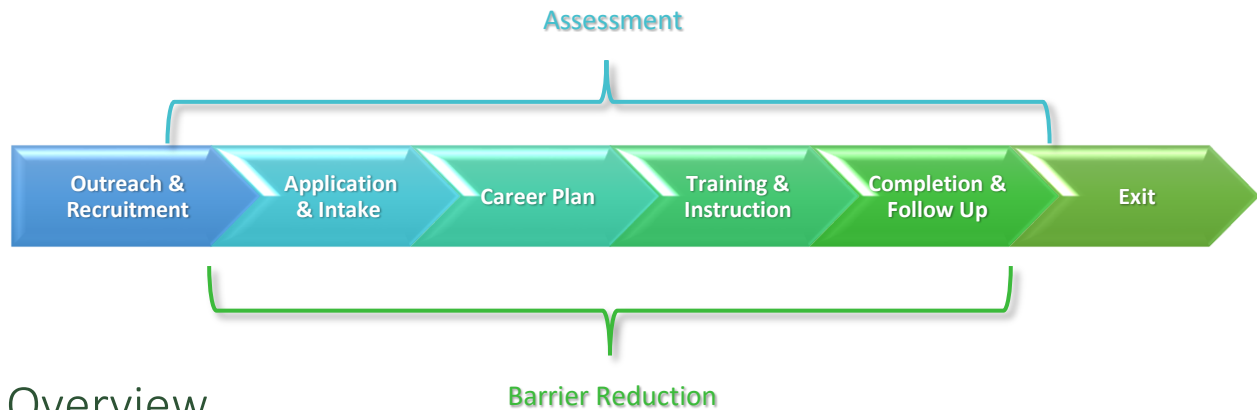


Chapter 5: Intake & Career Planning



Overview

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Utilize a customer-centered service approach.
- Leverage standardized tools and templates to complete the application and intake process.
- Comply with the application and intake requirements in the JTED reporting system.
- Complete tasks related to the intake process, including the Service Needs Assessment.
- Complete the process for developing a customer-centered design Career Plan.

Grantees are responsible for entering each customer's demographic information, eligibility documentation, services, case notes, credentials, employment outcomes, and follow-up activities in Illinois workNet in accordance with DCEO reporting requirements.

Customer-Centered Care

Introduction

In Illinois, **customer-centered service** means designing workforce programs and services around the unique needs, strengths, and aspirations of each customer. Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach, career planners work collaboratively with customers to understand their goals and challenges,

empowering them to make informed choices. This approach ensures that every customer receives personalized support, leading to more meaningful engagement and better long-term outcomes.

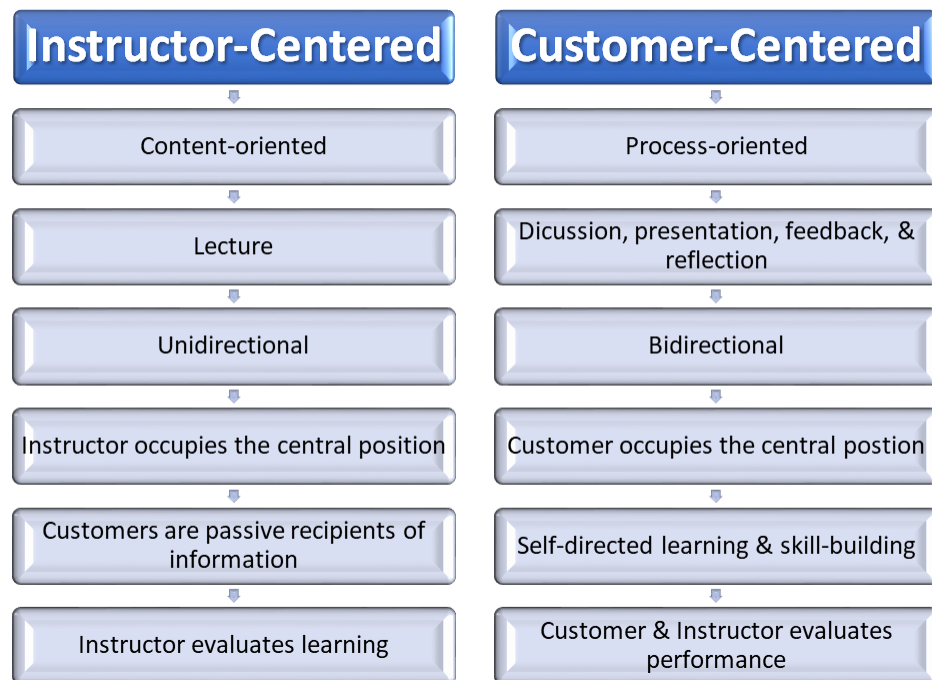
The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is committed to ensuring that workforce development services are as effective and impactful as possible. To that end, grantees are expected to employ a **customer-centered service delivery approach**. This approach centers the customer, recognizing that each individual has unique strengths, needs, goals, and challenges. By working collaboratively with customers, focusing on their strengths, and empowering them to make informed choices, grantees can help them achieve sustainable employment and long-term success.

