Bridge Program Development

CHAPTER II

Bridge Program Development

This chapter provides a step-by-step guide to developing a bridge program. First, it will help the program designer to identify and understand the target student audience and design a program that meets their needs, building on the best of what exists. Then it describes the process of building the partnerships necessary to develop and implement a bridge program, followed by a section on building key employer relationships. Next, the chapter presents bridge program instructional principles and sample curricula for our two model bridge types, along with a curriculum for employability skills that can be used in conjunction with either bridge model. Finally, this chapter presents a process for identifying the support services your students need and discusses post-program job and college placement.

In many cases, bridge programs will be built on or adapted from existing programs or services. The process outlined here is suited for such cases as well as for developing programs from scratch. Where programs for low-income adults currently exist, the object is to build on existing program strengths while working to fill gaps that prevent students from advancing in terms of both education and employment. The program designers should adapt the following steps as appropriate to build on the lead institution's strengths and avoid duplication of efforts. It is important to note that program design and development can be lengthy, taking anywhere from a few months to more than a year, as reflected by the programs profiled at the end of this guide.

Designing the Program

Designing a bridge program involves the following steps:

1) **Identify the target population** to be served and assess their learning and career goals and barriers to success.

2) **Identify jobs and further education and training programs** that would provide opportunities for advancement for the target population and map out the requirements of entry and success in those jobs and educational programs.

3) **Conduct a gap analysis** to determine how well existing programs or services prepare members of the target population to enter and succeed in the targeted jobs and education programs and highlight where individuals are "falling through the cracks."

4) **Redesign existing program components** and create new ones to address gaps and create "bridges" to better jobs and higher-level education and training.

5) **Create a program flowchart** to carefully review the elements that are in place and determine remaining gaps. In addition, it is a useful tool in identifying partner roles and providing a snapshot of the program for administrators, funders, and others.

Where the planned bridge programs build on existing programs, faculty and staff from those programs should be actively involved in the design process. In addition, it is critically important to involve faculty and staff from the programs to which the bridges are designed to lead.

The remainder of this section presents a series of worksheets containing questions and tips to guide bridge designers through each of these steps and to help in the initial stage of program design. These worksheets are guides and may need to be augmented depending upon the needs of the particular population, region, and partners.

Identify the Target Population

The answers to the questions in worksheet 1, p. 18, will help identify and assess the goals and needs of the target population the bridge program will serve. Potential target populations include individuals who have applied for training programs but have been rejected because they cannot pass the entrance test and current students in adult education classes, community college developmental education courses, and non-credit job-training programs. Instructors, staff, and students in adult education and non-credit job-training programs are good sources of information for answering these questions. The program designers may want to survey or conduct a focus group of students in adult education and developmental programs and students in degree-credit courses who have not yet declared a major. Even if the target population for the bridge program has already been identified, this section will help clarify their needs.

Cabrillo College in California developed the **Watsonville Digital Bridge Academy** based on an in-depth analysis of the needs of their target population, the majority of whom are first-generation American, limited-English-speaking Latinos. The resulting curriculum includes an initial two-week immersion class designed to help students learn new behaviors, become aware of their potential, and become motivated to learn, and an Academic Acceleration semester that includes a primary research project on a social justice issue, which serves as an important motivator for students. To develop the curriculum, program designers researched best practices for learning and conducted in-depth interviews of service providers.

Worksheet 1: Questions to Consider in Identifying Target Population

1. What are the basic literacy (reading, writing, math) levels of the target population?

2. Does the target population include non-native speakers of English? What is the range of ESL fluency in the population? Is the target population literate in its native language?

3. Do the targeted individuals have basic computer skills (word processing, Internet)?

4. What are their near- and long-term occupational goals? Have they had the chance to explore careers, receive career counseling, or develop a career plan?

5. What are their near- and long-term educational goals?

6. What types of occupations have they worked in? What is the nature of their work experience (short or long job attachment, full- or part-time work, etc.)?

7. What barriers do they face to program participation (e.g., child care, domestic violence, substance abuse) and what support service needs do they have?

Tips:

- If there is wide variation in the basic skill levels of the target population, consider offering both the lower-level and higher-level bridge programs. Dividing students into groups at similar skill levels will make instruction more manageable.
- If the target population has similar employment or career goals — for example, as would be the case with individuals who applied for a training program in a specific field but lacked the basic skills required to enter the program — consider a field-specific bridge.
- If the target population wants to enter college-level occupational training but has varied career goals, consider a higher-level bridge program with multiple career tracks, to provide exposure to postsecondary education in a range of fields.

Community colleges in a number of states may have access to **Community College Strategic Planner (CCSP),** a Web-based tool developed by CCbenefits, which is designed to assist community colleges in making strategic planning decisions that respond to growing industries and occupations and characteristics of their future student body. Employers in an employer focus group can then verify this information. Contact CCbenefits at www.ccbenefits.com or 208-882-3567.

Identify Jobs and Education and Training Requirements

This section helps identify the educational and job outcomes for participants in the bridge program or programs. One objective is to identify the qualifications for jobs in the region that pay decent wages and benefits to those with limited education and experience and have the potential for career advancement. A second objective is to identify existing education and training programs in the region that prepare people for these jobs. The program designers will then use this information to design bridge programs to be stepping-stones to these education and training programs and jobs. Worksheet 2: Questions to Consider in Identifying Job and Education Requirements, p. 20, provides a framework for this analysis and will help the program designer complete worksheet 3: Mapping Job Levels and Existing Education and Training Programs, on p. 21.

The following entities are good resources and should be consulted in this process:

- Employers and industry associations. Instructors and staff at both the bridge and college-credit levels should be involved in interviewing employers about their needs and practices. ("Building and Sustaining Employer Relationships," pp. 34–38, provides guidance on this process.) One option is to hold a session to bring employers together with faculty from both the bridge and college-credit levels.
- Workforce boards and economic development agencies
- Unions, including apprenticeship programs
- Postsecondary program faculty and any other postsecondary education departments that are involved as the program is developed

Conduct Gap Analysis

Worksheets 1, 2, and 3 have helped to define the target audience and qualifications needed for the targeted jobs and helped to identify further education and training that prepare people for these occupations. The next step is to conduct a gap analysis to see how effective existing programs and services are in preparing individuals from the target audience to advance to the identified jobs and postsecondary education programs (see worksheet 4: Questions to Consider in Conducting a Gap Analysis, p. 22). If certain data are difficult to obtain, key informants can provide a general idea, so as not to delay program planning.

