, attention, and sweat equity it deserves.

Focusing on Your “Why”

In a [famous TED Talk](#), author Simon Sinek said “People don't buy what you do. They buy why you do it.” (It's a short talk that's definitely worth a watch.)

People who possess power, talent, or resources are asked constantly to support numerous community causes. So before you ask someone to get involved in your organization, make sure you're able to clearly communicate *why* this matters – to the community overall and to them as a person.

The **Workbook** ([Download MS Word](#) or [PDF](#)) that accompanies this toolkit includes a section on developing positioning statements that you may find useful.

Goal 2: Formalization

Developing a formalized communitywide college attainment program can help ensure more widespread impact and ensure that initiatives to support a college-going culture are sustained. You'll need to work with partners to determine an organizational structure that works best for you. You may want to establish a foundation that not only provides programming but also funding for college-going initiatives. If you want to explore that route, we recommend starting your research with [The Council on Foundations](#) and [Philanthropy West Virginia](#).

Another option is the network model, which has been proven successful in advancing college attainment efforts across the country. Here are some examples of successful college access/attainment networks you may want to research:

- [Michigan College Access Network](#)
- [Florida College Access Network](#)
- [AzCAN \(Arizona\)](#)
- [National College Attainment Network \(NCAN\)](#)

These are just two examples of organizational structures you may want to consider. The most important thing is to develop a framework that meets the needs of your community and makes the most of your existing assets.

Goal 3: Vision Setting

One of the most important steps to ensuring effective collaboration is developing a shared vision. This may sound simple, but we can all become so immersed in our specific areas of expertise and individual program objectives that we have trouble seeing how all the pieces fit together to support a common goal. Additionally, we may think we have a firm grasp of the problem to be solved and later realize there are underlying issues we've overlooked.

To begin the vision-setting process, we recommend reviewing the following resources:

- Article: [Collective Impact](#) (focusing particularly on the common agenda and shared measurement sections).

- Article: [Empathize: The Heart of Design](#)
- Article: [How Reframing a Problem Unlocks Innovation](#)
- Video: [Setting Goals, Objectives, and KPIs](#)

You may also want to share these resources with your team.

Then, work together to articulate your shared vision and common goals. Determine how you will measure progress. The [Dashboard](#) template included in this toolkit may be helpful in tracking shared measurements and communicating progress.

Aim for Intense Focus

Because you're bringing together such a wide variety of stakeholders, you may find that you come up with numerous goals and objectives. Try to get specific and limit your focus so that you can work intensively on key problems. As a rule of thumb, we recommend defining one overarching shared goal and no more than five supporting objectives. Once you've achieved those aims, you can always tackle more later.

The **Workbook (Download [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#))** accompanying this toolkit offers an exercise to help you narrow your focus and home in on the most important issues at hand.

Goal 4: Quick Wins

In developing your college attainment organization, you're setting your community up to succeed in the long game. After all, meaningful and widespread cultural change can take decades. But it's easy to lose focus or support if you aren't able to demonstrate some early wins.

To build trust and momentum, identify some initiatives you can accomplish as a team within the next 3 to 6 months. Be sure to communicate and celebrate your achievements, giving all members of the group ample credit for their contributions. Showing the broader community that you've already made an impact can help you secure long-term buy-in.

The tactics section below is a good place to find ideas for "quick wins."

Tactics

The following are practical, actionable ideas for engaging the wider community and securing "quick wins" for your collective initiatives:

- Ask partners from outside the school system to present on collaborative initiatives during school board or faculty senate meetings.