This shift requires grantees to move away from a one-size-fits-all model and embrace a more flexible, individualized approach. It means actively listening to customers, understanding their perspectives, and tailoring services to meet their specific needs. It also involves connecting them with the holistic support they require to overcome barriers and thrive.

Customer-centered services can increase customer engagement, improve outcomes, and result in a stronger workforce development system overall.

The graphic below provides a comparison of customer-centered versus Instructor-centered workforce development instruction:

Graphic 1: Customer-centered Versus Instructor-centered



Key Elements of a Customer-Centered Approach

There are **seven key elements** of a customer-centered service approach:

- **Individualized Services:**
Recognizing that each customer has distinct circumstances, skills, and barriers. Moving away from a "one-size-fits-all" approach to create customized service plans.
- **Respect and Dignity:**
Treating every customer with respect, empathy, and understanding. Valuing their unique perspectives and experiences.
- **Empowerment and Choice:**
Providing customers with the information and support they need to make informed decisions about their career path and service options.
- **Collaboration and Partnership:**
Working *with* the customer, not just *for* them. Engaging in a shared process of goal setting, planning, and service delivery.
- **Strengths-Based Approach:**
Focusing on the customer's assets, skills, and capabilities, rather than solely on their deficits. Building upon what they *can* do to overcome challenges.
- **Holistic Support:**
Addressing the range of factors that can affect a customer's success including; employment, education, and support services (e.g., childcare, transportation, and housing).
- **Continuous Improvement:**
Regularly seeking and incorporating feedback from customers to improve service delivery and ensure that services are meeting their needs.

Why a Customer-Centered Approach Matters

Adopting a **customer-centered approach** benefits customers, career planners, and the Illinois workforce system as a whole.

Benefits for Customers

- **Increased Engagement:**
When customers feel heard and respected, they are more likely to be actively involved in their own success.
- **Improved Outcomes:**

Services tailored to individual needs are more effective in helping customers achieve their goals.

- **Enhanced Confidence:**
Recognizing and building upon their strengths empowers customers and increases their self-efficacy.
- **Greater Satisfaction:**
Customers who feel valued and supported are more satisfied with the services they receive.
- **Long-Term Success:**
By addressing root causes and empowering individuals, this approach leads to more sustainable employment and economic self-sufficiency.

Benefits for Career Planners

- **Stronger Relationships:**
Building trust and rapport with customers creates more positive and productive working relationships.
- **Increased Job Satisfaction:**
Helping customers achieve their goals is rewarding and contributes to a sense of professional fulfillment.
- **Efficient Service Delivery:**
Understanding individual needs from the outset allows for more targeted and effective use of resources.
- **Increased Completion Rates:**
When customers are engaged and receiving effective support, they are less likely to drop out of the program.
- **Better Communication:**
Customers are more likely to openly communicate their challenges and needs, leading to more effective problem-solving.

Benefits for the JTED Programs

- **Improved Performance:**
Higher customer engagement and better outcomes contribute to the achievement of JTED performance measures.
- **Enhanced Reputation:**

Positive customer experiences enhance the credibility and reputation of the JTED program.

- **Stronger Partnerships:**
A customer-centered approach encourages collaboration with other agencies and community organizations to provide comprehensive support.
- **Optimal Resource Allocation:**
Focusing on individual needs ensures that resources are used effectively and efficiently.

Intake Process (IWN)

Each customer must go through an intake review process which includes consideration of suitability between the customer and the program. Part of intake process is to review and choose whether or not to participate in the program(s) offered by the grantee. Even though a person may have some information about the program, the intake form is a solid way to determine a program match. To determine one's aptness for a program, the online intake form has a series of questions to assess interests, values, preferences, motivations, and abilities.

