



FORD NGL



PHASE 1 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

PULASKI COUNTY, AR

Explore Visit
January 15-18, 2019

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The requirements of the workplace are constantly evolving. States and municipalities need a powerful, scalable, and responsive strategy that serves their students and is aligned with workforce demand. Ford Next Generation Learning's (Ford NGL) approach addresses this challenge with a robust, sustainable solution. Built around a community-connected, Career Academy (CA) model, the Ford NGL approach provides the roadmap, processes, and support required to guide regions from implementation through sustainability. Scaled across a region, this model will prepare high school graduates with improved academic performance, 21st century workplace skills, relevant credentials, post-secondary and in-demand, high-wage, high-skill career pathways. Students graduate ready to enter a state's workforce, and employers benefit from a viable and local talent pipeline.

Ford NGL completed a comprehensive assessment of high schools in the four Pulaski County districts as well as the community, to evaluate the potential for this community-connected approach to education transformation in this community. This assessment included preliminary research, on-site school visits, and meetings with key stakeholders (detailed in the Appendix).

This is a report of findings and recommendations for readiness of career pathway design, academy implementation, and business alignment that will serve as the basis for any future work with Ford NGL and partner organizations. Based on our research, observations, and analysis, we believe Pulaski County districts are at a unique juncture and on the verge of community-connected education transformation. The local and regional workforce presents various high-wage, high-skill opportunities for students. Community leaders, educators (secondary and post-secondary), and employers in Pulaski County are interested in transformation and see this moment in time as the stars aligning for the change that this community needs.

There is widespread desire to strategically align community and school efforts toward achieving county prosperity through the implementation of career academies with aligned 21st century pathways. With this in mind, Ford NGL identified five key elements essential to moving Pulaski County forward.

Key elements include:

- 1. Collaborative Design: CA design elements that are consistently implemented in the region, but may be unique in how they are applied in each district. This includes determining what autonomy each district requires.**
- 2. Freshman Academy design elements common across the region.**
- 3. 21st century pathways which are aligned with local and regional workforce needs and drive CA program offerings.**
- 4. Structures, processes, and policies to enhance strategic business engagement.**
- 5. A communications plan which includes regular and tactical external and internal communication.**



We believe Pulaski County will benefit from a strategic, scaffolded approach to planning and implementation of these key elements. The first two can be implemented either separately or together, while the third element incorporates the first two and takes the collaborative effort to the next level of transformation. In terms of implementation, it may be preferable to move forward with several schools in one cohort and then plan for additional cohorts to be added each year based on readiness.

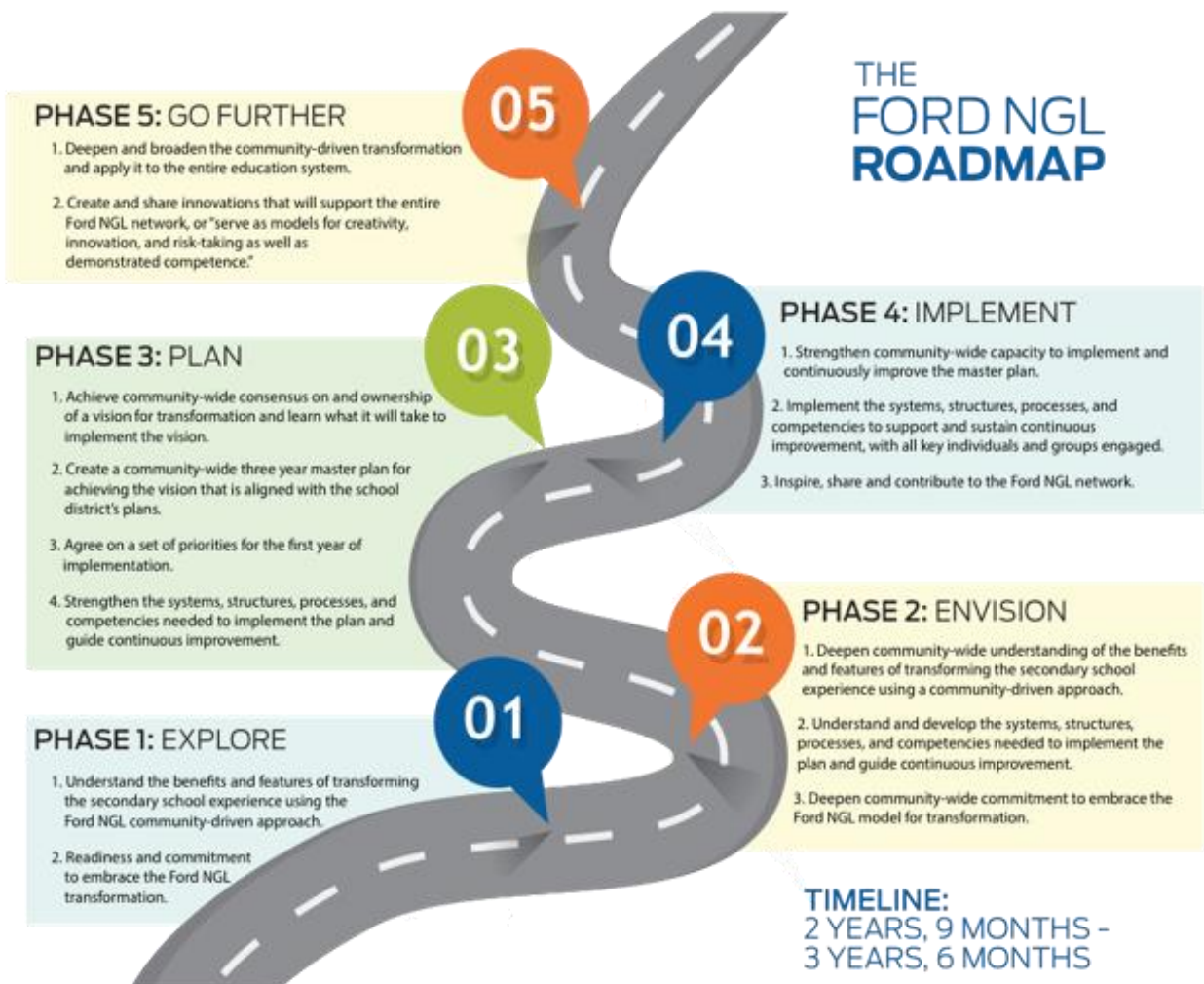
Achieving a strategic, scaffolded approach and implementing a viable and mutually beneficial plan is a challenging journey. It is, however, a journey that can finally deliver on its promises when implemented with fidelity. Ford NGL can provide the model, guidance, training, and ongoing coaching necessary for unifying the effort and driving sustainability. In addition, the professional development and training we provide is drawn on and applied throughout the Ford NGL Roadmap. Ford NGL will be happy to discuss how we can provide support for your high school transformation should Pulaski County decide to move forward with any of the recommended options.