- Ask your school board members and your building leaders to formally recognize and adopt one or more of your organization's goals and objectives.
- Secure news coverage for your initiatives and goals within local media outlets. A press release template is included in the [Templates](#) section of this toolkit.
- Ask your local media outlets to publish updates on your progress in achieving your organization's goals and objectives.
- Provide presentations on your goals and progress to community organizations, churches or faith-based centers, and student leadership groups.
- Ask members of your organization to write letters to the editor explaining why your cause is important and why they've committed to helping.
- Find a community sponsor to fund school-organized college visits or provide scholarships for ACT or SAT prep courses.
- Work with athletic groups to have college facts or planning deadlines announced before games or during time outs.
- Make sure your school celebrates academic achievements at least as much as they do athletic achievements. Ensure that the number of academic awards is at least equal to the number of athletic awards — and that they're equally visible. For example, if you have a trophy case displaying athletic feats, create one displaying academic victories. You may want to enlist community partners to sponsor awards or prizes.
- Partner with local businesses and organizations to develop job shadowing and internship programs for students.
- Ask businesses and organizations to participate in a college-themed window or door decorating contest. Encourage them to share facts about or pictures from their alma mater.
- Ask community partners to speak to students about their college experience. Or ask them to record short videos describing their college experience and post these on your school's social media channels.
- Reach out to current college students who graduated from your high school and ask them to speak to younger students about their college experience. Encourage them to share advice and personal stories. Post their presentations on your school's social media channels.
- Support the outreach and messaging of members of your college attainment organization. For example, repost or share one another's social media posts or cross publish articles in newsletters.

- Develop a mentoring program and enlist community partners as mentors.
- Ask business leaders to present information about their workforce needs to school personnel or school board members.
- Engage community partners in activities surrounding [College Application and Exploration Week](#), the [FAFSA Completion Campaign](#), and [College Decision Day](#).

Evaluation

At this stage, it is more important than ever to tailor your measures and key performance indicators (KPIs) to your community's specific goals and objectives.

However, we have listed below some outcomes you may want to consider.

Outcomes

1. You have created a formal organization composed of cross-sector partners from diverse backgrounds to focus on increasing college attainment rates in your community.
2. Your attainment organization has adopted shared metrics, regularly tracked, with action plans.
3. College and university staff members visit the school on a regular basis and collaborate regularly with teachers and counselors at your school.
4. Counselors and teachers at your school have a close working relationship with state-level college-readiness professionals, such as CFWV and state-level financial aid representatives.
5. Business and community leaders as well as postsecondary professionals are consulted when planning district or school wide goals and improvement plans.
6. Data and research drive decision-making.
7. Students and parents have a voice in school and district decisions and their input is valued and seriously considered.
8. Your school and your college attainment organization clearly communicate your goals to the broader community and provide updates on progress.
9. Your college attainment organization is composed of diverse members representing a variety of sectors, expertise, and backgrounds.

10. Low-income, first-generation college, and minority students and family members are actively involved with your college attainment organization's activities and leadership.

Resources

[AzCAN](#): An organization supporting college attainment in Arizona.

[Collective Impact](#): An article published by the Stanford Social Innovation Review that outlines a framework for effective and meaningful collaboration.

[Eight Dimensions of Wellness](#): A detailed overview of the 8 Dimensions of Wellness provided by William and Mary.

[Empathize: The Heart of Design](#): A case study describing how to get to the heart of a problem or issue.

[Florida College Access Network](#): An organization supporting college attainment in Florida.

[How Reframing a Problem Unlocks Innovation](#): Advice for understanding or clearly defining the problem to be solved.

[Impact Management](#): This free, online course teaches participants how to center their efforts around a common cause or a desired impact. (Source: Trailhead.com)

[Michigan College Access Network](#): One of the most successful college attainment networks in the country.

[National College Attainment Network \(NCAN\)](#): A national organization supporting college attainment networks across the country.

[Philanthropy West Virginia](#): a nonprofit organization supporting West Virginia's philanthropic organizations and foundations.

[Placemaking](#): An introduction to placemaking provided by the Project for Public Spaces.

[Setting Goals, Objectives, and KPIs](#): A video offering practical guidance for articulating a common agenda.

[Starting a Foundation](#): A guide provided by the Council on Foundations.

Sustained Innovation

Sustaining your work and developing an environment that supports continual improvement is the ultimate goal of anyone seeking to create cultural change. But, reaching this stage doesn't mean your work is done. As we said earlier in this toolkit, building a college-going culture isn't a task you can "check off" your to-do list.

