



Building a Competitive Workforce through Career Pathways Systems: Partner Roles and Responsibilities

Overview

To build a competitive workforce and organize career pathways, strategic partnerships must establish trusting relationships and clear lines of communication. These strategic partnerships must include, at a minimum, educational organizations, the Workforce Investment System, and economic development entities. At all stages, outreach is conducted to garner support and participation from additional stakeholders.

Each career pathways collaboration differs and is tailored according to the situation. However, for the purposes of providing a general understanding, typical partner roles are described below.

Intermediary

The responsibility of the intermediary is to bring together local stakeholders to help build and pursue a strategic plan to create a competitive workforce and develop career pathways collaboratives. The intermediary's role may vary based on the needs of the partners, but this lead organization is often tasked with the overall development of the project framework including partnership agreements, developing operations and implementation plans, and coordinating the partners to develop pilot programs. The intermediary will also work with project partners, local and state governmental agencies, and private foundations to formulate a resource funding package to ensure that pilot programs continue and are sustainable. Finally, it is the role of the intermediary to ensure that goals are set, milestones are met, and the system is functioning on a day-to-day basis.

Secondary Education Institutions

Secondary school partners play a major role in preparing students for their college education and career training. The schools maintain high standards established by their states including grade advancement and graduation requirements. They focus on strategies that will eliminate or at least reduce the need for remedial work in college. Secondary schools provide early career and academic information and counseling to motivate students and make them aware of their options and the value of their academic and career accomplishments. In addition, they negotiate articulation agreements with postsecondary officials to develop and offer credit-bearing transitional coursework that will smooth their advancement from high school into college studies.

Bridge Training Programs

Bridge programs provide adults with the basic skills they need to enter and advance in post-secondary education and career training. Specifically, bridge training could include GED preparation, English-as-a Second Language, workplace literacy, and/or college remedial or developmental courses. These programs typically incorporate basic and vocational skills with an exposure to workplace literacy.

Post-Secondary Education Institutions

Community and technical colleges and other post-secondary education partners provide the education and training that leads to career track employment. They develop curriculum in partnership with the identified employer community to ensure that individuals receive the skills and credentials that will prepare them both to enter and advance in a career track occupation, and continue with their studies in a degree-granting academic program.

The college partners also provide the infrastructure for curriculum development, instructor recruitment and certification, negotiation of course fees and the delivery of the training. Often the colleges work hand-in-hand with One-Stops, social services organizations, and other recruitment partners on effective recruitment and assessment strategies.

Industry Partners

Industry partners play a critical role in identifying the workforce challenges associated with building a competitive workforce and designing a career pathways system. They provide current information on industry trends and the workforce issues that are impacting their businesses. On a more micro level, they help define needed worker skills, review curriculum, visit training classes, and provide opportunities for work experiences, internships, employment and upgrade training for incumbent workers. Industry partners may also provide resources that help sustain career pathways.

Workforce Investment System

The Workforce Investment System which includes state and local Workforce Investment Boards and One-Stop Career centers oversees talent and professional development resources that support the preparation of a region's unemployed and underemployed population. Along with education partners, the Workforce Investment System serves as information and relationship brokers. The One-Stop Career Centers connect a wide array of federal programs and community resources into a single access point for both business and job-seekers. Overall, the Workforce Investment System is responsible for integrating the career pathways framework into other public sector investments.

Economic Development

Economic Development agencies may play a number of different roles in building a competitive workforce through career pathways collaboratives. First, they are a source of economic information during the economic and gap analysis to drive the strategic planning phase and throughout the planning and implementation to ensure that collaboration partners are made aware of plant closings or new employers entering a particular region. These partners may also offer access to their network of employer contacts that can support the collaboration or hire student participants. In addition, Economic development partners may promote and market the career pathways framework and other competitive workforce

strategies as they attract new businesses to the region and offer funding or in-kind contributions to support the system.

Community-Based Organizations and Social Service Agencies

Community-based organizations and social services agencies often provide recruitment and support services to individuals isolated from post-secondary education and career opportunities. They can assess candidates, supply case management services to individuals and connect them to health care, child care, transportation or other needed services. Additionally, these organizations may serve as a site for a community college or adult basic education programs to effectively bring the training to the students.

State Agencies

Agency leaders and policymakers may support competitive workforce strategies and career pathways from a state-wide perspective. They may provide a statewide vision, engage and support regional and local players, work to align policies and programs among various state agencies and provide funding for the planning and implementation of the career pathways framework. They may also establish parameters for measuring the performance of a career pathways system and help align its goals and outcomes to other state policies and investments.

Regional Foundations

Regional foundations throughout the country are becoming involved in competitive workforce strategies and career pathways initiatives. They often play a convening role, provide support for planning, and support capacity building. As a collaboration matures, private foundations may be helpful in funding documentation, evaluation and dissemination.

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