MY TRANSITION, MY CAREER

Kansas Transition Council Guide

A RESOURCE FOR ESTABLISHING , REVITALIZING, AND SUSTAINING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

KU CENTER ON DISABILITIES

KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ABOUT THE KANSAS TRANSITION COUNCIL PROJECT

The mission of the Kansas Transition Council (KTC) project is to build the capacity of communities across the state to improve the transition outcomes of young people with disabilities. Leveraging their strengths and assets, each transition council will work alongside self-advocates and family members to identify and dismantle systemic barriers to competitive employment, continuing education, and community inclusion. Through ongoing technical assistance, the Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities (KUCDD) will support and empower all transition councils to establish the policies, practices, and partnerships needed to sustain their efforts and ensure the voices of transition-age youth with disabilities and their families are reflected in local transition systems and services. KTC is part of a broader project, My Transition, My Career that emerged listening sessions and a policy analysis conducted as part of a year-long Administration on Community Living planning grant. Efforts of the planning grant pointed to a pressing need for community collaboration, self-advocate and family involvement in the transition process, and increased opportunities for transition-age youth to develop self-determination skills.

ABOUT THE KANSAS UNIVERSITY CENTER ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

The mission of the Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities (KUCDD) is to enhance the quality of life, self-determination, and inclusion of Kansans with developmental disabilities and their families through research, training, technical assistance, and community service activities. KUCDD research,

| Doing High Quality Work | Knowing Your Purpose | Seeking Diversity | Including Others | Respecting Other People |

For more information about KUCDD, visit: https://kucd.ku.edu/

HOW MIGHT TRANSITION COUNCILS USE THIS GUIDE?

The purpose of this guide is to support Kansas Transition Councils' efforts to improve the postschool outcomes of transition-age youth with disabilities, forging sustainable pathways to competitive employment, continuing education, and community inclusion.

As your transition council works toward achieving its vision for community change, we hope this guide provides a wealth of information and resources to steer your efforts. This guide leverages the power of bringing together a transition council with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, expertise, and abilities to launch grassroots efforts. This guide also emphasizes the importance of including people with lived experience of disability in each step of the change process to ensure the transition council's efforts align with the priorities, needs, and values of the disability community. Each chapter of this guide highlights a critical step in the systems change process.

USING THIS GUIDE, YOUR TRANSITION COUNCIL WILL WORK COLLABORATIVELY TO EXPLORE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- To what extent do transition-age youth with disabilities in our community currently have opportunities for employment, continuing education, and community inclusion?

- To what extent are transition-age youth with disabilities and their families prepared to shift from the school system to the adult service system and what challenges might they encounter?

- What services, supports, programs, policies, and partnerships currently exist in our community to support the transition-to-adulthood process? Where might we focus our efforts to enhance the process?

- Do transition challenges persist for all transition-age youth with disabilities in our community or are there more for specific groups?

- What are the most pressing needs of transition-age youth in our community?

- What actions can we take to advance accessibility, advocacy, awareness, and opportunities for our transition-age youth?

- How might we engage other key stakeholders in our efforts to ensure effective and sustainable action?

Because of variations in how and why transition councils are established, it can be difficult to provide a single definition. Within the Kansas Transition Council Project, our goal is to establish transition councils with a core team of 10-12 members who represent the lived experiences of self-advocates and family members, professionals from the school and service systems, and broader community members (e.g., employers, civic leaders). We expect each core team to include at least one person with lived experience of disability and at least one family member of a person with a disability. Together, transition council members meet at least monthly to identify and implement solutions to the most pressing local transition-related issues. Transition councils also engage a broad cross-section of community members outside the core team as advisors to inform the transition council's activities.

THE NEED FOR TRANSITION COUNCILS

The transition-to-adulthood is marked with new experiences, responsibilities, and challenges as youth navigate postschool environments. Youth with disabilities often face additional challenges as they shift from an entitlement-based education system to an eligibility-based system in which they must seek out and secure adult services. Ideally, transition-age students and their families connect to postschool services and supports while still in high school, setting the stage for a seamless transition to community life. However, many Kansas families report having limited information on service options and eligibility requirements as well as encountering fragmented, duplicated, or delayed services (Dean et al., in preparation). Identifying effective strategies for educators and families to document and connect to local transition resources is essential to promoting postschool success. The absence of strong postschool connections inhibits community inclusion and contributes to poor outcomes in the areas of employment, education, and independent living.

One essential practice known to improve postschool outcomes is collaboration (Mazzotti et al., 2021). Collaboration is the exchange of resources between two individuals or organizations to generate solutions to a shared issue or concern (Cook & Friend, 2010; Idol et al., 1995). Collaboration exists on a continuum from networking and collecting basic information to shared decision-making and interdependence (Frey et al., 2006). Transition councils offer a unique opportunity for collaboration as members from the school system, service system, and community work alongside each other to support the transition process. Together, these collaboration partners act as a kind of "transition network," exchanging, borrowing, and mobilizing resources to improve postschool outcomes. Members of the transition council can leverage the resources housed within the transition council or mobilize their own personal networks to connect students, families, and other stakeholders to critical postschool supports.

Effective transition councils:

- Give voice to self-advocates and family members who might not typically have a "seat at the table"

- Build trust and partnerships across school systems, service systems, and community members

- Document the strengths and resources that exist within the local community

- Identify and work to address transition barriers at the local- and state- level

- Educate council members and community members on transition policy and practices

- Develop new practices, policies, and programs to address pressing local needs

- Create systems to document and measure progress on postschool outcomes

- Improve the postschool outcomes of young people with disabilities in employment, continuing education, and community participation

THE ROLE OF TRANSITION COUNCILS IN SYSTEMS CHANGE EFFORTS

Transition councils are a powerful force for change. Pooling the diverse talents and resources of a broad cross-section of community members is a logical and effective strategy for addressing pressing local transition issues. Working collaboratively, transition councils are well-positioned to overcome barriers in a way that a single person or organization could not achieve on their own. Transition councils help build trust between agencies and organizations, share information and resources, build social capital within and beyond its membership, and mobilize populations who do not typically have a seat at the table. Further, because a transition council's change efforts are rooted in the community, they are informed by the values, priorities, and culture of the community, leading to more sustainable action and change.

PHASES OF TRANSITION COUNCILS

From the time a transition council is established, it should be diligently working toward the tenets of high-quality collaboration, including open communication, shared decision-making, power sharing, and the ongoing exchange of ideas and resources. The figure below outlines the common phases of community action through the Community Coalition Action Theory (CCAT; Butterfoss, 2007), including formation, maintenance, and institutionalization (i.e., sustainability). Although seemingly sequential, transition councils will likely return to previous phases multiple times as they add new members and navigate shifting community needs. Throughout this guide, we provide in-depth descriptions of each phase of the change process and identify activities to support transition councils on the path to sustainability.

Applying the CCAT Theory, the community context is what spurs the need for community change. In the case of the Kansas Transition Council Project, the consistent poor postschool outcomes of Kansas transition-age youth with disabilities call for innovative groups—such as transition councils (i.e., coalitions)—to work collectively to improve outcomes across the state. KUCDD, alongside its statewide partners in the *My Transition, My Career* project, convenes and supports transition councils in their efforts to build community capacity and improve postschool outcomes in employment, continuing education, and community inclusion. KUCDD provides technical assistance and funding (over 18 months) to support transition councils through the systems change process as they map community assets, document their existing transition process, gather community feedback, enact strategic planning, and implement and evaluate promising- and evidence-based practices.

Based on the CCAT Theory, there are three stages of community coalition action: **Formation**, **Maintenance & Implementation**, and **Institutionalization (sustainability)**.

