CAREER PATHWAYS: SIX KEY ELEMENTS

DEFINITION & FRAMEWORK

Career Pathways Definition

The term "career pathway programs" means a clear sequence of education coursework and/or training credentials that include the following components.

Career Pathways:

- Is aligned with the skill needs of industries important to the regional or state economies in which they are located, and reflects the active engagement of employers in targeted industry sectors regarding the skill requirements for employment or career progression in high demand occupations.

- Includes the full range of secondary, adult education, and postsecondary education options, including registered apprenticeship, with a non-duplicative progression of courses clearly articulated from one level of instruction to the next, with opportunities to earn postsecondary credits and lead to industry-recognized [and/or] postsecondary credentials;

- Includes curricula and instructional strategies that make work a central context for learning (contextual learning) and helps students attain work readiness skills;

- Includes, as appropriate for the individual, integrated education and training that combines occupational skills training with adult education services, gives credit for prior learning, and adopts other strategies that accelerate the educational and career advancement of the participant.

- Leads to the attainment of an industry-recognized degree or credential, which may include stackable credentials of value in the labor market and that articulates progressively to higher-level credentials or degrees.

- Helps a worker enter or advance within a specific sector or occupational field, regardless of their skills at the point of entry.

- Includes academic and career counseling, wrap around support services particularly at points of transition, and supports the development of an individual career plan.

- Is organized to meet the particular needs of adults, including childcare, accommodating work schedules with flexible and non-semester-based scheduling, alternative class times and locations, and the innovative use of technology.

- Has the goal of increasing an individual's educational and skills attainment and employment outcomes.

What does a comprehensive career pathways system look like?

State and local teams working collaboratively to develop a career pathways system at the local level must facilitate and coordinate **Six Key Elements** in order to implement a comprehensive career pathways system. These elements often happen simultaneously, or are revisited as programs are developed and your local, regional, and state systems evolve.

The following chart highlights goals related to each of the six elements in a comprehensive career pathways system.

Career Pathways: Six Key Elements

- 1) Build Cross-Agency Partnerships
- 2) Engage Employers & Conduct Gap Analysis
- 3) Clarify Roles and Responsibilities
- 4) Design Programs
- 5) Identify Funding Needs/ Sources
- 6) Align Policies and Programs

Element	Goal
1) Build Cross-Agency Partnerships	• Key cross-agency partners at the local and state levels are engaged to participate in the initiative.
2) Engage Employers & Conduct Gap Analysis	• Sectors and industries are selected and employers are engaged in the development of career pathways.
3) Clarify Roles & Responsibilities	• Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and formalized.
4) Design Programs	• Career pathway programs provide a clear sequence of education courses and credentials that meet the skill needs of high-demand industries.
5) Identify Funding Needs & Sources	• Necessary resources are raised and/or leveraged to develop and implement career pathway programs.
6) Align Policies & Programs	• Federal, state, and local legislation or administrative policies promote career pathway development and implementation.

BUILD CROSS-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

Key cross-agency partners at the local and state levels are engaged, agree to a shared vision, and gain support from political leaders.

In a comprehensive career pathways system, a diverse group of representatives from state and local public agencies, private and non-profit partners, and employers and members of the business community collaborate to design, craft, and implement a shared vision. Your *local team* forms to design, pilot, launch, and grow a local or regional career pathway system. Your *state team* supports the local team with administrative policies and legislation that aids local implementation and statewide growth or replication. In addition, senior or political leaders in the state/region actively support the initiative.

Recommended Partners

Key agency partners at the *local* level include:
– Workforce Investment Board(s) and local workforce development agencies
– Community College(s) and Postsecondary Education Providers
– Adult Basic Education providers
– TANF providers and Human service agencies
– Economic Development agencies
– Community-based organizations
– Business representative(s)

Key agency partners at the *state* level include:
– State Workforce Agency
– Adult Basic and Postsecondary Education
– Economic Development
– Human Services

ENGAGE EMPLOYERS & CONDUCT GAP ANALYSIS

Sectors and industries are selected and employers are engaged in the development of career pathways.

