

# **Developing Flexible Pathway Profiles at the Local Level**

## **Facilitation Guide**

**September 16, 2019**



## **Facilitation Guide: Developing Flexible Pathway Profiles at the Local Level**

Over the course of several months during the 2018-2019 academic year, the Agency of Education (AOE) and our partners at the Northeast Comprehensive Center (NCC) engaged in initial field testing through a series of workshops, trainings, presentations and site visits to:

1. Introduce field educators to a developing set of tools<sup>1</sup> to support SUs/SDs in the implementation of flexible pathways;
2. Elicit feedback and refine the tools based on that feedback; and
3. Develop a guide based on facilitation of school teams as they used the draft tools.

What follows is a facilitation guide informed by frequently asked questions, suggestions from the field, and successful strategies that were used to complete the field testing.

### **Background:**

From 2016 – 2019, AOE staff from the Student Pathways division engaged in listening tours, participated on Integrated Field Reviews (IFRs), facilitated collaboratives and showcases of learning, and collected the questions and observations of students, educators, parents and community members, legislators and business owners, and other Vermont stakeholders to better understand challenges to implementation of personalized learning and flexible pathways in Vermont. We called what we learned *case studies in inequities* – common barriers that contributed to a lack of parity between student groups in access, opportunity and equity of educational experience, specifically regarding flexible pathways to graduation. These common barriers are diverse; some are the result of legislation and policy coming into conflict, some the result of geographic and resource challenges, and some the result of implementation failures. In 2018, the Agency began in earnest to collate what we learned to develop supports for the field. As a local control state, our challenge was to develop technical assistance sensitive to the unique needs and context of a local school community that also encouraged consistency in implementation and educational equity across the state. A set of resources that we refer to as the Flexible Pathways Implementation Kit is the result of our efforts. What follows, are recommendations for using the [\*Flexible Pathways Profile: A Tool to Evaluate Flexible Pathways at the Local Level\*](#). This tool will be referred to as the Pathways Profile tool throughout the facilitation guide.

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<sup>1</sup> *VT Flexible Pathways Profile: A Tool to Evaluate Flexible Pathways at the Local Level* and the *VT Flexible Pathways Tool: Considerations for Student Participation in a Flexible Pathway*

## **Purpose of the Pathways Profile Tool:**

The purpose of the Pathways Profile tool is to assist schools and LEAs in developing, improving upon, and communicating Flexible Pathway opportunities that are effective, equitable, compliant, and safe. It is not intended to be a checklist, but rather a robust tool for teams to evaluate how they implement procedures, practices, and processes for flexible pathways consistent with [Vermont's Education Quality Standards](#), and foster transparency with students, staff, families and the community.

## **Using the Pathways Profile tool:**

The Pathways Profile is intended to be a tool for school and district representatives to make an informed decision about whether a particular learning opportunity is effective, equitable, compliant, and safe at a level that qualifies it as a Flexible Pathway accessible to all students at their school. Before offering a flexible pathway opportunity to students, the school and district leaders should initially review each opportunity using this tool.

## **What are flexible pathways?**

The [Flexible Pathways to Secondary School Completion Initiative](#), passed by the Legislature in 2013, described opportunities school districts could provide to engage and support students to complete secondary school.

[Flexible Pathway Opportunities](#) may include:

- [Blended/Virtual Learning](#)
- [Career Technical Education](#)
- [Dual Enrollment](#)
- [Early College](#)
- [Expanded Learning Opportunities](#)
  - [After-school and Summer Programs](#)
- [High School Completion Program](#)
- [Work-Based Learning](#)

## **Convening a Team:**

When using the Pathways Profile tool to develop a local profile for each Flexible Pathway opportunity offered at your school it is recommended that you convene a team of diverse educational stakeholders.

While team composition may change from school to school or based on the flexible pathway you are reviewing, it is important to have on any team individuals who meet these overarching criteria:

- A decision-maker,
- Personnel familiar with the specific flexible pathway under consideration,
- Personnel involved in PLP/scheduling/etc.,
- Personnel involved in assessing for/awarding of “credit,”
- Students who have participated/engaged in the flexible pathway.

