

TAKING ACTION TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

Meeting 4 Issue Brief

INTRODUCTION

This fourth virtual gathering of the 2020-21 **Complete Tennessee Leadership Institute (CTLI)** program will focus on empowering policymakers to advance college completion policies, aligning regional and local efforts with statewide priorities, and creating action from lessons learned. This session will also give you an opportunity to reflect on your time in the program, create an action plan, and connect with other individuals to identify areas for future collaboration. These topics build on the themes of the three **CTLI** meetings, which focused on equity and quality of access to higher education, supporting student success in persistence, and helping students complete certificates and degrees.

The Importance of Policy Implementation

Throughout the first three meetings, you have engaged with resource experts and practitioners who have highlighted a number of policy solutions across the themes of access, persistence, and completion. During this meeting, you will hear guidance and advice on how to translate some of these great policy ideas into real, impactful action. This evolution happens through the policy implementation process.

Policy implementation is the process by which policies enacted by a government are put into effect by the relevant agencies, organizations, or other stakeholders. The design and implementation of policy are closely related because choices made in the design of a policy will influence the way a policy is implemented, which ultimately influences the outcomes of that policy. To help understand the importance of policy implementation, one [popular framework](#) separates policy implementation activities into two main categories:

THE TOP-DOWN APPROACH

Starts with the goals of the high-level policymakers and traces the design and implementation of the policy down through the implementers on the ground.

THE BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

Starts with the abilities and motivations of the implementers on the ground and reverse engineers policy design up to the high-level policymakers.

It is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive – often, successful policy implementation strategies will combine aspects of both approaches. But it is worth looking at a breakdown of the key differences between these two approaches to policy implementation:

	Top-Down Approach	Bottom-Up Approach
Policy Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly defined at the start of the process. Used to measure progress and success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often developed to address needs within a specific context – may be less clearly defined, and may conflict with larger policy goals or the preferences of high-level policymakers.
Policy Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy is dictated by a single statute or other authoritative statement of policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy is dictated by a set of laws, rules, practices, and/or norms to address specific issues.



Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clarity at the beginning of the process can provide clear implementation tools and goals to measure progress against. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implementation becomes more of a collaborative process involving more stakeholders and a clearer sense of capacity. ■ Encourages bargaining and compromise among stakeholders – not a focus on compliance.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High-level policymakers may not have a complete understanding of the capacity of the implementers on the ground. ■ It can be difficult to reach consensus around goals – and to predict the likely effects of a top-down policy. ■ It can be difficult to isolate the causal effect of a particular policy within the larger context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Different populations and groups have varying levels of familiarity with – and access to – the policy design and implementation process. Groups that are less engaged are often left out of the implementation conversations. ■ Actors on the ground may misinterpret the intent of a policy when they are designing or implementing it.

[Source](#)

COMMON IMPLEMENTATION THEMES OF TENNESSEE EDUCATION POLICY MILESTONES

Here are some common themes and strategies that were used by policymakers in Tennessee during the implementation processes of major education initiatives.

Strategy: Connecting a policy initiative to the state's postsecondary and workforce goals, with a focus on postsecondary attainment.

What does this strategy involve?

- Drawing connections between the goals or outcomes of a policy initiative and the state's focus on improving postsecondary affordability, completion, and alignment to the workforce goals.
- Focusing on connections between the policy initiative and the state's Drive to 55 attainment goal.
- Setting specific targets on how an initiative will raise attainment – and among which students.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- Tennessee's changing workforce needs, completion challenges, and Drive to 55 goal have broad buy-in from policymakers and stakeholders across the state who care about education policy, so drawing these connections can help grow the support for an initiative.
- Tying efforts to these state focuses can increase opportunities to expand the initiative across the state, gain additional funding through state and advocacy partners, and ensure the initiative has a long-lasting impact on student success.

When has this happened in Tennessee?

- The **Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS) program** initially began at one community college. After demonstrating impactful student success rates, SAILS was able to expand across Tennessee and gain funding because it had the potential to increase student attainment and act as an additional contributor to the Drive to 55 initiative.



