



2021 PROCEDURES MANUAL

3/15/2021 Draft v2

The Illinois workNet Center System, an American Job Center, is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. All voice telephone numbers may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment by calling TTY (800) 526-0844 or 711. This workforce product was funded by a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. For more information, please refer to the footer at the bottom of any webpage at illinoisworknet.com.

CHAPTER 2: ESSENTIAL YOUTH CAREER PATHWAYS PROGRAM ELEMENTS



ESSENTIAL YOUTH CAREER PATHWAYS PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board envisions ten success elements for serving opportunity youth. These elements demonstrate the principles, strategies, and criteria in the Illinois' Unified State Plan and how various funding sources may be blended for full regional ownership and sustainability:



For more information, click on the [full report](#) released by the IWIB Disadvantaged Youth Task Force.

1. Partnerships with education, employers, and workforce boards to plan and leverage resources;
2. Business engagement in developing and managing career pathway programs;
3. Credentials, certifications, and/or postsecondary access that result from career pathway programs;
4. High-demand industries and higher skill occupations that meet youth earnings and career goals;
5. Work-based learning opportunities to experience the workplace;
6. Individual career/employment plans for each youth participant;
7. Individual supports available to meet the unique needs of each participant;
8. Contextualized learning and work-based skills that prepare youth for employment;
9. Measurement of results and continuous improvement methodology to enhance program quality; and
10. Sustainability plans that connect the program to broader, long-term employment strategies.

This chapter details the components of a successful youth career pathways program. Best practices, program staff feedback, and customer input shape the tailored deliverables of program elements.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partners include secondary and postsecondary education, employers, workforce development boards, and other organizations plan and commit to leveraging resources to educate, train, support and/or locate employment for individuals.

- Partner roles and relationships are defined.
- Partners take shared ownership in the development, improvement, and outcomes/performance of the pathway programs.
- Partners leverage resources to implement pathway programs.

Grantees should collaborate with key players in their regions to develop a robust, sustainable program. Every partner has a critical role to play. The Grantee is responsible for the overall operation of the program, working in collaboration with the partners.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Employers play a leadership role in developing and managing career pathway programs to ensure the careers are high demand/higher skill at the local and/or state level, content is current, and work-based learning opportunities are integrated throughout the pathway experience.

- Employers participate in regular meetings/discussions about pathway programs.
- Employers share views on local, regional, and state labor market needs related to pathway programs expected job openings and changing skill requirements.
- Employers offer work-based learning experiences to pathway program participants.

For example, the U.S. Department of Labor identified three phases of business engagement for “selling” apprenticeships as a workforce solution. Apprenticeships are just one form of work-based learning as a strategy to a career pathway. These three phases could apply to all career pathway programs.

THREE KEY PHASES OF BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Just as apprenticeship uses a formalized approach to create replicable results, there are steps you can take when approaching businesses about apprenticeship that will ensure replicable successes. These steps fall into three key phases:

- 
RESEARCH & PREPARATION. Recognize the top challenges apprenticeship can help address, use research to identify businesses that could benefit from apprenticeship, keep track of what you learn, know the value of apprenticeship, and prepare for your initial business meeting.
- 
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS. Validate pain points and learn the business’s culture, introduce apprenticeship in the context of existing business practices, and build trust.
- 
GETTING TO COMMITMENT. Address concerns, build organizational buy-in for the apprenticeship model, and bring the right partners to the table.



For more information on each of these phases, refer to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Business Engagement Tools Resource Page: [A Targeted Approach to Apprenticeship](#)

CREDENTIALS, CERTIFICATIONS, AND/OR POSTSECONDARY ACCESS

Career pathway programs lead to the attainment of a recognized post-secondary credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of an apprenticeship, a

license recognized by the State involved or Federal Government, or an associate or Baccalaureate degree with opportunities to obtain advanced standing throughout the pipeline e.g., early college credit, etc.

- Recognized credentials are defined at all stages of the pathway.
- Connections between the pathway credentials are clearly defined including how they can be stacked and built upon for career and educational advancement.
- Opportunities for advanced placement, e.g., early college credit, are available throughout the pathway.

HIGH-DEMAND INDUSTRIES AND HIGHER SKILL OCCUPATIONS

Through collaboration between youth and workforce development staff, customer and professional identify appropriate career goals. Career pathway programs address high demand industries and occupations that meet state, regional, and/or local youth earnings goals and provide career advancement opportunities to higher skill and higher earnings jobs.

