

## Your Question:

You asked ECS for research on state best practices for designing and implementing career pathways. Specifically, you requested examples of states creating career pathways that align high school and tech ed. to community college programs in order to meet regional needs of business and industry.

## Our Response:

Since 2013, a number of states have enacted legislation to better align curricular offerings with regional workforce needs. This has taken place through one of two approaches:

- Development or assignment of a statewide entity to develop or revise career pathways.
- The voluntary or mandatory creation of regional partnerships of K-12, postsecondary and business/industry partners, or

In some instances, states have created a competitive grant process to support local alignment initiatives, while in others, an appropriation has been made to a statewide entity to finance efforts.

The section that follows provides examples of these efforts in Colorado, Arkansas and Indiana.

### **Colorado: Assignment of statewide entity to develop pathways**

Authorized by [2015 H.B. 1274](#)

**Of note:** This legislation calls for a process based on prior success. H.B. 1274 directs the Colorado Work Force Development Council to use the model developed to create Colorado's manufacturing career pathway, including any improvements to the model based on implementation of the pathway. (The manufacturing career pathway was developed as directed by [2013 H.B. 1165](#).)

**Who involved:** Led by the Colorado Work Force Development Council ("the council"), in collaboration with the Department of Higher Education, the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education, Department of Education, Department of Labor and Employment, Colorado Office of Economic Development, and "interested postsecondary providers"

**The charge:** Design integrated career pathways in industry sectors identified in the annual Colorado talent report that are "growing industries" (projected to create new jobs annually for at least the next 10 years) and that have "critical occupations" (jobs with strong projected average openings per year for 10 years and pay a living wage according to the Colorado talent pipeline report) that are without clearly articulated career pathways. The Colorado Work Force Development Council must design at least one career pathway ready for implementation by the 2016-17 academic year, and design at least two career pathways ready for implementation in at the beginning of each subsequent academic year. Based on the 2014 talent pipeline report, the first three growing industries for design of a career pathway are construction and related skilled trades, IT, and health care.

Industry, through regional sector partnerships, and statewide trade associations must review each career pathway annually to ensure it remains relevant to the industry, and provide input for ongoing adjustments to meet work force needs.

Required components of career pathways:

- Apprenticeship and other work-based learning options when relevant to the pathway and available
- Direct alignment with postsecondary and work force readiness and individual career and academic plans (individual graduation plans). DOE and districts through postsecondary and work force readiness coordinators must partner with the state work force council to achieve the alignment
- Initiatives for adult and out-of-school youth when relevant to the pathway and available.

Once a pathway is completed, the council must:

- Facilitate outreach and training among partners involved in implementing, and other local, regional and state entities to advise students on career pathways
- Collaborate with the department of higher education and the department of labor and employment to create a “microsite” about the career pathway. Microsites must include: industry-sector career awareness, salary and wage information for the industry-sector career, industry-sector employment forecast, information on programs within the career pathway, services provided, and student financial aid opportunities, and online student support services.

**Appropriation:** To support these efforts, 2015 H.B. 1274 appropriates:

- \$485,043 to department of labor and employment, division of employment and training, for additional 2.5 FTE.
- \$86,960 to department of higher education, for college opportunity fund program fee-for-service contracts with state institutions (for the creation of career pathways pursuant to above and 23–60–109.
- \$86,960 to department of higher education, for fee-for-service contracts with the state board for community colleges and occupational education state system community colleges.
- \$200,000 to department of higher education, for Colorado commission on higher education administration.

### **Arkansas: Voluntary development of regional alliances supported by competitive grants**

Authorized by [2015 S.B. 891](#)

**Who involved:** Department of Higher Education is to disburse competitive grants from the Workforce Initiative Act of 2015 fund to local “alliances” through a request for proposals (RFP) process. The RFP procedures, and grant application review and award process must be approved by the governor and include input and recommendations from the Department of Education, the Department of Workforce Services, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, and the Department of Career Education.

