



# Side by Side: Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Framework 1.0 & the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)

## Introduction

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014, the term “career pathway” is defined in law. The WIOA definition articulates the interdependence of career pathway programming with industry sector strategies and identifies the specific features and functions of a career pathway program. This side-by-side analysis demonstrates the alignment of [\*Shared Vision, Strong Systems: The Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Framework Version 1.0\*](#)—a consensus framework on quality criteria for career pathway systems—with WIOA’s career pathway definition and system-building elements ([WIOA Bill Public Law No: 113-128](#)). The consensus framework was developed by the ten-state Alliance for Quality Career Pathways (the Alliance) and the Center for Law and Social Policy.

As planning for WIOA moves forward in each state, the chart below can be helpful in developing and advancing career pathways aligned with WIOA. Career pathway partnerships must be familiar with WIOA’s language and could benefit from understanding what the career pathway practitioners who make up the Alliance define as a quality career pathway system:

## Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Career Pathway

**The term "career pathway" means a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that**

(A) aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the State or regional economy involved;

(B) prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships registered under the Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as the "National Apprenticeship Act"; 50 Stat. 664, chapter 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.) (referred to individually in this Act as an "apprenticeship," except in section 171);

(C) includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual's education and career goals;

(D) includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or

## Alliance for Quality Career Pathways

The career pathway approach connects progressive levels of education, training, support services, and credentials for specific occupations in a way that optimizes the progress and success of individuals with varying levels of abilities and needs.

**Alliance Criterion 2: Engage Employers and Integrate Sector Strategy Principles** to ensure multiple employers, business associations, and labor unions are partners in creating demand-driven career pathways.

*Summary of Indicators:* Employer, business associations, and/or labor partners make demonstrated investment in building, scaling, and sustaining the career pathway system; labor market intelligence informs development and ongoing relevance of career pathways; partners integrate sector strategy principles, including a focus on regional in-demand occupations, focus on "dual customers" of workers/job seekers and employers, system change and alignment, and engaging multiple employers.

**Alliance Criterion 6: Implement and Integrate Evidence-Based Practices and Processes**

*Indicators:*

- 6.1. Each career pathway includes and measures the effectiveness of **well-connected and transparent education, training, credential, and support service offerings** that may be delivered through multiple linked and aligned programs.
- 6.2. Each career pathway has **multiple entry points** and evidence that they enable well-prepared participants, as well as targeted populations with limited education, skills, English, and work experiences, to successfully enter the career pathway.
- 6.3. Each career pathway has **multiple exit points** with proven labor market

occupational cluster;

(E) organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable;

(F) enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and at least 1 recognized postsecondary credential; and

(G) helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

[Sec. 3(7)]

value at successively higher levels that lead to self- or family-supporting employment and are aligned with subsequent entry points.

- 6.4. Each career pathway program provides **participant-focused education and training**.
- 6.5. Each career pathway program provides **consistent and non-duplicative assessment** of participants' **education, skills, and competencies**.
- 6.6. Each career pathway program provides **consistent and non-duplicative assessment** of participants' **support service assets and needs**.
- 6.7. Each career pathway program provides **academic advising and supports** that keep participants engaged as they move along the career pathway.
- 6.8. Each career pathway program provides **career navigation assistance**.
- 6.9. Each career pathway program provides **personal skill development and supports** for participants assessed to need them.
- 6.10. Each career pathway program provides **employment services** for participants.
- 6.11. Each career pathway program provides **work experiences** for participants.

## Where is the rest?

WIOA's career pathway definition contains two core elements: anchoring the work in demand-driven occupations and a sector partnership (Alliance Criterion 2); and using evidence-based education and workforce development practices (Alliance Criterion 6). However, to truly move from good programs to a quality career pathway **system** that can continue to build and implement good programs, partners need more. The Alliance states have identified four additional criteria: a shared vision, a commitment of resources, a consideration of policy, and the use of data and shared measures. Each of these critical criteria is also addressed in a variety of places within WIOA:

## WIOA Career Pathway System Building Elements [Statutory Reference]

## Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Criteria and Indicators

### WIOA Local Board Activities

(5) CAREER PATHWAYS DEVELOPMENT.—The local board, with representatives of secondary and postsecondary education programs, shall lead efforts in the local area to develop and implement career pathways within the local area by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services that are needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers to employment. [Sec. 107(d)(5)]

### WIOA Title II State Leadership Activities

(1) REQUIRED.—Each eligible agency shall use funds made available under section 222(a)(2) for the following adult education and literacy activities to develop or enhance the adult education system of the State or outlying area:

(A) The alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, to implement the strategy identified in the unified State plan under section 102 or the combined State plan under section 103, including the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities.

