

# Deepening Career-Connected Learning in Schools

Recommendations for Strengthening  
New York City Public Schools' Industry Commissions



*August 2024*

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Over the past ten years, industry commissions<sup>1</sup>—composed of industry leaders, skills-based postsecondary training providers, and school-based staff—have provided resources for career-connected learning programs in New York City’s public schools, particularly CTE (career and technical education) schools. However, there is an urgent need to enhance the effectiveness and reach of these commissions in order to help fulfill Chancellor David Banks’s “north star” of ensuring that all students graduate with a plan and on a path toward long-term economic security.

To this end, JobsFirstNYC partnered with the New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) Office of Student Pathways to seek input from key stakeholders<sup>2</sup> and develop a set of actionable recommendations for consideration by the Pathways Advisory Council and Chancellor Banks aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and reach of the industry commissions, thereby helping cultivate a highly skilled, globally competitive workforce in New York City.

## Methodology

The recommendations in this report were informed by a structured and inclusive process that engaged key stakeholders. The process involved exploratory research regarding past efforts of industry commissions; background research on best practices in career-connected learning; and meetings with NYCPS leadership and industry commissions, interviews with industry commission chairs, the formation of a provisional Steering Committee, and open-design sessions.

## Findings

The current state of the industry commissions reveals varying levels of development, engagement, and leadership clarity. To reach the “ideal” state, the commissions need proper staffing, more resources, and deeper engagement with educators and young adults. Clear expectations, responsibilities, and documented procedures are essential for effective functioning.

## Recommendations

This report outlines the following key recommendations for key stakeholders aimed at helping NYCPS strengthen its partnerships with industry leaders, ensure high-quality career-connected learning experiences for students, and prepare students for professional success:

### New York City school system:

1. **Build accelerated college and career pathways.** Using the industry commissions as a resource, share information and insights on industry standards, trends, and labor needs with New York City public school educators.

### Industry commissions:

2. **Develop future talent.** Increase engagement in student-facing career exploration and readiness support.
3. **Be visible champions of NYCPS students and schools.** Advocate for policy and funding changes at the local, state, and federal levels to make career-connected learning more accessible.

### NYCPS leadership:

4. **Provide educator upskilling and professional development.** Engage educators in industry-based opportunities to learn new skills and practices
5. **Strengthen the structure and capacity of the industry commissions.** Enhance governance by clarifying roles, responsibilities, and expectations for industry commission members, and formalize and strengthen commission governance structures for knowledge continuity.
6. **Improve the industry commissions more broadly.** Clarify the vision and composition of the commissions. Invest in the infrastructure and capacity of the industry commissions (including staff support) and make available relevant student data to inform decision-making.

## Actionable Items for the Coming Year

The report also identifies several actionable steps that NYCPS leadership and industry commissions can take over the next six to twelve months in order to begin making these recommendations a reality.

### 1. Cross-commission collaboration:

- ▶ Shared quarterly meetings
- ▶ Standing cross-commission Steering Committee



- ▶ Further definition of career and job readiness
- ▶ Improved communication efforts
- ▶ Annual commissions convening

## **2. Industry-specific engagements for career-oriented employer-led events in schools and at places of business:**

- ▶ Increased traction based on the work already being done
- ▶ More employer engagements

## **3. Adoption of commission charters to further formalize commissions' governance and structure:**

- ▶ Creation of a Governance Committee and a Recruitment Committee for the industry commissions as a whole
- ▶ Development of an industry commission prospectus
- ▶ Development of industry commission charters that include elements applicable to all commissions and elements specific to each industry
- ▶ Development and implementation of industry commission job descriptions
- ▶ Implementation of a vice chair role
- ▶ Creation of an onboarding process for new commission members
- ▶ Implementation of terms of service

## **4. Professional development for school-based staff:**

- ▶ Essential/durable skills training for educators
- ▶ Overview of entry-level jobs for educators
- ▶ Career readiness and development 101 for educators
- ▶ Effective employment and training-related referrals for educators
- ▶ Job development essentials for educators

## **5. Industry commission policy and advocacy annual convening:**

- ▶ Development of an annual advocacy agenda to promote the work of the industry commissions and the schools engaged with them

## **6. Inaugural "signature" industry commission annual event**

## **7. A youth-centered approach:**

- ▶ Creation of a Young Adult Career-Connected Learning Advisory Council
- ▶ Creation of a Young Adult Speakers Bureau
- ▶ Engagement and recruitment of alumni to serve as industry commission members and as ambassadors for students

## Conclusion

This report outlines actionable recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the NYCPS industry commissions. By implementing these recommendations, NYCPS can strengthen partnerships with industry leaders, ensure high-quality career-connected learning experiences, and prepare students for professional success. The continued collaboration between educators, industry leaders, and policymakers is essential to achieving these goals and supporting the economic mobility of NYCPS students.





# Introduction

## Background

Over the past ten years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has created a set of industry commissions composed of industry leaders, skills-based postsecondary training providers (including those connected with the City University of New York), and school-based staff. These commissions were developed under the direction of the New York City Pathways Advisory Council,<sup>3</sup> which provides overall guidance to NYCPS regarding career-connected learning.

The purpose of the industry commissions is to partner with the NYCPS Office of Student Pathways and school-based staff by providing support and resources for career-connected learning programs. To date, these commissions have served as a meeting place for industry to come together, discuss trends, and advise the school system overall, in addition to specifically supporting career and technical education (CTE) schools in their respective industries. The commissions aim to help align learning with labor market trends and facilitate connections among industry, education, labor, and community stakeholders in order to develop a highly skilled, globally competitive workforce in New York City.

