

Maine ACCESS

Workforce Development Project

*A Practical Approach to Implementing
and Sustaining an
Adult Career and Colege Education Service System
in Maine*



INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to provide a broad overview of the considerations imperative to developing a successful Career Pathways approach to workforce development in adult education and can be used by local, regional, and state partners in the design, development, and implementation of Career Pathways initiatives. The following Career Pathways resource materials were consulted in the development of this document and can be found and reviewed in detail on the Maine Adult Education website at the Career Pathways in Adult Education link (www.maine.gov/education/aded/dev):

- *Career Pathways Toolkit – Community College Bridges to Opportunity Initiative, 2007*
- *Guide to Adult Education for Work – Transforming Adult Education to Grow a Skilled Workforce*
- *How to Build Bridge Programs That Fit Into a Career Pathway*
- *Integrating Adult Basic Education Into Career Pathways*
- *Vision for Career Pathways in Adult Education*
- *Washington State I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training) Program*

Other sources consulted include:

- *Charting a Path: An Exploration of the Statewide Career Pathway Efforts in Arkansas, Kentucky, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin*
- *The Career Pathways How-To Guide*
- *Ohio Stackable Certificates: Models for Success*

This overview is divided into the following sections:

- Addressing a Pressing Need
- Career Pathways in Adult Education Defined
- Components of a Career Pathways Initiative in Adult Education
- Career Pathways Founded on Adult Education for Work
- Design Models for Career Pathways Development and Delivery
- Making Career Pathways Work in Adult Education
- Challenges and Opportunities.

Each section will answer questions practitioners and stakeholders have about developing Career Pathways in adult education in Maine, but should also stimulate focused inquiry, creative thinking, innovation, collaboration, systemic planning and decision-making by partners at the state, regional, and local levels – all aimed at developing Career Pathways projects in adult education through purposeful input and involvement from stakeholders throughout the state.

ADDRESSING A PRESSING NEED

The retirement of the baby boom generation in the United States is projected to create a skilled worker shortage in many of Maine's high-growth employment areas. According to recent labor market analysis, Maine will need 136,000 workers with two-year post-secondary education degrees, 128,000 workers with four-year degrees, and an unspecified number of workers with industry-based certifications aligned to expected jobs by 2018 in order to maintain and build upon its skilled workforce.

Maine's projected workforce development needs and the attendant economic and community development implications present themselves at a time when the workforce in the United States (and Maine) is affected by the following conditions:

- 90 million working adults in America score at the lower levels (below a 9th grade equivalency) on national assessments of functional literacy.
- 18 million working adults in America and nearly 75,000 working-age adults in Maine lack a high school credential.
- By 2018, only 38,000 jobs will be available in Maine to workers who possess neither a high school diploma nor a GED.
- As many as 85% of today's jobs require at least some training beyond secondary school.
- Over the next decade, as many as 63% of the jobs in the American workplace and 59% of the available jobs in Maine will require a post-secondary credential or degree.
- A total of 57% of the working-age adults in Maine have either completed a high school diploma and not entered college (36%) or have completed some college but have not earned a degree (21%).
- An estimated 65% of the projected American workforce in 2020 is already beyond the reach of our public school systems.

These pressing realities and their specific impact on Maine's workforce in the foreseeable future recently were highlighted in a study conducted by Georgetown University – the results of which were featured in the June 20, 2010 issue of the *Bangor Daily News*. The national study projects a shortage of skilled workers in the United States by 2018. In the BDN article, John Dorrer, director of the Maine Department of Labor Center for Workforce Research and Information asserts the study “tracks what we have been looking at here in Maine” and emphasizes the following points:

“As more Mainers retire, the skilled work force is reduced and this adds to the challenge of meeting the need for improved skills.”

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“We have a challenge in front of us. With Maine being the oldest state in the nation and with slow population growth, we are going to have to figure out how to replace ... the most skilled labor force we have ever had on the field. This is something we need to act on now, and not wait until people in business can't find the skilled workers they need.”

“Maine, like the rest of America, will need more college educated workers than it will have. It's a problem that needs to be addressed now, because it takes time to solve. Our employers won't have the workers they need in 2018, if we don't act today.”

These conditions underscore the need to increase post-secondary achievement in Maine not just among secondary school students, but also among adults enrolled in adult education programs for the purpose of developing literacy, numeracy, work, and life skills. Career Pathways initiatives in adult education combine literacy and numeracy skills-based instruction with career-focused workforce training and a range of critical support services to help adults overcome barriers to transitioning to post-secondary enrollment and attainment.

Toward these ends, the Maine Department of Education's Office of Adult Education has appointed a Task Force to spearhead development of a Career Pathways workforce development initiative in adult education called **Maine ACCESS** (**A**dult **C**areer and **C**ollege **E**ducation **S**ervice **S**ystem). Task Force members include the following representatives:

Adult Education State Team

Jeff Fantine, State Director of Adult Education
Peter Caron, Career Pathways Consultant
Connie Patton, Career Pathways Consultant
Andy McMahan, GED Administrator
Nancy Dionne, Professional Development Specialist
Larinda Meade, College Transitions Coordinator
Cathy Newell, Maine Adult Education Association

Critical Stakeholder Representatives

Jean Demster, Maine Centers for Women, Work, and Community
Lora Downing, Career and Technical Education
Bonnie Sparks, University of Maine System
Kathy Moore, Consultant
Rob Brown, Opportunity Maine
Mark Harmon, Kennebec Valley Community College
Scott Voisine, University of Maine at Fort Kent
Sally Daniels, Maine Educational Opportunity Center
Elise Scala/Sally Sutton, Muskie School of Public Service
Jon Symonds, Career and Workforce Development Director, Penobscot Job Corps
Melanie Arsenault, Director, Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services
Garret Oswald, Maine Jobs Council, State Workforce Investment Board
Ellis King, Maine Department of Corrections

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Local Workforce Region Representatives

LWIB 1 – Serving Aroostook and Washington Counties

Ryan Pelletier, Executive Director

Dan MacDonald, Eastern Aroostook RSU #39 Adult and Community Education

LWIB 2 – Serving Piscataquis, Penobscot, and Hancock Counties

Joanna Russell, Executive Director

Thelma Regan, Piscataquis Valley Adult Education Cooperative

LWIB 3 – Serving Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset Counties

Jeffrey Sneddon, Executive Director

Pat Theriault, Lawrence Adult Education

Bill Grant, Lewiston Adult Education

Ray Therrien, MSAD #9 Adult and Community Education

LWIB 4 – Serving Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Cumberland, and York Counties

Mike Bourret, Executive Director

Gail Senese, Portland Adult Education

Marianne Doyle, Mid-Coast School of Technology

Business, Industry, Trade, and Commerce Representatives

Steve Pound, Cianbro Corporation

Dana Connors, Maine Chamber of Commerce

Gerald Salvo, Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

Judy West, Maine Medical Center

Chuck Bogdan, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard

Linda Smith, Hannaford, Inc.