(C) The provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under this title, including—...

**Alliance Criterion 1: Commit to a Shared Vision and Strategy** for industry sector-based career pathways for youth and adults and for building, scaling, and dynamically sustaining career pathway systems.

### Summary of Indicators include:

Public, private, and nonprofit partners build and maintain a system that supports the essential features and functions of quality career pathways and programs; adopt a shared strategy and commit their agencies/organizations to carrying out specific roles and responsibilities; embed shared definition of career pathway approach and key related concepts into their own strategic plans and policies.

(ii) the role of eligible providers as a one-stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services; [Sec. 223(a)(1)(A-C)(ii)]

### WIOA Title I Adult Training Services

#### REQUIRED LOCAL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES.—

##### (1) IN GENERAL.—

(A) ALLOCATED FUNDS.—Funds allocated to a local area for adults under paragraph (2)(A) for dislocated workers under section 133(b)(2)(B), shall be used—

- (i) to establish a one-stop delivery system described in section 121(e);
- (ii) to provide the career services described in paragraph (2) to adults and dislocated workers, respectively, through the one-stop delivery system in accordance with such paragraph;
- (iii) to provide training services described in paragraph (3) to adults and dislocated workers, respectively, described in such paragraph;
- (iv) to establish and develop relationships and networks with large and small employers and their intermediaries; and
- (v) to develop, convene, or implement industry or sector partnerships. [Sec. 134(c)(1)(A)]

(D) TRAINING SERVICES.—Training services may include—

- (i) occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment;
- (ii) on-the-job training;
- (iii) incumbent worker training in accordance with subsection (d)(4);
- (iv) programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs;

**Alliance Criterion 3: Collaborate to Make Resources Available** by identifying, prioritizing, and leveraging resources for career pathway systems, partnerships, and programs.

#### *Summary of Indicators:*

Designated staff convene and support the career pathway system with adequate human and technology capacity; partners make available necessary resources, tools, infrastructure, and time to support practitioners in providing the essential features and functions of career pathways and programs; partners leverage and coordinate existing and new federal, state, and/or private/philanthropic resources.

- (v) training programs operated by the private sector;
- (vi) skill upgrading and retraining;
- (vii) entrepreneurial training;
- (viii) transitional jobs in accordance with subsection (d)(5);
- (ix) job readiness training provided in combination with services described in any of clauses (i) through (viii);
- (x) adult education and literacy activities, including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, provided concurrently or in combination with services described in any of clauses (i) through (vii); and
- (xi) customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training. [Sec.

**134(b)(3)(D)(i-xi)]**

**WIOA Title II Permissible Use of Funds**

(F) The development and implementation of a system to assist in the transition from adult education to postsecondary education, including linkages with postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education.

(G) Integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers.

(H) Activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities. [Sec 223(a)(2)(F-H)]

**Eligible Training Provider List focus on quality training programs with credentials with regional labor market value:**

**State Criteria**

(D) The degree to which the training programs of such providers relate to in-demand industry sectors and occupations in the State.

(F) Ways in which the criteria can encourage, to the extent

**Alliance Criterion 4: Implement Supportive Policies** for career pathway systems, pathways, and programs.

**Summary of Indicators:**

Partners provide clear and consistent guidance on cross-system alignment and the allowable use of resources to support career pathways; partners adjust existing or adopt/implement new policies and internal structures to remove barriers and to facilitate the development and implementation of career pathway systems, pathways,

practicable, the providers to use industry-recognized certificates or certifications. and programs.

(G) The ability of the providers to offer programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials.

(H) The quality of a program of training services, including a program of training services that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential.

