

Department of Labor Releases Career Pathways Technical Assistance Resources

Department of Labor Assistant Secretary Jane Oates of the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) recently released a Training and Employment Notice (TEN) announcing the availability of technical assistance resources for states, local areas, and tribal entities developing career pathway systems. During the recent OVAE, Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) [2012 Annual Meeting for State Directors of Adult Education](#), DAEL, in partnership with ETA staff, provided a mini-training institute on implementing career pathways.

ETA's [Career Pathways Initiative](#) was launched in June 2010 to focus on increasing credential attainment and improving access to training opportunities for disadvantaged populations. The first portion of the initiative offered 11 grantees training, peer- to-peer learning, research and best practices to help create sustainable career pathways systems. It also produced a diverse collection of resources and materials for the broader workforce investment system to use in creating successful career pathways initiatives.

The Career Pathways Initiative identified six key activities that state, local and tribal policymakers can undertake to support the development of successful career pathway systems. The activities offer a clear sequence of education and training courses and credentials to meet the needs of youths and adults who often are also in the workforce while they are in school. These activities were the result of the work produced by the grantees in advancing the development of their career pathways systems, and were further refined to incorporate feedback from state, local, and tribal practitioners, as well as career pathways subject-matter experts.

ETA has since compiled a diverse collection of tools and resources, through the [Career Pathways Community of Practice](#), to assist state, local, and tribal leadership with building career pathways systems. In addition to the community of practice itself, available resources include the following: a joint letter of support, the Career Pathways Community of Practice Framework, the Implementing Career Pathways Train-the-Trainer Power Point, the Career Pathways Toolkit, the Career Pathways Toolset, a newly issued ETA Policy Paper: *The Promise of Career Pathways Systems Change and Initiatives*, and the Career Pathways Webinar Series.

We encourage all interested parties to access and explore the full range of news, information, and resources available on ETA's Career Pathways Initiative [website](#). We further encourage you to share this link and that of the recent [TEN](#).

Career and Technical Education Alignment

This column is the second of several that will appear over the next few months on *Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education*, the administration's proposal for the reauthorization of the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act*, last reauthorized in 2006. This column begins the discussion of one of the four core principles that will guide reauthorization: alignment.

In the blueprint, effective alignment between high-quality CTE programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels, and the needs of employers and industries is intended to equip students with 21st century academic, technical, and career skills. Employers should help design, develop, and implement the CTE programs taking into account students who have been traditionally underserved such as women, students of color, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities. Twenty-first century skills are transferable to various fields and prepare students for in-demand occupations in high-growth industry sectors in our increasingly global economy. CTE programs must be rigorous, relevant, and results-driven and aligned with the structure of local economies. Their development also depends on the second core principle, to be addressed in future issues: collaboration.

More specifically, effective CTE programs must offer a streamlined, structured, and articulated sequence of courses that span secondary and postsecondary education and that lead to an industry certification or licensure or to a postsecondary certificate or degree. The expectation is that these credentials will enable their holders to gain employment in a high-growth industry upon program completion and to build successful careers. In addition, local education agencies, postsecondary institutions, and employers would be required to offer students opportunities to accelerate completion of their studies through dual or concurrent credits and to participate in work-based learning.

Achieving alignment and its benefits will require the reauthorized *Perkins Act* to provide states with refined guidance on establishing high-quality programs. It also will require a more active role for states in identifying the in-demand occupations in high-growth industry sectors on which local CTE programs should focus.

The envisioned reform is grounded in the recognition that America's CTE system cannot be transformed without strong leadership from the states, yet the key aspects of such leadership are not clearly outlined in the current *Perkins Act*. Under the proposed robust reform design, states would be required to systematically identify the economic needs and priorities of state, regional, and local economies and to use this information in decisions governing the funding of consortia of local education agencies, postsecondary institutions, and their partners with *Perkins* dollars.

The next column will feature examples of successful alignment.