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.  

Career pathway programs make it easier for students to earn industry-recognized credentials; participate in flexible education and training opportunities that are provided; and attain market identifiable skills that can transfer into work. Career pathways offer comprehensive education and training programs suited to meet the needs of working learners and non-traditional students. Career pathways programs are designed to serve a diverse groups 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.  

Providers may offer life skills pathways and career pathways to meet student needs. Providers should review the career pathway criteria requirements of various funders and partners: Basic Skills Plus, NC Works Certified Career Pathways, Ability-to-Benefit and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to ensure compliance as requirements may vary in purpose and scope.

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?

After July 1, 2015, approved Basic Skills PLUS programs, do not need to submit requests for approval of new career pathways to the System Office. Colleges that are approved for Basic Skills Plus and want to offer a new career pathway(s), should notify College and Career Readiness by sending an email to adultliteracy@nccommunitycolleges.edu.

Identify in the email the new career pathway using the program title and code (curriculum) or course title and ID Number (continuing education) as listed in the Combined Course Library. Contact your curriculum and continuing education partners, or Cassandra Atkinson, atkinsonc@nccommunitycolleges.edu if you need assistance locating the correct program title or code. Colleges are encouraged to continue to use the career pathway template and map for planning and during discussions with partners.

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and 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-based and employer partners work to build a workforce that has the skills needed for the jobs and occupations in their area. 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 such as high school equivalency and career readiness certificate (CRC) credentials are essential for helping workers gain employment. Providing more 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. Pathways that lead to a series of stackable credentials tend to offer more long-term benefits for students.

4) **What are essential steps to planning or starting a career pathway?**

Colleges are encouraged to discuss career pathway plans with all internal partners—curriculum, continuing education, student services, workforce development staff as well as external partners—employers, chamber of commerce, workforce development boards, community based, and nonprofit organizations. Other suggestions include:

- Use occupational data analyses with internal and external partners to identify high demand jobs in the local area and region.
- Select career pathways that provide instruction and training in alignment with local workforce demand in cooperation with workforce development staff, employers and instructional staff in your organization.
- Plan student and instructional services to be offered with partners using available curriculum and continuing education courses aligned with approved programs of study.
- Develop contextualized and integrated curricula, lesson plans, and work-based learning activities using collaborations between Basic Skills and occupational faculty (curriculum and continuing education).
- Develop accelerated Basic Skills courses according to student learning needs in reading, math, and writing aligned to the skills requirements in postsecondary, entry level occupational courses and NC Adult Education Content Standards.
- Review and evaluate student outcomes to determine if desired results are being achieved.

5) **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

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entry level course work with instructional partners to ensure the needs of students will be met.

6) **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 help 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 varies 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 results.

7) **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 Office are available to assist colleges in acquiring teaching and learning strategies, labor market and occupational data analysis. Colleges are not required to submit completed pathway templates and maps to College and Career Readiness but are encouraged to use these tools to document their pathway program, courses, services, partnerships and credentials that may be earned through the career pathway sequence of courses. [http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/college-and-career-readiness/transitions-and-career-pathways](http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/college-and-career-readiness/transitions-and-career-pathways)