

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	<b>NO.</b> 17-15
	<b>DATE</b> December 1, 2015

**TO:** STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES  
 STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS  
 STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARD CHAIRS  
 ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER MANAGERS  
 STATE VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING DIRECTORS  
 WIOA SECTION 166 GRANTEES  
 JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTORS  
 ETA REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS  
 ALL DISCRETIONARY GRANTEES

**FROM:** BYRON ZUIDEMA /s/ for PORTIA WU  
 Assistant Secretary

**SUBJECT:** Release and Availability of the Technical Assistance Resource, Career Pathways Toolkit: A Guide for System Development.

1. **Purpose.** To announce the availability of a technical assistance resource, the revised Career Pathways Toolkit: A Guide for System Development, for States, local areas, and tribal entities developing career pathway systems.
2. **References.**
  - Training and Employment Notice (TEN): 39-11,  
[http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=4609](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=4609)
3. **Background.** The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) that went into effect on July 1, 2015 provides an extraordinary opportunity to improve job and career options for the nation's workers and job seekers through an integrated, job-driven, public workforce system that links diverse talent to businesses. WIOA requires states and localities to collaborate with adult education, postsecondary education, and other partners—to establish career pathways systems that make it easier for all Americans to attain the skills and credentials needed for jobs in their regional economy.

Career pathway systems offer an effective approach to the development of a skilled workforce by increasing the number of workers in the U.S. who gain industry-recognized and academic credentials necessary to work in jobs that are in-demand. The past several years have seen unprecedented collaboration at the Federal level among the U.S. Departments of Labor (USDOL), Education, and Health and Human Services. The Departments have made important investments to help expand career pathways across the country. The Departments have expressed their shared commitment for career pathway strategies as an effective way of helping youth and adults acquire marketable skills and industry recognized credentials;

developed a common career pathways framework to guide states and local leaders in implementing and sustaining career pathways systems; and have hosted two National Dialogues that engaged individuals across the country on implementation.

While the Departments have provided guidance and technical assistance on the development of career pathway systems over the years, WIOA now codifies the essential elements of career pathways into law. 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.

4. **The Revised Career Pathways Toolkit:** In September 2011, the USDOL published the initial Career Pathways toolkit, (please see TEN: 39-11 for more information). With the passage of WIOA, USDOL revised and updated the toolkit to provide the workforce system with a framework, resources, and tools for states and local partners to develop, implement, and sustain career pathways systems and programs. The “Career Pathways Toolkit: A Guide for System Development” is available here: <https://www.workforce3one.org/view/2001523732879857569/info> and attached to this TEN.

This revised Toolkit acknowledges USDOL’s and its Federal partners’ efforts to create and sustain a job-driven workforce system using career pathway systems as the framework. This version also maintains the original framework but reflects substantial gains in knowledge and experience as well as incorporates guidelines detailed within WIOA.

This Toolkit, like the original toolkit, features Six Key Elements of Career Pathways that help to guide local and state teams through the essential components necessary for developing a comprehensive career pathways system. The components under each element are not sequential and may occur in any order. Likewise, multiple partners can engage in the components simultaneously to carry out the mission of the career pathways system. The six elements are:

1. Build cross-agency partnerships and clarify roles
2. Identify industry sectors and engage employers
3. Design education and training programs
4. Identify funding needs and sources
5. Align policies and programs
6. Measure system change and performance

Given the increased role of the State Workforce Development Board in the development of an overall strategy for career pathways, state workforce staff and their colleagues at other state-level agencies including the State Adult Education Agency and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency may find this toolkit useful in supporting the work of the State Board. Under WIOA, State Boards are responsible for aligning core partners and developing and improving the workforce system through the development of career pathways. As such, they are responsible for convening stakeholders and core partners to contribute to the development of the state plan. The policies and strategies of the state leadership team regarding career pathways must be consistent with the state unified/combined plan required in WIOA. Local areas implementing career pathways may also find this Toolkit helpful.

In addition to this Toolkit, the Department plans to release a companion workbook that includes additional tools and resources to assist states and local partners in the work of developing, implementing, and sustaining career pathways systems and programs, sector strategies, and Registered Apprenticeship.

For more information on Registered Apprenticeship, the Department has posted the Registered Apprenticeship Toolkit. It can be found at [www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/toolkit/index.htm](http://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/toolkit/index.htm).

For more information on Sector Strategies, visit the Expanding Business Engagement Community of Practice at <http://businessengagement.workforce3one.org/>.

5. **Action Requested.** States, local areas, and tribal entities are encouraged to use these resources to support their career pathways initiatives and to share this TEN with workforce investment system partners, including employers, community colleges, adult basic education providers, human services, economic development and community-based organizations and workforce intermediaries. Also, please visit the Innovation and Exchange Network (ION) at <https://wioa.workforce3one.org/> to learn more about WIOA and access important resources. ION is your online learning and teaching community, designed to help you connect with peers throughout the public workforce system
6. **Inquiries.** For more information about the Career Pathways initiative, please visit the Career Pathways Community of Practice at <https://www.learnwork.workforce3one.org/> or contact the appropriate regional office.
7. **Attachment.** Career Pathways Toolkit: A Guide for System Development.