

# MODEL POLICY SET

## Extending the Runway: Providing Authentic, High Quality Career Exploration in Middle School Increases Student Engagement, Persistence & Long-Term Success

States have worked for over a decade to design thoughtful high school to postsecondary college and career pathways, that include academic and technical skill development, opportunities to earn college credit and industry credentials, and experiential learning. However, access to, and persistence through, these pathways are still not equitable for all learners. States can increase their students' engagement and understanding of these programs by providing high quality career exploration in middle school. States have an opportunity to set a clear vision for this work, provide incentives and support for quality implementation, and gather data to measure progress. This comprehensive package of model policies work together to set a clear vision for student success.

### ● Model Policy Set Overview

These model policies provide sample language that states can adopt to codify best practices related to implementing middle school career exploration, collected from our [national research](#) and recent work with the [Impact & Learning Network](#). The model policies fit under four categories, each of which connects to a central theme in the Extending the Runway Report. The policies proposed here collectively reflect the components we believe states should formally adopt to set expectations for quality middle school career exploration at the state level, informed by policymakers and implementation experts in five of the leading states identified in our national scan.



#### Definitions & Governance

- Middle School Career Exploration Definitions & Governance



#### District & Student Requirements

- Counseling Plans and Advising Requirements & Individual Career and Academic Planning (ICAP) Requirements
- Career Exploration Coursework, Programming, and Activity Requirements



#### Accountability & Reporting

- Accountability Mechanisms to Assess Middle School Career Exploration
- Middle School Career Exploration Data Collection



#### Building Infrastructure / Capacity

- Career Coach Programs
- Funding Mechanisms for Middle School Career Exploration
- Intermediary Support for Middle School Career Exploration

## ● How states can use this model policy set

As reported in *Extending the Runway*, most states have existing policies that establish standard practices for career exploration in middle school. However, there is still room for many states to outline expectations that would offer a more holistic approach to middle school career exploration that could further the potential to deliver meaningful experiences to students. **States should take a critical look at which policies they currently have in place in their code, rules, or regulations and compare them to the model policies outlined here.**

**These model policies should act as a framework for states to create a cohesive set of expectations that will enable districts and schools to provide quality career exploration experiences for middle school students.**

States can use these policies to fill gaps in their existing requirements to create the environment best suited to meeting this goal. Additionally, states can adapt these policies in a way that makes sense to the current practices, roles and responsibilities, and resources available in their state. The essential consideration for states is to ascertain the extent to which their existing policies provide enough clarity and guidance to state agency leaders, district and school administrators, and practitioners to deliver career exploration experiences that will enable middle school students to discover their aptitudes and interests as it relates to careers, adequately explore prospective careers, and plan their secondary academic coursework and subsequent postsecondary training accordingly. These model policies can supplement what states currently have in place to create a more coherent and focused policy environment and a standard for quality work to drive related efforts in states. We encourage you to use these policies as a guide, and customize terminology, regulatory bodies, and expectations to your current state context.