During *formation*, transition councils are established or revitalized. Councils are strengthened when they recruit a diverse group that includes people with lived experience, outline clear roles and responsibilities, formalize meeting schedules and communication practices, and engage in shared decision-making procedures.

During *maintenance & implementation*, transition councils develop and enact action plans. These action plans are informed by assessments of community strengths and needs as well as feedback from community advisors regarding feasibility and prioritization. Actions are strengthened when they are grounded in promising- and evidence-based practices.
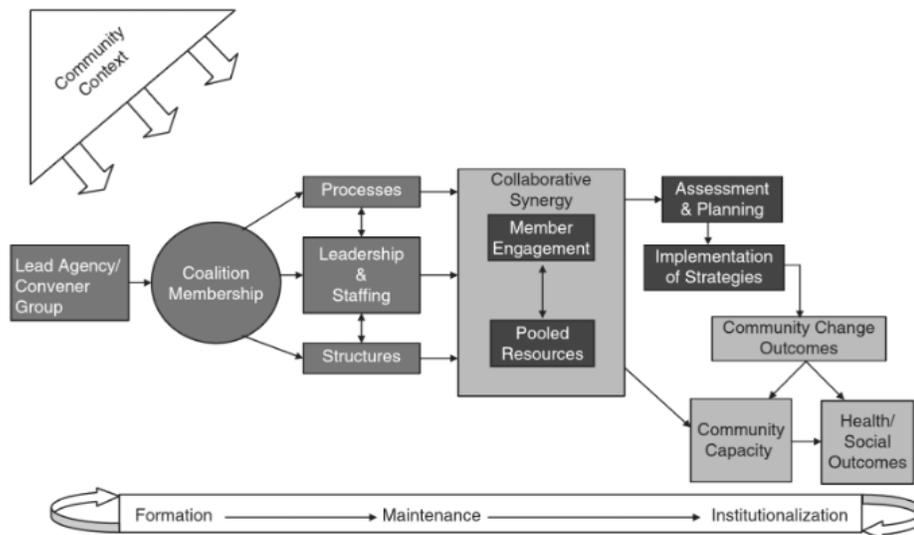
Figure 1. Community Coalition Action Theory

During *institutionalization* or *sustainability*, transition councils evaluate changes in policy, practice, environments, and systems. Transition councils identify the most successful strategies they implemented and share back their triumphs and challenges with the broader community. Transition councils plan for short-term sustainability by (1) connecting with other transition councils and coalitions, (2) flexibly responding to emerging needs, and (3) establishing strong leadership structures to seamlessly support membership changes. Transition councils plan for long-term sustainability by (1) identifying potential funding mechanisms or institutions that might provide ongoing support and (2) gaining buy-in of civic leaders and policymakers who recognize the value of the transition council's efforts.

Although every transition council will encounter challenges and setbacks, this guide is intended to complement ongoing technical assistance from the KUCDD team. We are here to support your journey and provide information, resources, and promising- and evidence-based practices to enact lasting change in your communities!

THE NEED FOR TRANSITION COUNCIL MEMBERS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF DISABILITY

We have known since people began thinking about the "science" of systems change that hearing the stories of people affected by that system has the power to change that system for those people's direct betterment. As for people with disabilities, however, too often their voices are filtered through well-meaning "helpers." While it is important to have and acknowledge allies, far more important is learning how people with disabilities can advocate for themselves, understanding they can be a community leader, and in that understanding knowing they have inherent power! Further, ensuring individuals with disabilities who are multiply oppressed based on their race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, or other social categories. That's all a part of changing the system, one person, one transition council, one community at a time.

Transition Councils have the potential to change people's thinking and have higher expectations of youth and young adults with disabilities. By bringing together in a community and focusing on how to support transition, transition councils have the power to change the system for the betterment of people with disabilities and their families.

We must change the mindset that dominates school and service systems related to disability – we're not here just to be taken care of. We need to be able to use our own voice and we need to stand up for ourselves. Nobody's perfect and there will be bumps in the road, but that's just a fact of life.

Transition Councils can lift the voices of people with disabilities to transform the entire system and we are ready to make that change!

-Brad Linnenkamp
KUCDD researcher and self-advocate

APPLYING THE EXCHANGE BOUNDARY FRAMEWORK

A primary goal of the Kansas Transition Council project is to bring new voices to local disability issues, particularly the voices of those most impacted. For this goal to be realized, transition councils must make steep investments in self-advocates and family members serving on their transition council. We encourage transition councils to leverage the Exchange Boundary Framework (see p. 9) to guide their efforts as they embark on their systems change project. Moving beyond mere presence and tokenism means building the capacities of marginalized transition council members, ensuring they have the tools to meaningfully contribute to the decision-making process, and creating space for them to share their ideas in the ways that feel most comfortable and accessible. True participation will also require pushing the boundaries of what a transition council is "expected" to be.

For many transition council members who have participated in other groups or initiatives, it will be tempting to fall into familiar patterns and procedures inherent to coalition-building (e.g., traditional agendas and rules of engagement). But transition councils will need to push against these socially-constructed norms and expectations and engage in difficult conversations about power, privilege, and authentic influence. By disrupting these systems and moving into a new space where everyone is learning, growing, and changing together, transition councils can empower *all* members to wield their influence, power, and voice to improve the postschool outcomes of young people with disabilities.
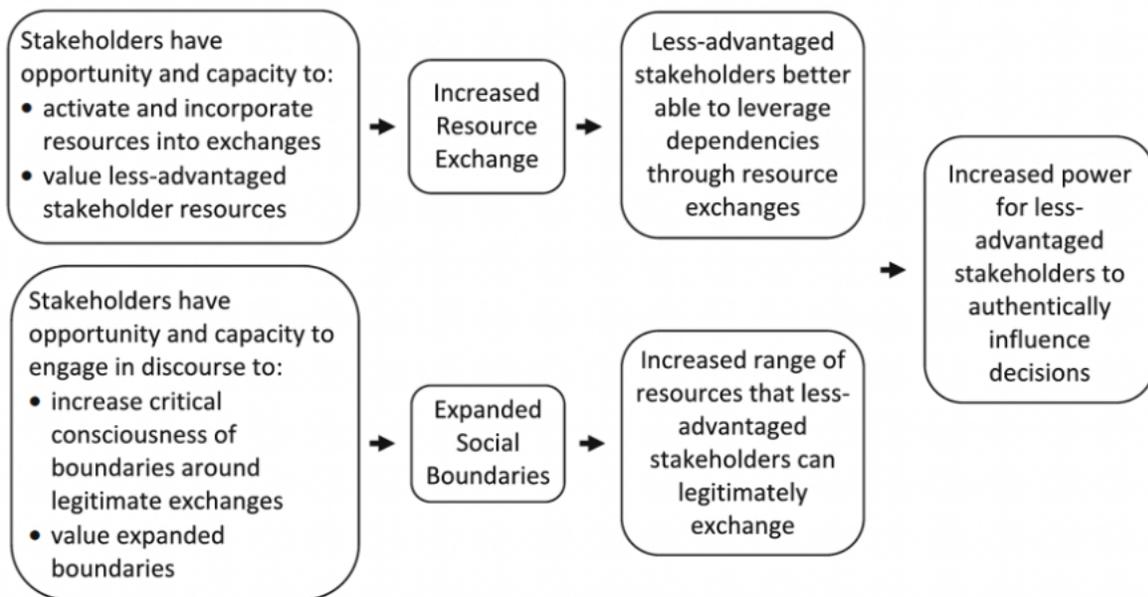
Figure 2. Description of critical processes within the Exchange Boundary Framework

THE EXCHANGE BOUNDARY FRAMEWORK IN ACTION

- Work to establish norms and expectations alongside transition council members. Be willing to create something new.