The Adult Education Program within the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education created the **WAGE (Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy)** workplace literacy program several years ago to contextualize adult basic education curricula to specific job skills and competencies based on Literacy Task Analyses. LTAs involve observing workers engaged in specific jobs to determine the particular skills needed for the identified positions. Southeast Arkansas (SEARK) College and the Southern Good Faith Fund used this model to develop the WAGE Pathways Bridge Program curricula, which are designed to help prepare people for certain Certificate of Proficiency college credit programs at SEARK College, and they continue to conduct Literacy Task Analyses to keep the curricula current.

Worksheet 2: Questions to Consider in Identifying Job and Education Requirements

Use responses to the following questions to complete worksheet 3: Mapping Job Levels and Existing Education and Training Programs, p. 21.

1) What industries are of economic importance to the region?
- Which are the largest industrial sectors in the region (e.g. healthcare, manufacturing, retail)?
- What jobs in these industries pay $9 to $12 per hour at the entry level plus full benefits?
- Is building a workforce for these jobs a priority for the region?
- What are the potential target occupations for workers without extensive education or skills (i.e., for workers with less than an associate degree)?

2) What are the characteristics of the targeted jobs/occupations?
- What are these jobs and what are the next steps up the job ladder?
- What wages and benefits do the jobs at each level offer?
- What is the current and projected demand for these jobs among local employers?
- What employers in the area hire for these jobs?

3) How do employers secure their workforce?
- From what sources and with what methods do local employers hire for such jobs?
- Do local employers have difficulty hiring for any of these jobs? If so, why?
- Do local employers have trouble retaining or advancing workers in these jobs? If so, why?

4) What are the requirements of the targeted occupations?
- What qualifications do local employers seek in applicants for the jobs at each level?
- Do employers in the region use common assessment tools or skill certifications in hiring?
- What professional certification or licensing standards exist for the targeted jobs?
- What screening criteria do employers use (e.g., educational credentials, work experience, drug testing, criminal background)?

5) What education or training programs in the area prepare adults for the jobs identified?
- Which institutions or organizations provide these programs? What types of programs are provided (certificate, degree)?
- What curriculum and support services (including job placement and follow-up) do these programs provide? How long is each program (number of hours per week and number of weeks)?

6) What are the requirements for entry into each of these programs?
- What competencies must students have to enter the program?
- What assessment tests and other methods are used to screen applicants?
- Are there any additional eligibility requirements such as those imposed by specific funding sources?

Tips:
- Potential sources of information for local labor market demand and projections include:
  - The "business and industry" contract training division at a community college
  - Faculty in occupational degree programs at community colleges or technical schools
  - Community-based organizations with strong ties to local employers
  - Universities
  - One-stop career centers
  - State departments of labor and employment security
  - State and local workforce boards
  - Local economic development groups and commissions
  - Chambers of commerce, employer or trade associations
- As helpful as labor market statistics can be in gauging overall employment and projected demand in particular job types, data analysis cannot substitute for reaching out to employers to discuss their hiring needs and challenges. (Worksheet 8: Employer Meetings Discussion Guide on p. 37 provides sample questions.)
- Consider whether there are opportunities for attaching academic credit or arranging for articulation with postsecondary credentials at a community or technical college.
- Determine whether anyone in the region has conducted a formal analysis of the skill requirements of the target jobs using ACT WorkKeys, DACUM, literacy task analysis, or some other methodology. Usually staff members of community college business and industry customized training divisions are familiar with such tools. Also, find out if the state workforce or economic development agency has developed skill standards for occupations in the target industry.

Worksheet 3: Mapping Job Levels and Existing Education and Training Programs

TARGET OCCUPATION(S):

JOB LEVELS		EXISTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS		
CHARACTERISTICS	REQUIREMENTS	PROVIDER(S)	CONTENT*	ENTRY REQUIREMENTS
Position: Wages: Benefits: Demand: Career Path/Next Job Level:	Qualifications: Assessment Tools: Certification/Licensing: Screenings:	Name: Type:	Curriculum: Services: Length:	Competencies: Assessments/Tests: Program Eligibility:
Position: Wages: Benefits: Demand: Career Path/Next Job Level:	Qualifications: Assessment Tools: Certification/Licensing: Screenings:	Name: Type:	Curriculum: Services: Length:	Competencies: Assessments/Tests: Program Eligibility:
Position: Wages: Benefits: Demand: Career Path/Next Job Level:	Qualifications: Assessment Tools: Certification/Licensing: Screenings:	Name: Type:	Curriculum: Services: Length:	Competencies: Assessments/Tests: Program Eligibility:

*List the program's basic curricula and support services components (more detail will be developed in later steps).

Worksheet 4: Questions to Consider in Conducting a Gap Analysis

1) Employer Demand and Existing Capacity:

- Are existing programs meeting the demand from employers in the region in terms of both quantity and quality?
- Is there sufficient demand from employers to warrant the building of bridge or feeder programs into the existing education and training programs?
- Are existing programs operating at or near capacity? If not, how many additional students could each accommodate?

2) Recruitment:

- What is the demographic profile of students in each program (e.g., age, educational level, race/ethnicity, parental status, work experience)?
- How are students recruited for these programs and from what sources?

3) Retention and Outcomes:

- How many students complete each program every year?
- Do the programs have trouble retaining students? If so, why?
- What data are available on the job and further education outcomes of each program? Which programs are most effective in preparing students for employment and further learning in the target sector?

4) Bridge Opportunities:

- What are the most common reasons that applicants are rejected from existing programs?
- Are there remedial programs for individuals who do not qualify for the programs? If so, whom do they serve, what instruction and support do they provide, and how effective are they?
- Given the above responses, what are the opportunities for bridge program development?

