



THE MAKING OF AN INNOVATION ENGINE:

ADVANCING CAREER- CONNECTED LEARNING

Insights from the Catalyze Challenge, Rounds 1 & 2

September 2022

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DISCLAIMER

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME STATEMENT

Catalyze was developed to support entrepreneurs in reimagining career-connected learning (CCL) in the US, with the ultimate goal of expanding economic opportunity to communities that have long suffered from a lack of access.

Beyond a challenge or grant competition, Catalyze was designed as an “innovation engine” that could source and fund models and programs bridging education and employment; learn from the successes and challenges of those models; and share these stories of impact and opportunities for improvement with funders, policy makers, and innovators.

Catalyze funded two cohorts of grantees in its first 14 months. These winning programs include models that focus on providing career identity development opportunities and creating career paths for students to follow after high school. In the spirit of continuous improvement, the Challenge’s cadence is under consideration and the process is still evolving.

What is unwavering, however, is Catalyze’s focus on creating opportunities for access to economic independence and career success for historically underserved groups (HUGs), which include, among others, learners of color, low-income learners, and learners in rural communities. In Round 2 alone, 92% of grantees serve or intend to serve communities in which >60% of learners are part of HUGs, and 76% of grantee programs are led by those with proximate or shared identity or lived experience.

CATALYZE YEAR ONE¹: AT A GLANCE

\$15M

raised

\$10M

granted²

7

national funders engaged

40

solutions funded

24

states served³

16,510

learners supported

¹Covers a 14-month period, June 2021-August 2022

²Remaining funds will seed future Challenge rounds

³Refers to states served directly; in addition, 5 national models support learners across the US

Catalyze has also stewarded a broad coalition of funding partners, beginning with its founding partners, American Student Assistance® (ASA), Charter School Growth Fund (CSGF), and the Walton Family Foundation (WFF). Since then, Arnold Ventures, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Charles Koch Foundation, and the Joyce Foundation have joined the collective, with interests spanning traditional career technical education, new post-secondary pathways, policy, and research. We expect this partnership to grow as Catalyze deepens its impact.

The Making of an Innovation Engine is designed to capture learnings from the Catalyze initiative to date and insights about the state of the CCL field, as gleaned through Challenge applications, the individuals who both completed and reviewed them, and the operational partners working with the grantees. The report seeks to answer two questions directly:

- 1. Was the Challenge successful in catalyzing new innovation?**
- 2. What types of innovation did the Catalyze Challenge surface?**

In answering these core research questions, a number of other insights emerged that are explored here.

This report first provides a Challenge overview. Next, the **Innovations in Career-Connected Learning** section discusses the applicants and their models, bringing them to life via deep dives and spotlights on representative grantees. The final section, **Learnings from Challenge Execution**, shares lessons learned from implementing two rounds of a unique competition.

We strive to inspire *funders* to join this movement, *employers* to both lend their voices to amplifying this work and hire graduates of the grantee programs, and *innovators* to apply to a future Catalyze Challenge. In early 2023, we will release a more detailed report that summarizes the experience of the models supported by Catalyze. This report will lay out lessons for any individual or organization seeking to advance innovation, quality, and equity of CCL in the US.

Thank you to all those who have generously shared your time, insights, proposals, and resources since Catalyze's inception. While we are proud of the journey we have taken together, we humbly recognize that our experience to date is only the beginning of a movement to drive much-needed change for young people and future generations in this country. We look forward to continuing to work with visionary leaders to bring groundbreaking solutions to the communities that need them most.

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

Career-connected learning plays a critical role in improving the connection between education and employment. A high school degree offers 50% fewer family-sustaining career opportunities than it did 30 years ago, and only a fraction of the students who attend any type of higher ed actually complete it ([TribLive](#)). Meanwhile, only 33% of high school students and 58% of employers believe students are career-ready after graduation ([Kauffman](#)).

This has particularly affected communities of color: 72% of Black Americans and 79% of Hispanic Americans over the age of 25 do not have a bachelor's degree. Non-degreed workers have traditionally been shut out of professions that require college credentials, resulting in lower wealth accumulation for these communities ([Washington Post](#)).

While some type of postsecondary education is critical to long-term career success, there is a need for viable career-training options beyond the college degree. This country needs a rethinking of how it prepares students for career success and unlocks access to economic mobility.

Driven by a commitment to support innovations that prepare students for career and lifelong success, sponsoring partners American Student Assistance, Charter School Growth Fund and the Walton Family Foundation launched the Catalyze Challenge to source CCL models that are more responsive to the needs of learners and employers.

Catalyze funds models that are groundbreaking, serve historically underserved groups (HUGs; e.g., learners of color, low-income learners, learners in rural communities), address the needs of learners in grades 6-14, have the potential to serve more learners over time, and are informed by employers' perspectives.

APPLICANT ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDE:

School districts | Post-secondary institutions | Nonprofits | Employers* | Government | Charter management organizations | Industry associations | Intermediaries

*For-profit employers must partner with a tax exempt organization to receive an Accelerate grant

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Catalyze set out to answer two core research questions: was it successful in catalyzing new innovation and, if so, what type? The key takeaways that are explored in greater depth throughout this report are summarized below.

Was the Challenge successful in catalyzing new innovation?

Through its first two rounds, Catalyze awarded nearly \$10M in grants to 40 innovative solutions that bridge the gap between education and employment and prepare students for lifelong economic success.

- Catalyze received 854 applications from 48 states, exceeding the application goal by 73%.
- Utilizing strategic digital marketing campaigns led to a larger and more diverse set of applicants that stretched beyond the network of Catalyze funders.

Targeting specific gaps in CCL provided a unique opportunity for funders to make more targeted investments.

- Informed by stakeholder research, Catalyze focused Round 2 on two under-resourced and critical areas in the CCL field: Career Identity Development & Planning and Post-High School Pathways. This focus helped surface solutions that address key gaps.

What types of innovation did the Catalyze Challenge surface?

CCL models that extend economic opportunity to communities that have long suffered from a lack of access.

- 40% of grantees serve rural students, many through innovative remote learning and working models that provide new high-quality career opportunities.
- Additionally, 44% of applicants serve students outside of the 20 largest metropolitan areas in the US. New “earn-to-learn” models surfaced that pay students while they learn a skill, further reducing access barriers for low-income students.
- An emphasis on early career exploration and identity development led to grantees both expanding existing high school programs into middle school as well as designing programs specific to grades 6-8.

Models that meet learner and employer needs through employer partnerships, learner voice, and proximate leadership.

Partnerships with employers, incorporation of input from learners, and program leaders with experiences, backgrounds, or identities in common with the learner population are all important ways to ensure that CCL programs meet both learners’ and employers’ needs.

CHALLENGE DETAILS

The Catalyze Challenge grants two categories of awards:



ACCELERATE

awards grants of up to \$500,000 to solutions* ready to serve students in the next school year



IGNITE

awards research and planning grants of up to \$50,000 to solutions that support bold emerging ideas for preparing students to become career-ready

At the start of the grant-making process, aspiring applicants are required to submit an application within Accelerate Theme 1, Accelerate Theme 2, or Ignite. Questions in the application aim to develop a clear picture of the model, including topics such as: the type of model, the model's groundbreaking features, the populations and geographies the model intends to serve, and other descriptive information.

The Catalyze Challenge employs a three-stage review process involving a collective effort to identify unique, groundbreaking career-connected models that are heavily invested in the communities they serve. At each stage, applications that do not meet the target thresholds are eliminated from consideration. The stages are summarized in the table below.

REVIEW STAGE	PRIORITIES	REVIEWERS
Screening	Alignment with the Challenge's themes and criteria; application completeness	Catalyze team
Evaluation	High-quality solution design, groundbreaking elements, proposed impact, leadership, budget	Diverse group of evaluators, including educators, funders, entrepreneurs, and community members; Accelerate applications are read by three evaluators and Ignite by two
Selection	Credibility of implementation plan, team strength, resonance with target audience	Feedback from youth panels (and educator/employer panels, for Accelerate), with selection decisions led by committee of funders, leaders in the education-to-employment field, and past Catalyze grantees

*For-profit employers must partner with a tax-exempt organization to receive an Accelerate grant

This report draws upon findings gathered from the first two rounds of the Catalyze Challenge.

ROUND 1: **Summer/Fall 2021**

The Catalyze Challenge initially sought to surface and study the various types of innovation currently occurring in the CCL space. Round 1 of the Challenge solicited a wide range of applicants and awarded more than \$4 million in grants in the fall of 2021, with funding from American Student Assistance, Arnold Ventures, Charter School Growth Fund, and the Walton Family Foundation. Fifteen inspiring solutions, reaching learners in more than 15 states, were drawn from a pool of 303 applicants.

