

DC Adult Career Pathways Strategic Plan Framework

Draft Version 6 (August 31, 2015)

Working Definition of a Career Pathway

The career pathway approach 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. The approach works with individuals on long-term planning related to their occupational goals and attainment of self-sufficiency, and assists them in meeting financial and family needs while progressing towards those goals. This approach helps individuals earn stackable and 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.

Mission

To ensure that every adult learner in the District has access to a career pathway by 2020; consisting of integrated, aligned and navigable education and skills training in high-growth sectors, combined with support services and financial assistance that allow them to advance towards their occupational goals and self-sufficiency.

Scope of the Report

The Adult Career Pathways Task Force scope is District residents that are participating in, or may benefit from, basic skills programs, which are defined as secondary, post-secondary, or alternative education or training programs that help individuals enhance the reading, writing, math, English language, digital literacy, or problem-solving skills that are needed to succeed in subsequent jobs, occupational training, and/or post-secondary education. The plan should specifically address practices for adult learners with basic skills below the 6th grade level and those above this level that may not have a high school credential or may not meet standards of entry for federally-funded occupational training programs (generally 8th grade EFL levels) or for non-remedial post-secondary education.

The Career Pathways Task Force will address how to help students progress within and beyond adult basic skills programs towards their career goals and self-sufficiency, including into relevant high-demand sectors and occupations that are well suited for shorter-term entry and longer-term advancement. It will also address the support services and financial assistance necessary to ensure that individuals can meet financial and family needs in order to participate in necessary programming to progress towards goals. The work of the Task Force will also inform broader DC State Plan Career Pathways efforts under WIOA through helping to inform Title II programming, links between Title II and Title I, III, and IV programming, and appropriate pathways within demand sectors and occupations.

Task Force Goals

To achieve the mission that every adult learner in the District has access to a career pathway by 2020, the Adult Career Pathways Task Force will work with District agencies and service providers to ensure that:

- Adult Learners have access to specific educational and occupational training opportunities that build towards employment and advancement within multiple high-demand sectors and lead to sustaining wages, with clear and attainable milestone outcomes incorporated.
- Career pathways education and training offerings funded are evidence-based, high quality, and flexible in meeting individuals' needs; and structured to minimize the time needed to successfully attain milestone credentials and skill gains.
- Adult learners have access to the support services and financial supports needed to maintain participation in and advancement through career pathways programming and employment, including through learn and earn models and coordination of available income supports.
- District agencies and their community partners deliver career pathways services cohesively through clearly defined roles and handoff processes; and assist individuals with mapping their goals and developing a comprehensive plan to meet them
- The District's business community gains access to a broader pool of District residents with the skills necessary to meet their needs and advance within their organizations.
- Performance outcomes, benchmarks, and accountability systems related to career pathways programming are developed, including key indicators related to educational gains, credential attainment, employment and earnings, retention, advancement, and post-secondary education participation.

Strategic Plan Guidelines

This section describes the strategic plan guidelines, which are intended to:

- Provide clear descriptions of the desired end state of the District’s adult career pathways system;
- Guide strategic plan recommendations and implementation steps;
- Inform the data collection that needs to occur as the career pathways system is developed and implemented; and
- Provide a basis for evaluating whether the adult career pathways system has attained its goals and make possible a process of continuous improvement.

The following are the five major strategic plan guidelines.

1. Adult learners are able to access career pathways and make progress along each step of the pathway.
2. DC government agencies and service providers align their programs, policies, operations, and funding to enable the creation of a career pathway system and sector career pathways.
3. Each sector career pathway has strong direct connections to the labor market and partnerships with the business community.
4. Each career pathway program provides high quality academic and occupational instruction supported by a strong system of technical assistance to pathway partners and professional development for adult educators and program staff.
5. Career pathway system partners create and evaluate measures of success for pathway system implementation and participant outcomes.

1. Adult learners are able to access career pathways and make progress along each step of the pathway.

- 1.1 Each sector career pathway includes well-connected and transparent education, training, credential, and support service offerings that are delivered through multiple linked and aligned programs.
- 1.2 Each sector career pathway has multiple entry points with defined services and supports that enable all District residents, including people with disabilities and those with multiple barriers, to successfully enter the pathway, with special attention paid to adult learners with basic skills below the sixth grade level.
- 1.3 Each sector career pathway has multiple exit points with proven labor market value in the targeted sector at successively higher levels leading to self- or family-supporting employment¹ and aligned with subsequent entry points.
- 1.4 There is a visual road map for each sector career pathway that illustrates the various programs that can be completed and credentials that can be earned in a pathway, as well as the various

¹ Some exit points may be jobs that are not self- or family-supporting, but the pathway will include some exit points that are, and some of those self- or family-support exit points could eventually be reached by any person on the pathway.

entry and exit points for the pathway. For each step in each sector career pathway there is clear documentation of how the successful completion of that step successfully prepares a participant for entry to a subsequent step in the pathway, whether that subsequent step is education and training or employment.