John Napolitano, Maine State Building and Construction Trades Council

Marcia Leander, UNUM

CAREER PATHWAYS DEFINED

Career Pathways is a framework for educational and workforce development that is based on pro-active planning and practical programming with the coordinated aim of addressing the need for a skilled workforce primarily in high-growth, high-demand, high-wage occupations. Successful Career Pathways projects prepare participants to:

1. attain or retain employment in specific industries within targeted employment sectors or career clusters;
2. advance over time to successively higher levels of education, work, and compensation in those industries; and
3. contribute to and maintain viability in a competitive state, regional, and local workforce.

To fulfill their intended purpose of assisting adults enter an educational pipeline where they simultaneously build skills and gain training that promote the attainment of employment and opportunities for advancement in specific sectors and clusters, Career Pathways endeavors in adult education integrate literacy and numeracy-based educational and targeted workforce skill training with comprehensive support services, including:

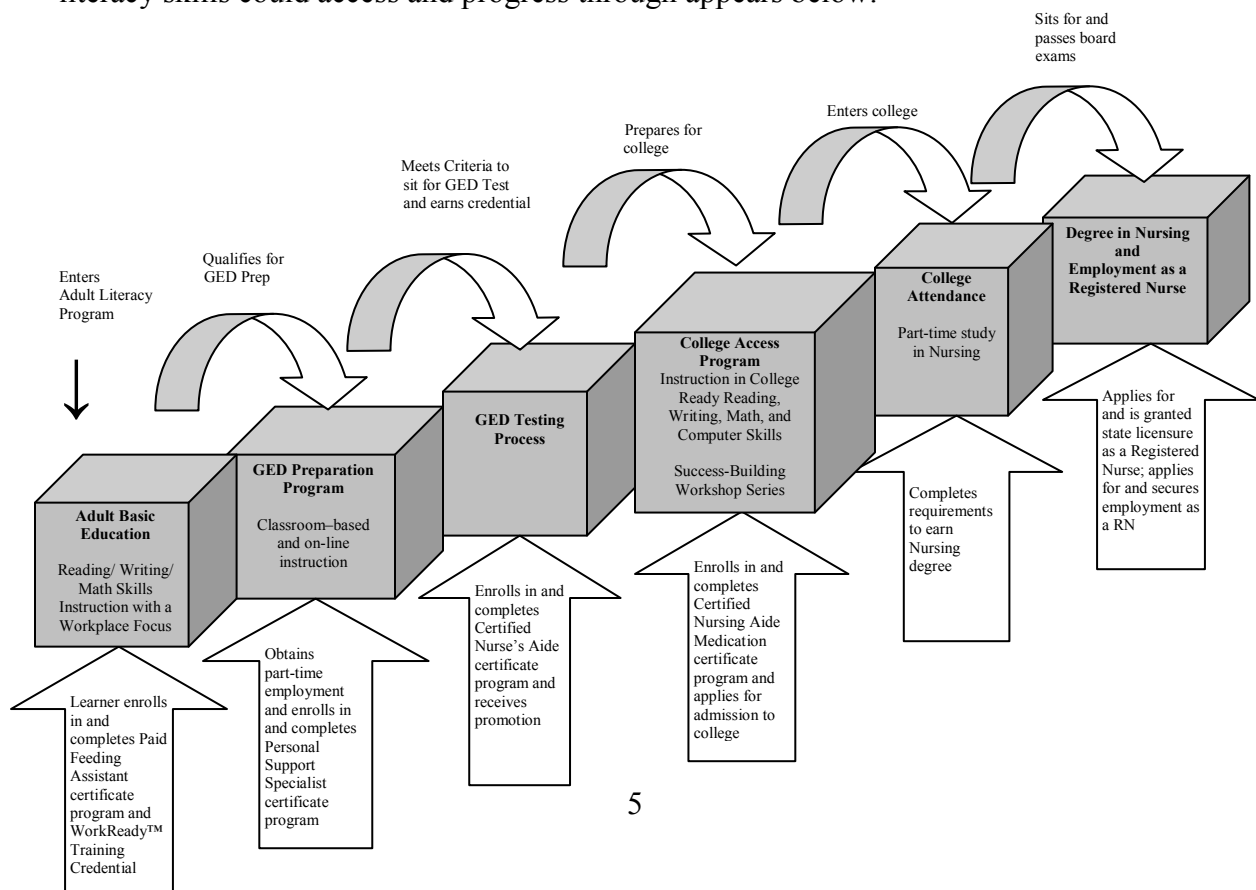
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- ongoing assessment
- student success courses
- student cohorts or learning communities
- career and personal advising
- assistance with childcare and transportation
- tuition assistance
- tutoring and mentoring
- career-focused goal-setting and individualized learning plans

These and other support services are provided by various collaborators who exert time, energy, and resources in a unified, blended manner to support participants as they progress along an education and training continuum featuring multiple entry and exit points denoted by benchmark achievements (also referred to as momentum points), including:

1. basic educational skills attainment demonstrated through pre- and post-testing on standardized assessments;
2. credential or degree attainment;
3. improved life skills; and
4. enhanced levels of self or family economic sufficiency through job attainment (commonly referred to as financial tipping points).

An illustration of an entire health care sector Career Pathways education and training continuum (founded upon clear articulation between a local Adult Education program and either a Maine Community College or a University of Maine campus) that a low skilled, low income adult with no high school completion certificate and underdeveloped literacy skills could access and progress through appears below:



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Adults with more highly developed literacy skills and an earned high school completion credential would access the above continuum at the point which best suits their skills, goals and needs. Unemployed two or four-year college degree holders seeking re-training also could access the continuum to earn a second college credential tied to opportunities for re-employment in a high growth, high-demand, high-paying field. The various academic, career, and life momentum points and tipping points experienced by a lower skilled, low income participant progressing along the comprehensive continuum illustrated above are delineated in the table below:

