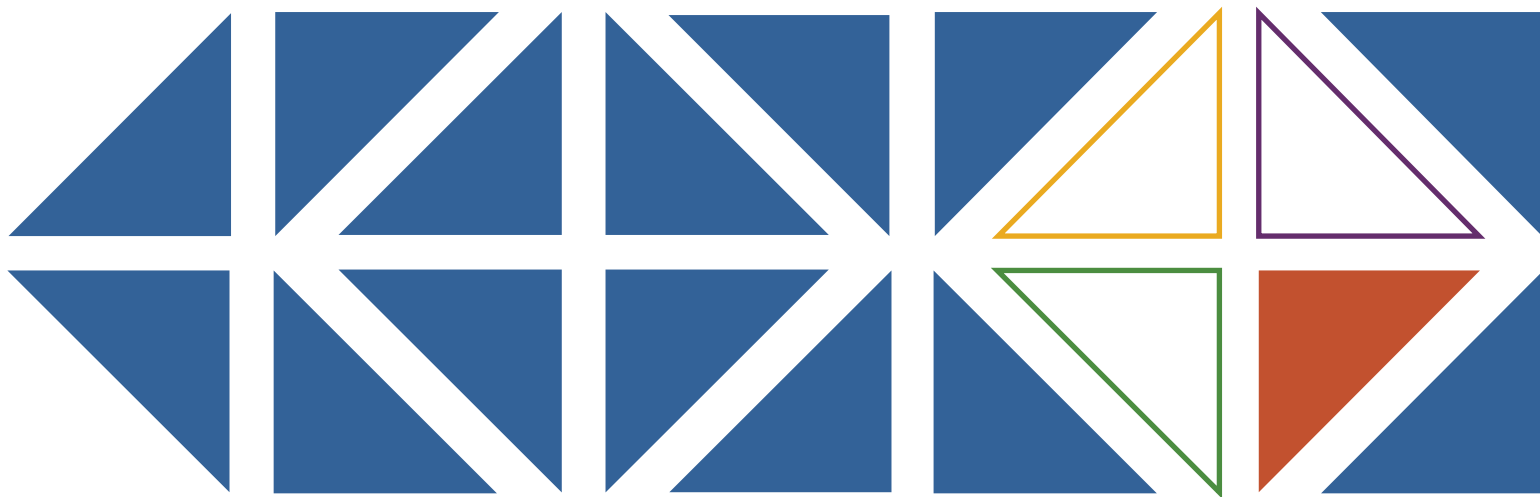


Designing a Career Pathways System

A Framework for State Education Agencies



Chapter 4

Planning for Implementation and Continuous Improvement

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE
FEBRUARY 2016

Designing a Career Pathways System: A Framework for State Education Agencies

CHAPTER 4: PLANNING FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Facilitator's Guide

February 2016

Overview of the Facilitator’s Guide

Across the nation, state leaders are exploring ways to better connect academic learning with career aspirations and workforce needs. One promising strategy is a career pathways system, a coordinated system of programs and services that support and guide an individual in the transition from secondary education to—and often through—the workforce. Historically a workforce development strategy, education stakeholders are increasingly looking to career pathways as a way to improve student outcomes and help set graduates on a path for success after high school. This *Facilitator’s Guide*, developed by the College and Career Readiness and Success Center (CCRS Center), is designed to provide state education agency (SEA) staff with a process and resources for designing a career pathways system in collaboration with other vested stakeholders from throughout the state.

For SEAs beginning the career pathways design process with this chapter, please be sure to read this introduction. Otherwise, please skip to page 2.

Career pathways can be part of a comprehensive system to support students’ college and career readiness. Career exploration programs and courses are appropriate for students at all levels, especially elementary and middle school students. Because choosing a career pathway requires mature decision making, these courses are most appropriate for students at the high school level.

WHY SEAs?

New data continue to expand our understanding of the inextricable link between education and employment. The endgame for K–12 stakeholders is no longer high school graduation. Instead, necessity demands a longer range view that includes preparing all students for a successful career. The SEA plays several roles in understanding and supporting these career and life goals, including the following:

- ▶ Establishing college- and career-ready goals for all students
- ▶ Determining the college and career readiness standards that outline the skills needed for career readiness
- ▶ Providing the sequence of activities that students can engage in that provide the building blocks for career readiness, including career exploration programs, extracurricular activities, work-based learning opportunities, and so on
- ▶ Facilitating collaborative partnerships with the Department of Labor/Workforce and securing business investments

OBJECTIVE OF THE GUIDE

The *Facilitator's Guide* is written for the project lead, the individual within the SEA who will guide a group of committed partners—from secondary and postsecondary education, labor, policy, and business and industry—through the process of designing and implementing a career pathways system. The *Facilitator's Guide* provides guidance from the beginning stages of stakeholder identification and information gathering, through the design of a pathways system, and into continuous improvement and sustainability planning. For states already in the process of designing or implementing career pathways, the *Facilitator's Guide* can help to enhance or refine efforts underway.

