



Bridges to Careers for Low-Skilled Adults



A Program Development Guide

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**Women Employed with
Chicago Jobs Council and
UIC Great Cities Institute**

Women Employed

Women Employed's mission is to improve the economic status of women and remove barriers to economic equity. Since its founding in 1973, Women Employed and its affiliate, the Women Employed Institute, have won historic changes in public and private sector policies that have expanded women's opportunities and improved workplaces throughout the country. Today, Women Employed is a leading national advocate for women earning low wages. Women Employed promotes fair employment practices, increases access to education and training, and provides women with innovative tools to plan their careers. In 2003, Women Employed launched the Illinois Career Pathways Initiative, a collaborative effort to enable individuals of varied skill and ability levels to move along clear educational pathways and into good jobs. www.womenemployed.org

Chicago Jobs Council

Founded in 1981 as a citywide coalition, the Chicago Jobs Council's (CJC) mission is to ensure access to employment and career-advancement opportunities for people in poverty. Since its origin, CJC has reflected the principle that to eliminate poverty we must facilitate diverse and broad community participation in public policy. To that end, the membership has grown from 18 founding members to more than 100 community-based organizations, civic groups, and individuals with whom our staff work to develop and implement successful reform initiatives. Members contribute their frontline experience serving disadvantaged job seekers and working poor families at monthly working group meetings. CJC also partners with workforce stakeholders —local workforce boards, foundations, public agencies, and local, regional, and national coalitions — to strengthen linkages for a community-informed policy agenda. www.cjc.net

UIC Great Cities Institute

The Great Cities Institute (GCI) serves as the University of Illinois at Chicago's (UIC) focal point for new initiatives in interdisciplinary applied urban research. Through its Workforce Development program, directed by senior fellow Davis Jenkins, GCI conducts research on how to increase access to economic opportunity for disadvantaged youths and adults. A key focus of this work is finding ways to strengthen the capacity of public postsecondary institutions, particularly community colleges, to educate economically and educationally disadvantaged individuals for gainful employment in a knowledge economy. www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci

Foreword

There is increasing focus in the U.S. on the importance of education and training as both a key avenue to advancement for people earning low wages and an economic development strategy for building healthy state economies. In Illinois, Women Employed launched the Illinois Career Pathways Initiative in 2003 to focus on building career pathways that would enable individuals — particularly those with low skills — to combine school and work and advance over time to better jobs and higher levels of education and training, including four-year degrees. Similar initiatives have been launched in other states, often involving partnerships of state agencies, advocacy groups, workforce agencies and intermediaries, community colleges, and community-based organizations.

In Illinois, we began this effort by focusing on the development of the first rung of the pathway — bridge programs for low-literate individuals who are locked in low-wage jobs or are unemployed. By bridge programs, we mean training to prepare adults who lack basic skills to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and training leading to career-path employment. This decision coincided with growing interest in a career pathways approach on the part of community colleges, advocacy and community-based organizations, workforce boards, and others, and the launching of the Critical Skill Shortages Initiative by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

To broaden understanding of the potential contribution of bridge programs to workforce development, a partnership of the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago, the Chicago Jobs Council, the UIC Great Cities Institute, and Women Employed formed to sponsor two conferences in 2004 focused on developing bridge programs in several high-growth industry sectors. The Grand Victoria Foundation and the Joyce Foundation provided funding. Partnerships of community colleges, community-based organizations, workforce boards, and employers interested in creating bridge programs attended in large numbers. Attendees told us: “We want to develop bridge programs, but how?” At the same time, the Center on Law and Social Policy (CLASP) was seeing the need for a how-to manual on bridge programs at the national level. CLASP approached Women Employed and the Chicago Jobs Council about developing this guide and then provided seed funding for it.

This guide is directed to bridge program developers, managers, and coordinators — that is, the individuals who are responsible for program development and implementation. They are typically based at a community college, a community-based organization, or other education or workforce agency. At the same time, the guide is rich with information useful to all bridge program partners, including employers, unions, four-year colleges, and others.

We welcome your ideas, your experiences with implementing bridge programs, and your suggestions for additional information or studies that would be helpful going forward. The guide will be available on the Web sites of Women Employed (www.womenemployed.org) and the Chicago Jobs Council (www.cjc.net). Also, information about career pathways and bridge programs will continue to be posted on the listserv of the Career Pathways Initiative (<http://groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/CareerPathways>).