Once an assessment is completed, grantees have ten (10) working days to complete eligibility and enroll the customer into the program by opening a service in the IWN system. A service must be started to enroll a customer; it is a best practice to open the career planning (Case Management) service in workNet.

Intake Flow:

- Outreach/Recruitment > Application > Eligibility Review > Comprehensive Assessment > Career Plan Development > Enrollment in Illinois WorkNet > Training & Supportive Services

Note: For more information on getting started in the Illinois workNet system, see the JTED Partner Guide: <https://www.illinoisworknet.com/partners/Pages/JTEDPartnerGuide.aspx>

In order to enroll into any program offered, grantees must have the following information for each customer documented in the IWN system.

Eligibility

JTED **program eligibility** can be very dependent on the program design and if there are specific under-represented populations that are targeted to be served. This information will be available in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), however there are general requirements.

Eligibility Questions

1. Are you considered unemployed, under-employed or under-represented based on the below definitions?
2. Are you low to moderate income?
3. Are you authorized to work in the Illinois/United States (JTED customers must be citizens and nationals of the United States, lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens, refugees, asylees, and parolees, and other immigrants authorized by the Attorney General to work in the United States (Sec. 188 (a)(5). Authorized to work in the United States is not required for In-School-Youth, the primary intent in continuing education in a career pathway and not employment.
4. For adult programs are you **18 years or older** (or who will turn 18 years old within the first six months of enrollment)?
5. For youth programs are you an in-school or out of school customer ages **16 to 24**?
6. Do you reside in the State of Illinois?

Table 1: Eligibility Documentation Examples

Documentation	Example
Illinois Residency Example	Driver's License, State ID, or Utility Bill
Income Verification Example	Public Benefits, Pay Stub, or Self-Attestation (if applicable)
Authorization to Work Example	I-9 Documentation
Age Example	Driver's License or Birth Certificate
Barrier Documentation Example	Self-attestation or supporting documentation

Note: Additional information regarding documentation is available in **Chapter 10: Data Management**.

Important Definitions

Unemployed individual is an individual who is without a job, and who wants and is available for work. The determination of whether an individual is without a job, for purposes of this definition, shall be made in accordance with the criteria used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Unemployed individual must include:

- an individual who meets the definition of "unemployed individual" set forth above and is a low-income individual or moderate-income individual; or
- an individual who is currently employed but received a notice of termination or lay-off from their current employer and will no longer be employed within ninety days, and is a low-income individual or moderate-income individual.

Under-employed individual is an individual who is a low-income individual or a moderate-income individual and meets one the following:

- working part-time but desires full-time employment; or
- working in employment not commensurate with the individual's demonstrated level of educational and/or skill achievement; or
- working in employment but would like to increase their skills to obtain a higher wage or promotion.

Under-represented individuals with a barrier to employment or Under-represented individuals is a low-income individual or moderate-income individual:

- who reside in or receive services in a qualified census tract or disproportionately impacted area as defined below; or
- have experienced one or more barriers to employment that are considered risk factors.

Low-Income is an individual who receives or in the past 12 months has received, or is a member of a family household that is receiving or in the past 12 months has received, assistance through:

- Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP);
- Childcare Subsidies through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Program;
- Medicaid;
- National Housing Trust Fund (HTF), for affordable housing programs only;
- Home Investment Partnerships Program, for affordable housing programs only;
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast (SBP) programs;
- Medicare Part D Low-income Subsidies;
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- Head Start and/or Early Head Start;
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC);
- Section 8 Vouchers;
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); or
- Pell Grants; or
- Has income that is at or below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) for the size of their household based on the most recently published poverty guidelines by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); OR has income at or below forty percent (40%) of the Area Median Income for its county and size of household based on data published most recently by the Department of House and Urban Development (HUD).

Below are the current low-income guidelines:

Table 2: 2026 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline	JTED Eligibility 185% of FPG
1	\$15,960	\$29,526
2	\$21,640	\$40,034
3	\$27,320	\$50,542
4	\$33,000	\$61,050
5	\$38,680	\$71,558
6	\$44,360	\$82,066
7	\$50,040	\$92,574
8	\$55,720	\$103,082
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$5,680 for each additional person.		

