

**AGENCY SPECIFIC CONTENT FOR THE NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY 75-412**  
**ILLINOIS TALENT PIPELINE PROGRAM**

**APPENDIX A - Illinois Common Career Pathways Definition and Guidance**

*Introduction to WIOA Career Pathways Definition*

A career pathway means a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that aligns both vertically and horizontally across Secondary Education, Adult Education, Workforce Training and Development, Career and Technical Education, and Postsecondary Education systems, pathways, and programs. Collaborative partnerships with these entities and business and industry, along with human service agencies, corrections, and other community stakeholders, serve as the foundational structure for high-quality and sustainable career pathways. A career pathway also includes multiple entry and exit points to facilitate individuals to build their skills as they progress along a continuum of education and training and advance in sector-specific employment.

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The following guidance should help policymakers and practitioners implement state, regional, and local career pathways. The guidance is meant to clarify how a successful pathway—often comprised of one or more career pathway programs—should operate. This guidance also addresses the career pathway system, which sets the policies and procedures that shape career pathways and can assist with strong pathway development and sustainability. A- G represents elements of the WIOA Career Pathways definition, with added guidance to clarify and provide additional detail for each element.

**(A) Aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the State or regional economy involved;**

Career pathways should:

- Use labor market data, informed by state, regional, and local employers, to design sector-focused programs that meet the needs of the employers in the state, regional, and local economies.
- Regularly and meaningfully engage employers at every stage of pathway development in an interactive, ongoing relationship<sup>1</sup> and encourage employers to assume leadership roles
- Identify the certifications, licenses, and industry-recognized credentials that state, regional, and local employers require and craft programs leading to them.

**(B) Prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships registered under the National Apprenticeship Act.<sup>2</sup>**

Career pathways should:

- Enable lifelong learning that ensures youth and adult participants can gain entry to and advance, as desired, through successive education and training programs, leading to stackable credentials<sup>3</sup> in a given occupational cluster.
- Lead to jobs in increasingly high-skill, high-wage, and/or high-demand industries.
- Ensure access and appropriate services for the targeted populations included in the State of Illinois Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified State Plan.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Meaningful employer engagement” is the process by which State and/or local stakeholders (e.g. training providers, colleges, workforce boards) convene with local and regional industry employers to discuss the skill and credential needs of their workforce and ways in which education and training programs can best prepare individuals.

<sup>2</sup> The Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as the “National Apprenticeship Act”; 50 Stat. 664, chapter 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.).

<sup>3</sup> A stackable credential is part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time and move an individual along a career pathway or up a career ladder.

<sup>4</sup> Priority populations identified in the [State of Illinois Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified State Plan](#) are: Long-term unemployed; Low-income adults; Low literacy adults, including those without a high school diploma; Low-skilled adults; Individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities; Those receiving public assistance; Out-of-school youth; Veterans; Migrant and seasonal farm workers; Re-entry individuals (ex-offenders); English Language Learners; Older individuals; Homeless individuals; Single parents; Youth in the foster system or who have aged out; Displaced homemakers; Veterans with disabilities; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.