



# WIA Reauthorization

December 2009

## Proposal to Create Career Pathways State Policy Leadership Grants Program

CLASP proposes the establishment of a Career Pathways State Policy Leadership Grants program within the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The program would be jointly administered by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor to strengthen and align adult education/ ESL, postsecondary education, career and technical education and workforce development systems in a career pathways framework.

Connecting these programs within a career pathways framework will make it easier for individuals, particularly low-skill and low-wage adults and out-of-school youth, to gain postsecondary credentials that have value in the labor market, and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in a given industry or occupational sector. Each step in a career pathway is designed to prepare students for the next level of employment and education and to meet employer demand for skilled workers. Ideally, pathways begin with short, intensive remedial “bridge” and “pre-bridge” programs for those at the lowest literacy and English language levels and extend through two-year and four-year college degrees.

### Structure of Program

The Career Pathways State Policy Leadership Grant program would issue grants in two phases: a one-year planning grant phase, followed by a multi-year implementation grant phase.

In the **planning grant phase**, states would have the option to apply for one- or two-year state planning grants under which interagency teams (designated by the Governor, led by high-level policy-makers and involving key stakeholders) would develop a State Policy Agenda and Action Plan articulating the state’s policy priorities related to creating multiple career pathways to family sustaining employment for low-income workers, as well as actions they will take to achieve specific administrative or legislative policy changes necessary for program implementation. States would be able to forego planning grants and move directly to implementation grants if they were ready.

Planning grants would be used by states to:

1. Articulate assumptions about the problem(s) to be addressed, develop a measurable goal (e.g. college completion or the number of career pathways developed) and the strategies that will be implemented to impact the goals of the legislation.
2. Describe how the resources that will be used under the full grant will result first in products or program activities such as increased interagency collaboration and strengthened data analysis capacity that will then lead to specific state and institutional policy and practice changes within a career pathways framework that will ultimately result in the improved student outcomes.

3. Implement a statewide planning process that includes the state agency responsible for community colleges, or if such an agency does not exist separately, for higher education and representatives from community colleges, along with state officials responsible for adult education, workforce development, career and technical education, as well as other key local stakeholders, including representatives of community colleges, employers and labor organizations, as appropriate.
4. Conduct an analysis of state policies related to community college, workforce and adult education innovation for the purpose of promoting policies that promote effective programs and improvement and removing barriers to program innovation.
5. Conduct labor market analyses and establish linkages with sector strategies to address regional labor market needs and priorities.
6. Develop a State Policy Agenda and Action Plan that articulates the grantees' policy priorities in terms of one or more quantifiable goals and specific actions that will be taken to guide and achieve systemic change in policy and practice to achieve these goals. The State Policy Agenda and Action Plan should specify the roles of key education and employment-related systems in the state in helping achieve the state's articulated policy priorities.
7. Identify the capacity of field to deliver on this plan and develop a capacity-building plan for addressing current weaknesses.
8. Develop a plan for collecting and analyzing data on student progress and outcomes, as applicable, by institution for all colleges, adult education, and workforce training providers in a state, and for convening educators from across colleges and other education and training providers, such as adult educators, to examine the data and share proven strategies for improving student outcomes at scale. This data plan should address how workforce development and adult education data systems will be linked to the state longitudinal databases being developed through other funding.

In the **implementation grant phase**, states would apply for two-year grants to support implementation of these plans. Implementation grants could be renewed with up to two more one-year grants. Implementation grants would support the following required activities:

1. Interagency implementation efforts to increase alignment of policies, assessment strategies and standards among: postsecondary; adult and career and technical education; workforce development; and human services, especially Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, to create multiple pathways/on-ramps to postsecondary education and a comprehensive set of supports to promote student success.
2. Engagement of state policy leadership and the employer community, including sector partnerships, in furthering administrative and legislative systemic changes within and across relevant programs.
3. Creation of state incentives, including state matching funds to support local implementation of comprehensive service delivery approaches involving community and technical colleges, adult education, providers, employers, workforce development boards and agencies, human services agencies and economic development agencies.

4. Inclusion of adult education, career and technical education and workforce development data on comprehensive longitudinal data systems that track student progress and success in postsecondary education and the labor market and efforts to analyze and use this data strategically to drive institutional and systemic change.
5. Implementation of transition studies to measure students' progress toward college and career success, including whether the achievement gap is being closed between different demographic groups.
6. Development and implementation of a strategic communications strategy to persuade state and local policy makers, business and leaders in postsecondary and other systems about the importance and urgency of systemic policy change.
7. Capacity building efforts, including state technical support to local interagency efforts that advance priorities set out in the State Policy Agenda and Action Plan developed during the planning grant.

## Grant Applicant

The grant applicant would be the interagency team designated by the governor.

## Funding Level and State Match Requirement

One to two-year planning grants would be funded at \$100,000-200,000 depending on where the state is in developing its data system. Implementation grants would be \$200,000-300,000. States would be required to provide a 50 percent match, which could be in-kind. Collaboration between sector and pathways efforts could be incented by deeming money spent on sector partnerships as meeting the match requirement even if the dollar amount is less than the 50 percent requirement.

## Technical Assistance

Direct the Department of Education and Labor to provide technical assistance directly or through contract to planning and implementation grantees.

This proposal was produced by CLASP's Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success. For more information, contact: Evelyn Ganzglass at [eganzglass@clasp.org](mailto:eganzglass@clasp.org)