

**Instructions for Small Group Discussion:
Career Pathways
11:45 am – 1:15 pm**

- 11:45 Find a lunch and read through the discussion questions and mini case study
- 12:00 Start discussion
- 12:45 Start working on report back questions and final instant polling question for the larger group
- 1:15 Break and return to large group

***Imagine a post-secondary system that is driven by real-time industry needs and can tailor degrees and credentials to meet both worker and business interests.
What would it take to get there?***

Discussion Questions

- What is already underway?
- What is working? And what can be expanded?
- What are the current dysfunctions/challenges to making progress?
- What are the biggest opportunities to leverage now, especially Recovery Act-related and the American Graduation Initiative?
- What would a coordinated regional approach look like? Do collaborative opportunities exist already?
- What would the recommended action steps look like?

Framework for reporting back to the larger group (7-8 min)

1. Why should we care – what is the urgency argument? If you were in an elevator with an influential official, what would you say?
2. What is in place now – list the assets – no more than 3 – that can be leveraged?
3. What needs to change? No more than 3 recommended action steps
4. If changes were made to create a regional career pathways approach, what are 3 potential outcomes?
5. Create an instant polling question for the larger group

Mini-Case Study: Career Pathways

“Career pathways” is a particular framework or approach by which regions can better align publicly supported systems and programs to build a knowledge economy workforce customized to the needs of local labor markets. A career pathway is a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector, and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector. Each step on a career pathway is designed explicitly to prepare the participant for 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 current workers, jobseekers and new and future labor market entrants and a supply of qualified workers for local employers. As such, they also serve as a strategy for strengthening the “supply chains” that produce and keep a region’s knowledge workforce up to date.ⁱ

One of the two core goals outlined in the *GO TO 2040* process that was essential to meeting the overarching regional vision is to have an integrated and adaptive career and education pathway system driven by the skill needs of employers and accessible to all workers in the region.

The full range of career and education pathways is not yet developed and, in general, service delivery is inconsistent across the region. In order for the implementation of these new educational pathways to be effective for the region’s workforce and businesses, they should be developed with the intent of forming an integrated and adaptive career pathway system or systems across the region.

There are three corresponding recommendations for the career pathways goal outlined in the *GO TO 2040* Workforce Development Report. Each has specific action steps associated with the recommendation.

1. **Recommendation:** Complete an environment scan of existing career pathways initiatives in the region.

Specifics:

- Convene key workforce, education and labor market experts to map existing pathways initiatives;
- Produce summary of existing efforts in the region;
- Recommend structure and membership of a “pathways” working group described below.

2. **Recommendation:** Establish a cross-system “pathways” working group.

Specifics: *Start from the environmental scan to:*

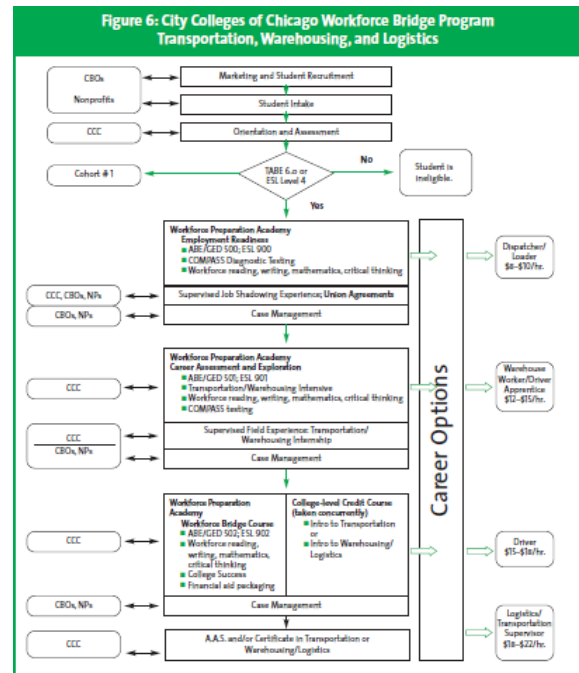
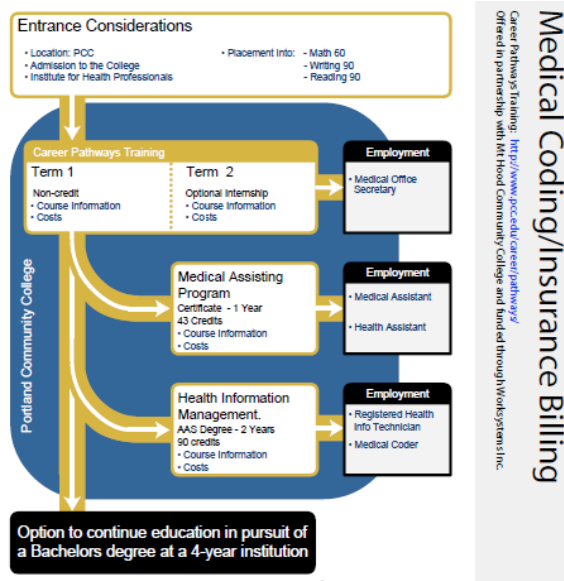
- Determine which populations are not well served currently and what their unmet needs are (for example: basic education, ESL, support services, transportation, etc.);
- Consult with economic developers, industry experts and employers to establish a baseline of skills to be self-sufficient, considering employment opportunities and skill needs;
- Make recommendations for each system’s role in developing and contributing to education and training pipeline;
- Produce an implementation plan for a regional “hub” that will be responsible for an ongoing “mapping” of career pathways for industries and occupations.

3. **Recommendation:** Implement a regional, cross-systems pathways coordinating hub, responsible for ongoing mapping of career pathways for industries and occupations.

Specifics:

- Make sure that existing labor market analysis is available to provide appropriate industry focus for any sectoral initiatives in the region;
- Make sure efforts of each system are linked and/or not duplicative;
- Update and revise career and education pathway “maps” to adjust to changes in labor market, population of job seekers, economic shifts;
- Evaluate performance and effectiveness of career and education pathways and implement accountability measures;
- Focus on short-term strategies that are integrated more closely with work – “employment-based learning”;
- Recommend new strategies based on emerging best practice models (informed by LEADS, Shifting Gears, TJ pilots, bridge programs).

Two graphic examples of career pathways:



¹Jenkins, Davis (AUGUST 2006). *CAREER PATHWAYS: ALIGNING PUBLIC RESOURCES TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT IN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY*. NEW YORK: WORKFORCE STRATEGY CENTER.