Introducing the Mobility Center

The Mobility Center, a new initiative from TNTP, works to improve outcomes for young people. We build the evidence on what it takes to turn experiences in school, at work, and in the community into economic mobility, and get that knowledge into the hands of the educators, employers, and leaders who can act on it while there's still time to change a young person's trajectory. It is the engine behind 50 Million Futures, TNTP's commitment to put 50 million young people on a measurable path to economic and social mobility by 2035.



For generations, America has run on a simple promise: finish high school, earn a degree, get a good job, and economic security would follow. Schools, states, employers, and families have organized around milestones like enrollment, completion, test scores, and diplomas, treating them as stand-ins for whether a young person can build a thriving life.

That promise is broken. For Americans born in 1940, out-earning their parents was nearly a given. For those born in the 1980s, it is closer to a coin flip. And now, AI is reshaping work at every level, from the entry-level jobs where people once gained experience to the skills it takes to advance, in a system already failing half the young people who relied on it.

Worse, we find out too late. Most of what we know about mobility arrives a decade after the fact, long after the decisions that shaped it. Each system that serves young people measures success at its own finish line, and no one is watching the handoffs between them, where too many young people lose their footing.

Three questions guide the work

- **What do young people need to thrive in life and work?**
- **How do we make those opportunities available at scale?**
- **What turns opportunity into mobility?**

Behind all three is one practical question: What can we see and change early enough to make a lasting difference?

The Center will build the early signals the field is missing, map capabilities that make a difference, and bridge knowledge-gaps between schools, colleges, workforce programs, and employers to turn evidence into tools that we can use now, not a decade from now.

How the Center Works

Researchers have already shown us a great deal about where and for whom mobility happens, and states and others have built data systems that follow young people from school into work. The Mobility Center builds on that foundation to answer a different question: What can we see early enough to act on?

Its goal is to bring together existing evidence, data, and new research to identify the experiences and capabilities that predict whether young people will thrive later. Then it turns those insights into early signals that schools, colleges, employers, states, families, and young people themselves can use while there is still time to change course. The Center will test those signals against what happens next and continually improve them. The goal is not simply to understand mobility better. It is to turn what we know about mobility into actionable policies and practices sooner.

At every step, our work is grounded in the recognition that mobility requires not just access to the experiences that build a young person, but the capabilities — the capacity to learn something new, exercise judgment, build relationships or recover from a setback — to translate those experiences into something of value.

Early Signals Can Move a Field

When a single early signal becomes clear, it can be a powerful lever for change. When research showed, for example, that children not reading proficiently by third grade were four times more likely not to graduate on time, it galvanized a national movement of governors, educators, parents and business leaders. The benchmark was helpful, but knowing early enough to act was the real game-changer.

No such signals exist yet for the transitions that actually unlock mobility: transitions that are not just for vertical, but horizontal; that cover the stretch from school into work; transitions that take place both within and across disparate systems; transitions that repeat themselves over a lifetime and aren't confined to just a subset of years. These are the gaps that TNTP's new Mobility Center is built to close.

What Makes Mobility Possible

For a young person's future to stop resting on our best guess, three things have to be true.

1. **We need reliable signals of whether young people are on a path toward mobility.** That means establishing a new evidence base. To do so, we have to measure what young people carry forward, not just what they finish. Did the experience prepare them for what came next?
2. **We have to know early enough to act.**
3. **We have to put that knowledge to work across systems to shift policies and practices.** Schools, colleges, workforce programs, and employers need evidence they can use together to improve how young people are prepared and supported, rather than each measuring success at its own finish line.

This is the work ahead for the Mobility Center.

Why Now, and Why TNTP

Significant investments are already being made. States are expanding career and technical education, dual enrollment, and early-college models, and federal Workforce Pell has opened new routes to short-term credentials. Each of those bets will be judged eventually. The Center exists so they can be judged early enough to adjust, not after a generation of young people has already passed through.

For three decades, TNTP has worked inside the systems that shape young people's futures. Increasingly, that work has extended beyond K-12 to community colleges, workforce systems, employers, and state governments. Along the way, our understanding of preparation has expanded too: from college readiness to multiple pathways, including the skilled trades and emerging tech professions.

Today, TNTP's work reaches 4,500 districts and 35,000 schools across 39 states. That reach, combined with growing partnerships across education and employment, gives the Mobility Center something essential: the ability to test its hypothesis in real-world settings and turn what it learns into better practice and policy.

Help Us Build It

TNTP is aiming to develop an actionable evidence base that offers practical, field-ready recommendations and frameworks that policymakers and practitioners can adopt and scale. Of course, no one organization or sector can do this work alone. The Mobility Center is still taking shape, and TNTP wants what you know to shape it.

The young people choosing their paths this year will not wait for the field to catch up. Neither should we.



Funders

Which of your investments would you most want to see judged earlier, and what would you do differently if it was?

State and district leaders

What signals would help you act sooner for the young people you serve?

Business leaders

What capabilities distinguish people who advance in your industry, and how could we recognize and develop those capabilities earlier?

Researchers and policy experts

Which long-held assumptions about what drives mobility most need testing?

Nonprofit and community partners

What do young people gain through your work that today's systems never see?

TNTP

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