- As **tnAchieves** spread across the state, some of the most in-need counties were unable to participate due to the local fundraising that was required in the model. Then in 2012, Governor Haslam announced his attainment goal, Drive to 55. In this role, Governor Haslam asked Randy Boyd to join his staff as a special advisor for education, allowing him to gather policymakers and advocates to brainstorm how KnoxAchieves could become the **TN Promise**. Rich Rhoda, the executive director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, recommended creating an endowment by tweaking the merit-based HOPE lottery scholarship, creating enough funding to provide the program across Tennessee.
- **Advise TN** was included in Governor Haslam's 2016-2017 [budget proposal](#) and was approved by the General Assembly to act as a program supporting the Drive to 55 attainment goal. Advise TN was developed by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the Office of Former Governor, Bill Haslam. The initiative aims to create a college-going culture in the state of Tennessee and works to provide high school juniors and seniors with one-on-one counseling sessions to map out postsecondary goals, participation in college preparation events, and support in filling out college and financial aid applications.

Strategy: Connecting a policy initiative to the TN Promise.

What does this strategy involve?

- Drawing connections between the goals or outcomes of a policy initiative and the statewide tuition program, TN Promise.
- Demonstrating that the strategy will positively impact the success of the TN Promise and student success.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- The TN Promise program has broad buy-in from policymakers and stakeholders across the state who care about education policy, so drawing these connections can help grow the support for an initiative.
- Like the strategy described above, tying efforts to the TN Promise program can increase opportunities to expand the initiative across the state, gain additional funding through state and advocacy partners, and can ensure the initiative has a long-lasting impact on student success.

When has this happened in Tennessee?

- To ensure that students are prepared to take full advantage of the TN Promise, high school students are given the opportunity and are encouraged to [obtain postsecondary credit](#) through the **Early Postsecondary Opportunities Program**. These opportunities not only give students credit, but they also help them become familiar with the rigor and expectations, develop confidence and skills for success, make informed postsecondary and career decisions, and decrease the time and cost of completion. The Early Postsecondary Opportunities program encourages all school districts in Tennessee to provide a robust offering of early postsecondary opportunities, including local dual credit, dual enrollment, industry certification, advanced placement, college level examination program, international baccalaureate, Cambridge International examinations, and statewide dual credit.
- Starting in 2015, a **Mentorship Program** was created as a subset of the TN Promise, which provided high school seniors [access to a mentor](#) as they transition to college. These mentors are executives, parents, and professionals who dedicate [10-15 hours](#) a year to assist 5-10 students. Mentors are asked to serve three roles: as a taskmaster to ensure students are aware of meetings and deadlines; as a resource to answer questions and connect students to resources; and as an encourager to ensure students reach their full potential.
- In 2018, **Tennessee Reconnect** was created as an extension of the TN Promise program, specifically targeting students 25 years and older to earn an associate degree or technical certificate free of tuition. In 2018, its first year, TN Reconnect had about 31,000 adults interested in participating and 18,217 enrolled in an eligible institution and received Tennessee Reconnect funding. In the first year of the program over [2,000 students completed a certificate or degree](#) and 248 of them maintained enrollment in pursuit of another credential.



Strategy: Coalition Building

What does this strategy involve?

- Networking with policymakers and stakeholders across the state to build relationships across sectors.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- Coalition building can garner support from the community to gain additional resources for implementation.
- When expanding efforts statewide, coalition building can create buy-in from policymakers and stakeholders across the state to make expansion efforts feasible.

When has this happened in Tennessee?

- One example of this strategy in action is the **Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS) program**, which utilized software from Pearson, partnership with local high schools, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, and strong relationships with community colleges to reinvent remediation classes. The program created at Chattanooga State Community College was strong but through coalition building the program was able to expand to a statewide effort and make a larger impact on student success.
- The **TN Promise program** began as a small, community led program and transformed into a statewide effort as coalitions and partnerships were built. In 2008, about one in four high school students stopped after their diploma due to a lack of funding and structural support. Deputy Chief of Staff, Krissy DeAlejandro, then-county Mayor Mike Ragsale, and Randy Boyd, founder of Radio Systems and its flagship brand, Petsafe, began using Boyd's network to outline a program to combat this issue. Within 60 days, they had raised \$2.3 million and had formed the KnoxAchieves Board, including the then-Knoxville Mayor, Bill Haslam. It later garnered support from Governor Haslam, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, and state policymakers to become a statewide program.

Strategy: State Led Initiatives

What does this strategy involve?

- Partnering with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission or the State General Assembly to implement strategies to support postsecondary students.
- In some cases, it may be necessary to compete for a federal or nonprofit grant to secure funding for the initiative.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- Garnering support for the initiative before implementation can ensure that there is adequate funding to see substantial student outcomes.

When has this happened in Tennessee?