This guide was a collaborative project of the Women Employed Institute, the Chicago Jobs Council, and the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Great Cities Institute. Toni Henle, Director of Workforce Development Policy at the Women Employed Institute, was the project manager. The project team included Davis Jenkins, faculty fellow at the UIC Great Cities Institute, and Whitney Smith, Associate Director of the Chicago Jobs Council, and project consultants, Deborah Hagman-Shannon, DHS Consultants, and Judith Kossy, Policy Program Partners. We’d like to thank Stephanie Sommers, Safer Foundation, who contributed to the curriculum section, and Dannielle Shaw and Rachel Unruh, Women Employed staff.

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Toni Henle, Women Employed Institute
Davis Jenkins, University of Illinois at Chicago Great Cities Institute
Whitney Smith, Chicago Jobs Council

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Overview of Bridge Training Programs

UNDERSTANDING BRIDGE BASICS

IDENTIFYING BRIDGE PROGRAM MODELS

BUILDING BRIDGES TO A CAREER PATH

Overview of Bridge Training Programs

UNDERSTANDING BRIDGE BASICS

Increasingly, jobs that pay more than subsistence wages and offer opportunities for career advancement require at least some training beyond high school, even at the entry level. Yet too many people already in the workforce or coming into the labor force lack the basic skills to succeed in post-secondary education.

Bridge training programs prepare adults who lack adequate basic skills to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and training, leading to career-path employment. Bridge programs seek to enable students to advance both to better jobs and to further education *and* training, and thus are designed to provide a broad foundation for career-long learning on the job and formal post-high school education and training.

Bridge programs are suited for adults who have reading and mathematics skills below the ninth-grade level. These individuals may or may not have a high school diploma or GED. There are millions of such individuals in the United States:

- 27 million adults in the U.S. do not have a high school diploma.¹
- More than half (52 percent) of U.S. adults with a high school diploma read in the two lowest literacy levels (out of five). This means, for example, that they are unable to find information in a text needed to perform a task.²
- Many students are not academically prepared for college. More than a quarter (28 percent) of first-time college freshmen in fall 2000 took at least one remedial course. Among first-time community college freshmen, 42 percent took at least one remedial course.³

Meanwhile, the rewards for higher levels of education and the education requirements of jobs have been increasing:

- In the last 30 years, real wages for workers without a high school degree declined 19 percent, while wages for those with a college degree increased 16 percent.⁴

- Jobs requiring a level of basic skills associated with at least some college will account for an estimated two-thirds of all new jobs created between 2000 and 2010, and the vast majority of new jobs that pay wages sufficient to support a family.⁵
- Workers with associate degrees earn significantly more than those with at most a high school education, and the earnings advantage of bachelor's degree workers has grown even more quickly.⁶

Figure 1: Knowledge Economy Job Structure, p. 5, summarizes the characteristics of jobs at different levels of the labor market along with the qualifications for each. Table 1, p. 6, presents sample titles and wages for jobs at each level of the diagram. To put this in practical terms, to get a job that pays nine or 10 dollars an hour to start *and* pays health benefits — jobs that in the diagram are referred to as “entry-level skilled” and include, for example, patient care technician, multiple machine tool setter, or bank teller — applicants would need to have the basic skills to qualify for entry into a college-level certificate program plus some specific training. To move to the next level, entry-level technician jobs, one would need at least the equivalent of two full semesters of college occupational certificate training, and in some cases an associate degree. Bridge programs are designed to prepare adults to qualify for entry-level skilled jobs and enter two-year college occupational certificate or associate degree programs.

Bridge training programs are designed for individuals who have generally not been successful in traditional education settings or have been out of school for some time. These include:

- Prospective college students with a high school diploma or GED who are unable to meet college entrance or placement requirements
- Students in adult education (including adult basic education, GED preparation, or English-as-a-Second-Language programs)
- Students in developmental (college remedial) programs

- Workers displaced from jobs because of structural economic change
- Unemployed adults with poor basic skills
- Low-skilled workers who are employed but stuck in low-wage jobs

Bridge programs are an effective tool to reach, motivate, and teach such adults and enable them to succeed in postsecondary training and enter jobs that pay family-supporting wages.