- Support self-advocates in pursuing leadership opportunities within and beyond the transition council.

- Offer valued roles and responsibilities for self-advocate and family members.

- Value the journey (not just the outcomes). Systems changes are only sustainable if they are informed by and driven by those most impacted. Sometimes this means substantial investments of time, energy, and expertise.

- Be willing to invest in people over products. All members must be supported to meaningfully engage in shared decision-making even at the risk of less external progress.
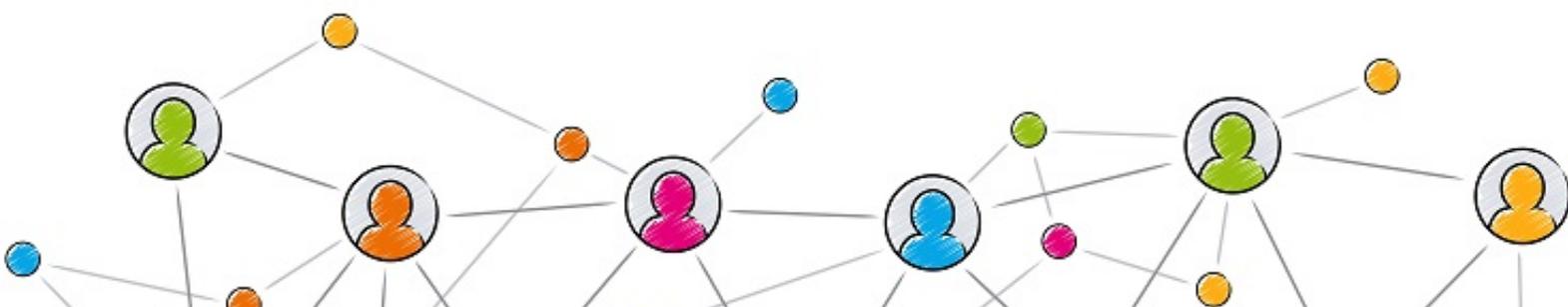
ESTABLISH A STRONG TRANSITION COUNCIL

ESTABLISH A STRONG TRANSITION COUNCIL

Launching systems change efforts to build community capacity and improve postschool outcomes in employment, continuing education, and community inclusion requires a strong and representative transition council. Establishing the council is part of Stage 1 of Community Coalition Action Theory, *Formation*.

TRANSITION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Transition councils are generally comprised of a core team of 10-12 members including self-advocates and family members, professionals from the school and service systems, and broader community members (e.g., employers, civic leaders, faith community leaders). When extending invitations for transition councils, it is critical to also consider a range of community roles but also diverse backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, expertise, and
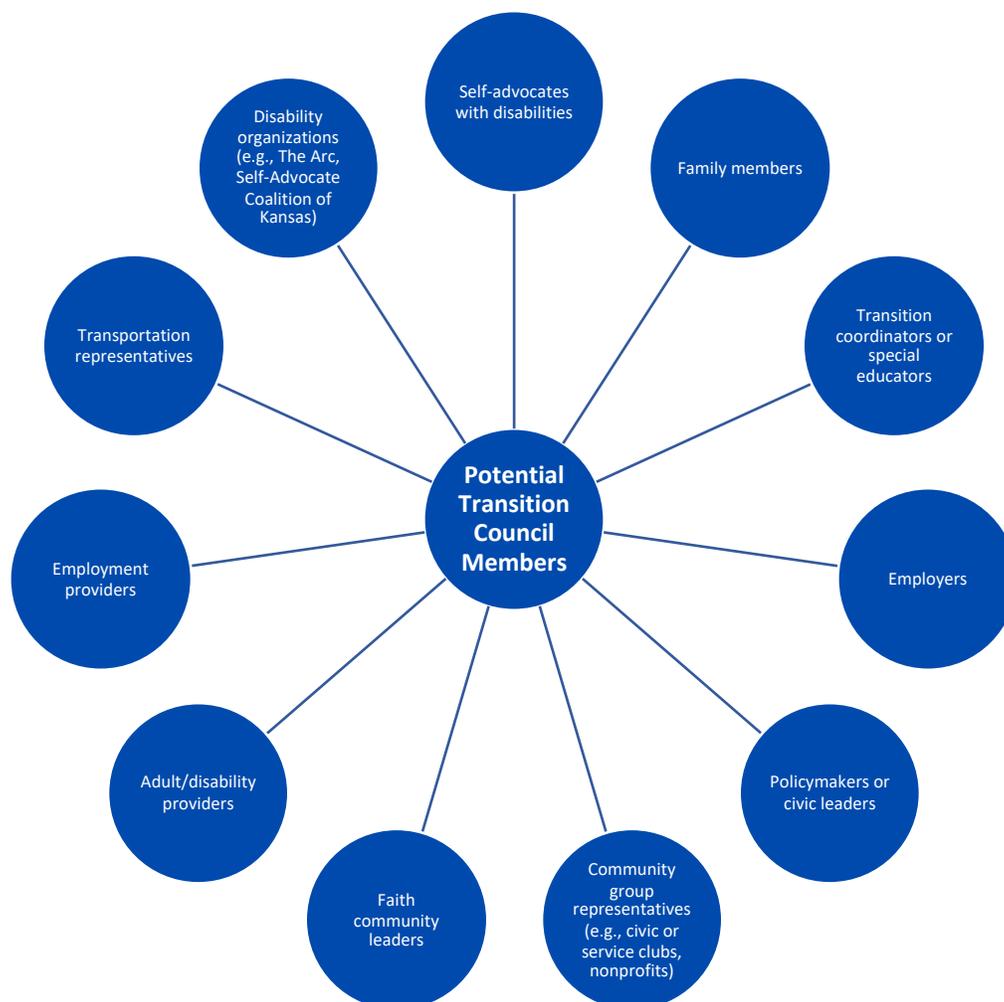
Figure 3. Potential Transition Council Members

To promote community buy-in and further inform the transition council's efforts, core teams might also engage additional stakeholders to act as advisors. Transition council advisors can support systems change in many ways including disseminating important information, connecting the core team to community services and support, sharing their expertise, and providing a pipeline for future core team members. Although transition council advisors don't typically attend core team meetings, engaging these broader groups virtually (e.g., online newsletter, social media page, email listserv) or in-person (e.g., inviting other community members to specific transition council meetings or events) can facilitate and sustain transition council efforts. Appendix A provides a resource for planning transition council invitations.

SHARED VISION AND MISSION VISION (THE DREAM)

A clear mission and vision are essential to an effective transition council. The *vision* statement should convey the transition council's ideal future for youth and young adults with disabilities. It should be in plain language for universal understanding and easy to communicate (think about what could fit on a t-shirt!) The vision provides a unifying goal for the transition council and should be revisited often to ensure the vision aligns with the transition council's values and priorities.

PRO TIP! Consider engaging in a short activity to create a vision board to equitably involve all transition council members. To get an idea of how the vision board can support this process, learn more from this video: https://icimedia.wistia.com/medias/yr8z0dfsuj

MISSION (THE WHAT AND WHY)

The *mission* describes what the transition council is going to do and how. The mission should be action-focused and might refer to the internal workings of the transition council (e.g., how they plan to empower council members or work collectively) or specific activities the transition council is going to take on to enhance transition outcomes in their community. Mission and vision statements can include more than one mission or vision, but the unifying factor is enhanced transition outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities.