Administrators, educators, special educators, students, instructional coaches, flexible pathway or PLP coordinators, community-based learning teachers, school counselors, work-based learning coordinators, parents/guardians and other adults involved in Flexible Pathways can and should be involved in the discussion.

[NOTE: In addition to reviewing flexible pathways opportunities, students should be involved in determining whether a particular flexible pathway is appropriate for them using the [Student Participation Tool](#) and [Student Participation Facilitation Guide](#).

Strategies to Consider:

Many teams may wonder when or how they’ll find the time to create profiles of pathways. We suggest that schools/leaders consider leveraging existing teams, schedules, and structures to engage in the evaluation and development of profiles of flexible pathways. For example, consider

- whether EST Leadership teams may evaluate flexible pathways as a core component of a school’s MTSS;
- leveraging PLCs as an opportunity for staff teams to engage in targeted work;
- utilizing in-service days for whole staff engagement in evaluating and improving upon how students prepare for, engage in, and are evaluated for learning that takes place outside of the school/classroom.

### **When This Tool Should be Used:**

Teams should develop Flexible Pathways Profiles for any existing flexible pathways that are offered at their schools. When teams are first beginning this process, they should not worry about timing (start of school year, etc.) – just get started! However, whenever a new opportunity is developed, or when reviewing existing flexible pathways opportunities, school teams should evaluate and update their profiles on an annual basis. When this occurs depends on the capacity and the planning cycle for each school.

Strategies to Consider:

Once schools have developed their pathway profiles, we recommend revisiting profiles at a time during the current academic year to allow for inclusion in Programs of Study,

the website, and in any other publications where schools make their learning opportunities visible for the next academic year.

Additionally, any time a school makes a modification to a flexible pathway, develops a new flexible pathway to graduation, or identifies a barrier to equitable participation in an existing flexible pathway, a team should be convened to update/document for the future.

## **Walking a Team Through the Tool:**

Prior to engaging with the tool, we recommend the team has the following materials on hand: any documented procedures or policies for already approved flexible pathway opportunities and/or off campus learning experiences; Local Graduation Requirements (PBGRs); the School Handbook, the School's Program of Studies; and the Student Participation tool.

Once a team has been convened, the following are a set of recommended steps as you walk through the tool:

1. Identify a team member who can act as facilitator and who can convene the group when updates to the profile are needed. You may also want to consider identifying a time keeper and recorder/note-taker depending on the size of your team. Whatever the team structure, it will be important to capture the information as you develop the pathway profile.
2. As a Team, read through each question in the *Consideration* column. Depending on the size of your team, you may want to assign different *Consideration* sections to different groups to work through (e.g., if it was a school-wide exercise - consider assigning different sections to different groups, then rotate or report out for feedback). [*Resource to Consider:* [SRI Tuning Protocol](#)]
3. Collect the appropriate information within your school to answer each question. Consider sending the tool template to team members in advance to allow them to review and gather supporting documents, and consult with appropriate school/district personnel who may have needed expertise.
4. Add the information to the Evidence column and/or provide a brief explanation to answer the question in the Evidence column.

*What is 'Yes'?*

If the evidence provided answers the question in the affirmative, answer 'Yes' in the *YES, or Action Steps to get to Yes* column. When saying 'Yes,' Teams should, as much as possible, consider linking/attaching existing school/district documentation related to the question.

*What if we can't say 'Yes'?*

If the answer to a question is 'no' or 'not yet' it does not necessarily mean that the opportunity cannot be offered. Instead, use the questions to prompt your thinking about action steps that are necessary to get to yes, including additional information, resources, or improved processes and policies.

Of special note, questions related to equity concerns can help surface systemic opportunity gaps that need to be addressed. For example, question 1e, *What orientation and/or preparation structures are in place to initiate learners to the experience*, provides an opportunity to consider additional orientation protocols and procedures to provide opportunities for additional flexible pathways.

When identifying action steps, it will be important to identify what additional information may be needed, who is responsible for tracking down information, and when the team will revisit the tool.