The very definitions of sustainability and continual improvement indicate that this work is never ending. And one of the more exciting things about working in the education and community development space is that the opportunities for innovation are limitless. We can always make things better.

But how do you maintain momentum for the long haul? In the **Sustained Innovation** section, we'll discuss strategies and tactics to help ensure your work continues through inevitable change. People central to your movement will retire or move on. Grant programs will end. And policymakers' focus will shift. But this issue — and your work — will remain critical to the success of your community.

Goals

For organizations that have reached the **Sustained Innovation** phase, we recommend focusing on the following long-term goals:

1. **Institutionalizing Proven Practices:** Adopting and implementing new policies and procedures
2. **Aligning Resources to Goals:** Securing new resources or reallocating existing ones to support strategic objectives.
3. **Fueling Research, Creativity, and Debate:** Creating an environment where stakeholders never stop learning or improving.

Strategies

Goal 1: Institutionalizing Proven Practices

Once you've identified practices that are effective in supporting a college-going culture, ensuring that they are adopted as formal policies and procedures is often a good way to scale and sustain them. At the local level, this process may be as simple as making a compelling argument to your administrators or school board. (Be sure to include data, research, and personal stories!)

If you're seeking to change state or federal policies, you may need to develop an advocacy strategy. This [Introduction to Advocacy](#) may help you explore this concept more.

Goal 2: Aligning Resources to Goals

Once your college attainment organization has developed clarity around a common vision and shared goals, you'll need to ensure that resources are aligned to support them. This could mean seeking new funding through grants or donations. Or it could mean reallocating existing resources. It likely comes as no surprise that the latter can cause controversy, so you'll want to be thoughtful and sensitive if you go this route.

Asset Mapping

One strategy is to undertake [asset mapping](#), or inventorying the work and resources your organizational partners are providing. This process can help you identify gaps or overlaps and facilitate meaningful conversations about whether resources should be combined or whether certain partners might want to focus on other areas. It can also help you recognize strengths and, well, assets you may have overlooked or aren't using to the fullest potential.

In addition to helping you identify tangible resources like funding or services available, asset mapping can also help you identify more nebulous assets. This might include things like community stories or traditions that can help you better connect and serve your audience or the experiences and skills of residents you might enlist.

It may seem strange to undertake this activity this "late in the game." And, in fact, many community development and organization experts recommend mapping your assets early. However, collaborating through shared resources requires a great deal of trust, as does leveraging community traditions and symbols. Because of this, we recommend waiting until you've built strong relationships within your organization and at least some level of support for your cause.

Securing Grants

Grant writing is a valuable professional skill set. But, even if you're a novice, you can still write effective grant proposals if you do your homework. Here are a few resources to help you get started:

- [Grant Writing 101 for US Nonprofits: Learning the Formula](#)
- [How Do I Write a Grant Proposal? A Guide](#)
- [Proposal Writing Insights](#)
- [Grant Writing 101: Resources for Grant Writers](#)

If your college attainment organization is not set up to be able to serve as the fiscal agent (the organization that will manage the grant funds), be sure to work with a reliable and trusted partner who can fulfill that role.

Goal 3: Fueling Research, Creativity, and Debate

Hundreds of books and thousands of articles have been written about how to build a culture that encourages research, innovation, creativity and debate. (In the **Workbook (Download [MS Word](#) or [PDF](#))** accompanying this toolkit, we listed a few of the most trusted books on the topic.)

