# **Leadership Academy for Student Success Module 2:** **Improving Labor Market Outcomes**

## Facilitation Guide

This guide provides an overview of the second module in the Leadership Academy for Student Success, originally led by the Success Center for Ohio Community Colleges. This curriculum is developed in partnership with the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement and the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program and draws from Aspen’s fellowship curriculum and additional modules developed for and by the OACC Leadership Academy.

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### *Thank you to the Ascendium Education Group, the ECMC Foundation, and The Kresge Foundation for their support of scaling the Leadership Academy for Student Success.*

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# Introduction

## Curriculum Overview

The curriculum is based on findings from the [Aspen Institute College Excellence Program](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/) with aligned small group discussion activities and prompts to deepen and apply learning. This version of the curriculum is designed to provide mid-level community college staff and faculty with an understanding of critical student success and change management concepts. The goal is to prepare them to advance to more senior-level positions at their institutions or more effectively lead from their current role.

This curriculum is designed with 10 modules in a progressive sequence, though modules may be delivered individually for targeted learning. The full sequence is included at the end of this module as a reference.

This curriculum is designed to help meet the following overarching Module 2 goal:

* Articulate scaled strategies and practices to improve workforce outcomes for all students, including through effective partnerships with employers

## Facilitation Overview

This guide includes module details with facilitation guidance and suggestions for pre-work. A customizable PowerPoint deck and Participant Toolkit are included, along with the *National Models of Community College Excellence* reference document. This module is designed for in-person delivery; however, it can be adapted for the virtual environment. General virtual facilitation guidance, as well as additional considerations to deepen the learning, are at the end of this document.

This module will take 3-4 hours to deliver. We recommend that you take time in advance to adapt the suggested agenda and make any necessary customizations to curricular materials to fit your context. Facilitators with experience or knowledge of the module content will deliver the curriculum with the greatest impact. Talking points are included throughout the PowerPoint deck, though we encourage facilitators to put these notes into their own words and bring an institutional perspective to the curriculum where possible.

# Suggested Pre-work

### Consider having your participants complete this work prior to your session:

* Read: [*The Workforce Playbook*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/playbooks/workforce-playbook), The Aspen Institute (2019)
* Complete the [Workforce Playbook Assessment Tool](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/assessments/workforce-assessment-tool) for your institution by reflecting on current practice. Bring your completed assessment to the session.
* Read: *National Models of Community College Excellence*

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# Suggested Detailed Agenda

# Leadership Academy for Student Success

## Module 2

***Note****: This agenda provides the suggested structure and timing of the module. Adjust timing and add breaks as necessary for your delivery. Be aware that the referenced slide numbers and Participant Toolkit page numbers may change as you adapt materials for your context.*