[Poverty Guidelines / ASPE \(hhs.gov\)](#)

Moderate-Income is an individuals whose income is at or below three hundred percent (300%) of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) of the size of their household based on the most recently published poverty guidelines by Health and Human Services (HHS); or at or below forty percent (40%) of the Area Median Income for its county and size of household based on data published most recently by Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Below are the current moderate-income guidelines:

Table 3: 2026 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline	JTED Eligibility 300% of FPG
1	\$15,960	\$47,880
2	\$21,640	\$64,920
3	\$27,320	\$81,960
4	\$33,000	\$99,000
5	\$38,680	\$116,040
6	\$44,360	\$133,080
7	\$50,040	\$150,120
8	\$55,720	\$167,160
F For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$5,680 for each additional person.		

[Poverty Guidelines / ASPE \(hhs.\)](#)

Documentation to Prove Eligible to Work in the US:

- Enhanced Driver's License/REAL ID
- Birth certificate (original or certified copy issued by a state, county, municipal authority or outlying possession of the United States)
- Certificate of Naturalization (INS Form N550 or N-570)
- Hospital record of birth or baptismal/church record (if place of birth shown)
- U.S. social security card issued by the Social Security Administration (other than a card that indicates not valid for employment)
- U.S. Passport (Unexpired or Expired)
- E-Verify with documentation
- Certificate of U.S. Citizenship (INS Form N560 or N-561)
- Consular Report of Birth Abroad or Certification of Birth
- Certification of Birth Abroad issued by the Department of State (Form FS-240, Form FS-545 or Form DS-1350)
- Alien Registration Card indicating Right to Work
- DD-214 / Report of Transfer or Discharge
- Permanent Resident Card or Alien Registration Receipt Card with photograph (INS Form I-151 or I-551)
- Foreign Passport stamped eligible to work
- Unexpired Foreign Passport, with I-551 stamp or attached INS Form I-94 indicating unexpired employment authorization
- Unexpired Temporary Resident Card (INS Form I-688)
- Unexpired Employment Authorization Document (INS Form I-688A, I-688B, or I766) with or without photograph
- Unexpired Reentry Permit (INS Form I-327)
- Unexpired Refugee Travel Document (INS Form I-571)
- ID Card for use of Resident Citizen in the United States (INS Form I-179)
- Self-attestation on how to meet DACA requirements outlined in – DOL TEGL 02- 14

Note: Another verification source list is the “List of Acceptable Documents Used for INS Form I-9 to Determine Identity and Employment Eligibility”. One verification source from List A OR one verification source from List B AND one verification source from List C are required to determine Identity and Employment Eligibility) [Employment Eligibility Verification / USCIS](#)

Note: Selective Service is NOT an eligibility factor, but agencies should assist the customer with registration, if required. Confirm or Register for Selective Service: www.sss.gov

Note: *Qualified Census Tracts and Disproportionately Impacted Areas:* Illinoisworknet.com/qcTdiamap

DCEO acknowledges that areas with the highest concentration of low-income individuals often experience disproportionate access to services. While residency in a Qualified Census Tract (QCT) or Disproportionately Impacted Area (DIA) is not an eligibility requirement, grantees are strongly encouraged to prioritize outreach and services to individuals residing in or receiving services within these areas to promote equity.

Qualified Census Tract means a census tract, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, having fifty percent (50%) of households with incomes below sixty percent (60%) of the Area Median Gross Income (AMGI) or having a poverty rate of 25 percent or more.

Disproportionately impacted area are those ZIP Codes that meet at least one of the following poverty-related criteria relative to other ZIP Codes within that region:

- Share of the population consisting of children aged six (6) to seventeen (17) in households with income less than one hundred and twenty-five percent (125%) of the federal poverty level (FPL);
- Share of the population consisting of adults over age sixty-four (64) in households with income less than two hundred percent (200%) FPL;
- Share of the population in households with income less than one hundred and fifty percent (150%) FPL; or
- Share of the population consisting of children ages five (5) and under in households with income less than one hundred and eighty-five percent (185%) FPL.

Comprehensive Assessment Procedures

Overview

A **comprehensive assessment** is the foundation for understanding a customer's employment goals, existing skills, career readiness, and any barriers to employment. Assessment is an ongoing, individualized process, not a onetime or one size fits all activity. The purpose is to help customers identify their current skills, determine areas requiring additional training, develop an employment plan, and connect to appropriate services through referrals.

