

Barriers to Workforce Education and Training

Barriers to workforce education and training are systematic and have real implications for individuals navigating the workforce development system. Policy can both create and alleviate them. By understanding these barriers and their impacts and effects for both systems and individuals, policymakers have an opportunity to increase access to education and training and help advance state and regional economies.

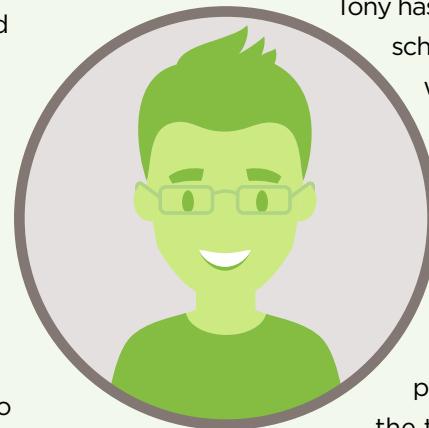
SYSTEMATIC BARRIER

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS

ACCESS

- Physical geography and uneven access to broadband and affordable technology can be significant barriers to education and training. Individuals with disabilities and people who speak English as their second language face additional accessibility barriers.

Policy Consideration: On a regional level, consider the physical location of education and training providers and publicly report on how accessible they are to different populations. As virtual learning spaces are created, consider accessibility to broadband and personal technology for students.



Tony, 18, Male

Tony has been taking CTE courses to fulfill high school graduation requirements and attain workforce skills. However, as an English-as-a-second-language student, even though he has subject and technical knowledge, an English-only exam may hinder his ability to demonstrate his competency.

Policy Consideration: Workforce programs can ensure students have the tools and accommodations they need to equitably access programs and program requirements. This may include testing accommodations or other provisions.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS

- Systems and entities that play an active role in developing and providing workforce education and training are often misaligned, creating inefficiencies and confusion for people and providers.

Policy Consideration: Consider what additional perspectives and input are needed to support a robust and informed system. Leverage knowledge, expertise and perspectives of a diverse set of stakeholders to create cross-system collaboration that establishes clear, publicized pathways to education and training for people in the state.



Michael, 42, Male

Michael was recently laid off and will need additional education and training before re-entering the workforce. Researching the connection between training and career opportunities has been difficult for him because job search tools are fragmented and incomplete.

Policy Consideration: Various entities within a workforce system can collaborate to build information systems and programming that makes it easy for individuals to understand and access all workforce programs and services in the state.



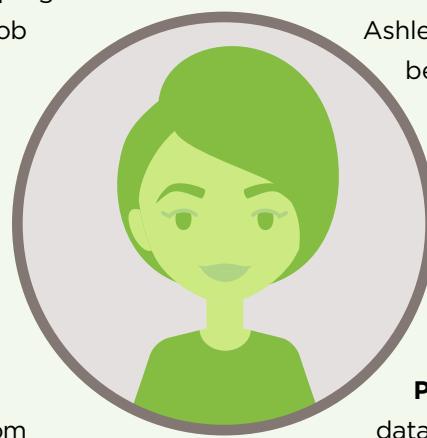
SYSTEMATIC BARRIER

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS

DATA USAGE

- Many workforce development programs target high-demand areas of employment. These programs may struggle to collect and disperse job market and employment data that are both accurate and timely. This information is most useful when it is accessible to workers, employers and program operators.

Policy Consideration: Leverage statewide longitudinal data systems already in place or expand their scope when necessary. Bring stakeholders from all different areas of the workforce and education systems together when developing data systems.



Ashley, 38, Female

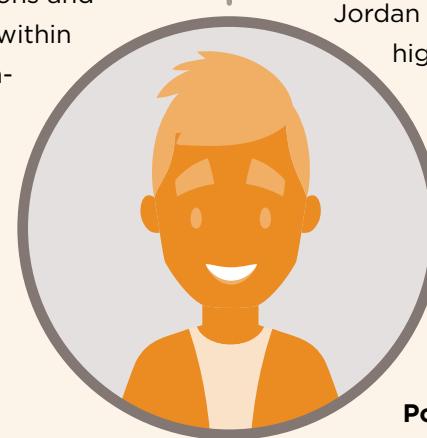
Ashley is ready for a career change, but before dedicating her time and money, she wants to make sure she's getting training that will open plenty of job opportunities. Information on required education and training for jobs of interest is hard to find and navigate.

Policy Consideration: Create workforce data tools that are user-friendly, free and contain accurate and timely information from all relevant workforce entities.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Policy is contingent on the restrictions and regulations that already exist both within and outside of education. For example, high school students seeking CTE skills and work-based learning experiences may be limited by graduation requirements, or labor and employment policy may restrict work-based learning and CTE opportunities for high school students.

Policy Consideration: Work within and across focus areas and talk with stakeholders about the implementation challenges that a workforce program is facing, or that proposed policy may face.



Jordan, 16, Male

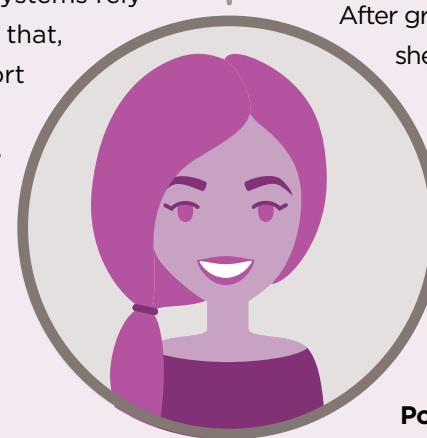
Jordan knows what he wants to do after high school and has signed up for a career exploration course in welding to gain experience in the field. However, Jordan cannot participate in the career exploration program because of age restriction regulations and safety concerns of employers.

Policy Consideration: While still considering student safety, policy can enable student participation in career exploration or training programs. Policy may include some age restrictions, supervision requirements, or specific measures to ensure student safety.

FINANCIAL

- Workforce education and training systems rely on funding from a range of sources that, taken together, may not fully support an aligned system that prioritizes education and training needs in the state. For individuals, the cost of attending short-term or degree programs could be prohibitive.

Policy Considerations: Evaluate and identify funding streams that support workforce development programs and align with education, workforce and economic development goals. Consider adjusting requirements of existing financial aid programs or leveraging existing state and federal funds to provide aid to students pursuing both degree and non-degree education and training.



Rebecca, 20, Female

After graduating high school, Rebecca knew she wanted to continue her education in a field that would set her on a career path. However, Rebecca isn't sure how she'll afford higher education since her family can't help her financially, and information on financial resources for short-term programs aligned to high-demand occupations is limited.

Policy Consideration: Grants and scholarship programs can be used to help support students who are interested in pursuing careers in high-demand or industry-specific occupations. Program requirements should consider how eligibility rules will affect accessibility. Program information should be available and disseminated to eligible students.