- In 2018, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission secured a federal grant of \$11.68 million from the U.S. Department of Education's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) which created the **GEAR UP TN program**. This was Tennessee's third GEAR UP grant, with their work first starting in 2005. Gear Up TN provides academic readiness and college access services to students in 32 middle schools and 18 high schools across Tennessee.
- In Tennessee, the **Education Lottery Scholarship system** began in 2004 and operates with funding from the net proceeds of the state lottery system. Over time, additional scholarships were added to support specific student demographics and student needs. Today, there are a total of 10 different scholarships and grants that support students with different identities and needs.



Strategy: Pilot Programs

What does this strategy involve?

- Implementing the initiative on a smaller scale to demonstrate student outcomes. Once the success of the initiative is evident, it can then be scaled to more locations and even become a statewide effort.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- This strategy gives policymakers and higher education leaders the ability to test out the initiative and ensure an increase in student outcomes before a sizable investment is made in the program.
- This strategy allows the initiative to gain feedback from the piloted programs to ensure that the scaled model can be implemented in a seamless fashion.
- This strategy benefits from testing the initiative across different geographic locations, student populations, and institutional characteristics to help understand the nuances of implementation as a statewide effort.

When has this happened in Tennessee?

- One example is the **Governor's Investment in Vocational Education (GIVE) Program**, which piloted in five school systems before becoming publicly available through a proposal process. GIVE prepares students for the high-demand, high-skill careers in Tennessee, juniors and seniors in high school are able to obtain high school credit for experiences such as internships, apprenticeships, and paid work experiences. This program began in 2013 with a statewide assessment to engage stakeholders at the school, district, and industry levels. Then in 2015, five school systems piloted the statewide Work-Based Learning program in geographically diverse areas of Tennessee.
- The **SAILS** program was created in 2013 at Chattanooga State Community College in partnership with a local high school. This program was developed by John Squires, a math professor at Chattanooga State Community College, who aimed to help remediate first-time freshmen. After seeing the success rate increase from 48 to 65 percent, Squires partnered with Red Bank High School in 2012 to create a developmental math class for seniors who scored lower than a 19 on the math portion of the ACT and utilized Pearson's MyMathLab to blend digital and faculty-led learning. By fall of 2012, three other community colleges piloted the program and Squires proposed a formal pilot to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. In the first year, 70 percent of students completed their bridge math course and graduated ready in math. Today, this program is a statewide initiative at all 13 community colleges and 184 high schools. SAILS coursework is aligned with community college introductory Mathematics standards and curriculum, and is currently offered in 274 high schools across Tennessee.

Strategy: Governor-Led Initiatives

What does this strategy involve?

- Collaboration with the Governor's Office to create initiatives in partnership.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- The Governor's Office is responsible for working with educational advocates across sectors, which can create coalitions that garner support for initiatives early on.
- Initiatives with the Governor's Office are more likely to gain resources and support, especially if there is broad buy-in from policymakers and stakeholders across the state who care about education policy.

When has this happened in Tennessee?

- In 2010, under Governor Phil Bredesen, the **Complete College Tennessee** was passed, which included two large initiatives. The first was an increase in **performance-based state allocations** from 5.5 percent to total higher education operating allocations to 100 percent. This Act also included premiums applied to performance of adult

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and low-income students to reflect a concern for critical shortages of student subpopulations. The second was **Tennessee Transfer Pathways**, which included a requirement for public two- and four-year institutions to improve transfer policies for a shared, 60-hour block of courses. These policies were implemented to include articulation agreements in many academic disciplines. This law also required partnership agreements for all community colleges and universities to allow dual admissions of students.

- In 2019, Governor Bill Lee introduced a legislative initiative to expand access to vocational and technical training statewide. The General Assembly approved \$25 million to foster partnerships between Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs), community colleges, industry, economic development/workforce agencies, and K-12 to identify and address skills gaps. This initiative is grant-based and proposals were required to show data to identify workforce needs and specific outcomes related to postsecondary attainment. The program was piloted in five school systems across the state.

Real-Time Continuous Improvement

As programs are implemented, it's important to continuously assess the program. As discussed in the other two themes, most of these programs started small before becoming statewide initiatives. In order to expand the program, it will be necessary to demonstrate positive student success rates and ties to state-led initiatives. For TN Promise, success rates from the first cohort in community college enrollment and retention demonstrated the potential of the program to positively impact students across the state.