Research indicates that the most effective way to help adults improve their basic skills is to teach the basics in the context of training for jobs, preparing for employment, or some other activity that is meaningful to their lives.⁷ This is precisely what bridge programs do. Some of the key features of bridge programs are as follows:

- The curriculum is defined in terms of competencies needed to succeed in postsecondary training and jobs that, with experience and further training, can lead to career advancement.
- Programs are focused on the basics of communication, problem-solving, applied mathematics, technology applications, and technical fundamentals taught in the context of problems and situations drawn from the contemporary workplace and the postsecondary classroom.
- Instruction emphasizes learning by doing through projects, simulations, and labs.
- Programs expose students to opportunities and requirements of employment and education in fields of importance to local economies through career and college exploration and planning, field trips, job shadowing, internships, and other means.
- Programs are offered at times and places convenient to working adults and use instructional methods and technologies appropriate for adult learners.
- Programs are compressed to allow adults to complete them quickly and move on to better jobs and further education.

- Programs offer support services, including assessment and counseling, case management, child care, and financial aid.
- Programs offer job and college placement assistance and follow-up.

Bridge programs are typically offered through partnerships that can involve degree-credit and non-credit divisions within colleges, community groups, adult education providers, employers and labor groups, one-stop career centers, and social service agencies all actively cooperating to recruit students and provide them the training and support they need to advance to postsecondary education and career-path employment.

On the following pages, figure 1, p. 5, presents a schema of the job structure, and table 1, p. 6, provides sample job titles and wages for selected job levels in the knowledge economy.

Many existing programs for adults with limited basic skills have at least one of the key bridge program features listed above. Yet few programs incorporate most or all of them. What most distinguishes bridge programs is their dual focus on preparation for postsecondary learning and career access and advancement.

Bridge training can be built on existing educational programs that serve low-skilled adults, but these programs need to be reconfigured to ensure a connection both to job advancement and to further education.

- Adult basic skills (ABE/GED) programs should prepare adults for college and a job, or to advance in a current job, as well as help them improve their literacy skills or study for the GED.
- English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs should help students develop academic skills and prepare for college or a job, in addition to improving their practical language skills.
- Adult vocational skills training programs, the typical short-term training programs for adults with no high school diploma or GED, should prepare students for further learning on the job or in school, and provide the specific skills needed for particular jobs.

UNDERSTANDING BRIDGE BASICS

- Workplace literacy training should emphasize the basic skills needed for further learning and job advancement, for example, oral and written communication, problem-solving, applied math, basic computer applications, time management, and test-taking, along with improving basic skills needed for particular jobs.
- College remedial or developmental courses should focus on preparing students for success in college generally, enabling them to place into the initial college-level English and math courses, while integrating some introductory occupational skills and concepts.
- Programs should focus on integrating basic and vocational skills with job awareness to improve student motivation for learning that is connected to good jobs.

Today's labor market values both skills and credentials. Students should not have to choose between an academic or degree track and a vocational one. Bridge programs are designed to prepare and motivate students to enter further education leading to certificates and degrees and advance to better jobs.

Figure 1: Knowledge Economy Job Structure

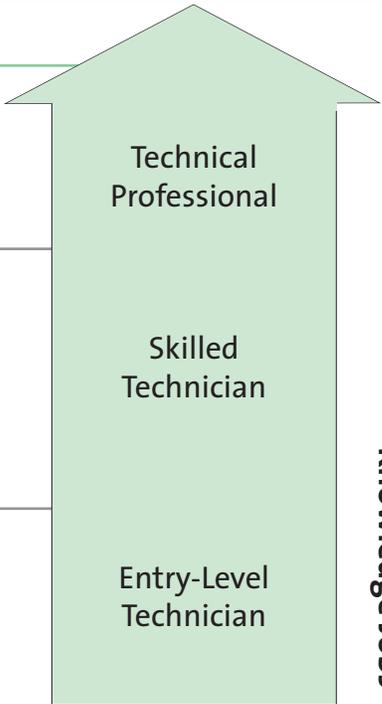
JOB CHARACTERISTICS	QUALIFICATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Salaried ■ Supervisory responsibilities ■ Career advancement potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bachelor’s degree ■ Strong communicator ■ People/project management skills ■ Extensive business knowledge 	 <p>Technical Professional</p> <p>Skilled Technician</p> <p>Entry-Level Technician</p>	<p>Knowledge Jobs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High Wages ■ Problem-solving intensive ■ Project-oriented ■ Learning-intensive ■ Career advancement potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Experience + Training ■ Degree often required ■ Technically current ■ Strong communicator ■ Business knowledge ■ Career entrepreneur 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ > \$11 per hour with benefits ■ Problem-solving intensive ■ Learning-intensive ■ Project-oriented ■ Career advancement potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ H.S. diploma or GED ■ Some postsecondary training ■ Strong technical fundamentals ■ Strong problem-solver ■ Flexible/rapid learner 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ > \$9 per hour with benefits ■ Usually full-time ■ Some discretion to solve problems ■ Multi-skilled ■ Opportunities for learning on-the-job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Drug free ■ Strong work habits/team player ■ Solid functional basic skills (> 9th grade communications/math) ■ Problem-solver ■ Motivated/resourceful ■ H.S. credentials often required 	<p>Entry-Level Skilled</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Low wage (\$6–9 per hour), often without benefits ■ Often part-time or temporary ■ Repetitive ■ Little discretion/autonomy ■ Dead-end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reliable ■ > 5th grade literacy (> 8th grade for higher level jobs) ■ Physical strength or manual dexterity (for some jobs) ■ Customer service/communication (for higher-level jobs) 	<p>Higher-Level Semi-Skilled</p>	<p>Low-wage, Dead-end Jobs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minimum wage, no benefits ■ Manual labor ■ Often temped through hiring halls/street corner hiring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Desperate for work 	<p>Lower-Level Semi-Skilled</p>	
		<p>Unskilled Laborer</p>	

