Career Pathways: Promise and Pitfalls

Presentation to NCLR Affiliates

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Many Uses of the Term

There are many definitions of Career Pathways floating around. Two examples:

• Small groups of occupations within an industry cluster

• A sequence of steps by which a worker can progress to more demanding, higher-paying jobs

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Career Pathways: WIOA’s Definition

The term “career pathway” means a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that—

(A) aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the State or regional economy involved;

(B) prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including registered apprenticeships;

(C) includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual’s education and career goals;

(D) includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;

(E) organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable;

(F) enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and at least 1 recognized postsecondary credential; and

(G) helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.
More on Career Pathways in WIOA

- State board must develop strategies to support the use of career pathways
- Local board must lead efforts to develop and implement career pathways and include descriptions in local plans
- Title I statewide set-aside may be used to develop career pathways programs
- Career pathways are a required element of youth service strategies under Title I, and a state leadership activity under Title II
Career Pathways in the Draft Regs

• WIOA draft regulations do not explicitly require cooperation between Title I and Title II activities in the development and implementation of career pathways.

• Local boards are instructed to work with “representatives of secondary and postsecondary education programs,” but not necessarily Title II programs.
Waiting for Guidance?

- It is anticipated that US DOL and/or ED will issue additional guidance on career pathways, outside the regulatory process

- Expected to be released in **Spring/Summer 2015**
A Closer Look

Next, we’ll delve into key elements of career pathways approaches, from the perspective of:

- Latino and immigrant jobseekers
- Community-based organizations

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Who is Eligible for Career Pathways?

- Should be **woven throughout** WIOA-funded services

- As with other services, Title I participants must be work-authorized; Title II does not require such authorization

- **Unknown** how programs that blend Titles I & II will handle eligibility determination
Understanding Career Pathways “Navigators”

**Education and career counselors**

- Some draw parallels to Affordable Care Act “patient navigators”
- Others compare to *promotora* model
- Deep knowledge of educational options/resources *and* cultural/linguistic factors is important
Implications for Latino & Immigrant Workers

**Multiple entry/exit points**

- Potentially good for individuals balancing family/workplace demands with training
- Will require greater coordination among CBOs, colleges, and other providers
- Danger of poor information leading to lost credits, time, or money

★ Signifies milestone achieved, such as attainment of a credential

www.nationalskillscoalition.org
Implications for Latino & Immigrant Workers

Supportive services such as assistance with childcare or transportation may be especially valuable for potential participants.

However, not all career pathways programs include such services.
Implications for CBOs

Unclear how career pathways approaches will use existing programmatic building blocks.

- CBOs that have pre-established connections to public workforce system, WIBs, or community colleges may be better prepared to ensure their services are part of new pathways.

- Danger that so-called “mainstream” organizations may lack specific expertise in serving immigrant and Latino workers.
Implications for CBOs

Open questions include:

• How will career pathways show that they are “job-driven”?

• How will career pathways relate to sector partnerships?
A Resource: Career Pathways for Lower-Skilled Individuals

Career Foundations Curriculum

The Career Foundations: Making Your Education Work for You curriculum helps students who read at a 4th grade level or above or who speak limited English assess their skills and interests, explore career paths, and craft a plan to get them to college.

womenemployed.org/pathways-careers-network
The Bird’s-Eye View:
Pathway Evaluator Tools

*Pathway evaluators* show different “pathways” or patterns of participation across programs, and the credential and labor market outcomes associated with them. They:

- Show these pathways and outcomes for a *particular population* of interest
- Determine which *combination of services* works best for that group
- Ensure that *skills programs work together* to equitably and efficiently prepare workers with different needs
More about Pathway Evaluators

www.nationalskillscoalition.org/
resources/publications/file/
SWEAP_Pathway_Evaluator_Report.pdf
More Resources

• National Skills Coalition
  www.nationalskillscoalition.org/state-policy/career-pathways

• National Career Pathways Network
  www.ncpn.info

• Career Pathways Exchange on LINCS

• Alliance for Quality Career Pathways/CLASP
  www.clasp.org/careerpathway
Contact

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock
Senior Policy Analyst
215-285-2860
amandabs@nationalskillscoalition.org