The Ford NGL Community Roadmap

The Ford NGL high school transformation model is community-driven. Building an effective organizational structure comprised of capable and dedicated members is critical for success. There are five phases of the Ford NGL Roadmap. By the end of Phase 2: *Envision*, most communities will have established a structure that includes: a steering committee with equitable representation, a convening organization, a community coordinator, and District leads who serve as the Ford NGL District Representatives.

This illustration depicts the five phases and timeline of the Ford NGL Roadmap. Each phase has defined outcomes.



PURPOSE OF THE EXPLORE PHASE

Little Rock Regional Chamber (LRRC) requested support from Ford Next Generation Learning (Ford NGL) in order to envision what the Ford NGL Model for a community-connected approach could look like in Pulaski County (the Little Rock region) across all four public school districts. Support includes an assessment of the systems, structures, and processes necessary for regional transformation within multiple school districts. In this report the Ford NGL team describes our findings in relation to how the Pulaski County districts and schools can move forward with the transformation.



The Ford NGL team visited Pulaski County with the goal of achieving the following specific objectives for Phase 1: *Explore*.

1. The community will understand the benefits and features of transforming the secondary school experience using the Ford NGL community-driven approach.
2. Ford NGL will understand the community data and the community's current readiness status.
3. The community will have sufficient information about Ford NGL, the Ford NGL Roadmap, and services available in order to support a decision on next steps.

The partners of Pulaski County have also begun initial elements of Phase 2: *Envision*.

1. To deepen understand of the transformation requirements and outcomes, a large contingent of Pulaski County's stakeholders including Superintendents, district leadership, principals, business partners, chamber personnel, and community organizations have attended Nashville Study visits.

Objectives and Focus Questions

Within the context of these broad Phase 1 objectives, the Ford NGL team focused on the following questions to assess the community's readiness for transformation.

- What strengths and structures does the Pulaski County region possess?
- Does the regional community have a leadership team ready to support the transformation of their high schools?
- Has the leadership team successfully worked together on a large scale change in the past?
- What systems are in place for communication, collaboration, and coordination?
- What are the mechanisms used to keep everyone in the community and district up to date on current and projected initiatives?
- Does each district have a strong internal leader who will serve as the district representative and has the clear support of the district superintendent and school board?
- Is the regional business community sufficiently well organized to galvanize industry support for the prospective career academies?
- Is there a regional convening organization and a leader to serve as community coordinator?
- Will additional organizations help lead these efforts in each local community?
- How will the organizations coordinate and communicate?
- Are there strong existing career pathways, including sequenced programs of study, that can serve as building blocks for strong career academies?
- Are those pathways aligned with the regional workforce needs as identified by current workforce demand data?
- Does the culture support equity and intentionally focus on diversity and inclusion?
- Are relationships at the center of the existing culture?
- Are there sufficient resources to fund not only each phase of the Ford NGL Roadmap but also the professional development and facilities improvements that may be necessary to implement the Ford NGL Master Plan with fidelity?



FINDINGS: PULASKI COUNTY



A six-person explore team visited the Pulaski County School Districts from January 14-18, 2019, to learn more about the community and discuss their readiness and interest in using the Ford NGL Roadmap for educational transformation.

While in Pulaski County, we met with a wide variety of stakeholders. We learned a tremendous amount from our interactions with several groups, all of whom could be placed into one or more of the following categories: civic leaders, school district leadership including administrators and board of education members, chamber of commerce leadership, business/industry partners, post-secondary school personnel, secondary school administration, secondary school teachers and counselors, parents, and high school students.

In addition to these information gathering interviews, we were able to gain a sense of the culture and level of energy around transformation. All stakeholder groups spoke of their city with tremendous hope and optimism. They highlighted similar strengths and were open and honest about the challenges they face and the opportunities they envision.

FINDINGS: REGIONAL STRENGTHS

1. Governance, Leadership, and Business Engagement

- a. The four Superintendents of the Pulaski County districts and their senior teams have been working collaboratively for nearly six months. The leadership capacity of these four men and their senior teams is a key strength of the region given the importance of bold leadership within the Ford NGL transformation process.
- b. The regional convening organization, the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC), offers strong leadership and advocacy and is able to get the right people to the table. They play a critical and valued leadership role.
- c. Regional leaders are committed to public education as a key strategy for workforce and economic development. Leadership is open to change.
- d. There are strong strategic partnerships with the regional Chambers of Commerce. There is a true commitment to learn about the Ford NGL transformation design. More than 38 stakeholders from various districts have committed to attend Nashville's Ford NGL Hub visit in March. District leadership teams and Chamber staff attended the September visit.
- e. The regional Chamber leader has experienced the development of the academy model in another Ford NGL community.



- f. Strategic, targeted industries are being researched by the Chamber starting with healthcare and information technology with more dimensions to come.
- g. The Core Team meets regularly and appears to have a regional commitment to excellence. They want to support public schools and view the competition as private, charter, and outer counties.
- h. The Chamber has identified priority business sectors such as **Advanced Manufacturing, Corporate Operations, Distribution/Logistics, Energy/Technologies, Financial Services & Technologies, Healthcare/Medical, and Startups/Innovation.**

2. Communications and Public Awareness

- a. In Ford NGL's most successful communities, communication is conducted from the very beginning of planning and is very intentional in its design and use.
- b. Communication about the Ford NGL visit and the importance of public education among businesses has been coordinated by the LRRC in conjunction with all school district communication directors. To date, the initiative has received excellent press coverage.

3. Equity and Diversity

- a. Equity is a major focus among all segments of stakeholders that we met with in both business and education.
- b. Chamber and education leaders strive to be inclusive when determining the leadership who should help in the early stages of the initiative.

4. Career Academy Design

- a. Several of the districts were observed to be using career awareness tools which are foundational to the CA model. In particular, the use of Naviance by the Little Rock and Pulaski County Special School districts provides a common platform from which to build countywide career academy strategies, particularly in the freshman academies.
- b. Academies have potential to address major challenges identified by schools (student engagement, discipline, teacher engagement/passion).
- c. Many schools have some elements of freshman-academy type programs or pockets of excellence through programs offered to a small group of students.

