

CAREER PATHWAYS – INTEGRATED EDUCATION & TRAINING

ABOUT THIS SERIES

The stated purpose of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is “to strengthen the United States workforce development system through innovation in, and alignment and improvement of, employment, training, and education programs in the United States, and to promote individual and national economic growth.” Through this series of briefs on key equity levers in WIOA, World Education, Inc. (WEI) provides analysis of WIOA quantitative data 2016-2019 and recommendations for WIOA reauthorization on five key topics:

- CO-ENROLLMENT
- CO-INVESTMENT
- CAREER PATHWAYS
- PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY
- SYSTEM INTEGRATION

The goal of the series is to inform policy makers and other key stakeholders on WIOA outcomes to date and present options for increasing the efficacy of the WIOA legislation to promote equity.

DEFINED FOR EQUITY

Effective career pathways require partnership. No one program or institution can build a comprehensive, responsive program to meet the complex educational and economic needs of individuals confronting barriers to success.¹ Career pathways are an equity tool for aligning high quality services to build equitable outcomes for people in our public education and workforce development systems. A decade ago, a federal interagency workgroup pledged a cross-agency commitment to career pathways.² The three federal investments in adult learning – WIOA, Perkins V, and Higher Education Act – now all share the same definition of career pathway and, within it, the Integrated Education and Training (IET) delivery model.

The term “career pathway” means 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 apprenticeships registered under the Act of August 16, 1937;
- (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.

WIOA QUANTITATIVE REPORTING

While WIOA requires state and local strategic planning and implementation of career pathways, there is no reporting mechanism on those efforts except within WIOA Title II Integrated Education & Training (IET). From PY 2016 to PY 2018, the total national enrollments in IET grew substantially. During this period, IET enrollments increased by 123 percent, and while that is an impressive growth rate, in actuality the IET percentage of *total* participants rose just from 1.6 percent to 3.9 percent of total WIOA Title II participants (see **Table 1**).

Table 1: IET Total Enrollments, PY 2016 - 2018				
Program Model	2016	2017	2018	2016 - 2018 Percent Change
IET Participants	23,301	43,905	51,915	122.8%
IELCE Participants	116,683	160,128	167,326	43.4%
Total Participants ²	1,492,137	1,433,599	1,332,457	-10.7%
IET Percent of Total Participants	1.6%	3.1%	3.9%	

Nine states represented more than four percent of the PY 2018 national IET total, and together accounted for about three-quarters of IET programming in that year (**Figure 1**). Sixteen states had more than five percent of their statewide participants enrolled in IET during PY 2018. Seven states fell into both categories (see red data points in **Figure 1**).

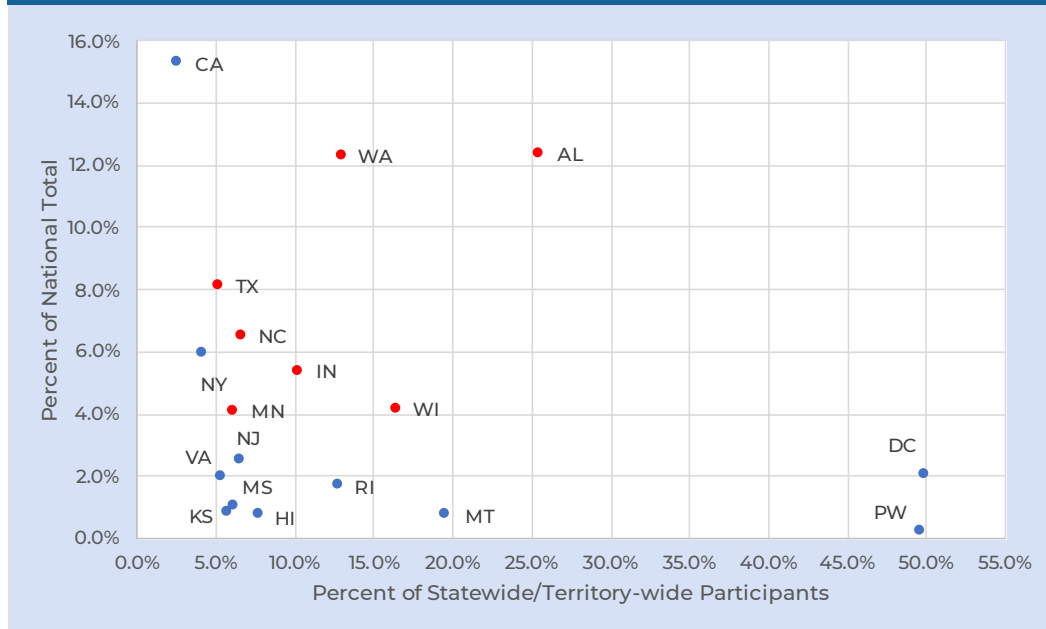
FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

The Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) continues to build technical assistance projects to support IET scale; e.g. implementing IET Design Camps³ in each state and in correctional settings.

