



Succeed 2020

Executive Summary

FHI 360, working in partnership with the State of North Dakota, has developed an initiative to improve the state's education and workforce development systems and increase students' achievement in middle grades and high school, access to and success in postsecondary education, and preparation for 21st century careers. The overarching goal for this initiative is bold and ambitious: successful transition from school to college and careers for all North Dakota students. Achievement of this goal will require active participation of multiple stakeholders, including state and local leaders, school districts, educational institutions, Native American groups, Hess Corporation, and the FHI 360 team.

Progress toward the initiative's goal will be measured by three key indicators—higher ACT scores, on-time completion, and reduced need for remedial courses at the postsecondary level. More specifically, this initiative seeks to attain the following results by the end of a five-year implementation period:

- Increase the number of students completing secondary and postsecondary education by 15%;
- Increase the number of students awarded state scholarships (based on ACT scores) by 15%
 - Academic (ACT) Scholarships: from 1200 to 1400
 - Career and Technical Education (CTE) (WorkKeys) Scholarships: from 425 to 500
- Reduce by 25% the number of students needing remedial courses in postsecondary education.

North Dakota's eight regional education associations (REAs) will have lead responsibility for implementing this initiative, with each collaborating with a wide range of partners. The REAs, which had their roles strengthened in the most recent biennial legislative session, are uniquely qualified to assume leadership roles because they already work with multiple school districts and other partner organizations. In leading this initiative, the REAs will work with their partners to design and implement activities in three core strategy areas: ongoing college and career counseling and planning; access to and success in rigorous academic and CTE preparation; and targeted and coordinated supports. Throughout the initiative, they will be expected to collect, analyze, and use data to improve student outcomes.

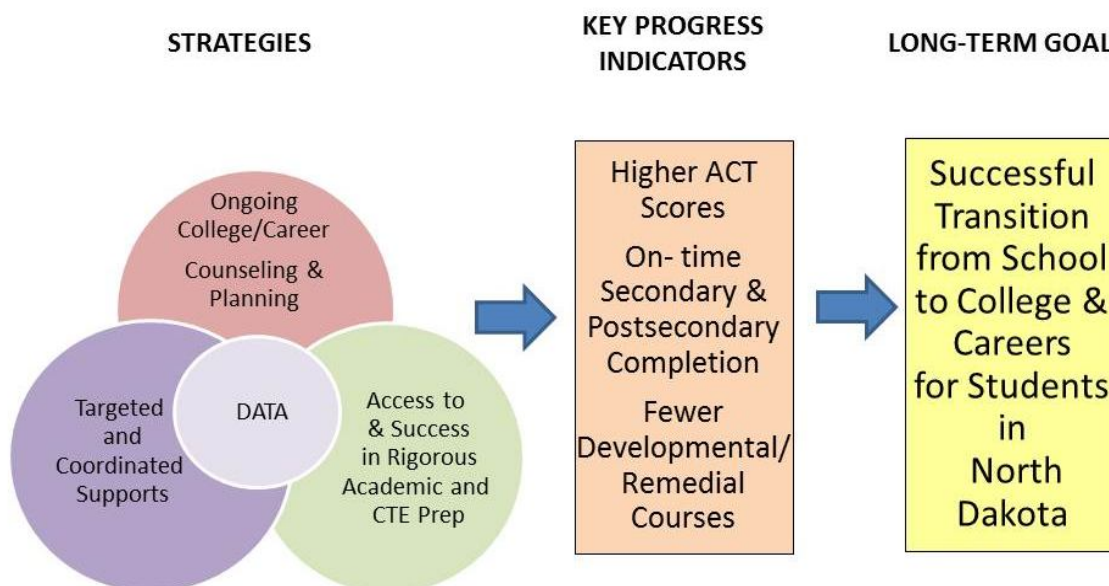
The North Dakota Education and Workforce Development Initiative spans a preliminary study phase and two program phases. During the study phase (9/1/10-8/31/11), the FHI 360 team conducted site visits to communities across the state, worked with the ND planning committee planning to design the initiative, and identified partners and points of leverage. During the first program phase (9/1/11-

6/30/12), regional project planning and development, FHI 360 staff and ND leaders will work with REA to conduct needs assessments, develop proposals, establish regional leadership teams, and identify common metrics. In the second program phase (7/1/12-6/30/14), the focus will shift to full implementation, with up to four REAs receiving implementation grants and the remaining REAs working to revise their proposals to qualify for funding in 2014. FHI 360 staff will provide intensive technical support to the four funded REAs while offering a series more limited assistance to the other REAs.

Five-Year Vision

The work being proposed is meant to contribute to the successful transition from school to college and careers for all North Dakota students. The achievement of this goal will require multiple stakeholders, including the state, local communities, educational institutions, Native American communities, Hess, and an FHI 360 technical support team (FHI 360 team),¹ working together in collaborative fashion. The following sections provide an overview of a proposed theory of action and an outline of the proposed structure of the initiative.

Theory of Action. A graphic representation of the initiative’s proposed theory of action is shown below. The members of the North Dakota planning committee identified the initiative’s long-term goal and three critical indicators of progress. They also identified the three major strategies and were unanimous in putting data and its use in multiple settings as the central driver for change.



¹ The FHI 360 technical support team is a group of specialized staff working to provide support and guidance, specifically for this project.

Three indicators were seen as particularly important in gauging efforts to help students achieve successful transitions from school to college and careers:

- **Higher ACT scores**, because higher scores—along with good grades—predict that students will be accepted into more selective postsecondary institutions and will be more likely to succeed in and complete their postsecondary studies.
- **On-time completion** of high school and postsecondary programs, because the successful on-time completion of each stage of education increases the likelihood of successfully completing the next level. (For example, students who complete ninth grade on time with no more than a single semester course failure are more than three times as likely to graduate from high school as students with more than a single semester course failure.)
- **Fewer remedial or developmental courses at the postsecondary level**, because the time and cost of taking non-credit courses increases the likelihood that students will drop out of their postsecondary programs before graduation.

The planning group also outlined three strategies that are central to achieving improved performance on the key indicators:

- **Ongoing college and career counseling and planning**, starting as early as middle school, to help students understand how their educational choices and performance are connected to achieving their future aspirations.
- **Access to and success in rigorous academic and CTE programs**, with a particular focus on middle grades, high schools, and transitions between levels of schooling, to help students become well-prepared for lifelong learning and their personal, economic, and civic futures.
- **Targeted and coordinated supports** (which might include tutoring, specialized counseling, or work-based learning opportunities) to help students, families, and communities succeed, even when faced with challenges.

The North Dakota planning committee also clarified its intention that all students benefit from the initiative, in particular those who have not achieved at levels needed for a secure economic future. In particular, Native American students from the nations that share geography with North Dakota, whether attending schools under state or federal authority, lag far behind their peers. While the primary goal of this initiative is to benefit all North Dakota students, special attention will be given to ways the initiative can help address the needs of Native American students.