Alliances may include technical institutes, community colleges, universities, K-12 systems, educational cooperatives, or employers, and input from local workforce investment boards.

**The charge:** Legislation provides for three phases of grants:

*Phase I:* Planning grants of up to \$100,000 may be awarded alliances. (Legislation does not specify minimum or maximum number of grants to be awarded.) Local workforce investment boards must identify the industry sectors for each of their 10 areas, including a comprehensive data analysis of employer skill requirements in each sector in each region. Identified industry sectors and employment skills serve as basis for RFPs.

RFP responses must contain an education and employer alignment plan that includes state-approved, employer-driven career pathways supported by a secondary center that awards concurrent credit courses that may be applied to a certificate of proficiency, technical certificate, associate of applied science degree, bachelor of applied science degree, or similarly designed bachelor degree.

Priority for Phase I awards must be given to applicants that best enhance regional efforts, including collaboration between community colleges, universities, public schools, education service cooperatives, the local workforce investment boards, career and technical education programs, multidistrict vocational centers, and private partnerships with clearly defined and measurable performance and effectiveness objectives.

*Phase II:* Of recipients of Phase I grants, some will be awarded implementation grants for up to two years, and must include clearly defined outcome measures. Legislation does not specify a minimum or maximum number of grants to be awarded or minimum/maximum of grant amounts, but requires grants to be awarded in an amount necessary to provide the resources to implement approved projects concluded and approved by the Department of Higher Education from phase one.

*Phase III:* Continuation grants will be awarded to Phase II recipients that meet or exceed outcome measures. Continuation grants must be used to align the performance and relevance of programs to ever-changing workforce training needs.

**Appropriation:** Arkansas 2015 S.B. 97 appropriates \$2,000,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016 to the Department of Higher Education for workforce education grants, as well as administrative and operating expenses.

### **Indiana: Mandatory development of regional partnerships supported by competitive grants**

Authorized by [2013 S.B. 465](#)

**Of note:** Indiana was an “early adopter” of this approach that has gained a foothold in states across the nation, of regional collaboratives redesigning career pathways. As such, Indiana can offer lessons learned from states just beginning these efforts. However, the efforts of regional councils is broader than simply developing career pathways.

**Who involved:** Legislation establishes an Indiana Works Council in each of various [geographic regions](#) throughout the state, as designated by the governor. The governor appoints members of each Indiana Works Council. Legislation tasks the Department of Workforce Development with providing staff and administrative support to councils.

**The charge:** By November 2013, each council was required to prepare and submit to the governor a comprehensive evaluation of the available career, technical, and vocational education opportunities for high school students in its region.

As of January 2014, each council was authorized to create an alternative career, technical, or vocational educational curriculum for high school students in its region in order to offer those students opportunities to:

- Pursue internships and apprenticeships
- Learn from qualified instructors; and
- Have a goal of:
  - Earning an industry certification
  - Earning credits toward an associate degree; or
  - Establishing a career pathway toward a high wage, high demand job in the region.

To develop alternative CTE curricula, the state has made a series of grants available to Indiana Works Councils. Per 2014 [application guidelines](#), applications must either:

- Create new curricula “under existing Indiana State Approved Courses Titles and Descriptions” or
- “[Develop] an entirely new career pathway that has not yet been approved by the [state board]. New pathways must adhere to both academic standards, industry competencies, and have the possibility of dual credit with higher education institutions. New pathways and courses must be approved” by the state board.

State funds must receive a private match. Curricula and pathways developed through this process may subsequently be adopted by other regions across the state.

**Appropriation:**

- In February 2014, the Indiana Works Council and the Center for Education and Career Innovation (CECI) [announced](#) the availability of \$4.3 million in state funds for the grants. The first cycle of a little over \$3 million was [awarded](#) in July 2014, and the second cycle of \$1 million [awarded](#) in February 2015.