Strand 4: Postsecondary Pursuits

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Strand 4: Postsecondary Pursuits

- How can we better measure and monitor whether a student is prepared and ready to pursue a postsecondary credential?

Potential impact

- Evaluate the effectiveness of current college readiness indicators in meeting the goal of increasing postsecondary enrollment.
- Promote better alignment between preK12 college readiness standards and postsecondary expectations for enrollment, admission, and degree completion.
- Improve access to strong college readiness programs and enhance student support systems in both preK12 and postsecondary education.

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Research Collaborative Team

HERC

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CIRCLE Texas Tech

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Motivation

- By 2036, an estimated 70% of Texas jobs will require a postsecondary credential, yet current credential attainment lags significantly behind this benchmark
  - Stark disparities persist: only 35% of Black and 24% of Latino adults in Texas hold a postsecondary credential, compared to 50% of the overall population
- High school graduation rates have improved, but too many students **stall out after graduation**—not enrolling, persisting, or completing college.
- The result? **A growing disconnect** between K–12 preparation and postsecondary and workforce demands

We need better ways to identify and support students who are ready but at risk of falling off track

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Policy Landscape

- Over the past decade, Texas has enacted a suite of reforms linking secondary education to postsecondary and workforce outcomes:
  - **Integrated College, Career, and Military Readiness** (CCMR) into the state A–F accountability framework (HB 22), elevating CCR as a formal measure of school performance
  - **Expanded dual credit and CTE pathways** to promote early college access and workforce alignment (HB 5, HB 505, HB 1638)
  - **Introduced outcomes-based funding** for community colleges, rewarding institutions for dual credit completions, credential attainment, and labor market entry (HB 8)
- These reforms reflect a shift toward **performance-based policy**
- **State goals are ambitious:** 60% of Texans aged 25–34 with a postsecondary credential by 2030.

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Research Questions

- To what extent do Texas high school graduates attain CCR accountability standards?
- What distinct CCR profiles can be identified among Texas high school students based on their academic and career preparation experiences?
- How well do these readiness profiles predict postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion, and do additional readiness indicators further refine our understanding of postsecondary success?
- Do these relationships vary by key student and school characteristics?

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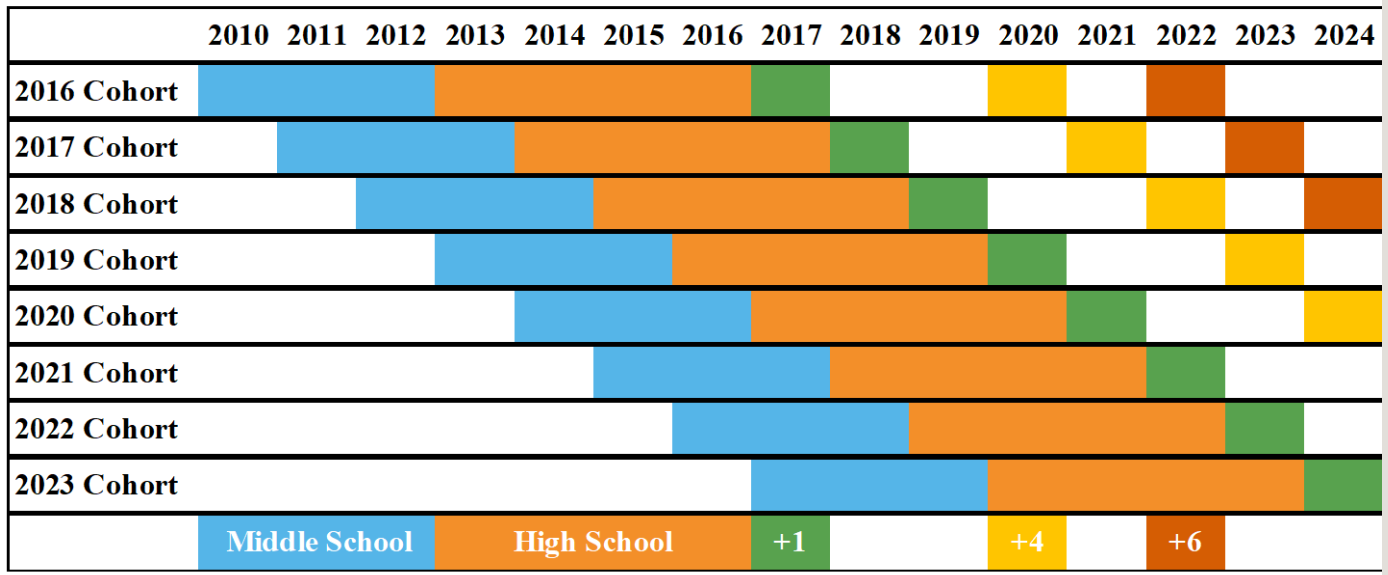
Data