Tips:

- If the lead institution is a community college, examine the extent to which students in adult education (ABE, ESL, or GED) or developmental education programs advance to college-level occupational programs in the target field and the extent to which adults trying to enter college-level occupational programs are successful or unsuccessful.

- If the lead institution is a community organization, examine the extent to which clients with low literacy skills enter job training and other occupational education programs within the organization or with other education and training providers.

- If the lead institution is an employer, think about the sorts of qualifications more applicants should exhibit for the jobs in question. What are the most common deficiencies in applicants for these jobs? Do entry requirements clearly relate to what is required for success on the job? How prepared are current employees for their jobs, and what improvement in skills or work behaviors do they need?

Develop Bridge Program Components

Using the information developed in worksheets 1 through 4, the next step is to develop the basic bridge program components. This process will often involve both building on existing programs and developing new components to meet the needs of the target population, employers, and gaps in existing programs and services. Worksheet 5: Questions to Consider When Developing Program Components, p. 24, along with worksheet 6: Bridge Program Components, p. 25, guide the program designer through the process of developing the basic bridge program components.

Create a Program Flowchart

Now that the basic curriculum and support service elements to be offered through your bridge program(s) are outlined, the program designers can begin to map the flow of steps that will be involved in the operation of the program. Below are sample program flowcharts of two bridge programs. Figure 6, p. 26, from the City Colleges of Chicago, shows the program elements of a lower-level bridge program leading into a higher-level bridge program in targeted jobs in the transportation, warehousing, and logistics sector. Figure 7, p. 27, from Instituto del Progreso Latino, a community-based organization in Chicago, also shows the elements of a lower-level bridge leading into a higher-level bridge for targeted occupations in the healthcare field. A bridge program would produce such a flowchart after the program designers have analyzed the target population, employer needs, and existing institutional resources and identified the gaps that the bridge program is designed to address.

These diagrams can help the lead institution and partners begin to assign responsibility for the various parts of operating the program. They can also help identify any unintended gaps prior to program implementation.

Worksheet 5: Questions to Consider in Developing Program Components

1) What will be the level of the bridge program? What if any sector(s) are targeted?

- Should the bridge program be designed with multiple levels?
- Will the bridge program be field-specific?

2) What will be the entry requirements and recruitment sources?

- What basic skill levels are required for program entry at each level?
- What are the screening and assessment tools?
- What are the recruitment sources?

3) What are the targeted education and employment goals?

- What skill levels will program graduates attain (literacy and other competencies)?
- What is the next level of education for which program graduates will be qualified?
- What is the employment goal (targeted occupations)?
- Who are the targeted employers?

4) What will be the basic curricula and support services components?

- What competencies do students need to succeed at the next job and education level?
- Based on these competencies, what are the essential curriculum elements?
- What existing courses or programs address these competency areas? What types of new courses will need to be developed?
- What program length (number of hours and number of weeks), schedule (days, evenings), and location are best suited to the target population?
- What will be some unique features of the program (e.g., internships, cohorts)?
- What support services, for example counseling, case management, child care, transportation, job-placement assistance, will be needed to ensure that members of the target population are able to complete bridge training and advance to the next levels of education and employment? ("Targeting Student Services," pp. 56–63, will help answer this question.)

Tips:

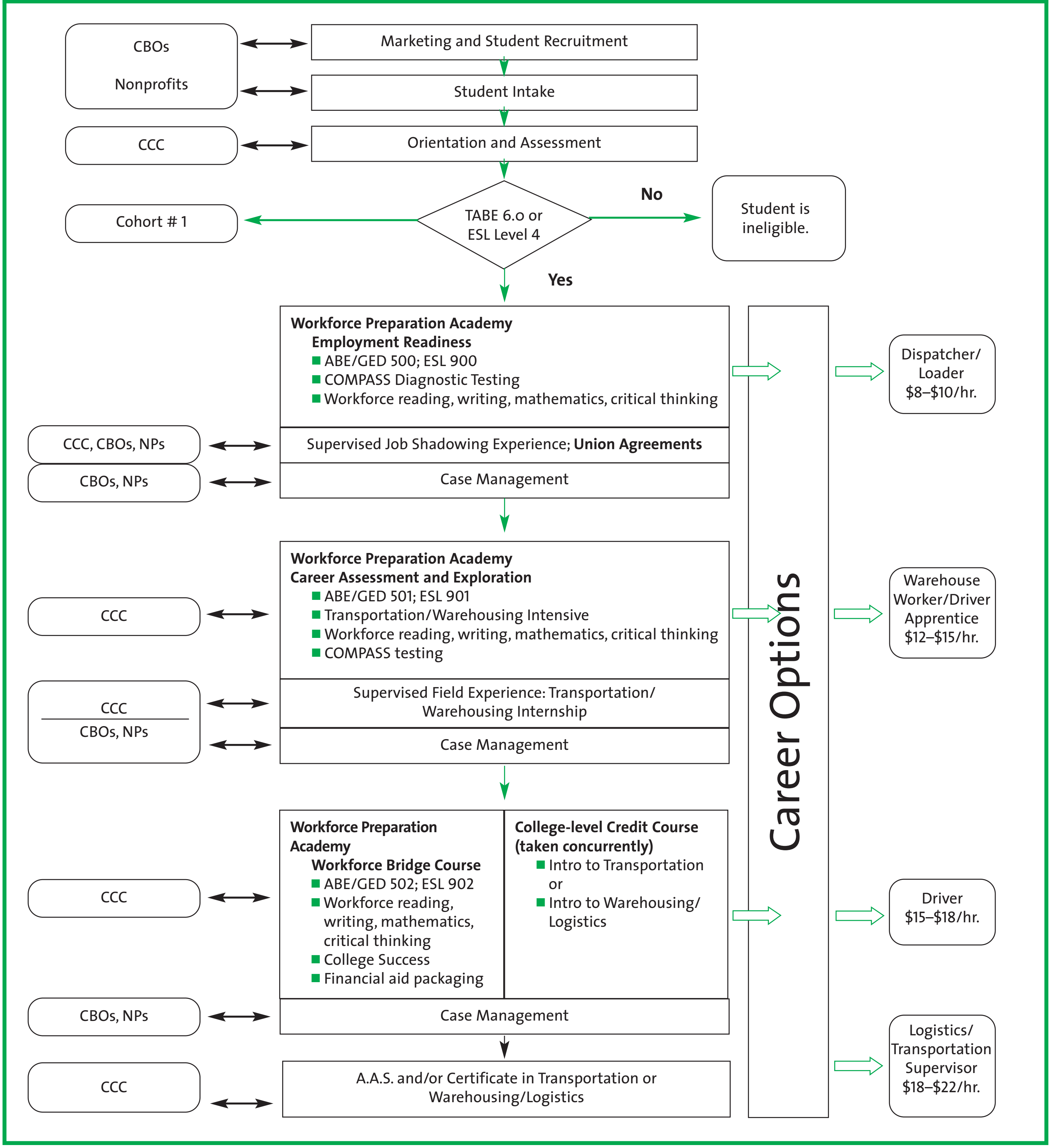
- Use worksheet 6, p. 25, to help summarize the major features of the bridge program design at each level. Responses to the questions in worksheets 1 through 5 will aid in completing the worksheet.
- Examine how existing programs and services can be modified or repackaged to provide the instruction and support needed by the target population to advance to the targeted further education and jobs. What new or additional program elements are needed?
- More guidance on developing or adapting bridge curriculum materials is provided in "Developing Program Curriculum," pp. 39–56, and more guidance on student support services is provided in "Targeting Student Services," pp. 56–63.