The *Facilitator's Guide* offers an overview of the key elements of a pathways system, along with guidance on a process for designing a system tailored to a state's individual needs and priorities. The *Facilitator's Guide* is organized into four customizable chapters. Each chapter includes the following:

- ▶ Important context or information for the facilitator to know and understand
- ▶ Facilitation tips
- ▶ Slide presentation with facilitation notes
- ▶ Resources

The resources and tools found in the *Facilitator's Guide* do not promote any particular career pathways model or initiative, or address teaching and learning strategies or curriculum resources.

The *Facilitator's Guide* includes chapter objectives, facilitation tips, and activities for each session. There are two types of activities included in this guide:





- ▶ Planning activities, which involve the facilitator and (if applicable) other supporting staff
- ▶ Group activities, which involve a larger group of stakeholders engaged in the work

Each activity includes information and considerations for both internal planning and group activities.

Chapter 4 at a Glance

The goal of this chapter is to implement and evaluate the development of the career pathways system framework, identify short-term and long-term metrics for evaluating the success of the career pathways system work, and engage stakeholders in the implementation process.

Table 1. Planning for Implementation and Continuous Improvement

 Objectives	 Planning and Preparation Tasks	 Group Activities	 Handouts
1. Implement and evaluate the career pathways system framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a comprehensive work plan and monitor implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Handout 4A: Pathways Requirements Document ■ Handout 4B: Master Schedule Template ■ Slides 6–8
2. Identify and analyze measures for career pathways system implementation progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Convene smaller group to identify career pathways system evaluation metrics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify career pathways system evaluation metrics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Handout 4C: Risk Breakdown Document ■ Handout 4D: Stakeholder Roles in Evaluation ■ Expert presentations (TBD) ■ Slides 9–13
3. Engage stakeholders in reflection of the career pathways system implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a communication plan proposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reflect on the implementation process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Handout 4E: Stakeholder Communication Planning Document ■ Slides 14–19

OBJECTIVES

Chapter 4 describes the planning and continuous improvement process that the facilitator and stakeholders will regularly revisit throughout the implementation of the career pathways system.

There are three objectives for this chapter:

- ▶ **Objective 1:** Implement and evaluate the career pathways system framework.
- ▶ **Objective 2:** Identify and analyze measures for career pathways system implementation progress.
- ▶ **Objective 3:** Engage stakeholders in reflection of the career pathways system implementation.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

In Chapter 3, stakeholders worked to develop preliminary career pathways system frameworks, identify gaps in the system, and plan for continuous improvement. This chapter expands on this work by supporting the facilitator and stakeholder group in implementing, evaluating, and communicating the development of the career pathways system.



Plan the Scope of the Work, Identify Requirements, and Develop a Breakdown of the Work

The first planning and preparation activity requires the workgroup to define all of the tasks required for developing and implementing the work plan. The phase of the work begins after stakeholders complete a career pathways framework for each of the industries; this work occurs in three phases—plan scope, identify requirements, and develop a work breakdown.

The facilitator will use the completed frameworks from Chapter 3, **Handout 3D: Career Pathways System Framework**, to fully define the scope of the project. After fully defining the scope of the project, the facilitator is able to make decisions about other key elements of the design and implementation of the career pathways system, including the timeline, cost, resources needed, and quality measures.

The facilitator will play the lead role in consolidating the individual career pathways system frameworks into a coherent work plan; however, it may be beneficial to engage the workgroup to review the plan, identify requirements of the work, and develop a work breakdown document.

Handout 4A: Pathways Requirements Document, Part 1



To plan the scope of the project, the facilitator will consolidate all of the career pathways system frameworks into a single document. Using **Handout 4A: Pathways Requirements Document, Part 1**, develop a list of requirements for the entire project. The facilitator completes **Handout 4A: Pathways Requirements Document, Part 1** by looking across all of the career pathways system frameworks and reviewing what the state already has in place and what is needed. The handout begins by reviewing the information across the Career Options section of the framework. Here the facilitator identifies existing partnerships as well as partnerships that are needed. The information collected in this section will elicit the requirements of the industry partnerships.

The facilitator will follow the same process for identifying course sequences in existence and those that are needed, and for identifying the work-based and postsecondary opportunities that exist and are needed.

Handout 4A: Pathways Requirements Document, Part 2

After identifying the overarching requirements, the facilitator will break down each of the requirements into progressively smaller components. During this process, the facilitator should ask him- or herself, what is needed in order to meet this requirement.