EXAMPLE TRANSITION COUNCIL VISION STATEMENT

Empowered and Effective Transition for All

**EXAMPLE TRANSITION COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT**

Ensure every young person in our county has access to competitive employment, continuing education, and opportunities to live and build meaningful relationships in the community

Appendix C provides a resource for transition councils to use as they are creating their vision and mission statements. When developing mission and vision statements, ensure transition council members, particularly self-advocates and family members, feel they have real influence in the process. Because transition councils should continually aim to place youth and young adults with disabilities in positions of leadership, transition councils should continually reflect on how they are integrating the Exchange Boundary Framework (see p. 9) as a guide in "systems thinking." As a reminder, the Exchange Boundary Framework describes that culturally responsive, participatory decision-making requires:

1. Those directly impacted by disability and marginalization by current systems to have the **opportunity to engage in critical conversations** that are not limited by socially constructed boundaries, and

2. People in positions of power (e.g., transition coordinators, policy and civic leaders) facilitate opportunities to **recognize and enhance the capacity of those most impacted** so that they might activate and cultivate community resources.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Transition council leaders greatly impact the growth and development of the group. When beginning a new transition council, leaders should focus on building trust among members as they work alongside each other, sharing their diverse backgrounds and experiences. Each member should be encouraged to actively participate in all transition council decisions through consensus, vote, or other equitable approaches that align with council culture. Shared decision-making and and a feeling of ownership over council processes and outcomes creates an environment in which the council can achieve more than would be possible for any one member working on their own.
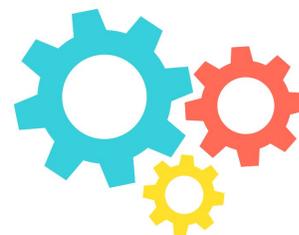
The Kansas Transition Council Project is committed to empowering self-advocates and family members with lived experience of disability to take on council leadership roles.

Centering the voices of individuals with lived experience of disability within council leadership promotes processes and outcomes that reflect the values and priorities of the disability community. Although leadership practices may look different within each council (e.g., number of leaders, role of leaders), all councils should (a) create opportunities for self-advocates to lead and grow self-determination skills within and beyond the council; (b) build the capacity of council members without disabilities to support self-advocate leadership through ongoing conversations about power and privilege; (c) provide necessary supports and accommodations to facilitate self-advocate leadership; and create space for unique leadership styles that align with the strengths and talents of each member.

Regardless of the members of the leadership team, we recommend a co-leadership model in which (a) duties are shared between at least two transition council members for a set term (e.g., 1 year, 2 years) and (b) leaders are cross-trained and able to step in and support each other as needed. Having a structure for succession (e.g., voting, self-nomination) and identifying (and training) future leaders early on is another recommendation for a sustainable council. Clear leadership structures create strong councils that are able


Artwork courtesy of Gabby Melnick with Sangha Unity Network

to adapt to the shifting environment of systems change and pivot to meet the changing needs of its members. Similar to ensuring the voices of self-advocates with disabilities are centered in the leadership determination process, continue to reflect on the integration of the Exchange Boundary Framework (see p. 9) as a guide for culturally responsive, participatory leadership.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Well-defined roles and responsibilities enable transition council members to identify their unique contributions and support the council in ways that align with their strengths and talents. At the same time, council members will only be well-positioned to fulfill their roles and responsibilities when council processes, meetings, and activities are inclusive and accessible. Transition councils should work together to identify and implement the supports and accommodations necessary for the full participation of all members. This may require transition councils to operate in new ways that may be unfamiliar or feel uncomfortable at first (particularly for those with extensive experience serving on other councils or coalitions without disability representation). Again, leaning on the Exchange Boundary Framework (p. 9) as a tool for facilitating ongoing conversations about power and participation is essential to a thriving transition council.
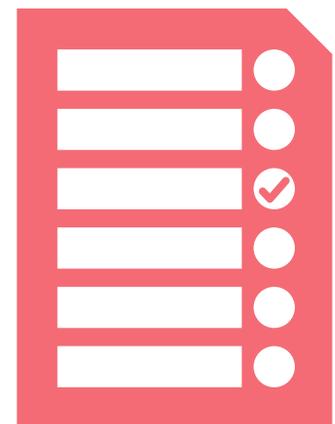
Transition councils should consider inclusion and accessibility in each of the following areas:

- Meeting schedule and location (e.g., virtual, in-person, hybrid)
- Transportation and technology needs for participation
- Communication within and outside of meetings (e.g., need for interpreters or visual supports)
- Decision-making processes
- Leadership structures and plans for succession
- Task management and supports (i.e., how to ensure action steps are taken between meetings)
- How information and resources are exchanged within the group

When identifying roles and responsibilities of transition council members, each person should feel empowered to share their strengths, support needs, and preferences to support a democratic decision-making process rather than hierarchical. In addition, multiple members may take on similar roles or rotate roles on a regular basis to provide support or promote skill development. All roles and responsibilities should foster the self-determination and individual expression of all members.

Depending on individual strengths, support needs, and preferences, some Transition Council members might take on specific roles and responsibilities including:

- Scheduling meetings (e.g., sending calendar invitations) or reserving in-person space

- Taking notes or record keeping at meetings

- Keeping meeting on track and on time using specific strategies (e.g., "parking lot" for topics to return too if they are not entirely relevant)

- Informing the transition council about upcoming meetings or distributing information (e.g., sharing agendas, meeting minutes) to transition council members ahead of time, ensuring they are provided in accessible formats

- Managing transition council funds

- Tracking council activities and progress

- Identifying community partners or communication with other organizations

IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

Improving the postschool outcomes of youth with disabilities cannot be the sole purview of the formal service system or fall fully at the feet of family members. Instead, families, schools, employers, and agencies must work with one another—and in tandem with natural community partners—to promote the awareness, attitudes, expectations, and opportunities needed to move young people with disabilities toward personally important community outcomes. Every community (yes, yours!) has a whole host of people with knowledge and expertise to contribute to the transition process. Further, every community has unique strengths influenced by its geographic locale, citizens, and culture. Identifying the strengths and assets in your community and conducting a "gap analysis" to inform your Transition Council's action plan is part of Stage 2 of Community Coalition Action Theory, *Maintenance and Implementation.*

DOCUMENTING COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

After a Transition Council is established with a mission and vision in place (part of Step 1), it is important to have a clear understanding of what makes the local community unique. For example, is the community located in a rural area? Is there a focus on athletics and sporting events? Are there new employers focused on technology or specific industries? Documenting these unique characteristics can help spur discussions about a community's assets and strengths that might be leveraged for systems change. For example, new employers might be willing to serve as work-based learning sites for a local high school. Similarly, a community with a strong chamber of commerce may have the resources to host an annual training program for employers on the benefits of inclusive hiring and practices.

Keep in mind that not all Transition Council members will view these characteristics in the same ways. In fact, what might be considered a strength by one person could be viewed as a growth opportunity by another. How community characteristics are perceived are largely impacted by each person's background, experiences, and priorities. For example, a new public bus route in a rural community could support increased inclusion and accessibility. At the same time, for community members who need to travel to areas not on the bus route, this could be viewed as a missed opportunity and they might advocate for expanded routes. By documenting these diverse perspectives and using them to inform short- and long-term goals, Transition Councils can anticipate barriers to effective transition planning and generate solutions that address the concerns of all stakeholders. Use Appendix D to begin documenting what makes your community unique!

DIGITAL COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING

Once a transition council has identified its community's unique characteristics, it's time to shift the focus to capacity. There are three key questions for a transition council to consider when evaluating their capacity for systems change.

(1) What are the assets—the people, providers, programs, and places—in the community that support the transition process?

(2) How do these assets currently coordinate their efforts to support a streamlined transition process?

(3) What partnerships might need to be strengthened or assets introduced to improve transition outcomes?