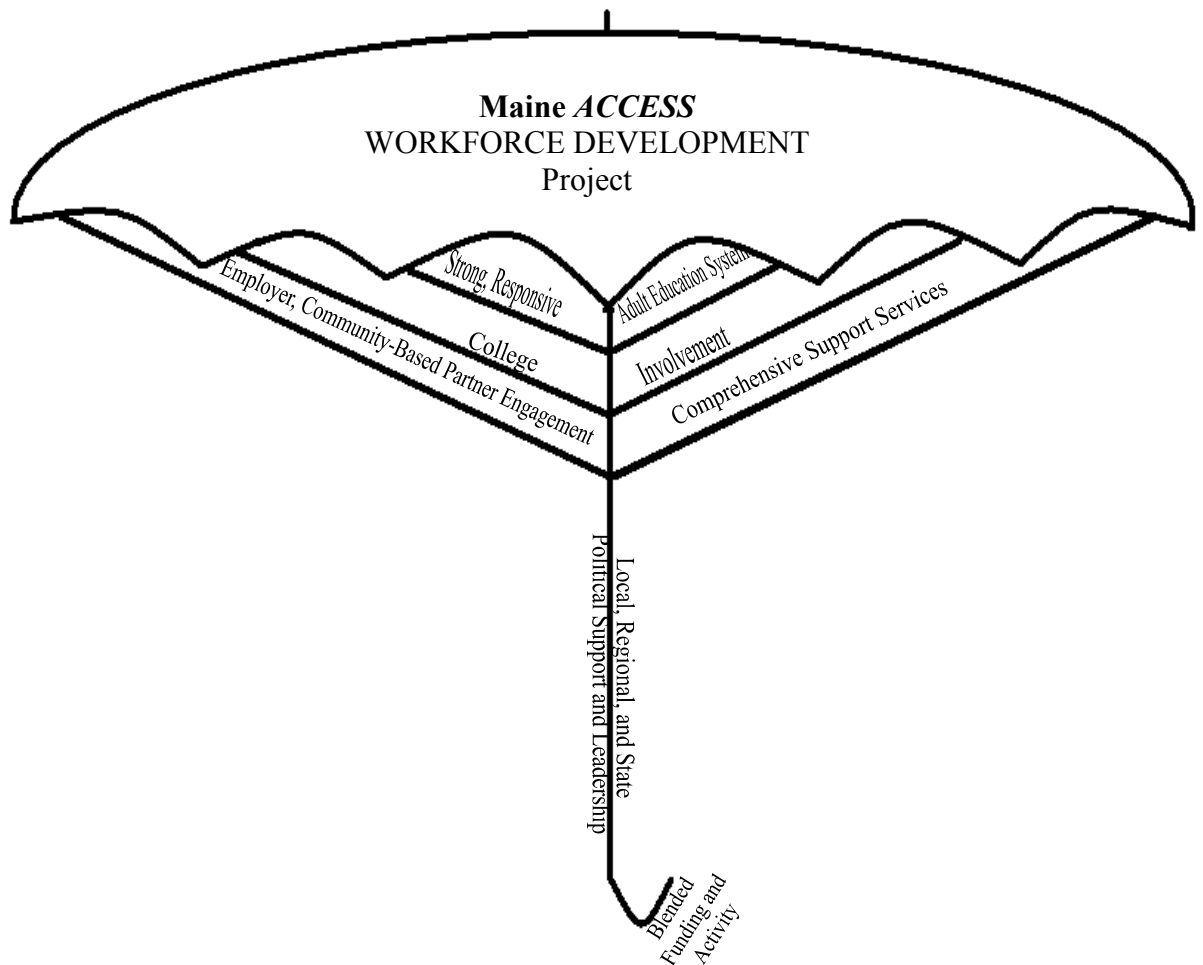
ACADEMIC CONTINUUM	CAREER CONTINUUM	LIFE CONTINUUM
<p>Adult Basic Education</p> <p>Achieves requisite skills to enter GED Preparation program</p>	<p>Enters and completes Paid Feeding Assistant Training and acquires part-time employment</p> <p>Enters and completes WorkReady™ Credential Training</p> <p>Enters and completes Personal Support Specialist training program and receives hourly pay increase</p>	<p>Develops interpersonal communication skills; learns about wages, benefits, and taxes; acquires work-related safety skills</p> <p>Makes friends in program and develops a social circle with people who possess similar personal motivations</p> <p>Attends school conferences with children</p> <p>Begins reading newspaper regularly to stay informed</p> <p>Registers to vote</p>
<i>Momentum Point</i>	<i>Momentum Point</i>	<i>Momentum Point</i>
<p>GED Testing</p> <p>Earns high school equivalency diploma</p>	<p>Enters and completes Certified Nurse’s Aide training program and earns passing grade on state competency exam</p> <p>Receives promotion, pay raise and benefits package, and full-time employment at work</p>	<p>Delivers student address at Adult Education year-end ceremony</p> <p>Public Assistance grant is eliminated</p> <p>Joins PTA at childrens’ school</p> <p>Volunteers in childrens’ classrooms</p> <p>Votes in local and state election</p>
<i>Momentum Point</i>	<i>Momentum Point and Tipping Point</i>	<i>Momentum Point and Tipping Point</i>
<p>College Transitions</p> <p>Completes semester-long program in College-Ready Reading, Writing, and Math</p> <p>Applies to college and is accepted in Nursing program</p>	<p>Enrolls in and completes Certified Nurse’s Aide – Medication training program and earns passing grade on state competency exam</p> <p>Receives promotion and pay raise</p> <p>Appointed as a mentor to new employees</p>	<p>Inducted into National Adult Education Honor Society</p> <p>Speaks at School Board meeting about Adult Education program and the opportunities it makes available to local citizens</p> <p>Learns to balance multiple roles of Parent/Family Member, Worker/Student, and Citizen/Community Member</p> <p>Votes in national election</p> <p>Becomes PTA officer and attends state convention</p>
<i>Momentum Point</i>	<i>Momentum Point and Tipping Point</i>	<i>Momentum Point</i>
<p>College Attendance</p> <p>Granted credit for previous health care training and experience</p> <p>Participates year-round in modularized program that allows for continued employment</p> <p>Awarded Competitive Skills Scholarship Program grant to finance studies</p>	<p>Granted flexible schedule at work</p> <p>Work hours are reduced but employer pays for classroom hours</p> <p>Named employee representative to management team</p>	<p>Elected President of local PTA</p> <p>Attends state PTA convention and leads workshop session</p> <p>Addresses local Town Council on zoning ordinance</p>
<i>Momentum Point and Tipping Point</i>	<i>Momentum Point and Tipping Point</i>	<i>Momentum Point</i>
<p>Degree in Nursing</p> <p>Sits for and passes state nursing board exam</p>	<p>Earns licensure as a RN</p> <p>Hired as RN by employer</p> <p>Receives pay raise and is appointed shift supervisor</p>	<p>Purchases home</p> <p>Elected officer of state PTA organization</p> <p>Elected to local municipal zoning board</p>
<i>Momentum Point</i>	<i>Momentum Point and Tipping Point</i>	<i>Momentum Point</i>

COMPONENTS IN THE MAINE *ACCESS* PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

The **Maine *ACCESS*** Workforce Development Project, under the direction of the Career Pathways Task Force, will strengthen and bring together a number of existing assets in Maine that are widely recognized as priority components in successful Career Pathways initiatives, including:

1. A Strong, Responsive Adult Education System;
2. College Involvement;
3. Local, Regional, and State Political Support and Leadership;
4. Employer and Community-Based Partner Engagement; and
5. Comprehensive Support Services

An illustration of the cohesive integration of these priority components into a focused and comprehensive workforce development initiative appears below followed by an asset-based description of each component.



A Strong, Responsive Adult Education System: Maine’s 107 active Adult Education programs are both geographically located and strategically positioned to be the primary access point to Career Pathways programming for adults in need of literacy and numeracy-based skills instruction and career-focused workforce training. In fact,

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between 2007 and 2009, Adult Literacy enrollments in Maine's Adult Education programs increased by 30%. Typically, Adult Literacy services available and locally accessible through Maine Adult Education programs include: basic literacy instruction in reading, numeracy, and writing; English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); career and life preparation; college transitions classes and programs; Family Literacy services; and both General Educational Development (GED) and High School Diploma courses. Maine's Adult Education programs also provide Workforce Development programming including: state-approved and nationally-recognized industry certification programs tied directly to local employment opportunities and workforce needs; a range of courses tied to acquisition and retention of employment and advancement in the workplace; WorkReady™ Credential training programs; Community College off-campus center courses and degree programs; University of Maine Distance Education courses; and custom-designed workplace trainings for local businesses and employers.