EMPLOYER/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OBSERVATIONS

- Meaningful community engagement is emerging in Pulaski County as evidenced by varying levels of area chambers and their partners. However, there are no systems in place to help the districts and schools participate in addressing larger community needs, priorities, and goals.
- Employers reported a willingness to engage, but they want to make sure there is follow-through on engagement requests. Employers indicated that they would like a more streamlined and intentional approach to requests for business involvement.
- At the school-level, few teachers reported interacting with community members and employers. When there is business interaction, teachers reported to be the main contact to engage businesses. They have not been trained to work with business partners in meaningful and sustainable ways.



Targeted Business Sectors and Educational Alignment

Pulaski County should continue to build upon the work that the Little Rock Regional Chamber (LRRC) has done with targeted business sectors. Within the four districts, alignment of the MetRock 2020 Strategy and the Career and Technical (CTE) education offerings (as provided by the Arkansas Department of Career Education’s CTE Department) is detailed below as it relates to student enrollment.

Ideally, CTE courses should align with the demand for high-skill, high-wage careers in the workforce pipeline and be developed through a lens that ensures equity (gender, race, etc.) Additionally, pathway progressions should be analyzed. For example, in business and marketing technology, Economics and Personal Finance is a course required by law (*A.C.A. 6-16-135 Act 480 of 2017*) for graduation that inflates the numbers in that program. Currently, it just stands alone. Instead, it could be an opportunity to ensure pathways are marketed during this core course such that it leads to completion of a business, finance, or marketing pathway that aligns with corporate operations. There may also be opportunities to adjust pathways into career academies such as distribution and logistics, information technology, and healthcare. Emerging industries clusters like aerospace and aviation, while not among the largest from a total employment standpoint, provide high growth high, wage jobs and could be targeted as specialties within manufacturing or business and IT academies.

Sector Summary			
Sector	Jobs County/MSA	Average Earnings County/MSA	Projected Growth County/MSA
Advanced Manufacturing	3,856 / 5,104	\$65,421 / \$65,530	16.1% / 13.8%
Corporate Operations	4,739 / 5,359	\$78,352 / \$78,905	4.9% / 7.2%
Distribution/Logistics	6,225 / 8,995	\$60,382 / \$62,687	NA
Energy/Technologies	1,583 / 1,712	\$128,445 / \$126,870	1.4% / 1.6%
Financial Services & Technologies	10,132 / 13,547	\$99,070 / \$95,970	5% / 1%
Healthcare/Medical	34,682 / 44,557	\$69,737 / \$65,185	11% / 11.5%
Startups/Innovation	445 jobs created in 3 years	NA	NA
Targeted Business Sector Alignment with Educational Offerings			
Sector	CTE Program offerings in the 4 districts		Enrollment** (Fall 2018)
Advanced Manufacturing	Construction Technology Pre-Engineering (PLTW) or Engineering Welding		69 663 80 <i>Total: 812</i>



Corporate Operations	Business and Marketing Technology <i>(Note: Grad requirement Econ/Personal finance)</i>	4,991
Distribution/Logistics	None offered	0
Energy/Technologies	Industrial Technologies	82
Financial Services & Technologies	<i>(Business and Marketing Technology)</i>	<i>already listed above in corporate ops.</i>
Healthcare/Medical	Biomedical Systems Medical Professions	66 666 <i>Total: 732</i>
Entrepreneurship/Innovation	Advertising and Graphic Design	267

Additional CTE program enrollments that did not align directly

Career Technical Program offerings in the Four Districts	Enrollment**
Family and Consumer Sciences	4,128
Television Production	224
Audiovisual Tech & Film	337
JAG	1,015
Automotive Service Technology & Diesel	262
Cosmetology	94
Criminal Justice	146

** Has duplicate enrollments as students can enroll in more than one course.

Regional Career & Technical Education Offerings at Enrollment: Metropolitan Career Technical Center (Fall 2018)

Audio Video	Advertising Design	Automotive Collision	Automotive Service	Construction Technology	Cosmetology	Criminal Justice	Culinary	Medical Professions	Welding
39	38	23	27	30	20	47	75	120	28

Arkansas CTE Facts: *(Source: Arkansas Department of Career Education, CTE Dept. One-sheeter)*

Data shows while many students are taking CTE courses, the number completing as CTE concentrators (complete three sequential courses) is less than 10%.

- 97% of HS students enrolled in CTE courses graduate
- 175,993 HS students are enrolled in CTE courses
- 14,039 HS CTE students are CTE concentrators
- 26,712 post-secondary students are enrolled in CTE
- 95% of HS CTE graduates enroll in college, enlist in the military, or start careers within 6 months



DISTRICTS and SCHOOLS

The Core Team (consists of Superintendents and districts' leadership teams convened by LRRC)

Findings

- Superintendents of the four districts feel they must unite and get students back into public schools. The competition is viewed to be charters, public, and outer-lying counties.
- District leadership has to balance many competing priorities and challenges that will need to be aligned to a clear, collective vision.
- Districts need a professional development plan to ensure sustainability and address teacher morale and turnover issues. This plan should include training/onboarding newly hired academy teachers on the academy model and the why behind it. All teachers should be part of interdisciplinary teaming for academies, incorporate project-based learning, and be teaching on the block.
- Most challenges raised, are addressed during the Master Planning Phase of the Roadmap as structures are built to support the transformation (teacher training, business engagement, transportation, budget deficit, and state control circumstances).
- Many schools have elements of the Freshman Academies (FA) on which they can build. They have experienced success and agree that all children should have the benefits of the FA. Various versions of freshman programs exist, and stakeholders have positive feelings about the importance of Freshman Academy.

During this Phase 1 visit, the team had a chance to see and learn about all schools in the four Pulaski County School Districts, with specific interest in the secondary culture, programs, and facilities. The following observations of school readiness are based on the focus questions (page 5) that give insight to the levels of competence, capacity, commitment, and culture.

University of Arkansas – Pulaski Technical College

Findings

- Dr. Margaret Ellibee, Chancellor, came from WI and is familiar with Gateway Tech (a very progressive Ford NGL partner).
- Pulaski Tech is genuinely interested and willing to partner with schools to shape their programs to better serve needs of students and business.
- The college is interested in expanding secondary CTE programs aligned to industry/workforce data.
- Dual and concurrent enrollment is impacted by the significant gap in high school students' abilities to pass entrance requirements for post-secondary.
- New, modern facilities serve Pulaski and Saline County students.
- The lack of a statewide system to gather and reflect workplace data that aligns with the college's graduate data at the local, regional, and state levels results in workforce data that isn't consistently valid and impacts the college's ability to make data-informed programmatic decisions.