ROUND 2: **Spring/Summer 2022**

Following Round 1, Catalyze worked with a group of leading employers, educators, field experts, and leaders of youth-serving organizations to identify gaps in CCL. In Round 2, the focus of the Accelerate award was narrowed to two "themes" describing areas with the greatest opportunity and identified need: Career Identity Development & Planning and Post-High School Pathways. Launched in January 2022, Round 2 saw 551 applications. In summer 2022, Catalyze selected 25 grantees in 24 states and awarded more than \$5 million in total. American Student Assistance, Arnold Ventures, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Charles Koch Foundation, Charter School Growth Fund, the Joyce Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation participated in Round 2 funding.



INNOVATIONS IN CAREER-CONNECTED LEARNING

OVERVIEW

The first two Catalyze Challenge rounds generated 854 applications from 48 states, nearly three times as many as originally targeted. The Challenge was successful in sourcing innovation from a diverse applicant pool and awarded grants to ~40 solutions across Rounds 1 and 2. Through its selection process, the Challenge prioritized solutions that will expand access to career pathways for diverse populations across the United States, particularly for historically underserved groups. These models are led by multi-sectoral partnerships that reveal an understanding of the collective responsibility for reimagining education and career possibilities for youth.

The first two rounds of the Catalyze Challenge have uncovered promising solutions that can help youth actively explore careers at an early age, discover their aptitudes and passions, and secure jobs that lead to family-sustaining careers. The sections below explore Catalyze applicants, the learners they serve, and the methods they use to serve those learners. Within these sections, the Challenge has identified four standout elements of successful applications regarding career-connected learning (CCL) opportunities for youth. These programs do one or more of the following:

Engage employers in meaningful ways to ensure programs meet employers' needs, while expanding pathways to employment for young people.

Develop innovative models in rural areas to provide local youth with high-quality CCL opportunities typically found in metropolitan areas.

Introduce career exploration and identity development in middle school, offering youth an opportunity to explore their passions early on while developing relevant skills and discovering potential careers.

Design robust earn-to-learn models, allowing youth to pursue paid, hands-on work-based learning experiences that can expand career opportunity, as opposed to entry-level low-wage jobs with limited growth potential.

WHO ARE CATALYZE APPLICANTS?

Across the sectors of K-12 education, higher education, and employment, the Challenge successfully sourced cross-cutting solutions that break down traditional silos to deliver transformative and relevant career-connected learning for students.

The Catalyze Challenge applicant pool is a diverse group of early-stage programs across many industries, regions, and model types. Given the traditional separation among K-12 education, higher education, and employment, the Challenge encouraged multi-sectoral partnerships to create relevant CCL experiences.

These multi-sectoral partnerships are critical in creating alignment and structures that enable students to take steps along a career pathway resulting in credentials with labor market value ([JFF](#)). The applicant pool delivered on this, with Round 2 applications featuring both an mean and median of four types of partner organizations.

CATALYZE CHALLENGE APPLICANTS AT A GLANCE

NON-PROFIT-LED

60% of solutions are led by non-profit organizations, 15% by K-12 schools, 15% by businesses, and 10% by other types of organizations.

EARLY-STAGE PROGRAMS

77% have existed for 3 years or less and one-third have yet to launch.

PROXIMATE LEADERSHIP

76% of Round 2 grantees' leadership draws on lived experience, identity, and/or geographic location they share with the communities they serve.

DIVERSE PARTNERSHIPS

Solutions have a mean and median of four types of partner organizations.*

*for Round 2 applications only



WHO ARE APPLICANTS SERVING?

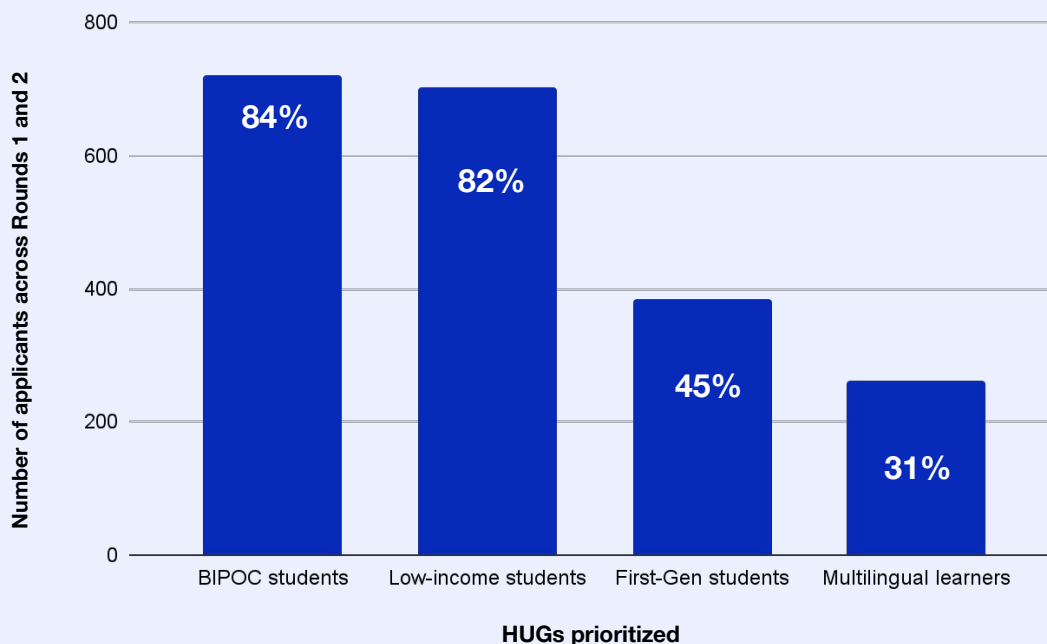
The Catalyze Challenge surfaced and invested in programs serving diverse populations across the US to expand the reach of quality career-connected learning.

In particular, the Challenge prioritized solutions that serve learners from historically underserved groups across a variety of ages, starting as early as middle school. The Challenge also aimed to invest in solutions that broaden the typical reach of CCL solutions beyond major metropolitan areas and into rural communities.

The Challenge was successful at surfacing applications serving priority populations:

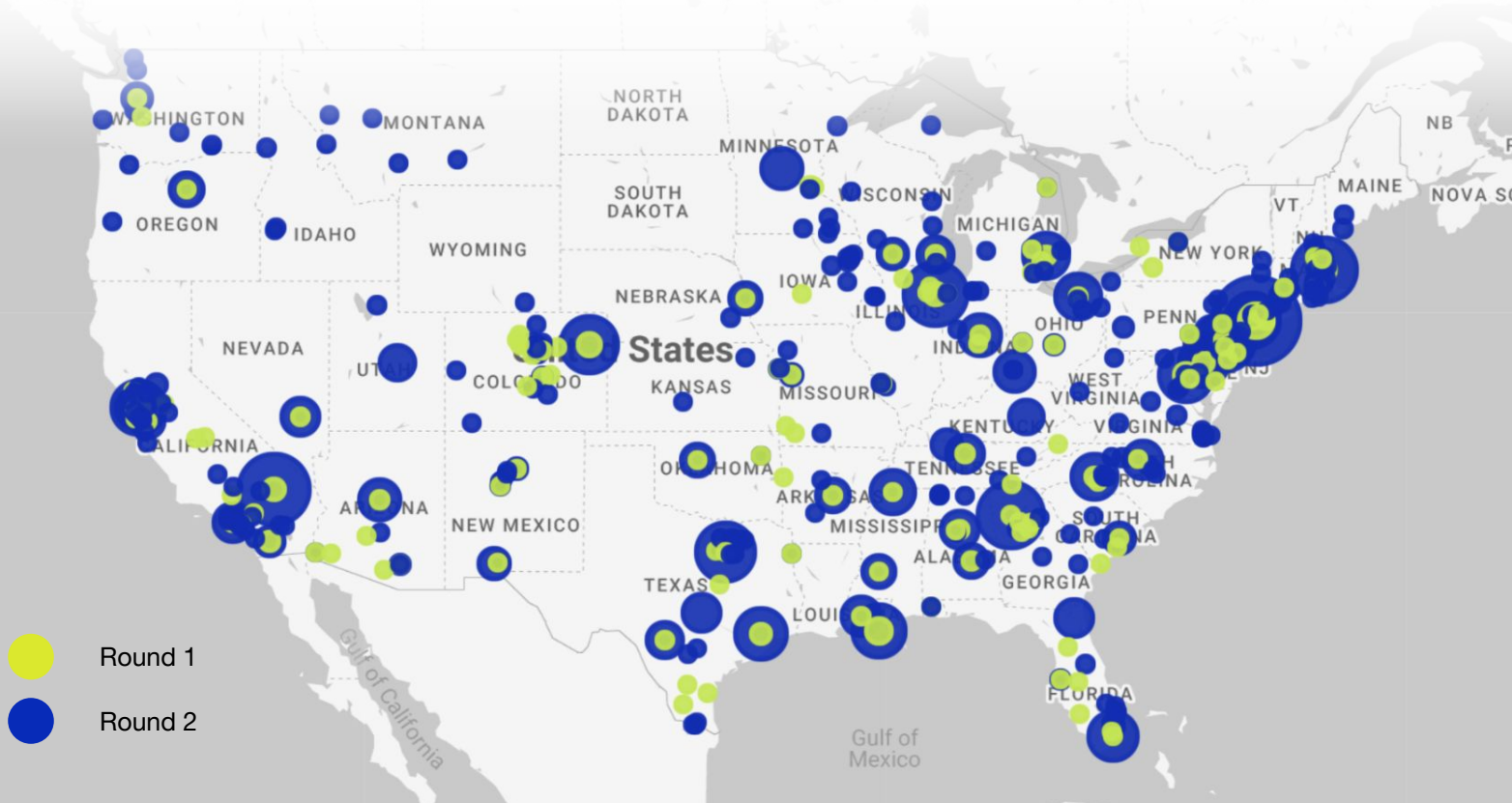
- Applicants serve **48 states** and **372 cities/regions**, plus nationwide programs
- **71%** of applicants serve students in urban areas while **37%** serve rural areas
- **44%** of applicants serve students outside of the largest 20 metropolitan areas (see *Appendix B*)
- **70%** of applicants serve historically underserved groups (60% or more of their student population)
- **80%** serve high school students while almost half serve middle school or post-secondary students