But if we were going to create a “10 Commandments of Innovation” list, it would look something like this:

1. Don't get complacent
2. Never stop learning and exploring
3. Don't be afraid to fail
4. Engage individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives
5. Encourage robust debate
6. Listen and learn from those you seek to serve
7. Develop rigorous research and evaluation programs
8. Prototype and pilot, early and often
9. Explore ideas outside your discipline or field
10. Be uncompromising on your goals, but flexible on how you get there

Tactics

The following are practical, actionable ideas for institutionalizing and sustaining a college-going culture and creating an environment that supports innovation:

- Make it standard procedure for your counseling team to identify low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented minority students. Make sure to personally reach out to these students and their families regarding postsecondary planning.
- Identify and reach out to students who may be struggling or overlooked. One powerful exercise is to play “Personal Interaction Post-its.” Here’s how it works: For every single student you serve, create an individual post-it with their name on it. Place these on the floor of a large wall with plenty of space to walk around and examine the names. Instruct your teachers or team members to look at the names and consider whether or not they’ve had a meaningful personal interaction with that student within the past two weeks. If they have, they should take that student’s post-it. (It’s ok if someone else gets a post-it for a student you’ve also interacted with). After everyone has walked around and collected students’ names, which ones remain unclaimed? These students probably need your focus and attention.
- Identify your “middle of the road” students — those students who aren’t top of the class and involved in everything... but also aren’t on the failing or detention lists. Encourage

these students to pursue leadership positions or join extracurricular activities. Often, these students are capable but hindered by a lack of confidence or other personal barriers.

- Host an articulation conference to bring together high school and college educators. Collaborate to find ways to better align curricula.
- Create opportunities for students to provide feedback and input on college issues. Invite them for coffee and donuts before school for informal conversations. Hold annual or semi-annual focus groups with diverse groups of students. Or use the [Discussion Guides](#) included in this toolkit to host group discussions with student leaders.
- Start a nonfiction book club at your school or within your college attainment organization. Choose books that focus on issues related to postsecondary success, social issues your students and families are facing, or community development and collaboration.
- Host an annual College Access and Success conference. Invite members of your college attainment organization and the broader community to participate. Secure a keynote speaker who can address a critical issue facing your community and include breakout sessions focusing on other key topics.
- Submit proposals to present at regional and national conferences focusing on college attainment. Share your experiences, best practices, and research.
- Share your successes through stories in local media outlets, student and parent testimonials, social media posts, and presentations to community groups.
- Be up front and open about your challenges and don't be afraid to ask for help. Host town hall meetings on tough issues or lead group brainstorming sessions during regular meetings.
- Engage every member of your school community — including teachers, cafeteria staff, counselors, principals, bus drivers, coaches, janitorial staff, and office administrators — in supporting a college-going culture. Offer them clearcut ways to participate, such as hanging college pennants around their work space or wearing their favorite college gear on Fridays.
- Set expectations for supporting college access and success within hiring practices, job descriptions, and performance evaluations.
- Host college planning workshops outside of the school at churches, 4H club meetings, Scouting events, or popular local hangouts.
- Ask parents to host a college-planning party at their home. Play games and offer prizes. At one, elect a host or hostess for the next party and charge them with inviting new people. (Think MLM parties.)

Evaluation

At this stage, you likely have developed your own robust set of metrics and goals. However, we would be remiss if we didn't include some indicators to consider when evaluating the strength of your college-going culture.

Indicators

1. In your community, college means postsecondary, not just a four-year degree.
2. College is broadly viewed as a viable and desirable path for ALL students.
3. College success stories are prevalent throughout the school and community.
4. Academic achievement is considered a universal point of pride on par with athletics.
5. Teachers generally believe that all students can succeed in higher academic level classes when the appropriate strategies and support structures are put in place.
6. Parents and students demand that a wide variety of advanced classes be offered and there are high levels of participation in upper level and advanced courses.
7. Your school has identified all students from low-income, minority, and first-generation college families and made an intentional effort to assist them in college planning, engage them in leadership opportunities, and encourage them to take advanced academic courses.
8. College advocacy is emphasized during hiring and performance evaluation practices.
9. Most school team members can report on your school's college-going rates and the activities and initiatives you've undertaken to increase them.
10. Your school's college-going rate is published and discussed throughout the community and is viewed as a measure of success for your school system.

Resources

[Asset Mapping](#): An overview of asset mapping provided by the AmeriCorps Vista program.

[Grant Writing 101 for US Nonprofits: Learning the Formula](#): An overview of the components and stages of the grant writing process.

