

GOLDEN STATE PATHWAYS PROGRAM: STATUS UPDATE AND LOOKING AHEAD

October 2026

CURRENT STATUS

Established in 2022 through a one-time \$500 million state investment, the Golden State Pathways Program (GSPP) supports local educational agencies (LEAs) in expanding high-quality college and career pathways through partnerships with community colleges, employers, workforce partners, and community-based organizations. The program promotes dual enrollment, career technical education, work-based learning, and integrated student supports to help students transition successfully from high school into postsecondary education and careers.

According to the [Public Policy Institute of California \(PPIC\)](#), as of February 2025, about \$426 million had been allocated to 372 LEAs statewide. Approximately 88 percent of funding (\$376 million) supports implementation grants that expand or strengthen existing pathways, while the remaining funding supports planning grants and regional consortia. Implementation is well underway across California, and the [California Department of Education](#) recently announced implementation funding for additional pathways that previously received planning grants, extending implementation activities through June 2029.

As implementation continues, grantees are collecting and reporting annual outcome data. State law also requires an independent evaluation of GSPP's effectiveness to be completed between June 30, 2027 and June 30, 2028. As annual reporting from grantees becomes available, California will have an opportunity to better understand how GSPP is influencing dual enrollment, work-based learning, postsecondary transitions, credential attainment, and workforce outcomes.



WHY IT MATTERS

GSPP is an opportunity to bring together the pieces that too often operate separately: academic coursework, career education, dual enrollment, work-based learning, and student supports. GSPP can integrate these elements within well-designed pathways. Students should be able to move through a connected sequence of rigorous academic and career-focused coursework, earn 12 units of college credit while still in high school, engage in career exploration and work-based learning, and receive the advising and supports needed to transition successfully into postsecondary education, training, and careers. Taking a holistic approach to the student experience can support students in developing a sense of purpose and belonging in the process.

By strengthening partnerships between K-12 schools, community colleges, employers, workforce partners, and community-based organizations, these grants are helping students access clearer pathways into postsecondary education and high-demand careers. The effects of GSPP can transcend high schools. While designed for high school students, GSPP implementation offers important lessons for California's broader education and workforce system. Strong cross-system partnerships, career navigation and advising, work-based learning, and seamless transitions into community colleges, apprenticeships, and workforce training can also strengthen pathways for opportunity youth and adult learners seeking to reconnect to education, earn credentials, and access quality jobs.

LOOKING AHEAD

AS CALIFORNIA PREPARES FOR A NEW ADMINISTRATION AND THE 2027-28 BUDGET CYCLE, STATE LEADERS SHOULD CONSIDER:

1

Evaluating GSPP implementation and using available outcome data to inform future education and workforce investments.

2

Strengthening alignment between secondary schools, community colleges, workforce development, apprenticeships, and adult education to create more seamless education-to-career pathways.

3

Identifying successful implementation strategies, including effective dual enrollment, student supports, and work-based learning models, that can be expanded statewide.

4

Planning for and investing in the long-term sustainability of successful pathways as one-time GSPP funding concludes.

As implementation continues and outcome data become available, California's next administration will have an opportunity to evaluate what is working and build on those successes. GSPP is more than a one-time grant program. It can help inform a long-term strategy that better connects K-12 education, community colleges, workforce development, apprenticeships, and employment, creating stronger pathways to college, credentials, and quality jobs for learners across the state.

SOURCES

California Department of Education. *Golden State Pathways Program*.

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gc/hs/gspg.asp>

California Department of Education. *Golden State Pathways Program Grantee Resources*.

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gc/hs/gspgpgresources.asp>

California Department of Education. *Implementation Funds for Planning Grant Pathways (FY 2026-27)*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/r17/gspgptoi26results.asp>

Public Policy Institute of California. *Early Insights from the Golden State Pathways Program*. October 2025. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/early-insights-from-the-golden-state-pathways-program/>