Maine's Adult Education programs also have a rich history of partnering and collaborating with post-secondary education providers to develop and deliver programs driven by community needs. For example, as a system, Maine Adult Education has implemented the legislatively-funded Maine College Transitions Initiative (MCTI), which has been formalized through Memoranda of Agreement between the University of Maine System (UMS) and the Maine Community College System (MCCS). The MCTI supports a total of 22 post-secondary preparation projects for adults. There is at least one College Transitions site in each of Maine's 16 counties. During the first two years of the MCTI (2007-2009), 34% of the adults served by Maine's Adult Education programs enrolled in higher education compared to only six percent prior to 2007.

College Transitions projects spearheaded through either individual local or regional alliances of Adult Education programs have, as a central aim, the preparation of adults following non-traditional paths to post-secondary education and training for success in higher education and advanced training through the purposeful, integrated provision of comprehensive academic skills instruction and holistic support services, including:

1. College-ready reading, writing, and math instruction;
2. Instruction in the use of technology hardware and a variety of software programs commonly employed by today's technical and community colleges and universities;
3. Success-building workshop sessions and individual meetings dedicated to a range of relevant topics, including: Study Skills; The Language of College; Time Management; Stress Management; Balancing the Roles of Worker/Student, Parent/Family Member, and Citizen/Community Member; Identifying a Career; Choosing a College Major; Applying for Admission and Financial Aid; etc.
4. Group and individualized career counseling;
5. The development of a peer cohort system aimed at enhancing learner persistence;
6. Peer mentoring provided by past program completers currently enrolled in post-secondary education and training; and
7. Academic mentoring (tutoring) provided either by peers within a cohort, past program completers enrolled in higher education, or program instructors.

In addition to these assets, the Maine Adult Education system has positioned itself to:

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- Develop ABE program-based policies, procedures, and instructional practices that allow every learner to have a plan leading to next-step employment and/or training.
- Make career advising an aspect of ABE program services.
- Pursue issuance of additional certifications based on nationally recognized industry standards and/or locally determined industry requirements.
- Build new and support existing sequential and integrated programming options, including co-enrollment and dual enrollment options with post-secondary institutions.

Finally, the Maine Adult Education system is in the process of re-defining its mission through *An Act To Establish Career Pathways, Define Comprehensive Services and Allow Performance-based Funding in Adult Education*. In this legislative proposal, Adult Education will be defined to mean “a program to provide comprehensive services designed to meet identified local needs, which will be defined as offering 3 of the 4 following types of services: basic literacy or ESOL instruction, high school completion, college and career preparation services, and community education; and where services are defined as a series of courses that include intake, assessment, career advising, instruction, and individual learning plans; and where programs are guided by data management, annual monitoring and annual professional development plans, and utilize appropriately certified staff.”

College Involvement: In addition to signing the MCTI Memorandum of Agreement with the Maine Department of Education, the MCCS long has partnered in substantive ways with local Adult Education programs through formalized Off-Campus Center Agreements based on common enrollment and profit-sharing. Also, the UMS, in its strategic planning document, *New Challenges, New Directions*, has cited the need to work more closely with Maine’s Adult Education programs in efforts to boost both enrollment and retention. Finally, the MCCS and the UMS have developed varied articulation options with the aim of facilitating seamless transitions from two-year degree attainment to four-year degree attainment. Given both these long-standing agreements and more recent developments, individual campuses within both the MCCS and the UMS are well positioned to work with local Adult Education programs to develop and co-deliver targeted Career Pathways opportunities through individual or combined delivery models proven successful with low-skilled adult learners including:

Integrated Remediation - blending the basic academic content (i.e., reading and math) most relevant to a particular field into college-level technical courses within that field.

Chunking - delivering a degree program as several sets of classes, with each set resulting in a competency-based certificate recognized by employers.

Accelerated Learning - compressing a course into a shorter period of time (i.e., less than a full semester) or combining two or more courses into one semester-long unit, with a more intensive workload than a traditional course schedule.

Contextualized Learning – delivering basic skills instruction (i.e., reading, writing, language, and/or math) with career-based content that aligns to competencies within a specific field.

Modularization - mini-courses that emphasize learning competencies in a short, compressed timeframe (e.g., weekend courses) and build on one another to equal the credit of a single traditional course.

Adult Education, the MCCS, and the UMS also possess the technological capacity and infrastructure to employ both synchronous and asynchronous distance education and to develop “digital” cohorts of adult learners in the design and delivery of Career Pathways initiatives.

Local, Regional, and State Political Support and Leadership: Maine’s Adult Education programs are part of local School Administrative Units (SAU’s) which are directed by Superintendents, governed by local Boards of Education, and feature access to secondary school Career and Technical Education (CTE) Regions and Centers where many Adult Workforce Development training programs are hosted and delivered. Adult Education programs are often housed in local schools, facilitating the ability of secondary school officials and Adult Education to work together in the development of alternative pathways to high school completion for secondary school students with unique educational goals, needs, and interests. In fact, the Maine Department of Education has identified Adult Education programs as an option for students in its state high school diploma initiative.

In addition, SAU’s build local share funding for Adult Education into their annual budgets. In the case of AEFLA programs, this local share funding includes at least a 25% match for Adult and Family Literacy programming. Local municipal governments, in turn, include an allocation for education in their annual budgets. These foundational elements of local support are strengthened at the state level through subsidy monies granted to local SAU’s for the delivery of Adult Workforce Development and Adult Literacy instructional and administrative services. Finally, the State Legislature has appropriated funding for the MCTI and worked to maintain level funding for Adult Education during the economic downturn and the attendant funding shortages and cutbacks that have plagued Maine in recent years.

Given this history of interconnectedness between the entities who share a primary charge of preparing both incumbent and prospective participants for work and career training coupled with literacy skills development, the environment in Maine is rich for these enterprises to address two factors cited as critical to the success of Career Pathways endeavors: legislatively-facilitated blended funding *for* and the sustained engagement of employers and community-based partners *in* targeted career sector projects.

Employer and Community-Based Partner Engagement: Partnerships with employers are an essential element in Career Pathways efforts for the following reasons:

- Local and regional target sector identification;

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- The identification of requisite skills for specific jobs within targeted career clusters;
- Initial and on-going guidance on curriculum development with respect to current and evolving industry requirements and standards; and
- Employment and career advancement for program completers.

Although essential, on-going employer engagement in Career Pathways projects also can often be elusive, because of time constraints for business representatives brought on by both economic and day-to-day business pressures and either turnover or positional change of designated representatives. Still, because of the visible presence of local programs, Maine's employers often turn to area Adult Education programs for specific training needs, including workplace-based literacy programs, custom-designed technology workshops, WorkReady™ Credential Training programs (designed with significant input from businesses and employers), and a range of industry-specific training projects.

