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# Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership

Strategic Plan 2027-2032



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# Letter from the Chair and the Executive Director

Dear colleagues,

For almost two decades, the Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership (MNP20) has served as a vital connector across our state's educational ecosystem. From early childhood to K12 to higher education and workforce development, MNP20 has consistently worked to identify policy and practice strategies that strengthen learner outcomes. Our cross-sector model ensures that the partnership's efforts are rooted in the experiences of all of Minnesota's students, setting our compass to what best supports each individual learner throughout their educational journey.

As the partnership has evolved, so too has our approach to this critical work across the state. With this new strategic plan, we are laser-focusing on the seams of education—places where responsibility is shared,

coordination is often difficult, and learners often experience barriers as they move from one stage of education to the next. Our research has clearly demonstrated the value of having a strong and strategic collective-impact organization in place to facilitate shared efforts and advocacy—and MNP20 is uniquely poised to do just that.

As we've shared with partners across the country, the value of our partnership comes from our ability to incubate and accelerate change in ways that facilitate more seamless and supportive experiences for learners. This work is driven by a shared commitment to continually improving outcomes for each and every Minnesotan throughout their lifelong learning journey.

This new strategic plan centers our priorities within an action-oriented framework that we call "connect, mobilize, and influence." We are excited to share with you how we will activate this framework over the next five years, as well as the impact we envision. We invite you to engage with us further as you learn more about what we are building, and as we collectively strive toward ensuring strong outcomes for each and every one of Minnesota's learners.

Thank you for being a part of this work alongside us!

Sincerely,

Satasha Green Stephen, PhD.  
Chair, MNP20

Josiah S. Litant  
Executive Director, MNP20

# Introduction and Background

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In 2009, legislation was first enacted to formally create the Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership by bringing together major statewide educational groups and other organizations with a stated interest in P-20 education (P-20 originally meaning preschool through graduate school, now a stand-in terminology for birth through postsecondary and workforce). The Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership (MNP20) is a multi-sector, independent coalition of leaders representing early childhood, K-12, higher education, advocacy and affinity-based organizations, workforce development, and state government. The partnership was created with the purpose of advising the state government on education policy and practice, and with the goal of strengthening education systems and student outcomes. MNP20's work is guided by an aspirational North Star: the

continual improvement of economic and social mobility for each and every one of Minnesota's learners.

Across every education system, learners experience transition points—moving from early childhood into K-12, from high school into postsecondary education or training, and eventually into the workforce. These transitions, what we refer to as the seams of education, are often where students face the greatest barriers: being ready for kindergarten learning, navigating credit transfer, finding career guidance, or simply understanding what comes next. No single agency owns these seams, but every learner moves through them. MNP20's work centers on these transition points, bringing systems together so learners experience a more cohesive and supported journey.



## Strategic Planning Process

The Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership engaged The Improve Group to facilitate a strategic planning process grounded in MNP20's mission, vision, and theory of change. The process combined primary and secondary research to develop an environmental scan, including a review of peer P-20 initiatives and aligned organizations, interviews with national and state partners, community-based organizations, executive committee members, and legislators, as well as surveys of community partners and member organization leaders. Findings from this research informed a series of facilitated workshops with a ten-member strategic planning committee representing diverse sectors and perspectives, and responsible for helping to shape the strategic directions, priorities, and recommendations reflected in this plan.

# Our Model for Impact

MNP20's approach to systems change relies on the intersection of two essential dimensions: horizontal reach and vertical reach. Horizontal reach connects leaders and institutions across Minnesota's education and workforce systems—early childhood, K-12, higher education, workforce, and state government. Vertical reach ensures that the voices closest to the work shape the solutions, including learners, families, practitioners, community organizations, and researchers.

Real impact happens when these two dimensions come together. By aligning cross-sector leadership with lived experience, MNP20 creates solutions that are informed by data, grounded in community realities, and supported across institutions. This integrated model gives Minnesota the best opportunity for lasting systems change—not just better collaboration, but better outcomes for learners.

## Our Mission and Vision



### **Mission**

MNP20 collaborates across sectors to increase equitable education access and supports, enhance lifelong learning opportunities, and improve outcomes for every Minnesotan.