Little Rock School District

Findings

- District leadership was enthusiastic about the CTE programs that exist. Programs such as fire academy, criminal justice, and medical have strong partnerships to build on.
- They have implemented the Excel program, are part of the CAPS network, and have adopted Buck's project-based learning model for all middle and high school Excel teachers.
- People are "hungry for change." There are some terrific building block programs.
- They will be building a new school which can be designed with academies as the centerpiece. The facility supports it.
- Metropolitan Career Tech Center serves multiple districts. It has labs that others cannot afford. Most of the CTE teachers have built business partnerships.

Schools

- **Metropolitan Career Tech Center**
 - ❖ Metro serves as the tech center for multiple districts. (Metro charges tuition to school districts, then districts are reimbursed by the state.)
 - ❖ The majority of students are eleventh and twelfth grade.
 - ❖ The school has open enrollment and conducts student recruitment activities.
 - ❖ The classes and labs are 2.5 hours and result in industry certifications.
 - ❖ Pulaski Tech gives credit for some of the courses you take in Metro.
 - ❖ Students only need 2 consecutive courses to be considered completed.
 - ❖ Metro's capacity is 720 students; current enrollment is 500.
- **Southwest High School Opening Fall 2020**
 - ❖ Southwest is ready to begin with Freshman Academies. As they launch a new school as an academy, it will be essential to hire staff with the understanding of the Career Academy design and expectations.
 - ❖ School leadership has not been selected (as of March).
 - ❖ The school design/facilities fully supports CA model and will open with A/B block scheduling.
 - ❖ The culture of this school has included community/student voice from the beginning. It is poised to understand and value the process used to select targeted industries within the region.
- **Central High School**
 - ❖ Principal, Nancy Rousseau, expressed reservations about wall-to-wall academies. She feels like the effort needed to make that happen could jeopardize what she and her team have worked hard to develop at Central.
 - ❖ Central offers CTE courses in Business and Marketing, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Computer Sciences (STEM). These pathways have active CTSO's (career and technical student organizations) and offer national certifications.
 - ❖ Central offers Jobs for Arkansas Graduates (JAG) and work-based learning.



- ❖ The EAST program is technology driven and student led. The teacher is a facilitator of learning as students work in teams to identify, research, and solve real-world problems.
- ❖ Students feel supported by their teachers beginning with freshman orientation and continuing throughout their four years at Central. They loved what they saw in the McGavock video and thought most students would respond positively, because they could still have advanced academics in the college and career academy model and explore future application of their academics.
- **Hall High School**
 - ❖ Teachers and staff are eager for change. They feel they are being used as an alternative school for the district. This school is the lowest performing in the state and has an economic imperative to change.
 - ❖ The staff is eager for change. They told the team about negative perception in the community regarding academics and safety. There's frustration with high achieving students moving out and low achieving students being moved in.
 - ❖ The school building is 50-60 years old and in need of significant work.
 - ❖ Enrollment is 1,000, but the school will lose the 300 English learner population to Southwest HS in the fall of 2019.
- **Parkview High School**
 - ❖ Principal, Randy Rutherford, has a CTE background and a history with the Career Academy model. He supports elements such as cohort scheduling and teaching through the lens, because it would help core academic teachers invest more in the magnet classes. His concern is that it will not be possible in their current realities in which students can crossover arts pathways and take multiple courses, as well as advanced academics. Also, there are many singleton courses which impacts scheduling, and they have maxed out their staffing ratio.
 - ❖ The arts pathways are state of the art. The carefully selected faculty has worked hard to build courses that attract students and prepare them for the real world. The performance courses could be paired with CTE courses that would give students a career skill set.
 - ❖ The students liked much of what they saw in the McGavock video, but they expressed fear of losing choice across pathways. They also expressed concerns about the limited space in their current facilities.
 - ❖ If they adopt academies, teachers expressed concerns about students losing choice and about the high school losing what they have built.

North Little Rock School District

Findings

- Staff reported innovative programming and strong CTE programs.
- Center of Excellence includes targeted industries of healthcare, manufacturing, IT, transportation and engineering.
- The district has strong post-secondary partnerships with Pulaski Tech and University of Arkansas.



- There is a strong sense of community pride here which can lead to expanded connections to better serve teachers and students.
- The district already works closely with the North Little Rock Chamber on several business engagement initiatives.
- Interest in the academy model is high.

Schools

- **North Little Rock High School**
 - ❖ The superintendent indicated readiness to move forward and feels that the timing is good for this change.
 - ❖ The new facility with collaborative spaces and was built for CAs.
 - ❖ A positive culture is being implemented supported by strong leadership and great facility.
 - ❖ The existing charter contract limits the scope to which students can participate in either school — no cross pollination.
 - ❖ There needs to be a broader understanding regarding the impact of the charter. Processes, policies, and communication need to be clarified in terms of how the charter might be managed or modified.

Pulaski County Special School District

Findings

- The district has a strong leadership commitment. Innovative schools receive district support.
- The district leadership team, informed by the team that visited Nashville, expressed excitement, but the team also has questions about the specifics of the model. That includes the need and plan for addressing professional development needs.
- The district is implementing DRIVEN as a personalized learning strategy that serves as a self-paced accelerator.
- The district is proud of the quality of the existing CTE programs.

Schools

- **Wilber Mills University High School**
 - ❖ School leadership is asking for help and clearly wants to have a focused vision of their purpose. They describe themselves as a “high need” school.
 - ❖ Teachers are enthusiastic about the CA model.
 - ❖ Most students take CTE courses, however, there is no sequence of courses.
 - ❖ The CTE pathways have limited partnerships. The advisory board meets twice a year.
 - ❖ The leadership hopes to have industry certifications for students.
 - ❖ Leadership says maximum capacity for their facility is 600 students.



- **Joe T. Robinson High School**

- ❖ The school leadership is enthusiastic, visionary, and deeply committed to the culture of this school being very community-centric. The principal believes the core of this school is relationships.
- ❖ Space/capacity is a concern in the expansion of programs and CA. They are housed in an older building that is too small for the growing population.
- ❖ The new facility is not complete, but when it is, it will house *Driven*, which is a self-paced acceleration program that begins in ninth grade for a small population of students.
- ❖ Traditional CTE programs include business, shop, and JAG. Students expressed interest in health and engineering career academies.