The type and depth of assessment should be based on the customer's circumstances:

- **Category 1 (Adult Focus)** customers receive occupational skills training along with work experience and supports to access the job market may require comprehensive assessments, while customers receiving skill upgrading with an existing employer may require minimal assessment.
- **Category 2 (Youth Focus)** customers needing a GED or High School Equivalency may require basic skills assessments.

Required Assessment Areas

At minimum, the **assessment process** must be appropriate for the customer and address the following areas to inform the **Career Plan**:

- Employment goals
- Interest and skills inventory
- Essential employability skills
- Basic skills deficiency
- Digital and financial literacy
- Barriers to employment
- Suitability for the desired training program
- Review of training options aligned with interests and skills
- Employer assessments (as applicable)
- Determination of referrals

Assessments must evaluate and identify the customer's suitability when developing employment goals, achievement objectives, and the combination of services needed to address barriers.

Use of Assessment Results

Information gathered from the comprehensive assessment is used to develop the **Career Plan**, which outlines the steps the customer must complete to transition successfully from training to employment.

Once assessments are administered:

1. Results must be reviewed and documented.
2. Information must be entered into IWN by the grantee.
3. Additional assessments should be administered as needed based on the analysis of results.

Guidance on Selecting Basic Skills Assessment

To support grantees in choosing appropriate **basic skills assessments**, a list of available assessments and brief descriptions of their functions is provided separately. Grantees may use industry-recognized, educational, or locally developed assessment tools that appropriately evaluate participant readiness, interests, skills, and barriers.

Table 4: Assessment Type and Summary

Type of Assessment	Summary of Assessment
CASAS Goals	CASAS Goals will determine the basic academic level (Reading & Math) for customers. It is available in Spanish and is administered online. The results include a narrative assessment on the individual's skills.
TABE 11 & 12	TABE will determine the basic academic level (Reading & Math) for customer s. It is available in Spanish and is administered online and through a paper copy.
Casey Life Skills	The Casey Life Skills Assessment which is traditionally used for youth in foster care is a free tool that assesses the behaviors and competencies youth need to achieve their long-term goals. It aims to set youth on their way toward developing healthy, productive lives. It also highlights life skills and interest of the customer.
Best/Best Plus	Best/Best Plus is a face-to-face oral interview designed to assess the English language proficiency of adult English language learners in the United States.

Assessments-[Illinois workNet Home](#)

While one of four formal assessments may be used (the TABE ([Test of Adult Basic Education](#)), CASA Goals ([Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System](#)), or [BEST and/or BEST Plus](#)), it is common practice to use the **TABE** to determine proficiency in math and reading.

To ensure both consistency in processes and validity in identifying appropriate instructional levels, all staff members administering assessments are required to have participated in the online training offered by the **Illinois Community College Board Adult Education Professional Development Network (PDN)** for any assessment test they will be administering. In addition to professional development for face-to-face assessments, the PDN developed online training courses for remote proctoring of assessments.

Professional development is available for administering the TABE 11&12 and CASAS GOALS (Reading and Math) tests for English speaking individuals and the BEST Literacy™, BEST Plus™ 2.0, or CASAS Life and Work Reading for English Language Learners can be found on the Illinois Learning, Educational and Academic Resource Network (iLearn).

While the above list of assessments is provided as a resource, each grantee has the option to use their own assessments or industry-recognized assessments to assist customers.

Suitability Determination

Suitability involves working with the customer to:

- Align career goals with interests, skills, and abilities
- Review occupational profiles and employment outlooks for the selected occupation, including wages, required training, and job duties
- Explore the career services needed to achieve employment goals
- Research training services required to meet employment goals, including:
 - Preferred training delivery method (classroom, virtual, hands-on)
 - Cost and length of the training program
 - Work based learning opportunities (e.g., Registered Apprenticeships, On-the-job Training, Transitional Jobs, work experience)
- Identify supportive services and barrier reduction needs

Universal Referral System and Guide

The **Universal Referral System** under Illinois workNet will be a shared, statewide tool that allows workforce partners to consistently identify needs, make referrals, and track connections across programs and agencies. It is designed to streamline intake and referrals, reduce duplication, improve coordination between providers, and ensure individuals are connected more quickly to the right services, support, and opportunities, regardless of where they enter the workforce system. DCEO encourages providers to utilize available referral resources within Illinois workNet and partner networks.