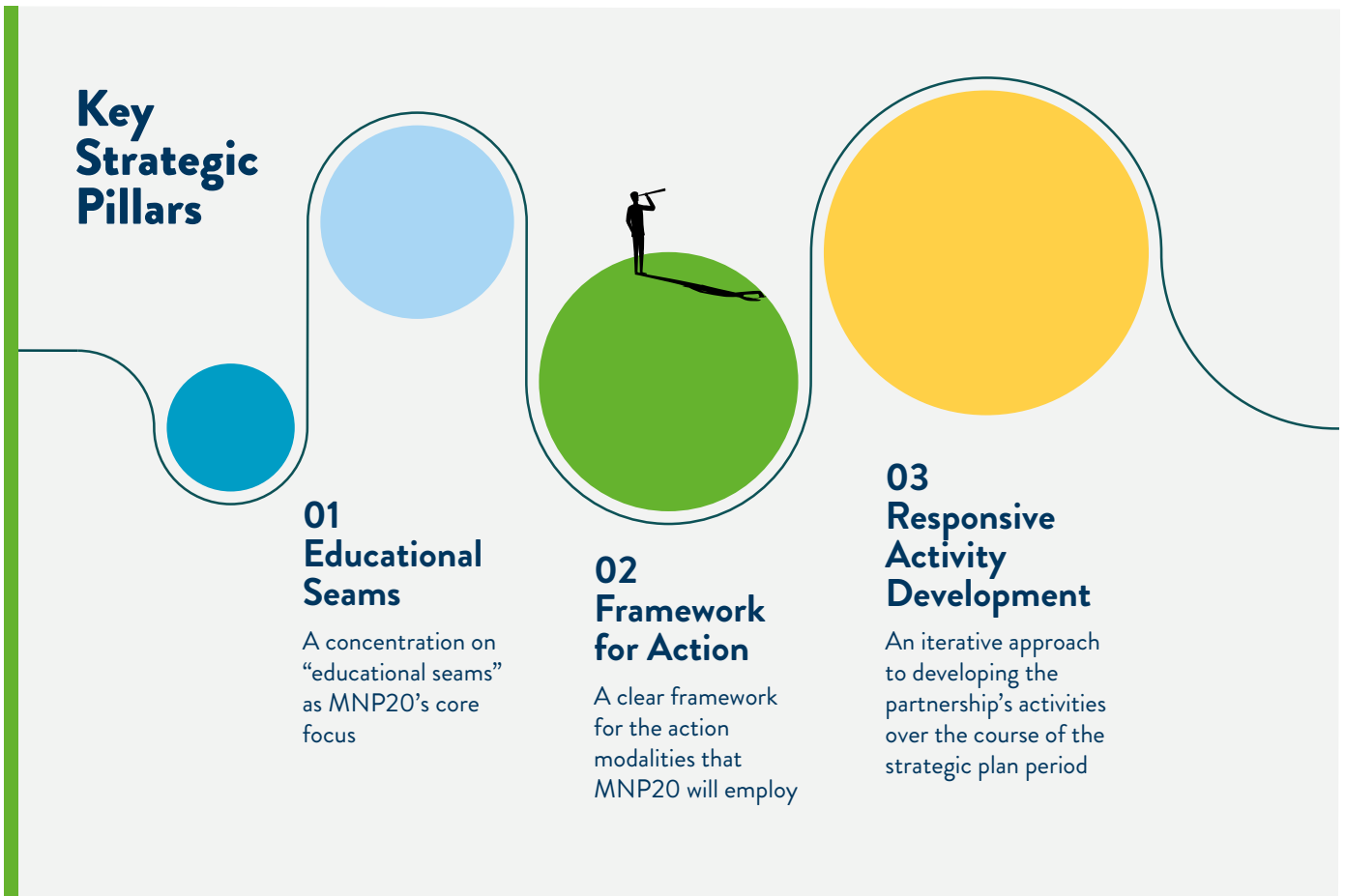
### **Vision**

MNP20 will influence change, foster innovation, and advocate for policies and practices that address priority issues in education and workforce development.

# Part 1: Strategic Pillars

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MNP20's strategy was created with the intention of leaning into opportunities that the partnership is uniquely positioned to advance for the state. As such, the plan rests upon three key strategic pillars:



# Strategic Pillar 01

A concentration on “educational seams” as MNP20’s core focus.

