

Collective Impact That Advances Postsecondary Degree Attainment in Florida

EXAMINING THE FLORIDA COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK
AND LOCAL COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORKS



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ABOUT HELIOS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Helios Education Foundation is dedicated to creating opportunities for individuals in Arizona and Florida to achieve a postsecondary education. Our work is driven by our four fundamental beliefs in Community, Equity, Investment, and Partnership, and we invest in initiatives across the full education continuum.

Through our Florida Regional Student Success Initiative, Helios is helping undeserved, minority, and first-generation students from the state's large population centers in Miami, Orlando, and Tampa achieve a postsecondary education.

In Arizona, where Latino students comprise the largest percentage of the K-12 public school population, the Foundation is implementing its Arizona Latino Student Success initiative focused on preparing all students—especially students in high-poverty, underserved Latino communities—for success.

Dear Colleague,

Helios Education Foundation is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals in Arizona and Florida by creating opportunities for success in postsecondary education. We believe that education changes lives and strengthens communities. While local and statewide leaders in Florida recognize the necessity of ensuring workers possess the skills required to meet evolving employer demand, current postsecondary completion rates fall short.

To address workforce challenges and meet the state's overarching goal of 60% degree attainment by the year 2030, regional communities are leveraging the collective impact model, forming local college access networks, and implementing change. Supported by the Florida College Access Network, local college access networks bring together leaders from both the public and private sectors, as well as a variety of industries, to promote degree attainment aligned with regional workforce needs.

Helios Education Foundation is a proud partner of the Florida College Access Network and supporter of postsecondary degree attainment. Upon reviewing this brief to learn best practices implemented by local college access networks and considering the recommendations proposed, we hope more leaders will be inspired to form local college access networks and champion postsecondary education as a means to economic and social mobility.

Sincerely,



Vince Roig

Founding Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vince Roig".



Paul J. Luna

President & CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul J. Luna".

INTRODUCTION

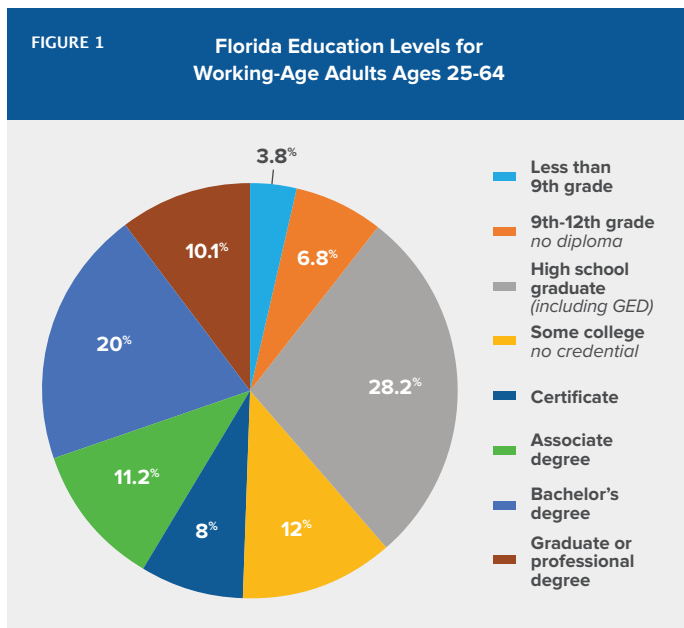
Helios Education Foundation is dedicated to student success. Helios supports initiatives that address the multitude of challenges students face across the birth to 20 educational continuum in both Arizona and Florida. Through our Latino Student Success Initiative in Arizona and our Florida Student Success Initiative in Florida, we support minority, first-generation, and underrepresented students in their pursuit of a postsecondary education.

The Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is a collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school so they can prosper in Florida's dynamic economy. From its evolution as ENLACE Florida to FCAN in 2012, Helios and FCAN have partnered together to improve college access and completion for all Floridians. Together, both organizations have sought strategies and policies to increase the postsecondary attainment rates in Florida.

The goal of this brief is to outline local and statewide efforts that engage community members toward degree completion aligned to projected workforce needs. It is our hope that legislators, leaders at institutions of higher education, community organizations, and other groups focused on workforce needs and postsecondary attainment use this brief to learn best practices that leverage collective impact to align community resources behind enhanced economic mobility and job growth.

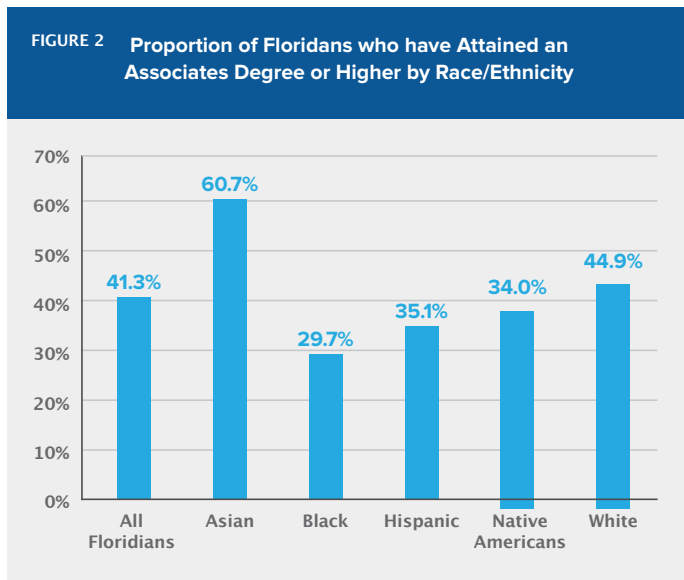
THE PROBLEM

As a whole, the economy in the United States is rapidly changing with a growing need for an increasingly skilled workforce. Both nationally and in Florida, the labor market projects roughly 65% of all jobs will require at least some form of postsecondary education by 2020 (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). However, current estimates of Florida's postsecondary attainment show that just 49.3% of Floridians hold either a workforce certificate, associate degree, bachelor's degree, graduate degree or higher (see Figure 1; Lumina Foundation, 2019). As a result, Florida is facing a skills gap.