Community asset mapping one approach to begin visualizing these questions. Community asset mapping is a strategy for locating and leveraging resources to address a pressing need (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1996). Asset maps are used in a wide range of fields (e.g., counseling, social work, and youth development) and rooted in the idea that community resources (e.g., people, programs, providers) can be activated to gain access to information, advice, and assistance that can improve personal outcomes (Lin, 1982). Asset maps take many different forms, including lists, infographics, community resource guides, and geographic maps.

Within the context of special education, asset mapping is typically employed as a tool to enhance transition programming (Crane & Mooney, 2005; Tindle et al., 2005). For example, transition council might use asset maps to document existing transition services and supports (businesses, providers, religious institutions, recreational facilities) and connect students to community resources that align with their postschool goals. Asset maps can be leveraged as a general informational tool for families and students navigating the transition process or customized to individual students with their circles of support, favorite spots in the community, or common public transportation routes. Although historically asset maps have been used in paper-based formats, the Kansas Transition Council Project encourages a digital approach to produce dynamic asset maps that can be easily shared and updated.

MAPPING ASSETS FOR POSTSCHOOL SUCCESS

One novel approach to digital asset mapping is Mapping Assets for Postschool Success (MAPS; Flanagan and Bumble, 2022). MAPS is a five-step process that leverages Google My Maps, a free online tool in Google Workspace. Building asset maps within Google My Maps modernizes the mapping process and introduces opportunities to customize maps using media (e.g., videos, images, informational text) and user-specific information (e.g., reflections, task analyses, video models). MAPS begins with developing a *base map* that includes general assets relevant to a broad audience of young people with disabilities, family members, and practitioners who support them.

Assets typically fall under the "four Ps": people, places, providers, and programs. On the base map, users organize assets on the map into broad categories or *layers* (e.g., independent living, employment, and higher education). Then, in-depth information about each asset is created through text, pictures, video, and links to websites or web-based tools embedded directly into the map. A benefit of this digital format is that base maps are easily shared through personal email or embedded into public websites, creating a central space for community members to access information about local transition services and supports. Once a base map is developed for a broader audience, it can then be copied and personalized to support the person-centered planning process. Within this guide, we describe the 5 steps of the MAPS process to support transition councils in developing their own digital community asset map. We provide a tool to support transition council members in listing community assets in Appendix E. In addition, councils can find more in-depth mapping instructions in Flanagan and Bumble (2022).

1. **Enlist a team.** To support relevance to a wide range of community members, it is helpful to engage the core team as well as transition council advisors in developing the list of assets to be included on the map. To develop a comprehensive and culturally responsive map, it may also be necessary to seek out the perspectives of self-advocates and family members representing multiply marginalized groups (if these groups are not already represented on the transition council).

2. **Establish your mapping goals.** Because mapping teams include such a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives, establishing an overarching purpose for the MAPS process is essential. This purpose should align with your transition council's mission and vision. For example, if a team is focused on the individualized education program (IEP) planning process, its vision might be to demystify disability services and supports for all transition-age students and their families in the district. By identifying a purpose for the map, the team can easily identify its audience and how the map will be shared with others.

3 **Identify and categorize local assets.** After establishing mapping goals, councils catalogue local assets using the four *Ps* (people, programs, providers, and places). First, transition council members work individually, listing people from their transition network—the individuals from the school system, service system, and community with whom they collaborate to support the transition process (Bumble et al., 2021). Then, council members work in pairs or small groups to identify overlapping assets and create a master list of community assets. This list is typically housed on a Google Doc or a large sheet of paper posted in the room. It is important to note that assets may not be related directly to the transition process. For example, a team might add important places (e.g., restaurants, museums, walking paths near school grounds).

With a master list in hand, it's time to categorize the assets into mutually exclusive *layers*. Google MyMaps allows only 10 layers per map, so we recommend strategically naming layers using transition domains (e.g., employment, continuing education, relationships, recreation). However, for more targeted maps, more innovative names may be needed. For example, a map of local employers committed to inclusive hiring might have employers categorized by industry (e.g., hospitality, technology, food service). Depending on the size of the community and the purpose of the map, transition council can set parameters for the number or type of assets to include.

4 **Create and customize a base map.** This is the really fun part. Add pictures, videos, stories, reminders, and links to your map to make it your own. You can create these on your own or find them on the web. Similar to a Google document, multiple people can work on the map at one time. When customizing, make sure to describe how each person, program, or place can support transition outcomes. You can also add contact information and links to websites or forms.

5 **Share the map with others.** With the base map complete, it is now time to disseminate the asset map with others. You can share a public link or embed the map directly onto a school, agency, or organizational website. Don't forget to keep your map up-to-date. You can add, remove, or update information at any time.

Once an initial base map is developed, transition council's can return to questions 2 & 3 for evaluating capacity for systems change (p.18). Using these questions as a "gap analysis," identify the partnerships and assets that might be the focus of future short- and long-term goals (see Appendix G). Be sure to document these ideas and create a plan to share them back with the community in *Step 4: Share and Learn with Your Broader Community*.

3

DOCUMENT YOUR TRANSITION PROCESS

DOCUMENT YOUR TRANSITION PROCESS

Navigating the transition to adulthood is complex and requires supports and resources for youth with disabilities and their families. That's where your Transition Council comes in! Step 3 involves those in power (e.g., employers, service system providers, civic leaders, policymakers) engaging with stakeholders who need to navigate the transition process (transition-age youth, families, educators) to map the transition journey, discovering needs, gaps, strengths, and wins embedding in the process. Documenting your transition process is part of Stage 2 of Community Coalition Action Theory, *Maintenance and Implementation.*

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "DOCUMENTING"?

Documenting the transition process as a Transition Council focuses on **intimate engagement** to break down assumptions, bring lived experiences on all sides to the forefront, and challenge limiting power dynamics. Documenting the transition process in your community may look different across different marginalized groups, but the purpose is the same: creating a visual of how users interact with and exchange with the service system as they approach the transition to adulthood.

Potential engagement approaches to document your transition process include:

- *Kitchen table conversations*

    Small, informal meetings at a local coffeehouse, someone's   house, or in a school multi-purpose room. Could be guided by a set of questions (e.g., "What aspect of transition to adulthood are you thinking about the most?"), but no set agenda.

- *Perspective mapping*

    Collaborative visualization that provides an opportunity to develop a shared understanding of what a person needs to guide decision making - 4 quadrants (**Says**, **Thinks**, **Does**, and **Feels**). See next page for more details!

- *Story harvest*

    Storytelling process to unveil multiple aspects, facets, and insights hidden deeply in the experiences of individuals, families, and communities.

WHO DO WE NEED TO ENGAGE IN THE DOCUMENTING PROCESS?

Each community is made up of different groups that have varying experiences with the transition process. Those experiences can be shaped by (among other things) culture, access to supports, or systemic oppression. When documenting your community's transition process, consider the the groups who often do not have a voice in conversations about practices, or who may experience practices differently than intended. Some examples might be:

- Communities of color

- Communities whose first language is not English

- Communities with limited access to technology, services, and other resources

Transition councils should consider which engagement approach will work best for their community and decide on what they will create from these options:

- **Transition milestones timeline** (Appendix F for an example)

- **Transition flowchart** (visual representation of how transition-age students and their families navigate the transition process - ex. service providers to contact in a specific order)

- **Perspective mapping** (the engagement approach above - 4 quadrants - can be used as the documentation of the transition process:
    - *Says* - Direct quotes of what the student/family says as they describe the transition process

    - *Thinks* - Add what the student/family might be thinking during this process (e.g., "Why is transition so confusing? There should be a simple way to do all of this!)