OCTAE's recent reinterpretation of WIOA performance accountability to allow the use of all Measurable Skill Gain types for negotiated target setting within IET and workplace education programs⁴ should finally provide more authentic ways for states to document learning.

Importantly, the IES What Works Clearinghouse released an intervention report⁵ documenting IET's benefits and a complementary WWC Practice Guide for implementing career pathways in community colleges. For community colleges, it is especially important to help leaders understand that their current intra-institutional *guided pathway* reforms will make them even better partners in adult career pathway work.

Figure 1: Top States/Territories for Integrated Education and Training (IET) Implementation, PY 2018



Like dual enrollment for high school students, IET works and works well for all learners, helping them move farther, faster through a focus on acceleration rather than remediation. So how can WIOA reauthorization create more incentives for partners to build these pathways?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in career pathways. WIOA reauthorization should include a dedicated investment in WIOA Title II AEFLA and in WIOA Title I Adult and Youth for career pathway programs, with an emphasis on strategic co-enrollment to comprehensively support older youth and adults through education and career progression.
- Create joint U.S. Departments of Education and Labor guidance on building these programs into state and local Eligible Training Provider Lists to promote strategic co-investment.
- Require state level policies on IET performance accountability, including Measurable Skill Gain types 3-5 for IETs. OCTAE requires all WIOA Title II state agencies to have an assessment policy, exclusively related to standardized pre-post testing.⁷ With recently expanded access to MSG types 3-5 within IET, OCTAE's assessment plan requirement should broaden. Assessment policies should require states to guide local providers in intentionally building IET programs with alternative assessment and documenting training milestones and skill progression.
- Support dual enrollment between WIOA Title II and community college career pathways through a national awareness campaign and technical assistance project promoting the use of the Higher Education Act Ability to Benefit provision, allowing adult learners to simultaneously work on secondary and postsecondary credential attainment while accessing federal student aid.
- Support dual enrollment between WIOA Title II and community colleges through correcting the misinterpretation of Measurable Skill Gain type 1c 'transition to postsecondary' as an exit measure rather than an interim progress measure.

Confronting Barriers

Barriers To Success

WIOA seeks to direct services to those most in need in local communities through disaggregated reporting to a category of people deemed “individuals with barriers to employment.” This prioritizing of public resources is a laudable goal and the list of barriers is comprehensive and derived from data demonstrating the relationship between a barrier and unemployment rates. However, the characterization of the individual as containing the barrier is counterproductive in designing the very workforce development interventions needed to address those barriers, only some of which are temporary and situational, like homelessness. Further, this deficit-based framing disrespects those we serve and further taints the WIOA system and WIOA system participants as being individuals in need of fixing, with the “fix” frequently being placement in a low-quality job and an ‘exit’ from services.

Recognize Assets

WIOA reauthorization needs to address this deficit-based language while maintaining critical reporting on who receives what services and to what impact. One way to do this would be to reframe ‘individuals with barriers’ to ‘individuals CONFRONTING barriers’ and to clearly articulate the public workforce system’s role to support that confrontation with resources needed to overcome barriers. Reauthorization should also involve a stakeholder consultative process, much like that included in Strengthening Career & Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) in which people confronting the barriers detailed in WIOA priority populations should be involved in designing the services for their communities. Adults in our communities have skills and experiences that can be a powerful starting point for building toward their career aspirations. WIOA needs to leverage job seekers’ assets in order to design more effective solutions.

¹ WIOA uses ‘individuals with barriers to employment’ to designate priority populations. See discussion on Confronting Barriers (p.5) for a recommendation on asset-based language in reauthorized legislation.

² Joint Letter on Career Pathways from the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/ten-attachment.pdf>.

³ IET Design Toolkit. Retrieved from lincs.ed.gov/professional-development/resource-collections/profile-8850.

⁴ Resources for Reporting Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) Types 3, 4, and 5. Retrieved from <https://nrsweb.org/policy-data/Resources-for-Reporting>

⁵ Integrated Basic Education and Training (I-BEST) Intervention Report. Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/WWC_I-BEST_Report_508.pdf

⁶ Designing and Delivery Career Pathways at Community Colleges. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/27>.

⁷ State Assessment Policy Guidelines. Retrieved from <https://nrsweb.org/resources/state-assessment-policy-guidelines-508-compliant-version>.

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