Local businesses and industries also often readily serve as internship sites for Adult Education learners and ensure flexibility in work schedules for incumbent employees participating in education and training. Area employers also are regularly represented on local Adult Education advisory boards where they offer input on and feedback regarding program and service development, design, and delivery based on community needs.

Regionally, Adult Education is represented on the four LWIB's in the state, and local Adult Education programs belong to regional Adult Education alliances which, in turn, often include representatives from or interface regularly with community-based organizations, including: health, human, and social service entities; economic and community development agencies; the Maine Department of Labor and local Career Centers; LWIB's and government offices; and regional post-secondary institutions.

The on-going engagement of community-based partners in Career Pathways initiatives also is critical to the initial and long-term success of these endeavors, because: 1. these partners often work simultaneously with the same consumers as Adult Education providers in the development of career plans and pathways for, the delivery of comprehensive, career-focused programming to, and the facilitation of goal attainment by consumers needing either training or re-training to enter or re-enter the workforce, to retain employment, or to access post-secondary education; and 2. they are the primary providers of comprehensive support services to project participants.

Comprehensive Support Services: Support services are vital to promoting the persistence of adults who participate in Career Pathways programs while trying to maintain the delicate balance between school, work, and family. As the target-constituency of the **Maine ACCESS** workforce development project, adults often face multiple barriers to program participation and completion, including:

- limited educational attainment
- underdeveloped literacy skills
- frequent and often extended periods of unemployment or persistent underemployment

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- financial hardship
- scarce resources for childcare and transportation

As noted earlier, various forms of support services have proven both valuable and effective in addressing these needs which, either individually or in combination, adversely affect both the entry into and the persistence of adults enrolled in education and training programs. These critical support services include: student success courses; student cohorts or learning communities; career and personal counseling; assistance with childcare and transportation; tutoring and mentoring, and career-focused goal setting and individual learning plans – elements specifically addressed in the design of the MCTI.

These existing assets often are accentuated through the participation in training initiatives and on local Adult Education advisory boards of community-based partners, including: representatives from industry and trade associations; local and regional officers and case management personnel from both the Maine Department of Corrections and the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation; regional and local Career Center representatives; agents from both the Maine Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC) and the Maine Centers for Women, Work, and Community (MCWWC); local economic and community development personnel and Chamber of Commerce representatives; Community Action Program Resource Officers and Workforce Training Centers; Local Workforce Investment Boards; Family Investment Centers; local and regional transportation agencies; local childcare centers and providers; and local Department of Health and Human Services officers.

Also, the Maine Department of Labor has established the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program which supports qualified participants pursuing post-secondary education in high-growth, high-demand, high-paying occupational sectors and jobs with various supports, including: tuition payment; transportation and child care allotments; training stipends; and health insurance coverage. Industry and trade associations provide similar supports coupled with on-the-job, paying apprenticeships to participants in sector-specific education and training programs. Case management personnel from the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation often support subsidized internships and other critical supports for clients in need of training or re-training.

This well-established history of collaboration with local and regional partners who share the common goal of preparing adults for college and careers in Maine's high-need occupational sectors, coupled with its historical emphasis of delivering effective Workforce Development programming and Adult Literacy services, places Maine Adult Education in the optimal strategic and programmatic position to both: 1. act as the primary point of entry for prospective target-population participants into Career Pathways projects; and 2. serve as the hub for systemic integration of critical support services vital to the development and sustainability of successful, effective Career Pathways endeavors.

THE MAINE ACCESS APPROACH: CAREER PATHWAYS FOUNDED ON ADULT EDUCATION FOR WORK

The **Maine ACCESS** Workforce Development Project will center on an Adult Education for Work framework as outlined and detailed by the National Center on Education and the Economy in its *Guide to Adult Education for Work: Transforming Adult Education to Grow a Skilled Workforce*. Adult Education for Work is the cornerstone of a broader effort to build a Career Pathways system that moves adults through a continuum of workforce-oriented Adult Education programs on to postsecondary (degree and non-degree certificate) programs that lead to personal and family-sustaining employment and career advancement.

In adopting the Adult Education for Work approach to Career Pathways development, **Maine ACCESS** positions Maine’s network of AEFLA-funded programs to continue emphasizing and exercising a sharpened focus on the preparation of adults for both non-credit and credit-bearing postsecondary education and training and for family-sustaining employment and career advancement within targeted career sectors.

The underlying principles of Adult Education for Work are:

- Work readiness and preparation for postsecondary education and training for all adults is a core mission of Adult Education;
- Career Pathways initiatives are clearly connected to local and regional economic development and workforce development efforts and strategies;
- Career Pathways are designed to move adults through the education and training system as quickly and efficiently as possible; and
- It is critical to partner with other providers in the community to provide the full range of services and supports adults need to persist in and complete Adult Education for Work programs.

With respect to the principle that work readiness and preparation for postsecondary education and training for all adults is a core mission of Adult Education, Maine’s AEFLA-funded programs will finalize what has been at least a decade-long, on-going transformation from traditional ABE to new ABE programming in the foundational facets of service design and delivery detailed below:

FACET	TRADITIONAL ADULT BASIC EDUCATION	NEW ADULT BASIC EDUCATION
Customer	Learners are primary customers	Learners and employers are primary customers
Curriculum Goal	Life, work, family and community skills are primary goals	Work readiness and post-secondary preparation are primary goals

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Content Focus	Applying literacy, numeracy, and English language learning to daily life	The acquisition and application of Literacy, numeracy, and English language as well as: technology skills; critical thinking and reasoning skills; and workplace skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, following directions, etc.
Teaching Work Readiness	Includes employment-related tasks like filling out a job application	Teaches basic skills in a work context and stresses good work habits such as punctuality, diligence, communication, and appropriate dress and behavior
Program Focus	Driven by learners' personal goals, needs, and interests	Driven by learners' employment goals, career interests, and the skill needs for the acquisition of self or family-sustaining jobs and the entry requirements for post-secondary education and training
End Goal	Earning a GED or High School Diploma	Earning a GED or High School Diploma and/or achieving the requisite level of basic, workforce readiness, and college-ready skills to enter self or family sustaining employment and/or post-secondary education and training

With respect to the principle that Career Pathways initiatives are clearly connected to local and regional economic development and workforce development efforts, Maine's AEFLA programs will work with collaborators to develop literacy and numeracy-based education and workforce training programs and services that are directly aligned with the needs and skill requirements of high-demand employment sectors across the state, in specific regions, and in local communities.

With respect to the principles that Career Pathways initiatives are designed to move adults through the education and training system as quickly and efficiently as possible, and that it is critical to partner with other providers in the community to provide the full range of services and supports adults need to persist in and complete pathways programs, Maine's AEFLA programs will work to ensure that a host of quality elements are part of their local and regional Adult Education for Work efforts.

These elements characterize high-performing, high-quality programs that effectively and efficiently prepare adults for post-secondary education and training, work, and careers.