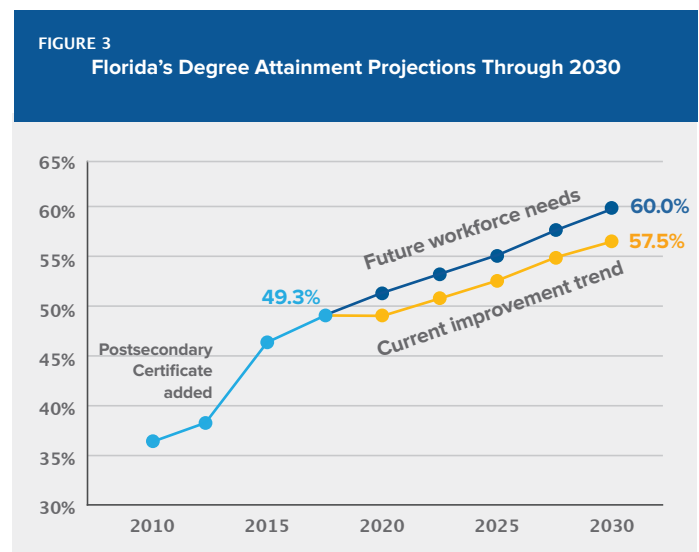
Lumina Foundation (2019). *A stronger nation: Learning beyond high school builds American talent*. Retrieved from <http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#page/downloads>

Of the 41.3% of Floridians who hold a 2-year degree or higher, disparities in attainment exist by race and ethnicity:



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–17 American Community Survey PUMS file; calculations by FCAN

One of the main reasons that Florida is facing a skills gap is the shifting nature of major industries in the state. While agriculture, tourism, and construction remain strong anchors, recent and projected growth in aerospace and aviation, health care and life sciences, manufacturing, logistics and distribution, and financial and professional services are increasing the level of education that Floridians will need to attain to compete for new jobs (Florida Chamber — Jobs 2030). For example, economists forecast 9% job growth by 2021 in health care and life sciences, which includes positions such as medical assistants, licensed nurses, and medical records technicians. Economists also project a 6% increase in financial and professional service positions, including insurance sales agents and paralegals. Nearly all new jobs will require at least some form of postsecondary education. And yet, at the current rate of attainment growth, Florida will not meet its future workforce needs.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year Estimates, 2010–2017; University of Florida, BEBR, Population Projections 2020–2045. All calculations including projections completed by FCAN.

Achievement of Florida's full economic potential will require state leaders, community leaders, and the business community to commit to increasing the state's postsecondary attainment rates. The Florida legislature established the Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC) in 2011 to help accomplish this task. As part of its charge, the HECC worked with education leaders, the business community, and the labor sector to set a preliminary postsecondary attainment goal of 55% for Floridians ages 25–64 by the year 2025.

For some stakeholders in Florida, the goal was not aspirational enough. Upon reviewing state-specific research and conducting education and workforce analysis, FCAN adopted a postsecondary attainment goal of 60% for Floridians ages 25–64 by the year 2025. Similarly, using its own research and job-growth projections, the Florida Chamber of Commerce adopted a goal of 60% by 2030.

By way of House Bill 7071, which was signed into law by Governor DeSantis in June 2019, the HECC evolved in name and scope. Now known as the Florida Talent Development Council, this business led and education supported organization is charged with oversight of Florida's new postsecondary attainment initiative, SAIL to 60, which calls for 60% of all Floridians ages 25–64 to have a high-quality degree, certificate, education or training beyond high school by the year 2030.

Figure 4 provides a quick snapshot of current postsecondary attainment rates by county.

FIGURE 4 Percentage of Florida's Young (25-34) and Working-Age Adults (25-64) with Associate's Degree or Higher (2017).