The facilitator should continue to ask this question while breaking down the requirements of the work into increasingly specific action steps. The facilitator will know the work is broken down sufficiently when he or she can answer the following questions:

- ▶ Can I estimate the time and cost for this requirement?
- ▶ Is there sufficient detail for whoever is assigned to move forward?
- ▶ Is there sufficient detail so that whoever is assigned can be held accountable for the outcome?



Handout 4A: Pathways Requirements Document, Part 2 provides a format for breaking down the work of the project.



Identify Risks and Define Quality Metrics

When preparing for this activity, the facilitator will identify any potential risks related to the overall project. Risk is related to an uncertain event and can affect the project positively or negatively. The facilitator creates the initial list of risks that will act as a roadmap and defines the level of risk tolerable for the project, how risks will be managed, and metrics for determining success. The



facilitator will use **Handout 4C: Risk Breakdown Document** to identify the risks and be prepared to share this handout with the group during the next convening. Exhibit 1 is an example of a completed version of **Handout 4C: Risk Breakdown Document**.

Exhibit 1. Sample Handout 4C: Risk Breakdown Document

Risks	Internal Risks	▶	
	▶	Technology	Integrating career pathways data into the state's statewide longitudinal data system
	External Risks	▶	
	▶		

After identifying the risks, the facilitator will begin to brainstorm quality indicators for the project. The facilitator will want to identify which stakeholders have the knowledge and expertise to determine the indicators of project success. Consider the stakeholders identified in Chapter 1, who have expertise in education and workforce data systems such as the following:

- ▶ K–12
- ▶ Postsecondary
- ▶ Career and technical education
- ▶ Business/Industry/Workforce
- ▶ Policy/Legislative
- ▶ State data directors
- ▶ State longitudinal data system administrators
- ▶ State labor data system administrators



The participation of a member from each of these groups in the evaluation group will ensure a comprehensive evaluation system for the career pathways work. See **Handout 4D: Stakeholder Roles in Evaluation** for more details.

The facilitator should be able to answer the following questions:

- ▶ What data would our state expect to see after each phase of implementation? After one year of implementation? Five years? Ten years?
- ▶ What are expected academic outcomes for students enrolled in a career pathways system?
- ▶ How have other states determined the success of their career pathways system? What lessons learned exist from those states? Are there existing measures already collected through other career readiness policies or programs that would be appropriate for this work?
- ▶ Is there statewide longitudinal data system information that would be appropriate?
- ▶ Does the state, region, or district collect business feedback surveys or other data from the business community, including feedback on students participating in internships, on the quality of the programs being developed and the quality of programs already offered?

Exhibit 2 provides an example of what measures might look like for different scenarios, including secondary and postsecondary measures, workforce measures, and long-term measures.

Exhibit 2. Sample Outcome Measures

When identifying outcome measures, consider measures for secondary, postsecondary, workforce, and long-term success.		
Secondary and Postsecondary Measures to Consider:	Workforce Measures to Consider:	Long-Term Success Measures to Consider:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Course completion ■ On-time graduation ■ Industry certificates earned ■ Internship participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Program participation ■ Job preparation and application assistance provided ■ Employment and earnings in the target occupations or industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved unemployment and out-of-workforce trends for individuals under 25 ■ Narrowed labor market gaps



Develop a Stakeholder Communication Plan

After stakeholders have designed a career pathways system and identified implementation milestones and measures, the next step requires the facilitator to identify the stakeholders who require ongoing communication about the progress toward the milestones for the career pathways work. The facilitator also will want to analyze the stakeholders identified to determine which ones may need particular attention and their desired levels of engagement. Exhibit 3 highlights how the facilitator can plot stakeholder engagement levels.

Exhibit 3. Sample Stakeholder Engagement Levels

Stakeholder	Unaware	Resistant	Neutral	Supportive	Leading
Carla T.		Current			Desired
Peter M.			Current	Desired	
Sally H.	Current			Desired	



After determining the level of stakeholder engagement, the facilitator will want to develop key messages for different audiences, determine the appropriate mode(s) of communication, and establish the frequency of communication. The facilitator can use **Handout 4E: Stakeholder Communication Planning Document** to begin developing a communication plan. This handout should be considered a living document that will be consistently updated and modified. Exhibit 4. Sample **Handout 4E: Stakeholder Communication Planning Document** offers a sample communication plan.