CATALYZE APPLICANTS PRIORITIZE HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED GROUPS (HUGS)



N= 854

CATALYZE CHALLENGE APPLICANTS REACH LEARNERS ACROSS THE US



While it saw a wide geographic reach, the Challenge can continue to work on sourcing high-quality solutions throughout the Mountain West, Great Plains, and other interior regions of the US. Rural youth are often overlooked in CCL. Catalyze grantees are aiming to change this narrative through creative solutions that equip rural youth to enter the workforce while helping revitalize rural economies.

Another population Catalyze can further target in future rounds is middle school students. While over 40% of Catalyze applicants serve middle school students in some capacity, only 7% of solutions exclusively serve middle school students. This reveals an opportunity for the Challenge to prioritize solutions that are designed specifically with the cognitive needs of young learners in mind.

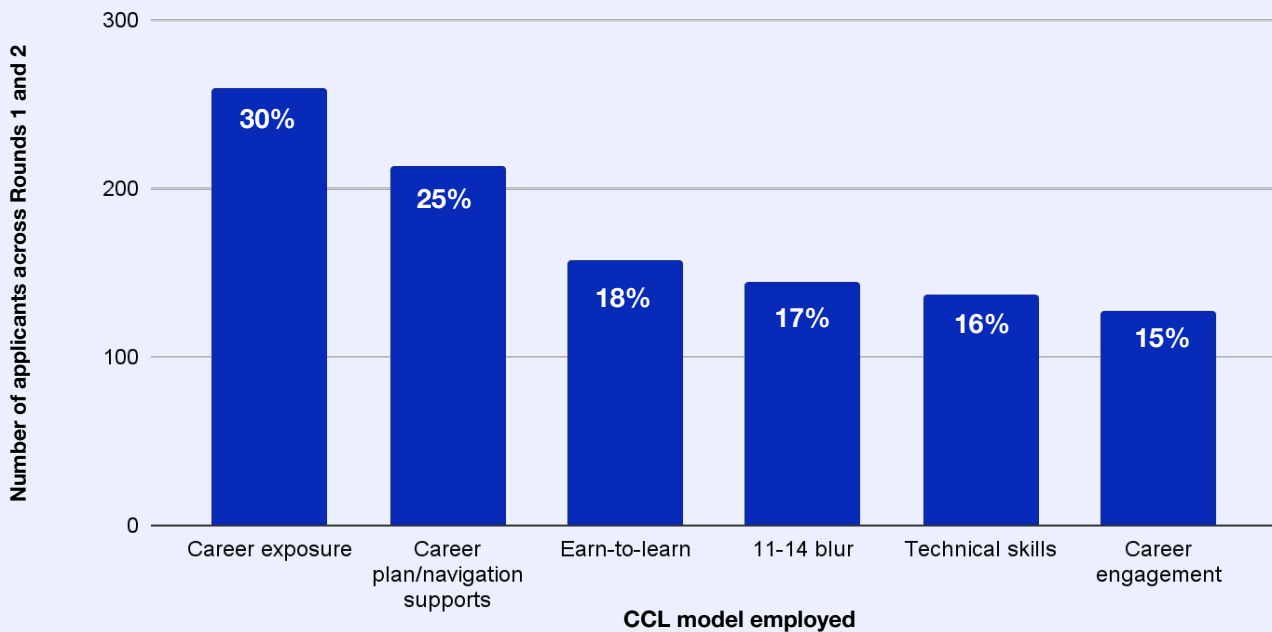
HOW ARE CATALYZE APPLICANTS SERVING STUDENTS?

In response to the gap in opportunities outside of the traditional higher education pathway, Catalyze sources programs that provide a variety of pathways into employment, including paid work-based learning opportunities that help students earn wages while gaining meaningful career skills and experience.

The applicant pool displays the varied landscape of CCL, with models that expose students to careers, provide employment opportunities, build skills, and blur the lines

between the traditional boundaries of K-12, college, and career ([see Appendix A for model descriptions](#)).

CATALYZE APPLICANTS OFFER A VARIETY OF CAREER-CONNECTED LEARNING MODELS

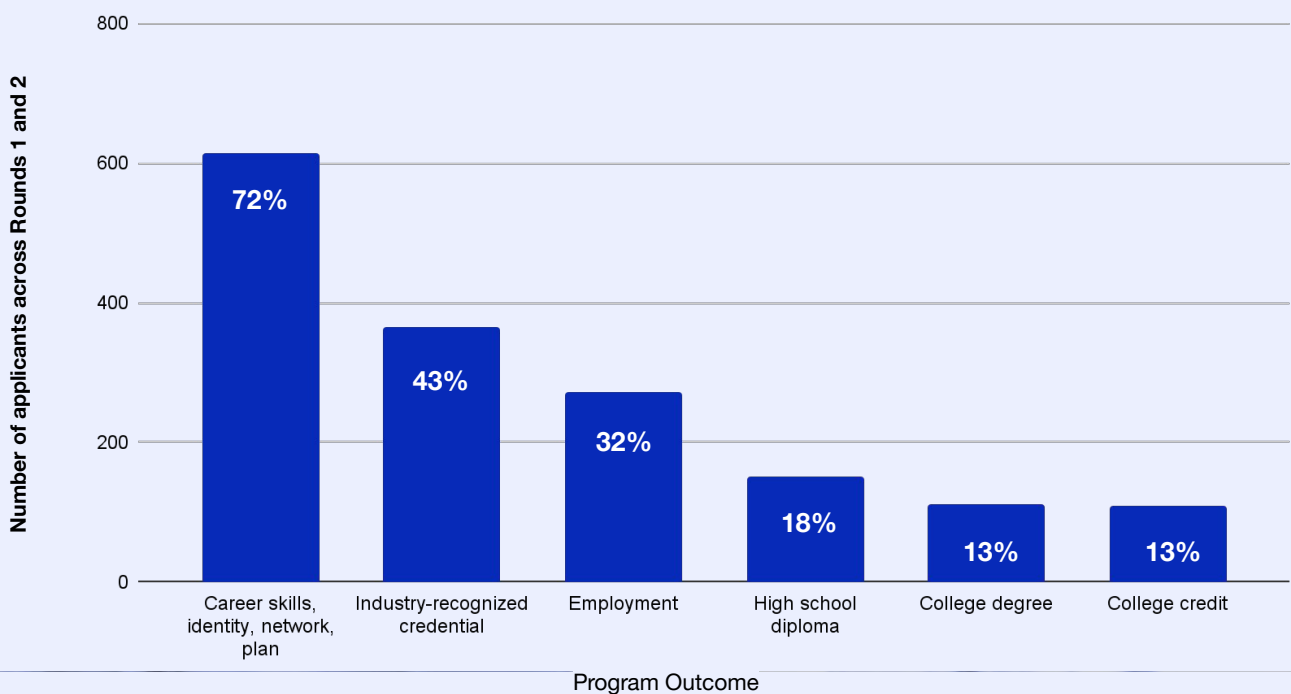


Models acknowledge the varied needs of students by offering a diverse set of opportunities—including employment; industry-recognized credentials; and career skills, identity, and plan development—that help facilitate pathways into meaningful careers.