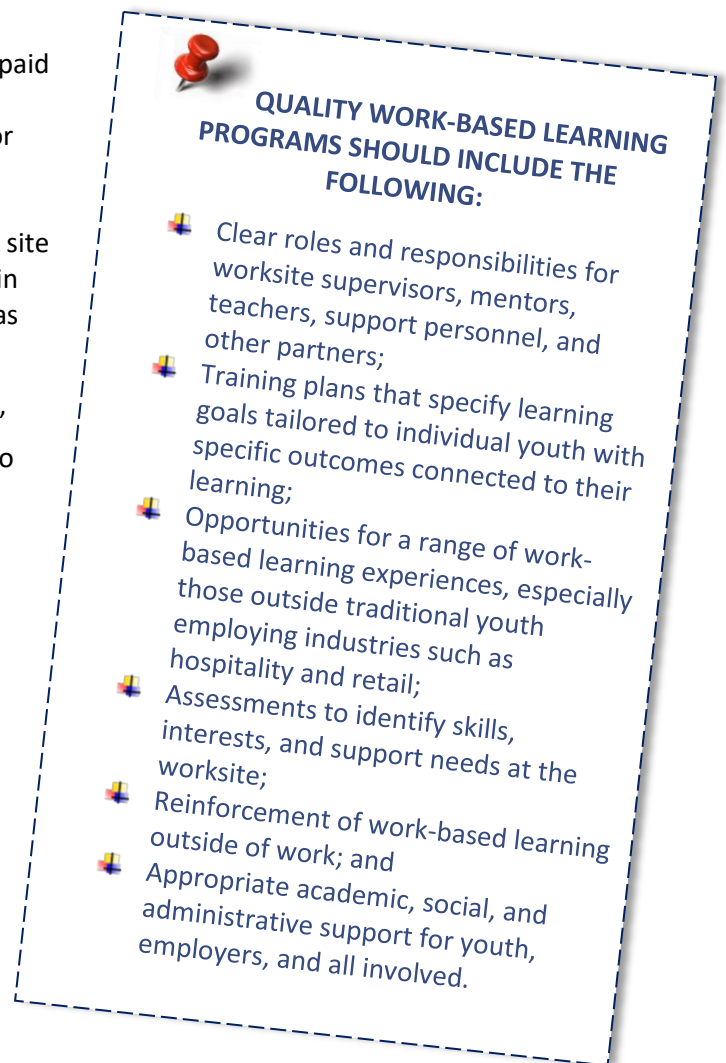
- Labor market information substantiates career pathway program and addresses in-demand industries and occupations.
- Targeted entry-level jobs meet state, regional, and local youth earnings goals.

WORK-BASED LEARNING

Career pathway programs include opportunities to experience the workplace through related paid or unpaid internships, apprenticeships, or other activities. The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth defines work-based learning as a “supervised program sponsored by an education or training organization that links knowledge gained at the work site with a planned program of study. Experiences range in intensity, structure, and scope and include activities as diverse as site visits, job shadowing, paid and unpaid internships, structured on-the-job training, and the more formal work status as apprentice or employee.” Work-based learning experiences have been shown to be one of the strongest predictors of adult employment success for students and youth with disabilities

- A continuum of work-based learning opportunities is available throughout the pathway.
- Work-based learning opportunities are structured with coordination between the business and the service provider, e.g., WDS, College, School, etc.

Below is a depiction of employer involvement on the continuum of employer engagement and work-based learning experiences (*Career Pathways Dictionary*.)



INDIVIDUAL CAREER/EMPLOYMENT PLANS

All enrolled youth will have an Illinois workNet Career Plan, which is developed after completing assessments and creating goals. The assessment results and goals inform the steps participants take to complete their career pathway.



This career plan is a living document and is used as a communication tool between the grantee and enrolled youth to identify the initial plan, provide updates service status, and obtain youth agreement to the plan.

Individual supports



Grantees must ensure they provide all enrolled participants with a program that offers all 14 Youth Program Elements, either by the Grantee, partners, and/or through referral relationships. The individual services provided to each participant must be based on an assessment(s) and included in the Illinois workNet Career Plan.

The allowable services for youth under WIOA include both training and supportive services. Under TEGL 21-16, DOL provides 14 WIOA youth program elements:



1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and dropout prevention
2. Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services
3. Paid and unpaid work experience
4. Occupational skills training
5. Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation and training for specific occupation
6. Leadership development opportunities
7. Supportive services
8. Adult mentoring
9. Follow-up services
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling
11. Financial literacy education
12. Entrepreneurial skills training
13. Services that provide labor market information
14. Postsecondary preparation and transition activities

CONTEXTUALIZED LEARNING AND ESSENTIAL EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Pathway program instruction relates to real-world, real-life situations and experiences. Application of learning is a primary focus with integrated content of related academics, technical skills, and soft skills.

- Pathway program content integrates related academics with technical skills and soft skills.
- Pathway program addresses work-based skills.
- Pathway instruction is focused on relevant application of related academics.

MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Pathway programs measure results on youth performance and use them to improve outcomes through evidence-based practices to remain responsive to the needs of the pathway participant and the employment community.

- A continuous improvement process is in use with the career pathway programs.
- Processes for 'quick' change/ improvement are in place based on program performance results.
- A data collection and analysis strategy is in place with opportunities to share and discuss information between/among service provide.
- State definition of Measurable Skills Gain.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is one of the priorities of the Youth Career Pathways project. Project, agency, or program sustainability is the goal of creating and successfully launching a project that can continue to generate benefits for an extended period. It should be addressed and considered at the beginning and throughout the life of the project. Different types of sustainability need consideration to ensure the continuation of programming. These include:

1. **Financial Sustainability:** refers to ensuring a steady flow of funds and generating revenue for maintaining and continuing the organizations work.
2. **Institutional Sustainability/Organizational:** refers to ensuring proper working of your organization and institutions that were developed as part of the project.
3. **Programmatic Sustainability:** continues the organization's projects and programs in the absence of donor support.

Developing a plan at the onset of the project that truly addresses these three types of sustainability will assist in program longevity. Comprehensive marketing, outreach, and communication strategies to keep DCEO and local and regional partners informed and involved are key components of such a plan.

Program services and grantee sustainability is beneficial for the community. Customer care must be sustainable. Should services no longer be available or appropriate for a customer, staff should refer individuals to appropriate community resources, including but not limited to:

1. The local America Jobs Center (AJC) or workforce board
2. Other community resources and agency