

**AGENCY SPECIFIC CONTENT FOR THE NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY
WIOA STATEWIDE YOUTH CAREER PATHWAYS**

APPENDIX B

Vision and Theory of Action

The vision and theory of action outlined in this section is key to the development of an application for funding in this NOFO. The Standing Youth Committee of the IWIB, responsible for the development of this NOFO, recognizes the need to connect young people to meaningful education, training, and employment. WIOA emphasizes deeper investment in a system which supports employer-demand driven programs that address the diverse needs of young people.

Career Pathway Systems: Young people who are disconnected from either the employment and/or education system represent diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and circumstances. As such the issue of disconnection (i.e., why students are disconnected in the first place) requires various approaches to solve. The theory of action for addressing the needs of opportunity youth centers on development of career pathway systems, with both elements that pertain to the development of the learner and the system that supports that learner.

Learner Focused Framework: As learner's progress through an education program and into a career, there are three aspects of career pathway development that must be taken into consideration:

1. **Workplace Learning**, through work-based learning opportunities, particularly those skills that enable people to grow in their work;
2. **Foundational Skills**, such as accountability, timeliness, and interpersonal skills, those skills that are essential to developing workplace relationships with others; and
3. The continuation of **Education and Training**, to develop and continuously fine-tune technical and academic skills which support both personal and business development goals.

System Focused Framework: Career Pathway system development requires several key elements to ensure long term feasibility and inclusiveness:

1. **Ownership** of local and regional programs by local actors, targeting participants with the supports that suit local needs, addressing the needs and requirements of the business community, working with providers, and blending/braiding public funds where appropriate from federal and state agencies and private sector investments;
2. Building **capacity** of local and regional actors to develop programs that are locally and regional appropriate, with the necessary intermediary supports to ensure the continuation of programs; and
3. Ensuring program **sustainability** through the blending of private and public funds where appropriate and the braiding of those funds where feasible.

Addressing Youth Needs: A key in shifting the conversation from disconnection to opportunity is a recognition that young people are ready and eager to be part of the solution, and desire ways in which to reconnect to work and to school, but face multiple obstacles in their attempts to do so. Career Pathway models have proved successful in reintegrating young people into education and employment, but care must be taken to ensure that appropriate supports are provided based on individual need. Opportunity Youth needs can be organized based up on their degree of preparation and ability to take up opportunities. Within each of these quadrants, critical needs and the types of support required are

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identified. This helps providers and community partners ascertain what types of support an opportunity youth learner might need in relation to his/her own career development.

Community Ownership: Communities should have a sense of ownership and participation in the design and implementation of career pathway systems. This co-ownership among partners at the local and regional level helps to build capacity among local actors to build regionally responsive programs and to build mechanisms for sustainability. The community ownership is facilitated by a connection to other communities who are doing this work, to learn from best practices and collectively overcome hurdles.

Consortia Models: [Building a consortium](#) helps to consolidate partners who are often servicing similar constituencies and/or connecting with the same partners and employers. Joining forces towards a common cause helps to avoid many issues of program overlap and can concentrate a community's focus for greater impact on a problem.

Youth Ownership: Young people should be given the opportunity to participate fully depending on their level of need and should be provided with the commensurate support to do so. Youth ownership is facilitated by the development of a forum where opportunity youth who demonstrate capacity for leadership are provided with the opportunity to speak for the opportunity youth community at large and to play a leadership role in that community.

Sector-Based Strategies and Career Pathways: Sector-based initiatives at the regional level are approaches to workforce and economic development that improve access to good jobs and/or increase job quality in ways that strengthen an industry's workforce. Sector initiatives:

1. Focus intensively on an industry within a regional labor market, and multiple employers in the industry, over a sustained period.
2. Are led by a workforce intermediary with credibility in the industry.
3. Create new pathways for low-wage workers into the industry, leading to good jobs and careers.
4. Achieve systemic changes that are "win-win" for employers, workers, and the community.

Career pathways are an approach to connecting progressive levels of basic skills and postsecondary education, training, and supportive services:

1. In specific sectors or cross-sector occupations.
2. In a way that optimizes the progress and success of individuals, including those with limited education, English, skills, and/or work experience.
3. In helping individuals secure marketable credentials, self-sustaining employment, and further education and employment opportunities.

Career pathway programs focus on a) participant-focused instruction and training; b) appropriate and meaningful assessment; c) supportive services and navigation; and d) direct connections to employment.

Sector and career pathways initiatives are complementary, and all career pathways should incorporate sector strategy principles.