Career Foundations: Connecting Low-Skilled Adults with the Right Career Pathways

PRESENTED BY: WOMEN EMPLOYED
A vision for an aligned system of pathways was developed jointly by City Colleges of Chicago and advocacy organization representatives

Any low-skilled Chicagoan, no matter which organization s/he approaches for help, has the opportunity to improve his or her skills and transition to a program providing a post-secondary credential leading to a job with family-supporting wages.
What are Career Pathways?

**Career Pathways** are an integrated collection of programs and services intended to develop students’ core academic, technical and employability skills; provide them with continuous education, training; and place them into high-demand jobs with a livable wage.
Aligning Bridge Programs & Pathways

**Bridge Programs** often referred to as “bridge” or “on-ramp” programs, are designed to help on the front end, providing remedial education and training that helps students meet pre-requisite requirements for college and technical education programs.

Generally bridge programming aligns with the **Targeted Occupation Profiles (TOPS)**, each holding its own pathway.

http://www.workforceboard.org/research-data/labor-market-data/target-occupation-profiles-(tops)/

- Retail
- Hospitality & Culinary
- Transportation Distribution & Labor
- Business & Professional Services
- Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Information Technology
Rapid expansion of City Colleges of Chicago bridges as well as some CBO bridges occurred in the Fall of 2012

Under the City Colleges of Chicago Reinvention initiative, College to Careers (CTE) pathways were identified (originally 6 sectors) with Adult Ed bridges recognized as the on-ramps for low-skilled adults.

- Substantial City Colleges of Chicago bridge expansion from Fall 2012 on
- Many CBOs added or modified bridges

Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) released a Strategic Plan for Adult Education, *Creating Career Pathways for Adult Learners*, in 2009 (formally established IL bridge definition).

ICCB Adult Education RFP has included a bridge requirement for all funded programs since FY15.
There seemed to be a “missing link” in the sequence for students who were ready for bridges or advanced levels of Adult Education.

- Adult Education
  - Basic Literacy or English as a Second Language through Intermediate levels
- ?
- Students make informed career choices
- Healthcare Bridge
- Manufacturing Bridge
- Transportation Bridge
- Culinary Bridge
- Early Childhood Education Bridge
- “Academic” Adult Education

Next steps:
- GED attainment
- Integrated ed & training
- College certificate and degree programs

Continued ABE or ESL classes
The Career Foundations course was the result of a collaborative effort to supply the missing element in the pathway.
The first “Career Foundations: Making Your Education Work for You” course was launched in summer 2014.

**Career Foundations:**

- Was developed through a partnership between Women Employed and City Colleges of Chicago
- Incorporated input from transition specialists, bridge instructors, and community based organizations
- Is free and publicly available*
- Includes detailed daily lesson plans
- Includes materials needed for activities
- Has been revised with input from Career Foundations instructors
- Has been implemented in a consortium of CBOs since Fall 2015.

*Note: Customization Guides are being developed to simplify adaptation by other community college districts both in and outside of Illinois as well as in Chicago community-based organizations (both Adult Education and Workforce Development.
Career Foundations moves students sequentially from self-awareness to awareness of educational opportunities and how to plan for them

**Course outline includes:**

- Identifying values, interests, and transferable skills—skills you are already using at home, at work, and/or in your community
- Exploring City Colleges of Chicago or local community college focus areas (programs of study) and pathways
- Learning about promising local sectors and job market
- Setting financial and career goals
- Learning about college support services and how they can be tapped to address potential obstacles
- **Creating a plan with timeline to get to college,** including getting through the participant’s current Adult Education or Workforce Development program

Informed selection of and planning for a career pathway supports WIOA implementation
Who is Career Foundations intended to serve?