## **Resources:**

### **Pathway Profile Examples:**

The Northeast Comprehensive Center and the AOE have gathered feedback from a number of stakeholder groups including school teams. As a result, the AOE will be rolling out the following Flexible Pathway Profile and Student Participation Tool examples as part of the Flexible Pathways Implementation Kit. These additional resources will be released through the AOE Weekly Field Memo and located on the AOE website.

- Dual Enrollment Profile
- Early College Profile
- Early College Student Participation tool
- Work-Based Learning Profile

### **Links to Resources:**

The following resources are referenced throughout the Flexible Pathways Implementation Kit. These resources are categorized according to the tool they are referenced in.

#### **Pathways Profile Tool links:**

[16 V.S.A. § 255](#) Title 16, Chapter 5, Subchapter 4, § 255. Public and independent school employees; contractors

[Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) and Accessibility](#)

[AOE Case Study Learning Project](#)

[AOE Special Education Resources](#)

[ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies](#)  
[Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#)  
[Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(VOSHA\)](#)  
[Vermont School Boards Association \(VSBA\)](#)  
[VSBA Model Policy Manual](#)  
[VSBA Required Policy: Volunteers and Work Study Students](#)  
[Vermont Student Data Privacy Alliance](#)

**Student Participation Tool links:**

[After-school and Summer Programs](#)  
[Blended/Virtual Learning](#)  
[Career Technical Education](#)  
[Dual Enrollment](#)  
[Early College](#)  
[Expanded Learning Opportunities](#)  
[High School Completion Program](#)  
[Personalized Learning Planning Process](#)  
[Work-Based Learning](#)

**DE Profile Tool Exemplar:**

[Agency of Education Dual Enrollment webpage](#)  
[AOE Dual Enrollment Program Manual](#)  
[Vermont State Colleges System, ADA/Section 504 Coordinators](#)  
[Vermont State Colleges Policies and Procedures](#)  
[Vermont State Colleges Policy 504: Campus Safety Policy](#)  
[Vermont State Colleges Policy 208: Criminal Background Checks](#)

**EC Profile Exemplar:**

[AOE Early College Program webpage](#)  
[Early College Program Manual](#)  
[Intro to College and Careers course](#)  
[Vermont State Colleges Policy 208: Criminal Background Checks](#)  
[Vermont Student Assistance Corp \(VSAC\)](#)

**EC Student Tool Exemplar:**

[Castleton University Early College Program Form](#)  
[Community College of Vermont \(CCV\) Early College Form](#)  
[Northern Vermont University Early College Assurance Form](#)  
[Vermont Agency of Transportation](#)  
[VSAC Planning for College](#)

**WBL Profile Exemplar:**

[ADA Policies for and Procedures for Small Business](#)

[AOE Work-Based Learning webpage](#)

[Child Labor Poster, VDOL](#)

[Information and Technical Assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)

[Vermont's Work-Based Learning Manual](#)

[Wages and the Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#)

**AOE webpages:**

[Blended/Virtual Learning](#)

[Career Technical Education](#)

[Dual Enrollment](#)

[Early College](#)

[Expanded Learning Opportunities](#)

[High School Completion Program](#)

[Personalized Learning](#)

[Work-Based Learning](#)

**AOE Contact Information:**

At this point, AOE is not collecting the Flexible Pathway Profiles or Student Participation tools nor are they asking schools to submit them. AOE expects that schools will use the questions in the guides to ensure appropriate, equitable placement, understands that the local context will vary from school to school and hopes that schools will publish their Flexible Pathways Profiles.

Use this facilitation guide with the Pathway Profile tool to ensure that all locally-offered flexible pathways are effective, equitable, compliant, and safe. This can be used to evaluate a new flexible pathway opportunity and can be part of an ongoing cycle of continuous improvement of existing flexible pathway opportunities. The AOE may discuss elements of a school's flexible pathway opportunities as part of the [Education Quality Assurance](#) Process.

Questions about the Facilitation Guides and Flexible Pathway Tools should be directed to [Veronica Newton](#), Program Manager, Personalized Learning Team or [Jess DeCarolis](#), Division Director, Student Pathways.



## Thank You:

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