## Educational Seams

MNP20 will work across the seams of the state’s education ecosystem to improve social and economic outcomes for Minnesotans. MNP20 serves as a connector and catalyst focused on educational transition points between early childhood, K-12, postsecondary, workforce development, and continued lifelong learning. These milestones often present both opportunities and barriers, making them strategic points for collaboration, innovation, and targeted support. By focusing specifically on transition points, MNP20 seeks to strengthen connections across systems, reduce gaps in access and achievement, and ensure that learners experience strengthened pathways that lead to stronger educational, career, and life outcomes across all demographic groups.

Experiences at these seams are not uniform. For some learners, strong early childhood preparation or comprehensive high school counseling help ease transitions. For others, especially those in rural or under resourced communities, navigating these seams can be confusing, overwhelming, or disenfranchising. Families often face inequitable access to quality early education, career navigation, or postsecondary options. Such challenges reveal why a statewide coalition is beneficial in designing solutions that meet learners where they are, and in offering policy and practice solutions that help bridge these critical gaps through partnership, collaboration, and shared strategies. This will be the focus of MNP20’s work.



# Strategic Pillar 02

A clear framework for the action modalities that MNP20 will employ.



## Framework for Action

To strengthen outcomes at Minnesota's educational seams, MNP20 is organizing around a clear, powerful framework for action that will focus our efforts in three specific categories: Connect, Mobilize, and Influence. Each of these will be an essential element of MNP20's efforts to strengthen the experience and outcomes of students across the entire learner lifespan. This approach provides necessary definition for how MNP20 will work towards accomplishing our vision.

### Connect

Connect experts across the state through convening, data-driven learning, and diverse engagement

MNP20's ability to convene leaders is rooted not in formal authority but in the collective power and credibility of who sits at the table. Our coalition represents senior-level leaders across sectors, geographies, and focus areas. This cross-sector voice uniquely positions MNP20 to identify shared problems and build trust for coordinated action. In addition to leaders, MNP20 is well positioned to convene individuals at various levels within organizations, as well as those with lived experience, to ensure MNP20's work is informed and guided by those most impacted by the policies and practices we seek to advance.

- **Connect** focuses on MNP20’s ability to be neutral, nonpartisan conveners who bring together cross-sector voices, leveraging trust, credibility, and access to high-level decision-makers to advance collaboration, accelerate innovation, and inform policy advocacy.

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- **Connect** allows MNP20 to serve as a data-driven hub for shared learning, bringing together statewide and national best practices while making data accessible and actionable for MNP20 members and the state.

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- **Connect** serves to expand and diversify engagement in our work by including underrepresented voices with more inclusive, authentic, and meaningful participation structures.



## Mobilize

### Mobilize action at the seams of the learner journey

Mobilize seeks to strengthen transitions across the seams of the education continuum by identifying and acting on opportunities for collective impact to influence programs, practice, and non-statutory policy—work we can begin immediately or in the near-term, without legislative action. By centering the learner journey as the focal point of our mobilization, MNP20 will ensure that learner outcomes remain the priority in this work.

- **Mobilize** requires centering the lived experiences of learners. Stories shared by Minnesota families illustrate how inconsistent access to early learning, uneven program offerings, or complex postsecondary systems can create barriers at each seam. These lived experiences help identify where coalition action is most needed—and where aligned, cross-sector strategies can remove obstacles and expand equitable pathways through collaborative action.
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- **Mobilize** translates data and cross-sector collaboration into practical, aligned strategies that address critical gaps and highlight areas for improving outcomes at each stage of the learner journey.
- 
- **Mobilize** promotes system-level changes in practice by working with partners to strengthen learner supports, remove barriers, and expand equitable pathways to success. MNP20’s role in this work is to help incubate, accelerate, and amplify promising practices, and to provide intermediary capacity to advance new efforts.



## Influence

Influence policies that strengthen learner outcomes

MNP20 was initially created to advise the state government on educational budget and policy. MNP20 has a statutory obligation not to flex authority, but rather to serve as critical advisors to the governor, state agencies, and the legislature.