Worksheet 6: Bridge Program Components Summary Sheet

BRIDGE PROGRAM LEVEL AND TARGET SECTOR(S)	STUDENT ENTRY AND RECRUITMENT	TARGET EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT GOALS	CURRICULA AND SUPPORT SERVICES COMPONENTS*
Level: **Target Sector(s):**	**Basic Skills Level:** **Screening and Pre-assessment Instruments:** **Recruitment Sources:**	**Exit Competencies:** **Education Goals:** **Employment Goal:** **Targeted Employers:**	**Curriculum:** ■ **Courses (existing and new):** ■ **Length and Schedule:** ■ **Features:** ■ **Credit:** **Support Services:**
Level: **Target Sector(s):**	**Basic Skills Level:** **Screening and Pre-assessment Instruments:** **Recruitment Sources:**	**Exit Competencies:** **Education Goals:** **Employment Goal:** **Targeted Employers:**	**Curriculum:** ■ **Courses (existing and new):** ■ **Length and Schedule:** ■ **Features:** ■ **Credit:** **Support Services:**

*At this point, simply list the basic curricula and support services components; more details on curriculum development and identifying needed student support services are provided later in this chapter.

Figure 6: City Colleges of Chicago Workforce Bridge Program Transportation, Warehousing, and Logistics



Developed by Cynthia A. Barnes, Ph.D., and Steven Bryant, City Colleges of Chicago, Adult Education, November 2004

Figure 7: Curriculum/Program Design for Carreras en Salud

LPN PROGRAM (PELL GRANT FUNDING)

Employment Outcome #3: LPN

Case Management	Study Skills/Workshops	LPN Courses
Association House	Instituto del Program Latino (IPL)	Humboldt Pk. Voc. Ed. Center (HPVEC)
On-going support	Supported cohort program	3 semesters

LPN PREREQUISITES

Case Management	Study Skills/Workshops	Biology 226/227
Association House	IPL	HPVEC
On-going support	Supported cohort program	2 semesters

Wright Placement Exam

Employment Outcome #2: Technician Speciality and/or Certification Outcome: GED

LEVEL B (CSSI/ITA FUNDED)

Case Management	VESL	Math	Biology 2	Test-Taking	Technical
Association Hse	IPL/CC (Eng 100)	IPL (Math 118)	HPVEC (Bio 121)	IPL	Wright
On-going support	1. Essays 2. Career Exploration 3. Medical Terminol/Study Skills/Grps/Tutorials	Mathematical reasoning and solving real life problems	Applied biology: cells and molecular biology	Preparation for the Placement & GED Exams	Phlebotomy/EKG

LEVEL A

Case Management	VESL	Math	Biology 1	Test-Taking
Association House	IPL/Casa Central (CC)*	IPL (Math 111)	HPVEC (Bio 121)	IPL
On-going support	1. Sentences/Paragraphs 2. Career Exploration 3. Medical Terminol/Study Skills/Grps/Tutorials	**Math 2:** Basic Algebra & Geometry **Math 1:** Whole and Part Numbers	Applied biology: cells and molecular biology	Preparation for the Placement & GED Exams

IPL/Grand Ave WIA System

Course Placement Exam

Casa Central & HPVEC CNA Programs

Current CNA's in Partner Health Care Orgs

High School/GED Programs

IPL BILINGUAL CNA (CSSI*/ITA FUNDED)

Employment Outcome #1: CNA

LEADERSHIP TRAINING	VESL	Math	CNA Prep
Mujeres Latinas	IPL	IPL	IPL
Empowerment Group	1. Sentences/Paragraphs 2. Career Exploration 3. Medical Terminol/Study Skills/Grps/Tutorials	**Math 2:** Basic Algebra & Geometry **Math 1:** Whole and Part Numbers	1. Test-taking for CNA certification 2. Health Care Computer Applications. 3. CNA Skills

*Critical Skill Shortages Initiative of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
Instituto del Progreso Latino (IPL) ESL Healthcare Career Ladder

Building a Bridge Partnership

Bridge programs involve a complex set of functions that are often beyond the capacity and resources of a single organization or department within a large organization. Formation of internal and external partnerships is an effective strategy for building the needed capacity and for leveraging resources. The number, scope, and nature of partnerships should be tailored to fit program needs and organizational culture. In many cases, partnerships will evolve and grow with the program, starting with a small number of partners in initial program phases and expanding to increase service scope and capacity in subsequent phases.