- **Sylvan Hills/North High School**

- ❖ This school applies distributed leadership: enthusiastic, well-prepared leadership and is building leadership teams (freshman center, sophomore campus, junior/senior campus).
- ❖ It is experiencing rapid growth resulting in scaffolded plan for moving into new building.
- ❖ It is developing new CTE pathways (rolling out one year at a time) aligned to economic data and workforce needs with experiential learning, industry certifications, and concurrent credit with UALR.
 - The school is being intentional about putting structures in place that allow for scalability of the work in progress.
- ❖ The school has a teacher driven advisory (Naviance) in place.
- ❖ There is student engagement in the new pathway courses and general student enthusiasm for potential academies.
- ❖ The leadership is working with school board, elected officials, local chamber, parents, and community partners.
- ❖ The building principal openly stated that career academies is the direction he wanted to go even before learning about FNGL. He wants to continue to work with Ford NGL.

- **Maumelle High School**

- ❖ Its *Driven* program is having tremendous results with a small group of students. Students and teachers would love to see this type of opportunity expanded for all ninth-grade students.
- ❖ This is a spacious school with excellent facilities in which to implement the CA model.
- ❖ The leadership and staff are excited about the possibilities of going wall-to-wall. Most have experienced CA before and embrace the concept. They are willing to learn more about a process that ensures success.



District: Jacksonville North Pulaski School District

Findings

- This is a new district which was formed when the community voted to break Jacksonville High School out of the Pulaski County Special School District.
- District leadership is working together to change both the culture and community perceptions. (Its young people are afraid of failure and the unknown. The young faculty needs intentional professional development while the seasoned faculty fears change.)
- During the past two years, the district leaders feel confident that as a result of working together they have made significant progress on changing the culture and developing the staff.
- The district vision views academies as vehicles for helping students see “something beyond Jacksonville” and as “co-thinkers in a plan for their success.”
- District/high school leadership has instituted programs like AVID, and they were interested in how the programs can be embedded in academies.
- District leadership sees value in the Ford NGL Roadmap and coaching, because they have begun the work. They have done some things well, but they acknowledged that they “didn’t know what they didn’t know.”
- Interest was expressed regarding middle school preparation for high school academies.

Schools

- **Jacksonville High School**
 - ❖ Leadership is ready, but they need to communicate the CA model, the “why,” and the benefits to all stakeholders and staff before moving forward.
 - ❖ The district has strong leadership focused on changing school culture (e.g. building relationships, referring to students as scholars, evolving role of school counselors).
 - ❖ They have implemented programs that promise equity, opportunity, and good outcomes for students (AVID, JAG).
 - ❖ They are beginning to develop career awareness (e.g. Naviance/student success plans, career fair, classroom speakers) and are working with the local chamber of commerce to develop partnerships to support engagement.
 - ❖ Leadership has placed an emphasis on developing young staff.
 - ❖ They have already begun to build CTE pathways that align with workforce needs.
 - ❖ A new building will open in Fall of 2019 with state-of-the-art spaces and technology.



RECOMMENDATIONS and TIMELINE

ESTABLISH STRUCTURES and PROCESSES

1. Facilitate a collaboration design session to address the following.

- a. Key structures, processes, and procedures need to be in place for regional implementation.

Recommendation: *Structure the collaboration design session to address regional implementation considerations at regional, district, and school levels. Also, design the Career Academy selection and placement process.*

- b. The Little Rock School District is under state control, so challenges include clear commitment and determined ownership is required to move forward.

Recommendation: *Conduct a meeting with state officials (LRRC and Ford NGL) charged with governing LRSD to determine level of flexibility and commitment that the state may have in the transformation process. Also, determine the legal requirements that the state may have in MOUs with a regional entity.*

- c. Turnover of key stakeholders presents a challenge for collaboration and communication if systems are not established.

Recommendation: *If the community moves forward with master planning, ensure that sustainability is a key part of the strategy. The community should establish a sustainability plan for any changes in key leadership. An early focus of the governance team should be to develop a vision and plan for sustaining the energy and excitement of transformation. Segment the strategic decision making by level of agreement, i.e. countywide (four district) level decisions, individual district level decisions, and school level implementation decisions.*

- d. Regional leaders have never taken on a transformation so massive. Ensure all district and business leaders understand the scope, commitment, challenges, and capacity needed to succeed. Perceptions and support of the school board for regional collaboration has been tainted by past initiatives (such as magnet schools).

Recommendation: *To move forward, secure full school board support.*

- e. Pulaski County does not have an educational services cooperative. That is it doesn't have a program of shared educational services provided to school districts. Acting Individually, transformation is usually cost prohibitive for smaller districts to implement with fidelity.

Recommendation: *Establish a cooperative, even if it is informal. Coops provide cost savings and opportunities to collaborate more effectively.*

- f. Many of the districts within Pulaski County are in older buildings or buildings which were not designed with academy laboratory space in mind.

Recommendation: *This physical space consideration should be front and center in the planning process. The districts may be able to realize some cost savings through collaborative planning on this issue.*



2. Begin with Freshman Academy design elements common across the region.

- a. Multiple programs exist across districts that focus on freshman, but there is not a cohesive outcome.

Recommendation: *Provide alternative options for school districts and schools to begin Phase 2 in cohorts. Engage all districts in planning to ensure they have input into the design and a timeline for their implementation of Phase 2. Each district should have the opportunity to include at least one high school in the initial implementation. Ensure each district has the opportunity to be represented in the visioning and master planning.*

3. Align 21st century pathways with the local and regional workforce that drive the Career Academy program offerings.

- a. Legislation has proposed changes to State CTE funding which will provide for Tier 1, 2 and 3 programs offered at secondary centers. All other CTE funding (state and federal) is available for approved CTE programs of study in a public school, including career academies.

Recommendation: *This should be considered when identifying the targeted industry alignment as the funding may be impacted.*

- b. Ensure equity distribution of CAs across districts aligned with targeted industries.

Recommendation: *Establish a systematic process to apply for new academies, remove an academy, or to revise an academy. Develop policies to determine how academies, themes, and partners will be selected and organized.*

4. Assess and build structures, processes, and policies to enhance strategic business engagement.

- a. Engage the business community in transformation planning and implementation to establish a system for business engagement and interaction. Assure interested employers are connected with opportunities for school engagement. Then engage new stakeholders in a systematic and equitable way. There are a limited number of partners, so it is likely all districts will want access to the same resources.