- **Influence** prioritizes policy advocacy efforts, with a focus on reaching MNP20's North Star by closing educational equity gaps, including across race, ethnicity, gender, and geography.

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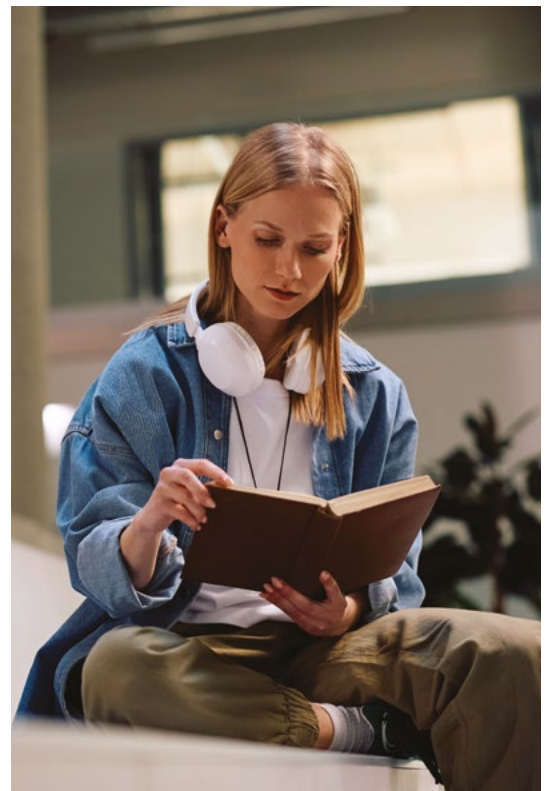
- **Influence** will synthesize data into informed policy proposals using integrated data, research, and best practices to transparently guide decisions and recommendations.

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- **Influence** will elevate policy recommendations grounded in learner-centered narratives and actionable evidence, helping policymakers understand both the urgency and the opportunity to strengthen Minnesota's education and workforce systems.

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- **Influence** is supported through the partnership's clear, focused messaging and visibility, ensuring policymakers understand the depth and value of the recommendations that the partnership brings to them.



# Strategic Pillar 03

An iterative approach to developing the partnership's activities over the course of the strategic plan period.

## Responsive Activity Development

In a constantly changing world, a static multi-year strategic plan runs great risk of rapidly losing its relevance. While this plan identifies clear pillars to provide direction and boundaries for our work, it is essential that the activities that animate this plan be dynamic and responsive to the educational and political ecosystems. To this end, this plan takes the following approach:

- Within this document we have identified a set of specific actionable items to tackle over the first year of the strategic plan.
- The results of the first year of work will feed the development of additional activities in year two, and so on through the remaining years of the plan.
- New opportunities and emerging priorities will present themselves over the duration of the plan, and it is essential that MNP20 is able to respond to those in real-time. To ensure the partnership's ability to do so with intention and alignment, we have developed a strategy screening tool. A strategy screening tool is a practical decision-making tool that will help MNP20 consistently evaluate new ideas, opportunities, and initiatives against the mission, strategic priorities, and available resources of the partnership. By providing a consistent set of criteria for evaluating opportunities, the strategy screen promotes transparency, reinforces strategic alignment, and enables MNP20 to make intentional decisions that maximize its influence and long-term value for Minnesota's learners. This tool will be used as new activities are considered, to help MNP20 leadership assess which activities to prioritize.

This responsive approach will help ensure that the strategic plan remains rooted in the core tenets that have been established, while allowing action items to develop more organically and responsively over the course of the plan.



# Part 2: Year One Strategic Activities

Within our framework for action, each action-type is aligned to specific activities that have been selected for the first year of the strategic plan. The first-year activities are separated into three tables, with each table focused on one of the action types. An additional table has been included to identify operational priorities on which the partnership will focus. The tables also indicate which seam in the educational ecosystem each activity touches or influences.



Connect

These activities combine both horizontal reach—connecting systems that historically work independently—and vertical reach—bringing in voices closest to the work, including learners, families, practitioners, community organizations, and researchers. This intersection of perspectives ensures that actions are shaped not only by data but also by lived experience.