    - *Does* - What the student/family does to move forward on the transition process (e.g., talks to other students/ families, invites service providers to IEP/transition meetings)

    - *Feels* - What the student/family are feeling (e.g., What are they excited and worried about?)
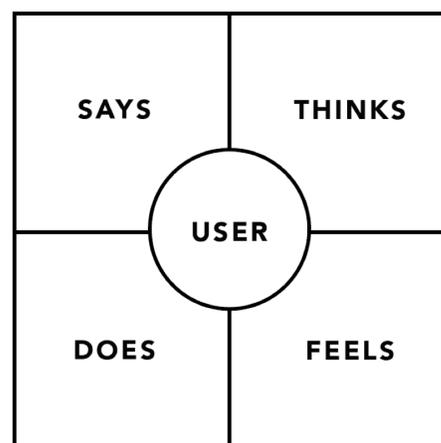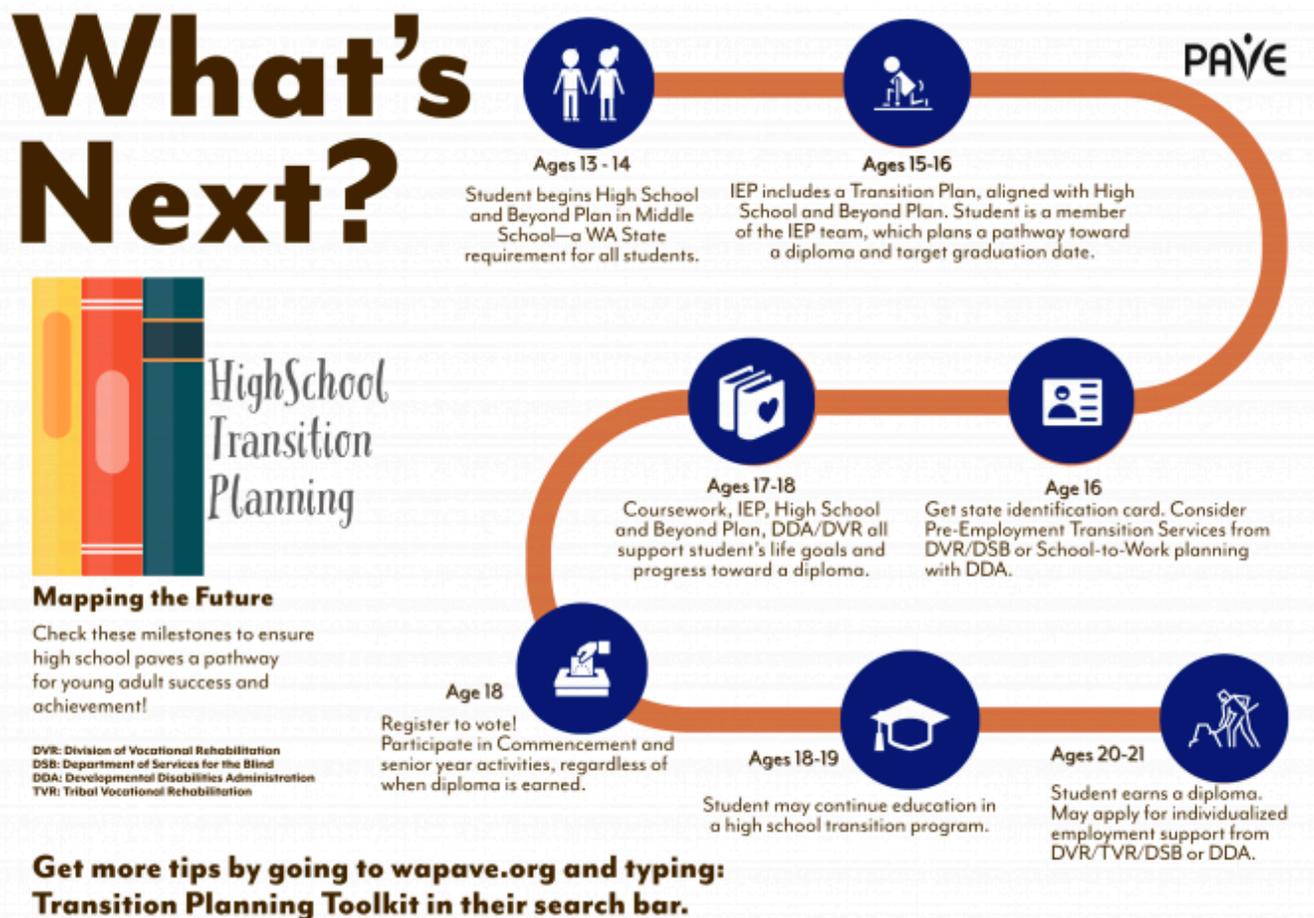
WHAT MIGHT A TRANSITION FLOWCHART LOOK LIKE?

While much of the transition process is shaped by state and federal policy, each community has unique assets and processes that shape youth and family experiences during transition. So, each community's transition flowchart will look different for each community. Further, each community may envision a unique way of depicting their transition process.

The example below was developed by the Partnerships for Action: Voices for Empowerment (PAVE), a organization in Washington state that provides support, training, information and resources to empower and give voice to youth with disabilities and their and families. This transition flowchart depicts a state-wide flowchart of transition milestones. It's an excellent example of what a flowchart can look like from a state policy level. Hearing the experiences of families and youth in your community can support shaping your community's transition flowchart.

To learn more about PAVE, visit their website (https://wapave.org/) and access the transition flowchart highlighted below using this link: https://wapave.org/whats-next-high-school-transition-planning-timeline/

4

SHARE AND LEARN WITH YOUR BROADER COMMUNITY

PLANNING A COMMUNITY EVENT

Now that you are in Step 4 (Share and Learn with Your Broader Community), celebrate all that your Transition Council has accomplished! As a reminder (while you pat yourself on the back), your Transition Council has created a digital map of local strengths and resources and mapped the transition journey in your community, discovering needs and gaps. Here is the fun part - time to plan how you want to share what your Transition Council has learned with the broader community! Sharing ad learning with the community is part of Stage 3 of Community Coalition Action Theory, *Institutionalization* or *Sustainability*.

As you are planning your community event to share what you have learned through digital asset mapping (Step 2) and creating your transition flowchart (Step 3), you can talk through the following questions with your Transition Council:

(1) What kinds of topics should we cover during our community event (like sharing the digital asset map, transition flowchart)?

(2) What structure for our community event would work best (informal gathering with sharing or more formal presentation)?

(3) Which community members should be invited? (**Remember!** Self-advocates and family members should be at the top of the list)

There are so many details to plan for community events so you might consider setting up a small subcommittee of Transition Council members that are excited about the community event. Appendix G provides a list of guiding questions the community event planning subcommittee might consider as they plan the community event. Some of these topics are logistical (like securing a location or venue) while others might need other Transition Council members to weigh in on, like what the overall goals are for the community event. In general, the purpose of Step 4 is to share what your Transition Council has learned during Steps 1-3 and engage the broader community in being a part of future Transition Council efforts.

GATHERING INPUT ABOUT FUTURE ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES

As your Transition Council is planning the community event, one of the main topics to discuss is what information you want to *learn* from the broader community. Community members are going to be thrilled to see your Transition Council's digital asset map and transition flowchart, but this is also an opportunity to hear their input and use that information to plan future actions and strategies to address areas for growth.

Transition programming encompasses a wide scope of topics, such as:

- Youth-focused planning and development for postsecondary employment, education, or community participation

- Family engagement

- Interagency collaboration

- So much more! (see Kohler et al., 2016)

To support rich conversations focused on what your Transition Council can do to support transition-age youth and their families in your community, you could use 3 questions to guide 3 rounds of conversation (Schutz et al., 2021):

(1) What outcomes are important for students with disabilities in our community as they leave high school?

(2) What could we do to prepare students for success in all of these areas while they are still in school?

(3) How could we partner better with communities, employers, and families to support this transition?