APPENDIX: RESOURCE EXPERT ROLODEX

Name	Organization	Contact	Strategies to Connect
Raumesh Akbari	Senator, District 29, 2nd Vice Chair, Education Committee	Sen.Raumesh.Akbari@capitol.tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Initiatives pertaining to Shelby County
Janet Ayers	President, Ayers Foundation	suzanne@ayersmgmt.coam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Programs and related projects for educational enhancement, innovative health care and by supporting organizations dedicated to the preservation of our natural resources and wildlife habitats for hunting and fishing ■ Grants for Scholarships
Charlie Baum	Representative, District 37, Member, Education Committee	rep.charlie.baum@capitol.tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Initiatives pertaining to Rutherford County
Jared Bigham	Senior Advisor on Workforce & Rural Initiatives, Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry	jared.bigham@tnchamber.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workforce development ■ Rural communities ■ Business partnerships
Bridget Burns	Executive Director, University Innovation Alliance	bridget@theuia.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strategies to expand access to higher education, address costs, and promote completion for students of all backgrounds ■ Higher Education Government Relations ■ Navigating governing boards ■ Financial aid policy

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Jake Bynum	Mayor, Weakley County	jake@jakebynum.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Leader Perspective Network
Anthony Carnevale	Director, Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce	Coral.Castro@georgetown.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Development Finance and Budgeting
Keith Carver	Chancellor, The University of Tennessee - Martin	chancellor@utm.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing enrollment Dual-enrollment partnerships Program implementation Tennessee Strong program
Karla Coleman García	Director of Policy and Community Engagement, TN Higher Education Prison Initiative	karla@thei.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inside-out college courses Student Success and Re-entry Services Currently and Formerly Incarcerated educational access and student success
Geoff Coltrane	Senior Education Advisor, Office of Governor Roy Cooper (D-NC)	geoff.coltrane@nc.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State-level implementation strategies Higher education policy in North Carolina
Krissy DeAlejandro	Executive Director, Tennessee Achieves	krissy@tnachieves.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TN Promise TN Promise Mentorship
Russ Deaton	Executive Vice Chancellor for Policy & Strategy, Tennessee Board of Regents	Russ.Deaton@tbr.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance
Kayla Elliot	Interim Director of Higher Education Policy, The Education Trust	kelliott@edtrust.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State and federal policy issues of access and accountability for students of color and low-income students HBCU Student Experience
John Fink	Senior Research Associate, Community College Research Center	john.fink@tc.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational and economic opportunity for racially minoritized, low-income, and first-generation students Community College Effectiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided pathways Transfer Student Success
Bill Fox	Director, Boyd Center for Business & Economic Research, University of Tennessee - Knoxville	billfox@utk.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Finance Cost of Education

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Emily House	Executive Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission	Emily.House@tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SHEEO Perspective Governance TN Promise and TN Reconnect
Millard House	Director of Schools, Clarksville-Montgomery County School System	Millard.House@cmcss.net	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and Regional partnerships
Shanna Jackson	President, Nashville State Community College	shanna.jackson@nscc.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Development Community Outreach
Jodie Kirshner	Research Professor, New York University Marron Institute of Urban Management	jodie.kirshner@nyu.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher Education Debt College Finance
Harold Love	Representative, District 58, Member, Education Committee	rep.harold.love@capitol.tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives pertaining to Davidson County
Amy Loyd	Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling effective policies, infrastructure, and practices to build sustainable systems Career pathways aligned with regional labor markets
Brian Noland	President, East Tennessee State University	president@etsu.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Planning Student Success Budgeting
Carol Puryear	President, Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Murfreesboro	cpuryear@tcatmurfreesboro.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic and Community Development TCAT
Tim Renick	Executive Director, National Institute for Student Success - Georgia State University	trenick@gsu.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of data, analytics and emerging technologies to identify barriers to student success Development of equitable programs Student Success
Angela Sanchez	Program Officer, ECMC Foundation	asanchez@ecmc.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversees grants related to college persistence, two-year transfer, and bachelor's degree completion for students from underrepresented backgrounds Student Success

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Jayme Simmons	Executive Director, Bill & Crissy Haslam Foundation	jayme@billhaslam.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State-level implementation strategies History of statewide higher education initiatives
Katherine Wheatle	Strategy Officer for Finance and Federal Policy, Lumina Foundation	kwheatle@luminafoundation.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education attainment and affordability Racial equity and justice
Mark White	Representative, District 83, Member, Chair, Education Administration Committee	rep.mark.white@capitol.tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives pertaining to Shelby County
Jamie Woodson	Former Chair, Senate Education Committee; Board Member, The Hunt Institute	jamie@tristarstrategies.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislative history of higher education initiatives

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