Table 1. Activities that advance the priority to connect experts across the state

| Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | ECE to K12 | K12 to Higher Ed | Higher Ed to Workforce |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Finalize state-level metrics across the seams of the educational ecosystem to populate MNP20’s impact measures dashboard.                                                                                                                                                      | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |
| Co-facilitate emerging career-connected learning coalition efforts, identifying and enacting priorities for action.                                                                                                                                                            | No         | Yes              | Yes                    |
| Refine the role and charge of the Integrated Data Use and Capacity Committee (IDUC) to articulate how it bridges MNP20’s data dashboard, the integrated data landscape, and helps inform MNP20’s activities and priorities, with specific attention to persistent equity gaps. | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |
| Design a sustainable way to incorporate diverse lived experience voices to inform and authentically engage with MNP20’s work. Focus on developing new, innovative ways to connect beyond traditional task forces, committees, or listening sessions.                           | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |

# Mobilize

Mobilizing action at transition points in the learner journey is where data will be leveraged as a decision-making tool. Seams will continue to be strengthened in order to support all Minnesotans in their learning journey.

**Table 2. Activities that advance the priority to mobilize action at transition points in the learner journey**

| Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                         | ECE to K12 | K12 to Higher Ed | Higher Ed to Workforce |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Launch key action items from the MNP20 "Next Phase of Dual Enrollment" report (being released in fall 2026).                                                                                                     | No         | Yes              | No                     |
| Identify major transition barriers from early childhood to kindergarten, and use that data to determine priorities for MNP20's focused work strengthening this seam.                                             | Yes        | No               | No                     |
| Leverage MNP20 council expertise to identify projects that address pain points in the learner lifespan, with particular attention to persistent equity gaps, and to identify experts to participate in the work. | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |
| Utilize the MNP20 equity planning tool throughout the partnership's work to ensure active embedding of strategies to close statewide equity gaps.                                                                | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |
| Develop an MNP20 "impact measures" dashboard that tracks key indicators of student success and systems health at educational seams, as well as the impact of MNP20's work.                                       | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |

# Influence

Advocating for state policies that support Minnesota's learners aims to strengthen outcomes for all Minnesotans across their educational journey.

**Table 3. Activities that advance the priority to influence policies that strengthen learner outcomes**

| Activity                                                                                                                                                      | ECE to K12 | K12 to Higher Ed | Higher Ed to Workforce |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Participate in ongoing research, priority setting, and policy proposal development as part of the Minnesota Children and Families Funding Collaborative.      | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |
| Advocate for legislative renewal and updating of the statewide educational attainment goal, informed by disaggregated data, and with subgoals in ECE and K12. | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |
| Advocate for legislative policy recommendations stemming from the MNP20 "Next Phase of Dual Enrollment" report (being released in fall 2026).                 | No         | Yes              | No                     |
| Advocate for policy recommendations stemming from the MNP20 and Governor's Workforce Development Board joint educator workforce committee.                    | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |
| Advocate for a base funding appropriation for MNP20 and related updates to the MNP20 statute.                                                                 | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |
| Develop and disseminate MNP20's 2027 legislative agenda.                                                                                                      | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |

# Operations

Though not one of our three specified action priority areas, MNP20 has also identified critical operational goals required to effectively carry out the aforementioned activities.

**Table 4. Activities that advance the **operations** of the partnership**

| Activity                                                                                                                                                               | ECE to K12 | K12 to Higher Ed | Higher Ed to Workforce |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Develop sustainable, braided funding sources to support MNP20's continued work.                                                                                        | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |
| As funding is secured, strategically hire additional staff to support MNP20's capacity.                                                                                | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |
| Launch MNP20's previously developed communications strategy, with a focus on sharpening MNP20's messaging to key stakeholders and constituents.                        | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |
| Produce an annual report for the governor, legislature, and general public, detailing the accomplishments, recommendations, and ongoing priorities of the partnership. | Yes        | Yes              | Yes                    |



# Appreciations

With thanks to those who made this possible.

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MNP20 staff and the Improve Group aimed to make this strategic planning process as collaborative as possible. This process would have been impossible without the generosity of the many who shared their time, thoughts, knowledge, and expertise so openly.