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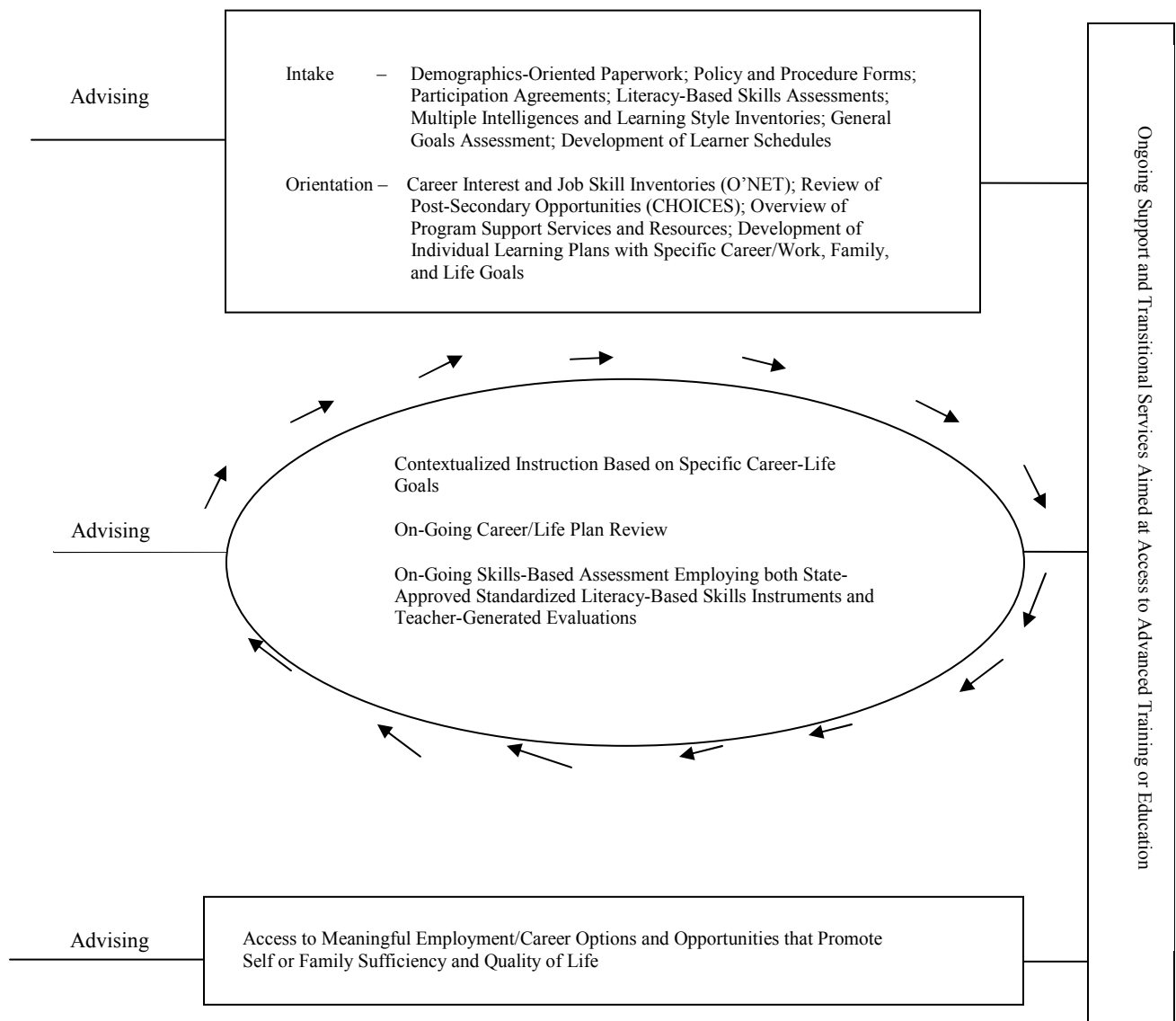
These twenty-three elements are divided into seven focus areas detailed in the table below:

FOCUS AREA	QUALITY ELEMENTS
<p>1. Program Design Adult Education for Work programs provide clear pathways for participants, regardless of their skill level at point of entry, to advance as quickly as possible to non-credit and credit-bearing post-secondary education or training programs, and, ultimately, to self or family-sustaining employment and/or advancement in careers.</p>	<p>1-A. Work with all partners to define the role of Adult Education for Work programs in the broader community-wide Career Pathways system.</p> <p>1-B. Provide all learners an orientation to Career Pathways.</p> <p>1-C. Help each learner develop a Career Pathways plan.</p> <p>1-D. Offer a continuum of instruction from basic skills (including English language) to readiness for post-secondary education and training and work.</p> <p>1-E. Provide programs and supports to ensure a smooth transition from Adult Education for Work programs to post-secondary education and training.</p> <p>1-F. Provide accelerated pathways for students to move ahead as quickly as possible.</p> <p>1-G. Accommodate work and other adult responsibilities.</p>
<p>2. Curriculum and Instruction Adult Education for Work programs adopt: 1. curricula that cover the full range of basic and work readiness skills needed for entry into and success in post-secondary education and training and in the workplace; 2. a range of resources and instructional practices that optimize both educational gains and work readiness.</p>	<p>2-A. Make post-secondary education and training and work readiness the goal of the curriculum.</p> <p>2-B. Make work a central context for the curriculum.</p> <p>2-C. Use instructional strategies that help learners learn by doing.</p> <p>2-D. Manage instructional settings in ways that enhance readiness for post-secondary education and training, and for work.</p> <p>2-E. Align sector-based curricula to industry standards and nationally recognized certifications.</p> <p>2-F. Make extensive and appropriate use of instructional technology.</p>

<p>3. Assessment and Credentialing Adult Education for Work programs use: 1. effective diagnostic assessments of student proficiency and progress for determining learners’ basic and workforce readiness skills; and 2. a process for identifying not only academic but also personal barriers in the design of instructional plans and support services that help learners enter and advance along Career Pathways as quickly as possible.</p>	<p>3-A. Use appropriate assessment tools, including assessments of post-secondary and work readiness, to place learners, to help them develop Career Pathway plans, and to periodically assess their progress. 3-B. Base advancement policy on assessments of skills and knowledge.</p>
<p>4. High-Quality Teaching Instructional staff in Adult Education for Work programs have specialized training in adult learning; receive ongoing professional development in workforce preparation; and are provided the classroom supports to apply such knowledge and skills in the provision of high-quality instruction.</p>	<p>4-A. Require high standards and recognized teaching credentials for adult education teachers. 4-B. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities and classroom supports for teachers.</p>
<p>5. Support and Follow-up Services to Encourage Access and Retention Adult Education for Work programs provide comprehensive supports to students to reduce personal barriers to retention and progress.</p>	<p>5-A. Make high-quality counseling a priority. 5-B. Partner with providers in the community to provide case management services to students, including counseling and social and academic supports.</p>
<p>6. Connections to Business Adult Education for Work programs work with individual employers, employer associations, economic development agencies, and business and industry groups to ensure there is alignment between program services and local and regional workforce needs.</p>	<p>6-A. Focus instruction on the skill needs of industries and occupations in which there is strong demand for workers. 6-B. Develop partnerships with employers.</p>
<p>7. Monitoring and Accountability Systems Adult Education for Work programs establish strong monitoring and accountability systems to document, evaluate, and improve learner and program outcomes on a continuing basis.</p>	<p>7-A. Develop customer-friendly performance information. 7-B. Track longitudinal data on learning gains and employment outcomes. 7-C. Use data to improve programs.</p>