Providers should also use the [IWDS Referral Relationship Guide 2025](#) to make informed, high-quality referrals by understanding available services, eligibility, and referral pathways across the Illinois workforce system, ensuring customers are connected to the most appropriate supports.

Career Planning

Career planning is a customer centered approach used to prepare and coordinate comprehensive employment plans for customers. It ensures access to workforce activities and supportive services throughout program participation and for one (1) year after job placement. Effective career planning is a collaborative, ongoing process, not a onetime event. It is individualized to each job seeker and supports their progress toward employment that leads to self-sufficiency and long-term career growth.

Successful career planning includes assessment, career readiness activities, preparation, training, job matching, job placement, and one (1) year of follow-up services. **Supportive services** and consistent follow-up are essential to customer success.

Key components of career planning include:

- Building rapport with customers
- Communicating effectively

- Identifying appropriate services
- Convening key service providers
- Connecting customers to needed services
- Creating a strong employment plan
- Motivating and encouraging customers
- Following up after appointments
- Monitoring services
- Conducting follow-up after job placement
- Maintaining accurate, timely, and descriptive case records

Career Plan Development

Item to consider when developing a Career Plan include, but may not be limited to:

- Customer engagement
- Application and eligibility determination
- Use of the basic skills screening tool
- Components of effective assessments
- Development of the Career Plan
- Proper service documentation in the case management system
- Importance of case notes and file maintenance

Career Plan Overview

Like the assessment, the **Career Plan** is a living document. It identifies employment and education goals within a **Career Pathway**, outlines objectives, and specifies the combination of services needed for the customer to reach those goals. The Career Plan must be developed collaboratively between the career planner and the customer, with mutually established goals.

Career Plans must:

1. Be developed after the objective assessment is completed
2. Reflect the customer's expressed interests and needs
3. Be signed by the customer
4. Be documented in the approved case management system
5. Be provided to the customer
6. Be stored as a hard copy in the customer file

S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Career Plan Objectives

Career Plans should be written using the **S.M.A.R.T.E.R.** framework:

- Specific

Identify clear short and long-term goals. Specific objectives outline the exact actions the customer must take to achieve their goals.

- **Measurable**
Define how progress will be tracked. Measurable goals include benchmarks that help customers see their progress toward completion.
- **Attainable**
Ensure goals and objectives can realistically be achieved within the agreed upon timeframe.
- **Relevant**
Goals and objectives must directly support what the customer is trying to achieve. Comprehensive and specialized assessments should guide the development of relevant goals.
- **Time Driven**
Establish target dates for progress and completion. Goals should be categorized as short, intermediate, or long-term to maintain accountability.
- **Evaluate**
Regularly review goals, objectives, activities, services, and case notes to assess progress and determine whether adjustments are needed.
- **Reflection and Adjustment**
Encourage customer s to reflect on their progress. If goals change, the Career Plan must be updated and mutually agreed upon.

Final Note

When creating the Career Plan, ensure that all service dates, expectations, and timelines are realistic and aligned with the customer's goals and circumstances.

Elements for A Good Youth Career Plan

Services are assigned to the customer based on the assessment review and goals created. Plans may vary dependent on if the customer is a job seeker, employed but needs a skill upgrade, or a **youth**.

The plan should include one or more services that relates to the fourteen (14) elements for youth. Educational services must include instructional approaches that offer a continuum of skill, grade-level, and developmentally appropriate educational options that connect to career pathways.

Below are the fourteen (14) elements that should be considered when an agency created a successful program:

1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction and dropout prevention strategies that lead to completion of a high school diploma includes services such as providing academic support, helping a customer identify areas of academic concern, assisting with overcoming learning obstacles, or providing tools and resources to develop learning strategies. Dropout prevention strategies intended to lead to a high school diploma include activities that keep a young person in-school and engaged in a formal learning and/or training setting.
2. Alternative secondary school services assist customers who have struggled in traditional secondary education. Dropout recovery services are those that assist customers who have dropped out of school. Both types of services help customers to re-engage in education that leads to the completion of a recognized high school equivalent.