The deep dives that follow provide more detail about how grantees are designing with one more of the following elements:

- Employer engagement in CCL
- Seeding innovation in rural areas
- Reimagining CCL in middle schools
- Expanding the field of earn-to-learn

CATALYZE APPLICANTS OFFER A VARIETY OF OUTCOMES FOR LEARNERS





DEEP DIVE

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT IN THE WORLD OF CAREER-CONNECTED LEARNING

Employer engagement is a crucial aspect of CCL models, as employers are able to provide up-to-date industry insights that can inform program design and may potentially employ the students at the end of the program ([Bain](#)). CCL can also help to increase the supply of workers prepared to meet employer demand. The Challenge identified these critical partnerships as a gap in the field of CCL, and made employer engagement an eligibility criterion.

The Challenge was successful in sourcing solutions in cross-sector, employer-involved partnerships: **in Round 2, 73% of applicants involved an “industry partner”** (e.g., for-profit enterprises, workforce leaders, or trade associations/unions).

Grantees have engaged employers to provide:

- Input on program design aligned to industry needs and trends
- Direct program delivery through internship, employment opportunities, or mentorship
- Credential-backing to validate industry-valued skills students are building

Grantees are also addressing shifts in the labor market. For example, with more work moving online, some grantees are using technology to enable virtual work-based learning experiences in areas where students would not otherwise have local access. Some are broadening CCL into historically overlooked industries, such as mental health and teaching. Others are employers seeking new ways to expand their pipeline of trained employees. Expanding into these fields increases the accessibility of the pathways to living-wage occupations, particularly for students in remote areas, and can address labor-supply challenges in industries that provide critical services to communities across the US.



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

ACCELERATE AMERICA

Propel America’s initiative, Accelerate America, supports young adults in Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Jersey in accessing pathways to living-wage jobs as Certified Medical Assistants, Sterile Processing Technicians, Laser Technicians or Registered Behavioral Technicians. Successful participants receive official certification and college credits, as well as a guaranteed interview for full-time employment. Propel America has engaged industry employers in designing the program curriculum, including competencies and necessary skills, to ensure its students are prepared for competitive job placements.

“Having an externship with RWJBarnabas Health gave me the hands-on experience I needed, and my coach, Hassan, helped me. If I needed anything personal, emotional, or spiritual.”

TAFARI

Propel alum and Certified Medical Assistant working at Vanguard Health



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT
BAYADA

BAYADA Home Health Care’s initiative—Scaling Health Care Careers for Young Adults—helps students in grades 13-14 in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Hawai’i acquire industry-recognized credentials in the health care field. BAYADA’s career training programs and apprenticeship model prepare young adults to enter occupations as Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses, or Registered Behavior Technicians, providing quick access to upward career and economic mobility. As a not-for-profit health care employer with a national presence, BAYADA’s initiative addresses critical health care worker shortages while providing young people with meaningful, in-demand jobs and marketable credentials in an earn-while-you-learn model.

“As a nationwide employer composed of multiple specialties, BAYADA is uniquely positioned to induct young adults into entry-level positions, offer a variety of health care career tracks, and elevate them to mid-career positions—all while eliminating the need to repeatedly change employers to accelerate their career. Through our portfolio of clinical training programs, we aim to scale access to a wide variety of upwardly mobile, family-sustaining health care careers for young adults and systematize pathways for upskilling and economic advancement.”

KRISTEN KOBA-BURDT, BCBA, LBA, CDP
Division Director Of Clinical Operations,
BAYADA



DEEP DIVE

SEEDING INNOVATION IN RURAL AREAS

Rural areas have long struggled to offer quality CCL opportunities due to challenges with educator recruitment and distance from institutes of higher education ([Council of Economic Advisors](#)). Still, rural areas can be fruitful grounds for reimagining economic pathways for the 21st century by investing in broadband internet development, local entrepreneurs, and industries in which rural communities have a competitive advantage ([Third Way](#)). While 14% of the American population lives in rural areas, **33% of all Rounds 1 and 2 grantees serve rural areas in some capacity and 15% serve rural areas exclusively.** These solutions are helping revitalize rural communities by providing viable career paths for rural youth ([USDA](#)).

Grantees serving rural areas exclusively are particularly focused on helping youth access family-sustaining jobs in local and in-demand sectors, such as construction, manufacturing, and STEM. To create talent pipelines into these careers, grantees are establishing partnerships with local employers, industry partners, and higher education institutions to provide youth work-based learning and dual-enrollment opportunities (dual high school and college enrollment). These initiatives help retain local talent, meet regional workforce needs, and invigorate rural economies.

A particularly groundbreaking aspect of some rural models is their focus on creating pathways to remote work in information technology and computer science, providing opportunities for rural youth to remain in their communities while entering high-wage industries. Access to this kind of career training requires affordable, high-quality broadband internet, which will be critical as more jobs can be performed remotely. Greater investments in rural technological infrastructure will help address the digital divide and expand CCL opportunities in these communities.



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

DIGITAL PATHWAYS IN THE RURAL HEARTLAND

Crowder College and Codefi's Digital Pathways in the Rural Heartland initiative aims to reshape the narrative about career opportunities in rural America from one centered on manufacturing and agriculture to one that includes a flourishing digital workforce. The partnership offers youth coding leagues for middle schoolers and software development programs for high school students in rural Missouri to help them learn about career opportunities, gain professional experience, and receive industry-recognized credentials that open doors to careers in the digital economy.

“Partnerships with education leaders, regional employers who have struggled to find digital skills talent, and communities that see the need to diversify beyond manufacturing and service industries have allowed the region to reimagine what is possible for youth in rural America.”

CHETT DANIEL
Interim VP of Academic
Affairs, Crowder College



DEEP DIVE

REIMAGINING CAREER-CONNECTED LEARNING IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Middle school is a critical period during which students benefit from career exploration as their brains are receptive to developing employability and soft skills ([ACTE](#)). However, career navigation often does not start until after students leave high school. In order to expand early career exposure and skill development, the Challenge prioritized middle school models as part of its portfolio. **Over 40% of all applicants and 34% of grantees serve grades 6-8.**

The majority of grantee models that serve middle school extend beyond grades 6-8, providing early career exploration before more targeted post-high school pathway programs. Middle school models engage students in a variety of career fields in authentic and hands-on ways, namely by *exposing* them to different careers, helping them *discover* what they like to do and have aptitude for, and providing them with opportunities to *build* and *demonstrate* career skills over time ([Entangled](#)).

Catalyze funding has enabled a few grantees to extend their program from high school into the middle school grades. One hypothesis stipulates that a program's impact is amplified if learners can explore careers early, and then later access a pathway that aligns to those skills and interests. Similarly, early exploration will also help students learn what they *don't* want to do, and ensure that more in-depth, expensive training programs later are targeted to students more interested in that career path. Catalyze funding provides investment and space for programs to test new models and hypotheses and then to iterate or expand on what works. Future studies in the field could examine the relative impact of students participating in career exploration in middle school, as compared to students who begin CCL later in their academic journey.



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

NXU PURPOSE OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM

nXu partners with schools across the nation to administer its national *Purpose Opportunity Program*, in which students engage in career exploration through the lens of purpose and identity while cultivating their social and emotional learning skills. The Challenge enabled nXu to expand from exclusively serving high schools to include middle schools, allowing younger populations of students to investigate careers and their interests earlier in their schooling. The full 6th-12th-grade curriculum will be shared with partner schools and organizations in the 2022-2023 school year.

"We are thrilled to have the Catalyze Challenge's support in expanding our curriculum to the middle school space because it is increasingly clear that middle school students need—and are developmentally ready—to engage in initial purpose, identity, and career exploration. There has been growing demand from middle schools seeking a comprehensive and integrated purpose, identity, and career exploration curriculum, and we at nXu are excited to partner with middle schools to implement our curriculum."

YUTAKA TAMURA,
NXU Executive Director



DEEP DIVE

EXPANDING THE FIELD OF EARN-TO-LEARN

Demand for new post-secondary pathways outside of higher education is growing ([Project on Workforce](#)), but information, access, and financial barriers stand in the way for many interested students ([Carnegie & Gallup](#)). For students from low-income households, payment for their time can mean the difference between participation in a CCL program and work in a low-wage position to make ends meet. Earn-to-learn can also provide an opportunity for students from low-income communities to build relationships and social capital across economic lines, a potential determinant for education and other life outcomes ([Chetty](#)).