### **There are currently seven<sup>4</sup> industry commissions:**

1. Automotive and Transportation
2. Business and Finance
3. Construction, Architecture, and Engineering
4. Culinary and Hospitality
5. Information Technology
6. Healthcare
7. Media and Design

### **Members of the industry commissions include:**

- ▶ Industry representatives and employers (including members of the Partnership for New York City)
- ▶ Representatives of the New York City Pathways Advisory Council
- ▶ NYCPS leadership
- ▶ School-based staff, including work-based learning coordinators and other staff focused on careers and postsecondary options
- ▶ Skills-based postsecondary education and skills training providers, including those connected with the City University of New York



## Project Rationale

Since the appointment of Chancellor David Banks in 2022, NYCPS's "north star" has been the achievement of both college and career readiness among all students graduating high school.

The NYCPS Office of Student Pathways is at the forefront of executing this vision, and its Student Pathways Initiative is the mechanism for achieving it. This initiative is predicated on direct connection to industry and career-connected learning opportunities that result not just in career preparation but in actual employment opportunities that put students on a path to economic security. Among other things, it seeks to expand students' access to internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities, as well as create new pathways for students to earn industry-recognized credentials while still in high school.

Through a number of discussions among Office of Student Pathways leadership, it was agreed that a key ingredient to making this happen would be to strengthen the industry commissions. Specifically, leadership identified an urgent need to clarify the function and infrastructure of the commissions, as well as to identify measures to optimize their effectiveness.

To this end, an information-gathering effort was conducted with the objective of crafting a set of actionable recommendations for consideration by the Pathways Advisory Council and the Chancellor of NYCPS aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and reach of the industry commissions, thereby strengthening their ability to prepare students for the workforce through career-connected learning.

The NYCPS Office of Student Pathways is at the forefront of executing this vision, and its Student Pathways Initiative is the mechanism for achieving it. This initiative is predicated on direct connection to industry and career-connected learning opportunities that result not just in career preparation but in actual employment opportunities that put students on a path to economic security.



## Methodology

This effort encompassed an intentional, thoughtful, and inclusive process involving the main stakeholders engaged with the work of the industry commissions. These stakeholders were essential for providing feedback and suggestions on how to strengthen, refocus, and refine the industry commissions themselves, as well as for offering input on systems-level considerations regarding career-connected learning in New York City's public schools in general.

In October 2023, NYCPS retained JobsFirstNYC, a New York City-based intermediary organization with the mission of creating and advancing solutions that break down barriers and transform the systems supporting young adults and their communities in the pursuit of economic opportunities. JobsFirstNYC has previous experience working within the NYCPS system, notably with efforts focusing on strategic employer engagement,<sup>5</sup> making the organization well-suited to assist with the overall project goal.

### **JobsFirstNYC was charged with the following tasks:**

1. Create a structure to solicit key stakeholder input and synthesize this input for whole-system learning.
2. Engage with the industry commissions to learn about their current state of operation and to gather their collective understanding of the work they currently do.
3. Partner with NYCPS leadership to create a mechanism for feedback and input that would inform the final recommendations.
4. Leverage the feedback provided to create a formal set of recommendations and a means to present the high-level findings to the Chancellor and others concerned with this work.



Between November 2023 and January 2024, all of the industry commissions held their regular quarterly meetings. Present at these meetings were commission members, inclusive of industry partners and employers, skills-based training providers, postsecondary educational institutions, school-based staff, and NYCPS leadership.

In December 2023 and January 2024, JobsFirstNYC interviewed all of the chairs and co-chairs of the industry commissions to establish a baseline of their role within the commissions, to gather input on the work accomplished to date, and to solicit recommendations on how to strengthen the commissions so that they can be as supportive as possible to NYCPS, notably educators and school leadership. The chairs also shared their perspectives on how to best prepare young adults for entry-level work in their respective industries.

The Pathways Advisory Council—a group of stakeholders that includes school leadership, chairs and other representatives of the commissions, and postsecondary skills training providers—also convened in December 2023, where it was agreed to form a temporary Steering Committee to formalize the information-gathering process and to develop the initial recommendations. The Steering Committee would be composed of representatives of the key stakeholder groups involved: industry leaders, NYCPS leadership, NYCPS educators, work-based learning providers, and postsecondary skills training and educational providers.

A key task for the Steering Committee would be to explore how the industry commissions can best support schools and teachers with respect to career-connected learning and overall industry awareness. Another key question to consider would be whether the commissions' primary function should be to (1) support schools and teachers or (2) advise NYCPS with respect to industry information and connections. While these are two concurrent goals, current governance guidelines suggest that the commissions' primary role is advisory in nature:

*“[The industry commissions’] overall goal and mission is to assist NYCPS in providing for all its students relevant and meaningful programs for acquiring high skills in both academic and workforce preparation.*

*The ultimate goal of the industry commissions is to bring the world of work and school communities together, by aligning learning and labor market trends. Commissions support collaboration between industry, education, labor and community stakeholders that is essential to the development of a highly skilled, globally competitive workforce.”<sup>6</sup>*



**The ultimate goal of the industry commissions is to bring the worlds of work and school communities together by aligning learning and labor market trends. Commissions support collaboration between industry, education, labor, and community stakeholders that is essential to the development of a highly skilled, globally competitive workforce.**

Drawing from the lists of attendees during the fall 2023 industry commission meetings, as well as a list of other critical stakeholders engaged in this work, the Advisory Council crafted a list of potential Steering Committee members and sent invitations asking these individuals to participate. Others were able to participate by responding to interest surveys shared by email and in meetings.