This section provides tips on forming and sustaining high-performing partnerships that:

- Include internal and external members
- Take advantage of core competencies of each partner
- Leverage resources
- Provide high-quality services in a seamless system
- Meet or exceed outcomes and objectives

This guide defines a partner as one who performs a specific service function and is responsible for delivery and outcomes. Partnerships may be distinguished from relationships with organizations that provide general assistance with, for example, marketing, but are not accountable for outcomes. These less formal relationships may include organizations that agree to post materials or host a workshop, and employers that serve on advisory groups and refer employees or job applicants to training.

Determine the Need for Partners

Lead institutions should start forming partnerships during program conceptualization. The first phase requires preparation of a preliminary list of core program components and the expertise needed to develop and manage the program. Although this list may change as planning progresses, it is intended to help systematically identify who needs to be involved at the outset and to identify gaps in existing relationships where new partnerships will need to be developed.

Table 3: Sample Partners and Roles, p. 29, identifies the types of organizations with services and expertise that may be assets in developing and delivering a bridge program. The table is intended to demonstrate the range of potential partners—both internal and external.

Worksheet 7: Partner Role Identification, p. 30, will help the program designers inventory the functions and services that the program will need, identify what is already in place, and highlight the need for internal and external partners. The worksheet should be completed in **two distinct steps**. After completing the **internal** partners, use the worksheet to identify the need for potential **external** partners.

Step One: Internal Partnerships. It is important to spend time building the internal team before reaching out to external partners. Identify the individuals and departments within the lead institution that will be able to help build the program and recruit them to be part of a "core team." The core team members should have a commitment to the success of this type of program, and their roles should be clearly defined as central and not simply add-ons to their existing jobs. The core team will help recruit the necessary

The key program partners in the **SEARK College Career Pathways Pilot Project** are the Southern Good Faith Fund (SGFF) and Southeast Arkansas (SEARK) College. SEARK College provides most of the academic instruction, while SGFF coordinates a comprehensive student support services system. Together SEARK College and SGFF have developed a replicable strategy for improving adult enrollment and completion of college credentials. The Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges (AATYC) supports any necessary institutional change at the college and replication of the program at other two-year colleges. The Arkansas Department of Workforce Education supported the development of the six contextualized WAGE Pathways Bridge Program curricula.

Table 3: Sample Partners and Roles

ORGANIZATION	POTENTIAL ROLES
Adult education programs (community colleges, community-based organizations, public school system)	Techniques for teaching lower-skill adults; Basic literacy, math, and computer skills training; English as a Second Language (ESL); Assessment tools
Community-Based Organizations	Marketing and recruitment; Case management; Support services and support services navigation; Work readiness and job placement; Vocational and occupational skills; ESL and vocational ESL; Adult education (reading, writing, and math); Computer skills; Job training
Community Colleges	
■ Career Services	Orientation to postsecondary education; Interest and capacity assessments; Educational and career advising; Support service navigation
■ Continuing Education/Workforce Development	Sector-specific occupational programs; Specific courses that may be adapted to the bridge program framework, e.g., computer applications, customer service basics
■ Corporate Training	Capacity to customize training for specific employers and industries; Employer connections; Adjunct faculty and trainers
■ Degree and Credit Departments	Associate and Applied Associate degree programs; Occupational certificates, licenses, and other industry-recognized credentials
■ Developmental Education	Basic literacy and math skills
■ Financial Aid	Information and application assistance
Employer Associations (Chambers of Commerce) and Industry Associations	Program review and feedback; Industry and career ladder information; Skill information; Labor market data; Marketing ; Employer recruitment and coordination
Employers	Skills identification; Job advancement information and requirements; Program review and feedback; Jobs, internships, and project learning; Instructors, role models, mentors; Referrals to program; Training facilities, equipment; Workplace-based incumbent worker training; Funding (tuition reimbursement, etc.)
Labor Unions	Identification of competencies and industry information; Employer outreach; Program review and feedback; Referrals to program; Skills training; Apprenticeships; Certifications; Funding
One-Stop Career Centers	Job search skills; Job information; Training vouchers
Social Service Agencies	Support services; Case management; Financial assistance (e.g., food stamps, dependent care, transportation); Referrals
State Agencies	Labor market information and analysis; Economic and workforce trend analysis; Identification of target industries; Connection to employers; Resource development and allocation; Evaluation
Universities	Labor market information and analysis; Curriculum and instructional design; Evaluation and continuous improvement
Workforce Boards	Identifying sectors of importance to regional economy; Mapping job requirements and advancement paths; Planning and budgeting; Policy development
Workforce Intermediaries	Program design assistance; Best practice models; Advocacy; Resource development; Conducting focus groups; Evaluation

Worksheet 7: Partner Role Identification

ROLES	PARTNER(S) RESPONSIBLE
Program Development	
Coordination	
Partnership development and management	
Identification of target population	
Identification of targeted jobs and skill requirements	
Identification of next step education and training programs	
Program design and planning	
Curriculum development	
Fundraising	
Recruitment of staff and instructors	
Training of staff and instructors	
Equipment, supplies, and facilities	
Monitor and track program outcomes	
Program Delivery	
Marketing and recruitment	
Intake, assessment, screening, and counseling	
Program orientation	
Instruction: basic skills and technical skills	
Certifications and degrees	
Tutoring and other academic support	
Case management	
Support services	
Career exposure and planning	
College exposure and planning	
Job, internship, and college placement	

support and related services within the organization and externally. The program designer should be prepared to discuss the importance of bridge programs with team members and the organizations, potential benefits of such programs, examples of successful programs, and what is needed in initial meetings with potential partners.

Early involvement of the lead institution's top leadership, such as the president or provost in a community college and executive director in a nonprofit organization, will facilitate program and partnership development within the organization. This leadership should be engaged in promoting the program, making it a priority, bringing key departments and individuals to the table, and seeking resources for development and delivery. Ideally, faculty from the next level of education or training will work with the bridge designers to identify competencies required both for their programs and for the jobs to which these programs lead.