The Challenge identified the lack of paid learning experiences as a gap in the field and prioritized earn-to-learn models in the selection process. As a result, about **30% of grantee models had some earn-to-learn component as part of their model.**

Catalyze observed that most grantee earn-to-learn models:

- Provide livable compensation for student participation in programs, especially after high school
- Focus on high-demand, high-wage industries such as information technology (IT) or construction
- Tend to incur more costs per student, due to payment of student stipends on top of program costs

Wraparound services, including childcare, transportation stipends, and other supports, play a significant role in promoting student academic and social-emotional outcomes by reducing physical, financial, and emotional barriers to participation ([Brookings](#)). The Catalyze Challenge is seeing early signs of programs offering wraparound services and intends to analyze their impact on students' experiences in work-based learning models.



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

HOPEWORKS DUAL ENROLLMENT

Hopeworks Dual Enrollment trains high school seniors without plans after graduation for higher education in Camden, NJ, and Philadelphia, PA, followed by a six-month paid work experience with Hopeworks and eventually a job placement. Unlike many high school experiences that are unpaid, this program pays students at all levels; provides necessary training and work experience in high-demand, high-wage industries, such as web design, global information systems (GIS), and data visualization; and either places students with employer partners or hires them directly.

"Prior to coming here, I thought there was only one path after school and that was attending college. Now that I'm here, I've learned so much about GIS that I'm not only considering college, but working for American Water is a new goal for me too."

MARQUIS POINDEXTER

Hopeworks participant

LEARNINGS FROM CHALLENGE EXECUTION

In addition to learning from the Catalyze applicants and grantees about the state of career-connected learning (CCL) in the US, the process has yielded insights related to the challenge mechanism itself. Lessons about Catalyze's ability to launch or expand groundbreaking models, as well as grow the number of learners who have access to opportunities that bridge education and employment, illustrate how philanthropic funders can use challenges as a means to address their organizational strategic goals.

The following section explores selected learnings gleaned from designing and executing the Catalyze Challenge. Round 2 incorporated key lessons learned from Round 1, primarily through increased specificity and focus on prioritized areas. While these changes demonstrably deepened the Challenge's impact, Catalyze continues to learn and identify areas for continuous improvement in Round 3, scheduled for 2023.

HIGHLIGHTED LEARNINGS INCLUDE:

- 1 Executing digital **sourcing** practices increases the number, diversity, and quality of challenge applicants, with a secondary effect of growing the greater Catalyze community.
- 2 Designing a themed approach better **targets gaps** in CCL and addresses areas of greatest need and underinvestment.
- 3 Defining, prioritizing and seeking **groundbreaking models** makes it possible to more efficiently and effectively identify areas of true innovation.
- 4 Incorporating **learner voice** into the challenge application and selection processes helps ensure grantee models are both valuable and feasible for learners.
- 5 Establishing **proximate leadership** as a core value increases the likelihood that innovators will have a keen and nuanced understanding of their target learners' needs.



SOURCING A WIDER APPLICANT POOL USING DIGITAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Consumer-focused social media marketing campaign strategies were used to reach potential applicants outside the typical funder networks, raise awareness of the Challenge, and encourage innovators to apply.

WHAT AND WHY

In order to best understand the state of CCL in the US and select the strongest models to fund, Catalyze seeks to maximize the number, diversity and quality of applications it sources. The credibility and strength of the Catalyze Challenge are proportional to the breadth and depth of the applicant pool.

THE ISSUE

Catalyze funders seek to source groundbreaking CCL models, which necessitates the use of innovative tactics to reach potential Challenge applicants. Groundbreaking ideas can come from anywhere, and some of the most forward-thinking ideas arise outside the networks of traditional philanthropy.

APPROACH & RESULTS

Digital advertising is a vehicle for connecting with existing contacts and going beyond traditional funder networks, reaching internet users on social media and search sites where they already spend their time.

In both Challenge rounds, Catalyze worked with communications partner and social issues firm RALLY to design and execute a social media campaign to elevate the message of the Catalyze Challenge and invite interested and qualified social innovators to apply.



Catalyze prioritized key audiences and developed a targeted approach to reach them via digital ads and posts, based on their social media behaviors.

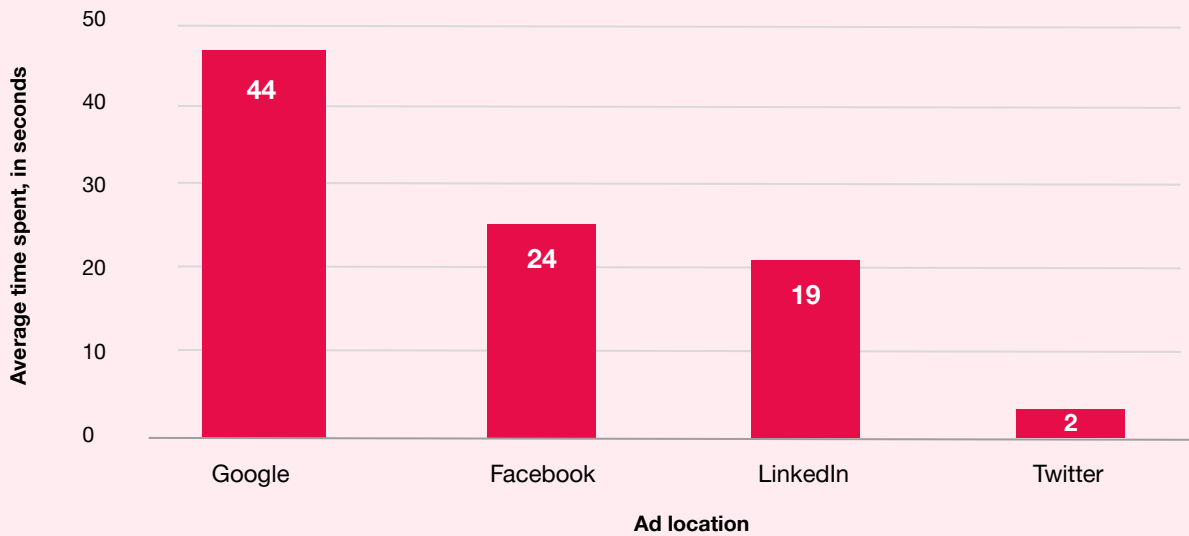
DIGITAL PLATFORM	TARGET AUDIENCE	RATIONALE
Google Ads	Users searching for education grants, CCL, and related terms	Reach users searching for resources offered by Catalyze
LinkedIn	Users working in HR at target companies	Reach users employed at companies that Catalyze has identified as potential partners, contributors, or influencers
	Users who attended ASU+GSV and other institutions with similar profiles	Attendees who are interested in reimagining education, in line with Catalyze grantees
	Users in K-12 education and related careers, innovation spaces, nonprofits, and entrepreneurial journeys	Reach users working in the education and business fields, who may have programs eligible for a Catalyze grant
Twitter	Users using keywords related to innovative education, and similar terms	Reach users in similar industries whose online activity shows interest in the education-to-employment sector
Facebook	Past visitors to the Catalyze Challenge website	Retarget users who visited the website but did not apply, to nudge them to submit applications

The campaign's audiences and the approach were refined in Round 2 to increase website engagement and focus on the **number of submitted applications, as opposed to the number of clicks on ads or impressions**. Ad spending was reallocated and targeting algorithms were iterated in real time to the platforms with the strongest performance.

In Round 1, the Challenge produced strong metrics, with 304 application submissions and 8,747 website views. Round 2's targeting approach proved successful, driving engaged users to the Catalyze Challenge website and far exceeding the goals of 12,000 website views and 300 application submissions. **Digital efforts yielded a total of 21,383 website views and 550 submissions, exceeding the ambitious initial goals by 83% and 78%, respectively.**

Google Search saw the greatest spending allocation because those who clicked through from a Google ad spent the most time on the Catalyze site. Twitter ads were ended early due to low site engagement.

VISITORS FROM GOOGLE SEARCH SPENT LONGEST TIME CATALYZE SITE AFTER AD CLICKTHROUGH



LEARNINGS

Digital targeting proved effective in driving the number of applications to Catalyze in Round 2. A further analysis of ad content shows that the best-performing ads featured engaged, excited learners and educators.

Catalyze Challenge
Offering grants for
**EDUCATION TO
CAREER SOLUTIONS**
[Apply Now ↗](#)

Apply now for up to \$500k to prepare students for career success
catalyzechallenge.org

[Catalyze Challenge | Apply for up to \\$500k | Career-connected Learning](#)
[Ad](#) www.catalyzechallenge.org

We're funding programs that set students up for a lifetime of success. Have an innovative education-to-career idea?

2

TARGETING GAPS IN THE FIELD THROUGH THE USE OF THEMES IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS

A theme-based approach introduced in Round 2 helped the Challenge effectively source solutions in areas of under-investment.