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It is critical to note here that the Maine Department of Education is engaged in revising its AEFLA state plan under the WIA and that the continuation of funding for both federally-funded and/or state-subsidized local programs providing Adult Literacy services will be contingent upon adopting the Adult Education for Work approach outlined above and implementing a local program model that incorporates comprehensive intake and orientation procedures that extend beyond traditional intake paperwork and pre-assessment procedures to include the development of Individual Learning Plans that highlight and focus on participant goals within the context of program objectives. Programs also will need to develop and implement specific procedures for assessing, together with learners, the skills development and goal achievement progress of participants on an on-going, regularly-scheduled basis. An illustration of this Participant Experience Model and its component elements appears below:



THE MAINE *ACCESS* APPROACH: MODELS FOR CAREER PATHWAYS DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

In the development and implementation of Adult Education for Work Career Pathways projects targeted to high-demand, high-growth employment sectors, Maine’s ABE programs and their partners will rely on and consider at least three effective design models:

1. Bridge Programs;
2. Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST); and
3. Stackable Certificates.

Bridge Programs:

This design model works to sequentially “bridge” the gap between the initial skills of participants and the skills they must acquire and competencies they must demonstrate in order to enter and succeed in post-secondary education and target sector employment. Bridge programs assist participants to obtain the necessary literacy-based, academic, employability, and technical workforce skills through three requisite components:

1. contextualized instruction;
2. focused career development; and
3. comprehensive sets of support services.

The bridge program model is based on the “tech prep” example of linking two years of high school to two years of community college, emphasizing a seamless pathway geared to careers in a particular industry. Essential features of bridge programs include:

- specific criteria to enter and exit
- connectivity of various points on a career ladder
- articulation to other bridges in an educational continuum and to entry into post-secondary education
- articulation of certifications at each level with academic degrees
- incorporation of academic support into daily learning activities
- project-based assessment procedures
- comprehensive, on-going career counseling
- integration of non-academic support services into the regular schedule
- clear articulation, for participants, of the connectivity between varied points on academic ladders with corresponding points on related career ladders

I-BEST:

This design model pairs workforce training and adult basic education so that participants learn both literacy and workplace skills at the same time. Co-taught by Adult Education literacy instructors and college faculty with specialties in certain fields, the goal of I-BEST projects is to help participants earn at least 45 college-level credits *and* industry-recognized certification in a particular field. Projects focus on three main outcomes:

1. participants demonstrate significant gains on basic skills tests of literacy;

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2. participants demonstrate the competencies to earn nationally recognized occupational certifications; and
3. nationally recognized occupational certifications articulate into credit-bearing coursework.

Credits earned are college-level, thus paving the way for participants, who receive higher levels of support and student services focused on their non-traditional needs, to persist in their education and training through degree attainment. Literacy and technical skills and training are delivered through contextualized curricula – meaning participants acquire both skills and training within the context of particular career fields of interest.

Stackable Certificates:

This design model incorporates three critical components: 1. academic remediation; 2. certificated technical skills training; and 3. college credits. The model includes a progression of certificates – entry level, intermediate, and advanced – each targeted to adults at a specific point along the education and training continuum within a targeted employment sector. Stackable certificate projects are designed to help adults complete at least one year of college with an advanced technical certificate. There are two primary varieties of stackable certificates: 1. pre-college level; and 2. college level.

Pre-College Stackable Certificates – a uniform system of certificates earned *before* an adult is enrolled in an institution of higher education and that features the following key components:

- a clear and accessible path for adults in need of advancing their education
- acceptance of skills and training and work experience for college credit directly applicable to higher education degrees based on Prior Learning Assessments
- effective, efficient, clearly articulated interconnection of competencies in specific training programs within the education and training continuum
- specifically addressed skills necessary for success in both the workplace and in higher education

College-Level Stackable Certificates – a uniform system of certificates earned *while* an adult is enrolled in an institution of higher education. Certificates that participants earn through Prior Learning Assessments are awarded for experience and for the demonstration of competencies rather than for time spent in the classroom and can be readily translated to subject competencies for college credit.

Of special note regarding Stackable Certificates is that the Department of Education, as part of its AEFLA state plan revision under the WIA, will introduce the requirement that all federally and/or state-subsidized programs offering Adult Literacy services include provision for program participants to accrue a series of linked, state-approved certificates learners can earn as they simultaneously progress along a sector-based Career Pathways continuum.

Lynchpin credentials yet to be developed in this state-approved, state-issued series of certifications will be:

1. An entry-level **Job and Training-Ready Credential** – This credential will be issued by the Department of Education upon certification by a local program that a learner has demonstrated: a. minimum grade-equivalent literacy and numeracy skill levels on the Reading and Math sections of state-approved assessments administered by programs to learners; and b. a standard series of computer technology competencies. In the case of higher-skilled learners, “test-out” provisions will be made so these participants, too, can earn this credential, if they so desire.

2. A **College-Ready Credential** – This credential also will be issued by the Department of Education upon certification by a local MCTI project that a learner has successfully completed the project’s college transition requirements.

An illustration of how accrual of a series of state-issued, state-approved “stackables” will coincide with a learner’s progression along a local health care sector Career Pathways continuum appears below:

Contextualized Programming	State Stackables	Career Credentials
<p><u>Certificate Level 1</u></p> <p>Core Skills and Knowledge</p>	<p>Local Adult Literacy</p> <p>Achieves requisite skills to enter GED Prep or Adult High School Diploma Program</p> <p>Earns state-issued Job and Training-Ready Credential</p> <p>Earns state-issued WorkReady™ Certificate</p>	<p>Local Workforce Development</p> <p>Enters and completes Paid Feeding Assistant training program and receives industry-recognized certification</p> <p>Enters and completes WorkReady™ Credential training program</p>
<p><u>Certificate Level 2</u></p> <p>Sector-Based Skills and Knowledge</p>	<p>Local GED Prep or Adult High School Diploma Courses</p> <p>Earns State of Maine GED Credential or state-approved, locally issued Adult High School Diploma</p> <p>Demonstrates requisite skills to enter local College Transitions project</p>	<p>Local Workforce Development</p> <p>Enters and completes Personal Support Specialist training program, earns passing score on state competency exam, and receives industry-recognized certification</p> <p>Enters and completes Certified Nurse’s Aide training program, earns passing score on state competency exam, and receives industry-recognized certification</p>
<p><u>Certificate Level 3</u></p> <p>Advanced Sector-Based Skills and Knowledge</p>	<p>Local College Transitions</p> <p>Enters and completes semester-long CT program</p> <p>Earns state-issued College-Ready Credential</p> <p>Applies to college and is accepted into Nursing program</p>	<p>Local Workforce Development</p> <p>Enters and completes Certified Nurse’s Aide – Medication training program, earns passing score on state competency exam, and receives industry-recognized certification</p>

