Career Pathways for the Lehigh Valley
Next Steps

Education Joining Workforce Development

Lehigh Valley
Workforce Investment Board, Inc.
Developed for the Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc.
in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Education
Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education and
The Pennsylvania State University Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy

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Introduction

The US Department of Labor Career Pathways Initiative has identified six key elements of Career Pathways. This Initiative provides a framework for development and implementation of career pathways models. Elements of this framework are included in the development of the *Manufacturing Career Pathways for the Lehigh Valley* guide, in partnership with the Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc., the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education and The Pennsylvania State University Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy.

(US Department of Labor, 2011a)

The US Department of Labor – Employment and Training Administration defines “career pathway programs” as a clear sequence of education coursework and/or training credentials that include the following components.

- Are aligned with the skill needs of industries important to the regional or state economies in which they are located, and reflect the active engagement of employers in targeted industry sectors regarding the skill requirements for employment or career progression in high demand occupations.
- Include the full range of secondary, adult education, and postsecondary education options, including registered apprenticeship, with a non-duplicative progression of
courses clearly articulated from one level of instruction to the next, with opportunities to earn postsecondary credits and lead to industry-recognized [and/or] postsecondary credentials;

- Include curriculum and instructional strategies that make work a central context for learning (contextual learning) and help students attain work readiness skills;
- Include, as appropriate for the individual, integrated education and training that combine occupational skills training with adult education services, give credit for prior learning, and adopt other strategies that accelerate the educational and career advancement of the participant.
- Lead to the attainment of an industry-recognized degree or credential, which may include stackable credentials of value in the labor market and that articulate progressively to higher-level credentials or degrees.
- Help a worker enter or advance within a specific sector or occupational field, regardless of their skills at the point of entry.
- Include academic and career counseling, wrap-around support services particularly at points of transition, and support the development of an individual career plan.
- Are organized to meet the particular needs of adults, including childcare, accommodating work schedules with flexible and non-semester-based scheduling, alternative class times and locations, and the innovative use of technology.
- Have the goal of increasing an individual’s educational and skills attainment and employment outcomes. (US Department of Labor, 2011b)
Next Steps

The Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board (WIB) has taken a leadership role in the development of initiating comprehensive career pathways programming in the Lehigh Valley. The WIB supported the development of the *Manufacturing Career Pathways for the Lehigh Valley* guide, a comprehensive resource that provides a building block for further development of career pathways that begin with adult basic education for low-skilled adults and provide entry and exit ramps for individuals at various stages of employment and education along the pathways.

Strong relationships and a shared vision among all stakeholders is a critical element to successful career pathways programming. Mutual respect among the partners is essential and teambuilding activities should be considered as a preliminary activity.

Successful career pathways systems are built on relationships and clear lines of communication between public and private partners. The five steps for developing and implementing career pathways are described below. *Recommendations for the Lehigh Valley are highlighted with blue text.* At all stages of the process, outreach is imperative, as is support and participation from stakeholders, such as jobseekers, businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies.
Gap Analysis
Gather education, workforce development, economic development, employer, and labor groups to identify sectors of importance to local economies, and map the requirements of entry and advancement at successive levels in each sector. Conduct a gap analysis to assess how well existing education, workforce, and social services support worker access and advancement in the target fields, identifying challenges and weaknesses.

- Lehigh Valley credential and service asset mapping
  - Compile data concerning local credentialing programs and certificates aligned with specific occupations in order to map assets and assess gaps
    - Occupation
    - Type of Credential
    - Training Provider
    - Integrated/Accelerated
    - Online/Classroom/Work-based
    - Pell eligible?
    - Fee?
    - Employer validated?
    - Stackable?
    - Portable?
    - Credit/Non-Credit?