Table 1: Knowledge Economy Job Structure: Sample Jobs and Wages

JOB LEVEL	SAMPLE JOB TITLES	MEDIAN WAGES
Technical Professional	Computer Systems Analyst	\$30.85
	Computer Software Engineer, Applications	\$34.87
	Computer Software Engineer, Systems	\$36.65
	Mechanical Engineer	\$30.72
	Registered Nurse	\$23.82
	Fashion Designer	\$25.42
	Accountant/Auditor	\$23.59
	Purchasing Manager	\$31.22
Skilled Technician	Computer Programmer	\$29.49
	CNC Programmer	\$18.43
	Machinist	\$15.91
	Industrial Engineering Technician	\$20.13
	Electronics Engineering Technician	\$20.98
	Surgical Technologist	\$15.45
	Radiologic Technician	\$19.53
	Bill and Account Collector	\$12.98
Entry-Level Technician	Computer Support Specialist	\$18.96
	CNC Operator	\$14.14
	Dental Assistant	\$13.32
	Emergency Medical Technicians	\$11.75
	Medical/Clinical Laboratory Technician	\$14.24
	License Practical Nurse	\$15.57
	Secretary	\$12.22
Entry-Level Skilled	Computer Repair Tech/Help Desk Level 1	\$16.24
	Multiple Machine Tool Setter	\$13.97
	Shipping and Receiving Clerk	\$11.38
	Patient Care Technician	\$11.62
	Office Clerk	\$10.80
	Bank Teller	\$9.94
Higher-Level Semi-Skilled	Telemarketer	\$9.55
	Home Health Aide (certified)	\$8.77
	Nursing Aides, Orderlies, Attendants	\$9.85
	Electronics Assembler	\$11.28
	Construction Laborer	\$11.86
	Truck Driver, Light or Delivery Services	\$11.58
	Counter/Rental Clerk	\$8.48
	Security Guard	\$9.45
	Taxi Driver or Chauffeur	\$9.14
	Mail Clerk	\$10.47
	Receptionist	\$10.25
	Cashier	\$7.58
Lower-Level Semi-Skilled	Production Worker – Helper	\$9.42
	Packers and Packagers, Hand	\$8.14
	Personal and Home Care Aide	\$7.91
	Maid/House Cleaner	\$7.98
	Car Washer	\$8.27
	Food Preparation Worker (incl. fast food)	\$7.92
	Baggage Porter or Bellhop	\$8.51
Unskilled Laborer	Day Laborer	Minimum wage

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics (OES), United States, May 2003. http://www.bls.gov/oes/2003/may/oes_nat.htm

IDENTIFYING BRIDGE PROGRAM MODELS

Bridge programs cannot be purchased “off the shelf” like a training curriculum or instructional software. Developing a bridge program is a *process* of adapting existing programs and services or adding new ones to enable the target population to advance to higher levels of education and employment. The particular form and content of a bridge program will depend on both the needs of the individuals to be served and the requirements of the education programs and jobs at the next level.

Not surprisingly, bridge programs for those who are seeking to move up from low-level jobs and who have relatively low levels of literacy are somewhat different than programs for those who are in somewhat better jobs and whose basic skills approach the level needed to enter postsecondary education and training.