WHAT AND WHY

From its inception, the Challenge was designed to support groundbreaking early-stage ideas that prepare all students for career success, through a variety of pathways that may not require a two- or four-year college degree. Catalyze aspires to introduce novel solutions that disrupt the current system, in areas where funding is needed most, and help better prepare students for career success. While groundbreaking, Round 1 applicants were not clustered around specific areas of need.

THE ISSUE

Round 1 was intended to broadly source and study innovation, but its open-ended nature limited the Challenge's ability to effectively compare and study models and focus its investments on key gaps in the CCL field.

APPROACH & RESULTS

Following the inaugural round, the Challenge sought to provide clear avenues for Accelerate applicants to surface solutions that address gaps in the CCL landscape. More than 20 funders, leaders, employers and learners collaborated to identify, discuss and prioritize key gaps. Based on those discussions, Catalyze created two themes to help focus Accelerate applications in Round 2.

Based on those discussions, Catalyze created two themes to help focus Accelerate applications in Round 2. While this approach results in not funding some promising models that due to lack of fit with the specified theme, the ability to better focus investment dollars on the most pressing CCL gaps makes the tradeoff worthwhile.



Two main gaps were identified and addressed by incorporating themes into the Round 2 application process:

Theme 1

CAREER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING

Catalyze reviewed research illuminating that career navigation and guidance should happen early and often throughout education and into career. Currently most products prioritize post-secondary learners; too few are designed with younger students in mind ([Entangled](#)). **Theme 1, Career Identity Development & Planning**, expressed the Challenge’s interest in funding real-world learning and career exposure models, with a particular interest in those models that begin working with students as early as middle school.

Theme 2

POST-HIGH SCHOOL PATHWAYS

The post-secondary pathways available to many students do not reliably lead to the opportunities they seek. Four-year college remains the “gold standard” in the US, but families want more post-secondary options for their children ([Carnegie & Gallup](#)). JFF’s Big Blur report calls for creating these options through reimagining the intersection of high school, college and career ([JFF](#)). **Theme 2, Post-High School Pathways**, expressed the Challenge’s interest in funding solutions that effectively prepare students to access economic opportunities after high school—with the added stipulation that they be created through collaboration among multiple organizations and sectors.

LEARNINGS

Catalyze was successful in sourcing programs within these two areas: 91% of applicants had a model type (see Appendix A) that aligned with one of these two themes, filling the CCL gaps Catalyze sought to address through its themed approach. The following examples demonstrate the kinds of work Round 2 applicants are doing in these areas:

Theme 1

REVX’S DEEDS

RevX’s DEEDS program leverages an instructional framework allowing students in Florida, New York City, and Newark to explore, learn, and test a variety of career skills in a project-based learning environment. They address real challenges in their communities such as discrimination, playground equality, and environmental preservation.

Theme 2

UNCOMMON CONSTRUCTION

unCommon Construction uses a tiered apprenticeship model in which apprentices from New Orleans complete construction projects while earning hourly pay, school credit, and scholarship funding to pursue additional education. Each successive tier deepens apprentice responsibilities and knowledge of construction.

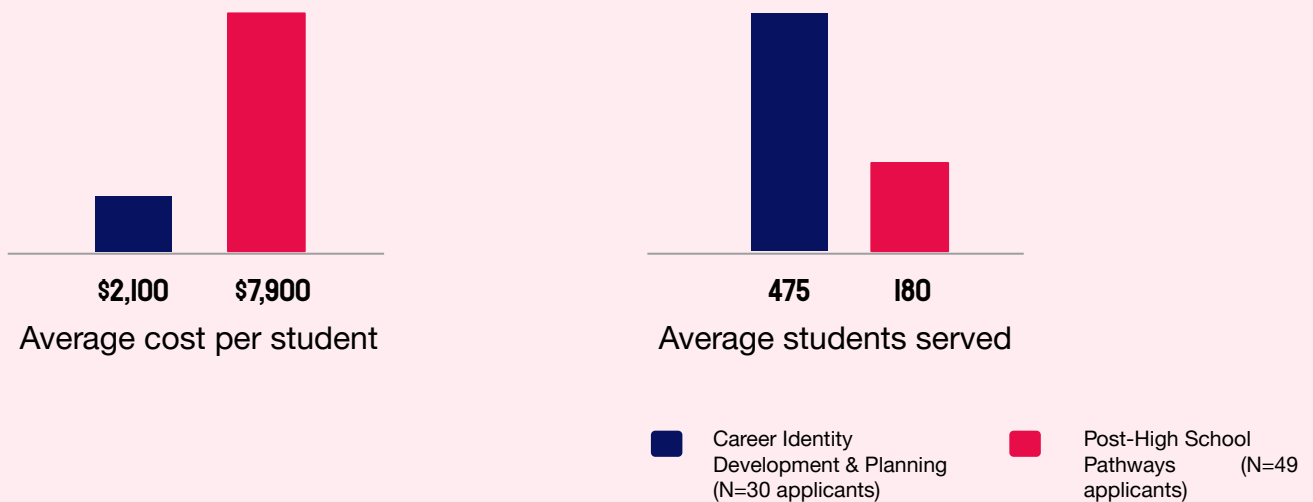
Using the theme focus in Round 2 also revealed a prevalence of models that focus on both themes. Nearly 25% of Round 2 Accelerate applicants focused on **both** Career Identity Development & Planning and Post-High School Pathways, indicating that themes need not be mutually exclusive.

In addition, Catalyze found that Post-High School Pathways models are costlier on a per-student basis than Career Identity Development & Planning models and serve fewer students. These comprehensive models tend to be resource- and people-intensive, including the need for increased staff, specialized and intersectional wraparound services, and cross-disciplinary partnerships.

RADIUS LEARNING

Radius Learning provides students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools with virtual work-based learning experiences that engage students in digital projects for top employers, such as Bank of America and Siemens. Students are able to test-drive high-growth careers across four major sectors: Business & Finance, Health Care, Informational Technology, and Advanced Manufacturing.

POST-HIGH SCHOOL PATHWAY MODELS ARE MORE RESOURCE INTENSIVE THAN CAREER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING MODELS



3

DEFINING “GROUNDBREAKING” TO ASSESS PROMISING MODELS

Catalyze created and employed a multi-pronged definition to identify the solutions with the most groundbreaking elements.

WHAT AND WHY

Catalyze aims to discover and fuel innovations that can unlock career success for all students. In centering on a consistent definition of ground-breaking, Catalyze promotes equity throughout the judging of applications.

THE ISSUE

Without a shared definition, assessing whether something is “groundbreaking” can be subjective. Judgment calls vary based on a reviewer’s individual and professional experience, making it difficult to calibrate results.

APPROACH & RESULTS

In Round 2, Catalyze developed and applied a more formalized definition of groundbreaking solutions, which were defined as models that incorporate one or more of the following:

- An entirely new approach;
- A creative, novel combination of program features or elements; or
- A pioneering reapplication of a model from a different industry or/sector.

A multi-stage approach was used to evaluate applications against the definition. First, evaluators were asked to determine which of the applicant solutions they were reviewing met the definition and assign an appropriate score based on this assessment. Each Accelerate application was read by three evaluators and Ignite applications by two evaluators, who represented a mix of funding and CCL expertise. Applications receiving the highest groundbreaking scores during the first evaluation stage had an increased chance of moving on to become Finalists.

Second, panelists with varied experience as learners, educators, or employers and nationally recognized Selection Committee members with deep expertise in CCL were asked whether the Finalist applications were new and different from other approaches they had previously seen.

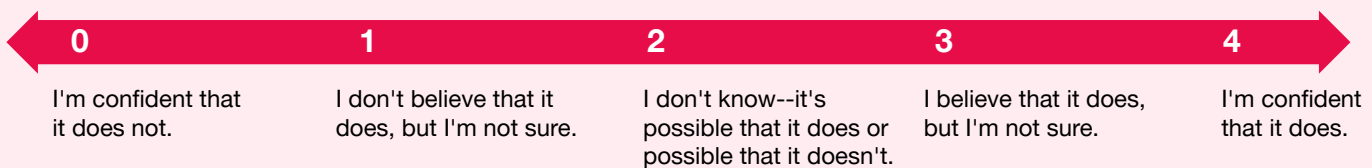
Third, the Catalyze team analyzed the Finalists’ groundbreaking application responses and moved on those deemed most innovative to the Selection Committee. The committee advanced the applications with the most compelling groundbreaking elements to provisional grantee status.

EVALUATION OF GROUNDBREAKING

In reflecting on the entire submission, evaluators scored each application based on the question, “How confident are you that the solution’s innovative approach meets at least one of the three following definitions of groundbreaking?”