Your Transition Council can also decide to make these guiding questions more specific. For example, if one of the priority areas for your Transition Council is focused on improving employment opportunities for students with and without disabilities in your community, then you might use these 3 questions:

(1) As a school and community, how are we creating strong pathways to future careers and job placements for our students?

(2) What could we be doing better or differently in this area?

(3) How can we ensure *all* students are accessing these opportunities?

SETTING SHORT-TERM GOALS

Celebrate and pat yourself on the back for hosting your community event! Now it is time to review the information that was gathered and identify next steps to prioritize. Get all of the information from the event whether that was collected through notes Transition Council members took, post-it notes on tables, and any anecdotal observations from Transition Council members. It's important to gather this information to (1) share back with community event attendees (see Appendix H for a sample of what a summary report could look like) and (2) support the Transition Council in setting short-term goals.

Based on findings from the community event, your Transition Council is ready to set some short-term goals to work on to address your community's identified areas of need. For example, let's say one of the big areas of discussion during the community was the lack of school-employer relationships in the community, perhaps particularly with a large sector or employer in the area. Your Transition Council might set a short-term goal to generate some innovative ideas (like a job fair night hosted at school) and then set another short-term goal to share these ideas with a small group of community members to see what they think! Community events help generate lots of the ideas and the Transition Council is the perfect leader to confirm these recommendations with some additional investigating.

When setting short-term goals, what should you document?

1. Write **SMART goals** (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time Bound)

2. For each goal, write down **action steps**

3. Each action step should have the **person(s) responsible** for the action step (like the Project SEARCH Transition Council member being in charge of asking transition-age youth what they think about a job fair night at school during an upcoming intern meeting)

4. Make sure that each action step has a **timeline** for follow-up checks and completion

Tip! Keep your goals and action plans in an accessible place for Transition Council members to reference and/or include them in the top of meeting agendas!

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure the sustainability of the transition council, it's important to plan for shared responsibility and contingencies when team members are unavailable. Creative thinking is also needed to secure funding for events and materials. This section provides suggestions on ways to plan for and buffer against these uncertainties to ensure the council's long-term success.

LOOK FOR EMERGING LEADERS AND ROTATE LEADERSHIP

One way to plan for the continued health of the transition council is to share and rotate leadership on a predictable cycle (e.g., yearly). As mentioned in Step 1, we recommend a co-leadership model in which (a) duties are shared between at least two transition council members for a set term and (b) leaders are cross trained and able to step in and support as needed. By sharing and rotating leadership, council members can concentrate their efforts and work diligently knowing that they will pass the leadership baton to another capable team member at a designated time. As the council plans for and takes action, certain members may emerge as potential leaders. These people are often more enthusiastic about the council's mission, have shown their willingness to prioritize council activities, and can take charge of certain tasks (e.g. drafting meeting agendas, communicating schedules and logistics with other team members, etc.). Another way to support council leadership is to identify organizations that can include council leadership in their job description and duties. For example, school personnel can often assist with leadership of the council because it is a great way for the school to meet their federal requirements for supporting transition planning. By looking for emerging leaders, rotating leadership, and building leadership activities into existing job duties, the mission of the transition council will continue to be driven forward.

REVIEW LOGISTICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES REGULARLY

The transition council can operate in various ways, including meeting frequency, timing, format (in-person or via platforms like Zoom or Teams), and leadership or committee structures. As the council evolves, especially with new members, these logistics may need to be adjusted. To ensure continued engagement, the council should periodically review its organizational structure, ideally once a year, to assess if current practices are working. If attendance is an issue, a short email survey could be sent to both active and inactive members to gather feedback on how they can best participate moving forward. Flexibility and regular adjustments will help maintain the council's effectiveness and success.

FUNDING

The transition council should regularly monitor its funds and explore new ways to secure additional resources to support its mission. It's important to track both short-term and long-term funding needs to ensure there is enough to meet all goals. Funding may be used for events, meeting refreshments, participant incentives (e.g., for surveys or interviews), or material development (e.g., translations or printing). As noted in Step 1, assigning a council member to manage the budget and collaborate on fundraising ideas can help sustain financial health. The box below provides examples of ways councils can raise additional funds.

FUNDING SOURCES

DONATIONS

Raising money thorough donations is a great way for the council to secure additional funding. There are several ways the council can go about asking for donations such as through email or through a website if the council has one.

FUNDRAISING

Councils can get creative by organizing different types of fundraising events to raise money. There are many different types of fundraising events the council can take on, but some examples include raffles, bake sales, car washes, and silent auctions.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

Some organizations that are members of the transition council might have funds from their organization built in to help cover the costs of certain expenses (e.g., venues, meals, translation of materials, printing).

GRANTS

There may be grants that the transition council could apply for to receive additional funds. These grants may be available through local, state, or federal government agencies or through non-profit groups.

The above outlined Steps can support transition councils' efforts to improve the postschool outcomes of transition aged youth with disabilities, forging sustainable pathways to competitive employment, continuing education, and community inclusion. As your transition council works toward achieving its vision for community change, we hope this guide provides a wealth of information to steer your efforts.

Appendix A

SAMPLE FIRST TRANSITION COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Date: Day and time

Location: Virtual meeting link or in-person location

Time	Topic	Lead	Discussed?
11:00AM-11:05AM	**Welcome** to the _____ Transition Council!	Transition Council Co-Lead	☐
11:05AM-11:15AM	**Introductions** • Name • Role/affiliation • Motivation to join the _____ Transition Council	All	☐
11:15AM-11:20AM	**Purpose** of the _____ Transition Council	Transition Council Co-Lead	☐
11:20AM-11:35AM	**Transition Council Members** • Do we have representation from key community members? • Who is missing? • How do we recruit them to join our transition council?	Transition Council Co-Lead	☐
11:20AM-11:35AM	**Shared Vision and Mission** • Draft vision statement • Draft mission statement	Transition Council Co-Lead	☐
11:35AM-11:50AM	**Leadership Structure and Roles and Responsibilities** • What leadership structure would best suit our transition council? • Based on strengths, support needs, and preferences, who can take on needed roles and responsibilities?	Transition Council Co-Lead	☐

TOP TIP! Have the Kansas Transition Council Guide with you to support each discussion topic!

Appendix B

IDENTIFYING TRANSITION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Directions: List the community members who have either agreed to be on your Transition Council or who you would like to reach out to and invite to join your transition council. At least 10 team members must be named. Required roles have an asterisk (*). At least 4 of the remaining roles should also be represented.

Role	Name(s)	Phone or Email	Agreed to join the transition council?	If not, who will contact them?
Self-advocate with a disability*			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Family members*			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Transition coordinator or special educator*			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Employers*			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Policymakers or civic leaders			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Community group representatives (e.g., civic or service clubs, non-profits)			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Faith community leaders			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Adult/disability provider			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Employment provider			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Transportation representative			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Disability organization representative			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Other social services			☐ Yes ☐ No	

Appendix C

REFINING YOUR TRANSITION COUNCIL VISION AND MISSION

Directions: Use this vision and mission refinement resource to determine your transition council's vision and mission statements. Remember to use the Exchange Boundary Framework to ensure all transition council members feel they have real influence in the process.

Vision

Our *vision* statement conveys our transition council's ideal future for youth and young adults with disabilities in our community. It is in plain language for universal understanding and easy to communicate.

Our vision for our Transition Council is:

_____

Mission

Our *mission* statement describes what our transition council is going to do and how. This mission might refer to specific activities we are going to take on to enhance transition outcomes in our community.