MNP20's Executive Committee supported the development of this plan with a strong foundational understanding of MNP20's work, as well as deep historical background of the P-20 work that has taken place in Minnesota. Thank you to Stephanie Graff (Minnesota Department of Education), Satasha Green-Stephen (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities), Maren Hulden (Minnesota Department of Education), Dennis Olson (Minnesota Office of Higher Education), Amy Pittenger (University of Minnesota), and Raj Singh (University of Minnesota) for their engagement in the development of this strategic plan.

The Strategic Planning Committee volunteered their time, working alongside MNP20 staff, to help build the core content of this plan, and they were indispensable throughout the process. Thank you to Tambryanna Akoi (Minnesota Education Equity Partnership), Rachel Grimes (Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families), John Fanning (Education Partnerships Coalition of Minnesota), Daron Korte (Minnesota Department of Education), Jennifer Kunze (University of Minnesota), Megan Rozowski (Minnesota Private College Council), Lauryn Schothorst (Minnesota Chamber of Commerce) and Liz Williams (Greater Twin Cities United Way).

Thank you to every single member of the MNP20 coalition who responded to surveys, provided feedback, and always showed up so genuinely and in support of advancing outcomes for each and every one of Minnesota's learners.

Thank you to the members of the MNP20 Integrated Data Use and Capacity committee for their support in beginning the process of developing the metrics that will underpin the work in this plan: Eric Billiet (Minnesota Department of Education), Julio Caesar (Bloomington Public Schools), Joe Curiel (Minnesota Department of Education), Veronica Deenanath (Greater Twin Cities United Way), Nora Morris (Minnesota Office of Higher Education), Joe Munnich (Generation Next), Leiataua Jon Peterson (Minnesota Education Equity Partnership), Peter Radcliffe (University of Minnesota), Megan Rozowski (Minnesota Private College Council), Carrie Schneider (Minnesota Office of Higher Education), Denise Smieja (Education Partnerships Coalition of Minnesota) and Clarinda Solberg (United Way of Central Minnesota). Extra thanks to Julio Caesar, Leiataua Jon Peterson, and Clarinda Solberg for their service on the workgroup that developed the framework for MNP20's impact measures, which in turn became the framework for so much of the strategic plan and the metrics development.

Finally, thank you to the staff of the Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership, Mandy Janssen and Josiah Litant, and the team at The Improve Group for their countless hours ideating, developing, revising, and ultimately delivering this strategic plan.



# Appendix: Environmental Scan Overview

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The environmental scan followed a multi-method, stakeholder-informed approach to identify priorities, challenges, and strategic opportunities for MNP20. The process moved from external landscape analysis to national and cross-state insights to local stakeholder input to internal reflection to broader validation, producing a comprehensive, multi-level understanding of:

- what works (effective practices and structures)
- what is missing (gaps in equity, funding, and systems alignment)
- what is needed next (strategy, resources, and coordinated action)

The sections that follow provide more detailed information about the methods, purpose, and findings.

## Literature and Comparative Review

**Method:** Scan of publicly available documents, websites, and resources from other states' P-20 initiatives and aligned organizations.

**Purpose:** Identify leading practices and structural insights.

- Examined national and state P-20 models to understand effective practices in policy implementation, equity, collaboration, and resource allocation
- Identified critical enablers: leadership buy-in, stakeholder alignment, and integrated data systems
- Highlighted persistent gaps, including limited documentation on administrative leadership and socioeconomic barriers

### Findings:

- Successful P-20 efforts focus on intentional collaboration, equity-focused design, strong leadership support, and integrated data systems.
- Policy and practice change is more effective when institutional leaders engage and align around shared goals.
- Many states face persistent challenges related to fragmented systems, uneven resource allocation, and socioeconomic barriers.
- MNP20 can learn from these models by pairing cross-sector collaboration with stronger infrastructure for accountability and continuous improvement.

# National Partner Insights

**Method:** Interviews with national education organizations.

**Purpose:** Capture cross-state, systems-level perspectives.

- Assessed how national partners support state P-20 efforts through data use, advocacy, and partnerships
- Identified systemic challenges: fragmented data systems, inequitable funding, and barriers to change
- Surfaced key strategies: relationship-building, diversified funding, localized data narratives, and formalized partnerships

## Findings:

- National partners emphasized that education reform depends on long-term relationship-building, strategic data use, and adaptive advocacy.
- Recurring barriers included fragmented data and social systems, inequitable funding, and structural barriers to change.
- Findings suggest that success depends less on isolated programs and more on stronger connections between people, institutions, and data.
- National partnerships may help MNP20 strengthen legislative strategy, diversify funding, and use more actionable, localized equity narratives.



