



NEW MEXICO

★ State Highlight

State guidance for career exploration. New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) created a [Next Step Plan Template Manual](#) with guidance and instructions to help districts implement this requirement. In addition, the state developed a New Mexico [Career Clusters Guide Book](#), a comprehensive tool for students planning their educational and career journeys.



VISION



Funding for Career Exploration. The [NextGEN CTE pilot program](#) establishes funding to enhance quality CTE programs. Communities can use funding for guided career exploration for middle and high school students.

NM has yet to codify its definition of career exploration and coordinate across agencies on career exploration.



POLICY



Next Step Plan. NM statutes require students in grades 8-12 to develop a [Next Step Plan \(NSP\)](#) before the end of 8th grade, which is visited annually throughout high school. The NSP should reflect steps the student will take in collaboration with their guidance counselor to research personal career interests or goals, among other requirements.

NextGen CTE Pilot Program. The [NextGen CTE pilot program](#) supports high-quality CTE programs and includes a competitive grant that may be used for guided career exploration for middle school and high school students.

NM has yet to formally include middle school career exploration in state and federal accountability systems.



INFRASTRUCTURE



NextGen CTE Initiative. [New Mexico's NextGen CTE initiative](#) provides nearly \$500,000 to support programs that build employability skills and allow districts to add career exploration programs. The state seeks to expand these funds to support career exploration programs in more middle schools.

NM Career Pathways. The state operates [NM Career Pathways](#), a website that allows educators, parents, and students to use area-specific data that highlights median wages and annual job openings, which helps students make informed decisions on a career path that best suits them.

NM has yet to provide dynamic training opportunities to staff related to middle school career exploration.



Full Report



NEW MEXICO • VISION

Category	Status	Description
Leadership Does the state leadership include career exploration as a valued or prioritized component of students' middle school experience?	 Building Emerging Advanced	NM launched a NextGEN CTE pilot program , establishing funding to enhance quality CTE programs. Communities can use funding for guided career exploration for middle and high school students. NMPED has made an additional request to the legislature to expand this funding and increase these opportunities across the state.
Career Exploration Definition Does the state formally define career exploration for middle school students?	 Building Emerging Advanced	NM defines terms related to career and technical education in their administrative code, but does not have a specific definition for career exploration.
Advocacy Are there organizations within the state that are advocating for middle school career exploration?	 Building Emerging Advanced	The LANL Foundation in Northern NM supports various educational programming, including college, career, and community pathways. Their recent New Mexico Comprehensive College and Career Assessment Pathways Report discusses current initiatives in NM, as well as opportunities moving forward to promote and support CTE and college and career pathways programs.



NEW MEXICO • POLICY

Category	Status	Description
Standards Does the state have policies that establish standard practices for career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	NM statutes require students in grades 8-12 to develop an NSP, visited annually throughout high school. NM administrative code specifies that each grade-level NSP is completed within the last 60 school days of the preceding school year. The NSP must address career clusters in career and technical education and exposure to postsecondary education and career options. The development of the NSP shall include the student, the student's parent or guardian, and the advisor, but it may also include additional relevant parties.
Accountability Does the state integrate career exploration into their accountability systems?	 Building Emerging Advanced	NM does not integrate career exploration into its ESSA state plan. General career exploration activities are formally included in NM's WIOA Plan , although not specifically targeted to middle school students.
Student Requirements Does the state have policies that require middle school students to complete career exploration activities?	 Building Emerging Advanced	NM administrative code outlines requirements for students to complete a Next Step Plan (NSP). NMPED guidance clarifies that the NSP be developed before the end of 8th grade and should reflect steps the student will take in collaboration with their guidance counselor to research personal career interests or goals, among other requirements. The NSP must be updated annually throughout high school and is required for graduation.
Incentives Does the state have policies that incentivize career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	NM created the NextGen CTE pilot program to support high-quality CTE programs. The program includes a competitive grant that may be used for guided career exploration for middle school and high school students.



NEW MEXICO • INFRASTRUCTURE

Category	Status	Description
<p>Funding</p> <p>Does the state use state or federal funding sources to support career exploration for middle school students?</p>		<p>NM launched the NextGen CTE initiative with nearly \$500,000 to support programs that build employability skills. These state funds also allowed 13 districts and charters to add career exploration programs. NM seeks to expand these funds to support career exploration programs in more middle schools.</p>
<p>Professional Development</p> <p>Does the state support the training of school counselors (and other school staff) in career exploration?</p>		<p>The NM Public Education Department lists the Pathways2Careers professional learning curricula on its approved list to help educators learn effective strategies to help students connect math problems to careers, explore the Pathway2Careers learning platform and its revolutionary tools to engage students and review the formative assessment to measure students' readiness for more complex skills.</p>
<p>Material Supports</p> <p>Does the state provide material supports on the implementation of middle school career exploration?</p>		<p>NM PED created a Next Step Plan Template Manual with guidance and instructions to help districts implement this requirement. The NM Career Clusters Guide Book is designed to be a tool for planning and preparing students for a career. The state also operates NM Career Pathways, a website allowing educators, parents, and students to use area-specific data highlighting median wages and annual job openings.</p>
<p>Data Collection</p> <p>Does the state collect data on middle school career exploration opportunities in the state?</p>		<p>There are no formal state-level data collection practices related to middle school career exploration.</p>
<p>CTSOs</p> <p>Does the state support participation in career and technical student organizations?</p>		<p>NM has CTSOs, including six that have middle school chapters: BPA, FCCLA, HOSA, EdRising, TSA, and FFA.</p>
<p>Organizations</p> <p>Are there organizations within the state that support career exploration in middle schools?</p>		<p>Pathway2Careers aims to help students attain a successful future through career exploration. The organization supports technology-based career and college education services in NM schools.</p>