Country	25-34	25-64	Country	25-34	25-64
Alachua	59.8%	53.6%	Leon	59.8%	56.4%
Baker	23.0%	21.8%	Levy	16.7%	19.6%
Bay	33.4%	34.0%	Liberty	15.7%	16.3%
Bradford	19.5%	19.8%	Madison	27.6%	22.6%
Brevard	43.4%	43.2%	Manatee	32.5%	37.1%
Broward	44.6%	43.9%	Marion	25.0%	27.9%
Calhoun	21.9%	15.1%	Martin	37.4%	43.4%
Charlotte	27.8%	30.8%	Miami-Dade	43.7%	40.2%
Citrus	21.1%	26.0%	Monroe	40.4%	40.2%
Clay	34.5%	36.3%	Nassau	32.2%	35.0%
Collier	35.2%	38.8%	Okaloosa	42.0%	41.6%
Columbia	25.0%	27.7%	Okeechobee	19.8%	18.6%
DeSoto	12.0%	13.3%	Orange	48.7%	45.8%
Dixie	12.5%	14.3%	Osceola	31.0%	31.2%
Duval	42.2%	40.2%	Palm Beach	42.5%	44.4%
Escambia	43.3%	41.8%	Pasco	39.7%	37.4%
Flagler	34.6%	32.1%	Pinellas	42.8%	42.6%
Franklin	9.3%	22.4%	Polk	28.3%	29.3%
Gadsden	19.5%	22.8%	Putnam	20.5%	18.6%
Gilchrist	17.8%	25.3%	Santa Rosa	40.2%	42.1%
Glades	14.3%	17.3%	Sarasota	35.5%	40.8%
Gulf	18.4%	24.8%	Seminole	56.0%	55.0%
Hamilton	6.0%	14.9%	St. Johns	49.4%	54.1%
Hardee	10.2%	12.3%	St. Lucie	28.1%	30.7%
Hendry	10.8%	14.3%	Sumter	12.0%	31.6%
Hernando	25.7%	29.4%	Suwannee	14.3%	19.5%
Highlands	16.1%	25.7%	Taylor	15.1%	19.0%
Hillsborough	44.7%	43.8%	Union	11.5%	16.3%
Holmes	12.5%	17.2%	Volusia	33.0%	34.4%
Indian River	32.4%	36.9%	Wakulla	18.4%	26.0%
Jackson	16.6%	20.8%	Walton	27.1%	34.5%
Jefferson	18.6%	29.4%	Washington	13.9%	17.9%
Lafayette	21.4%	20.3%	Florida	42.2%	41.3%
Lake	36.0%	34.2%	U.S.	44.7%	42.4%
Lee	33.0%	35.5%			

Source: ACS 2017

Setting the state's postsecondary goal is an important first step. The real challenge for the state and its stakeholders will be to organize a set of strategies that can actually increase postsecondary attainment.

This raises a number of unique questions. What strategies have worked in other states? Does the same strategy work across all communities and regions? Who should take ownership or leadership of the work? What data are available? How do we measure our success? These are just a few of the questions that demonstrate the complexity around increasing postsecondary attainment.

One of the most successful strategies implemented in Florida and in other states has been the development of a statewide network focused on college and career readiness, access, and success along with supporting the development of local college access networks (LCANs) that coordinate and align efforts to boost education attainment in the communities they serve. In Florida, FCAN serves as the collaborative network for the state, providing state-specific research, analysis, and information; leading statewide initiatives; and supporting regional LCANs. Currently, Florida has 16 LCANs that represent roughly 80% of Florida's population.

Each LCAN is unique and has its own set of needs and goals that reflect their community. Because LCANs can represent counties or regions, their talent development needs are not homogeneous. For example, the postsecondary attainment goal of a metropolitan LCAN would likely be higher than a rural LCAN because of their differing starting point and local workforce needs. As a result, each LCAN, with support from FCAN, identifies its workforce needs, explores gaps and barriers to student success, implements its own set of strategies to address those gaps and barriers, leverages local strengths, and sets its own postsecondary attainment goal. The LCANs' purpose is to remove barriers to student success, especially for student groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education (such as lower-income students, students of color, first generation college students, and returning adults), thereby contributing to a thriving Florida economy.

This brief examines the development and expansion of LCANs in Florida and how FCAN supports them. Part I provides a more detailed understanding of an LCAN's purpose. For example, why are they needed? What do they do, and what do they hope to achieve? Part II digs deeper into the formation and development of LCANs. What prompts their formation? How are they formed, and how are they structured? How does the collective impact framework influence their development? Part III highlights how FCAN supports the LCANs. What is the role of FCAN? How does it provide technical assistance? And, how do LCANs rely on resources like FCAN in gaining traction? In Part IV we conclude with recommendations.

PART I: WHAT IS A LOCAL COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK?

WHAT IS THEIR PURPOSE?

LCANs are defined as community-based college access alliances supported by a team of community and education leaders representing K12, higher education, business, economic development, the nonprofit sector, and philanthropy. Brought together to form coalitions or coordinating bodies, LCANs are committed to dramatically increasing college and career readiness, participation, and completion rates within their community for underserved student populations. LCANs focus on lowering or removing barriers that prevent students from succeeding in postsecondary education and in their careers.

WHAT DO THEY DO, AND WHAT DO THEY HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

To meet their purpose, LCANs organize community leaders around a singular vision: to ensure that all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school and a rewarding career. LCANs do this by building relationships and trust between leaders and stakeholders from different sectors, setting goals focused on student success, collaborating on initiatives that fill support gaps for students along the talent pipeline, establishing a system of data gathering and analysis, and reporting results.

The ultimate goal for LCANs seems rather straightforward. Yet the individual needs of regions can often create complexities that influence the sub-goals for each LCAN. When examining LCANs across the state of Florida, these nuances are evident. For example, **UpliftED**, a tri-county LCAN in central Florida, has a workgroup focused on career and technical education to support the tourism-heavy business climate in their region, whereas **Achieve Palm Beach County** has one focused on postsecondary advising for high school students, to prepare students for 2- and 4-year degree programs.

The approach to increasing postsecondary attainment may vary from LCAN to LCAN. For example, **Achieve Escambia** offers students assistance in Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion, support for college applications, and even targeted scholarships to ensure students can fund their education. **Earn Up**, the 6-county LCAN in northeast Florida, tailors their efforts toward supporting veterans as they transition from military to civilian life.

The **Alachua County Education Compact** focuses on exposing more middle and high school students and their parents to locally available careers through their annual Career Discoveries Day. These communities take a cross-sector approach, bringing leaders from school districts, higher education, business, philanthropy, nonprofits and workforce agencies together to work collaboratively following the collective impact approach.

