



Innovation and Workforce Development

by Vicki Niederhofer

With the transition from the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), an enhanced emphasis on career pathways, career planning and career services has emerged. Under the new legislation, career planning services are available to all who enter the Illinois workNet™ American Job Centers, rather than only those enrolled in training programs, as previously required under WIA. Individuals can access career

resources, wherever they are, whether unemployed, under employed or seeking a new occupation. The client-centered approach at the Illinois workNet™ American Job Centers helps accelerate the educational and career advancement of the individual while developing a talent pipeline to meet the employment needs of area businesses.

A “career pathway” includes a combination of education, training and counseling, and could involve

apprenticeships, work-based learning, or bridge programs, all leading to the attainment of post-secondary credentials aligned with the skill needs of industries in the regional economies. A career is the combination of education, occupations and jobs over an individual's entire life. Occupations are groups of related jobs that involve similar knowledge, abilities, duties and responsibilities. A job is a work situation at an organization or company. Most workers today have more than 11 jobs in their careers. Reasons for changing jobs include relocating for better opportunities, higher wages, moving to a different company or unplanned, unforeseen changes such as when a company downsizes or closes. Reliable information makes transitions easier to manage.

Career planning helps individuals prepare comprehensive employment pathways. Services provided at the Illinois workNet™ American Job Centers include computer-based portfolios and career plans in the

Illinois Career Information System including eight career assessments, information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations as well as other labor market employment statistics related to local, regional and national labor market areas. Individuals may qualify for training programs, apprenticeships or other local work-based learning opportunities depending on the needs of businesses in their community.

The one-stop service delivery system in the Illinois workNet™ American Job Centers relies on the partners to deliver integrated employment services and case management. While the configurations vary depending on location, core partners include workforce development, education, employment services, and other human services to achieve employment for jobseekers, including people with disabilities. By focusing on meeting the needs of businesses for skilled workers, Workforce Innovation Boards are creating talent pipelines. Short-term

training through a coordinated approach will mitigate the factors that contribute to poverty and unemployment including health, housing, transportation and child care. Individuals have access to employment and training services, career counseling, job placement and services to facilitate job retention.

Whether you are a partner in an American Job Center, an educator in Career and Technical Education or Adult Basic Education or an individual ready to plan for a brighter future, we are available to assist you with getting started in the Illinois Career Information System. Contact us at des.cis@illinois.gov or call 877-566-6230 and we will arrange for an introductory training session online.

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