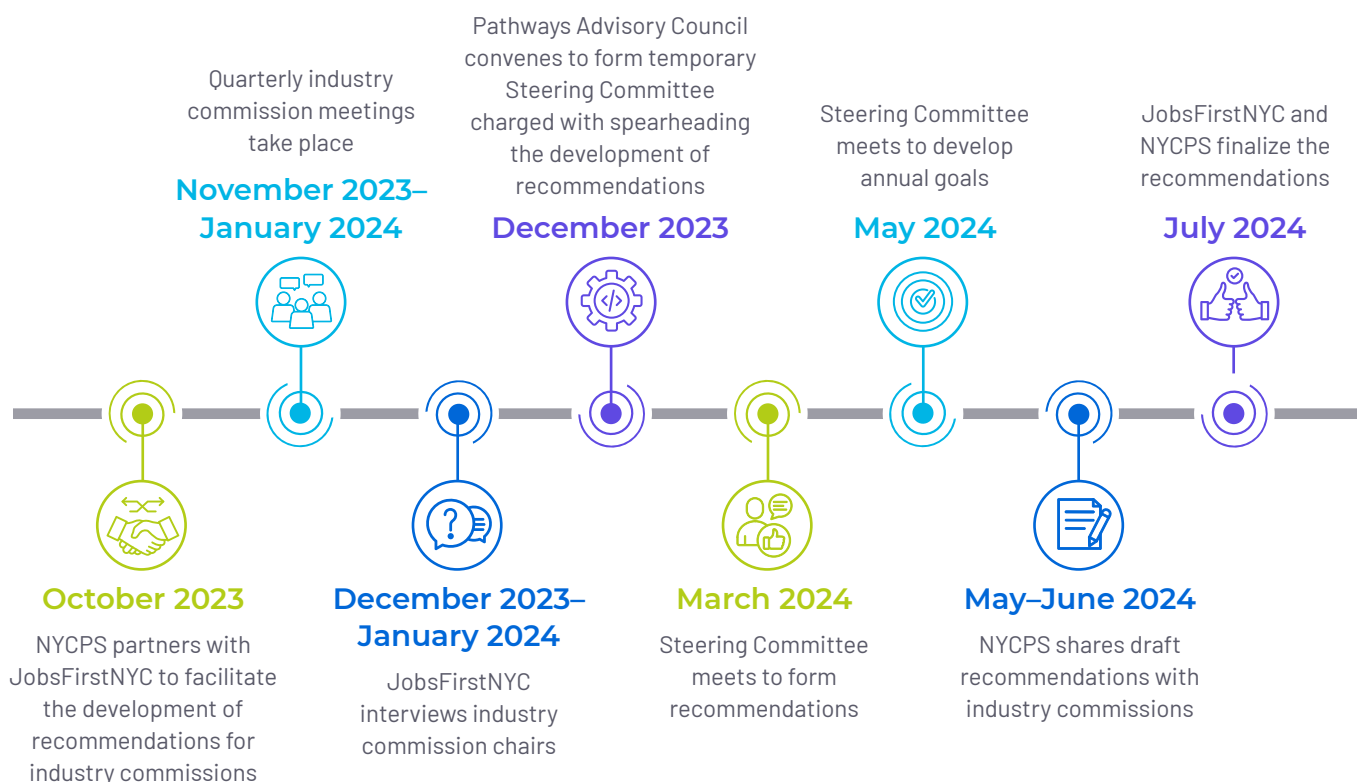
Then, in March 2024, the newly formed Steering Committee had its first meeting, which brought together 40 members. This meeting, which featured an open-design activity to generate feedback and engagement from members, resulted in a preliminary list of recommendations for the industry commissions and for the school system as a whole.

A second Steering Committee meeting was held in May 2024. The purpose of this meeting was to refine the preliminary list of recommendations, to rank the recommendations in order of importance, and to determine which recommendations could be achieved within the next year.

Following this meeting, the Steering Committee drafted an action plan with clear steps.

After the work of the temporary Steering Committee was complete, NYCPS leadership convened the industry commissions in May and June 2024, where it sought commission members' feedback on the draft recommendations.

Lastly, JobsFirstNYC worked with NYCPS leadership to incorporate this feedback and finalize the recommendations, which were then approved by the industry commissions in executive summary form. This report contains that final set of recommendations.







# Existing vs. Ideal State of the Industry Commissions

As the work of the commissions continues to unfold in the coming year, there are fundamental questions that should be given careful consideration regarding the current-versus-ideal state of these groups. Among them:

- ▶ What is the core purpose and function of the industry commissions?
- ▶ What is the sphere of influence of the industry commissions—in other words, what do they have the power to change?
- ▶ How can the industry commissions be best positioned to support the city’s public school system with respect to its new priorities around career-connected learning?
- ▶ What are some of the main barriers to progress, and how can the industry commissions overcome them?
- ▶ How do the industry commissions create impactful partnerships and shared efforts that can help them reach their goals?

## Current State

As a first step in answering these questions, this project conducted an assessment of the current operating state of the industry commissions. Information gathered from all of the relevant stakeholders—including NYCPS leadership, leadership from the Partnership for New York City, industry commission chairs, and the staff supporting the work of the industry commissions within NYCPS—revealed several characteristics of the current state of affairs:

- 1. There are two major goals of the industry commissions: Provide system-level advice and input and build strong connections with schools and young adults.** Striking the right balance between these two goals is important.
- 2. There is a lack of clarity on the scope and power of the commissions.** What are the commissions allowed to do or change within NYCPS?
- 3. Industry commissions are each in different stages of development.** Some have been operating longer than others, and some have invested more in their operating capacity.
- 4. Industry commissions have different levels of member engagement.** Some commissions have more active members than others. Most of the commissions have identified recruitment as a priority for future work.

