



# Career Pathways

January 2024

# What is Career Pathways?

Theoretical Framework

# Career Pathways Defined

Career Pathways (CP) is an approach to vocational rehabilitation that aims to maximize participants' opportunities for higher-paying jobs and advancement in employment through skills development

# Basis for Career Pathways

Foundation

## Federal Regulations

In accordance with federal law, VR services, “are available to assist the individual with a disability in preparing for, securing, retaining, ***advancing in*** or regaining an employment outcome that is ***consistent with the individual’s unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice***” (CFR 361.48 (b), p. 287).

## Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act

An advantage of the CP approach is that it's in alignment with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA): there is an integration of educational instruction, workforce development, and vocational supports that are linked to labor market trends and business needs leading to stackable credentials.

# Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act

WIOA defines CP as a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that:

- Align with the skill needs of industries in the regional economy involved;
- Prepare an individual to be successful in a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options;
- Includes counseling to support an individual in achieving their education and career goals;

# Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act

- Provide education and training to accelerate the individual's educational and career advancement;
- Includes education offered *concurrently* with workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupational cluster;
- Enables an individual to gain at least one recognized postsecondary credential;
- Helps an individual enter or *advance* within a specific occupational cluster.




# Benefits & Beneficiaries

Dual-Customer Approach

## Benefits & Beneficiaries

### Dual-Customer Approach:

- Career Pathways help VR meet employer's business needs
- Career Pathways help improve the employment landscape for individuals with disabilities

A scenic landscape featuring a paved road with yellow dashed lines leading into the distance. To the right of the road is a field of hay bales, and in the background are rolling hills under a sunset sky with warm orange and yellow light. The sky transitions from a deep blue on the left to a bright orange on the right.

# What Does Career Pathways Look Like?

Nuts & Bolts

## What does Career Pathways look like?


- CP shifts the focus from single job placement to a career trajectory with a focus on advancement
- CP provides for greater flexibility in training, education, and work-based learning opportunities to achieve goals
- CP allows for creative vocational guidance and counseling and IPE flexibility to help participants realize their full potential and achieve greater economic self-sufficiency

## What does Career Pathways look like?

- A CP case may allow for a multiple jobs that help the participant progress towards their goals and objectives.
- The first job may be related to the participant's goals, but may be unrelated employment that can help the participant pay the bills while he or she concurrently engages in training or post-secondary services to acquire credentials that lead to advancement opportunities

## What is Career Pathways?

- Know that the CP approach may not be the right approach for every participant — it depends on the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice

A close-up photograph of several metal nuts and bolts. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, creating a sense of depth and texture. The nuts are hexagonal, and the bolts have visible threads. The background is blurred, focusing attention on the foreground hardware.

# How it Will Work

Nuts & Bolts

# Process

First, it will require thoughtful vocational guidance and counseling.





# Process

## What is vocational guidance and counseling?

- Vocational guidance and counseling is a process in which the counselor and participant form a working, therapeutic partnership to assist the participant in achieving an employment goal that is consistent with his or her unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, interests and informed choices

# Process

- This process involves assessment to identify short-term and long-range employment goals, ongoing assessment of functional limitations that may pose barriers to reaching those goals, and strategies to address those impediments

# Process

- Counselors may obtain assistance with assessment of a participant from a provider, but vocational guidance and counseling cannot be delegated — this service can only be provided by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor

# Process

- The Counselor and participant will together determine if a CP approach is the right approach for the participant
- The Counselor will determine if referral to a provider for Discovery services is necessary to identify a viable employment goal

# Process

To aid in this process, the Counselor may utilize:

- Informational interviews
- Record review
- Online resources such as assessment tools and local labor market information (LMI)
- Formal diagnostic evaluations such as psychological and vocational evaluations
- Other options

## Process

### CP involves

- Some form of training – short-or long-term
- A longer timeline of services
- Coordination of services over that timeline
- Utilizes resources outside of VR, such as DWD, CTE programs, technical colleges, Pre-ETS providers, employers, etc.

