

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 39-11
	DATE April 17, 2012

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARD CHAIRS
ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER MANAGERS
STATE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING DIRECTORS
WIA SECTION 166 GRANTEES
JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTORS
ETA REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS
ALL DISCRETIONARY GRANTEES

FROM: JANE OATES
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Release and Availability of Career Pathways Technical Assistance Resources

1. **Purpose.** To announce the availability of technical assistance resources for States, local areas, and tribal entities developing Career Pathway systems.
2. **Background.** Career Pathway programs offer a clear sequence of education coursework and/or training credentials aligned with employer-validated work readiness standards and competencies. As part of the Department of Labor's (the Department) focus on increasing credential attainment and improving access to training opportunities for disadvantaged populations, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) launched the Career Pathways Initiative in June 2010. This initiative offered 11 grantees (nine states and two tribal entities) training, peer to peer learning and the latest research and best practices to help create well articulated and sustainable career pathway systems. The initiative also produced a diverse collection of resources and materials for the broader workforce investment system to use in creating successful career pathways initiatives.

The *Career Pathways Initiative* identified six key activities that state, local and tribal policy-makers can undertake to support the development of successful career pathway systems. Career Pathways systems align major education, training, and health and human services programs to meet the skill needs of students, jobseekers, and workers; and the skill requirements of employers in high-demand industries and occupations. Career pathways systems offer a clear sequence of education and training courses and credentials that are built around sector strategies, stackable educational/training options, contextualized learning, accelerated education, industry-recognized credentials and intensive wraparound services to meet the needs of youth and adults who are often working learners.

The six key activities are based on the experiences of states and local areas that have made significant advances in the development of career pathways systems and were further refined over the period of the Initiative to incorporate feedback from state, local, and tribal practitioners as well as subject matter experts in the area of career pathways. They are:

1. **Build Cross-Agency Partnerships:** Partnerships are at the heart of career pathways and are essential to making them successful. Key cross agency partners at the local and state levels must be engaged, agree to a shared vision, and gain support from political leaders. Along with employers, State and local partners include, but are not limited to, workforce investment boards, community colleges, adult basic education providers, human services, economic development and community-based organizations and workforce intermediaries.
 2. **Identify Industry Sector and Engage Employers:** Career pathways systems are designed using real-time labor market information and active employer involvement to ensure that training and education programs meet the skill competency needs of local employers.
 3. **Design Education and Training Programs:** Career pathways provide a clear sequence of education courses and credentials that meet the skill needs of high-demand industries. Key program design features include contextualized curricula, integrated basic education and occupational training, career counseling, support services, assessments and credit transfer agreements that ease entry and exit and promote credential attainment.
 4. **Identify Funding Needs and Strategies:** Because career pathways approaches blend and align services from different government agencies to support an individual's successful completion, innovative funding strategies that blend funds from a variety of public and private sources are essential.
 5. **Align Policies and Programs:** Career pathways programs require significant alignment among workforce, education, and human services to ensure that an individual can move seamlessly from school to work and earn in-demand credentials. States, localities and tribal entities will need to examine whether administrative or legislative policy changes are necessary to help individuals participate in programs, enable blended funding, or support the professional development of staff necessary to support career pathways approaches.
 6. **Measure System Change and Performance:** Career pathways initiatives define desired system and program outcomes; establish how data will be collected, stored, tracked and shared; and analyze data and assess progress made toward achieving outcomes.
3. **Project Resources.** A diverse collection of resources and materials has been compiled by ETA to help states and local areas develop effective career pathways initiatives. The following resources are available through the Career Pathways Community of Practice located at <https://learnwork.workforce3one.org>:

- A **Joint Letter of Support** from the Assistant Secretaries of the Employment and Training Administration, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, and the Administration for Children and Families encourages states and local areas to align resources that support integrated service delivery across Federal and state funding streams and calls for improved collaboration and coordination to support career pathways systems for youth and adults.
- A graphic depiction of the **Career Pathways Graphic Framework** provides an overview of the six key elements necessary for developing career pathways systems and includes key steps involved with achieving system component. The framework is available for download at <https://learnwork.workforce3one.org/view/2001126660947850297/info>.
- The **Career Pathways Community of Practice** is ETA's professional development forum for practitioners and policymakers. The Web site features career pathways tools and resources, blog postings from subject matter experts, and national news relating to career pathways. The community can be viewed at <https://learnwork.workforce3one.org/page/home>.
- The **Implementing Career Pathways Train-the-Trainer PowerPoint**, available for download at <https://learnwork.workforce3one.org>, provides an introduction to career pathways and step-by-step guidance to promote career pathways as a successful strategy in the workforce investment system. The tool is designed to help states and local areas build awareness and buy-in for career pathways systems.
- The **Career Pathways Toolkit**, available for download at <https://learnwork.workforce3one.org>, offers a clear and user-friendly road map for administrators, practitioners, and policymakers developing career pathway systems at state, regional, or local levels. It details the Six Key Elements Framework, highlights promising practices, and provides tools designed to support visioning and strategic planning.
- The **Career Pathways Toolset** assists teams in forming and implementing career pathways initiatives at the State and local levels. These process tools help teams assess readiness, identify gaps, and plan next steps. The tools are available online at <http://learnwork.workforce3one.org>. The toolset includes:
 - Readiness Assessment Tool
 - Program Design Flow Chart
 - Career Pathways Road Map
 - Credential Asset Mapping Tool
 - Next Steps Action Planning Tool
 - Occupational Credential Worksheet
 - Service Mapping Tool

- A newly issued ETA Policy Paper - **The Promise of Career Pathways Systems Change and Initiatives** – provides examples of state and local workforce investment systems that are centrally involved in the development of career pathways in their states and regions; discusses the benefits for workforce boards that can come from such investment, and the value of having workforce systems at the table; and describes specific investments of resources, time, and leadership that state and local workforce boards have committed to build effective career pathway system. It is available for download at www.learnwork.workforce3one.org.
 - The **Career Pathways Webinar Series** shares valuable perspectives on career pathways, building cross-agency partnerships, using real-time labor market information, and lessons from grantees. Links to the webinar series can be found on the Community of Practice at <https://www.learnwork.workforce3one.org>.
4. **Action Requested.** States, local areas, and tribal entities are encouraged to use these resources to support their career pathways initiatives and to share this Training and Employment Notice with workforce investment system partners, including employers, community colleges, adult basic education providers, human services, economic development and community-based organizations and workforce intermediaries.
5. **Inquiries.** For more information about the Career Pathways initiative, please visit the Career Pathways Community of Practice at <https://www.learnwork.workforce3one.org> or contact the appropriate Regional Office.