- State-wide student-level longitudinal administrative records from the ERC
  - PEIMS
  - THECB and NSC
  - TWC
- Cohorts that graduated between 2017-2023
  - Capture middle and high school college readiness experiences
  - Track outcomes from 1 to 8 years after high school graduation

Table 1. Proposed Cohort Timeline



Note. The year represents the spring term of a given academic year (e.g., 2010 = 2010-2011 school year). The labels +1, +4, and +6 indicate the years post-high school graduation.

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Methodology

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Phase 1: Descriptive Analysis of CCR Attainment and Disparities

To what extent do Texas high school graduates attain CCR accountability standards?

- Identify CCR and other success indicators
- Assess the distribution of CCR indicators
- Examine disparities across key student sociodemographic characteristics and school characteristics

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Phase 2: Identifying Student Profiles of College Readiness

What distinct CCR profiles can be identified among Texas high school students based on their academic and career preparation experiences? Do these vary by key student and school characteristics?

- Latent Class Analyses to derive profiles of students based on CCR indicators and other relevant predictors
- Identify whether students are more likely to be categorized into a specific profile based on their characteristics

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Phase 3: Evaluating Pathways to Postsecondary Success Using Machine Learning

How well do these readiness profiles predict postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion, and do additional readiness indicators further refine our understanding of postsecondary success?

Do these relationships vary by key student and school characteristics?

- Random Forest modeling
- Whether profiles alone are strong predictors of success or whether certain factors within profiles further differentiate student trajectories
- Outcomes will include postsecondary enrollment within one year of high school graduation and degree completion within 6 years
  - 2- and 4-year degrees

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Engaging community partners

Collaborations with school-district partners and other stakeholders

- Tailor and refine relevant indicators
- Make sense of findings
- Identify insights and recommendations for policy and practice

Localized analysis of bright spots

- Main analyses focused on the state accounting for regional variation
- Identify bright spots and actionable insights

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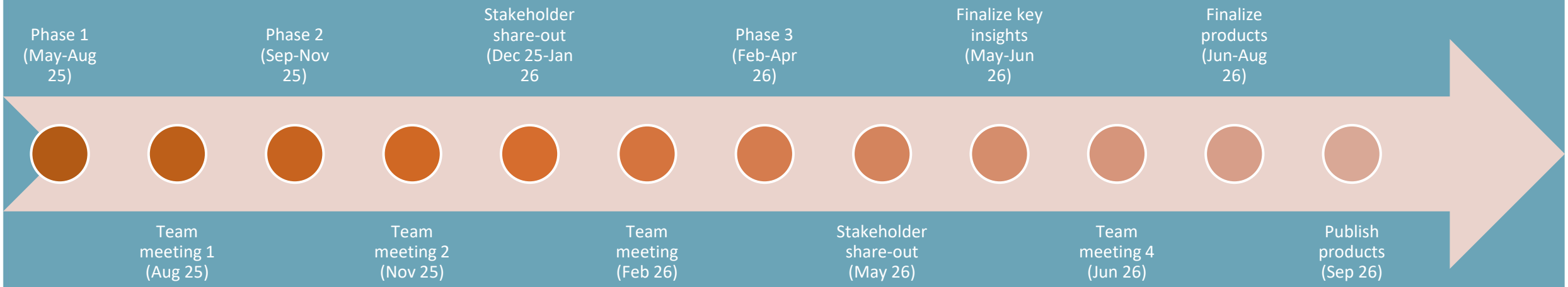
Project timeline



+ Monthly team check ins, LONESTARP3 touchpoints and convenings

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Leveraging resources to meet challenges

- Crowdsourcing possible indicators and metrics
  - LONESTARP3, district partners, other colleagues
- Taking advantage of the teams' knowledge of ERC data
  - Experience cleaning data and creating metrics
- Challenges
  - Overcoming unavailability of some CCR metrics
  - Are we including the most important factors?
  - Accounting for a changing accountability system while including enough cohorts to see longer-term outcomes
  - Making sense of our early phase analyses to provide insights on next phases

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Questions?

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