

Alignment Policy

TOOLKIT SUMMARY

PART OF NSC'S SKILLS EQUITY AGENDA



STACKABLE
CREDENTIALS



SKILLS-BASED
SNAP E&T



INTEGRATED EDUCATION
AND TRAINING

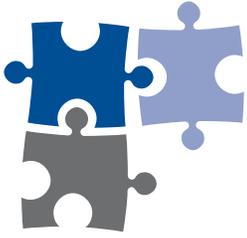


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Alignment Policy

WHY STATES SHOULD ADOPT AN ALIGNMENT POLICY

An alignment policy combines key elements that provide a pathway for low-income, low-skilled adults to earn postsecondary credentials that have value in the labor market. The central elements of an aligned pathway are:

- Integrated education and training;
- Career counseling;
- Support services;
- High school diploma or equivalent credential;
- Training leading to industry-recognized and stackable postsecondary credentials; and
- Industry engagement.

By aligning the elements in a single policy, states can better ensure that people receive a comprehensive array of services and that the services complement one another. Moreover, research suggests that pathways that combine the key elements listed above produce better results than programs that do not.¹

By establishing alignment policies, states can:

- Provide resources to assist the creation and maintenance of aligned pathways;
- Make it easier for people to continue their education and training if they move from one area of the state to another;
- Change higher education, workforce development, social services, and other policies to remove obstacles to coordination and help local areas create pathways; and
- Carry out the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's (WIOA) requirement for states to support the development of career pathways that include elements of an aligned pathway.²

COMPONENTS OF A MODEL ALIGNMENT POLICY

A state alignment policy requires and/or funds the alignment of the central elements that provide a pathway for low-income and low-skilled adults to attain industry-recognized and stackable postsecondary credentials. Model policies both require alignment and provide funding to support it. They include adult education and multiple levels of middle-skill training, with multiple entry and exit points.

State Alignment policies should include:

- A requirement that community and technical colleges³ and workforce agencies, in partnership with industry and community-based organizations, create aligned pathways for adult learners;
- Funds for agencies to design statewide frameworks for aligned pathways;
- State grants to support aligned pathways in local communities; and
- Multiple entry and exit points for adult education and middle-skills training.

ABOUT NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION'S SKILLS EQUITY AGENDA

National Skills Coalition is advocating for states to adopt a set of policies that expand equitable access to middle-skill training, credentials, and careers – particularly for those who have faced barriers to economic opportunity.

This effort includes scans of all fifty states to ascertain whether states have the policies in place to expand access to skills. NSC has also developed toolkits that provide resources, including model legislation, for policymakers and advocates to advance a skills equity agenda in their state. NSC's skills equity agenda includes state policies on Job-Driven Financial Aid, SNAP E&T, Stackable Credentials, Alignment, Integrated Education and Training, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Employment and Training.

Read more about NSC's Skills Equity Agenda and download the full toolkit at [nationalskillscoalition/skillsequity](https://nationalskillscoalition.org/skillsequity)

EXAMPLES FROM THE STATES

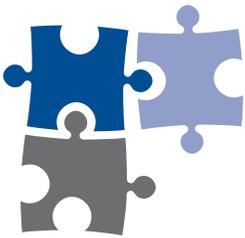
- **COLORADO** has used state legislation to establish a robust pathways framework (House Bill 13-1165 and House Bill 15-1274). The legislation requires the creation of pathways in manufacturing, construction, healthcare, and information technology industries, among others. The legislation charges the Colorado Workforce Development Council to design the pathways in collaboration with the Department of Higher Education, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Education, and the Office of Economic Development, and in consultation with local workforce boards, colleges, and area vocational schools.



The legislation requires that pathways span secondary school, adult education, and multiple postsecondary options. The pathways must include integrated education and training, stackable credentials, career counseling, and wrap-around support services. Industry must be engaged in designing and implementing pathways. The Colorado legislature has appropriated about \$500,000 from the general fund each year for implementation.



- **IOWA** Code 2014, Chapter 260H establishes the Pathways for Academic Career and Employment (PACE) Fund, authorizing up to \$5 million per fiscal year to community colleges, who work in partnership with industry and non-profit organizations. PACE includes a complete aligned pathways framework for low-skill and low-income adults, including integrated education and training, career counseling, support services, and stackable postsecondary credentials.



Alignment Policy LEGISLATIVE TEMPLATE

This template can be used to develop legislation or inform a state administrative policy in support of a state alignment policy. Other National Skills Coalition toolkits offer additional legislative language on pathway elements, such as stackable credentials, that a state may want to incorporate into aligned pathways legislation.

