



INTEGRATING CAREER PATHWAYS  
IN HIGH SCHOOLS

# Thinking Outside the (Budget) Box

Innovating the Use of Funding for  
School-Workforce Partnerships

LEARNING BRIEF #6



# INTRODUCTION

The Transfer 2 Career Collaborative (T2C) initiative brings together schools and workforce partners that are ready to forge new pathways to graduation and postsecondary opportunities for students. Though the partnership value is evident, education and workforce development stakeholders have very different funding streams, oversight mechanisms, budgets, and expected outcomes, making it challenging to come together at a practical level. Through T2C, these stakeholders have found ways to bridge their systems, often by braiding and blending funding to deliver the highest-impact services for young adults. However, the policies and parameters of funding streams sometimes clash with the particular needs of current or recently-graduated transfer students.

This brief describes how one T2C partnership has innovated to build capacity and find funding to keep its students on the road to college and careers.

# T2C AT EAST BROOKLYN COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

The partnership between St. Nicks Alliance and East Brooklyn Community High School (EBC) emerged when these two institutions recognized their deep alignment in terms of their existing pathways for students, the interests of their students, and the communication and working styles of their staff and leaders.

EBC Principal Patrick McGillicuddy met St. Nicks staff through the T2C Learning Community; he also knew of St. Nicks through EBC graduates who attended EBC's workforce readiness training programs and St. Nicks' appearance at an EBC career fair. When McGillicuddy needed a new T2C partner, he quickly turned to St. Nicks, having learned about its green construction, technology, and healthcare training programs during T2C network meetings. St. Nick's programs require no prerequisite exam minimum score, removing another barrier for EBC students.

But while this partnership was proving to be a good fit, it didn't come without obstacles; St. Nicks' existing workforce program funding was inflexible and could cover only those students who have already graduated high school or received their high school equivalency. Meanwhile, the T2C annual implementation grants from JobsFirstNYC could not cover the full cost for all three training programs. For the partnership's School Design Team,<sup>1</sup> this posed a challenge: **How could the EBC community benefit from St. Nicks' programs despite these funding limitations?**

## T2C LEARNING:

# INNOVATIVE FUNDING FOR NEW PROGRAMS

### PRINCIPAL MCGILlicuddy WAS WELL AWARE OF STUDENTS' NEEDS WHEN IT CAME TO WORKFORCE TRAINING OPTIONS.

First, students cannot put off getting paid for full-time work while they complete lower-paying internships or fellowships. Second, students benefit from working with partners that understand youth development and can provide a nurturing, albeit rigorous, work readiness program. Third, transfer schools graduate students at four points throughout the calendar year, but a workforce partner may provide a specific sector training program only once or twice a year; this discrepancy means that many students may become temporarily out of school and out of work following graduation, even if they have an intended plan. This time off without connection to counselors can get in the way of students' matriculation in programs.

Given that St. Nicks' mission and operation place youth development front and center, the organization was a perfect match for EBC. Therefore, Principal McGillicuddy's priority became finding a way to pay students and recent alumni so they wouldn't have to choose a short-term path that took them away from meaningful career development opportunities.

It was at this point that EBC and St. Nicks identified resources across multiple budget lines that could be allocated toward the partnership. Among these sources was EBC's federal Title I funding<sup>2</sup> to support current students, as well as St. Nicks' funding from the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development's Train and Earn contract to support recent graduates. This represented a new way of thinking about

intervention, as recently graduated students without a postsecondary plan, particularly from transfer schools, often become what the city would consider "out-of-school, out-of-work" young adults. Train and Earn programs, which are funded through the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), aim to provide "comprehensive job training and employment services, along with support services needed by participants to find a permanent job ... and access postsecondary education and training."<sup>3</sup>

St. Nicks recognized that its program participants could benefit from the broad criteria for this funding because the funding considers those who are enrolled in a WIOA-funded program and not registered to continue school in the fall as out-of-school youth.<sup>4</sup>

As recent graduates of transfer schools, the students face multiple barriers to employment that meet the criteria for WIOA funding, including being low income or living in high-poverty areas, pregnant or parenting, involved in the justice system, deficient in basic skills, English learners, or in need of additional assistance to secure or hold employment.

*“For the school, we understood that some budgets were pretty flexible if we creatively planned for it,” said McGillicuddy. “We were able to pay with regular city dollars, Learning to Work dollars, and federal dollars.”*

After identifying the financial streams and looking at the specific EBC student profiles, the School Design Team hosted “career weeks”—sector-based bridge trainings taught by employers so students could prepare for success in postsecondary training. The goal was to place students who completed career week immediately into postsecondary training programs following high school so there was little gap between high school graduation and postsecondary training. This new program is also intending to offer a paid, week-long, intensive option (40 hours per week in their

chosen work training) to graduated students who are awaiting postsecondary training start dates.


Moreover, EBC is working in partnership with three additional T2C transfer schools that also partner with St. Nicks through T2C in order to meet student interest in various industries and effectively use resources. And St. Nicks, because of its successful work, qualified for additional Train and Earn spots in year two of T2C, allowing it to work with additional T2C schools.

St. Nicks’ director for workforce development, Larry Rothchild, noted that the T2C partnership has defined a need for more training and support for young adults who are out of school and out of work or at risk of becoming so. In response, St. Nicks has expanded its young adult funding to include YouthBuild, Department of Labor anti-gun-violence training, job readiness and employment, and young adult customer service training. St. Nicks also offers diverse training in areas such as HVAC, data analytics, customer service, urban greenscaping, and environmental remediation.