5. **Several commissions have experienced notable membership attrition, and several have had leadership changes in the last two years.** This has been due to both anticipated and unanticipated changes.
6. **Industry commissions vary in terms of clarity regarding leadership roles.** This is due in part to the varied tenure of chairs, as well as the historically mixed capacity of NYCPS to provide direction on expectations for commission leadership.
7. **Industry commission chairs welcome guidance, support, and training on how to best serve their roles.** This was a consistently voiced request among chairs.
8. **Industry commissions' levels of engagement with students and schools vary.** In general, however, the commissions seek more robust and impactful engagement with students and schools.
9. **Adherence to current governance practices varies among the industry commissions.** This is due, in part, to varying levels of institutional memory regarding governance and structural processes.

## Ideal State

To identify and clarify the “ideal state” of the industry commissions’ work, a “bold ideas” open-design activity was conducted during the March 2024 Steering Committee meeting.<sup>7</sup> Several themes emerged in this regard:

1. **Adequate staffing and resources are critical for supporting the work of the industry commissions.**
2. **Every industry commission should be fully engaged with educators in every aspect of their work.**
3. **Young adults and their voices should be factored into all of the work that industry commissions do.**
4. **Common expectations and responsibilities of the industry commissions should be clearly defined, documented, and distributed across their membership bases.** The industry commissions should have a clear game plan for carrying out their work, in addition to further clarity and context for this work.

Common expectations and responsibilities of the industry commissions should be clearly defined, documented, and distributed across their membership bases. The industry commissions should have a clear game plan.

# Recommendations

Head start refers to building career learning and readiness—as well as postsecondary readiness—earlier into the learning continuum for students, ideally in middle school. Real skills focus on the durable, essential skills that all employers need of their entry-level workforce. A strong plan means that each student will graduate high school with a clear postsecondary plan for their career and for their education.

In order to ensure that the industry commissions are well prepared to support NYCPS's new vision under Chancellor Banks, as well as strategically situated to provide both advisory support and industry intelligence to schools (with the end goal being the career readiness and economic mobility of young adults), the Steering Committee developed the following high-priority recommendations.

As noted above, these recommendations reflect the input of NYCPS leadership and the wider membership of the industry commissions. They also strongly align with the final report of the New York State Education Department's Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures,<sup>8</sup> which was released in November 2023. In addition, they closely align with Chancellor Banks's emphasis on head start, real skills, and a strong plan. Head start refers to building career learning and readiness—as well as postsecondary readiness—earlier into the learning continuum for students, ideally in middle school. Real skills focus on the durable, essential skills that all employers need of their entry-level workforce. A strong plan means that each student will graduate high school with a clear postsecondary plan for their career and for their education.

## New York City School System

### 1 Build accelerated college and career pathways.

Using the industry commissions as a resource, share information and insights on industry standards, trends, and labor needs with New York City public school educators.

- ▶ Provide schools with feedback via focus groups on citywide industry-focused curriculum, credentials, and core competencies, as well as support during schools' curriculum and program review processes.
- ▶ Identify and substantiate degree or non-degree-bearing credentials of value.
- ▶ Provide input on technology, tools, equipment, applications, software, and systems used in instruction for relevance with industry.
- ▶ Help create a set of annual recommendations for how to better align classroom and off-site learning with industry needs.
- ▶ Identify and engage colleagues and experts from the industry commissions to present on industry trends to school educators and to advise on labor market needs and hiring criteria for entry-level roles to help schools decipher labor market intelligence for application in classrooms.

*This recommendation can be implemented in any given year, including the coming year.*



## Industry Commissions

### 2 Develop future talent.

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- ▶ Increase engagement in student-facing career exploration and readiness support.
- ▶ Organize career readiness events.
- ▶ Organize schoolwide or citywide competitions, annual career fairs with student-facing workshops, or stand-alone student-facing training.
- ▶ Organize work-based learning activities to help students acquire and practice durable skills.
- ▶ Facilitate in-school industry challenges and career exploration site visits.
- ▶ Develop internship or apprenticeship programs.

*This recommendation involves ongoing aspects that can be implemented within any given year, including the coming year.*

### 3 Be visible champions of NYCPS students and schools.

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- ▶ Gather insight from schools and industry on challenges they are facing (in terms of state or city policies, funding, advocacy needs, etc.) when it comes to career pathway education. Then, bring this information to the industry commissions so that their members can:
  - Advocate for policy and funding changes at the local, state, and federal levels to make career-connected learning more accessible.
  - Support advocacy to change systems and build conditions for postsecondary success plans.
  - Advocate for greater flexibility for schools to incorporate career-connected learning.
  - Recruit and develop industry commission membership.
  - Advocate for mechanisms to facilitate not just school-based employer relationships and partnerships, but system-based ones as well.

*This recommendation can be implemented within any given year, including the coming year. It requires staffing capacity to support the work of the industry commissions to source recommendations and action items with respect to potential advocacy efforts.*

## NYCPS Leadership

### 4 Provide educator upskilling and professional development.

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- ▶ Engage educators in industry-based opportunities to learn new skills and practices. These opportunities could include:
  - *Team trainings (webinars, conferences, workshops):* Host educators in sessions to learn about new tools, software, applications, processes, and policies; or participate in existing training sessions as panelists or speakers.

- *Company-sponsored events open to the public:* Invite educators to attend industry events, trainings, and other professional development opportunities.
- *Summer externships:* Offer short-term (one-day to one-week) workplace experiences related to educators' specific subject areas. These experiences should engage educators in hands-on activities, allow them to observe professionals, and offer insights into real-world practices. Participants would take pre- and post-professional development assessments and create lesson plans to share with other educators.