SEC. 1: INTENT

The Aligned Pathways Framework and Aligned Pathways Grant Program are established for the purpose of developing and supporting pathways for low-skilled adults to attain skilled careers.

SEC. 2: DEFINITIONS.

As used in this Act:

- State Board means [either the state workforce development board or the board overseeing community colleges].
- Aligned pathways means the combination of integrated education and training, career counseling, support services, high school equivalency credentials, and industry-recognized, stackable postsecondary credentials to prepare individuals for careers in an industry sector or group of occupations.
- Integrated education and training means a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.
- Stackable postsecondary credential means an industry-recognized credential offered by a certificate or other non-degree program, which articulates toward a higher level certificate or associates degree in the same occupational area.

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Alignment Policy LEGISLATIVE TEMPLATE (CONTINUED)

SEC. 3: ALIGNED PATHWAYS FRAMEWORK

The State Board in collaboration with the [other state agencies overseeing or administering workforce training, postsecondary education, and adult education], and in consultation with local workforce development boards, community and technical colleges, non-profit organizations, and industry shall design a framework for a system of aligned pathways. The framework shall include:

- a. Aligned pathways leading to employment in the state’s targeted industry sectors [either list sectors or identify by reference];
- b. Multiple entry and exit points for adult learners of different skills and abilities from adult education through applied associate degree programs;
- c. Engagement of industry or sector partnerships in the design and implementation of aligned pathways;
- d. Engagement of local workforce boards, community colleges, adult education providers, community-based organizations, and other local partners;
- e. Apprenticeship and other work-based learning options when available in the area; and
- f. Outreach to and advising of pathway participants and potential pathway participants including but not limited to secondary students and out-of-school youth.

SEC. 4: ALIGNED PATHWAYS GRANT PROGRAM

The Aligned Pathways Grant Program is established to provide grants to Sector Partnerships for the purpose of creating and sustaining aligned pathways that are consistent with the Aligned Pathways Framework established by the State Board.

- a. The State Board shall administer the Aligned Pathways Grant Program.
- b. The State Board shall allocate Aligned Pathway Grants to eligible local sector partnerships through a competitive process. To be eligible, a sector partnership must meet the definition of an industry or sector partnership under Public Law 113-128,⁴ and submit a proposal to the State Board that describes participation in the design and implementation of the aligned pathway by:
 - i. Employers representing a substantial share of employment in the aligned pathway sector or group of occupations in the geographic area represented by the sector partnership;

- ii. Each community college in the geographic area represented by the sector partnership that offers one or more programs of study in the aligned pathway’s industry sector or group of occupations;
- iii. Each local workforce development board in the geographic area represented by the sector partnership;
- iv. Adult education providers in the area; and
- v. Community-based and other non-profit organizations as appropriate; and may include:
 - vi. Representatives of secondary or K-12 education.
- c. Sector partnerships may form an aligned pathway committee to facilitate the participation requirements in Sec. 4(b).
- d. Eligible activities that may be funded by an Aligned Pathways grant include activities that are connected to an aligned pathway and that are consistent with the Aligned Pathways Framework established by the State Board including, but not limited to developing and providing as part of an aligned pathway:
 - i. Integrated education and training;
 - ii. Career counseling;
 - iii. Support services; and,
 - iv. Training leading to industry-recognized and stackable post-secondary credentials.
- e. The State Board shall provide technical assistance to sector partnerships on developing and sustaining aligned pathways.

SEC. 5: FUNDING

Sec. 5: For the period ___ to ___, \$___ in state general funds are appropriated to the State Board for Sec. 3 of this Act. For the period ___ to ___, \$___ in state general funds are appropriated to the State Board for Sec. 4 of this Act, of which, up to 15 percent may be retained by the State Board for administering grants and providing technical assistance.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ College Count\$, “Evidence of Impact Study: The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative: Phase One Research Results,” 2016.
- ² The toolkit definition of aligned pathways explicitly includes support services and stackable credentials, while the WIOA definition of career pathways does not. Because it is inclusive of the WIOA-listed elements, implementing an alignment policy will meet the WIOA requirements.
- ³ Other than community colleges, states vary in the types and names of their sub-baccalaureate postsecondary institutions. Here, the term “community and technical colleges” intends to be inclusive of sub-baccalaureate postsecondary institutions.
- ⁴ Public Law 113-128 references the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