- 1.5 Pathway partners will coordinate and develop a uniform process to guide participants through each sector career pathway.
- 1.6 Relevant partners in each sector career pathway will assist participants who need and request a job with employment as part of the individualized long-term career pathways plan. This assistance will occur initially and again as needed throughout participation in the career pathway.²
- 1.7 All education and training programs on the sector career pathway will incorporate contextualized curriculum appropriate to the educational functioning level of the participant.
- 1.8 Each sector career pathway includes education and training that is participant-focused, which is measured by the extent to which programs within the pathway incorporate the following:
 - integrated or concurrent education and training
 - chunked or modularized curriculum and instruction
 - competency-based curriculum
 - self-paced instruction (may also be “guided” self-paced)
 - education and training offered at times and places and in formats that work for participants—including non-semester-based schedules, block schedules, evening/weekend schedules, and employer-based education
 - technology-enabled, online, and/or hybrid instruction
 - work-based learning
 - learning communities
- 1.9 Pathway partners recognize the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are attained from prior and current employment and adjust the steps of education and training and use differentiated instruction based on those work experiences.
- 1.10 At each step in the pathway as appropriate, including after job placement, participants receive consistent and non-duplicative assessments of:
 - education, skills, and competencies³;
 - support service needs and assets; and
 - learning disabilities and executive functioning.

² This assistance with employment as needed and requested by the participant recognizes the importance of the income, work experience, and the skills that an “earn-as-you-learn” experience can provide as part of the individual’s long term career pathways plan. Employment would preferably be within the participant’s target career pathway sector if possible, but we recognize that employment at the early stages of the individual’s career pathway may be in a different sector.

³ Participants may need to retake assessments to assess education level gains or because assessments are only valid for a limited period of time; these are not considered duplicative assessment.

- 1.11 At each step in the pathway as appropriate, including after job placement, participants receive consistent and non-duplicative case management and support services to address needs and barriers including:
- Mental health;
 - Child care;
 - Transportation;
 - Substance abuse;
 - Physical health;
 - Housing;
 - Energy assistance;
 - Legal assistance;
 - Citizenship;
 - Ex-offender status;
 - Financial literacy; and
 - Professional/work attire.
- 1.12 The pathway provides participants with:
- academic advising and supports;
 - career counseling and navigation assistance including development of career plans;
 - personal skill development and supports including work-readiness (soft skills); and
 - executive function.
- 1.13 An individualized career pathway plan is created with participants so that they can clearly see the steps that they can follow and the supports that they can access.
- 1.14 Measures are created, and data are collected and reported on, to show the extent to which pathways are accessible to low skill adults and specific target populations. These will include measures of:
- Need;
 - Demand;
 - Capacity⁴; and
 - Availability (e.g. convenient locations).
- 1.15 Any DC resident who attempts to access a career pathway will gain entry to a pathway if the resident is found ineligible for the specific program or service initially sought, and the resident will receive a “warm handoff” to the appropriate pathway starting point.

⁴ Number of persons on wait lists should be a component of the measurement of capacity and demand.

2. DC government agencies and service providers align their programs, policies, operations, and funding to create a career pathway system and sector career pathways.

- 2.1 System partners adopt a shared strategy and formally commit their organizations to carrying out specific roles and responsibilities and to communicating and coordinating with each other to build, scale, and dynamically sustain the career pathway system
- 2.2 A document exists and is agreed to by partners that provides a clearly articulated vision and value proposition for the career pathways approach to facilitate partner understanding and buy-in.
- 2.3 System partners adopt a shared definition of a career pathway approach and key related concepts.
- 2.4 System partners embed the shared definition of a career pathway approach and key related concepts into their own strategic plans/goals, new and existing policies, operating procedures, and funding priorities to support career pathways.
- 2.5 System partners engage in visible and consistent messaging to show support for and promote the career pathway approach and system.
- 2.6 System partners adopt a joint funding strategy to build, scale, and sustain the career pathway system.
- 2.7 A funding feasibility determination is made and a funding plan developed for career pathways implementation.
- 2.8 System partners have access to and can get advice from individuals with expertise in how to braid or blend funding streams to support different components of career pathways programs.
- 2.9 System partners adjust existing program policies and adopt new policies and internal structures (as needed) in their respective agencies/organizations to remove barriers and to facilitate the successful development and implementation related to:
 - Access to and student success in career pathway programs; alignment; and non-duplication;
 - Quality and labor market value of education, training, and credentials;
 - Funding and resources;
 - Academic and career navigation;
 - Support services (as needed based on assessments of participants); and
 - Data and performance measures.
- 2.10 Career pathway system partners identify statutory and administrative policy barriers to successful pathways implementation (such as siloed funding, data collection, and service delivery).
- 2.11 Career pathway system partners develop a plan with concrete activities to address identified statutory and administrative policy barriers to successful pathways implementation.
- 2.12 Solutions to identified barriers are developed and implemented.

2.13 System partners adopt a shared policy agenda and pursue legislative policy reforms to support career pathway systems.

3. Each sector career pathway has strong direct connections to the labor market and partnerships with the business community.