This section describes two bridge program models, one for lower-skilled individuals and the other for those with somewhat higher levels of basic skills. It also includes examples of actual programs that reflect each model (see the last chapter of this guide for profiles of these programs). The two models incorporate features of actual programs and, as such, they should be thought of as idealized models. It is important to remember that **each bridge program is unique because it is developed for a specific target population and specific employers and will generally involve adapting existing program elements into the bridge model.**

Lower-level bridge programs prepare adults who are unemployed or in lower-level semi-skilled jobs to advance to higher-level semi-skilled jobs and to higher levels of training, including more advanced bridge programs. Lower-level programs are generally designed for native English speakers at the fifth- or sixth- grade reading level or for non-native speakers at the low-intermediate ESL level (as defined by the National Reporting System). Although participants in these programs are usually far from qualifying for college-level training or career-path employment, they will begin to explore postsecondary and career opportunities as part of the bridge experience.

Lower-level bridge programs emphasize the teaching of basic skills such as reading, communication, and applied math in the context of developing skills such as customer service, basic computer operation, and job-specific skills that will improve their job prospects. In this sense, these programs are like vocational ESL (VESL) or vocational adult basic education (VABE) programs. Yet, whereas VESL and VABE programs tend to focus fairly narrowly on the skills needed for specific jobs, lower-level bridge programs are designed to provide a broader foundation in applied basic skills. The goals of a lower-level bridge program are to improve the individual’s job prospects, provide a foundation for continued education and training, and increase career awareness.

Some lower-level programs are designed for individuals who want to enter a specific career field in a particular industry sector. These field-specific programs include instruction in basic skills integrated with teaching of basic occupation-specific technical skills. They can be offered in a college or other training organization.

Higher-level bridge programs prepare adults for advancement into entry-level skilled positions and into occupational certificate or associate degree programs. Most programs generally require a minimum of seventh grade reading for native speakers or a high-intermediate ESL level. Some higher-level programs are designed for individuals who want to enter a specific career field in a particular industry sector. These field-specific programs include higher-level instruction in basic skills (reading, communication, and applied math) integrated with teaching of basic occupation-specific technical skills. They can be offered in a college or other training organization. They can also be offered in workplaces, for example, when state customized training and workplace literacy funds are linked to develop programs for advancing employees within an individual company or within an employer consortium.

Other higher-level bridge programs are designed for those who want to pursue a career path but are not sure in which field. In these programs, students build their basic skills in the context of exploring postsecondary options and careers. They may also get a taste of instruction in the basics of one or more occupational fields. These programs put special

IDENTIFYING BRIDGE PROGRAM MODELS

emphasis on preparing for college placement tests and on college success skills in addition to career exposure.

Higher-level bridge programs most often prepare people for community college occupational certificates and degree programs. With careful design, they can also prepare students to succeed in two-year transfer programs. In any case, higher-level programs should be developed to connect students to college-credit programs as quickly as possible. This will enable students to draw on student financial aid and motivate them by putting career-path employment within their reach.

In some cases, lower- and higher-level bridge programs are designed sequentially to enable individuals who start at low levels of literacy to advance over time, completing one level of training and perhaps working for a while before returning to complete the next level. (See the profile of Instituto del Progreso Latino's "Pre-Bridge" contextualized ESL program on pp. 110–111, which is designed as a feeder for the higher-level Manufacturing Technology Bridge Program.) How long it will take those who start with low levels of literacy to advance to the point where they can enter college-level training will vary according to each person's circumstances. In some cases, an individual struggling to support a family through low-wage jobs may take years to advance.

Because even the lower-level bridge programs require at least fifth-grade reading level or a low-intermediate ESL level, native English speakers with even lower levels of literacy or who have learning disabilities and non-native speakers with limited English fluency are unlikely to succeed in bridge training without extensive instruction and support. Those who have little or no work experience may also have trouble succeeding in bridge programs or may require assistance securing stable employment and even income supports before they are ready for a bridge program.

An optional follow-on to higher-level bridge programs is an intensive GED program. In such a program, students take a GED practice test and then the program staff and instruc-

tors tailor a program that addresses students' individual weaknesses.* Intensive GED programs are designed for individuals with at least eighth-grade reading and math skills. In contrast to the traditional approach to GED instruction, intensive GED programs are designed to be offered *after* students enter or at least qualify for college-level training or entry-level skilled employment.† Such students are not only more prepared than the typical GED students, they can more readily see the connection between getting a GED and earning a postsecondary credential and advancing in their jobs. Both bridge program types described here are designed to teach skills essential to mastering the GED, so that students begin building their GED skills even before entering formal preparation for the test.

