

## **Summary of** **ABE Career Connections: A Manual for Integrating Adult Basic Education** **into Career Pathways**

How could your program help students advance toward their career goals? Would you like to learn more about what some programs are doing to help students succeed in jobs that require at least some post-secondary education?

This Manual provides information on steps to develop and design career pathways as a way to address both the educational and employment needs of adults. It offers some interesting examples of five programs and schools that have embarked on career pathways programs that integrate ABE.

The information in this manual and the examples from the Adult Basic Education Career Connections (ABECC) project summarize various approaches to implementing ABE career pathways. Regardless of how pathways are implemented, the five sites all worked towards a common goal: improving the educational and employment outcomes of ABE participants. Furthermore, the sites' experiences resulted in some common insights about ABE pathways.

The career pathways at the five sites were:

1. ESOL and pre-CNA training → CNA course → Certified Nursing Assistant
2. Pre-CMA course → CMA course → Certified Medical Assistant
3. Professional communication for Health Care Workers course → Prerequisite courses for certificate programs → various positions
4. Prep for Success course → Prerequisite courses for certificate programs Prerequisite courses for certificate programs
5. Lab animal caretaker Training (LACT) → Lab animal caretaker
6. ESOL for Building Trades and Health Care Careers → Noncredit PSE courses in building trades and health care → various positions

Career pathways—a series of linked educational courses and training programs that lead to advancement within an industry—are a promising approach. Adult basic education (ABE) career pathways, in particular, focus on strengthening connections between ABE and postsecondary education to help more adult learners acquire a postsecondary credential or degree and well-paid employment. ABE programs can partner with employers, unions and job training programs to help students and workers acquire skills they need to advance on the job.

Some employers are interested in creating a “pipeline” into the jobs in their workplaces for workers with the needed skills. Others are interested in helping educate and train their current workers for higher-level positions. And ABE programs may be interested in partnering with employers or one or the others of these efforts, in order to help create employment opportunities for their students, develop new funding streams for their programs, or be able to reach out to new and diverse populations. For all of these groups, career pathways programs and partnerships provide great opportunities. Especially now that most jobs with family-sustaining wages pretty require some education beyond the GED and/or advancement beyond an entry-level job, these programs are really the way of the future—for ABE programs, for students, for teachers, for employer, unions, community colleges and job training organizations.

Despite the need for more information, the examples in this manual show how ABE programs can construct connections to career pathways to promote educational and career advancement for adults. The sections include:

**Overview of ABE Career Pathways:** Defines ABE career pathways and discusses steps involved in designing them.

**Descriptions of Pathway Components and Site Examples:** Summarizes information on the pathway components, based on resources used by project staff and participants. Each section also discusses challenges related to the pathway component and offers implementation examples from the ABECC sites.

**Student Recruitment, Orientation, and Placement:** Discusses approaches to identifying participants, introducing them to the educational and employment steps along the pathway, and confirming a match between their skills and interests and the pathway goals.

**Course Development:** Discusses approaches to designing and delivering contextualized basic skills courses, including the roles that postsecondary and employer partners can play in course development, support services for participants, and strategies for helping participants transition to postsecondary education.

**Partnerships:** Discusses approaches to establishing and sustaining partnerships in support of ABE pathways and provides information on the types of partners that may be involved and possible roles they may play.

**Data Collection and Analysis:** Discusses approaches to collecting and analyzing program and participant data on an ongoing basis to measure participants' basic skills gains and assess the effectiveness of the basic skills training. Also discusses the selection and use of appropriate assessment tools.

**Conclusion:** Summarizes lessons learned from the sites about ABE pathways design and implementation and discusses implications for policy and practice.

**Resources:** Lists resources made available to project staff and ABECC participants and consulted in the development of this manual. Includes brief descriptions of each resource and links to resources available online.

**Glossary.** Defines key terms related to adult basic education and career pathways.

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