- Employer Focus Group
  - Can you fill your current job vacancies?
  - If so, are you filling them from within or from the general population?
  - How much is the filling of vacancies costing your organization?
  - Are you having trouble retaining employees?
  - If so, what is that costing your organization?
  - Do you have existing pipelines, and if so, how successful are they and are how satisfied are you with them?
  - What interests do you have in building additional pipelines?
  - What challenges do your incumbent workers face in accessing workforce development services?
  - How important to you is creating a career pathways system?
  - Would you be willing to make a further commitment to partner with the team?
  - What commitment would you be willing to make?
  - What are your current vacancies?
  - What are your projected vacancies?

Validating the Career Pathways
- (Including the required foundational academic, work readiness and technical skills, abilities, and knowledge for key occupations; required
certificates and credentials for key occupations, and accepted training institutions)

- For the current vacancies, what are the
  - Basic skill requirements for each vacancy?
  - Technical/occupational skill requirements for each vacancy?
  - Soft skill requirements for each vacancy?
  - Credentials/certificates required for each vacancy?
  - What training institutions do you accept credentials from for each occupation?

- For future vacancies, what are the
  - Basic skill requirements for each vacancy?
  - Technical/occupational skill requirements for each vacancy?
  - Soft skill requirements for each vacancy?
  - Credentials/certificates required for each vacancy?
  - What training institutions do you accept credentials from for each occupation?

- For your incumbent workers to remain competitive, what are the
  - Additional basic skills needed for the workers to be competitive?
  - Additional technical/occupational skills needed for the workers to be competitive?
  - Additional soft skill requirements for the workers to be competitive?
  - Additional credentials/certificates required for the workers to be competitive?
  - What training institutions do you use/accept to assist the incumbent workers to gain required skills/credentials/certificates for each occupation?

**Career Pathways Planning**

With input or guidance from business and industry, convene front-line staff from partner agencies, including education, workforce, and social services, to rethink partner programs and services to support career entry and advancement in the target sector(s). Identify costs and develop a funding strategy.

- **Career Pathways Summit for Partners**
  - Training and TA to support structure development (2 or 4 teams)
    - Develop vision/mission
      - *(e.g.)* To develop and sustain a regional career ladder system in the field of information technology that is targeted to high wage, high demand jobs and meets the needs of both employers and workers.
    - Build teams
      - Adult education provider(s)
• Workforce development partners
• Community Action/Social Service Agencies
• Postsecondary education
• Career and Technology Center
• Employer/employer group/industry partnership
  ▪ Assess current partnerships
  ▪ Assess employment opportunities
  ▪ Assess educational opportunities

Implementation
Plan for program development, marketing and recruitment, delivery of programs and support services, job development, and outcomes tracking. Consider implementing strategies in stages.
• Identify gaps
  ▪ Assess for gaps using customized resources
• Create action steps
  ▪ Develop action plans with time frames and data tracking
• Prioritize actions
• Technical Assistance for Program Development (adult education with postsecondary and training providers)
  ▪ Orientation and career mapping
  ▪ Case management and career coaching
  ▪ Relationship building especially with postsecondary providers
  ▪ Alignment of curricular materials
• Data collection and evaluation plans

Continuous Improvement
Systematically track education and labor market outcomes at each level, and continually modify programs and services to support advancement. Continue to evaluate program changes to ensure that they produce the desired improvements.
• Data collection and evaluation plans
  ▪ Selecting target industry sectors
  ▪ Mapping Career Pathways
  ▪ Improving recruitment
  ▪ Increasing retention
  ▪ Enhancing placement and advancement
**Expand the Pathways**

Bring the pathways model to scale to serve larger numbers of students and employers. Adapt the approach for replication in other sectors of importance to the regional economy or to other populations of job seekers.

- Additional resource development
  - Healthcare
  - Logistics and Transportation
  - Energy
  - Food/Beverage

The information and processes described above are essential for the implementation and growth of this career pathways initiative. For further development and implementation of this model, consider further integration of the United States Department of Labor model and associated resources. The model and associated tools provide a framework for partnering, resource sharing, alignment and program design.
References