Common features of the lower- and higher-level bridge programs are:

- Exposure to GED skills for those who have not earned a GED
- Computer-assisted instruction in reading and math
- Strong emphasis on teaching test-taking skills (which are important for advancing both to college-level programs and to career-path employment)
- Career exploration, which may involve use of Internet-based resources such as Women Employed's Career Coach (www.womenemployed.org)
- Critical thinking integrated into all lessons
- Emphasis on learning to network to advance one's career, navigate support systems, and deal with personal issues (e.g., dependent care, transportation, domestic violence)
- Assistance with finding services such as child care, transportation, housing, and medical care

Figures 2 and 3, pp. 9–10, provide more details on the lower-level and higher-level bridge program models. In addition, profiles of the programs cited as examples are included at the end of this guide.

*For a guide to developing an intensive GED program, see <http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/techbridge/>.

†In most states, students who demonstrate an "ability to benefit" by passing placement tests at a certain level can enter community college programs without having a high school diploma or GED, allowing students to take intensive GED instruction concurrently with college-level courses.

Figure 2: Lower-Level Bridge Program Model

Target Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fifth- to sixth- grade reading (for native English speakers) ■ Low-intermediate ESL level (for non-native speakers)* ■ With or without a high school diploma or GED ■ At least some work experience ■ Desire to improve basic skills to advance to a better job 	
Job Objective		Education Objective
Full-time job paying \$7 to \$10 per hour, sometimes with benefits. Examples include home care aide, receptionist, construction laborer, telemarketer.		Further training through higher-level bridge programs.
Duration	8–12 weeks, 12–14 hours per week	
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adult educators and vocational instructors jointly develop and teach curriculum ■ Basic reading (meaning), writing (sentences), speaking (workplace vocabulary), and math (arithmetic) taught in context of job and life “success skills,” such as writing a resume, interviewing for a job, providing customer service, using computers at home and on the job, workplace safety, workplace rights, and exploring life and work values and goals ■ Training in industry-specific vocabulary and skills (in field-specific programs) ■ Workplace communication skills ■ Job-placement assistance 	
Program Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ESL Pre-Bridge, Instituto del Progreso Latino ■ Career Pathways Vocational Trainings for Non-Native Speakers, Portland and Mt. Hood community colleges 	

*The literacy levels for English as a Second Language (ESL) are based upon the National Reporting Service (NRS) levels; see www.nrsweb.org/reports/EFL_Descriptors.doc.

Figure 3: Higher-Level Bridge Program Model

<p>Target Audience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Seventh- to eighth- grade reading (for native English speakers) ■ High-intermediate ESL level (for non-native speakers) ■ With or without a high school diploma or GED ■ Stable work history ■ Desire to pursue postsecondary technical training or education 	
<p>Job Objective</p>		<p>Education Objective</p>
<p>Full-time job paying \$8 to \$12 per hour, usually with benefits. Examples include bank teller, multiple machine tool setter, medical billing, and coding clerk.</p>		<p>College-level certificate, associate degree program, or other postsecondary technical training.</p>
<p>Duration</p>	<p>8–16 weeks, 12–14 hours per week</p>	
<p>Features</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Outcome competencies set by employers and college occupational degree program faculty ■ Basic reading (reading for information), writing (paragraphs), speaking (presentations), math (pre-algebra), and computer applications (word processing, spreadsheet, presentation software) taught in the context of exploring careers and postsecondary training options and preparing a career plan ■ Learning success skills (for school and on the job), including note-taking, study habits, time management, financial literacy, and test-taking ■ Training in industry-specific vocabulary and technical fundamentals taught using workplace problems and tools and material from introductory college-level courses (in field-specific programs) ■ College credits or “credit equivalencies” for competencies developed and documented during bridge training ■ Job shadowing and internships ■ Job and college placement assistance 	
<p>Program Examples</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Watsonville Digital Bridge Academy, Cabrillo College ■ WAGE Pathways Bridge Program, Southeast Arkansas College and Southern Good Faith Fund ■ Manufacturing Technology Bridge, Instituto del Progreso Latino ■ Essential Skills Program, Community College of Denver 	

BUILDING BRIDGES TO A CAREER PATH

Ideally, bridge programs provide the initial steps in a longer progression of education and training that enables adults to advance over time to better jobs and higher levels of education. Figure 4: Educational Pathway to Careers for Adults, p. 12, illustrates such a “career pathway,” which consists of a connected series of education programs, with integrated support services, work experience, and learning on the job, and which enables adults to combine work and learning. Table 2: Educational Pathway Program Level Descriptions, p. 13, describes the various levels of programs involved in a career pathway. Note the key role of bridge programs in preparing low-skilled adults, who would otherwise be stuck in low-wage jobs, for postsecondary education leading to well-paying, career-path jobs.