Recommendation: *Develop and implement a system for partner engagement that ensures equity among districts, schools, and career academies. Enhance business involvement processes, communications, and opportunities for all stakeholders who might be volunteering in schools. Provide professional development for teachers and school personnel regarding how to engage with business partners.*

- b. Examine the capacity of current staff (chamber, business, and districts) sufficient to lead the transformation initiative.

Recommendation: *Determine the governance structure, roles, and responsibilities that will fall to each chamber, key business contact, etc. and assess capacity needs.*



5. Regional Communication planning:

- a. The prevailing negativity among the general public toward Pulaski County Public Schools is causing student migration to the outer counties and loss of funding.

Recommendation: *Continue regional, strategic communication that the regional chamber has started. Communication and marketing should begin early and be maintained and refined at the initiative progresses.*

- b. Prior community initiatives have resulted in plans but little in the way of implementation. Community perception is that business leaders are tired of committing their people to initiatives with little follow through.

Recommendation: *During planning, create a timeline and set sights on early wins that can build momentum among all stakeholders (business, school personnel, teachers, and students. This initiative is a departure from past efforts as it is based on a proven approach that is supported and facilitated by experienced Ford NGL coaches.*



RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES FOR PHASE 2: *ENVISION*

The objectives of Phase 2: *Envision* are to:

1. Deepen community-wide understanding of the benefits and features of transforming the secondary school experience using a community-driven approach.
2. Understand and develop the system, structures, processes, and competencies needed to implement the plan and guide continuous improvement.
3. Deepen community-wide commitment to embrace the Ford NGL Model for transformation.

As part of Phase 2: *Envision*, we recommend that the community complete the following set of activities to help ensure that this phase is as productive as possible and prepares Pulaski County to write the community master plan during Phase 3: *Plan*. We are outlining a 17-month planning and implementation period (timelines will be determined by the community), with work to begin collaboratively on the following items in preparation for Phase 3.

MARCH/APRIL

1. Convene the core team to debrief the Nashville Hub study visit. Have one or two study visit participants present their key takeaways, the connections and opportunities for their district, and the anticipated roadblocks. Invitees should include the core team, business participants, and chamber lead staff who attended the study visit. Facilitation can be led by chamber representatives or the Ford NGL team.

APRIL

2. Conduct a collaboration design session facilitated by Ford NGL with participation from the core team, key district leadership, and chamber lead staff. The outcomes of this session include:
 - a. Regional, district, and school decisions: Examination of and solidifying roles/responsibilities for regional district representative(s) and convening organization.
 - b. The systems to be used for collaboration, coordination, and communication.
 - c. The process to select the Career Academy themes.
 - d. Identification of stakeholders to be engaged in master planning process (each district, school, teachers, students, business, chambers, etc.). Diverse representation is essential.
 - e. Anticipated questions and answers for regional school board members.
 - f. Potential governance structures and roles including steering committee, operating team, tactical teams, district implementation teams, and school team.
 - g. Agreement upon communications protocols and procedures.
3. When overall agreements for regional collaboration are determined, we recommend a MOU signing ceremony for the community. Doing so will highlight regional collaboration progress, celebrate the teamwork, and build further momentum for the initiative.
4. Develop a variety of case studies and solution samples for anticipated challenges including master planning, staffing structures, and other key implementation decisions.



RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES FOR PHASE 3: PLAN

JULY-NOVEMBER (begin Phase 3)

1. **Master planning:** The community will work with Ford NGL to conduct one visioning/framing session and two days of master planning sessions.

Part 1: Conduct a visioning/framing session (July) for the steering committee and a diverse group of community members from partner chambers, business, nonprofits, post-secondary, faith-based, local government, state board of education, and district. That includes representation from each district department (curriculum and instruction, finance, human resources, professional development, etc.) and all levels of school employees (teachers, counselors, assistant principals, executive principals, parents, etc.). Communities typically engage between 50 and 250 people in this type of session. The topics generally include developing the profile of a graduate, envisioning the future of academies in your community, making connections to other community initiatives, reviewing Ford NGL tactics, reviewing the major sections of the master plan, and examining Ford NGL data points to determine baseline data for your community. Develop a Governance structure for regional partners. Include the multiple stakeholders — Arkansas Department of Education, higher education, career and technical education (CTE), internal school district, and business.

Part 2: Conduct master planning session #1 (September). Attendees should include the key community members listed above. As a frame of reference, other communities have brought together between 50 and 150 people for this gathering.

This session generally occurs about one month after the visioning/framing session. Topics may include a review of the master plan purpose, or refining materials from visioning/framing session including the statement of mission and goals. It may also include discussions around the Profile of a Graduate or the vision for the academy system needed in the community. This session will review Ford NGL tactics that will be part of your community's master plan, as well as how to begin staging and phasing for implementation.

Part 3: Conduct master planning session #2 (October-November) for key community members who will be writing the master plan. Attendees include the steering committee, tactics team chairs, and representatives from education (secondary and post-secondary), business, and the community at large. In the past, communities have brought together between 30 and 80 people for this session.

Topics include reviewing a sample tactical plan, refining tactical plan implementation staging, and developing a plan for monitoring the implementation of the master plan. Much of the time will be devoted to tactical plans and designing data dashboards to monitor impact.



Set Up for Success in Master Planning

The four districts of Pulaski County will identify a district representative for each district and commit to allocating 10-20 hours per week of his/her time to leading and coordinating this initiative in collaboration with the Ford NGL coaches and the convening organization coordinator.

During preparation discussions, we will create a plan to engage business and education stakeholders in order to maintain momentum throughout the process. This effort will include:

- Strategic organization and development of a steering committee.
- Establishment of academy themes using analysis of workforce data and existing CTE programs.
- Analysis of current career pathway courses (including facilities, equipment, and staffing audits) and how they are or can be aligned to form programs of study under academy umbrellas.
- Alignment of approach and development of action plans in anticipation of Freshman Academy implementation in the fall of 2020.
- Discussion of the need for additional sessions to deepen community partners' understanding of the anticipated transformation. This could include resources such as Ford NGL 101, Academy 101, and/or steering committee 101 presentations. These resources could be accessed virtually through Ford NGLU or Adobe Connect sessions
- Finalization of a Phase 2 letter of commitment between LRRC and Ford NGL.
- Development of a memorandum of agreement for all stakeholders including districts, chambers, and lead business and post-secondary partners.
- Formation of a steering committee and operating board for this initiative by LRRC as the convening organization and the district with guidance from Ford NGL.



