

Future Ready Replication Executive Summary

Expanding access to high-quality career-connected charter schools is essential to ensuring more students graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and life. Across the country, innovative schools are demonstrating how meaningful employer partnerships, work-based learning, industry-aligned pathways, and postsecondary connections can transform student outcomes. As these models mature, there is growing interest in replicating successful schools to extend opportunity into additional communities. Yet despite this momentum, there is little national guidance to help determine when a career-connected charter school is truly ready to scale.

While authorizers have established rigorous processes for approving new schools, very few have developed meaningful frameworks for evaluating replication readiness. Fewer than a dozen authorizers publicly provide robust replication-specific guidance, and only a handful have historically maintained dedicated replication application pathways. Most continue to evaluate experienced operators through processes designed for first-time applicants, placing primary emphasis on academic performance and organizational capacity while giving limited attention to the unique conditions required to successfully replicate a high-quality, career-connected school model.

This gap reflects the realities of the authorizing landscape. Many authorizers oversee relatively small portfolios and encounter replication infrequently. State statutes often prescribe a single application process regardless of applicant experience, and many authorizing offices lack the capacity to design and maintain specialized replication review systems. As a result, there is no widely accepted framework for assessing whether a successful career-connected school has developed the systems, partnerships, and organizational capabilities necessary to deliver high-quality outcomes at scale.

This framework also recognizes that replication decisions require a deliberate balance. Authorizers must take material risks seriously, but they should weigh those risks alongside the benefits a strong career-connected model may offer and the demand expressed by students, families, employers, and communities. A cautious review should not become a presumption against innovation; the central question is whether identified risks can be responsibly managed in light of credible evidence of need, opportunity, and operator capacity.

This deliverable addresses that need by introducing a Future Ready framework for evaluating the replication readiness of career-connected charter schools. Rather than relying solely on traditional measures of school quality, the framework recognizes that successful replication requires a broader set of conditions. It examines evidence across multiple domains, including demonstrated academic and organizational performance, fidelity to the school's career-connected model, leadership and governance capacity,

workforce and community demand, employer and postsecondary partnerships, financial sustainability, and the systems necessary to expand while maintaining quality.

Designed for authorizers, school operators, and state leaders, the framework establishes a common language for evaluating whether a career-connected school is ready to replicate, identifying strengths to build upon and gaps that should be addressed before expansion. Equally important, it provides operators with a roadmap for intentionally strengthening the conditions that support sustainable growth and expanding equitable access to high-quality career-connected learning opportunities.

By moving beyond a narrow focus on academic outcomes to consider the full ecosystem required for high-quality career-connected learning, this resource fills a significant gap in the national charter sector. It offers one of the first comprehensive, practical approaches to assessing replication readiness specifically for career-connected charter schools—helping ensure that as these innovative models grow, they do so with fidelity, sustainability, and the capacity to expand meaningful opportunities for students, employers, and communities.

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