Career pathways are characterized by clear connections within and across education and workforce institutions and programs. The outcome standards for each level are aligned to the requirements of education and employment at the next level and beyond and may result in state- or employer-recognized credentials. Thus, career pathways create explicit connections and clear roadmaps to educational and career advancement.

Career pathways are also designed around jobs of importance to regional economies. As such, they create educational stepping-stones for workers and job seekers and a supply of qualified workers for employers. Because of their focus on workforce and economic development, career pathways are best built through regional partnerships of education, workforce training, and economic development entities. Figure 5, p. 14, lists some of the many benefits of bridge programs to low-skilled adults, employers, and providers.

Figure 4: Educational Pathway to Careers for Adults

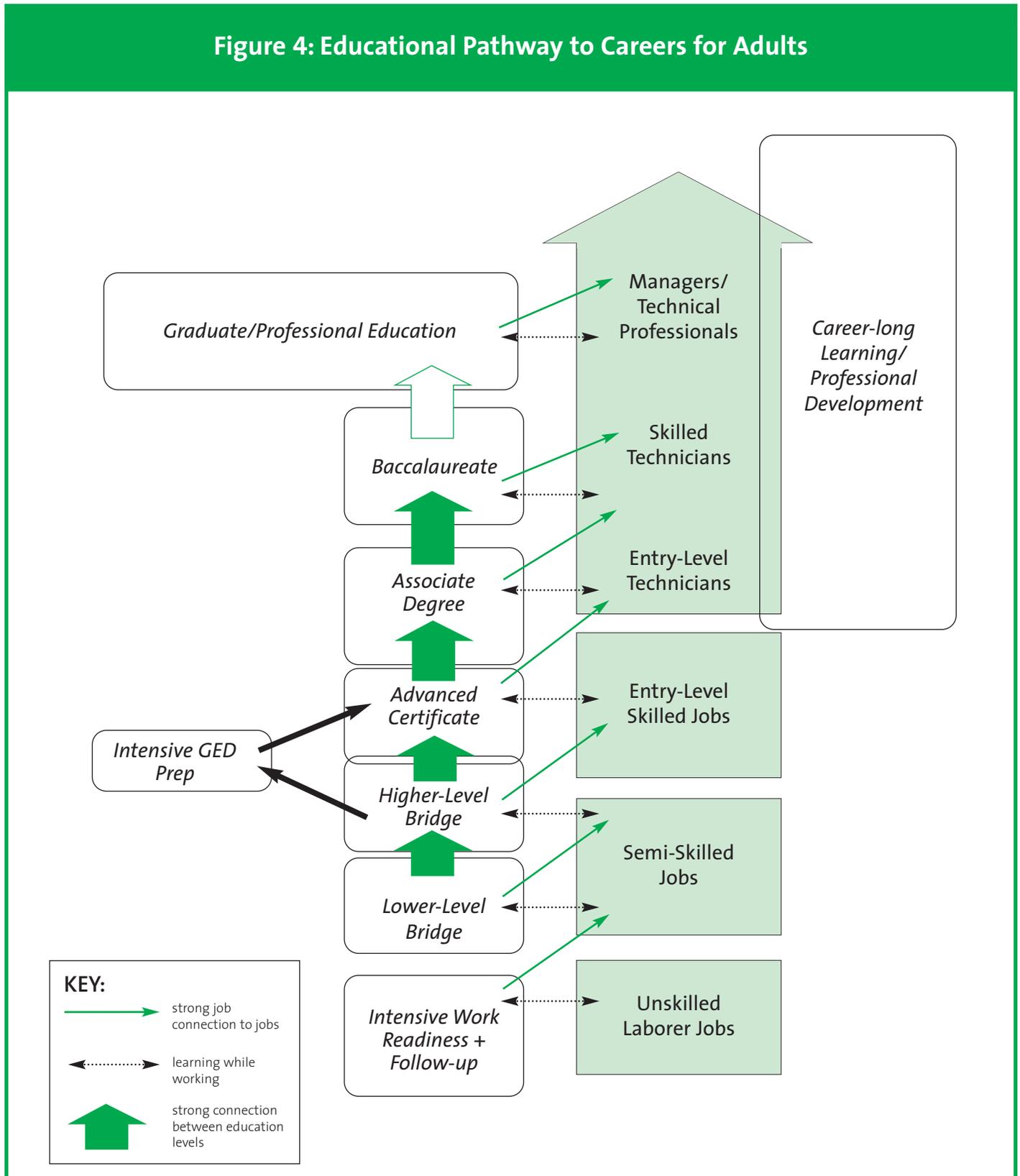


Table 2: Educational Pathway Program Level Descriptions

PROGRAM LEVEL	REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRY	CONTENT/FEATURES
Baccalaureate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ H.S. diploma or GED ■ Associate degree or equivalent (for cc transfer students) ■ Pass college placement exams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Technical fundamentals ■ General education core ■ Project learning ■ Career exposure/planning ■ Internships/co-op education ■ Job-placement assistance
Associate Degree (Applied or transfer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pass college placement exams ■ 10th-grade reading and math ■ H.S. diploma or GED (to complete) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Technical fundamentals ■ General education core ■ Project learning ■ Career exposure/planning ■ Internships/co-op education
Occupational Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pass college entrance exams ■ 10th-grade reading and math ■ H.S. diploma or GED (to complete) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applied technical fundamentals ■ Project learning ■ Industry exposure/career planning ■ Career success skills
Intensive GED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ≥ 8th-grade reading and math 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assessment to target weaknesses ■ Intensive tutoring and computer-assisted instruction focused on weaknesses ■ GED writing skills instruction ■ Test-taking strategies
Higher-Level Bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 7th- to 8th- grade reading and math or high-intermediate ESL level (with some exceptions) ■ Stable work history ■ Demonstrated motivation ■ Drug free ■ Desire to enter target sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applied communication + math + problem-solving + computers ■ Technical fundamentals (sector-specific) ■ Intro. to technical basics in various fields ■ Career/college planning ■ Job shadowing and internships ■ Career/college success skills ■ Test-taking skills ■ Computer-assisted basic skills instruction ■ Job- and college-placement assistance
Lower-Level Bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 5th- to 6th- grade reading (native English speakers) or low-intermediate ESL level (non-native speakers) ■ Desire to advance in job and improve basic skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applied basics: communications + math + problem-solving ■ Job/life success skills ■ Vocational skills (field-specific programs) ■ Introduction to computers ■ Career exploration ■ Computer-assisted basic skills instruction ■ Job-placement assistance