***This recommendation can be implemented within any given year, including the coming year.***

## 5

### **Strengthen the structure and capacity of the industry commissions.**

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- ▶ Enhance governance documents by clarifying roles, responsibilities, and expectations for industry commission members, and formalize and strengthen commission governance structures for knowledge continuity.
- ▶ Update commission memberships to prioritize institutional relationships over individual ones and to ensure ongoing relationship continuity, fostering commission consistency and strength over time.
- ▶ Create designed documents that industry commission members can use to recruit new talent to their commissions.
- ▶ Promote NYCPS alumni who are early career professionals to participate in the industry commissions.

***This recommendation can be implemented in any given year, including the coming year. It requires potential outside support from a governance expert.***

## 6

### **Improve the industry commissions more broadly.**

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- ▶ *Clarify and sharpen the vision and purpose of the work of the industry commissions in an intentional and publicly shared manner.* Define what the commissions can and cannot do—their sphere of influence and reach of responsibility.
- ▶ *Invest in the infrastructure and capacity of the industry commissions with intentional resources and strategy.* This includes formalizing and standardizing how the commissions are governed and how commission members and leaders are onboarded, oriented, and trained to do their work.
- ▶ *Provide specific training to commission chairs on how to lead and manage partnerships.* This includes both strategic aspects of partnership engagement and development, and the tactical aspects of carrying forward an impactful commission-led annual action agenda.
- ▶ *Provide adequate and consistent staffing (and other needed human capital resources) to ensure that the industry commissions—and notably the commission chairs—have the appropriate support needed to carry out their work.* Ensure that the staffing has expertise in work-based learning, industry partnerships, and demand-driven approaches to industry engagement.
- ▶ *Standardize, where possible, the structural work of the industry commissions.* While each industry commission has a unique perspective and set of responsibilities, there are several functions and procedures that should apply to all industry commissions.

- ▶ *Make available sufficient and relevant student-based data that the industry commissions can use to inform their approach to supporting schools and to create opportunities for new work.* Ideally, data would be provided to the industry commissions through an annual reporting process.
- ▶ *Based on the success of collaborative engagement with the industry commissions this year, create and build on opportunities for cross-commission collaborative efforts.* Industry partners want to be better engaged with other partners in other industries. They have also clearly voiced a preference for in-person opportunities to connect, given the nature of the work and the necessity for effective networking to drive the process.
- ▶ *Based on the learnings from this year's process, develop a mechanism to ensure that the industry commissions can share recommendations in a formal way on an annual basis.*
- ▶ *Create and resource a marketing structure for the industry commissions to raise the visibility of their work.* In addition to hosting events together throughout the year, develop an annual signature event that brings together the whole community—including young adults—to celebrate and to learn from the work of the prior year.
- ▶ *Create and implement an annual labor market survey that enables all industry commissions to understand what occupations are most in demand; what training, skills, and education are needed for those occupations; and what the career pathways are for specific occupations.* This report should incorporate data from all the industries and be shared as a means to foster learning and further collaboration.
- ▶ *Diversify and strengthen industry commissions by involving young adults (both students and alumni of NYCPS) directly in their work at every opportunity.* Ensure that young adults' voices, perspectives, and suggestions are fully a part of the industry commissions' work and that young adults are afforded the opportunity to influence the work, given that they are the first and primary stakeholder for it.<sup>9</sup>

**Many of the recommendations listed here are systemic and will require time, resources, and effort to accomplish. To this end, each recommendation could be partialized in order to address the most actionable aspects first. NYCPS leadership could also consider developing a three-year action plan that factors in progress on all these recommendations.**





# Short-Term Actionable Items

In order to turn the above recommendations into reality, NYCPS and the industry commissions can begin by taking the following concrete steps. The items below are practical and achievable in the short term.

## 1 Cross-commission collaboration

The stakeholders engaged in recent months repeatedly highlighted the value and power of shared efforts, as well as the need for industry commission members to collaborate and engage in activities—within and across commissions—that facilitate shared learning and valuable networking and partnership development opportunities.

One example of such collaboration could include career fairs that focus on cross-occupational career exploration and development (e.g., helping young adults understand the hiring needs commonly shared by entry-level administrative, finance, logistical, legal, marketing, and other occupations in most industries). Since the skill and experience requirements for these kinds of entry-level jobs are similar across industries, events like these have the potential to bring all of the industry commissions together to share their expectations for entry-level roles and to define the education, experience, and skills needed for labor market entry.

Another strong point of feedback from industry partners was the desire to be more deeply engaged with schools and more closely connected to young adults. Indeed, one of the gratifying and valuable aspects of industry commission membership is young adult engagement, as well as engagement with school-based staff focused on career-connected learning.

### ACTIONABLE ITEMS THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED INCLUDE:

- ▶ **Shared quarterly meetings:** Institute a shared quarterly meeting structure so that all or part of the industry commissions have the opportunity to discuss shared agendas and action.
- ▶ **Standing cross-commission Steering Committee:** Transform the provisional Steering Committee into a permanent cross-commission Steering Committee tasked with overseeing shared efforts among the industry commissions, setting goals on collaborative work, benchmarking and tracking progress, and lifting up accomplishments for all of the industry commissions' benefit.
- ▶ **Further definition of career and job readiness:** Develop a working definition for career readiness that is employer informed, and define all elements of essential skills training that are required for entry-level positions across industries.
- ▶ **Improved communication efforts:** Institute an industry commission newsletter or bulletin that showcases the work of the industry commissions, especially in the context of school-based and student-based efforts.
- ▶ **Annual commissions convening:** Organize an annual event that brings all industry commissions together to review the year's accomplishments and confirm plans for the coming year.

