# CAREER PATHWAYS

A career pathway is a series of articulated educational and training programs and services that enables students, often while they are working, to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in a given industry or occupational sector. Each step on a career pathway is designed explicitly to prepare students to progress to the next level of employment *and* education. Career pathways target jobs in industries of importance to local economies. They are designed to create both avenues of advancement for workers, job seekers, and new labor market entrants and a supply of qualified workers for local employers.

Because of their multifaceted role in providing low-cost and convenient education and training for employment, degree preparation, and remedial education for those without the requisite basic skills for postsecondary learning, community colleges play a linchpin role in career pathways. In many parts of the country, community colleges have traditionally not worked closely with local workforce and economic development agencies. In the career pathways model, regional partnerships among education, workforce, and economic development agencies, as well as with social service providers and labor and employer groups, help to ensure that investments in education and training pay off for the region's economic vitality.
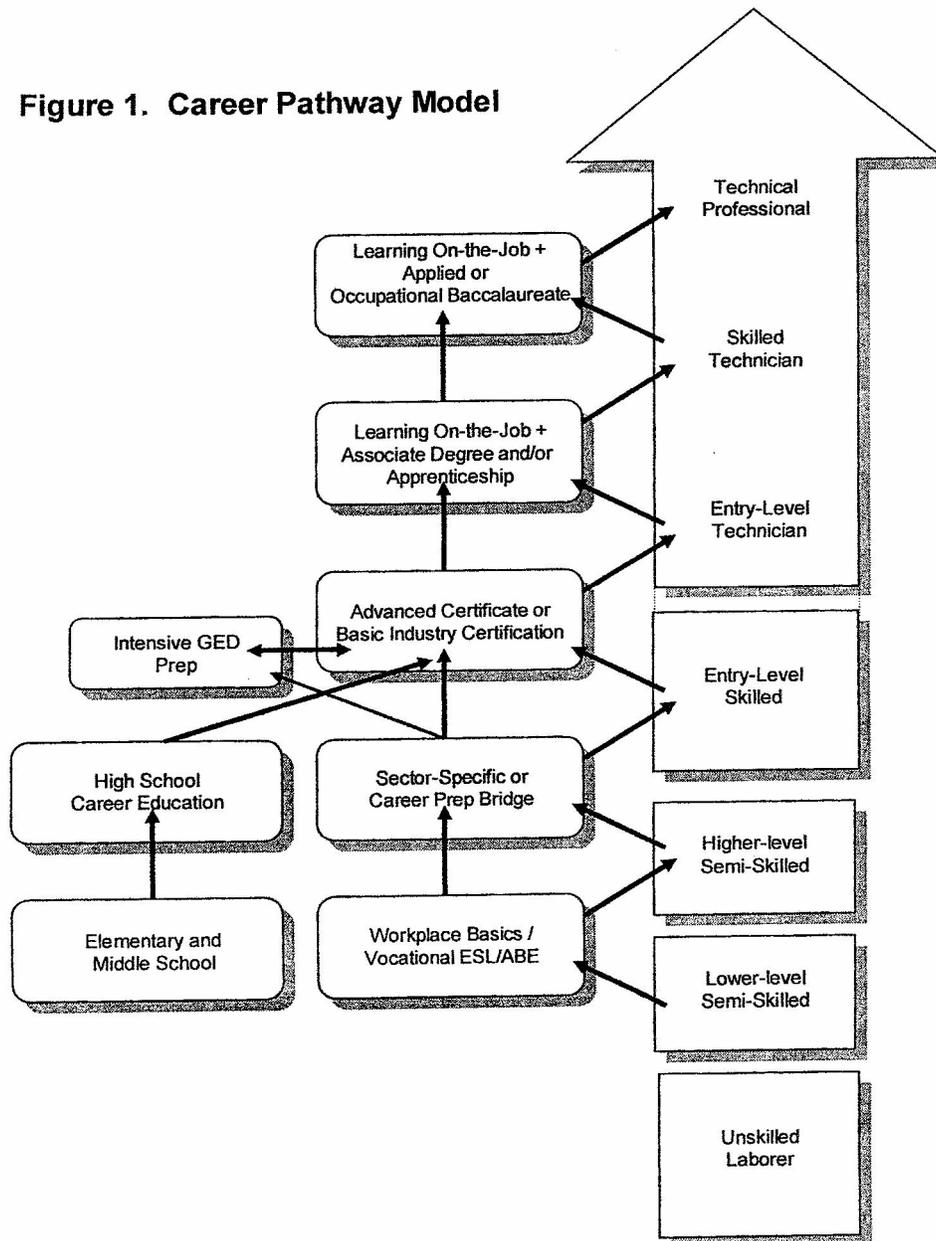
Other key features of career pathways include:

✓ Effective use of labor market data to understand the dynamics of regional labor markets and the implications for program design.

✓ "Road maps," jointly produced by educators, workforce professionals, and employers showing the connections between education and training programs and jobs in a given industry or occupational sector at different levels.

✓ Easy articulation of credits across educational institutions and clear connections among remedial, academic, and occupational programs within institutions to enable students to progress "seamlessly" from one level to the next and earn credentials while improving their career prospects.

✓ Curricula defined in terms of competencies required for jobs and further education at the next level and, where possible, tied to industry skill standards, certifications, or licensing requirements.

✓ Emphasis on "learning by doing" through class projects, laboratories, simulations, and internships.

✓ Programs offered at times and places (including workplaces) convenient to working adults and structured in small modules or "chunks," each leading to a recognized credential, to allow learners to work while they are enrolled in school and to enter and exit education as their circumstances permit.

✓ "Wrap-around" support services, including career assessment and counseling, case management, childcare, financial aid, and job and further education placement.

✓ Outreach to middle and high schools to prepare and motivate students, beginning as early as possible, for postsecondary education and careers.

✓ "Bridge programs" for educationally disadvantaged youths and adults that teach basic skills like co9mmunication, math, and problem solving in the context of training for advancement to better jobs and postsecondary training.

✓ "Blending" of funding from both public and private sources, such as Workforce Investment Act; Temporary Aid to Needy Families; state, federal financial aid and employer tuition reimbursement; and sharing of costs among partners to provide the education and support services needed at each level cost-effectively.

Figure 1 shows how career pathways provide stepping stones to postsecondary education and career-path employment for individuals at various levels of readiness for careers, including for youths and educationally disadvantaged adults. Tables 1a and 1b summarize the components of career pathway programs at each level for adults and youth respectively. At each point along these pathways, the objective is to prepare students to move to the next level and motivate them to advance by exposing them to the opportunities available in terms of both education and employment.

Source:        Workforce Strategy, Inc.
               April 2005

# Figure 1. Career Pathway Model

Technical Professional

Learning On-the-Job +
Applied or
Occupational Baccalaureate

Skilled Technician

Learning On-the-Job +
Associate Degree and/or
Apprenticeship

Entry-Level Technician

Advanced Certificate or
Basic Industry Certification

Intensive GED Prep

Entry-Level Skilled

High School Career Education

Sector-Specific or Career Prep Bridge

Higher-level Semi-Skilled

Elementary and Middle School

Workplace Basics / Vocational ESL/ABE

Lower-level Semi-Skilled

Unskilled Laborer

Note: See Figure A1 and Table A1 in Appendix A for summary
      description of the characteristics, requirements, sample job titles,
      and wages of jobs at each of the levels indicated in this diagram.