Intensive Work Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Desire to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Help accessing income supports ■ Drug treatment ■ Transitional jobs ■ Intensive work readiness prep ■ Job placement and follow-up support for clients and employers

Figure 5: Benefits of Bridge Training

BENEFITS FOR LOW-SKILLED ADULTS

- Help for individuals who want to advance to a career-path job but lack the necessary basic skills
- Access to postsecondary occupational education
- Higher earning potential
- Counseling to help with career and educational planning and overcoming barriers to success
- Facilitated contacts and connections to the labor market, employers, and specific jobs
- Exposure to a broad range of jobs, careers, and education opportunities
- Building resume through work experience
- Increased income through paid internships

BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS

- Improved recruitment of qualified and motivated workers
- Source of workers who are qualified for higher-level semi-skilled and entry-level skilled jobs and are prepared to advance
- Reduced turnover of entry-level workers and accompanying cost savings
- Improved productivity resulting from a qualified workforce
- Good public relations and improved corporate citizenship image with local communities

BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND OTHER POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

- “Feeders” of qualified and motivated students to occupational certificate and degree programs; preparation of students who come to college with inadequate basic skills to succeed in college-level occupational-technical and, potentially, transfer degree programs
- Improved retention, graduation rates, and job-placement outcomes, particularly among disadvantaged students
- Faculty in credit programs can focus on college-level material rather than try to remediate students’ basic skills
- Strengthened relationships and better reputation with employers
- Improved image in low-income communities
- Clear way to show the connections between a college’s multiple missions

BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

- Help community members advance to college-level occupational education, which has become the gateway to career-path employment
- Strengthened and expanded relationships with employers by providing a supply of prepared workers
- Use of publicly subsidized staff, facilities, and equipment for technical training found at most community college campuses for providing basic skills instruction integrated with instruction in technical topics
- Effective response to community need for economic development
- Potentially increases eligibility for competitively awarded private and public funds

BENEFITS FOR WORKFORCE TRAINING AGENCIES, WORKFORCE BOARDS, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENTITIES

- Job-connected training and advancement opportunities for one-stop career center clients
- Use of existing infrastructure to meet employers’ hiring needs in sectors of importance to regional economies
- Response to the mismatch between employers’ demands for motivated workers with strong basic skills and basic skills deficiencies among large segments of the workforce