Designing a Career Pathways System
A Framework for State Education Agencies

Chapter 1
Identifying and Engaging Key Stakeholders and Defining Goals of the Career Pathways System

HANDOUTS

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COLLEGE & CAREER
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Contents

Handout 1A. Identifying Stakeholders

Use this handout to start identifying the public and private stakeholders in the state who should be involved in the design and implementation of a career pathways system.

Part 1: Identifying Stakeholders

Use Table 1 to identify the different stakeholders you will engage in your work to implement career pathways.

Table 1. Selected Stakeholder Groups and Points of Contact

Stakeholder Category	Possible Stakeholders Groups	Possible Stakeholders
Example: K–12	*Member(s) of the State Board of Education*	▪ *Jane Smith, member* ▪ *Mike Taylor, administrative assistant*
K–12		
Postsecondary		
Career and Technical Education		
Business/Industry/Workforce		
Policymaker/Legislative		
Individuals/Community Members		

Part 2: Assigning Roles and Responsibilities

Now is the time to decide how each stakeholder will be involved. You should start assigning roles and responsibilities, a task that will be revisited many times throughout the initiative as you become more familiar with the knowledge and skills of the partners involved in building the career pathways system.

Use Table 2 to indicate which stakeholders might be able to assist you with specific aspects of the design and implementation of a career pathway system. When possible, include some notes on what each stakeholder can contribute to the project. You should aim for having at least one stakeholder in each role and from each sector participating in each stage of the initiative. Add additional rows to the table as needed to include all stakeholders.

Table 2. Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities

Stakeholder Role	Sector (e.g. Education, Workforce, or Health)	Stage of the Process			
		Process and Logistics	**Policy**	**Evaluation**	**Capacity Building**
Example: Champion	*Education*		*Carol Hardy, state superintendent: Vision and direction for state policy, political influence*		
Champion					
Connector					
Decision maker					
Doer					

Handout 1B. Career Pathways System 101

What the Research Says

As new data continue to expand our understanding of the relationship between education and employment, public education must change how it prepares students accordingly to ensure that that they are college and career ready. Recent research provides critical insight into student preparedness for college and career and illuminates the need for comprehensive and integrated career pathways systems.

- Recent data suggest most job openings and almost all of the new jobs being created in the economy in the next few years will require at least some form of postsecondary education.[i] Yet, as a nation, we are failing to adequately prepare students to extend their learning beyond the high school curriculum.

- A majority of first-time students in associate's degree–seeking programs in the United States are required to take at least one remedial course in English language arts or mathematics.[ii] Many students who take remedial courses do not complete their program because of time and fiscal limitations or inadequate academic progress.[iii]

- Postsecondary enrollment rates do not come close to matching workforce need, let alone graduation rates: only 66 percent of high school graduates enroll in a two- or four-year program the following fall, only 31 percent of those students at two-year institutions earn a degree or certificate in three years, and only 59 percent of students at a four-year institution finish in six years.[iv]

- The unemployment rate is 16 percent among youth ages 16–24—nearly twice the rate of older workers.[v]

The problem is not contained to the United States. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development reports that as many as 39 million young people between the ages of 16 and 29 (about 1 in 4 people in that age group) in member countries were neither employed nor in an education or training program in 2013.[vi]

Additional data describe the implications of students falling short of expectations for college and career readiness, including economic and social costs.

- Researchers estimate that the cost of lost economic opportunity for a high school dropout is estimated at $258,240 during a lifetime and $755,900 for society as a whole.[vii]

- Researchers project that increasing the high school graduation rate to 90 percent would result in annual gains of $8.1 billion for the United States.[viii]

From the workforce perspective, employers have long reported a skills gap: a mismatch between the skills prospective employees have and the skills they need to do the job.

- In ManpowerGroup's 2015 survey of hiring managers in 42 countries and territories, 38 percent of employers reported having difficulty filling jobs, up 2 percentage points from the previous year.[ix]

- The Manufacturing Institute reports similar findings: Of the 3.5 million manufacturing jobs that need to be filled in the next decade, 2 million will go unfilled because of the skills gap in both technical and employability skills.[x]

Handout 1C. Existing Definitions of a Career Pathways System

Entity	Commonly Used Definitions, Framing, and Elements of a Career Pathways System
U.S. Department of Labor	State and local teams working collaboratively to develop a career pathways system at the local level must facilitate and coordinate six key elements 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: ▪ Build cross-agency partnerships and clarify roles. ▪ Identify sector or industry and engage employers. ▪ Design education and training programs. ▪ Identify funding needs and sources. ▪ Align policies and programs. ▪ Measure system change and performance.
U.S. Department of Education	Career pathways, along with career clusters, are important terms in career and technical education programming, governed by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act: ▪ Career clusters are broad groups of occupations and industries (e.g., health). ▪ Career clusters are subdivided into career pathways (e.g., diagnostic services).
Joint Definition from U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor	A series of connected education and training strategies and support services that enable individuals to secure industry-relevant certification and obtain employment within an occupational area and to advance to higher levels of future education and employment in that area. Essential components of a career pathways approach should include the following: ▪ Alignment of secondary and postsecondary education with workforce development systems and human services ▪ Rigorous, sequential, connected, and efficient curricula that "bridge" courses to connect basic education and skills training and integrate education and training ▪ Multiple entry and exit points ▪ Comprehensive support services, including career counseling, child care, and transportation ▪ Financial supports or flexibility to accommodate the demands of the labor market to allow individuals to meet their ongoing financial needs and obligations ▪ Specific focus on local workforce needs, aligned with the skill needs of targeted industry sectors important to local, regional, or

	state economies and reflective of the active engagement of employers
	• Curriculum and instructional strategies appropriate for adults that make work a central context for learning and work-readiness skills
	• Credit for prior learning and other strategies that accelerate the educational and career advancement of the participant
	• Organized services to meet the particular needs of adults, including accommodating work schedules with flexible and non-semester-based scheduling, alternative class times and locations, and the innovative use of technology
	• Services that have among their goals a focus on secondary and postsecondary industry-recognized credentials, sector-specific employment, and advancement over time in education and employment within a sector
	• Founded upon and managed through a collaborative partnership among workforce, education, human service agencies, business, and other community stakeholders
Alliance for Quality Career Pathways	Three essential elements: • Multiple entry points for skill development • Multiple exit points into the workforce • Well-connected and transparent education, training, credentialing, and support services Four key functions: • Quality education and training • Nonduplicative assessments • Support services and career navigation • Employment and work experience
Pathways to Prosperity Network	Grades 9–14+ pathways that structure education, training, and career advancement in a seamless continuum. They enable young people to build academic and technical skills, attain postsecondary credentials with labor market value, and launch careers in high-demand, high-growth, high-wage industries while leaving open the prospect of further education. Cross-sector stakeholder groups design and implement pathways that reflect regional contexts. Key elements of pathways include the following: • Multiple entry and exit points • Rigorous curricula that integrate core academic content and career-focused learning • Opportunities for high school students to earn at least 12 college credits through dual enrollment • Early and sustained career information and advising systems • A continuum of work-based learning opportunities, including paid internships, in which employers are actively engaged • Strong cross-sector partnerships supported by intermediaries

Endnotes

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