



# Alliance for Quality Career Pathways

a project of CLASP

## **Developing a National Framework for High Quality Career Pathways**

In today's shifting economy, strong education and career skills are more important than ever, particularly for the nearly 48 million workers who need better skills and wages for economic advancement.

### **Career Pathways: A Developing Solution**

Career pathways, an emerging model for skills development among low-skilled adults and out-of-school youth, offer a streamlined sequence of education and training services that enable students, often while they are working, to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in a given industry or occupational sector. These programs are making a real difference in helping thousands of workers earn much-needed postsecondary credentials and family-supporting jobs while ensuring that America can remain globally competitive. The concept of career pathways, sometimes called "stackable credentials," has been gaining popularity across the country for a number of years, but until now, there has been little research on what constitutes a high quality initiative and how to best measure program successes. The Alliance for Quality Career Pathways (AQCP), a new initiative led by CLASP, will identify these benchmarks that signal high-quality systems and programs.

### **Ten States, One Quality Framework**

While career pathways have gained a foothold in many states, there is enormous variation among approaches and models, making it difficult for practitioners, managers, policymakers, and funders to easily identify quality career pathways. In order to address this gap and ensure that career pathways continue to grow and improve, CLASP is partnering with ten leading-edge career pathway states on a two-year initiative to draw upon their combined decades of experience and jointly develop a set of quality benchmarks and metrics for programs nationwide. This framework will be useful in evaluating programs, helping new programs start-up, and helping existing programs continuously improve. AQCP will focus on career pathways with on-ramps outside of high school, such as adult education programs, workforce training programs, and will also coordinate closely with career pathway efforts focused on in-school youth.

### **Our Process**

The AQCP framework development process will be built upon a careful consensus process with Alliance states. Specifically, AQCP will include three key activities:

- 1) Developing and field-testing a set of voluntary quality benchmarks and metrics,
- 2) Creating a self-assessment tool based on the framework, and
- 3) Communicating widely to the field about the value of high quality career pathways and the resulting quality career pathways framework.

A unique aspect of this initiative is that it will result in a framework of quality benchmarks and outcomes measures – as a sort of “north star”—to complement the array of existing “how to” guides for building career pathways. This framework will be considered “version 1.0,” setting a solid foundation for further testing, validation, and improvement for the next generation of career pathways.

### **Alliance Partners and Funders**

The Alliance for Quality Career Pathways includes members from ten leading career pathway states: Arkansas, California, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin and will be led by CLASP. The Alliance for Quality Career Pathways is generously funded by the Joyce Foundation, which supports the development of policies that both improve the quality of life for people in the Great Lakes region and serve as models for the rest of the country, and the James Irvine Foundation, which is dedicated to expanding opportunity for the people of California to participate in a vibrant, successful and inclusive society.

### **Learn More**

For more information and to stay up-to-date on the Alliance for Quality Career Pathways, visit [www.clasp.org/careerpathways](http://www.clasp.org/careerpathways).