The combined capacity of the core team is critical. Effective core teams:

- Have skills and resources to teach low-literate adults
- Have the expertise to design a curriculum for the target audience
- Are knowledgeable about employers' needs and hiring practices
- Will be able to define the competencies required for the next level of education and target jobs
- Are familiar with the target population's need for support services
- Have an effective network of relationships both within and outside the organization, and can build institutional support
- Are familiar with diverse funding streams

Step Two: External Partnerships. Identify the need for external partners by reviewing the gaps on the completed worksheet 7: Partner Role Identification, p. 30. How a partnership functions will vary depending on the context, organizational cultures of the partners, and history of the partnership. Some, especially those that involve fees, contracts, or grants, may be formalized. Others may be informal and based on a mutual understanding. These are effective when organizations have complementary functions and trust each other, or when departments of large organizations have difficulty entering into legal relationships. They are also useful in working with employers, who may define "partnerships" differently and therefore prefer more informal relationships. (See "Building and Sustaining Employer Relationships," pp. 34–38.)

Together, the internal core partners should identify organizations that could perform the needed functions. The

As part of the **Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) Demonstration Project**, the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges has developed Guidelines for Quality Integration Programs for colleges, including:

- Efforts begin with faculty most optimistic and enthusiastic about integrated learning.
- Faculty members are cross-educated about the culture, norms, and values of their respective disciplines.
- Curriculum is built between Adult Education and Professional and Technical faculty members.
- Outcomes are tracked in parallel (i.e., gains in ESL levels and certificate graduation in professional and technical elements) to demonstrate actual impact of the integration project.
- One point of contact is provided for student

process of recruiting and selecting external partners should build interest in partnering and should determine whether the organizations have the capacity to provide the needed services and whether they are the "right fit." Preparation of a one- to two-page preliminary program concept will help focus the conversation. The concept should outline the purpose of the program, key components, organizational involvement, time frame, resource requirements, need for partners, and potential partnerships.

The core team should start the recruitment process with organizations that the lead institution already works with or that have been referred by colleagues and that have appropriate capacities. The following factors should be considered in the screening process:

- Compatibility with the organization's mission, culture, and values
- The quality of their experience with the target audience
- Their capacity to provide the needed services and their past performance
- Their understanding of labor market dynamics, work environments, and general expectations of employers for productive employees
- The resources that they will bring to the partnership, such as financing, staff expertise and experience, knowledge of employers, or networks with the target audience
- Their ability to adapt their current activities to a bridge program context
- The effectiveness of their management, information, and financial systems
- Their excitement about the potential of the program

The lead institution may want to formalize relationships with those external partners that are responsible for program outcomes and resources. This may involve a formal document, such as a letter of agreement or memorandum of understanding, which is signed by all core partners. The document should:

- Identify the lead organization and who has overall responsibility and authority. This organization is responsible for managing the flow of students through the different provider partners.
- Identify the lead person and primary contact in all partnering organizations.
- Define the specific tasks (type of service) that will be performed by each organization and the expected outcomes.
- Identify the participating staff and their specific responsibilities.
- Describe the resource contributions from each organization and how each will be compensated.
- Define the service delivery outcomes (number and length of courses, students, etc.).
- Include timelines and identify key milestones.
- Identify facilities to be used and who is responsible for set-up, supplies, and maintenance.
- State the protocol for communication with funders, the press, and other parties.
- Specify liability for each partner, as appropriate.
- State the terms for opting out of the agreement.
- Include signatures of all partners.

In the best partnerships, each partner recognizes that the other parties must have their goals met in this project. It must be a "win" for all concerned. Program partners must meet regularly and actively listen to each other.

Launch and Manage the Partnership

The success of the bridge program will depend on the effectiveness of the working relationships among all of the partners—formal and informal. Even though some of the organizations may have worked together in the past, or are in the same larger organization, it is important to make sure that members have a shared understanding of the mission, goals, and objectives of the bridge program, can present a common message about the program, understand each others' roles, responsibilities, and techniques for implementing their part of the program, understand program policies, protocols, and requirements, have basic contact information for each other, develop a shared trust and openness with other members, and participate in interorganizational problem-solving and continuous improvement activities.

These relationships can be developed through an initial orientation, team-building activities, workshops with the entire staff on new techniques and challenges, facilities tours, and introductions to organizational leaders. It may be helpful to establish an advisory committee for the bridge program that includes internal and external partners. An advisory committee can be built from an existing committee, such as a committee that advises on a related program, or it can be built from scratch. See "Building and Sustaining Employer Relationships," pp. 34–38.

The team will also need to develop simple and effective management and information systems for use by all program partners. These might include:

- A governance structure that allows for efficient decision-making and is participatory
- Identification of a single point of contact for all partnership organizations
- A documented process for referrals and sharing information about students
- Communication protocols (e.g., a process for identifying and solving problems)
- Ongoing informal communication regarding student progress and needs for intervention
- Compatible information-collection and tracking systems
- Reporting schedules and formats
- A process for monitoring performance and continuous improvement
- Ongoing fundraising
- Regular communication with stakeholders

Partners should be an asset to program delivery, meeting the needs of the target audience and achieving goals. The person responsible for coordinating the program should monitor their progress regularly and work with all partners to make adjustments that are necessary for continuous improvement (see "Bridge Program Evaluation and Continuous Improvement," pp. 83–88). In addition, over time it may be useful to add partners or change roles to pursue new opportunities, to expand service capacity to reach new groups, or add training in different sectors or occupations.

The **Center of Excellence in Skilled Trades and Industries** in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, partners with employers, unions, training providers, and community-based organizations to design and deliver pre-employment certificate programs to address skills shortages identified by local employers and labor unions. In developing a pre-employment certificate, the center establishes a steering committee for the trade or industry that is jointly composed of employers and labor to design a program to meet the target industry's skills shortage. The steering committee helps to assess the specific skills required for the identified job openings and assists in overseeing the curriculum development and instruction. The committee reviews the curriculum and approves the pre-employment certificate as a qualification for hiring.