- A) An entirely new approach or technological application;
- B) A creative combination of program features or elements; or
- C) A pioneering reapplication of a model from a different industry / sector?”

SCORING SCALE



ROUND 2 RESULTS

24%

of 415 qualifying screened applicants scored 3-4

79%

of 68 Finalists scored 3-4

84%

of 25 grantees scored 3-4

EXAMPLES OF THE GROUNDBREAKING ELEMENTS IN WINNING PROPOSALS:

- Focusing on community challenges and societal issues (e.g., mental health, low-income housing)
- Treating CCL for youth as a communal/collective responsibility
- Introducing a tiered apprenticeship model culminating in earn-to-learn experience
- Providing IT technical training and professional development to students with autism
- Running businesses that train/pay students and prepare them for employment
- Using virtual reality and mobile tech labs to train learners
- Inspiring and creating a pipeline of BIPOC high school students for teaching careers
- Offering bilingual career prep, including internships, certifications, and access to social capital



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT ABRETECH

AbreTech prepares multilingual learners in Lynn, MA, for in-demand technology careers through dual-language career training, paid bilingual internships, and mentorship from Latinx tech professionals. The solution features a collaboration between two Round 1 Ignite grantees, CodeSpeak Labs and Cultivate Pathways. Catalyze paved the path for them successfully develop and apply for a new initiative in Round 2.

“AbreTech was born from a partnership that the Catalyze Challenge made possible! CodeSpeak Labs and Cultivate Pathways were both Round 1 Ignite grantees, and the Catalyze team realized that we were working on similar challenges related to paid apprenticeships. They connected us together, and during our first Zoom conversation, we clicked! We kept in touch and realized we could achieve even more if we worked together and, serendipitously, Catalyze Round 2 opened up and is now going to enable us to make our dream collaboration happen.”

JEN CHIOU
Founder, CodeSpeak Labs

LEARNINGS

Although the definition of “groundbreaking” added greater specificity in Round 2, additional workshoping of the definition will help to calibrate reviewers’ interpretations.

Catalyze found that prioritizing the concept of groundbreaking creates a tension between advancing ideas considered more innovative and advancing ideas suited for scalability or replicability.

4

INCORPORATING LEARNER VOICE INTO PROGRAM DESIGN AND GRANTEE SELECTION

Seeking input from learners enables the design and identification of models that meet the target audience's needs, interests, and preferences.

WHAT AND WHY

Despite the best of intentions, organization leaders often make product and program decisions based on their own experience and knowledge, which is not necessarily representative of others. Learner voice is defined as input from individual learners about their needs, goals, and lived experience. Effective use of learner voice involves prioritizing input from learners, alongside, and often above, that of other stakeholders such as leaders and credentialed field experts, to ensure long-term probability of a model's success.

THE ISSUE

Leveraging learner voice in program design is a standard in private sector industries such as consumer packaged goods. It is used variably, if at all, in education and other public sector work. A recent Populace poll shows that 67% of Americans believe that colleges and universities are prioritizing institutional interests above student interests ([Populace](#)), which has implications for student matriculation, retention, and long-term success.

Without a standard definition, applicants' claims regarding learner voice usage are difficult to assess. Such claims can imply a range of methods, from leveraging findings published in a third-party research study to collecting feedback via active, ongoing learner advisory councils.



APPROACH & RESULTS

Modeling a core value it seeks in its winning solutions, Catalyze not only assessed whether applicants incorporated learner voice into their solutions, but also incorporated learner input into the Challenge's grantee selection process.

In both Rounds 1 and 2, Catalyze applicants were asked to describe how feedback from stakeholders, including students, was incorporated both at the program design stage and as part of continuous program improvement.

Catalyze's analysis found that **half of the Round 2 Accelerate grantees integrated learner voice into program design**. Incorporation of learner voice was more variable among Ignite grantees, as some models are still in program design phases and will use Catalyze funds to perform user research.

Round 2 Grantees: LEARNER VOICE (LV) IN PROGRAM DESIGN

75%

of Accelerate
Theme 1

33%

of Accelerate
Theme 2

26%

of Ignite
grantees

Forms of LV Used in Program Design (Number of R2 Grantees):

- Surveys (4)
- Design workshops (2)
- Group discussion (2)
- Third-party research reports (2)
- Assessments (1)

Round 2 Grantees: LEARNER VOICE IN PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

76%

of all grantees integrated or plan to integrate learner voice into **ongoing program improvement**.

75%

of Accelerate
Theme 1

100%

of Accelerate
Theme 2

67%

of Ignite
grantees*

Forms of LV Used in Program Improvement (Number of R2 Grantees):

- Surveys (10)
- Assessments (6)
- Third-party research reports (3)
- Design workshops (2)
- Direct interviews (2)
- Group discussions (2)

*May represent actual or planned use of learner voice

As part of the grantee selection process, Catalyze convened user panels, composed of diverse groups of learners and young adults who represent the finalist applicants' target audiences, to provide feedback on Finalists' relevance to their targets' needs, interests, and goals. Panelists assessed the depth of learner voice used in program design and improvement, and the sensitivity and perceptiveness with which the solution's approach addressed the identified community problem.

The format for incorporating learner voice was enhanced in Round 2 by sharing user panelist scores with the Selection Committee. In placing this emphasis on learner voice, the grantee decisions heavily reflect user panel input.

LEARNINGS

Based on the experience of incorporating and prioritizing learner voice in its own selection process, Catalyze recognizes the nuance and complexity of meaningfully engaging target audiences in program design and improvement.

Catalyze sought to recruit a set of diverse and representative learners, yet recognizes that those audiences may not have the local context that helps to fully grasp a specific model's value proposition.





GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT ELLA BAKER INSTITUTE (EBI)

The Ella Baker Institute (EBI), a forthcoming independent micro high school in the Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn, reimagines school as a hub of the community, connecting young people, their families, community leaders, local businesses, and key industries. EBI's Young People's Leadership Cooperative (YPLC) positions youth to engage in participatory action research, resources, and industry connections to solve community issues that persist in Brownsville, such as food injustice, gentrification, high unemployment, and incarceration. YPLC supports youth most proximate to local challenges in taking community well-being into their own hands while gaining career-readiness skills.

“Uplifting the voices of the unheard is exactly what we did in this program where scholars were able to define problems, investigate the solutions, and be creative with the possibilities they see for the future of Brownsville [Brooklyn]. Some will say we developed them; we didn't. We created a space for them to develop themselves, their community, and their Afrocentric futures.”

CHRISTIPHER JAMES FLEMING
Fall 2021 facilitator, Ella Baker
Institute

5

EMPHASIZING, DEFINING, AND EVALUATING PROXIMATE LEADERSHIP

Entrepreneurs and leaders who are proximate to the communities and issues they serve have the lived experience, relationships, data, and knowledge essential for developing solutions with measurable and sustainable impact.

WHAT AND WHY

A proximate leader is defined as “someone who has a meaningful relationship with groups whose identity, experience, or community are systemically stereotyped, feared, dismissed, or marginalized” ([Jackson, Kania & Montgomery](#)).

Comprehensive proximate leadership allows an organization to recognize and leverage assets within communities that are often overlooked or misunderstood when viewed through a dominant cultural lens.

THE ISSUE

When leaders are not representative of the audiences they aim to serve, their program designs, on average, tend to be less effective. While the importance of proximate leadership is well-recognized, it is challenging to assess because it requires a deep, nuanced understanding of the backgrounds and experiences of applicants, their team members and partners, and their target learners.

The presence of proximate leadership at the head of an organization is important, and proximate experience is also critical for day-to-day program leadership and implementation staff, partner teams who may also serve as conduits to learners, and learner advisory council members.

APPROACH & RESULTS

In both Challenge rounds, applicants were asked to describe their team members and their relevant experience and familiarity with the populations and communities the team intended to serve. Evaluators assessed whether teams demonstrated lived experience with and/or deep knowledge of these communities.

Round 1 lacked a formal approach to verify the depth of proximate leadership in the application and placed greatest value on the racial identity, ethnic background, and lived experience of the organization’s executive director. Of the 15 Round 1 grantees, 73%, or 11 solutions, had proximate leadership.