# Cross-State Leadership Interviews

**Method:** Interviews with P-20 leaders from four geographically and politically diverse states.

**Purpose:** Extract implementation lessons and sustainability factors.

- Identified success factors: neutral governance, inclusion of decision-makers, shared goals, and strong coordination roles
- Highlighted constraints: limited staffing, unstable funding, and challenges scaling innovations
- Emphasized need for structural autonomy and sustained investment

## Findings:

- Strong P-20 initiatives often stress the importance of neutral governance, inclusion of decision-makers, shared goals, and transparent, equity-centered action.
- Coordinators play a key role in connecting fragmented systems and sustaining momentum across sectors.
- A major challenge across states is under-resourcing, especially limited staffing and unstable funding.
- Long-term sustainability appears to require structural autonomy, permanent staffing, and more reliable funding.

# Community-Level Needs Assessment

**Method:** Interviews with Minnesota community-based organizations (CBOs).

**Purpose:** Understand barriers and equity gaps across populations.

- Identified systemic inequities affecting marginalized groups across the cradle-to-career continuum
- Highlighted barriers related to funding, access, geography, policy, and social determinants of education





### Findings:

- CBOs described significant systemic barriers that limit access to education and employment for marginalized communities across the cradle-to-career continuum.
- Key barriers included inequitable funding, geographic access, immigration enforcement, technology access, and other social determinants.
- Groups named as especially affected included very young children, adult learners, immigrants, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, incarcerated individuals, and people with disabilities.
- Findings underscore the need for inclusive policy design and more sustainable support structures across the learner lifespan.

## Internal Strategic Reflection

**Method:** Interviews with MNP20 Executive Committee members (ECMs).

**Purpose:** Assess internal strengths, gaps, and readiness.

- Confirmed MNP20's strength as a neutral convener
- Identified key limitations: lack of funding, unclear shared goals, reactive governance, and limited operationalization of strategy
- Emphasized need for roadmap, key performance indicators, and a balanced focus across the P-20 spectrum

### Findings:

- ECMs consistently described MNP20 as a respected, neutral convener for cross-sector dialogue.
- Members expressed a need for a more focused roadmap, clear key performance indicators, stronger infrastructure, and more balanced attention across the full P-20 spectrum.
- ECMs identified several constraints on long-term impact, including limited financial resources, unclear shared goals, reactive governance, and overreliance on individual engagement.
- Conversations suggest that MNP20's value is recognized, but its strategic potential has not yet been fully operationalized.

# Policy Perspective Scan

## 01

### Method

Interviews with Minnesota state legislators.

## 02

### Logistics

Identify policy alignment and opportunities.

- Surfaced interest in a comprehensive, equity-centered, data-informed review of education systems
- Indicated potential legislative traction for MNP20-led initiatives



### Findings:

- Legislators described a need for a broader, data-informed reevaluation of how education is funded and delivered in Minnesota.
- Their comments emphasized equity, student well-being, and authentic connection over outdated or overly bureaucratic measures of success.
- Legislators did not define a specific role for MNP20, recognizing this clarification as a key issue for future efforts.
- Their perspectives suggest there may be legislative traction for MNP20 to serve as convenors for conversations about improvements to the systems linked together in the learner life span.

# Broader Stakeholder Surveys

## Method:

- Survey of community partners not interviewed
- Survey of MNP20 members not interviewed

**Purpose:** Validate themes and assess broader stakeholder sentiment.



## Findings:

- Community partners emphasized system strain, inequities, and need for coordinated, equity-centered action
- Members affirmed MNP20's convening value but called for stronger strategy, funding stability, and clearer impact pathways
- Identified priority levers: advocacy, data-driven practice, and addressing systemic barriers to mobility



Thank you for taking the time to review our  
2027-2032 Strategic Plan. We look forward  
to partnering with you on the work ahead.