



April 28, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

We are pleased to let you know that the Federal partnership regarding career pathways has been expanded and strengthened. We hope that you will continue to build similar collaborations at State, local, and tribal levels.

In April 2012, the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services formed a Federal partnership and issued a letter of joint commitment to promote the use of career pathways to assist youth and adults with acquiring marketable skills and industry-recognized credentials through better alignment of education, training and employment, and human and social services among public agencies and with employers. In 2013, the U.S. Department of Transportation joined the partnership to advance career pathways in response to the anticipated hiring needs in the transportation sector.

Today, our Federal partnership has grown to include the agencies that are part of the Administration's *Skills Working Group (Working Group)*. This group, launched in November 2014 by U.S. Secretary of Labor Tom Perez, maintains momentum for the Administration's Job-Driven Training Initiative, which seeks to assure that youth and adults completing our education and training programs have the skills businesses need. The *Working Group* comprises the White House National Economic Council, the Office of Management and Budget, and thirteen Federal agencies, including: the U. S. Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, Labor, the Social Security Administration, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs (the Departments). The *Working Group* coordinates activities across these various agencies, including efforts to ensure that career pathways are available to all individuals, especially our nation's low-skilled youth and adults, many of whom are already in the workplace.

This letter, which demonstrates the continued commitment of the Administration to promote career pathways, provides updated information and resources from the expanded Federal partnership to help States, regions, local entities, and tribal communities integrate service delivery across Federal and State funding streams. This letter also ensures that interested partners and agencies—whether focused on education, workforce development, or human and social services—are aware of this joint commitment for improved collaboration and coordination across programs and funding sources.

As the demand for skilled workers increases, some skilled jobs remain unfilled. In an effort to meet the demand for a skilled workforce, the Departments of the expanded Federal partnership have consistently articulated the need for increasing the skills of American workers, including

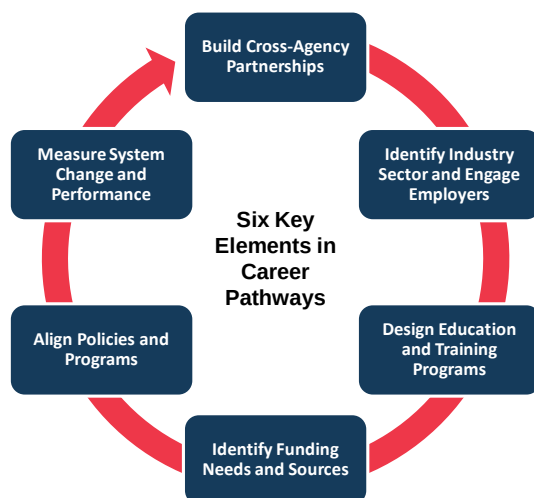
adults and youth with disabilities, and invested in education and training as an economic and business imperative. Despite these efforts, and at the current rate of postsecondary graduation, this country will lack over three million postsecondary graduates to fill those jobs by 2018.

Too often, our systems for preparing low-skilled youth and adults with marketable and in-demand skills can be complex and difficult to navigate for students, job seekers, and employers. Career pathways can offer an efficient and customer-centered approach to training and education by connecting the necessary adult basic education, occupational training, postsecondary education, career and academic advising, and supportive services for students to prepare for, obtain, and progress in a career.

The newly-enacted Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 includes an updated definition and overarching framework for the implementation of career pathways at Federal, State, local, and tribal levels. WIOA defines a career pathway as “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;
- (B) prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including registered apprenticeships;
- (C) includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual’s education and career goals;
- (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;
- (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;
- (F) enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and at least one recognized postsecondary credential; and
- (G) helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.” [Section 3(7) of WIOA]

With this updated definition, the six key elements for developing comprehensive career pathways systems that were included in the April 2012 letter still apply and provide a framework for building an integrated career pathways system.



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The Departments encourage State, local, and tribal policymakers to use these elements to promote alignment among their public workforce, education, and social and human services systems.

At the same time, the Departments continue to take steps to incorporate career pathways approaches into a wide range of program investments, evaluation and research activities, and technical assistance efforts. A few examples include:

- The U.S. Department of Labor has released an updated [Career Pathways Toolkit: A Guide for System Development](#) to provide the workforce system with a framework, resources, and tools for States and local partners to develop, implement, and sustain career pathways systems and programs.
- The U.S. Department of Education has released [The Evolution and Potential of Career Pathways](#) that provides a framework for organizing and formally aligning the education, workforce, and supportive services needed by a wide range of individuals to attain the credentials required for family-supporting careers.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded [Health Profession Opportunity Grants \(HPOG\)](#) for five-year, sector-based, career pathways programs. HPOG provides education and training to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals for occupations in the health care field that pay well and are expected to either experience labor shortages or be in high demand. A rigorous evaluation is being conducted of the HPOG program to provide information about program implementation, systems change resulting from HPOG programs, and outcomes and impacts for participants.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation has developed [Strengthening Skills Training Across the Transportation Industry](#) that projects the employment and skill needs of the transportation industry over the next 10 years, and, in so doing, highlights the future growth areas and employment “hot spots” in transportation by industry subsectors, occupations, career areas, and geographic areas. It also emphasizes the need for skills training and career pathways across the transportation industry.
- The U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Energy have all partnered to support the [Career Pathways Exchange](#) which is a free information service that consolidates and distributes career pathways-related resources, events, and information from Federal and State agencies and partner organizations.

More thorough information on Federal career pathways initiatives is located on the following Websites: <https://careerpathways.workforcegps.org/>, <https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/ofa-initiative/103>, and <http://cte.ed.gov>, as well as the Websites of each Federal agency partner.

Thank you for your continued efforts to improve collaboration across partner agencies and systems and, in so doing, more fully implement career pathways that help Americans enter and advance in the labor market.

Sincerely,



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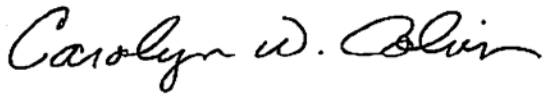
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