

***Building Pathways to Jobs for the Economic Recovery***

**Recommendation:** Include in the new economic recovery package \$500 million for the Adult Education and English Literacy system to scale up existing career pathway programs, including “bridge” programs, with a track record of helping lower-skilled youth and adults earn marketable credentials and enter family-sustaining careers within one year or less.

**Rationale:** Investing in workforce skills is critical to rebuilding the economy and to ensuring that all Americans can benefit from an economic recovery and be better qualified for jobs created during and after the recovery. Nearly half of our workforce has only a high school education or less. These workers are being particularly hard hit by the recession. In November 2008, adults with the least education had an unemployment rate of 10.5 percent compared with the overall unemployment rate of 6.7 percent. In addition, for those who are working, employers now pay college-educated workers 75 percent more than those with only a high school diploma, compared to just 40 percent more back in the 1980s. High performing career pathway and bridge programs have been shown to fast-track lower-skilled adults and youth into careers within one year or less and significantly increase their earnings.

**Key Features:**

The federal government would immediately distribute \$500 million in new funding through the Department of Education to adult education directors for the purposes of expanding successful career pathway programs, including integrated basic skills and technical training programs, and other programs offering dual or concurrent enrollment in basic skills and technical training, provided by community colleges, adult education programs, and training providers.

- Funding would flow through basic skills providers for quick expansion of bridge programs that integrate basic skills and technical training, and/or similar dual or concurrent enrollment approaches, linked to career pathways.
  - Funds would flow to state adult education directors based on the formula laid out in Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. State directors will issue grants to local partnerships of basic skills providers (e.g., local school districts, community colleges, community-based organizations, etc.) and postsecondary career and technical education and training providers based on core elements, including the capacity to scale up or replicate existing bridge programs and/or describe specific similar approaches that use dual or concurrent enrollment and collaborate with postsecondary partners.
- The adult education grantees could use these career pathways funds for other services essential to participation, such as student financial assistance, when other aid is not available and student success services, such as advising and counseling, tutoring, and child care.
- Local grantees would need to demonstrate that their programs target demand occupations leading to good jobs in career pathways in their regions. Given the focus of the economic recovery, these would include jobs in construction, infrastructure, and the green economy.
- None of the funds distributed to states under this initiative would be subject to the rules, including performance measures, eligibility standards or other requirements, of existing federal programs including the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.