Building and Sustaining Employer Relationships

The role of employers is an important component in all bridge programs. The significance of these roles in developing and implementing these programs is reflected throughout this guide. This section, however, specifically describes how to effectively build relationships with employers and employer groups so that they will engage in developing, implementing, and sustaining the bridge program. The process described here assumes that the employer has a limited amount of time to devote to the bridge program, therefore, the lead institution and/or core team members will be responsible for selling the program and facilitating the partnership. It further assumes that the core team is prepared to approach employers in a specific industry with a bridge program model in mind and the reasons why it can help solve one or more of the employers' problems, such as high turnover in entry-level positions or a lack of qualified candidates. Most likely, the core team has already met with key employers in order to complete worksheet 2: Identifying Job and Education Requirements, p. 20. In all cases, the bridge program providers need to ask employers for specific commitments and make it as simple as possible for them to participate.

Labor unions and labor-management partnerships that are active in the targeted sectors can be an important asset in all phases of program design and delivery. They can provide information about the industry and required competencies, instructors, apprenticeships, and resources, and can refer employees. Where appropriate, bridge program operators should work with labor and management in determining the most effective collaboration.

Build Employer Relationships

Employers should play numerous roles in the development and implementation of bridge programs. They are most heavily involved with higher-level bridge programs, but they need to be engaged in the development and implementation of lower-level bridges as well. Employer relationships are best built in phases.

Phase 1 Learn the language of business and develop an understanding of the issues employers face, their workforce needs, and their performance challenges. Some suggested action steps to take:

- Review the Web sites of industry associations, industry leaders, and labor unions that are active in the target sectors.
- Talk with internal and external partners who have good connections with the industry.
- Review annual reports from relevant companies.
- Meet with local workforce boards.
- Meet with labor union representatives.

The initial impetus for Portland and Mt. Hood community colleges' **Career Pathways Vocational Training for Non-Native English Speakers** came when Kaiser-Permanente and then three other medical facilities approached Mt. Hood Community College because they were having trouble filling pharmacy packager jobs. PCC/MHCC interviewed employers to identify entry-level requirements, including skill levels, as well as state requirements in order to develop the curriculum and to establish parameters for internships and jobs. This program has expanded from one department and one occupation to more than 60 employers and several occupations. PCC/MHCC continues to adapt the programming to meet the current needs of employers.

Phase 2 Create a strategy for reaching out to employers. Action steps include:

- Determine which employers in your area are the best prospects for outreach.
- Document what the bridge program will offer to employers.
- Document the advantages of employer participation from the employer's perspective. Employer benefits may include filling employee skill gaps, reducing recruitment costs, increasing retention, and improving quality and safety.
- Outline the advantages of labor union participation.
- Outline the specific roles of employers and labor unions (as appropriate) in the bridge program.

Phase 3 Develop a networking plan to reach employers in the industries of importance to the region. Action steps include:

- Ask bridge program partners, labor unions, and stakeholders for references and enlist them in making connections.
- Consult local Workforce Investment Board members and staff, as well as local chambers of commerce for suggestions of employers and employer groups.
- Determine the company or companies that would be the most logical starting point.

Phase 4 With the networking plan in place, begin the engagement at the CEO or senior executive level in companies where there is an entree. In some cases, it is necessary to get buy-in at this level early in the project. Action steps will be:

- Determine who should participate in the meeting. It is sometimes advantageous to include the lead institution's CEO.
- If a labor union is active in the company, determine the best approach for involving their leaders.
- Collect information and outcomes regarding previous interactions with the company.
- Be sure to have current information about the company to appear knowledgeable. Minimally, review the annual report and visit the company Web site.

Phase 5 Begin to work with others in the employer organization. Action steps may include:

- Meetings with human resources, training, and/or organizational development managers to learn more about how the bridge program will fit into their training and development strategy.
- Meetings with supervisors and frontline staff from hiring departments to gather information about skill needs and gaps among current employees.
- Identification of a single point of contact in both the lead institution and employer organization to ensure good coordination and efficiency. (It is also advisable to engage a "back-up" person in case the designated person leaves the company or is moved to a different job.)
- Establishment of meeting formats, length, and follow-up protocol.

Worksheet 8: Employer Meetings Discussion Guide, p. 37, is designed for meetings with individual employers and may be useful at either Phase 4 or Phase 5. If appropriate, it can be easily adapted for use with a focus group of employers in a particular industry.

Phase 6 Employers should be involved in bridge program design and curriculum development (see "Designing the Program," pp. 16–27, and "Developing Program Curriculum," pp. 39–56).

One way to do this is to establish a curriculum advisory committee that includes program designers and employers. When these roles are clearly stated and represent the employers' perspective, the core team can then develop the curriculum. Action steps might include:

- Identify a number of employers who could participate in this phase to ensure a broad perspective.
- Engage employers in identifying specific entry-level requirements, technical and soft skills, and desired competencies for those who complete the program.
- Ask employers for copies of company manuals, forms, and procedures that could be incorporated into the curriculum.
- Form a curriculum advisory committee for getting employer input.
- If appropriate, contact labor union representtives for information about entry level competencies and skills gaps and include them in the advisory committee.

Phase 7 As the program is being developed, the employer should be invited to provide program review and feedback. This is essential to ensure that the end product is aligned with employer needs and expectations. Specific action steps include:

- Develop milestone points to obtain employer feedback.
- Develop a clear format for getting the employer feedback. (If the program has an advisory committee, this is an appropriate vehicle.)

Phase 8 Once the program is in the implementation phase, the lead institution needs to maintain regular communication and follow-up with the involved employers. A program advisory committee is one vehicle to get input on changing employer demand and to ensure that the curriculum continues to meet employer needs. It also helps the program build employer relationships that can lead to further involvement in program delivery. All communications should be short, to the point, and in language that will resonate with employers. Specific actions might include:

- Establish clear internal protocol for communication to ensure that all contacts with the employer are centralized and thoughtful.
- Develop a schedule for regular communication (such as advisory committee meetings).