- 3.1 Multiple businesses, business associations and/or labor partners jointly develop and participate in the career pathway system.
- 3.2 System partners use labor market intelligence on current and future industry sector demand to inform the development and ongoing relevance of career pathways.
- 3.3 System partners integrate the following key principles of sector strategies into the career pathway system:
- Focus on regional, in-demand sectors or cross-sector occupations based on analysis of labor market intelligence.
 - Focus on both the worker/job seeker needs and business workforce needs.
 - Focus on system and credential alignment; and
 - Focus on workforce solutions for a consortium of businesses within an industry sector or cross-sector occupation, i.e., an industry or sector partnership.
- 3.4 Each career pathway includes a description of the value to businesses.
- 3.5 A comprehensive plan for business partner engagement that is coordinated across agencies and partners is developed for each sector, subsector, and partner. This plan should reduce duplication in outreach to and requests for assistance from businesses.
- 3.6 A specific plan for business engagement to meet business partner needs is developed for each business partner in the sector career pathway.
- 3.7 The career pathways system provides support to pathway participants who become employed after initial job attainment (e.g. coaching, mentoring, counseling).
- 3.8 Career pathway partners measure and evaluate employer satisfaction.
- 3.9 All pathway occupational training programs are informed by and reviewed by one or more business partners in the sector.⁵
- 3.10 Businesses contribute as partners in the career pathways system by⁶:
- participating regularly in pathway planning activities;
 - participating regularly in the leadership team;
 - assisting with recruiting other employers;
 - participating in reviews of labor supply/demand;
 - participating in curriculum design;

⁵ Businesses will collaborate in the design of curriculum where that is possible, and curriculum will be based on occupational and industry standards where such standards exist and are relevant.

⁶ Employers may also contribute by providing financial support in certain situations.

- participating in development of standards of qualifications for occupational training instructors and occupational training instructor professional development;
 - providing trainers/instructors;
 - providing data on pathway participants who are in on-the-job-training or apprenticeship at their sites;
 - host training or work-based learning sites;
 - providing equipment and materials required for accurate training and work simulations; and
 - assisting with recruiting participants.
- 3.11 Businesses and labor partners support participant involvement and progression in career pathways through their policies and practices to retain, reward, and advance employees.

4. Each career pathway program provides high quality academic and occupational instruction supported by a strong system of technical assistance to pathway partners and professional development for adult educators and program staff.⁷

- 4.1 Technical Assistance and supports are provided at all levels of the system for implementation, program quality, and staff development.
- 4.2 There are specific certification, degree, or license requirements or other qualification requirements for all adult education instructors that they must meet or demonstrate that they are working towards. These requirements may differ for ABE, ASE, GED, occupational skills instructors, and work readiness instructors. These requirements are based on some accepted standards.⁸
- 4.3 The requirements in 4.1 are based on some accepted standards for adult education and occupational training and these should align to college and career readiness standards.
- 4.4 There are requirements for re-certification based on ongoing professional development.
- 4.5 There is sufficient public funding to support professional development for adult educators and occupational training providers and technical assistance to pathway partners.

⁷ The School Reform Act grants public charter schools “exclusive control over its expenditures, administration, personnel, and instructional methods” and specifies that a public charter school “shall be exempt from District of Columbia statutes, policies, rules and regulations established for the District of Columbia public schools by the Superintendent, Board of Education, Mayor, District of Columbia Council, or Authority, except as otherwise provided in the school’s charter or this subchapter”. Public charter schools are not required to modify their programs and operations to meet the specific requirements of the Career Pathways strategic plan, but are encouraged to participate with the development and implementation of Career Pathways.

⁸ Standards for adult education instructors should be consistent with “College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. Washington, D.C., 2013: <http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/CCRStandardsAdultEd.pdf>)

5. Career pathway system partners create and evaluate measures of success for pathway system implementation and participant outcomes.

- 5.1 Career pathway system partners develop their capacity and provide data to support the career pathway system-wide use of longitudinal data for development and implementation.
- 5.2 Career pathway system partners develop a shared set of implementation measures for the entire career pathway system and for each sector career pathway, not by federal program, funding silo, or individual service provider.⁹
- 5.3 Career pathway system partners develop a shared set of progress and outcome measures for participants. They measure progress and success along the career pathways, not by federal program/funding silos. These measures include progress and success in earning credentials and achieving labor market outcomes.
- 5.4 Career pathway system partners develop a shared set of benchmarks and targets for implementation and outcome measures following a period of collection of baseline data.
- 5.5 System partners develop a plan to evaluate how the career pathway system is performing and to support continuous improvement efforts. This evaluation plan includes input from all system partners and stakeholders.
- 5.6 System partners develop a data reporting plan that describes how and when data on pathway metrics (including interim outcome and implementation measures) will be reported and shared to support a performance management and continuous improvement process.
- 5.7 System partners develop a data requirements and governance plan that describes how all career pathway participant data is collected, managed, shared, and secured.
- 5.8 The evaluation plan and data reporting plans are funded and implemented.
- 5.9 There is a data system that enables the collection of longitudinal participant data in accordance with the data requirements and governance plan that enables the calculation of the progress and outcome measures described in 5.3 and supports implementation of the evaluation and data reporting plans.

⁹ Implementation measures may be primarily based on the indicators in this document.