# LESSONS LEARNED

EBC and St. Nicks leadership mentioned the following lessons learned from his early experience in the partnership:



**Build a pathway based on prevention and intervention, and braid funding streams together to support it.**

The T2C team determined that even though Train and Earn dollars cannot be used for current students, they can be used to fund students right after they graduate, provided they are not enrolled in any postsecondary education program. This can prevent students from ever becoming part of the out-of-school, out-of-work population and struggling through job seeking or searching for a training program on their own—often a lonely and discouraging experience.



**When it comes to funding, think outside the box.**

Many funding sources are more flexible than one might believe. Institutions should re-read the fine print to ensure that they are leveraging the most support in all ways possible to meet their goals. For example, St. Nicks—recognizing the importance of having staff physically present in the school building—has been strategically utilizing the time of two of its staff members. These staff are able to meet all of the obligations and requirements of the grants that fund their positions while also spending time on site with students, which can be counted in their young adult recruitment duties.



**Stay nimble and creative with funding, even after the school year has started.**

Although half the school year had passed and budgeted funding had already been spent, three St. Nicks school partners committed funding from their school budgets toward “career week” bridge training programs. The schools made new funding commitments after seeing the value of the T2C initiative for their students. This funding practice ensures more sustainability, as school budgets tend to be more stable than program funding for which community-based organizations must reapply every few years.



**Utilize the time between a student’s graduation and postsecondary training start date well.** St. Nicks benefits from enrolling students early. Even if a program doesn’t begin for six months, staff are engaging students in community events and workshops to prevent “summer melt” (when students are accepted but then fail to enroll) and increase student follow-through with their postsecondary training plans. This ensures that funding is used well and that program impact is robust. By getting students early—while they are enrolled in school—and then serving them in the time between graduation and training, partners can prime young adults for postsecondary success rather than having them wade through postsecondary options on their own without a supportive structure.



# ABOUT T2C PARTNERS



**EAST BROOKLYN COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL**, a recently renovated single-school site, is a community school<sup>5</sup> that offers enriching, supportive, and inclusive activities that bring together children, teens, and adults from the community. The school operates on a trimester schedule and serves up to 200 students annually between the ages of sixteen and twenty who are under-credited and wish to receive a high school diploma.



**ST. NICKS ALLIANCE** is a nonprofit community development organization serving low- to moderate-income North Brooklyn residents. It offers skills training and industry credentials to community members, and partners with major North Brooklyn employers to provide hands-on experience and workforce connections.



## ABOUT THIS SERIES

JobsFirstNYC and New Visions for Public Schools are spearheading the Transfer 2 Career Collaborative (T2C), an innovative career development strategy for New York City transfer high schools aimed at improving the postsecondary and workforce outcomes of students most at risk of becoming part of the out-of-school, out-of-work population. Working across twelve transfer schools in the New Visions network, T2C integrates sectoral workforce development partners and postsecondary programs to provide sector-specific career pathways for over-age, under-credited students. This learning brief is part of a series describing emergent practices in the T2C initiative that support progress toward student, partnership, institution, and system-level goals.



### **ABOUT JOBSFIRSTNYC**

JobsFirstNYC creates and advances solutions that break down barriers and transform the systems supporting young adults and their communities in the pursuit of economic opportunities. Our innovative approach to developing new partnership models has helped shape public policy, private philanthropic investments, and the best practices of employers, colleges, service providers, high schools, and others. Over the last 14 years, JobsFirstNYC has worked with more than 150 organizations in communities across New York City to build innovative solutions that connect young adults to economic opportunities.



### **ABOUT NEW VISIONS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

New Visions for Public Schools is a nonprofit organization that has worked to strengthen New York City public schools for more than 30 years. Since 1989, New Visions has designed, created, and sustained great public schools for all New Yorkers, driven by the belief that all of New York City's students deserve public schools that make successful futures possible. It has empowered and equipped everyday visionaries—New York City's educators, students, and families—with the tools and support needed to achieve the future they imagine for themselves. Today, New Visions helps nearly 1,600 public schools plan for the success of nearly a million students citywide.

## DEDICATION

We dedicate this report to Julia Forman, Principal Dez-Ann Romain, and all the educators we lost too young and too early in 2020. They dedicated their energy, creativity, and intelligence to building a more equitable, more supportive public school system for all students, but particularly students who have too often been excluded from educational opportunity. We honor their memory by building on their lives' work.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# ENDNOTES

- 1 School Design Teams are multi-stakeholder groups that drive T2C's strategy, decision-making, and implementation at the school level. Their members consist of transfer high school leaders, representatives of community-based organizations, representatives of workforce development organizations, and administrators from community colleges.
- 2 New York State Education Department, "Title I Program Overview," <http://www.nysed.gov/essa/title-i-program-overview>.
- 3 New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, "Train & Earn," <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/jobs-internships/train-and-earn.page>.
- 4 New York State Department of Labor, "WIOA Title I Youth Program Eligibility Guide" (September 27, 2019), <https://dol.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/03/wioa-youth-eligibility.pdf>.
- 5 See New York City Department of Education, "NYC Community Schools," <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/programs/community-schools>.