Certificate Level 4

Specialty-Based and Specialized Skills and Knowledge

Local College Attendance

Matriculates and earns Associate Degree in Nursing through MCCC campus, sits for and passes State Nursing Board Exam, and earns licensure as a RN

Applies and is accepted into ADN to BSN degree program through UMS campus and earns Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing

Local Employment-Based Education, Training, and Certification

Through employer, enrolls in industry-based distance education training program which includes on-the-job internship/apprenticeship, and earns nationally-recognized certification in Psychiatric Nursing

Through employer, enrolls in and completes regional Nurse Manager training cohort and receives nationally-recognized, industry-based certification

MAKING MAINE ACCESS WORK

Regardless of which individual model or combination of designs that local programs adopt in developing and implementing Adult Education for Work Career Pathways projects, their work and that of the state Career Pathways task force necessarily will evolve and cycle through five stages identified by the **Workforce Strategy Center** in the *Career Pathways Toolkit* it developed for the *Community College Bridges for Opportunity Project*. The five stages and their attendant guiding questions and general strategies appear below:

Gap Analysis Stage

What specific education/training opportunities, options, and enhancements are most likely to produce benefits for individuals, employers and communities?

- Conduct a systematic labor market analysis, identifying industries and fields that offer jobs with family-supporting wages and opportunities for advancement. Broadly collected statistics, such as those from state labor departments, must be supplemented with direct input from employers regarding specific occupational and skill needs.
- Assess the extent to which existing education programs and services are supporting student/worker access and advancement in high-demand fields.
- Identify state, regional, community and partner resources that can be leveraged to fill unmet education and training needs.
- Build customer-oriented relationships with employers, meeting regularly with them to stay abreast of current and emerging market trends.

Partnership Development and Planning Stage

What partners are needed to build the pathway, and what will be their roles and responsibilities?

- Identify and engage potential partners, including employers; civic and philanthropic organizations; public and private providers of education, training and social services; and economic and workforce development agencies.
- Provide professional development aimed at defining and describing Career Pathways and its benefits.

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- Develop an agreed-upon goal based on the gap-analysis findings, and clearly define the expected role and contributions of each partner.
- Identify costs and develop a funding strategy.
- Build and broaden support by bringing partners together regularly, and promoting communication and collaboration.
- Establish measurable goals and create a methodology for tracking educational and career outcomes for individuals over time.

Implementation Stage

How will the various roles and responsibilities of the partners be defined and coordinated?

- Clearly articulate the roles, commitments and contributions of each partner—including employers—through written memoranda of understanding.
- Determine, delineate, and work to coordinate what work will be done by which partners, including program development, marketing, recruitment, tracking outcomes, educational delivery, and support service provision.
- Provide professional development aimed at supporting all role-players to effectively carry out their responsibilities in a Career Pathways initiative.

Continuous Improvement Stage

How will program performance be measured and tracked, and the need for fine-tuning be identified and addressed?

- Use data management systems to conduct regular in-process reviews of performance, as measured by the criteria set during the implementation phase.
- Use data management systems to track employment and educational advancement outcomes of participants at each level.
- Make adjustments based on evidence of program impact and effectiveness. Alter programs that are failing, and set a timeline for terminating them if they continue to fall short. Adjustments could include redrawing funding plans, redesigning instructional methods and course material, providing additional professional development, and/or shifting partners' roles and responsibilities.
- Regularly reevaluate mission, goals and priorities.

Expansion Stage

What can be done to broaden the scope and reach of career pathways efforts?

- Identify ways to expand successful pathways models to additional populations or geographic areas within the same industry, bringing in new partners as necessary.
- Identify ways to incorporate successful strategies to efforts in other industry sectors important to the local economy.

The state Career Pathways task force will support and pave the way for the work of local and regional initiatives by working with the UMS, MCCS, DOL, DHHS, all other relevant state agencies (i.e., Department of Economic and Community Development), LWIB's, MCWWC, MEOC, industry and trade associations, critical community-based

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partners across Maine, the state’s business community and employers, the states economic and community development entities, Maine’s network of AEFLA programs, and the State Legislature to ensure that the requisite levels of *authentic* collaboration and communication and the material and human resources necessary to provide for the following overarching features commonly attributed to national models of excellence are present in Maine:

- Linking academic and workforce education
- Innovative curriculum development
- Cross-discipline faculty collaboration
- Faculty and staff professional development
- Student support
- State and institutional rule changes
- State funding

The final two elements are inextricably intertwined. In the current and foreseeable economic climate in Maine, an infusion of new state monies to support Career Pathways is not likely. While grants can and should be pursued, a more reliable means for securing the short-term and long-term financial resources for the development of a Career Pathways workforce development service system is the blended funding of existing resources among partners, including and especially regional alliances of Adult Education programs and post-secondary partners. At times, blended funding will entail institutional rule changes and, in other instances, it will require state policy adjustments at the department level. In some instances, these adjustments may need to be facilitated through the legislative process.

CONCLUSION: THE OPPORTUNITY WRAPPED IN THE CHALLENGE

The task of developing an effective, efficient Career Pathways approach to workforce development in Maine will be challenging. According to the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) Center for Post-Secondary and Economic Success, the most notable challenges to implementing, sustaining, and ramping up Career Pathways initiatives include the reality that these endeavors typically:

- are funded with or through one-time grants;
- often are implemented within just one agency or system, leaving key partners by the wayside; and
- tend to be regarded as isolated innovations rather than seen as the new “normal”.

The varied entities that must participate and fully engage in moving the **Maine ACCESS** Workforce Development Project forward historically have and currently continue to operate, to a significant extent, within their respective service silos. According to CLASP, when services are siloed and aligned neither with each other nor with labor market needs, the result is a “leaky pipeline” for preparing adults for high-skill, high-demand jobs and careers. Disconnected, siloed systems of services are ill-equipped to prepare adults for advanced training and education and result in the following conditions which continue to impede Maine’s workforce development efforts:

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- ABE services are not fully aligned with job training and post-secondary education;
- Developmental education at the post-secondary level is not fully aligned with college occupational programs;
- Non-credit occupational education and training is not fully aligned with credit-bearing certificate and degree programs; and
- Occupational education is not fully aligned with employer workforce needs.

Maine deserves better. The demographics in our state necessitate that the multi-faceted challenge of preparing adults for success in post-secondary education and in the workplace through articulated, blended activity and funding be undertaken now, if Maine is to maintain and grow a skilled workforce that will sustain its economic development well into the future.

If the old adage that “every challenge presents an opportunity” is true, then the **Maine ACCESS** Workforce Development Project presents our state with countless opportunities to re-shape and improve its various and effective (but still notably isolated and somewhat disconnected) workforce development efforts into a comprehensive whole that has produced noteworthy results in other parts of our country. The significant and timely opportunity facing Maine’s Adult Education programs, post-secondary education institutions, state government agencies, political leaders (at the local, regional, and state level), social and human service support providers, employers, industry and trade associations, community-based partners, and business community is to transform a loosely connected array of *good* services that, both directly and indirectly, address and affect workforce development into a *great system* of tightly organized, cohesive, efficiently delivered services.