



CAREER PATHWAYS CHECKLIST



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Introduction

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was enacted on July 22, 2014. WIOA calls for cross-system alignment; education and training that is focused on the needs of high-demand industry sectors and occupations; regional collaboration focused on the skill needs of regional economies; and the establishment of career pathways systems that make it easier for all Americans to attain the skills and credentials needed for family-supporting jobs and careers.

Within these systems, career pathways programs offer a clear sequence, or pathway, of education coursework and/or training credentials aligned with employer-validated work readiness standards and competencies.

What is this checklist for?

- This checklist is designed as a work aid to help determine the extent to which a newly developed or existing program meets the requirements for career pathways in section (3)(7) of WIOA.

Who is this checklist for?

- Planners and managers of career pathways programs
- Financial aid counselors and administrators responsible for administering the Ability to Benefit (AtB) provisions of the Higher Education Act (HEA), that allow a student who does not have a high school diploma (or its recognized equivalent) to be eligible for Title IV, HEA student assistance through one of the AtB alternatives if the student is enrolled in an “eligible career pathway program” that aligns to the statutory requirements in WIOA.

How should the checklist be used?

- Review each element (letters A–G) of the WIOA career pathway definition to ensure a program meets the required criteria.
- If the program meets a criterion, check the “Yes” box and describe the evidence demonstrating how the criterion is met.
- If the program does not meet a criterion, check the “No” box and describe what enhancements the program needs to make in order to meet the criterion.

This program meets this criterion:

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	How I know it meets this criterion ...
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	What program changes are needed to meet this criterion ...

CHECKLIST

WIOA Definition of Career Pathway:

(7) CAREER PATHWAY—The term “career pathway” means a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that—

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

Discussion: Career pathways are intended to encourage and expand the number of students, jobseekers, and workers who earn industry-recognized, postsecondary credentials that correspond to the skill needs of employers in high-demand industry sectors. Therefore, career pathways programs should engage employers and other stakeholders in:

- Identifying the skills that are needed by high-demand employers
- Determining how students are deemed proficient in these skills
- Identifying the credentials that employers value in making labor market decisions
- Providing work-based learning opportunities for students
- Advising how to validate curricula and credentials.

This program meets this criterion:

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	How I know it meets this criterion ...
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	What program changes are needed to meet this criterion ...

(B) prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships registered under 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.) (referred to individually in this Act as an “apprenticeship,” except in section 171);

Discussion: Long-term economic trends point to increasing demand for better-educated workers. Career pathway programs include a full range of secondary, adult education, and postsecondary education options, including Registered Apprenticeships.*

Preparing individuals with diverse backgrounds for success requires varied programs that offer a range of education and training strategies, career development support, and wraparound services, including:

- Registered Apprenticeships
- Contextualized instruction
- Integrated education and training
- Career ladders/lattices/roadmaps to careers
- Curriculum built on industry competency models
- Multiple entry/exit points
- Stackable credentials that lead to certificate/degree attainment
- Career navigation and supportive services.

*A Registered Apprenticeship is a formalized and highly structured system of learning that is a combination of on-the-job training and related classroom instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a highly skilled occupation.

This program meets this criterion:

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	How I know it meets this criterion ...
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	What program changes are needed to meet this criterion ...

(C) includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual's education and career goals;

Discussion: Counseling and supportive services are a key component of career pathway programs. It is important for each individual to have an individualized academic and career development plan that shows the unique steps she or he will take to reach her or his ultimate goal. Counseling should support an individual's journey through the pathway and provide "roadmaps" outlining the education and training that must be completed and credentials that must be earned to reach identified career goals.

Counseling may include:

- Career assessment
- Academic and career counseling, planning, and navigation
- Academic support, including tutoring
- Social support, including referrals to resources and services
- Transition planning to employment or postsecondary education.

Supportive services are an important tool in addressing life issues that may occur during an individual's participation in a career pathways program. Counseling may include ongoing assessment of an individual's need for assistance in a variety of areas such as childcare, transportation, and financial aid. These much-needed services allow individuals to participate more fully and help remove barriers to program completion.

This program meets this criterion:

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	How I know it meets this criterion ...
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	What program changes are needed to meet this criterion ...

(D) includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;

Discussion: Work-based learning experiences, such as internships, job shadowing, and project-based learning opportunities, can help students apply their knowledge, gain valuable hands-on experience, and develop the day-one readiness and foundational skills necessary to succeed in the labor market.