Drawing on the learnings from Round 1, in Round 2 the Catalyze team also implemented an assessment process to better understand and verify the depth of proximate leadership on each applicant team. To conduct the assessment, the Catalyze team took the following steps:

- Verify the target population(s) and their core attributes (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, income level, ability status)
- Review the core team to see who has lived experience (i.e., one, but ideally more attributes) in common with the target learners
- Categorize proximate leadership as a head of the organization and/or a member of the support team

ASSESSING PROXIMATE LEADERSHIP (PL)



WORST CASE

- no PL among the organization heads or support team
- no strategies in place to supplement team gaps through partners or learner voice

BEST CASE

- PL demonstrated at all levels of the core team
- PL supplemented by strategic partnerships and learner voice, influencing the design and execution of the model



76% OF ROUND 2 GRANTEES DEMONSTRATE PROXIMATE LEADERSHIP

GRANTEES	YES	NO	UNKNOWN*	TOTAL
Theme 1: CAREER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING	4	0	0	4
Theme 2: POST-HIGH SCHOOL PATHWAYS	4	1	1	6
IGNITE	11	2	2	15
TOTAL	19	3	3	25

* An unknown rating was given to applicants whose submission, video, and/or website do not directly identify the lived experience that the team members have in common with the target population. An unknown rating does not indicate that proximate leadership is not present, only that it could not be verified. Where proximate leadership remained unknown after carefully reviewing the applications, live interviews with the grantees were leveraged to discern its type(s) and depth.



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT **'BUILDING' CAREER PATHWAYS FOR NATIVE STUDENTS**

'Building' Career Pathways for Native Students, a partnership between the National Indian Education Association, College of Menominee Nation, Core Learning Exchange and Bowler School District, serves Bowler School District in Wisconsin, where nearly 50% of students belong to one of the three local tribal communities. The program teaches skills required for careers in the construction industry, providing an opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials while in high school. Students gain culture-aligned academic knowledge and skills to access a living wage and address an affordable housing crisis in their communities. Two core members of the grantee's leadership team identify as Native American.

"Involvement, knowledge, and community roots allow the College of Menominee Nation to serve and lead with passion and dedication in the communities we identify with and are a part of. We care deeply about these communities and aim to model that through our actions, partnerships, and projects."

DEBBIE DOWNS
Technical Education
Coordinator, College of
Menominee Nation

Best Practice

PROXIMATE LEADERSHIP AT MULTIPLE LEVELS

- ✓ Head(s) of organization, who maintains the highest level of authority over resource allocation and partner development
- ✓ Partners, who supplement and complement the lead organization, often in direct relationships with learners
- ✓ Implementation and support teams, who build the strongest understanding of learners through direct relationships and can elevate learner needs in program decision-making
- ✓ Learner advisory council, which provides direct and continuous input throughout program design and implementation

LEARNINGS

The process of assessing proximate leadership retains an element of subjectivity and cannot rely solely on written responses in an application. Conversations with the applicant team and learners can help evaluators assess the depth and breadth of proximate leadership across an applicant and its partner organizations.

LOOKING AHEAD



In its first year, the Catalyze Challenge surfaced hundreds of leaders across the country who are seeking to develop solutions to address local labor market gaps via groundbreaking CCL programs. With generous seed funding to ensure that Catalyze drives maximum impact in the coming years, we will continue to hone the challenge design and identify opportunities to leverage the challenge infrastructure.

Catalyze intends to continue running an innovation challenge that enables deep field-based learning about new pathways through which young people in the US can launch careers that lead to economic mobility and long-term success. These learnings will contribute to a discussion across practitioner, policy, employer and educator circles about driving systemic change over time. The Catalyze Challenge is only the beginning.

In the coming months, Catalyze will continue to collect and evaluate Round 1 and Round 2 grantee data on students served, qualitative trends in success drivers and challenges, and student survey data on program experience and impact.

A report in early 2023 will incorporate new learnings, beginning to address a third key question:

- **Did grantees demonstrate early indicators of quality?**

This report will dive into the early experiences of the first 40 Catalyze grantees to share reflections on milestones achieved and challenges faced. The learnings will be generalized to address early-stage social innovation in the CCL space, with a focus on:

- Students served, demographics, and geographic location as programs launch
- Early indicators of positive long-term outcomes, including data on student experience
- Stories of first-year impact
- Learnings that serve to influence future investments, programs, and policy

We look forward to continuing the dialogue. Your thoughts and reflections are always welcome at info@catalyzechallenge.org.

APPENDIX A

CAREER-CONNECTED LEARNING MODEL GLOSSARY

CAREER-CONNECTED LEARNING MODELS ALIGNED WITH CAREER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING

Theme 1 Models	Definition
Career Exposure	Introductory career exposure (e.g., job shadowing, simulation or project, company tour, panel, mentoring)
Career Plan and/or Navigation Supports	Career identity, plan, and skills to navigate to career path(s)
Career Engagement	Unpaid career experience in basic technical and employability skills, including unpaid internships, pre-apprenticeships, cooperative education, and service learning
Career Diagnostic or Skills Assessment Tools	Reflections or assessments to help students discover career interests and skills

CAREER-CONNECTED LEARNING MODELS ALIGNED WITH POST-HIGH SCHOOL PATHWAYS

Theme 2 Models

Definition

11-14 Blur Model	New configurations of training, education, and work-based learning that blur the line between high school, college, and career preparation
Earn-to-Learn	Paid career experience in specific skills including apprenticeships, on-the-job training, transitional jobs, paid internships, and paid work-based courses
Hybrid College	Blended model of online higher ed and nonprofits that provides coaching, career advising, and other supports
Curricular Pathways	Aligning high school and/or college curricula to high-demand career pathways
13th Year	Year after high school for career and/or college prep
Dual Enrollment	Dual high school and college enrollment

OTHER CAREER-CONNECTED LEARNING MODELS

Definition

Essential Skills	Building transferable 21st-century skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration) and employability skills (interviewing, resume writing, etc.)
Technical Skills	Building specialized knowledge and skills needed to perform specific career tasks (e.g., coding, graphic design)
Entrepreneurship Skills	Building skills specifically to start new enterprises
Networking and/or Job Search Support	Platform or program to connect students to networking and/or job search opportunities

APPENDIX B

TOP 20 METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS ([US Census Bureau](#))

1. New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA
2. Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA
3. Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI
4. Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX
5. Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX
6. Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV
7. Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD
8. Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta, GA
9. Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL
10. Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ
11. Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH
12. Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA
13. San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, CA
14. Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI
15. Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA
16. Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI
17. San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA
18. Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL
19. Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO
20. Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD

APPENDIX C



ROUND I GRANTEES

Listed as: organization name - solution name

Accelerate

1. nXu - Purpose Opportunity Program
2. Propel America - Accelerate America
3. Building 21 - Launchpad
4. Collegiate edu-Nation - Rural HOPE Project
5. Crowder College - Digital Pathways in the Rural Heartland
6. Collegiate Academies - Next Level NOLA
7. Education Design Lab - Propel Polk
8. WeThrive - WeThrive Education

Ignite

9. Hack the Hood - Designing a High School to Tech Career Path
10. Aecern - At the Cutting Edge of Emerging Career Fields
11. CodeSpeak Labs - The Next Step
12. Trio - 3-D Learning: A New High School to Career Pathway
13. BUILD - BUILDing Generation Entrepreneur through Digital Acceleration
14. Cultivate - Cultivate Pathways
15. Rural Community Alliance - Rural Community Alliance

ROUND 2 GRANTEES

Listed as: organization name - solution name

Accelerate

1. Ella Baker Institute - Young People's Leadership Cooperative
2. RevX - DEEDS
3. Radius Learning, Inc. - Virtual Work-Based Learning
4. Oregon STEM - Spark Oregon
5. WorksFirst - Abretech
6. unCommonConstruction - unCommonConstruction
7. BAYADA - Scaling Healthcare Careers for Young Adults
8. National Indian Education Association - "Building" Career Pathways for Native Students
9. Hopeworks N Camden - Hopeworks Dual Enrollment
10. Research Foundation of The City University of New York - CUNY Catalyze Challenge

Ignite

11. Code the Spectrum - Spectrum IT Career Pathways
12. Innovators for Purpose - New Futures Lab
13. Cowden St. Collaborative DBA Segue Academy - Legacy High School for Education
14. OneInFive - Building Youth Supporters Through Training
15. MindSpark Learning - Design solution to scale GEOINT Tech to Colorado
16. The BroadStreet Institute - The Community Data Project
17. Stepmojo Education, LLC - Hybrid credential-bearing computer science pathway
18. SkillUp Coalition - LevelUp Dallas
19. Global Grid for Learning - Certified School Passport Administrator (CSPA)
20. NuPaths - Central PA Cybersecurity Learn-and-Earn Ecosystem
21. Urban Strategies, Inc. - NISE (Niche Innovators and Social Enterprise)
22. Victor Anthony Scotti, Jr. - A Different World: Moving Mountains in VR
23. Builders + Backers - Credentials for Young Entrepreneurs
24. Reve Academy - Rever in Residence Experience
25. OneGoal - Many Paths, One Goal: Non-degree Career Pathways

APPENDIX D

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