Appendix C: Glossary

Assessment: The process of gathering and documenting information about the achievement, skills, abilities, and personality variables of an individual. The process and tools used for the assessment must be reliable, valid, and diagnostic and must be used appropriately to place individuals in educational levels and programs and measure their progress.

Assessment of prior learning: A method of determining the knowledge and skills of a participant gained through work and life experience; military training and experience; and formal and informal education and training from in-state, out-of-state, and foreign institutions. Assessment of prior learning can be accomplished using methods such as individualized student portfolios, evaluation of corporate and military training, program evaluations, challenge exams, and standardized exams.

Braided funding/resources: The weaving together of various state, federal, and private funding streams and resources to sufficiently fund an intervention or set of interventions (e.g. career pathways and programs). See Funding Career Pathways and Career Pathway Bridges: A Federal Funding Toolkit for States, CLASP, March 2013 (revised edition) for guidance on braiding federal funding to support career pathways.

Bridge program: See career pathway bridge program.

Career ladders and lattices: Devices that help people visualize and learn about the job options that are available as they progress through a career. Career ladders and lattices consist of a group of related jobs that comprise a career. They often include a pictorial representation of job progression in a career as well as detailed descriptions of the jobs and the experiences that facilitate movement between jobs. Career ladder/lattices are not necessarily organization-specific; they frequently span multiple organizations because movement within one organization may not be possible. Career ladders display only vertical movement between jobs. In contrast, career lattices contain both vertical and lateral movement between jobs and may reflect more closely the career paths of today’s work environment.

Career navigation assistance: Services that assist participants in determining a career path, understanding the requirements for the jobs they seek, and accessing the education and training needed to achieve their goals.

Career pathway approach: An approach that 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. This approach helps individuals earn marketable credentials, engage in further education and employment, and achieve economic success. Career pathways deeply engage employers and help meet their workforce needs; they also help states and communities strengthen their workforces and economies. This approach is not simply a new model; it is a systems-transformation strategy.

Career pathways: An operationalization of the career pathway approach that includes three essential features: (1) well-connected and transparent education, training, credential, and support service offerings 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

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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, certain high school students; disconnected or “opportunity” youth, some former military personal, un- or under-employed adults, or others); and (3) multiple exit points at successively higher levels leading to self- or family-supporting employment and aligned with subsequent entry points. Career pathways also include four essential functions: (a) participant-focused education and training; (b) consistent and non-duplicative assessments of participants’ education, skills, and assets/needs; (c) support services and career navigation assistance to facilitate transitions; and (d) employment services and work experiences.

Career pathway bridge program: An extension of the career pathways concept, but designed specifically to meet the needs of lower-skilled adults and youth. Career pathway bridge programs provide targeted basic skills or English language help to lower-skilled students to enable them to enter and succeed in career pathways.27

Career pathway credential completer: A career pathway participant who attained one or more of the pathway education and training outcomes (group B) attainable in a career pathway prior to leaving the pathway. These outcomes include marketable credentials as designated by the local/regional career pathway partnership, such as a license, industry certification, certificate, diploma or degree. Career pathway credential completers include:

a. participants who have left the career pathway after attaining one of the above credentials; and
b. participants who are still enrolled in career pathway courses after attaining one of the above credentials, with the goal of attaining further credentials.

Career pathway leaver: A career pathway participant who is no longer enrolled in pathway courses, services, or activities for a period of at least one year. Career pathway leavers include:

a. participants who attained one or more of the interim outcomes (group A) or pathway education and training outcomes (group B) attainable in a career pathway prior to leaving the pathway; and
b. participants who did not attain one of these interim or pathway outcomes prior to leaving the pathway.

Career pathway participant: An individual who has enrolled in and is attending specific courses or activities or is receiving services (or combinations thereof) that have been designated as specific entry points for a career pathway.

Career pathway programs: integrated sets of services representing each of the four essential functions of career pathways and that are aligned along a career pathway.

Career pathway system: The cohesive combination of partnerships, resources and funding, policies, data, and shared accountability measures that support the development, quality, scaling, and dynamic sustainability of career pathways and programs for youth and adults.

Career and technical education programs of study: The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (“Perkins IV”) defines a program of study as: “a multiyear sequence of courses in a career and technical content area. The sequence: must include academic and CTE content in a non-duplicative progression of courses; must combine secondary and postsecondary program elements; may allow for dual or concurrent enrollment in a postsecondary program; and must lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level or to an associate’s or bachelor’s degree.” Additional guidance from the Department of Education can be found in the document: “Career and Technical Programs of Study: A Design Framework.”

“Chunked” or modularized curriculum: A method by which programs can divide certificate or degree coursework into smaller sets of courses, thereby allowing adults already in the labor force to build

skills on a schedule more amenable to work and family life, while enabling firms to utilize exactly the minimum training they need.\(^28\)

**Competency-based credentialing:** Model or method of awarding credit that uses defined learning outcomes and competencies instead of measuring learning through clock or credit hours.