Exhibit 4. Sample Handout 4E: Stakeholder Communication Planning Document

Audience	Key Messages	Modes of Communication	Frequency of Communication
Parents and Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Benefits of career pathways systems (e.g., financial and job opportunities) ■ Flexibility and support of career pathways systems ■ Practical impact of changes to support career pathways (e.g., additional courses, dual credit) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ School-level communication (e.g., flyers, school presentations) ■ Website information ■ YouTube videos ■ Guidance counselors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ongoing (e.g., monthly communication about individual pathway)
Industry Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Benefits of career pathways systems (e.g., fiscal and organizational) ■ Benefits of engagement with secondary and postsecondary ■ Possible entry points and levels of commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Personal outreach to key contacts through e-mail ■ Networking through professional organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quarterly e-mails ■ Ongoing networking

FACILITATION ACTIVITIES



Develop an Implementation Timeline (Slides 6–8)



Using the completed **Handout 4A: Pathways Requirements Document**, the facilitator will develop a comprehensive implementation timeline. This preparation activity helps the facilitator review the requirements, list the activities or actions that are needed to meet the requirements, sequence each activity in order, and estimate the duration of each activity. The facilitator can use **Handout 4B: Master Schedule Template** to complete this preparation activity.



Handout 4A: Pathways Requirements Document helps the facilitator list all of the activities that need to take place to meet the requirements. Referencing **Handout 4A: Pathways Requirements Document, Part 2**, the facilitator will solicit heavy involvement from the workgroup to leverage members' expertise for completing the activities. The facilitator:

- ▶ Divides the workgroup into small groups (about three people per group).
- ▶ Assigns each requirement listed in **Handout 4A: Pathways Requirements Document, Part 2**. If there are more requirements than small groups, the facilitator assign multiple requirements to a group.
- ▶ Asks each group to break down the requirements into tasks, using **Handout 4B: Master Schedule Template**. Each group will need to estimate the duration of each task and sequence the activities into the right order of completion.



Identify Career Pathways System Evaluation Metrics (Slides 9–13)

After the group has committed to the implementation plan, the facilitator can guide it in developing an evaluation plan to determine the success of the implementation, as well as identify course corrections as needed. By creating an evaluation plan, all stakeholders can continue to build and sustain consensus on the goals of the system and identify gaps or challenges over time. This activity will be introduced and guided by expert presentations.

- ▶ Prior to the meeting, the facilitator:
 - Engages in conversations with implementation measurement experts to determine which measures other states have used, the accessibility of different measures, and the validity and reliability of those measures for informing success.
- ▶ During the meeting, the facilitator:
 - Supports experts in guiding the conversation using the following types of questions:
 - What are expected enrollment and completion rates in the first few years of implementation?
 - What college- and career-ready outcomes would we expect to see as a result of this pathway?
 - What changes in district, school, and classrooms are needed to support the career pathways system? How can these be accomplished?

- What outcomes do you expect to see in higher education? How can these be documented?
- What outcomes do you expect to see in business and industry? How can these be captured?



Reflect on the Implementation Process (Slides 14–19)

After the career pathways system has been implemented, the facilitator will reconvene the stakeholder group to reflect on the success of implementation and lessons learned throughout the process. This work will inform the continuous improvement of the system over time. Likewise, this work will inform the communications and outreach planning.

- ▶ During the meeting, the facilitator:
 - Engages the group in a series of reflection discussions based on each milestone identified using the following types of questions:
 - What worked well? Was there anything that you were not expecting that helped the process?
 - What did not work well? What would you change about this process?
 - Is the level of engagement you have now desirable? Why or why not?
 - Are there any anticipated factors that might impact the system? Are there any changes to the implementation timeline that should be considered as a result?
 - Are we committed to moving forward with the career pathways system as currently outlined? Is there anything that should be revisited, discussed, or changed?
 - Guides conversation in a way that allows stakeholders to share their experiences, captures lessons that were learned during the process, and identifies how that information can be used to ensure that all stakeholders maintain commitment to the implementation of the career pathways system. When engaging in these reflection conversations, key questions the group can discuss include:
 - What worked well? Any unexpected supports?
 - What did not work well? What would you change?
 - Is the level of engagement desirable? Why or why not?
 - Are there any changes to the implementation timeline that should be considered as a result?
 - Is there commitment to moving forward with the career pathways system as currently outlined? Is there anything that should be revisited, discussed, or changed?
 - Uses the information collected during the discussion to create consensus about the next phase of the work and the milestones that will be used to determine progress.
 - Integrates any needed changes that have been highlighted in the planning process.

Chapter 4 Summary and Desired Outcomes

By the end of this chapter, the stakeholder group has identified the measures, milestones, and outcomes that will be used to evaluate the implementation of the career pathways system. Stakeholders have committed to different roles on the continued evaluation of the system. Because this final chapter focused on a continuous improvement process, there is no defined ending for implementation. Stakeholders determined what role they will play in the continuous improvement process, and the facilitator will keep stakeholders involved to ensure sustainability of the career pathways system.

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