- **Instructional types/levels**
  - Adult Basic Education students at Low Intermediate level (grade equivalent 4.0-5.9) and up
  - Second language learners at High Intermediate level and up
  - Individuals with or without high school equivalency

- **Types of programs enrolled in**
  - Adult education
  - Workforce development

- **Connections with the organization**
  - Existing students, clients, or customers who could benefit
  - New participants, as a way to determine the right type of classes or services

- **Student intent**
  - Adults interested in a career (not just a job) and/or in becoming college-ready
  - Individuals interested in bridges who are not yet at required level
  - Adults who may not be in the job market themselves but who need career pathway information to help guide their children
Who is Career Foundations intended to serve? (cont’d)

- Challenges faced
  - May not have experienced academic success
  - May have low self esteem
  - May not be aware of the skills s/he already possesses
  - If an ESL student, may have fears about ability to achieve success in the new culture
  - Unlikely to have received much (or any) information about educational and promising career pathways
The course consists of 32 contact hours and is flexible enough to be offered in various formats

- Original format: Twice a week (two 2-hour classes per week x 8 weeks)
- Other possible formats:
  - Once a week (one 4-hour class per week x 8 weeks)
  - Intensive (8 hours per week x 4 weeks, as an orientation class for new students not yet enrolled in regular or bridge classes)
- Can also be seamlessly embedded in another course or program, such as an Adult Basic Education course or Workforce Development job readiness training.

Intended as a supplemental class offered alongside basic skills classes.
It is important to address common misconceptions in advance so both students and teachers understand the purpose and benefits

What Career Foundations is not:

- Career Foundations is not a job readiness course.
- Career Foundations does not explicitly teach a specific set of soft skills (although it does include soft skills).
- Career Foundations is not a reading/writing course.
- Career Foundations teachers are not expected to perform the role of college advisors.
New Title II language added with WIOA implementation points up the need for a tool like Career Foundations

**WIOA: Expanded Adult Ed Purpose**

1) Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge & skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;

2) Assist adults...to obtain the education and skills that
   a) Are necessary to becoming full partners in the educational development of their children, and
   b) Lead to sustainable improvement for economic opportunities for their family.

3) Assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma and in transition to post-secondary education and training, including through career pathways; and

4) Assist immigrant and other individuals who are English language learners...

Source: Public Law 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 202 – WIOA
Career Foundations and the bridge/transition programs that follow must link to well-articulated educational pathways.
Adult Education and Workforce Development participants who are planning their pathways benefit from clear student-facing charts.
199 Career Foundations completers took post-class student surveys between 10/1/16 and 4/1/17.

- Almost all survey respondents (95%) said they learned about next steps to complete their education goals.
- Almost all (96%) said they felt more confident about reaching their education and career goals.
- As a group, respondents showed a 19% increase in their level of interest in going to college as a result of the course.
- Focus areas of greatest interest to course completers varied by organization, with Healthcare, Business, and Transportation, Distribution & Logistics cited most frequently overall.
- Respondents said their next steps during the coming year were: Adult Education classes (51%), job training (20%), classes toward a college degree (16%), find or continue a job (32%).

Source: Post-class surveys administered to Career Foundations students at 12 CBOs
Career Foundations instructors have reported the course fosters student goal-setting and career planning

“Career Foundations is a significant tool to provide students with career building strategies and complements other on-site skill building programs.”

“It was great to see students' minds open with material from the course...[Students] learned about themselves and about certificates of interest to them at City Colleges. Two of the students did start taking a Healthcare Bridge at our organization, and all now have a more solid foundation to make decisions about next steps once they finish their Healthcare Bridge/GED courses.”

“Great curriculum and helps students form realistic goals.”

“The content of the curriculum was interesting and applicable to the students...and we had a great relationship with the transitions specialist from [the neighboring college].”

“Although the audiences I taught were primarily employment focused, students were still empowered with this information. They were curious about the many degrees/certificates available to them at City Colleges and I could tell their interest in a career was enhanced during the workshop. After teaching a couple cohorts, I would say this curriculum is undoubtedly valuable as an addition to job-readiness training. Teachers can easily tailor the curriculum to their students...”

•Source: Outcomes surveys completed by instructors and other staff at CBOs, 2015-16
For more information, contact:

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The Career Foundations curriculum is available for free download at [http://womenemployed.org/pathways-careers-network](http://womenemployed.org/pathways-careers-network)
Career Foundations from a Workforce Perspective
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