WHAT IS COLLECTIVE IMPACT?

To jointly achieve their goals, Florida LCANs operate using the collective impact framework for social change first articulated by FSG in their Stanford Social Innovation Review article “Collective Impact”. This approach is intended for groups looking to solve complex community problems and is comprised of the following five core conditions:

1. Generating a common agenda;
2. Using shared measurements to understand progress;
3. Building on mutually reinforcing activities;
4. Engaging in continuous communications;
5. Providing backbone support to move the work forward.

Collective impact calls for the joint ownership of a goal among various cross-sector stakeholders or partners in achieving complex social change. In contrast to other forms of collaboration in which one organization typically spearheads a goal, all participants within the collective impact framework are equal players in working toward change, and they hold the same weight in decision-making.

Source: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

“Under the collective impact framework, LCAN leaders are co-owners of the goal. They share responsibility for that goal. The level of buy-in is different and more powerful in terms of getting metrics to move.”

—Laurie Meggesin, Executive Director, FCAN

Collective impact is focused on systems change – changing the conditions that hold a problem in place. While there may be programmatic activities involved, the LCANs focus on the underlying conditions – systemic barriers caused by outdated policies, procedures, assumptions, and biases that get in the way of student success. They focus on building relationships and trust that are crucial to collaboration. And they create dynamics where there is space to share leadership with constituencies that are often left out of conversations around community change. Finally, they help leaders grow into this new model for shared leadership by putting the needs of students first.

The FutureMakers Coalition organizes regional stakeholders around the common purpose of creating systems-level change that improves postsecondary success. Stakeholders share a mutual vision of community impact, albeit from variety of perspectives including a social mobility and equity lens as well as an economic development and employment angle.

In Florida's southwest region, industries such as health care, machining, manufacturing, and welding currently are experiencing a high number of unfilled positions. Thus, FutureMakers strives to engage representatives from these industries to help ensure the region's population receives the formal training required to meet economic demands.



It boils down to the need to create a more skilled workforce to fill in-demand jobs, and help people have a higher quality of life through attainment.”

—Tessa LaSage, Director of Social Innovation and Sustainability,
Southwest Florida Community Foundation

CASE STUDY: FUTUREMAKERS COALITION

OVERVIEW

Chronic turnover and challenging underemployment in Southwest Florida led the FutureMakers Coalition to identify a workforce preparedness gap. The coalition began to address the gap by striving to ensure that more students enrolled in postsecondary education.

The FutureMakers Coalition led conversations that centered on economic development, workforce needs, and customization of educational opportunities to address chronic workforce vacancies identified by Southwest Florida's employers.

“The FutureMakers Coalition is an opportunity to bring the region together around systems-level change,” said Tessa LaSage, director of Social Innovation and Sustainability with the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, which serves as the backbone organization for the FutureMakers Coalition.

PROBLEM

Lee Health, the largest employer in their 5-county region, approached the coalition to address chronic vacancies in Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA). Using the collective impact framework, the FutureMakers Coalition engaged Fort Myers Technical College, Cape Coral Technical College, CareerSource Southwest Florida, the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, and Lee Health.

They started by mapping the student journey from recruitment to employment to determine where the current system was breaking down so that they could address the barriers that were getting in the way of student success. They determined that new approaches were needed in three key areas: recruitment, gap funding, and building employability skills.

RECRUITMENT

Coalition partners agreed to pilot a program that engages individuals to fill chronically vacant CNA positions by first recruiting in areas of the community with chronic unemployment and underemployment.

GAP FUNDING

The student journey map identified cost as a barrier, both at the tuition stage and surprisingly, after completing their programs when it came time to pay for licensing exams. CareerSource Southwest Florida worked with clients to provide financial aid to address their first hurdle—program tuition. Once clients exhausted all financial aid available, the Southwest Florida Community Foundation offered gap funding to ensure individuals not only completed the required curriculum but also took licensing exams.

BUILDING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

More than 60 people enrolled in the six-week program, yet nine weeks after program completion, only one person was hired by Lee Health. The pilot highlighted the fact that the technical skill set is only one aspect of employability. Employability skills were equally important. Knowing how to write a resume, prepare for an interview, and how to conduct themselves in a professional manner was an additional area the Coalition needed to address for students to have a clear route to job security.

Additionally, partners discovered opportunities to sit for the state-required examination were inconsistent, which led to an extended wait time between course completion and examination.

As a result of this pilot, the Coalition not only addressed system issues by analyzing the opportunity-to-employability pipeline but also each partner had to examine how their individual organization's processes contributed to what was a community-wide challenge to economic mobility and growth.

RESULTS

Over an 18-month period, the Coalition was able to help 60 unemployed and underemployed residents earn their CNA credential and a job with average gap funding for the students that needed it of \$250. More importantly, these coalition partners now have a replicable framework for working together to address other workforce shortages impacting the region.

"We've learned that employers are the key, particularly for individuals who face a number of barriers to pursuing and completing postsecondary degrees or certificates," said LeSage. "That job is really what has to be there, and that employer has to be there in order to increase their likelihood of completing (a degree or certificate) and getting employment."



PART II: HOW ARE LOCAL COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORKS FORMED?

Once a community's need for an LCAN is established, the beginning steps of development are critical. In general, LCANs begin with one or more influential champions in the community or region who build support with other local leaders. These individuals share a common agreement that a problem exists in educational attainment, and they wish to apply a collaborative effort in addressing this need. When asked why they decided to form an LCAN in Broward county, **Broward Bridge to Life** champion Ralph Aiello, director of school counseling and BRACE with the School District of Broward County shared, "The left hand didn't know what the right hand was doing." Local leaders recognized they had great support from community partners to help students apply to college and access financial aid, but because the activities weren't coordinated, they weren't having as much impact as they could.