A first step in developing a comprehensive career pathways system involves conducting a labor market analysis and assessing gaps and assets in order to identify the best sectors around which to build career pathways. Based on this analysis, team should target high-demand and growing state/regional industries and sectors, and seek to engage employers and business consortiums that represent the chosen industries. The team should develop a marketing and outreach strategy, as well as a long-term plan for supporting and sustaining the engagement of employers.

Key Questions:

How will you determine labor market trends, skill development needs, and opportunities, employer preferences, etc.?

How will you select which employers (or industry representatives) to approach? How will you "pitch" career pathways to them?

How do you plan to work with employers during the various phases of the project (design, launch, operation, evaluation?)

CLARIFY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and formalized.

Once partners are engaged, the team should define and formalize roles and responsibilities, using written memoranda of understanding. A leadership or steering committee should guide the process of developing the career pathways system. The following chart outlines some of the common roles and responsibilities of key partners.

Workforce		Education	
	Labor Market Information Employer Engagement Recruitment and Referrals Support Services Skills Assessments Job Search Assistance Job Placement Services		Program Design Curriculum Development "Chunking" and "Modularizing" Linkage between credit and non-credit Articulation agreements to promote portability Support Services Financial Aid
Economic Development	Labor Market Information Employer Engagement	Human Services	Referrals and Recruitment Supportive Services Employer Engagement
CBOs	Referrals and Recruitment Employer Engagement Support Services	Employers	Curriculum Development Trainers/Faculty Employment/Internships

DESIGN PROGRAMS

Career pathway programs provide a clear sequence of education courses and credentials that meet the skill needs of high-demand industries.

In a comprehensive Career Pathways system, programs are designed to provide a clear sequence of education courses and credentials that prepare individuals, regardless of their skill level at the point of entry, for postsecondary education or training and employment. As addressed in element two, programs should be designed around high demand regional/state industries and support career ladders that pay family-sustaining wages. Programs should support a full range of education options leading to credentials, and be supported by state legislation and administrative policies to support sustainability.

Key Questions:

How will you design programs that:
- ☐ Incorporate and align secondary and post-secondary education elements?
- ☐ Integrate and contextualize adult basic education and occupational skills training programs?
- ☐ Chunk curricula into shorter programs of study?
- ☐ Meet the need for flexible training and education options?
- ☐ Include academic and CTE content in a coordinated, non-duplicative progression of courses?
- ☐ Integrate wrap-around services into program delivery?
- ☐ Lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level, or an associate or baccalaureate degree?

IDENTIFY FUNDING NEEDS/SOURCES

Necessary resources are raised and/or leveraged to develop and implement career pathway programs.

A primary function of the career pathways team involves identifying resources necessary to operate career pathway programs and core components of the system, including: program development, professional development, operating costs, and supportive services. State and local partners work together to raise and leverage funding from federal, state, local, and foundation sources.

Key Questions:

What are your funding needs?
- ❑ Curriculum development
- ❑ Professional development
- ❑ Operating costs
- ❑ Supportive services

What funding sources have you explored?
- ❑ WIA Titles I, II, and IV
- ❑ Wagner-Peyser Act funds
- ❑ Carl Perkins Act funds
- ❑ TANF funds
- ❑ State funding
- ❑ Private foundations

ALIGN POLICIES & PROGRAMS

Federal, state, and local legislation or administrative policies promote career pathway development and implementation.

Local and state partners identify key policy and program changes and actions necessary to implement the goals and vision of the career pathways initiative. Partners actively coordinate efforts across the region and/or state and establish formal procedures to institutionalize system change. Agencies and programs collaborate to provide professional development across organizations and systems. Measures are used to assess and determine system change and performance (including policy changes for system-wide change).

Key Questions:

How can policymakers support a coordinated, system approach to adult education and training?
- ❑ How are career technical and academic programs linked (or not) at the community college and how can the linkages be strengthened?
- ❑ How does the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) promote the development of career pathways?
- ❑ Do your One Stop and TANF service providers coordinate with one another in service provision? If not, what needs to change?
- ❑ What funds can be used to fund curriculum and professional development to support a career pathways approach?
- ❑ How can state and policymakers support the development of portable and stackable credentials?