**Contextualization:** An instructional technique that integrates concepts from occupational areas, industries, or sectors with basic skills education (e.g., a health careers bridge might teach math concepts in that context, such as measurement for proper medication dosage).\(^29\)

**Credential:** An attestation of qualification or competence issued to an individual by a third party (such as an educational institution or an industry or occupational certifying organization) with the relevant authority or assumed competence to issue such a credential. A credential is awarded in recognition of an individual’s attainment of measurable technical or occupational skills necessary to obtain employment or advance within an occupation. These technical or occupational skills are generally based on standards developed or endorsed by employers. Credentials include degrees, diplomas, certificates, certifications, and licenses.\(^30\)

**Credit recognition:** The act of awarding educational credit for academic-equivalent competencies mastered through formal and informal occupational education and training completed at an educational institution or an industry or occupational certifying organization.

**Cross-sector occupation:** An occupation that exists in multiple industry sectors, i.e., an accountant or a forklift driver.

**Disconnected youth:** A low-income 16- to 24-year-old who also meets one or more of the following: has dropped out of high school; is within the age for compulsory school attendance but is over-age and under-credited (has not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter); has been subject to the juvenile or adult justice system or ordered by a court to an alternative school; is homeless/a runaway or under the care of the child welfare system; is pregnant or parenting and is not attending any school; has a disability; or is an English language learner.

**Dual/Concurrent enrollment:** Allowing basic skills students to enroll in occupational or academic courses at the same time they are enrolled in basic skills courses.\(^31\) Allowing high school students to enroll in community college courses at the same time they are enrolled in high school.

**Employment services:** Services provided to participants that are designed to increase the employability of the un- or underemployed, which can include employment counseling, assistance with resume writing, mock interviews, job fairs, assistance with finding a job, and other similar services.

**Evidence-based practices or processes:** Practices or processes of demonstrated effectiveness as shown by theoretical knowledge, practice data, program evaluation results, implementation data, and/or synthesis research.\(^32\)

**Hybrid instruction:** An instructional model that utilizes both online and face-to-face learning.

**Industry:** A specific grouping of companies with highly similar business activities within a sector. For example, the financial sector can be broken down into industries such as asset management, life insurance,

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\(^{29}\) Foster, Marcie, Julie Strawn, and Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield. *Beyond Basic Skills: State Strategies to Connect Low-Skilled Adults to an Employer-Valued Postsecondary Education*, CLASP, 2011.

\(^{30}\) Based on the Department of Labor’s definition of credential found in Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 15-10, *Increasing Credential, Degree, and Certificate Attainment by Participants of the Public Workforce System*.

\(^{31}\) Foster, Marcie, Julie Strawn, and Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield. *Beyond Basic Skills: State Strategies to Connect Low-Skilled Adults*.

and banking. Despite their differences in scope, the terms industry and sector are often incorrectly used interchangeably.

**Integrated education and training:** An instructional model that combines skills training with basic skills services to increase the educational and career advancement of participants by delivering these services simultaneously.\(^{33}\)

**Labor market intelligence:** Data and other information that can be used to understand labor market conditions in a particular region or local area. This can include employment statistics, unemployment rates and unemployment insurance claims, wages and salaries, job projections, and qualitative intelligence from employers.

**Learning community:** A cohort of students who co-enroll in two, or sometimes three, courses that are linked by a common theme and are taught by a team of instructors who collaborate with each other around the syllabi and assignments.\(^ {34}\)

**Participant-focused education and/or training:** Education and/or training models that focus on the needs of the whole participant rather than those of others involved in the educational process, such as instructors, faculty, and administrators. Participant-centered education and/or training is focused on each participant’s needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles both inside and outside of the classroom. Examples include integrated education and training; contextualized curriculum and instruction; learning communities; chunked or modularized curriculum and instruction; competency-based curriculum; self-paced instruction (may also be “guided” self-paced); technology-enabled, online, and/or hybrid instruction; and education and training offered at times and places and in formats that work for the targeted population—including non-semester-based schedules, block schedules, evening/weekend schedules, employer-based, etc.

**Program of study:** see career and technical education program of study.

**Scaling career pathways:** To increase the number of career pathways and programs available to participants and/or to increase the capacity of existing pathways and programs to serve more participants.

**Sector:** One of approximately 12 large segments in the economy. Despite their differences in scope, the terms industry and sector are often incorrectly used interchangeably.

**Sector initiatives:** Regional, industry-focused approaches to workforce and economic development that improve access to good jobs and/or increase job quality in ways that strengthen an industry’s workforce.\(^ {35}\)

**Sector strategies:** (definition 1 from the National Governors Association, National Network of Sector Practitioners, and Corporation for a Skilled Workforce in 2008): State-level efforts to provide strategic direction and resources towards the promotion and development of individual, regional sector initiatives.\(^ {36}\)

**Sector strategies:** (definition 2 from the National Governors Association, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, and National Skills Coalition in 2013): Partnerships of employers within one industry that bring government, education, training, economic development, labor, and community organizations together to focus on the workforce needs of an industry within a regional labor market. At the state level, they are policies and investments that support the development of local sector partnerships.\(^ {37}\)

\(^{33}\) Adapted from OVAE Program Memorandum *Use of Funds Under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) for Integrated Education and Training (IET).* http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/aefla-funds-for-iet.pdf.