Examples of activities under this program element include the following:

- Basic education skills training
 - Individualized academic instruction
 - English as a Second Language training
 - Credit recovery
 - Counseling and educational plan development
3. Paid and unpaid work experience is a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace and provides customers with opportunities for career exploration and skill development. A work experience may take place in the private for-profit section, the non-profit sector, or the public sector. Work experience for customers include; summer employment and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing, and on-the-job training.
 4. Occupational skills training is an organized program of study that provides specific vocational skills that lead to proficiency in performing actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate, or advanced levels.

Occupational skills training includes the following:

- is outcome-oriented and focused on an occupational goal specified in the individual service strategy for the customer
 - is of sufficient duration to impart the skills needed to meet the occupational goal
 - leads to the attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential
5. Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation and training for a specific occupation element reflects an integrated education and training model and describes how workforce

preparation activities, basic academic skills, and hands-on occupational skills training are to be taught within the same time frame and connected to training in a specific occupation, occupational cluster, or career pathway.

6. Leadership development opportunities encourage responsibility, confidence, employability, self-determination, and other positive social behaviors.

Leadership development includes:

- Exposure to postsecondary educational possibilities
 - Community and service-learning projects
 - Peer-centered activities, including peer mentoring and tutoring
 - Organizational and teamwork training, including team leadership training
 - Training in decision-making, including determining priorities and problem solving
 - Citizenship training, including life skills training such as parenting and work behavior training
 - Civic engagement activities which promote the quality of life in a community
 - Other leadership activities that place customers in a leadership role, such as serving on leadership committees
7. Supportive services enable an individual to participate in WIOA activities (such as, but not limited to, assistance with transportation, childcare, housing, health care, educational testing, and work-related tools).
 8. Adult mentoring is a formal relationship between a youth customer and an adult mentor that includes structured activities where the mentor offers guidance, support, and encouragement to develop the competence and character of the mentee. Mentors should be someone other than a case manager.
 9. Follow-up services are critical services provided following a customer's exit from the program. The goal of follow-up services is to help ensure that customers are successful in employment and/or postsecondary education and training. Follow-up services may include regular contact with a customer's employer, including assistance in addressing work-related problems that arise.
 10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling provide individualized counseling to customers. This program element also includes substance and alcohol abuse counseling, mental health counseling, and referral to partner programs.
 11. Financial literacy education provides customers with the knowledge and skills that they need to achieve long-term financial stability. Financial literacy education encompasses information and activities on a range of topics, such as creating budgets; setting up checking and saving accounts;

managing spending, credit, and debt; understanding credit reports and credit scores; and protecting against identify theft.

12. Entrepreneurial skills training provides the basics of starting and operating a small business. This training helps customers develop the skills associated with entrepreneurship, such as the ability to take initiative, creatively seek out and identify business opportunities, develop budgets, and forecast resource needs, understand various options for acquiring capital and the trade-offs associated with each option, and communicate effectively and market oneself and one's ideas.

Examples of approaches to teaching youth entrepreneurial skills include:

- Entrepreneurship education introducing to the values and basics of starting and running a business, such as developing a business plan and simulations of business start-up and operation
- Enterprise development, which provides supports, and services that incubate and help youth develop their own businesses, such as helping customer s access small loans or grants and providing more individualized attention to the development of viable business ideas
- Experiential programs that provide customers with experience in the day to-day operation of a business

13. Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area and includes; career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services. Labor market information also identities employment opportunities, and provides knowledge of job market expectations, including education and skill requirements and potential earnings. Numerous tools and applications are available that are user-friendly and can be used to provide labor market and career information to youth. These tools can be used to help youth make appropriate decisions about education and careers.

14. Postsecondary preparation and transition activities help customers prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training. These services include helping customers explore postsecondary education options including; technical training schools, community colleges, 4-year colleges and universities, and Registered Apprenticeship programs.

Examples of other postsecondary preparation and transition activities include:

- Assisting youth to prepare for SAT/ACT testing
- Assisting with college admission applications
- Searching and applying for scholarships and grants
- Filling out the proper Financial Aid applications and adhering to changing guidelines
- Connecting youth to postsecondary education program.

Essential Employability Skills

Grantees are expected to incorporate the **Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework** into their programs. The Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework is designed to define and clarify the essential employability skills and provide a standard for the state. The Essential Employability Skills Framework has been cross walked to the [Illinois workNet Job Skills Guide](#). Essential employability skills are those general skills that are required to be successful in all sectors of the labor market and are separate from the technical skills attained in career pathways or academic skills such as math and reading. Programs should integrate employability skills throughout technical training, work-based learning, and supportive service activities rather than treating them as a standalone curriculum.