As another example, the **LEAP Tampa Bay** LCAN was founded and launched with the assistance of a charter grant from Lumina Foundation. At the onset, LEAP focused in Hillsborough County and later broadened its effort to encompass Pinellas County as community support and buy-in accelerated.

As LEAP moved forward, specific workgroups emerged with an emphasis on topics such as college access, scholarships, asset identification, strategic communications, and data measurement.

As the idea to form an LCAN takes root, it is imperative for leaders to map out key aspects for LCAN success, such as roles, responsibilities, and objectives. For example, members should consider who will serve as the LCAN's backbone organization. A backbone organization serves as a fiscal agent for the LCAN and, ideally, has a dedicated staff who coordinate LCAN activities. Typically, an effective backbone organization possesses strong social ties within the community and is known for impartiality. Across the state of Florida, LCAN backbone organizations are comprised of a variety of entities ranging from community foundations and nonprofit community organizations, to workforce agencies and chambers of commerce. In some instances, multiple entities share responsibility in serving as the backbone structure. A chamber of commerce, for example, may serve as a coordinator of LCAN activities, while a community foundation may undertake fiscal duties. The flexibility in which LCANs are formed aids LCANs that strive to engage members of certain sectors.

Additionally, stakeholders will want to identify a data-informed regional postsecondary attainment goal,

determine the population the LCAN wishes to target through its collaborative approach, and establish key priorities as the LCAN moves forward. **Achieve Palm Beach County** created an organizational structure for their LCAN that consisted of executive level champions, an operations team made up of cross-sector decision makers who oversee the work, and strategy teams that take on specific areas of focus identified by the operations team. These four strategy teams are focused on parent engagement and support; FAFSA completion; postsecondary advising for high school students, and scholarships, non-financial resources and support services for college students.

Engaging outside resources can be beneficial in gaining traction. Historically, LCANs have done so by securing seed grant money for initial financial support of early convenings and employing the services of a consultant who facilitates meetings of the LCAN leadership in examining current educational outcomes and workforce needs, while building relationships and trust among stakeholders. For example, FCAN provides planning grants and data support. The Florida Philanthropic Network (FPN) also provides challenge grants specifically for community foundations interested in helping to lead the establishment of an LCAN. Philanthropic partners Helios Education Foundation and the The Kresge Foundation provided early resources in order to make this community assistance possible.

Overall, LCAN progression is not always a seamless process. Sometimes the backbone organization that provides initial support to get the LCAN going will evolve to another partner organization once LCAN priorities become clear. For instance, in Polk county, the LCAN was originally supported by the Florida Prosperity Partnership, a statewide nonprofit with the ability to bring leaders together. But as the LCAN was growing, the backbone organization decided to transition out of this role. The leaders spent the next year considering options to find the right support for the LCAN's next level of growth. **Polk Vision** became the strong local champion who could provide the backbone support that was needed.

"In many cases, LCAN development occurs in fits and starts. Sometimes the work will pause, particularly when key leaders leave and relationships and trust need to be re-established. It takes a few influential champions to carry the torch and move the work forward."

—Kathy McDonald, Assistant Director for Network Partnerships, FCAN

CASE STUDY: LEAP

OVERVIEW

Focusing its efforts on Hillsborough and Pinellas counties, LEAP Tampa Bay strives to help students of all ages succeed in education beyond high school. LEAP's main objective is for 60% of adults to hold a college degree or certificate by the year 2025 so they can improve their lives and be ready for the workforce opportunities available in the Tampa Bay economy.

Across time, an examination of both regional attainment and workforce data has helped guide LEAP's work. According to Chuck Tiernan, the director of the LEAP Tampa Bay LCAN, a data scan of the Tampa Bay region revealed a comparatively low associate degree completion rate among 25- to 34-year-olds and a concerning number of 16- to 24-year-olds disengaged from school or the workforce. Furthermore, an analysis of regional workforce needs revealed a shortage of workers in sectors such as information technology, health care, manufacturing, and finance. These statistics presented an opportunity for LEAP to tailor its efforts toward specific age groups and industries.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The CEO or leader among all 17 core partners sits on the LCAN's Vision Council. The LCAN also includes a Leadership Council that conducts the day-to-day board activities for LEAP, including approving budgets and making decisions about moving work forward. Some members of the Vision Council also sit on the Leadership Council. Finally, five workgroups—College Access, the FUSE Working Group (scholarships), Asset Identification, Strategic Communication, and a data workgroup—hone in on a key area of emphasis.