While some programs may initially involve just one employer, where possible bridge program designers should identify and work with multiple employers in designing a bridge program and placing graduates. It may make the early development more complex, but it also brings more options and greater flexibility in the long run. Finally, the lead institution should make a point of meaningfully recognizing the individuals within the employer companies who help develop and implement the bridge program.

Instituto del Progreso Latino designed the **Manufacturing Technology Bridge** based on the Transformations program that was developed by the Consortium on Occupational Research and Development in Waco, Texas, for use in training displaced manufacturing workers for more skilled jobs. Instituto worked closely with a group of Chicago-area manufacturers and with faculty from the Manufacturing Technology certificate programs at Richard J. Daley College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago, to ensure that program graduates meet the qualifications sought by employers and are qualified to enter the college program so they can advance to even better jobs.

Worksheet 8: Employer Meetings Discussion Guide

Below is a set of topics to discuss during start-up meetings with potential employer partners. The topics discussed will vary based on knowledge of the company, type of bridge program under development, and previous relationships with the company. The completed worksheet 2: Questions to Consider in Identifying Job and Education Requirements, p. 20, will provide answers to some of these questions.

Background

A. Information about the lead institution

B. Summary of previous relationships with the employer

C. Overview of how/why you chose to meet with this employer now

Tip: Consider sending this information before the actual meeting along with a detailed agenda. Be ready to give an overview of the information to reinforce it and focus the conversation.

Bridge Program Basics

A. Brief overview of bridge program basics (a handout may be helpful)

B. Brief overview of the bridge program you are developing:

1. Target occupations
2. Target audience *(The target audience is important to the provider. Employers tend to care most about who they see at their door when they are hiring—make this a program that will help employers meet their bottom line, not a social service program.)*
3. Timeframe/schedule
4. Expected outcomes

C. Benefits to the employer *(To the degree possible, anticipate what the benefits will be. These can be clarified as you learn more about the employer.)*

1. The bridge program will help develop a qualified workforce.
2. The program curriculum will reflect the employer's needs.
3. The bridge program can assist in promoting the company to a new population of potential workers.
4. The program would be available to the employer's entry-level workers.
5. The program could help the employer lower costs of recruitment and reduce turnover.

Employer Information

A. Baseline information about the company

1. Number of employees, types of positions, number of company locations, etc.
2. The company's goals for the next one to three years
3. Challenges the company faces in meeting its goals

B. Human resources information and challenges

1. Does the company have the skilled workforce it needs to meet its goals? What gaps exist? Are there plans to address those gaps?
2. What are the problems with finding and training entry-level workers?
3. Has the company identified career pathways for entry-level workers? *(If not, this might be a useful exercise to engage in with the employer.)*
4. Is the company open to working with an external provider such as your institution?
5. Is the company willing to provide release time or on-the-clock time for participation of incumbent workers and new hires?
6. Does the company have a labor union and what roles might it play?

Options for Employer Roles

A. Specific information on the role the employer (and, if appropriate, the labor union) might play in bridge program development and implementation

1. Program development
- Clarification on hiring issues
- Descriptions of required skills and educational levels, advancement opportunities, and salary levels for entry-level positions
- Input into curriculum development

2. Program delivery
- Presentations to bridge program participants
- Service on advisory committee
- Providing tours of facilities, job shadowing, or mentoring
- Providing internship or work experience opportunities
- Priority interviewing for program graduates

B. Exploration of areas that are of most interest to the employer

- Strengths of employer organization
- Motivation for involvement, e.g., gain new employees, educate current workforce, improve public relations

C. Feedback and input on curricular directions and program design

- Eligibility of incumbent employees for the program
- Other potential employer partners *(be aware that the employer may be sensitive about having partners who are direct competitors)*
- Potential funding through the Workforce Investment Act

Summary and Next Steps

A. Summarize the program under consideration and the employer's response to it

B. Together, determine what needs to be done, by whom, by when

C. Agree on a next meeting time and who needs to be at the next meeting

Develop the Employer Role

Employers will play specific roles in the implementation of a successful bridge program. These roles can include providing opportunities for student field trips, job shadowing and internships, and appearing as a guest speaker ("Job and College Exposure," p. 53, provides a more detailed discussion from the student learning perspective). Most of these options bring benefits to the employer as well as to the program, as highlighted below.

Field trips to worksites provide opportunities for employers to "market" their business to potential new hires.

Job shadowing can be used as a developmental opportunity for incumbent employees, who may be asked to give a detailed narrative about the individual job or how the business functions as a whole.

Internships are attractive to employers because they allow them to assess potential employees before hiring them.

Appearing as a **guest speaker** provides an opportunity for an employer to inform potential employees of business expectations. Managers may also want to use this as an opportunity for an employee to develop new skills in speaking and representing the company.

Support and encouragement for employees who are program graduates can be an important factor in participating in the next level of education or training and ultimately the transition to the next step in their career ladder.

While these kinds of collaborations may require additional effort and coordination, the payoff is great. Employer participation on an advisory committee can help facilitate their involvement. These activities allow the employer to have ownership in the program and its outcomes, and employer involvement makes the bridge from school to work easier for the program participant.

Sustain Employer Involvement

There are several key elements in keeping employers engaged:

- Balancing employer and program needs. Most employers are not accustomed to seeking hiring and employee-development assistance with an educational institution and/or nonprofit provider. Their needs are not the same as the needs of the program provider; employers are generally seeking expertise, quick turnaround, and very direct assistance in solving their workforce issues.
- Providing regular opportunities for input and feedback. This can be formal, informal, quantifiable and/or qualitative. An advisory committee is one potential vehicle.
- Keeping communication short and to the point. Employers believe that "time is money."
- Involving the employer in various aspects of the curriculum.
- Following up in a timely manner on internship and job placements to find out what is working and to correct what is not. It may also help to establish a process for recommending job applicants, such as a commitment by the employer to interview candidates from the program. Providing the employer with qualified entry-level employees and upgrading incumbent workers' job skills will be key to sustaining employer involvement.
- Providing timely recognition to individuals within the engaged companies, getting media coverage ensuring that the right people are credited and that the employer(s) has given permission, and identifying and pursuing award opportunities.