[Grant Writing 101: Resources for Grant Writers](#): A list of resources to help you learn to be an effective grant writer.

[How Do I Write a Grant Proposal? A Guide](#): An introductory course on grant writing.

[How Successful Companies Sustain Innovation](#): An article from Fast Company on the common characteristics of innovative organizations.

[Proposal Writing Insights](#): Strategies and tips for improving grant proposals.

[The Capabilities Your Organization Needs to Sustain Innovation](#): An article from the Harvard Business Review about building a culture to support ongoing innovation.

Discussion Guides

This toolkit includes a series of Discussion Guides to assist you in building your community's awareness around critical issues in college access and success. The following [Discussion Guides](#) are designed to kick off a conversation aimed at developing localized solutions:

- [Reducing Summer Melt](#)
- [Supporting College Match and Fit](#)
- [Integrating Trauma-Informed Care in College Counseling](#)
- [Supporting Social and Emotional Learning](#)

Implementation Guides

This toolkit includes comprehensive implementation guides for the following initiatives:

- [College Application and Exploration Week](#)
- [Financial Aid Campaign](#)
- [College Decision Day](#)
- [College Visits](#)

Templates

To help you in your day-to-day work, we have included the following templates:

- [Strategic Communications Plan](#) (*link downloads an MS Word document*)
- **College-Going Culture Dashboard**

- [Social Media Calendar and Images](#)
- [Editable News Release Template](#)

Index

Resources for Students

[Admissions 101](#): A guide provided by CFVW to help students explore and apply to colleges.

[Amazon Prime College Tour](#): A streaming TV series featuring information about colleges and universities across the country.

[College Scorecard](#): A tool to help students and families evaluate the quality of higher education programs.

[College Is Necessary](#): A flyer demonstrating why pursuing postsecondary education is imperative for success.

[College Is Worth It](#): A flyer describing the benefits of completing postsecondary education.

[FAFSA Guardianship Guide](#): A guide to assist counselors, students, and families in navigating issues of guardianship when completing the FAFSA.

[Financial Aid 101](#): A guide provided by CFVW to help students and families secure financial aid for college.

[Financial Aid Infographic](#): An infographic outlining the average amount of financial aid West Virginia students receive.

[Financial Aid Road Map](#): A resource provided by CFVW that outlines steps students and families should take to apply for financial aid.

[Map of West Virginia Colleges and Universities](#): A flyer listing West Virginia's two-year and four-year public and not-for-profit colleges and universities.

[Road Map to College](#): A resource provided by CFVW that outlines steps students should take throughout high school to prepare for college.

[Senior Year Road Map](#): A resource provided by CFVW that outlines steps high school seniors should take to prepare for college.

[Txt 4 Success Program](#): A program that provides 12th grade students with “just in time” college-planning reminders via text messaging.

[West Virginia College Road Trip](#): A website featuring virtual tours, videos, and interactive activities to help students explore colleges in West Virginia.

[YouVisit](#): A website housing virtual tours for numerous colleges and universities across the country.

Resources for Educators

[Asset Mapping](#): An overview of asset mapping provided by the AmeriCorps Vista program.

[AzCAN](#): An organization supporting college attainment in Arizona.

[Capabilities Your Organization Needs to Sustain Innovation](#): An article from the Harvard Business Review about building a culture to support ongoing innovation.

[CFWV English Curriculum](#): A curriculum guide for integrating college-planning resources into English classes.

[Champion of College Access and Success](#): A designation to recognize schools in West Virginia that are committed to students’ postsecondary success.

[Collective Impact](#): An article published by the Stanford Social Innovation Review that outlines a framework for effective and meaningful collaboration.

[College Application and Exploration Week](#): A statewide program to help elementary, middle, and high schools increase awareness of postsecondary opportunities.

[College Decision Day](#): A statewide program to celebrate students who choose to pursue some form of postsecondary education.

[College-Going Culture](#): The characteristics of a college-going culture according to UC Berkeley

[College-Going Rates](#): Annual College-Going Rates by West Virginia county

[Common App Ready](#): A guide for counselors to help students complete the Common App.