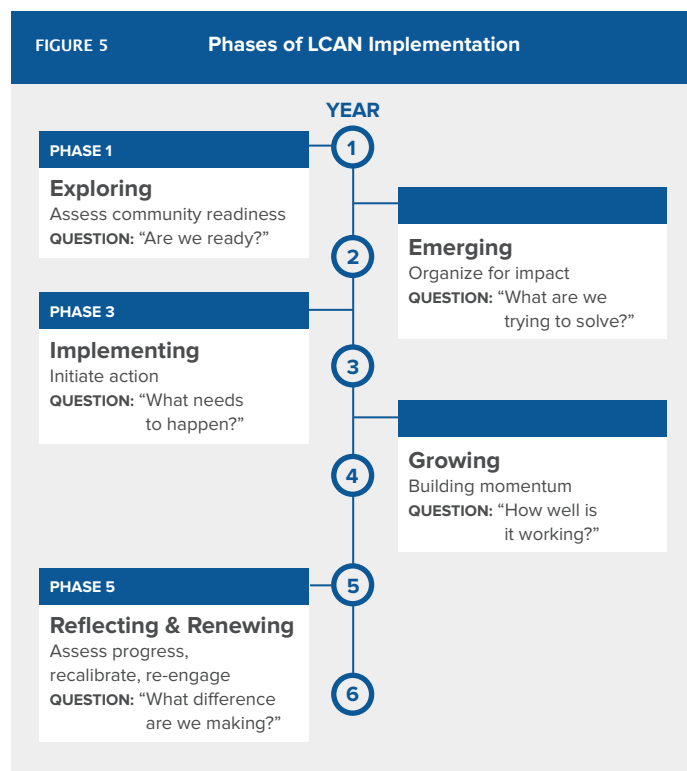
RESULTS

LEAP Tampa Bay mobilizes partners around a common set of goals, shared measurement, and mutually reinforcing activities. An example of the collective impact framework has been a collaborative effort to increase FAFSA completion among students in the Tampa Bay area through convening partners together, such as the United Way, to identify gaps for targeted intervention and common metrics for measuring FAFSA completion progress.

LEAP also mobilized to support students transferring from the local community colleges to the state university through the FUSE program, which guarantees transfer students admission to their program of choice if they complete program requirements. LEAP has helped to promote the program and raised over \$2.6 million in scholarships, which has helped 184 students within the last two years stay on track to complete their associate's degree and transfer to the University of South Florida.

In collective impact, there can be an ebb and flow in member engagement across time. According to Tiernan, collective impact is a constant work in progress. It is crucial to help members engage and understand the importance of connecting with their LCAN peers while they simultaneously manage their respective day-to-day career responsibilities.

While the pathway to development is unique for each LCAN, FCAN has created a general timeline to serve as a guide for managing expectations and considering key questions. This pathway generally consists of five phases as demonstrated in Figure 5.



Source: adapted for LCANs from Tamarack Institute's The Phases of Collective Impact <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/316071/Resources/Tools/CI%20Self%20Assessment%20Tool.pdf>

Formed in 2013, **UpliftED** (formerly the Central Florida College Access Network) moved through these phases and successfully piloted an emergency intervention program called Destination Graduation (see case study below). At the five-year mark, leaders recognized they had entered phase 5, took time to reflect on the progress they had made, and also recalibrate for future momentum. With a rebrand and an update to their strategic plan, they are now engaging new leaders to envision further progress.

Although there is no prescriptive method for establishing an LCAN, certain actions have proven beneficial in creating a structure and gaining momentum. FCAN's online resource "Forming a College Access Network: Recipe for Success Field Guide" provides insight into 13 key ingredients for success. One of these key ingredients is shared metrics, whereby the LCAN and its partner organizations agree on how they will measure their progress, using metrics responsibly to foster shared learning about what's working and what's not to mobilize action towards high-impact practices. **Achieve Escambia**, for example, shares their metrics via a data dashboard on their website to transparently share progress.¹

“One of the best ways we’ve seen to accelerate progress is where LCAN communities can learn from each other what works and mistakes to avoid.”

—Kathy McDonald, Assistant Director for Network Partnerships, FCAN

UpliftED views collective impact as a set of tools or understandings that enable a community or group of people to work together in a more impactful and effective way. This involves identifying methods of reinforcing the work of others and using data and learnings to further a common objective. **UpliftED** cited FCAN's online resources and data provided as crucial in successfully applying the collective impact framework to their work.

CASE STUDY: UPLIFTED

OVERVIEW

UpliftED (formerly Central Florida College Access Network) strives to raise the attainment rate of high-quality credentials and degrees to 60% by 2025 across their 3-county region of greater Orlando. Formed in 2013, **UpliftED** brought focus and support in three key areas: adult learners, career connections, and scholarships/financial aid.

PROBLEM

Many college students today struggle with life needs that interfere with their ability to be successful in college. Food and housing insecurity, interruptions in transportation and child care, and access to internet services are among the many challenges students face outside of the classroom that affects their studies.

UpliftED brought Seminole State College and Heart of Florida United Way (HFUW) together to see if working collaboratively could improve students' persistence in college from one term to the next. Called Destination Graduation, the collaboration brought the strengths of HFUW's 2-1-1 informational resources to help students struggling with life challenges by connecting them to available community resources and emergency aid.

Destination Graduation placed 2-1-1 case specialists in the academic advisor's office on three Seminole State campuses with regular office hours so that students could reach out when there was a need.

RESULTS

Over three years, the program improved term-to-term persistence rates by 25% over low-income students in crisis who did not receive assistance. Destination Graduation assisted 905 students with community resource referrals. Of these students, 119 received emergency funds for support with housing (35%), utilities and internet (22%), tuition (22%), transportation (11%), textbooks (5%), childcare (3%), and testing and other needs (1%). On average, 76% of Destination Graduation recipients enrolled in the following semester after receiving support.

This success earned them support from the SunTrust Foundation to build an online toolkit for other communities and colleges to replicate. Two sites, Daytona State College and Palm Beach State College, are now in the planning stages of implementation.