17-Month Timeline

Dates / Attendees	School Personnel Engagement	Business, Post-secondary and Community Partners Engagement
Phase 2: ENVISION		
March Core Team	FNGL report finalized and available for April meeting. Schedule planning calls with LRRC and Ford NGL.	
March/April 1.5-2 hours	Nashville Debrief Meeting Attendees: Core team+ business/chamber Determine priority tactics such as freshman academies, communications, and business engagement.	Participate in core team meeting just through the Nashville debriefs.
April 9 am-3pm suggested	Collaboration Design Session: Leading Regional Transformation Attendees: Core team + internal district leads, chamber leads, local chambers, PS, city rep, state DOE and State Department of Career Education Outcomes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional vs. district decisions 2. What level of autonomy? 3. Systems for collaboration, coordination, and communication 4. Process to select (then add, delete, & change) CA themes 	Introduce CA 101 and planning timeline. Early engagement opportunities to support master planning: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facility audit (equipment, updates, etc.) 2. Examples of CA start-up costs 3. Process to add/delete/change Career Academy themes 4. Conduct and review a deeper analysis of priority business sectors, job forecasts, and alignment with CTE/career focus course offerings.
May-June	Facilitate design sessions with priority tactical teams such as Freshman Academy, communication, and business engagement.	Facilitate design sessions with priority tactical teams such as Freshman Academy, communication, and business engagement.
May-June	School board approval of structure <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual meetings 2. School board meetings / approval 	
May or June	MOU community signing: Superintendents, business, chambers, etc.	



Phase 3: <i>PLAN</i> Master Planning		
July	<p>Session 1: Visioning session regarding the profile of a graduate and desired outcomes</p> <p>Tactical team meets monthly until a plan is written.</p>	<p>Participate in visioning session.</p> <p>Examine best practices in Business Engagement.</p> <p>Tactical team meets monthly until plan is written.</p>
September	<p>Session 2: Master planning with community involvement</p>	<p>Participate in Session 2 and present information needed such as facility audit results, CA pathways info, etc.</p>
October - November	<p>Session 3: Determine tactics, and write MP and tactical plans.</p> <p>Tactical team meets monthly until plan is written.</p>	<p>Participate on MP and tactical writing teams.</p> <p>Tactical team meets monthly until plan is written.</p>
December	<p>Submit MP and tactical plans to Ford NGL.</p>	
Fall 2019	<p>Educate faculty on the CA model.</p>	<p>Educate business on CA model.</p>
Spring 2020	<p>Identify Freshman Academy teams.</p> <p>Identify implementation team (Teams from each district) and plan for Freshman Academy.</p>	<p>Convene communication and business engagement tactical team members in implementation mode.</p>
Spring/ Summer 2020	<p>Identify and conduct needed professional development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interdisciplinary teaming ● Team leader training ● Freshman seminar curriculum adoption and training 	<p>Develop Career Academy marketing materials.</p>
Fall 2020	<p>Open freshman academies in participating schools/districts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Freshman seminar 	<p>Promote CA to all constituents.</p>



CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings obtained from our site visit and related data collection activities, the Ford NGL team concludes that Pulaski County is making considerable progress in building readiness to undertake the transformation. There is a growing understanding among district and school leaders of the FNGL design and what it would take to implement that design in Pulaski County.

The Little Rock Regional Chamber is well-positioned as the convening organization and has engaged all the right partners in early discussions. Area chambers are willing to help. The regional approach, while more complex, is what the businesses need to engage in a systemic and scalable transformation. Regional collaboration comes with several challenges that must be addressed early including territorialism; building trust; establishing roles and responsibilities; competing agendas; and fear of losing contacts, funding, and potentially, credit. While all these are real challenges, when executed with fidelity the long-term impacts of this collaboration will change the face of education in Pulaski County. Streamlined processes, clarity in vision and direction, and intentional access to partners generally increase the scope and quality of the initiative.

There is community support and an urgency from many to make systemic changes to the public high schools that results in increased performance for all students, teachers, parents, and partners. There is a deepening understanding of the systems, structures, and processes that are needed to lead and support the transformation, particularly with respect to communication, collaboration, and coordination within and across the districts; with the business sector; and throughout the community. A vision for how the transformation could be staged over multiple years is beginning to take form.

The Core Team has begun the work of planning and exploration. Superintendents appear encouraged by their visits to Nashville and have shared key learnings and insights with their leadership teams. It is important that each district have a strong internal leader who will serve as the district representative with clear support of the district superintendent and the school board. Equally important is the engagement of community leaders in the transformation, particularly those from business and post-secondary education.

When county leaders decide to take advantage of this opportunity, they can build on a foundation of competence, capacity, and commitment. They can move into Phase 2 of the Ford NGL transformation process and finally *Envision* a new day in education and community prosperity. In Phase 2, Pulaski County leaders can deepen and broaden the strong foundation necessary for success. They can enhance Pulaski County's capacity to engage the community as it prepares a custom blueprint for transformation based on the Ford NGL design. This initiative has the potential to serve as a true benchmark for how a regional initiative might be designed and implemented.



APPENDIX

Data Collection Process and Methods

The Ford NGL team compiled and reviewed a regional profile in preparation for and during the site visit of January 14-18, 2019. The profile includes the following reports, data, and focus group conversations with various key stakeholders.

DATA REPORTS

- **EMSI Report from Chamber** Emsi Q4 2018 Data Set | www.economicmodeling.com
- **Chamber's MEDRock 2020: Economic Development Strategic Plan**
- **Pulaski County Community Profile** Data on the region's demographics, districts, and schools.
- **Arkansas Department of Career Education Reports:**
 - [Career and Technical Education in Arkansas's K-12 Schools](#), January 23, 2018
 - Pulaski County School Districts CTE Enrollment by Course (provided on January 28, 2019 by Lesia Edwards)
 - Tiered Funding Programs (proposed legislation may impact funding by changing to a tiered system would impact multiple programs at Metro Technical Center.)
 - [Arkansas Career Education Occupational Program Areas](#) (website)



EXPLORE PHASE ACTIVITIES: KEY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Ford NGL team members: Rick Delano, Charles Mojkowski, Paula Barkley (Implementation Coach), Paula Chaon (Roadmap Coach), Jane Heiple, Thom Suddreth, Kelly Henderson, and Ernesto Villarreal

January 15 - 18, 2019

Over four days, the Ford NGL team members met with key stakeholder groups representing the state, the region, and local education and workforce interests. The complete list includes:

Tuesday, January 15

Core team and entire Ford NGL team

Chamber's Board of Directors meeting: Paula C, Charlie, Kelly, Ernesto, Paula B

District presentations:

Little Rock: Paula C, Charlie, Kelly, Ernesto

North Little Rock: Paula B, Rick, Jane, Thom

Pulaski County Special: Paula C, Charlie, Kelly, Ernesto

Jacksonville North Pulaski: Paula B, Rick, Jane, Thom

Pulaski Tech: Rick, Jane, Thom

Wednesday, January 16

Wilbur Mills High School

Metropolitan Career Tech

Jane, Rick, Ernesto

Joe T. Robinson

Maumelle High School

Paula C, Kelly

Sylvan Hills/ North High School

Jacksonville High School

Paula B, Thom, Charlie

Thursday, January 17

Southwest High School

Regional Chambers

Rick and Paula C

State Dept of Career Education &
Career and Tech

Rick and Paula C

North Little Rock High School

Hall High School

Kelly, Thom

Central High School

Parkview High School

Jane, Paula B, Ernesto

Friday, January 18

Teachers' Unions (local and state)

School Board chairs

Core Team Debrief

Elected officials

Foundations



Planning timeline for 17-month implementation: Pre-work for community visioning and master planning

Pre-Work: Chamber Responsibilities

1. **Schedule regular planning calls with Ford NGL / LRRC**
2. **Host Nashville Trip Debrief - March/April**
 - a. **Step One:** Design a debrief session for Nashville study visit participants that can achieve predetermined outcomes around the following agenda items.
 - b. Record key takeaways from Nashville or anything else you've read, seen, or heard about other places.
 - c. Discuss next steps.
 - d. Determine interest in moving on to Phase 2.
 - e. Uncover insights into potential questions from school board members.
 - f. Identify a decision maker in each district.
 - g. Dates for collaboration design session: determine invitees.
 - h. Determine day 2 topics and attendees (freshman academies, communication, business engagement).
 - i. **Step Two:** Convene Nashville study visit participants.
3. **Host Collaboration Design Session - April**
 - a. **Step One:** Co-plan a collaboration design session with Ford Next Generation Learning that can achieve predetermined outcomes around the following agenda items.
 - b. **Step 1:** Core Team: Design workshop (one day)
 - c. What does communication/collaboration/communication look like at the regional level?
 - d. With a coop or council, what elements of the design might we share?
 - e. Governance and control: What decisions are county? What decisions are local? What decisions belong to schools? Who has what power/responsibilities?
 - f. What are our shared values, and how will they determine how we work together?
 - g. Add Day 2 session to begin: Regional tactical teams: Freshman Academies, Communication, and Business Engagement.
4. **Conduct an MOU Signing Ceremony - May/June**
 - a. Districts, chamber, founding partners
 - b. **Step 1.** Vision event
 - c. **Step 2.** Backwards plan for the event.
 - a. Secure site, order catering, design and produce certificates.
 - b. Determine guest list, design and send invitations.
5. **Engage District School Boards - March/April/May/June**
 - a. **Step 1:** The Chamber defines the ask moving forward in partnership with the superintendents.
 - b. **Step 2:** Chamber conducts meetings with school board members individually and collectively to elicit public support from the district school boards (no resource or spending requests to date).



6. PREP for Visioning - July

- a. **Step 1.** Work with chambers to identify a diverse group of community members from partner chambers, business, non profits, post-secondary, faith-based, local government, and state board of education.
- b. **Step 2.** Work with superintendents to identify a diverse group of stakeholder representatives from each district department (curriculum and instruction, finance, human resources, professional development, etc.) and all levels of school employees (teachers, counselors, assistant principals, executive principals, parents, etc.).
- c. **Step 3.** Develop a short term communication plan that provides a consistent message to stakeholders.
- d. **Step 4.** Send invitations and prep materials outlining the ask: process, benefits, and commitment.

7. Pre-work for Core Team - March/April/May/June

- a. **Step 1.** Participate in Nashville study debrief and collaboration design session, and work collaboratively with the chamber and school board to determine interest in moving forward and the pace for doing so.
- b. **Step 2.** Identify a diverse group of stakeholder representatives from each district department (curriculum and Instruction, finance, human resources, professional development, etc.) and all levels of school employees (teachers, counselors, assistant principals. executive principals, parents, etc.). Share participant list with the chamber.
- c. **Step 3.** Serve as or identify a lead for the transformation work who has decision-making power.
- d. **Step 4.** Work with the chamber on a short-term communication plan for common messaging.

8. Pre-work for Business, Economic Development - April/May/June

- a. **Step 1.** Conduct a CTE facility audit.
- b. Using current workforce data, assess school facilities for upgrade needs as funds/resources become available.
- c. Using current workforce data, assess current facilities readiness for meeting workforce development needs and earning industry certification.
- d. Include assessment of collaborative spaces (Studio Main - a collaborative design build group).



Ford NGL Roadmap MASTER PLANNING:

July	Visioning
September	Master planning I (Nashville study visit)
October/November	Master planning II (Nashville study visit)
Mid/late December	Submit plan to FNGL (includes pathways and academies)
Fall 2019	Educate faculty on Career Academy model Visioning and master planning participants share Attendees at Nashville study visit, conferences, etc., ongoing faculty update presentations
Spring 2020	Identify Freshman Academy teams Identify implementation team (teams from each district) Plan for Freshman Academy
Spring/Summer 2020	Suggested professional development <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Interdisciplinary teaming● Team Leader training● Freshman Seminar curriculum adoption and training
Fall 2020	Open Freshman Academies in participating schools/districts <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Freshman Seminar (Career Academy marketing material)
Spring/Summer 2021	Reveal academy teams; professional development <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Academy distributed leadership training● Repeat FA trainings for 10th grade teams
Fall 2021	10th grade roll-out
Spring/Summer 2022	Chamber Signing Celebration when reach 2 partners for every pathway Repeat Trainings for 11th Grade
Fall 2022	11th grade roll-out
Spring/Summer 2023	Repeat trainings for 12th grade
Fall 2023	12th grade roll-out
Spring 2024	First graduating class

Essential to success:

- Ford NGL endorses a professional development plan that provides education, training, and ongoing support.
- Ford NGL encourages “just in time” training, so that teachers use the training right after receiving it and are supported throughout the Community-connected Learning Continuum.
- Ford NGL requests that teams attend training together (academy principal, counselor, academic and CTE or Freshman Seminar teacher).