[Culture Code](#): A book by Daniel Coyle on how to build strong organizational cultures.

[Eight Dimensions of Wellness](#): A detailed overview of the 8 Dimensions of Wellness provided by William and Mary.

[Empathize: The Heart of Design](#): A case study describing how to get to the heart of a problem or issue.

[FAFSA Completion Campaign](#): A toolkit of resources to increase FAFSA completion rates, tailored for West Virginia students.

[Family Engagement Toolkit](#): A toolkit provided by Appalachian State GEAR UP

[Financial Aid Toolkit](#): A toolkit with a variety of financial aid resources to help educate students about financial aid opportunities.

[FAFSA Completion Rates](#): Weekly FAFSA Completion Rates by West Virginia high school

[Fearless Organization](#): A book by Amy Edmondson on “creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth.

[Federal Financial Aid Outreach Toolkit](#): A toolkit provided by the federal office of financial aid that includes training for counselors, materials that can be shared with students and families, and details about federal financial aid programs.

[Florida College Access Network](#): An organization supporting college attainment in Florida.

[Good to Great](#): A book by Jim Collins on facilitating organizational cultures to support greatness.

[Grant Writing 101 for US Nonprofits: Learning the Formula](#): An overview of the components and stages of the grant writing process.

[Grant Writing 101: Resources for Grant Writers](#): A list of resources to help you learn to be an effective grant writer.

[How Do I Write a Grant Proposal? A Guide](#): An introductory course on grant writing.

[How Great Leaders Inspire Action](#): A TED Talk by Simon Sinek

[How Reframing a Problem Unlocks Innovation](#): Advice for understanding or clearly defining the problem to be solved.

[How Successful Companies Sustain Innovation](#): An article from Fast Company on the common characteristics of innovative organizations.

[How to Start a Movement](#): A TED Talk by Derek Sivers

[Impact Management](#): This free, online course teaches participants how to center their efforts around a common cause or a desired impact.

[Leadership Without Easy Answers](#): A book by Ronald Heifetz on addressing complex social problems.

[Leading Continuous Change](#): A book by Bill Pasmore on how to lead organizations and communities through change.

Michigan College Access Network: One of the most successful college attainment networks in the country.

National Association of Secondary School Principals College Access Guide: A guide for principals for supporting college access and readiness.

National College Attainment Network (NCAN): A group providing college readiness and success resources and training.

National College Colors Day: An annual initiative encouraging people to wear the colors or gear of their favorite college or university.

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP): A group providing college readiness and success resources and training as well as support for GEAR UP programs across the country.

Parent Engagement Toolkit: A toolkit provided by Oregon GEAR UP.

Philanthropy West Virginia: a nonprofit organization supporting West Virginia's philanthropic organizations and foundations.

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Prichard Committee: A group that provides numerous in-depth resources and training programs for facilitating stronger school/family engagement.

Proposal Writing Insights: Strategies and tips for improving grant proposals.

Setting Goals, Objectives, and KPIs: A video offering practical guidance for articulating a common agenda.

Starting a Foundation: A guide provided by the Council on Foundations.

Study Lab: Online professional development courses provided by NCCEP related to college access and readiness issues.

Supporting First-Generation Students: A guide for high school counselors created by The College Board.

Theory of Change: An overview of how to develop a Theory of Change, provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

True Gen: Generation Z and Its Implications for Companies: A report by McKinsey on the characteristics of Gen Z.

West Virginia's Climb is a collaborative effort amongst educators, business leaders, policymakers, and community members to support the educational attainment of ALL West Virginians.

[Why Your Environment is the Biggest Factor in Changing Your Life:](#) An article from Inc Magazine.

[West Virginia Student 'HEROs' Inspiring Their Peers to Reach Higher:](#) An article about a college-access-focused youth group formed in West Virginia.

[West Virginia Student Success Summit:](#) An annual conference convening educators and partners from across the Pre-K through postsecondary continuum.

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