“Community partnerships support students in a way that's difficult for colleges to provide on their own,”

—Ray Larsen, Vice President for Collective Impact, Heart of Florida United Way

¹Source: <http://floridacollegeaccess.org/resource/forming-local-college-access-network-recipe-success-field-guide>
<https://www.achieveescambia.org/data>

PART III: THE ROLE OF FCAN AS A STATEWIDE ORGANIZING BODY

Regional initiatives, such as those coordinated by LCANs, not only grow each region's workforce, they also maximize the impact of both public and private investments. However, without a statewide coordinating body, they fall short of propelling sustained economic growth in Florida.

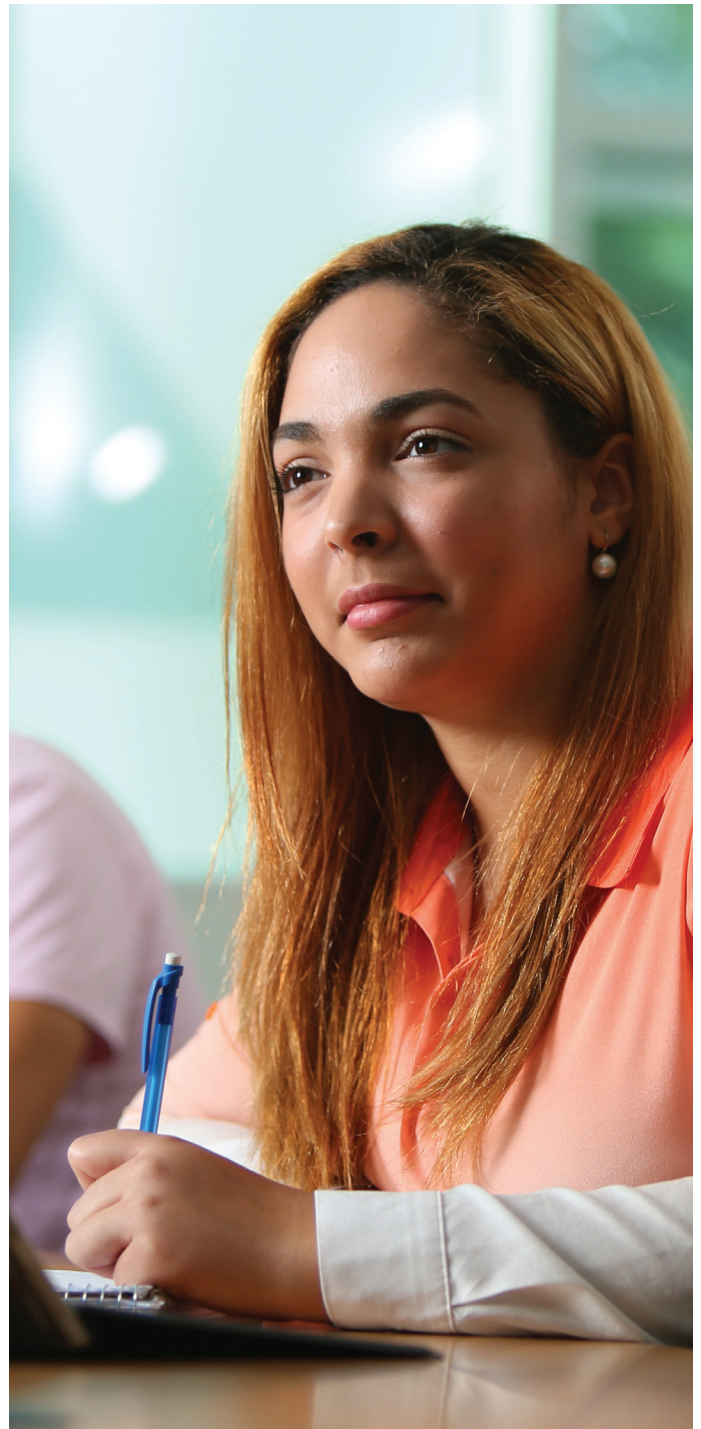
Addressing the need for a statewide organization, FCAN serves as coordinator, convener, and advocate for postsecondary degree attainment. Since 2012, FCAN has provided leadership that complements regional momentum by championing an aspirational, workforce-driven, postsecondary degree attainment goal for the state of Florida called Goal 2025. To retain talent, grow economic enterprises, and ensure a globally competitive posture, Goal 2025 calls for 60% of working-age Floridians to hold a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential by the year 2025. With the recent enactment of House Bill 7071, which establishes the SAIL to 60 Initiative, FCAN is shifting focus to support the state's new postsecondary attainment goal.

Building public will for increasing postsecondary attainment places FCAN at the forefront of discussions with leaders in both the public and private sectors, as each has a stake in the prosperity of Florida's workforce.



FCAN focuses on strengthening and broadening LCAN development around the state; disseminating knowledge through research, data, and policy analyses; and building public will to achieve Florida's new attainment goal."

—Laurie Meggesin, Executive Director, LCAN



As a statewide organization, FCAN does its work in three primary ways:

1 LCAN CULTIVATION AND SUPPORT

FCAN offers communities interested in forming a local college access network valuable resources, learnings, and an accelerated onramp based on best practices. Leveraging the principles of collective impact—a focus on the collective versus the singular, cross-sector collaboration, and shared ownership of the goal—FCAN links regional LCANs into a network of networks to provide a platform for peer learning, idea generation, and momentum building all focused toward increasing the proportion of Floridians holding degrees and credentials beyond high school.

FCAN is the convener of the LCAN learning community that provides a platform for LCAN leaders and supporters to explore best practices and learn from each other through monthly affinity calls, leadership off-sites that do a deeper dive in various aspects of implementing collective impact, through an annual statewide summit, and through monthly webinars on timely topics.