### 2 Industry-specific engagements for career-oriented employer-led events in schools and at places of business

Another strong point of feedback from industry partners was the desire to be more deeply engaged with schools and more closely connected to young adults. Indeed, one of the gratifying and valuable aspects of industry commission membership is young adult engagement, as well as engagement with school-based staff focused on career-connected learning. Many industry partners also cited the value of availing their companies to young adults for career exploration opportunities and helping them learn more about employers and their hiring expectations.

Young adults engaged at places of business is both a powerful learning opportunity for young adults and a great way for employers to diversify their talent pool strategies by factoring for younger entry-level workers. With this in mind, it is recommended that the industry commissions be guided by a school-based activity action plan (updated annually or at a cadence that makes sense and can be supported) so that industry commission members have clearly identified ways in which to more deeply engage with students and school-based staff.

#### ACTIONABLE ITEMS THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED INCLUDE:

- ▶ **Increased traction based on the work already being done:** Build on existing young adult engagement efforts already underway, specifically with the Healthcare and Automotive and Transportation industry commissions, where significant youth engagement has occurred through active, collaborative efforts.
- ▶ **More employer engagements:** Host career exploration fairs and other employer engagement events in schools and within the companies represented by the industry commissions. There is already an established record of accomplishment in hosting such events that can be readily built upon. In the coming year, each of the commissions could host such an event.



### 3 Adoption of commission charters to further formalize commissions' governance and structure

Efforts to further formalize the governance of the industry commissions will have a clear and positive impact on how the industry commissions function, the impact they have, and their ability to attract new talented membership. Basic governance necessities such as member job descriptions, industry commission charters, bylaws, and leadership structures can all be developed and refined with minimal budget impact. The further the commissions' governance is strengthened, the clearer the responsibilities of the chairs will become, which in turn will facilitate even more effective management over time.

#### ACTIONABLE ITEMS THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED INCLUDE:

- ▶ **Creation of a Governance Committee and a Recruitment Committee for the industry commissions as a whole:** The Governance Committee will ensure standardization and consistency with respect to the implementation of all bylaws and procedures approved by the industry commissions. To ensure inclusivity, it should have representation from all of the industry commissions. The Recruitment Committee will have the primary responsibility of setting recruitment targets and supporting all of the industry commissions in ensuring a consistent and available talent pipeline for commission membership.
- ▶ **Development of an industry commission prospectus:** As a means to support the work of the Recruitment Committee, a master prospectus should be created that details the role, purpose, function, and composition of the industry commissions; the expected responsibilities of members; and any recruitment needs that the commissions may have. One prospectus can be created for all commissions but can be customized to include specifics by industry as needed.
- ▶ **Development of industry commission charters that include elements applicable to all commissions and elements specific to each industry:** These charters would be overarching governance documents that define the mission, vision, function, and purpose of the commissions, in addition to providing a high-level statement of the commissions' goals and intentions in any given year. The charters would be updated annually in order to reaffirm the industry commissions' work for the year.
- ▶ **Development and implementation of industry commission job descriptions:** Industry commission members should have a job description available to them in order to provide guidance on their service and to clarify expectations. The job description should also serve as a commitment form for members to complete and update on an annual basis. A standardized job description and clear expectations will strengthen the functioning of the industry commissions overall and can be a powerful mechanism to galvanize commission members in service of the work.

Moreover, the leadership of the commissions should have formal job descriptions and receive an annual training regarding their responsibilities. This will ensure consistency in leadership and assist with the recruitment of new chairs and succession planning over time.

- ▶ **Implementation of a vice chair role:** As a means to ensure consistency in leadership and to create a talent pipeline for chair roles, a vice chair position could be implemented. This role would also provide the necessary leadership in the absence of the chairs when appropriate.



- ▶ **Creation of an onboarding process for new commission members:** Providing a formal process for training new members and onboarding them effectively will serve to strengthen the commissions, reduce attrition, and ensure consistency regarding roles and expectations. The onboarding process should be led by the Governance Committee, which will be responsible for preserving the institutional memory of the commissions' work over time.
- ▶ **Implementation of terms of service:** As a means to ensure a new pipeline of talent and to roll off disengaged or inactive members, terms of service should be created and elections implemented on a regular basis throughout the year (or at least once per year). Instituting time-bound terms will make recruitment easier for the commissions and will ensure that the commissions remain current and relevant with new talent.

### 4 Professional development for school-based staff

Professional development for teachers and other school-based staff focused on career-connected learning was identified as a top priority by educators and employers alike. Most school-based staff crave industry insights, intelligence, and access to employers who can provide key feedback on career-connected learning and work-based learning curricula and pedagogy.

Professional development for teachers and other school-based staff focused on career-connected learning was identified as a top priority by educators and employers alike. Most school-based staff crave industry insights, intelligence, and access to employers who can provide key feedback on career-connected learning and work-based learning curricula and pedagogy.

While educators cannot readily play the dual role of employment counselor and job developer on top of their teaching duties, there are many ways that educators can learn more about the workforce development system and strategic approaches to developing students' work readiness. And although professional development has actual financial costs for schools and opportunity costs for educators, availing school-based staff of such support has strong dividends.

Work can be done this year to pilot professional development programs—focused specifically on career-connected learning and workforce development tools—to both test the value and justify further costs of training should the professional development prove effective in supporting school-based staff in their work. Building new training takes time and resources; the options below are examples of what could be implemented now, keeping in mind that a more complete list of training topics may take years to implement.