The framework includes four elements:

1. Personal Ethic:
Integrity, respect, perseverance, and positive attitude
2. Work Ethic:
Dependability and professionalism
3. Communication Skills:
Active listening and clear communication
4. Teamwork:
Critical thinking, effective, and cooperative work

The framework will assist programs with a self-assessment to ensure that technical and basic skills training aligns with the Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework.

The document is divided into two sections:

- **Section one** includes an overview of the Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework. This first part of the assessment focuses on developing program goals related to the framework.
- **Section two** is the Essential Employability Skills Program Self-Assessment. This second part of the assessment addresses exposure to employability skills in classrooms and work-based learning activities and is designed to provide an opportunity to reflect on how instruction is aligned with the framework's definition of essential employability skills.

To access the Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework and Self-Assessment, click on the following link: **Essential Employability Skills Framework: <https://icsps.illinoisstate.edu/cte/cte-resources/2-home/63-illinois-essential-employability-skills-framework>**

Supportive Services

Common Supportive Services

Common supportive services include:

- Transportation
- Childcare
- Technology
- Work Clothing
- Tools
- Licensing Fees
- Testing Fees
- Emergency Assistance
- Housing Referrals

Co-Enrollment

Customers may receive services through multiple workforce programs including; WIOA, SNAP Employment & Training, Adult Education, and other partner programs.

Grantees should document co-enrollment appropriately and coordinate services to avoid duplication.

Regarding Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other public benefits, grantees should assist customers in connecting to available public benefits and community resources, however, should **not** determine eligibility for SNAP or other public assistance programs. Questions regarding benefits eligibility should be referred to the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS).

Case Notes Expectations

Best practice for case notes document requires the following:

- Participant progress
- Barrier reduction
- Supportive services
- Employer engagement
- Training milestones

- Credential attainment
- Employment outcomes

Building Rapport with Customers

Throughout the application and intake process, grantees should strive to build rapport with customers. Building rapport is essential to creating a program culture that fosters belonging, inclusion, and collaboration. Rapport requires a professional relationship that features mutual understanding and connection and cultivates a trusting relationship between grantee staff and customers. Intake meetings are ideal for grantee staff to establish rapport with customers. When customers feel they have trust and can trust those around them, they can better engage in instruction, support services, and career transition.

The ability to build rapport with customers is a skill like any other. It can be learned, and it can be improved over time with dedicated practice.

Below are some examples of how staff can build rapport with customers:

- **Remember Customer Names**
This may seem like a small act, but this can be a significant gesture for many. Remembering customer's names can reinforce a sense of belonging.
- **Be Prepared for Customer Interactions**
Not adequately prepared for instruction or customer meetings may make customers feel that interacting with them is not a priority. Being on time, greeting customers, and having necessary resources available or following up after meetings can strengthen grantee staff connections with customers.
- **Find Common Experiences or Opinions**
Enrolling in a program like will be new for many customers, and finding common connections with customers further promotes positive connections. Find common experiences or opinions to help root the relationship and provide a shared connection. It is also helpful to foster relationships between customers and alums. Perhaps students are from the same neighborhood or school or cheer for the same sports team. These connections do not have to be deeply rooted; revealing them fosters belonging.
- **Actively Listen**
Being fully present in conversations means more than being physically present. Building rapport also requires staff to be mentally and emotionally present as well. Some ways to do this during a conversation are to make eye contact with a customer or ask follow-up questions.

- Be Aware of Body Language

Non-verbal communication is equally, if not more important, than verbal communication.

However, at times, it can be misleading, which can cause a rupture in a staff/ customer movements, facial expressions, vocal tone and volume, and distance from customers. For example, a staff member who is very passionate might move closer to a customer, move their hands more, and increase their vocal volume. Their intention may be to communicate excitement, but it may be interpreted as aggressive.

While rapport building is important during intake, these behaviors and activities must extend to the delivery of all program elements. It is the responsibility of all staff to cultivate a welcoming and trust-based environment.

Additional Resources

See the JTED Partner Guide for:

- Application/Career Assessment
- Needs Assessment