In addition to leadership development, FCAN supports Florida's LCANs with data analysis based on their local objectives. Functioning as Florida's "network of networks," FCAN helps local communities identify and quantify these needs, and also constructively use data to address them objectively. FCAN also provides a wide variety of technical assistance, including leadership coaching, community case-making and presentations, and connecting LCANs to resources and support. FCAN also cultivates partnerships with complementary statewide organizations and helps to connect their regional partners to LCANs.

2 RESEARCH, DATA, AND POLICY

FCAN acts as a clearinghouse, vetting the best sources of publicly available data and metrics supporting college and career readiness, access, enrollment, persistence, and completion. FCAN produces policy briefs on timely topics pertinent to improving student access and success in postsecondary education. FCAN also keeps cross-sector stakeholders informed through periodic legislative updates on policy developments impacting postsecondary education.

Finally, FCAN is widely recognized for its Florida FAFSA Challenge dashboard, which shares up-to-date progress of FAFSA completion in the state by school and county.

3 STATEWIDE INITIATIVES

FCAN is uniquely positioned to promote initiatives under the College Ready Florida name that enhance community efforts to increase college access. While local stakeholders focus on regional tactics, FCAN complements their efforts with programmatic resources that build momentum across all geographic regions. The following initiatives coordinated by FCAN, encourages schools and districts to help students in preparing for their postsecondary goals after high school by offering training as well as free resources and toolkits.

PROGRAM

- **Apply Yourself Florida**

Offers students the opportunity to complete their college application under the guidance of trained volunteers during school hours. As part of the national American College Application Campaign, local host sites provide a place for students to focus on the college application process. Trained volunteers carefully guide students through each step, often anticipating challenges otherwise unknown to students, particularly first-generation, minority, and underrepresented students who may lack familiarity with the college admissions process.

- **Florida FAFSA Challenge**

During the 2017–18 school year, fewer than half of all eligible Florida high school seniors, 49.3%, completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Completion of the FAFSA is a precursor to all forms of financial aid, yet annually thousands of students leave millions of aid dollars unused simply because of a failure to complete it.

Initiated in 2015, the **Florida FAFSA Challenge** encourages schools and districts to increase the number of students who complete the FAFSA by 5% annually. Numerous high-potential, low-income students qualify for the federally funded Pell Grant, which is awarded to students who seek their first postsecondary degree based on financial need.

FCAN collaborates with schools and districts across the state on the FAFSA Challenge that kicks off each October to coincide with the availability of the federal application.

- **Florida College Decision Day**

Acknowledging each student and his or her postsecondary path is a cause for celebration. Inspired by former First Lady Michelle Obama's Reach Higher initiative, FCAN launched Florida College Decision Day to celebrate each student's future after high school.

Florida College Decision Day is intended to inspire students, parents, and community members to support postsecondary education. Celebrations are hosted annually on or around May 1, which is the deadline for students to commit to their college or university of choice.

PROGRAM

- **Plan It Florida**

Many college preparation programs engage students already in high school, which might prove too late. Leading FCAN's work into the future is an evolving project called Plan It Florida, with the goal for every high school senior to graduate with a plan for life after high school. The initiative introduces postsecondary and career planning to students starting in middle school. The goal of engaging students in middle school is to start planning for postsecondary success while options are plentiful; academic courses can offer career insights, and ultimately, graduation from high school is viewed as the beginning of a journey toward their future career.

PART IV: CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Workforce projections are clear: The labor market of the future will be a knowledge-based, agile, and fluid sector supporting industries and jobs we have yet to conceptualize. In light of such ambiguity, or perhaps because of it, individuals with a postsecondary education are best positioned to secure employment that requires more than rote muscle memory, more than technical skill, and even more than management of established processes. Our country's future workforce will require innovation, adaptation, and most certainly education beyond high school.

How we create this type of educated workforce is the real challenge. No one organization can single-handedly increase the number of working-age adults with a postsecondary certificate or credential to achieve Florida's SAIL to 60 goal. Thought leadership and shared ownership, which focus on solutions that address community-centered challenges from a cross section of industries and sectors, is the premise of collective impact, an effective framework implemented by numerous local college access networks.

In Florida, one of the most successful strategies has been the creation of a central college access organizing body (FCAN) that supports localized college access networks (the LCANs). In less than a decade, FCAN has supported the development of 16 LCANs that now cover 80% of the state. In addition, FCAN provides research, data analysis, and knowledge development on issues impacting postsecondary education and coordinates the College Ready Florida statewide initiatives that have been adopted in more than 300 Florida schools.

While it is difficult to measure the impacts of both FCAN and each individual LCAN, there is growing empirical evidence that the network is meeting its intended goals. For example, in 2016–17 FCAN's Florida FAFSA Challenge resulted in the state having the third-highest improvement in completions across the country. This attracted more than \$37 million in additional Pell Grants for graduating seniors. When FCAN compared communities that were supported by an LCAN with those that weren't, they found a 10.8% improvement in FAFSA completions among LCAN-supported communities, indicating this collaborative approach works.

Moving forward, FCAN's multi-layered approach to postsecondary success will be imperative to the economic success of the state. In Florida we urge stakeholders in the communities not represented by an LCAN to come together to form their own coalition. For communities who do have an LCAN, we recommend leaders support its maturation and growth. In other states that do not currently have a centralized college access network or LCANs, we ask you to take evidence from this brief to start conversations on how to improve postsecondary attainment in your state.



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