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| **Estimated Timing** | **Session Details and Facilitator Notes** | **Materials** |
| **10 minutes** | **Welcome and Overview**  Welcome (10 minutes)   * Welcome participants to the session * Review:   + Module learning goals   + Module overview   + Pre-work assignments | *Slides 1-4 Participant Toolkit p. 2* |
| **30-40 minutes** | **Framing the Module and Defining the Issue**  *Facilitation notes:*   * *Talking points for the presentation are provided in the notes section of the PowerPoint.* * *For the data slides, you may replace sample national data with state or local data.*   Turn & Talk (5 minutes)  What is one new question or idea you had after completing the Workforce Playbook Assessment Tool?  Present Key Ideas (15 minutes)  Why do community college students’ graduation and employment outcomes matter so much for our communities? For the nation?   * Too many people are living in poverty. * Adults are stranded in low-wage work. * Many young adults cannot make ends meet. * Higher education leads to higher earnings and lower unemployment. * By 2031, the number of good jobs for workers on the bachelor’s degree pathway will grow by more than 15 million net new jobs, while the number of good jobs on the high school pathway will decline by nearly 600,000. * Bachelor’s attainment varies by race/ethnicity. * Community College 3.0 focuses on post-completion success for all students.   Turn & Talk (5 minutes)  Which data points or ideas were most surprising to you? Most compelling?   * Two paths to economic mobility | *Slides 5-16 Participant Toolkit p. 3* |
| **75-90 minutes** | **Strategies for Improving Labor Market Outcomes for Students**  *Facilitation notes:*   * *Talking points for the presentation are provided in the notes section of the PowerPoint.* * *Multiple case studies are presented. Select the case studies most relevant to your context.*   Introduction (5 minutes)  Aspen’s *Workforce Playbook* Strategies:   * Advance a vision for talent development and economic mobility * Deliver high-quality programs aligned to regional needs and demands * Support students’ goals from pre-matriculation through post-graduation * Build responsive, mutually beneficial employer partnerships   ***Playbook* Strategy 1:** Advance a vision for talent development and economic mobility  Presentation (10 minutes)   * Key ideas * Student success considerations * Case studies: Choose at least one to present, considering which case studies may be most relevant to your context:   + Southwest Wisconsin Technical College (small college, rural setting)     - Won the Aspen Prize in 2025     - Revamps programs that have limited or no labor market demand.     - For more information, see:       * [*The 2025 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/956), pp. 6-9       * [*The 2023 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/60), pp. 28-29   + Walla Walla Community College (small college, rural setting, union context)     - Won the Aspen Prize in 2013     - Transitioned their workforce programming to viticulture and winemaking when faced with the decline of more traditional local industries     - For more information, see:       * [*Workforce Playbook*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/workforceplaybook)*,* p. 15       * [*The 2013 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/154)*,* pp. 13-15   + San Jacinto College (large college, urban setting)     - Has been a finalist for the Aspen Prize several times     - This case study emphasizes the importance of program review and aligning program offerings to workforce demands     - For more information, see:       * [*Workforce Playbook*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/workforceplaybook), p. 20       * [*The 2025 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/956), pp. 10-11       * [*The 2023 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/60), pp. 24-25       * [*The 2021 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/64)*, pp. 12-13*       * [*The 2019 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/98)*, pp. 4-5*   Strategy 1 Activity: Understanding Your Context (15 minutes)   * Instruct participants to review their responses to the Workforce Assessment. (5 minutes) * Participants discuss the aligned questions in the Participant Toolkit with a partner. (10 minutes)   + In which of the four overall domains does the college appear to be strongest? Which needs the most improvement?   + Within the domains where the college performs well, what practices or strategies contributed to this strength? Could the college make any changes to continuously improve in these domains?   + What area of opportunity is most likely to create the biggest impact on student outcomes if implemented effectively and at scale? Consider successful outcomes for all students.   ***Playbook* Strategy 2:** Deliver high-quality programs aligned to regional needs  Presentation (10 minutes)   * Key ideas * Impactful program review * Case studies: Choose at least one to present, considering which case studies may be most relevant to your state context:   + Southwest Wisconsin Technical College (small college, rural setting)     - Won the Aspen Prize in 2025     - Builds trust and ownership for improvement through honest conversations with faculty in low- and medium-wage programs and works with employer partners to define key skills, then uses those skills as the basis for program redesign     - For more information, see:       * [*The 2025 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/956), pp. 6-9       * [*The 2023 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/60), pp. 28-29   + Valencia College (large college, urban setting)     - First winner of the Aspen Prize in 2011     - Intentional program review practices led to more collaborative course sequencing and scheduling, capstone courses     - For more information, see: [*Workforce Playbook*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/workforceplaybook)*,* pp. 31-33   + Lake Area Technical College (small college, rural setting)     - Won the Aspen Prize in 2017     - Conducts annual program reviews for all programs and uses a dashboard to show trends and outcomes for both students and employers     - For more information, see:       * [*Workforce Playbook*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/workforceplaybook), p. 55       * [*The 2017 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/121), pp. 5-8   + Monroe Community College (mid-size college, suburban setting, union context)     - After jobs from large employers disappeared in the mid-aughts, MCC developed a system for aggregating small employers within similar industries to build programs that aligned with key skills.     - For more information, see: [*Workforce Playbook*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/workforceplaybook), pp. 57-58 * Successful advisory board meetings   Strategy 2 Activity: Reflecting on Your Program Review Process (10 minutes)  Instruct participants to discuss the questions in the Participant Toolkit. For the sake of time, remind them to prioritize those questions that resonate most with the group.   * How often are program reviews conducted for CTE programs? * Who (and whose experience) is represented in the room? * Is there a tone that supports honest feedback? If so, how is it created? * What data do you share? * How are they presented? * What might be changed or added? * What does follow-up look like to ensure feedback is translated into actions, and actions are having intended outcomes?   ***Playbook* Strategy 3:** Support students’ goals from pre-matriculation through post-graduation  Presentation (10 minutes)   * Key ideas * Case studies: Choose at least one to present, considering which case studies may be most relevant to your state context:   + Broward College (large college, urban setting)     - Has been a finalist for the Aspen Prize     - This example focuses specifically on Broward’s nursing program—focused their efforts on early career exploration and made sure there were clear expectations for the nursing students about the program demands, that the program was accessible to under-represented populations, and that internal supports help students succeed in the program and get jobs after graduation.     - For more information, see:       * [*Workforce Playbook*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/workforceplaybook), p. 44       * [*The 2023 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/60), pp. 14-15       * [*The 2021 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/64)*,* pp. 10-11       * [*The 2017 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/121), pp. 9-12   + Lorain County Community College (mid-size college, suburban setting)     - This example focuses on its Careers by Design program, a regional approach to talent development.     - By analyzing regional talent gaps, Team NEO (The Northeast Ohio Region) was able to create urgency when it comes to boosting enrollment in the college’s key programs and disciplines.     - Note: This work is emerging. These results are happening in real time, rather than established practices with historical results.     - Advisors were trained on program data dashboards to learn more about programs and labor market and wage outcomes     - Results of the program so far:       * Data-informed, uniquely prepared academic advising, outreach, and student service professionals: 72 participants | 42 “Career Designers” | 65 + mini session attendees       * Enrollment in areas spotlighted in the series has begun to increase     - For more information, see: [*Excellence and Equity in STEM Programs*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/research-reports/community-college-guide-excellence-and-equity-stem-programs)**,** p. 12 * The myth of the “decided” student   Activity for Strategy 3: Supporting Informed Decision-Making (10 minutes)  Instruct participants to discuss the aligned questions in the Participant Toolkit. For the sake of time, remind them to prioritize questions that resonate most with the group:   * How do we currently build career awareness, career exploration, and guidance around career decision-making into our advising practices? * What data are students given about programs? * What structured, required experiences enable students to learn more about program and career fit? Who helps students learn about program and career fit? * How do we know these efforts are working? * Are we reaching all students? Who is left out?   ***Playbook* Strategy 4:** Build responsive, mutually beneficial employer partnerships  Presentation (10 minutes)   * Key ideas * Student success considerations * Common pain points in community college-employer partnerships * Case studies: Choose at least one to present, considering which case studies may be most relevant to your state context:   + San Jacinto College (large college, urban setting):     - Finalist for the Aspen Prize in 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2025     - Responded strategically when leaders received negative feedback about the preparation of their graduates for the workplace.     - For more information, see:       * [*Excellence and Equity in STEM Programs*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/research-reports/community-college-guide-excellence-and-equity-stem-programs), pp. 26-27       * [*Workforce Playbook*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/workforceplaybook), p. 20       * [*The 2025 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/956), pp. 10-11       * [*The 2023 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/60), pp. 24-25       * [*The 2021 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/64)*, pp. 12-13*       * [*The 2019 Aspen Prize*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/98)*, pp. 4-5*   + West Kentucky Community and Technical College (mid-size college, rural setting)     - Finalist for the Aspen Prize in 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2021     - The college and employers worked together to build strong pathways with multiple credentials tied to local opportunities re: riverboats     - For more information, see: [*The 2021 Aspen Prize,*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/64) *pp. 10-11*   + Valencia College (large college, urban setting):     - Won the Aspen Prize in 2011     - Created an accelerated skills training program mapped to industry credentials.     - For more information, see: [*Excellence and Equity in STEM Programs*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/research-reports/community-college-guide-excellence-and-equity-stem-programs)**,** pp.27-28   + Patrick and Henry Community College (small to mid-size, rural serving):     - A regional demand for welders led Patrick and Henry to an innovative solution partnering with K-12 schools     - For more information, see: [*Rural Community College Excellence,*](https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/media/58) pp. 24-25 | *Slides 17-47 Participant Toolkit pp. 4-10* |
| **10-15 minutes** | **Workforce—Models of Excellence**  *Facilitation notes:*   * *This may be a good place to implement a “Walk & Talk,” where participants move and find a partner from another table. You may encourage participants to connect with a partner they haven’t yet connected with this session. If you have a time constraint, you may, alternatively, consider a “Turn & Talk” with a nearby partner.* * *Remind participants they read the Models of Excellence case studies as pre-work, and for this activity, they’ll be focusing on workforce practices.*   Independent Reflection (5 minutes)   * Instruct participants to review the workforce sections of the Models of Excellence case studies for Lake Area Technical College and Valencia College, and then reflect on the questions in the Participant Toolkit.   + How do elements of the framework we just discussed show up in these examples?   + How are these workforce case studies different from what you see in traditional workforce practices?   + What are you wondering?   Partner Discussion (5 minutes)   * Participants discuss their reflections with a partner. | *Slides 48-49 Participant Toolkit p. 11* |
| **45-60 minutes** | **Panel: Employer Partnerships to Advance Labor Market Outcomes**  *Planning considerations: There are no standardized curricular materials for the panel discussion. We recommend you either invite college workforce leaders or employer partners (or both) to join the panel. We encourage moderators to share the Aspen* Workforce Playbook *Strategies and state workforce context data with panelists ahead of time via email. We also recommend meeting either in person or via Zoom with panelists to address any questions they may have on the curriculum for this module and to develop a series of panel questions and responses. We recommend aligning question prompts to the key ideas in the* Workforce Playbook. *This will ensure alignment between panelists’ reflections and the curricular materials. Optional prompts are below. Customize the questions to align with panelists’ strengths and experiences.*   * *College leader and employer partner: What does a successful college-employer partnership look like to you? How do you monitor progress? What is the impact on students? What is the impact on the workforce?* * *Employer partner: How have you worked with college partners to create honest and consistent feedback loops? How do you align the skills graduates need to be successful employees?* * *Employer partner: How do you communicate the unique needs of your regional labor market and industry with colleges?* * *College leader and employer partner: What are the challenges in developing strong college-employer partnerships? How have you navigated those challenges?* * *College leader: What is your institution’s vision for talent development and economic mobility? How is this vision institutionalized as a central component of student success? How do you ensure all students have access to high-value programs?* * *College leader: How do you support students’ goals from pre-matriculation to post-graduation at your institution? [Consider: intentional early outreach, onboarding process, career, and life skills development support for post-graduation in good jobs/careers.]*   *We recommend limiting the panel discussion to approximately 30-45 minutes. This will allow 10-15 minutes for participants’ questions.* | *Slide 50 Participant Toolkit p. 12* |
| **10-15 minutes** | **Module Closing: Debrief and Reflections**  Independent Reflection (5 minutes)  Participants reflect:   * What are your takeaways from the module? * What questions do you have? * As a result of this learning and reflections from your workforce practice assessment, what might you:   + …keep doing?   + …stop doing?   + …start doing?   Walk & Talk (5 minutes)  Participants find a partner and discuss their reflections.  Group Debrief (5 minutes)  Allow a few participants to share closing reflections.   * What learning might you take back to your current role based on this module? * What might you share with others at your institution? | *Slides 51-54 Participant Toolkit p. 13* |