Source:     Workforce Strategy, Inc.
            April 2005

# Table 1a. Career Pathway Program Features for Adults

| Program Level | Minimum Requirements | Content / Features |
|---|---|---|
| **Applied Baccalaureate** | • H.S. diploma or GED<br>• A.A.S. or equivalent (for cc transfer students)<br>• Pass college placement exams | • Applied technical fundamentals<br>• General education core<br>• Project learning<br>• Career exposure/planning<br>• Internships/coop education |
| **Associate of Applied Sciences** | • Pass college placement exams<br>• $\geq 10^{th}$ grade reading + math<br>• H.S. diploma or GED (to complete) | • Applied technical fundamentals<br>• General education core<br>• Project learning<br>• Career exposure/planning<br>• Internships/coop education |
| **Advanced Certificate** | • Pass college entrance exams<br>• $\geq 10^{th}$ grade reading + math<br>• H.S. diploma or GED (to complete) | • Applied technical fundamentals<br>• Project learning<br>• Industry exposure/career planning<br>• Career success skills |
| **Intensive GED** | • $\geq 8^{th}$ grade reading + math<br>• Desire to earn GED | • Assessment to target weaknesses<br>• Intensive tutoring and CAI focused on weaknesses<br>• GED writing skills<br>• Test-taking strategies |
| **Sector–Specific Bridge** | • $\geq 8^{th}$ grade reading + math<br>• Stable work history<br>• Demonstrated motivation<br>• Drug free<br>• Desire to enter specific field | • Applied communication + math + problem-solving + computers<br>• Technical fundamentals (sector-specific)<br>• Career/college planning (sector-specific)<br>• Job shadowing and internships<br>• Career/college success skills<br>• Test taking skills<br>• Computer-assisted basic skills instruct.<br>• College placement assistance |
| **Career Prep Bridge** | • $\geq 6^{th}$ grade reading or $\geq$ ESL Level 5<br>• Stable work history<br>• Desire to pursue postsecondary training, but unsure of field | • Applied communication + math+ problem-solving + computers<br>• Career/college planning<br>• Career/college success skills<br>• Test taking skills<br>• Computer-assisted basic skills instruct.<br>• College placement assistance |
| **Workplace Basics**<br>(Vocational ESL/ABE) | • 5th–$6^{th}$ grade reading (native English speakers)<br>• ESL Levels 3–4 (non-native speakers)<br>• Desire to advance in job | • Applied basics: communications + math + problem-solving<br>• Job/life success skills<br>• Intro. to computers<br>• Computer-assisted basic skills instruct.<br>• Job placement assistance |

# Table 1b.  Career Pathway Program Features for Youth

| Stage of Technology Career Preparation | Objectives | Sample Actions/Programs for Achieving Objectives |
|---|---|---|
| **Grades 11–12:** Postsecondary Preparation + Technology Career Planning | • All students are prepared and *motivated* for postsecondary education and training.<br><br>• Students enroll in postsecondary education *before* they graduate from high school.<br><br>• Students continue to learn about work through part-time and summer jobs—they are motivated to work hard in school by desire to advance beyond low-wage, dead-end jobs. | • Advanced courses in math, science, and technology—heavy use of labs and projects<br><br>• Dual high school–college credit programs<br><br>• Advanced Placement courses<br><br>• Capstone projects<br><br>• College exposure, planning, and placement assistance for all students<br><br>• Career exposure—work site visits, guest speakers, job shadowing—and planning<br><br>• Short-term, substantive "internships" in technology intensive during school and summer<br><br>• Part-time and summer jobs |
| **Grades 7–10:** Academic Foundation + Technology Career Exploration | • Students begin to think about how their own skills and interests fit with potential careers.<br><br>• Students develop education plans that will lead them in the direction of their career interests.<br><br>• Students develop applied math, science, and technology skills that are the foundation for career-long learning.<br><br>• Students learn about the world of work and develop strong work habits through part-time jobs. | • Foundation courses in math, science, and technology—heavy use of labs and projects<br><br>• Computer games and simulations<br><br>• Class projects<br><br>• Technology (e.g., robotics) competitions<br><br>• Career exploration—guest speakers, work site visits |
| **Grades 1–6:** Technology Awareness | • Students learn how to use computers<br><br>• Students use computers to enhance academic learning<br><br>• Students become aware of technology in the world around them and how technology affects their lives. | • Hands-on technology projects<br><br>• Computer games and simulations<br><br>• Community learning activities |

Source:   Workforce Strategy, Inc.
April 2005