\(^{36}\) *An Evaluation Framework for State Sector Initiatives,* National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, National Network of Sector Practitioners, and Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, May 12, 2008.

\(^{37}\) *State Sector Strategies Coming of Age: Implication for State Workforce Policymakers,* National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, and National Skills Coalition, 2013.
Stackable credential: A credential that is part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to build up an individual’s qualifications and help them to move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher-paying jobs.  

Sustainability, dynamic: Not only continuing the career pathways, programs, and system beyond initial development but also supporting their adaption and continuous improvement over time based on experience, new information, data, and outcomes. In some cases, it may mean discontinuing career pathways and programs that are no longer in demand.

Support services: The range of supports that should be available to students to help them persist in and complete their education or training program. These can include financial stability support, personal support, academic support, and career preparation support.

Work experiences: Opportunities provided to participants that enable them to develop occupation or sector-specific skills while on the job in a paid or unpaid capacity. Examples include work simulations, job shadowing, on-the-job-training, internships, transitional jobs, etc.

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**Text Box 8: Credentials**

“Credentials” is an umbrella term that includes degrees, diplomas, certificates, badges, professional/industry certifications, apprenticeships and licenses. Credentials vary in the awarding organization, the standards on which the award is based, and the rigor and type of assessment and validation processes used to attest to the skills, knowledge, and abilities people possess.

**POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS**

Educational credentials include degrees, diplomas, and certificates that are awarded by accredited educational institutions based on successful completion of a course of study. These credentials vary in the specificity with which courses have clearly articulated learning outcomes that students must achieve to obtain the credential. These courses of study also vary in scope, duration, and level of effort, which has traditionally been calibrated by a metric of time-based credits. Postsecondary certificates are typically awarded for completion of a less-than-two-year course of study, but the duration varies substantially. Postsecondary diplomas are typically no more than 1 year or 30 credits in duration and include general education courses, as appropriate to the field of study. Associate-level degrees are awarded to students who complete 90 quarter credit hours or 60 semester credit hours of schooling, which typically requires two years to complete on a full-time schedule. In addition, educational institutions award certificates for completion of noncredit occupational training programs.

Portability of credentials across educational levels and institutions depends on articulation and transfer agreements. Associate Degrees have a general scope and are intended as a transfer function, while Applied Associate Degrees, which have a narrow technical scope and are intended for individuals in a specific field of study to gain employment, only transfer by specific transfer agreement.

Educational credentials are awarded once and carry no requirement from the awarding organization for repeated demonstration of knowledge and skills. However, to address rapidly changing knowledge and skill requirements, some certificates are now dated to indicate when these requirements were current.

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INDUSTRY OR OCCUPATIONAL CREDENTIALS

Industry or occupational credentials include certifications, licenses, and certificates.

**Certifications** are awarded by a third-party nongovernmental certification body, such as an industry or occupational association, based on an individual demonstrating through an examination process that she or he has mastered the required knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a specific job. The examination can be written, oral, or performance-based. Quality certifications set the standards against which mastery is assessed through a defensible, industry-wide job analysis or role-delineation process and use examination processes that meet psychometric rigor to assure they are fair, valid, and reliable. A certification is typically a time-limited credential that may be renewed through a recertification process and rescinded for ethical violations and incompetence. Certification is often voluntary, but may be mandatory when tied to state licensure and preferred or required by an employer for hiring.

Certifications differ widely in quality and the breadth and level of competencies covered, as well as the types of assessments used in the certification process. Some certifications are knowledge-based, while others focus more on skills and abilities. For example, CompTIA’s Strata IT Fundamentals certification having worked for a certain period of time, or successfully completing a complex certification-related task. Certifications also differ in whether they are vendor-neutral, as in the case of CompTIA certification in IT, or vendor-specific, as are Microsoft certifications.

**Licenses** to practice are granted by federal, state, or local government agencies based on predetermined criteria, which may include some combination of degree attainment, certifications, certificates, assessment, apprenticeship programs, and work experience. Licenses are time-limited and must be renewed periodically. Licenses are granted to provide a level of consumer protection and ensure safety and quality of work. Licensure requirements are defined by laws and regulations. Violation of the terms of the license can result in legal action.

**Certificates** are awarded under a variety of types of education and training. Employers, industry associations, and others award certificates of completion for their various training programs. Upon completion, participants in a registered apprenticeship receive a portable, nationally recognized certificate of completion issued by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) or the State Apprenticeship Agency that certifies occupational proficiency. They may also receive interim credentials issued by USDOL and an Applied Associate Degree.