# Techniques for Virtual Facilitation

While originally built for in-person delivery, all our module materials are designed for easy translation to a virtual environment. If you are facilitating this module virtually, it will be helpful to keep the following tips in mind:

* It may save time to create breakout groups randomly. However, if you would like to create specific breakout groups for activities, we recommend you do so ahead of time, so the rooms are ready to deploy immediately after you give instructions.
* Facilitation options for group discussions include sending participants into random Zoom breakout rooms in partners or trios, or facilitating a whole group discussion using a virtual whiteboard, such as [Mural](https://mural.co/?utm_medium=paid-search&utm_source=adwords&utm_campaign=11265145092&utm_term=mural&utm_adgroup=109231331743&utm_mt=e&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiAhvK8BhDfARIsABsPy4i1-OvQF3VIeNBaLWnj9WtSyk1tfr3lUl_9yI8p4TX4KkLCd-VXOqQaAgfEEALw_wcB), using the chat feature, or using the raise hand feature.
* For virtual delivery, we recommend you omit Walk & Talks/Turn & Talks or turn them into group discussions.

# Considerations for Additional Learning

Leadership Academy modules were originally situated within a sequenced curriculum with further opportunities for customization. While not included in the open access materials package, the following presentations or activities may be relevant for your audience/context and further support participants’ learning.

## State Workforce Development Overview

Consider offering additional session time to ground participants in your state labor market context. You could present data from college institutional research (IR) teams, state/regional labor market indicators, labor market indicators from outside vendors (such as Lightcast), and conversations from employer partners. Below is a potential framework for the session.

* Current labor market overview
* Employer and employee/job seeker workforce trends
* State-specific historic economic development investments
* State investments and workforce strategies
* Additional workforce or context data, as needed

## Activity: Analyzing State Labor Market Data

This activity allows participants to practice analyzing labor market data for their region. Using labor market data that is already available to you/the colleges in your state, develop a data report for participants to explore. You may use data from the state- and/or college-specific report where available. Once you have identified data sources, please create questions that align with the metrics participants will investigate. Questions may include:

* What is the living wage in your region? Does that surprise you?
* What are the largest in-demand jobs that pay a living wage in your region?
* Are the programs your college offers aligned to in-demand occupations? With jobs that provide a living wage?
* Which living wage, in-demand jobs have been increasing? Decreasing?
* What other information about your local labor market would be helpful? What questions do you still have?

We suggest providing time for participants to explore the data reports independently, discuss the questions as a small group, and debrief as a whole group.

Leadership Academy Module Sequence

This curriculum is designed with 10 modules in a progressive sequence, though modules may be delivered individually for targeted learning. While these modules may be delivered as stand-alone learning sessions, we recommend referencing the sequenced curriculum below and considering if there is any content from other modules that may support your participants’ learning.

If delivering Module 2 (Improving Labor Market Outcomes) as a stand-alone module, we recommend reviewing Module 1 (Defining Student Success) and Module 9 (Leading Strategic External Partnerships) to consider what additional content from those modules might support your participants’ learning.

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| **Excellence in Student Success at Scale** | | |
| **Session 1: The Essential Roles of Leadership in Student Success** | **Session 2: Keeping Students’ End Goals in Mind** | **Session 3: The Student Experience** |
| Module 1: Defining Student Success | Module 2: Improving Labor Market Outcomes  Module 3: Improving Transfer at Scale | Module 4: Improving Teaching and Learning  Module 5: Aligning Completion Strategies to Post-Graduation Success |
| **Transformational Leadership to Advance Student Success** | | |
| **Session 4: Transformational Leadership for Student Success** | **Session 5: Institutional Capacities to Advance Reform** | **Session 6: Strategic External Partnerships and the Leadership Journey** |
| Module 6: Leadership Qualities for Student Success | Module 7: Leading Finance Strategically to Advance Reforms  Module 8: Leading Strong Teams for Transformational Change | Module 9: Leading Highly Effective Strategic External Partnerships  Module 10: Scaling and Improving Dual Enrollment |