



Frequently Asked Questions: Transitions and Career Pathways

1) What is a Career Pathway?

The *Career Pathway Toolkit* developed by the US Department of Labor defines a career pathway as a clear sequence of education coursework and/or training credentials aligned with employer-validated work readiness standards and competencies. Career pathways offer a more efficient and customer-centered approach to workforce development because they structure intentional connections among employers, adult basic education, support service providers, occupational training, and postsecondary education programs and design the systems to meet the needs of learners and employers.¹

Career pathways programs are designed to serve a diverse group of learners such as: adults, youth, dislocated workers, veterans, individuals with a disability, public assistance recipients, new immigrants, English language learners, and justice-involved individuals. The Workforce and Innovation and Opportunity Act now codifies the essential elements of career pathways into law.² Providers may also offer guided life and literacy skill pathways to meet student needs

2) Our college has been approved by the State Board to offer Basic Skills Plus. Do we need to have new Basic Skills Plus Career Pathways approved by College and Career Readiness in the System Office?

Colleges that are approved for Basic Skills Plus and want to offer a new career pathway(s), should submit pathways approved by their College to College and Career Readiness using the online Basic Skills Plus Registry. The Pathways will be reviewed and accepted by College and Career Readiness and included in the list of current Career Pathways. Contact Cassandra Atkinson, atkinsonc@nccommunitycolleges.edu for assistance in accessing the Online Registry. Colleges are encouraged to continue to use the career pathway template and map as planning tools during discussions with their implementation team members, employers and other partners for marketing and recruitment purposes. College and Career Readiness will maintain and publish a list of Basic Skills Plus Career Pathways by Career Cluster.

3) Which credentials should be included in a Career Pathway?

Community Colleges, community-based organizations, and employer partners work to build a workforce that has the skills needed for the jobs and occupations in their county and region. It is important to include nationally and industry recognized credentials in career pathways because they reflect the alignment of the skills and training taught to the requirements of available industry. First or occupational-entry level credentials, local and national credentials are essential for helping individuals

¹ Career Pathways Toolkit: A Guide for System Development, US Department of Labor, Contract # DOL141RQ20748.

² Career Pathways Toolkit: A Guide for System Development, US Department of Labor, Contract # DOL141RQ20748.

gain employment. Providing additional avenues for more students to complete micro-credentials, industry-recognized credentials, and degrees is critical to their career advancement and is particularly relevant to adults with high school diplomas or some college credits.³ Pathways that lead to a series of stackable credentials tend to offer more long-term benefits for students.

4) Are developmental courses required as part of the pathway? No. Providers should design pathways according to the needs of the learner, local job demand and within the policies and requirements of their organization. Many pathways do not require developmental courses. Discuss required or prerequisite courses for entry level course work with instructional partners to ensure the needs of students will be met.

5) What kinds of support services should be provided for students in pathways?

Providers should plan to offer both academic support and non-academic or personal support to students. Academic support is the instruction and training that is given to students in addition to or outside of regular classes in the academic subjects. These supports may include tutoring, writing labs or supplemental instruction and office hours advising arranged to give students help with course work. Non-academic or personal support vary according to students' needs and circumstances. Support services needs for students are typically discovered during orientation, advising and counseling sessions with students. These services are broad and may include transportation, daycare, personal counseling, financial issues, job search or any of a host of other ways we help students with problems outside of class. You may list any support services that you have arranged to offer to students whether you provide them directly or through a campus or community partner. These support services help ensure successful student outcomes.

6) How should Basic Skills and occupational faculty work to benefit students?

Collaboration and cooperative planning of instructional content on an ongoing basis will help ensure integrated instruction. Instructional teams can work together to plan curricula, syllabi, lessons, and participate as a team in staff development and professional development. Employer engagement is a key opportunity for collaboration among instructional faculty and coordinators.

CAREER PATHWAY TOOLS

The Basic Skills Plus career pathway template and example career pathway maps are provided as planning and resource tools for colleges and providers. College and Career Readiness staff in the NC Community Colleges System are available to assist colleges in acquiring teaching, learning and career pathway development strategies.

<http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/college-and-career-readiness/transitions-and-career-pathways>

³ *Making Skills Everyone's Business: A Call to Transform Adult Learning in the United States*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career Technical and Adult Education, February 2015