## ACTIONABLE ITEMS THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED INCLUDE:

- ▶ **Essential/durable skills training for educators:** Create and implement an “essential/durable skills” training that is done in partnership with schools and employer partners in all of the represented industries. This training will help educators understand and be able to develop curricula and learning opportunities for the basic skills that all employers need (and expect) from entry-level workers. Essential skills include many elements, but important among these for young adults are:
  - Using critical thinking and situational judgment in the workplace
  - Working effectively on a team and participating in team-based projects in a workplace context
  - Effectively relating to and managing authority figures and hierarchy in the workplace
  - Effective communication skills (with respect to both speaking and writing) in the workplace
  - General workplace etiquette practices and expectations
  - Effective time-management practices and strategies
- ▶ **Overview of entry-level jobs for educators:** Create and implement a training providing an overview of entry-level job requirements in each of the industries represented by the commissions. Issue a field paper that documents those same expectations for shared learning and for the benefit of young adults and educators alike.
- ▶ **Career readiness and development 101 for educators:** Create and implement a “Career Readiness and Development 101” introductory course for educators that outlines the career development process and provides a clear and consistent definition of career readiness.
- ▶ **Effective employment and training-related referrals for educators:** Create and implement training on providing effective employment and training-related referrals for young adults. Since educators are often not in a position to provide the services needed, they should be knowledgeable and adept at getting young adults to the right services to support their job search and career readiness efforts.
- ▶ **Job development essentials for educators:** Create and implement a “Job Development Essentials” introductory course for educators. While no educator is expected to be a job developer, educators should understand the job development process from both the practitioner and the young adult perspective. Demand-driven strategies to support employer hiring needs is a necessary aspect of this work.



### 5 Industry commission policy and advocacy annual convening

Developing an annual advocacy agenda to promote the work of the industry commissions and the schools engaged with them is a powerful means to lift up the voices of commission members. Throughout this project, industry commissions frequently asked for a better understanding of what the school system is advocating for in terms of resources, policies, and structures to improve student outcomes overall, and student postsecondary success in particular. Bringing together industry commission members with others within the public school system may be a powerful way to galvanize the industry commissions and foster closer collaboration between schools and industry commissions.

- ▶ In the next year, the industry commissions can work closely with NYCPS leadership to determine the most pressing issues to address through advocacy efforts, develop an agenda or platform based on input from NYCPS, and bring state- and city-level leadership together in a single convening that highlights policy priorities, lifts up best practices, and provides a mechanism to amplify the needs and concerns of the public school system with respect to the implementation of career-connected learning.

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### 6 Inaugural “signature” industry commission annual event

Perhaps one of the most powerful ways to showcase the work of the industry commissions and the school-based staff focused on career-connected learning is to convene the industry commissions and relevant stakeholders in an annual event that brings employers, training providers, educators, and young adults together in the same setting for shared learning, to present and promote work supported by the industry commissions, and to enable the networking and cross-collaboration that are so valuable to driving this kind of systems-change work. Of course, this event can also serve as a means to convene and lift up the voices of young adults currently in schools, as well as recent school alumni. Any opportunity to connect young adults to employers is likely a highly worthy investment of time and resources. Such an event can become the cornerstone of the industry commissions’ marketing and communications efforts.

- ▶ This event could be developed in conjunction with or as part of the policy and advocacy convening described above, or it could be its own stand-alone effort.



## 7 A youth-centered approach

Perhaps the most important actionable item is to further formalize and build on mechanisms to ensure the ongoing engagement, involvement, and guidance of young adults in all aspects of the work of the industry commissions, given that young adults are the primary stakeholder impacted by commissions' work. This can be done incrementally, and engagement can begin right away.

### ACTIONABLE ITEMS THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED INCLUDE:

- ▶ **Implementing a Young Adult Career-Connected Learning Advisory Council:** The industry commissions can create a Young Adult Career-Connected Learning Advisory Council made up of students (both current and former) from CTE schools and Future Ready schools, and eventually expand to include all schools. This council would provide input and guidance on the work of the commissions and would also bring a critical ground-up perspective regarding the challenges and opportunities faced by young adults in the career planning and development process.
- ▶ **Implementing a Young Adult Speakers Bureau:** The most powerful way to promote the work of the commissions is to have young adult representatives who can present at schools, at commission meetings, with school administrative staff and leadership, and in other settings and contexts. Young adults communicating directly with young adults regarding the value of the commissions' work and the importance of the career development process, as well as young adults speaking directly to those in the likeliest position to influence their career exploration and development experience in schools, is an impactful way to advance the work of the commissions.
- ▶ **Engaging and recruiting alumni to serve as industry commission members and as ambassadors for students:** Incorporating alumni as members of the commissions, as well as having alumni return to the schools they graduated from in order to share their insights with current students, is another approach to consider.