# Implications for the Employment Service Providers

More targeted Discovery if needed

Increased potential for hourly ES

Potential for more than one set of milestones paid on a case



# Desired Outcomes

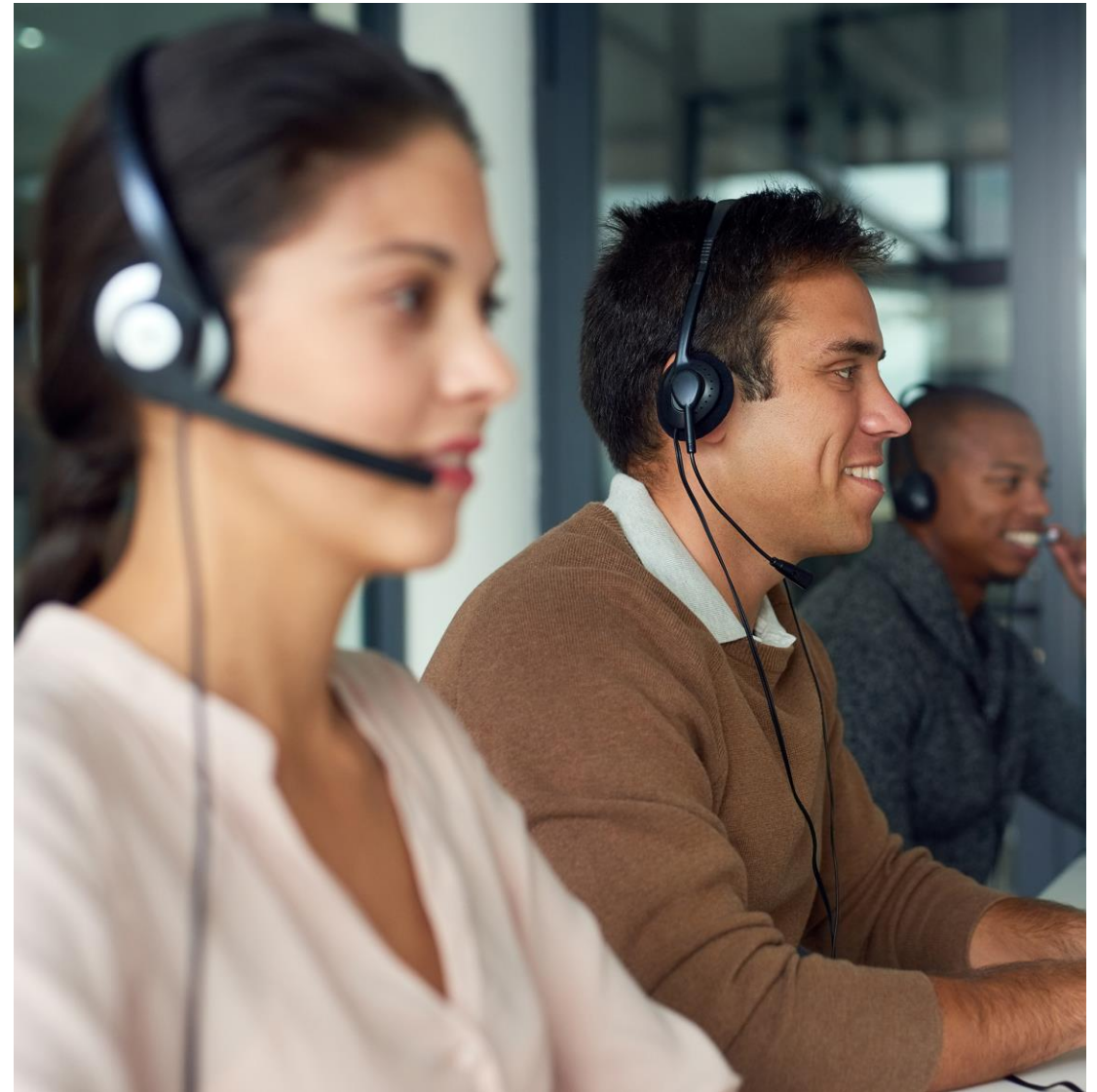
Higher participant wages

Greater participant advancement opportunities

Longer-term job retention

Enhanced customer satisfaction

Decreased recidivism





## Desired Outcomes

- Employer staffing needs better met
- Increased economic development statewide and for local communities
- Improved performance on WIOA metrics
- Enhanced staff satisfaction knowing their efforts are having a more significant impact

# 01

Emphasis on participant's capabilities for advancement given access to needed services and supports

# 02

Will require thoughtful evaluation to assess participant capabilities for ultimate vocational goal viability determination

# 03

Strong vocational counseling and guidance required for staged goal development in Career Pathways approach

## Summary

CP may or may not be appropriate for every participant

CP requires critical-thinking skills to conceptualize the process, to see the case as a pathway with steps to a destination

Know that the process may not always be linear, and may look differently for each participant

## Summary

CP approach allows for more than one job goal, and training services concurrent with employment services

Cases will progress in stages or phases, and those may be subject to change

Likely to result in cases open for longer periods

Summary

# Questions?

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