The mission of our Transition Council is:

_____

_____

_____

Appendix D

DOCUMENTING UNIQUE COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Directions: Use this resource to identify what makes your community unique. Feel empowered to choose 1-2 questions for your Transition Council. For Transition Councils spanning multiple communities, it may be helpful to complete one form for each community you serve. Be thinking about what sets your community apart from others in Kansas and try to use a strengths- and asset-based approach. Use the conversation prompts below to create your list on a large sheet of paper or electronic bulletin board (e.g., Padlet, Jamboard) to encourage multiple response options!

Use the prompts below to help generate your list of unique community characteristics:

- Our community is known for…

  _____

- Our community represents diverse cultures including…

  _____

- People in our community highly value…

  _____

- Our community hosts many events each year including…

  _____

- Our community is a leader in…

  _____

- Our community invests in…

  _____

- People are always surprised to find out our community is…

  _____

- The best part about our community is…

  _____

- We can depend on people in our community to…

  _____

- Our community is passionate about…

  _____

Appendix E

CREATING A LIST OF COMMUNITY ASSETS

Directions: Think about the people, providers, programs, and places in your community that support transition planning. Make a list below (feel free to look up contacts online!) and then share with your other Transition Council members to make a master list of community resources.

People

1. Ex. Dan, town mayor
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Providers

1. Ex. Vocational Rehab.
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Programs

1. Ex. YMCA
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Places

1. Ex. Town Rec Center
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Appendix F

TRANSITION MILESTONES TIMELINE EXAMPLE (p. 1)

Transition Calendar: Douglas County
Connecting with Community Services

*This is a suggested guideline for students who may be eligible for services related to a developmental disability.
For other HCBS Waiver see www.cddo.cwood.org/waivers

Recommended Age/Time	Action Steps	Details	Date Completed
0-Adult	● Register for Smart 911- provides emergency responders with information regarding the individuals disability, needs, other contact information, etc.	**Website:** www.safety.smart911.com Update profile as information changes	
0 – 18	● Application to Social Security for Supplemental Security Income. Eligibility is based on disability & **family** income	**Apply Online:** https://www.ssa.gov/disability/ssi/ssi.html **Social Security Office:** 1440 Wakarusa, Suite 200 **Phone:** (800) 772-1213 | (866) 698-2561	
0 – 18	● Apply for Kancare (Kansas Medicaid). Eligibility is based on disability diagnosis. ● If eligible for Medicaid, contact the CDDO to explore case management options. ● During this process you will select your "Managed Care Organization" (MCO)	**Apply Online:** www.applyforkancare.ks.gov or https://cssp.kees.ks.gov (click on "Health Plans" to explore the 3 MCO options) **Case Management Options:** www.cddo.cwood.org/TCM	
5 – Adult When services are needed but at least prior to age 21	● Contact the **Community Developmental Disability Organization** (Single Point of Entry) Cottonwood CDDO: Angela Drake (785) 842-0550 ● CDDO will determine eligibility for Intellectual / Developmental Disability (I/DD) Waiver services funding. ● Obtain information about service options and providers.	**To initiate eligibility determination:** request an eligibility packet from the CDDO. Be prepared to provide: Birth Certificate　　　　www.kdheks.gov/vital Social Security Card　　　　www.ssa.gov School & Disability Diagnosis Records **I/DD Service options:** www.cddo.cwood.org/services	
14-21	● School Transition Services	**Transition planning** will begin at IEP meetings at age 14. **Transition services** will begin at age 16.	

Appendix F

TRANSITION MILESTONES TIMELINE EXAMPLE (p. 2)

Recommended Age/Time	Action Steps	Details
14-21	• Referrals to Community Resources and services • Complete applications according to needs and preferences	**Transportation:** Para-Transit Services (aka. T-Lift). Complete "Part A" of application. Send "Part B" to a medical professional. http://lawrencetransit.org/ada-services **Recreation:** Special Olympics LPRD Special Populations Independence, Inc.
Prior to age 18	• Explore guardianship / estate planning issues	**Kansas Guardianship Program:** www.ksgprog.org **Guardianship Resources:** www.cddo.cwood.org/guardianship
18 months before exiting school Services	• Complete adult Kansas Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) application	**Available at Lawrence DCF:** 1901 Delaware	(785) 832-3700 (If eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services, prepare to choose an employment services provider) **Website:** http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Pages/Employment-Services.aspx
The month they turn 18 yrs. old, Call for an appointment	• Apply or reapply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) SSI provides a monthly case benefit. Eligibility is based on disability and **student** income • If denied for SSI, contact Disability Professionals:	**Social Security Office:** 1440 Wakarusa, Suite 200 **Phone:** (800) 772-1213	(866) 698-2561 **Website:** https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityssi/ssi.html (866) 825-7489	www.mydisabilityprofessionals.com
Age 18	• Males are required to register for Selective Services	**Register Online:** www.sss.gov
Age 18	• Re-Apply for Kancare (Kansas Medicaid) as an adult. This will provide funding for some medical services, and I/DD Case Management. • During this process you will select your "Managed Care Organization" (MCO)	**Apply Online:** https://cssp.kees.ks.gov/apspssp/ www.applyforkancare.ks.gov **Kancare:** 1 (866) 305-5147	www.applyforkancare.ks.gov (click on "Health Plans" to explore the 3 MCO options)

Appendix G

COMMUNITY EVENT PLANNING GUIDING QUESTIONS

Directions: Use this resource to guide the planning discussion for your community event. Feel empowered to choose 1-2 questions for your Transition Council to focus on at first and then you can always have additional subcommittee meetings to figure out the other questions. You might also think of other questions that might be specific to your community! Use the conversation prompts below to create your list on a large sheet of paper or electronic bulletin board (e.g., Padlet, Jamboard) to encourage multiple response options!

Use the prompts below to help generate your plans for the community event:

- Do we have all of the perspectives we need on our community event planning subcommittee?

_____

- What are our goals for this community event (sharing digital asset map, transition flowchart)?

_____

- When and where should be host this community event?

_____

- What should be the tone for the community event (formal, informal)?

_____

- Should we have people register or RSVP? If so, what method makes the most sense?

_____

- Everyone loves food! What kinds of food/drink can we offer?

_____

- Who should be on our invitation list based on our goals?

_____

- How will we get the word out about the community event?

_____

- Should have any other incentive activities (like a raffle or drawing with small prizes)?

_____

- What is the main takeaway we want attendees to leave with?

_____

Appendix H

SAMPLE COMMUNITY EVENT SUMMARY PAGE

See full sample community event summary report via https://transitiontn.org/community-conversations/

A Sampling of Ideas Shared During the Event

After the community conversation event, all of the notes taken at each of the individual tables and during the whole-group discussion were compiled and organized. A sampling of these ideas and potential next steps is included below. A full report will be provided to the school later in the year.

Round 1: What outcomes are important for students with disabilities in our community as they leave high school?
- Soft skills needed for getting/keeping a job
- Ability to self-advocate when necessary
- Basic academic skills
- Experience with volunteering in the community
- Experience with job shadowing/ job placement
- Plan for education and training after graduation

Round 2: What could we do to prepare students for success in all of these areas while they are still in school?
- Create more opportunities for students to have experiences working in different careers during the school year
- Teach soft skills directly to all students
- Provide exposure to all of the career options available to each student
- Take students on tours of post-secondary schools, and meet with the special needs coordinator to learn about accommodations
- Make the CTE classes accessible for students with disabilities (safety test issues)

Round 3: How could we partner better with communities, employers, and families to support this transition?
- Host a transition fair with community members for the high school students
- Share information with parents and connect parents with each other
- Hold quarterly meetings with entire special education staff and school staff to coordinate efforts
- Create a transition board of stakeholders, including parents, special education staff, businesses, disability service organizations, etc
- Improve the transition portion of the IEP for each student

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