A career pathway program strives, as appropriate, to provide adult education activities concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement. This could take many forms including, but not limited to: basic adult education with contextualized materials; adult education (with or without contextualized materials) and workforce preparation activities; bridge programs designed for particular occupations or occupational sectors; integrated education and training (IET); and workplace adult education and literacy.

Articulated career pathways may include short-, moderate-, and longer-term education and training programs offered at times convenient for working learners and those with family responsibilities, and align credential attainment to in-demand employment opportunities.

In addition, paid work-based learning and apprenticeship programs allow students to develop relevant skills while earning money to cover living expenses. Without access to these opportunities, many students will seek paid employment unrelated to their pathways and likely slow their program completion and career advancement. Offering training programs relevant to students' career interests also can improve outcomes such as course completion and/or certification. Contextualizing math and English, English language instruction, and general education will engage and retain students.

This program meets this criterion:

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	How I know it meets this criterion ...
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	What program changes are needed to meet this criterion ...

(E) organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable;

Discussion: A variety of individuals participate in career pathways education and training programs; a typical semester-based college and university schedule may not meet the urgency of many career pathways participants to obtain a credential and find a job. Strategies that allow learners to simultaneously pursue multiple steps along a pathway can accelerate their progress while maintaining the quality and integrity of required learning. These may include:

- Flexible program design
- Workplace learning
- Credit for prior learning
- Dual enrollment.

Flexible and accessible education, training, and support services help promote advancement. Flexibility in program offerings means more than convenient class schedules. It also includes e-learning that allows students to progress at their own speed based on their abilities and schedule; work-based learning; and competency-based learning that is skills-based, self-paced, and personalized.

Workplace-learning experiences such as job shadows, internships, and apprenticeships help expand and accelerate career pathway opportunities when combined with classroom instruction.

Prior learning assessment strategies honor the content mastery students have acquired through previous coursework and work experience and can reduce the cost and time required to achieve outcomes within a pathway.

Dual enrollment has proven successful in improving the probability that students will graduate from high school, transition to college, be less likely to require remediation, and persist in postsecondary education.

This program meets this criterion:

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	How I know it meets this criterion ...
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	What program changes are needed to meet this criterion ...

(F) enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and at least 1 recognized postsecondary credential; and

Discussion: It is projected that by 2020 there will 140–165 million jobs in the United States, 65 percent of which will require a high school equivalency *plus* additional training or education. Therefore, a career pathways program needs to enable those without a high school diploma or its equivalent to attain one and be prepared to access additional training and education opportunities that lead to additional credentials. Credentials, both academic and work-related, are important milestones for career pathways. Students can earn credentials (at both secondary and postsecondary levels) that verify educational attainment and mastery of skills and provide the authority to perform a task or operation. For employers, credentials allow them to readily determine the skill or education level of a job applicant. Credentials can be awarded by various parties and have differing requirements. The table below provides features and examples of the most common types of credentials.

	CERTIFICATE	CERTIFICATION	DEGREE	LICENSE
Awarded by...	Education institution	Business, trade association, industry	Education institution	Government agency
Results from...	Course of study	Assessment	Course of study	Meeting requirements
Indicates...	Education	Skill mastery	Education	Legal permission
Completed in...	<2 Years	Variable	2+ Years	Variable
Examples	ServSafe Food Handler, Green Manufacturing Specialist, Certificate in Business Administration	Certified Welder (CW), Certified Logistics Technician (CLT), Certified International Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP)	Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, Doctor of Engineering	Registered Nurse (RN), Cosmetologist, Master Plumber

This program meets this criterion:

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	How I know it meets this criterion ...
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	What program changes are needed to meet this criterion ...

(G) helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

Individuals often face obstacles completing education and training programs and may need to take a break or deviate from their educational and career plans due to life circumstances. Career pathway programs provide individuals with multiple entry points to accommodate academic readiness and multiple exit points to allow individuals to obtain employment and return to the program when they are ready to progress to the next level of credential attainment. Flexible strategies and services permit interruptions without causing an individual to veer from an education or career path. This results in increased access to family-sustaining careers and career advancement over time.

This program meets this criterion:

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	How I know it meets this criterion ...
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	What program changes are needed to meet this criterion ...

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