(I) The ability of the providers to provide training services to individuals who are employed and individuals with barriers to employment. [Sec. 122(b)(1)(C-I)]

### **Priority of Service to Individuals with Barriers to Employment**

(E) PRIORITY.—With respect to funds allocated to a local area for adult employment and training activities under paragraph (2)(A) or (3) of section 133(b), priority shall be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient for receipt of career services described in paragraph (2)(A)(xii) and training services. [Sec. 134(c)(3)(E)]

**WIOA** provides the structure for collaborative career pathway system building. Partners can use the language of the law and the lessons learned by early career pathway pioneering states to turn on the power of career pathway programming and turn on Pell Grant eligibility for students without high school credentials through the newly reinstated Ability to Benefit provision in the 2015 consolidated appropriations bill<sup>1</sup>. To learn more about the efforts of the ten-state Alliance for Quality Career Pathways to define standards for career pathway programs and systems, visit [www.clasp.org/careerpathways](http://www.clasp.org/careerpathways).

<sup>1</sup> See *Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015*, [Sec 309 (a)(d)(1)(2)], pp 926-929, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CPRT-113HPRT91668/pdf/CPRT-113HPRT91668.pdf>.

## Alliance for Quality Career Pathway System Criteria

**Criterion 1: Commit to a Shared Vision and Strategy** for industry sector-based career pathways for youth and adults and for building, scaling, and dynamically sustaining career pathway systems.

*Summary of Indicators* include: Public, private, and nonprofit partners build and maintain a system that supports the essential features and functions of quality career pathways and programs; adopt a shared strategy and commit their agencies/organizations to carrying out specific roles and responsibilities; embed shared definition of career pathway approach and key related concepts into their own strategic plans and policies.

**Criterion 2: Engage Employers and Integrate Sector Strategy Principles** to ensure multiple employers, business associations, and labor unions are partners in creating demand-driven career pathways.

*Summary of Indicators:* Employer, business associations, and/or labor partners make demonstrated investment in building, scaling, and sustaining the career pathway system; labor market intelligence informs development and ongoing relevance of career pathways; partners integrate sector strategy principles including a focus on regional in-demand occupations, focus on “dual customers” of workers/job seekers and employers, system change and alignment, and engaging multiple employers.

**Criterion 3: Collaborate to Make Resources Available** by identifying, prioritizing, and leveraging resources for career pathway systems, partnerships, and programs.

*Summary of Indicators:* Designated staff convene and support the career pathway system with adequate human and technology capacity; partners make available necessary resources, tools, infrastructure, and time to support practitioners in providing the essential features and functions of career pathways and programs; partners leverage and coordinate existing and new federal, state, and/or private/philanthropic resources.

**Criterion 4: Implement Supportive Policies** for career pathway systems, pathways, and programs.

*Summary of Indicators:* Partners provide clear and consistent guidance on cross-system alignment and the allowable use of resources to support career pathways; partners adjust existing or adopt/implement new policies and internal structures to remove barriers and to facilitate the development and implementation of career pathway systems, pathways, and programs.

**Criterion 5: Use data and Shared Measures** to measure, demonstrate, and improve participant outcomes.

*Summary of Indicators:* Partners develop their capacity and provide data to support the use of longitudinal cross-system data, including data collected by community-based career pathway programs as well as educational institutions; partners evaluate how well the career pathway system is performing and support continuous improvement efforts.



## **Criterion 6: Implement and Integrate Evidence-Based Practices and Processes** (specifically for regional/local career pathway systems).

*Summary of Indicators:* Partners engage in continuous improvement process in order to develop and integrate a set of evidence-based practices and processes that optimize career pathway participant success; partners provide and measure the effectiveness of the essential features and functions of career pathways.

### The 3 Features of a Quality Career Pathway

1. Well-connected and transparent education, training, support services, and credentials within specific sectors or cross-sector occupations (often delivered via multiple linked and aligned programs).
2. Multiple entry points that enable well-prepared students, as well as targeted populations with limited education, skills, English, and work experiences, to successfully enter the career pathway. Targeted populations served by career pathways may include adult education or other lower-skilled adult students, English Language learners, offenders or ex-offenders, high school students, disconnected or “opportunity” youth, some former military personnel, un- or under-employed adults, or others.
3. Multiple exit points at successively higher levels that lead to self- or family-supporting employment and are aligned with subsequent entry points.

### The 4 Essential Functions of a Quality Career Pathway

1. Participant-focused education and training;
2. Consistent and non-duplicative assessments of participants’ education, skills, and assets/needs;
3. Support services and career navigation assistance to facilitate transitions; and
4. Employment services and work experiences.

WIOA and the Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Participant metrics also share much in common. Learn more at [Relationship between WIOA Performance Measures and Alliance for Quality Career Pathway Metrics.](#)