

Career Pathways: Local Planning

STATE PLAN LOCAL PLAN POLICIES & GUIDANCE BUDGET CHOICES

CLASP's [Opportunities for Action](#) is a series of short memos with recommendations for state and local areas to fully realize the options in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to help low-income and lower-skilled youth and adults achieve economic success.

WIOA requires local workforce boards to convene their education partners to develop and implement career pathways. Section 3(7) of WIOA includes the first-ever federal definition of the set of core activities that are required in career pathways (see appendix in [State Plan and Policy memo](#)). The local plan is **not** a recapitulation of the local college career and technical education catalogue or a listing of local job training agencies. The local plan will outline the strategic and operational functions local boards undertake with WIOA and required one-stop partners in the development and implementation of a career pathway program or programs that serve local employers and local residents.

Local Plan

As part of WIOA local unified/combined planning, boards need to initiate the move from career pathways as special programs to career pathways as the workforce development system's new way of doing business. Many local workforce boards have been actively engaged with education partners through federal initiatives like DOLETA Trade Adjustment Act Community College Career Training grants (TAACCCT) or state strategies like [California's Workforce Accelerator Fund](#). These partnerships have laid the groundwork for the next stage: sustained, durable talent pipelines critical to a regional economy. Even for boards deeply engaged with partners, this will require strategic thinking around building a system for sustaining career pathway programs. Boards will need to move past the model of one-off programs with separate operational plans for service delivery, resource allocation, and staff capacity building to aligned operations across WIOA programs. For boards new to career pathway work, WIOA affords the opportunity to build a local career pathway system from the ground up.

Guidance for boards new to career pathway programs

- Convene education and employer partners, as well as community-based organizations and other stakeholders, to identify the intersection of potential collaborative work.
- Learn about partners' pain points, such as funding, outcomes, recruitment, and retention. What collaborative solutions can be found to address these issues?
- Define partnership roles and responsibilities. What resources does each partner bring, and which outcomes are they accountable for?
- Integrate sector strategy and career pathway conversations to assess both the demand and supply sides of your talent pipeline.
- Build on existing initiatives by aligning activities across systems and adding interventions for specific target populations.

Guidance for boards partnering in existing career pathway programs

The local board is uniquely positioned to merge sector strategy work (the demand) and career pathway work (the supply). If collaborative education and training efforts already exist, local boards will still have to negotiate with the existing collaborative leadership team to be effective WIOA career pathway convenors.

Action steps a local board can take:

- Lead a review of existing education/training partnership activities using the WIOA career pathway definition to ensure compliance.
- Explore expanding target sectors to serve other industries in the region.
- Engage WIOA title II adult education providers to ensure English Language Acquisition and Basic Skills students have entry points to the pathway.
- Build entry points for WIOA title I adults, especially [priority of service populations](#).
- Build entry points for WIOA title I youth, particularly out-of-school youth populations who need re-attachment to education and training.
- Engage WIOA title IV vocational rehabilitation providers so individuals with disabilities are well served in pathways to integrated competitive employment.
- Discuss aligning programs or building new programs that can connect to form a longer pathway.
- Allocate resources to support individuals in career pathway programs (e.g., cohort training funds, support services).
- Build staff capacity to offer critical workforce development services under the new WIOA definitions: career services, training services

The reference chart below is a helpful way to organize partners' conversations on the federally defined set of core activities in the WIOA career pathway definition. This reference chart builds from both the WIOA definition and the [Alliance for Quality Career framework](#).

CORE ELEMENT OF A CAREER PATHWAY SYSTEM	KEY COMPONENTS	KEY QUESTIONS
PATHWAY PARTNERSHIP	Partnership formation, leadership, vision, governance, funding	Who comes together to implement the career pathway, and what resources do they bring to bear?
PATHWAY SECTOR	Industry sector focus, employer engagement, occupational targets, skill shortage context	What need in the regional/state economy is the career pathway intended to address?
PATHWAY DESIGN	Starting skill levels, stackable credentials, course/credential sequencing, curriculum design, multiple entry/exit points, alignment across settings, articulation, alternative placement	Who is the pathway intended to serve and how will it do so? What is the pathway from a participant perspective?

PATHWAY INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY	Participant-focused, evidence-based practices, contextualized instruction, concurrent remediation, dual enrollment, competency-based education, work-based learning, integrative education and training.	What specific instructional innovations will be implemented in the pathway to improve results?
PATHWAY PARTICIPANT SUPPORTS	Participant assessment, career navigation, supportive services, intrusive advising, case coordination, referral	How will the pathway address the non-curricular needs of participants to improve results?
PATHWAY MEASUREMENT	Identifying pathways in shared data, appropriate metric selection, shared measurement and accountability, continuous improvement, closing achievement gaps	How will we define success for the pathway, and how will we assemble the data to determine success?

Source: Tim Harmon, Workforce Enterprise Services, Inc. & member of the CLASP Alliance for Quality Career Pathways

Related CLASP resources: [Career Pathways Explained](#); [AOCP Shared Vision, Strong Systems web portal](#).

We also recommend that you print out [AOCP's WIOA Career Pathways summary](#) to bring to your planning meetings.

Questions? Contact [Judy Mortrude](#), director of CLASP's Alliance for Quality Career Pathways.

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