# Conclusion

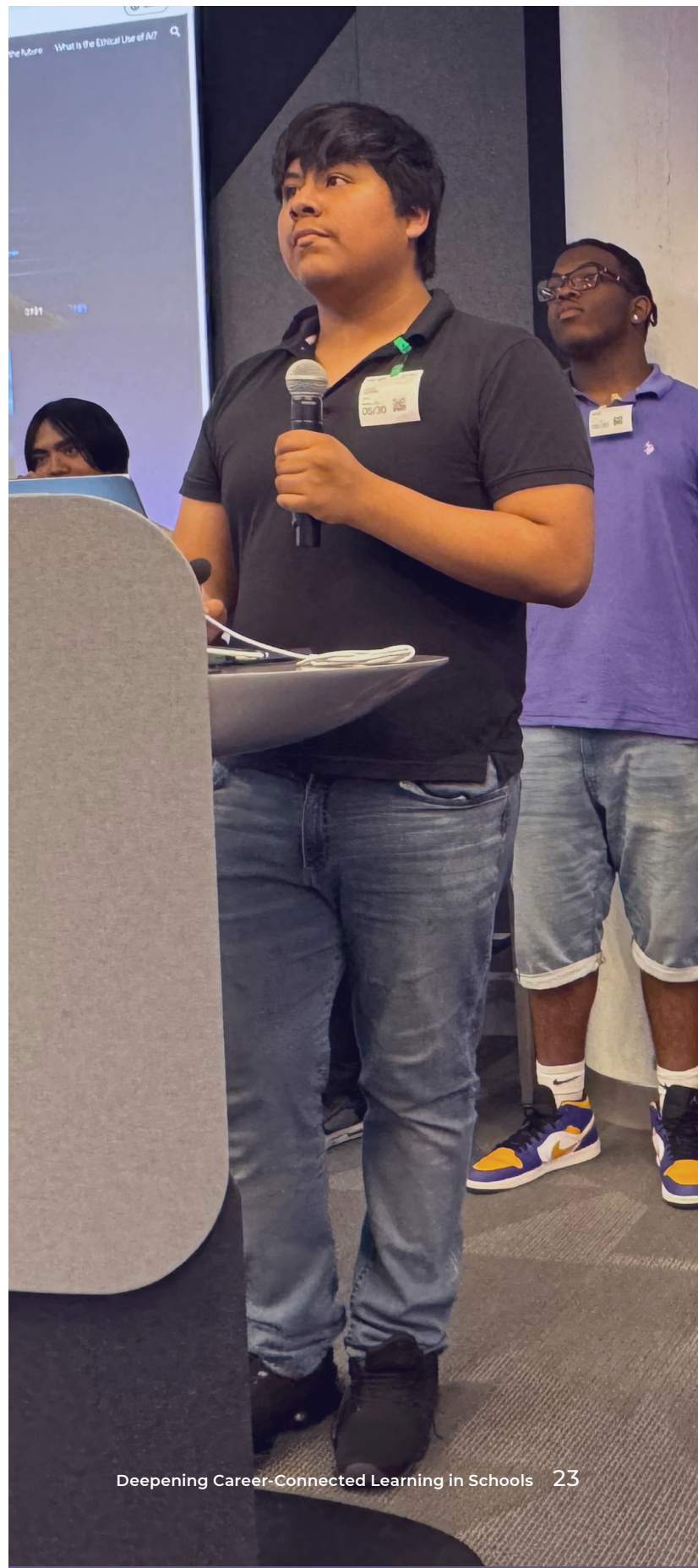
## **THE NYCPS INDUSTRY COMMISSIONS HAVE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN ALIGNING EDUCATION WITH INDUSTRY NEEDS OVER THE PAST DECADE.**

This alignment has helped prepare students for the workforce by providing career-connected learning opportunities. The recommendations in this report aim to enhance the effectiveness and reach of these commissions, ensuring their continued impact.

The proposed recommendations focus on integrating industry insights into curricula, developing relevant credentials, and facilitating work-based learning experiences. Additionally, professional development for educators and advocacy for policy and funding changes are crucial.

The collaboration between NYCPS leadership, industry representatives, and educational stakeholders has established a solid foundation. Implementing these recommendations will require ongoing engagement with industry partners, refining governance structures, and maintaining a focus on student outcomes.

In conclusion, the NYCPS industry commissions are essential for preparing students for the workforce and supporting the city's economic needs. By strengthening the connection between education and industry, we can ensure that students graduate with the skills and knowledge necessary for success. The recommendations in this report provide a clear path forward to achieve these objectives.







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# Endnotes

- 1 The seven commissions are Automotive and Transportation; Business and Finance; Construction, Architecture, and Engineering; Culinary and Hospitality; Information Technology; Healthcare; and Media and Design. An eighth commission, for Education and the Social Sectors, is currently under development.
- 2 The stakeholders engaged in this work include Pathways Advisory Council members, NYCPS leadership, school-based staff, industry partners, and postsecondary training providers.
- 3 The Pathways Advisory Council is charged with advising New York City’s public schools on the development, administration, and evaluation of policies and programs relating to career and technical education and, more broadly, career-connected learning. It is dedicated to creating meaningful links between public schools and industry and postsecondary institutions in an effort to bridge the worlds of school and career. Members of the Advisory Council—who participate on behalf of their organizations—engage with the NYCPS Office of Student Pathways to ensure that students are accessing relevant and industry-aligned programs that prepare them with high-level academic and workforce readiness skills.
- 4 Planning is underway for an eighth industry commission that will focus on Education and the Social Sectors.
- 5 See JobsFirstNYC, *Building and Strengthening Employer Partnerships for Work-Based Learning* (April 2023); JobsFirstNYC, “Advising for Career Pathways: An Innovative Approach to Postsecondary Education and Career Planning” (December 13, 2021), <https://jobsfirstnyc.org/latest/advising-for-career-pathways/>; JobsFirstNYC, “Transfer 2 Career Collaborative,” <https://jobsfirstnyc.org/solutions/transfer-2-career-collaborative/>.
- 6 “Historical NYCPS Industry Commission Objectives” (on file with the authors).
- 7 The output data are available at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zIEgQP0yetgTEbPhayRJR83kewOajKIdBUDusKnMSY8/edit>.
- 8 New York State Education Department, *Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures* (November 2023), <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/grad-measures/nys-blue-ribbon-commission-graduation-measures-report.pdf>.
- 9 While young adults were not directly involved in the majority of the work leading up to these recommendations, they did participate as observers and presenters during industry commission meetings, where they lent their valuable voices. JobsFirstNYC also independently conducted a young adult survey to gather input on the Chancellor’s call for “head start, real skills, and strong plan.” The survey results are available from JobsFirstNYC upon request.



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