

# Career Pathways Learning Lab

EVENT SUMMARY & NEXT STEPS

scared **connect** educate **labor** resource  
impact sector **possibility** network  
exciting **research** bridge relationships  
partnership solution expensive funding  
ambitious developing overwhelmed

The NYC Mayor's Office of Workforce Development (WKDEV) and the New York Association for Training & Employment Professionals (NYATEP), in partnership with the City University of New York (CUNY), hosted a one day **Career Pathways Learning Lab on May 4, 2015**. The event, sponsored by **JP Morgan Chase & Co.**, engaged 240 local, state, and national partners and experts in sharing and learning about best practices in career pathways implementation. Participants also rolled up their sleeves to simulate with colleagues the development of a career pathways program. This brief highlights reflections on the career pathways concept, the current state of the City's ability to implement this strategy, and proposed next steps for building a robust network of career pathways programs.

**GUEST SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS AT THE CAREER PATHWAYS LEARNING LAB INCLUDED:**

- Matthew Bruce, Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance
- David Garza, Henry Street Settlement
- Chauncy Lennon, JP Morgan Chase & Co.
- Judy Mortrude, Center for Law and Social Policy
- David Socolow, Center for Law and Social Policy
- Jennie Sparandara, Philadelphia Job Opportunity Investment Network
- Jennifer Tausig, Phipps Neighborhoods

**Career Pathways – Clarifying the Concept**

- Career Pathways is meant to systematize a complex set of relationships, partners, performance requirements and, ultimately, systems to ensure that participants and businesses are both served effectively.
- The presentation by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) made it clear: you cannot create and operate a career pathway alone. It must be done through partnerships, and should integrate sectoral approaches.
- Implementation of effective pathways is neither quick, nor uncomplicated. The biggest perceived (and real) issues are the barriers to utilizing funding based on current performance requirements and timeframes.
- Communication, joint goal setting, reallocation of current resources and acquisition of new resources, and long term partner commitment are requirements for success.

**Current Assets Available Locally to Build Career Pathways**

**Employer relationships:** Attendees described strong and existing relationships with local businesses, specifically in healthcare, transportation, retail, accommodations and food service, information technology, and the trades.

**Deep knowledge of and connections to local communities:** Providers, funders, city agencies and other stakeholders maintain a deep understanding of neighborhood dynamics and are valued as institutions by their local communities. These entities implement effective models to serve highly barriered populations such as out-of-school youth, court-involved individuals, low literacy learners, and TANF recipients.

**Network of supportive services:** Many of the assets shared during the prototyping exercise included a range of supportive services available to participants. The list included: transportation, housing, educational stipends, financial counseling, substance abuse counseling, and legal support.

**Innovation already on the ground:** Sectoral programs in healthcare, information technology, green/clean, and transportation, and collaborative approaches to serve populations like out-of-school youth — both key components of career pathways models — currently operate throughout the city.

**Challenges to Building Career Pathways**

**Funding Career Pathways programs and measuring their activities and outcomes:** Presently, most career pathways models “knit together” existing programs, services, and resources. To truly reorient the workforce system toward a career pathways framework, public and private funders will need to invest in new infrastructure that supports collaboration, staff professional development, coordinated data systems, and common metrics, with allowance for longer grant periods to meet performance outcomes.

**Connection to CUNY:** Several groups identified the need to create a deeper connection to CUNY. These groups aim to create on-ramps that support their participants as they enroll and continue their education at the college level, as well as develop systems to track student participation and degree or certification achievement outcomes in college programs.

**Expanding the array of stakeholders:** Engaging players less frequently involved in City- and CBO-run workforce development programs will be necessary for the success of some career pathways models. These include literacy and basic education providers, as well as labor management partnerships.

**Creating true bridges for the hardest to serve:** Noticeably absent from many of the learning lab prototypes were defined services and supports for those with less than an 8th grade literacy level or individuals with disabilities. Significantly more work needs to be done to develop — and appropriately fund — effective bridges for those with low levels of literacy, numeracy, and English proficiency; or individuals with disabilities, that connect to educational and occupational programs within career pathways.

**Supportive services:** Several participants described the ongoing need to connect clients to two supportive services that are limited in availability — and outside of the scope of services typically provided by providers — but critical to maintaining employment: healthcare and childcare.

**Career Pathways Lab Recommendations**

**Pilot projects:** Flexible funding (philanthropic and public) to develop career pathway infrastructure and support pilot projects for partners who are ready to collaborate on the development of an enhanced or extended pathway program.

**Gap funding:** Issue targeted, small grants that range from \$15,000 - \$50,000 to support programmatic gaps ( i.e. transportation, co-teaching models, childcare stipends) to aid programs as they restructure to support the career pathways approach.

**Data and reporting infrastructure:** Citywide adoption — among both publicly and privately funded programs — of common metrics that apply to the spectrum of career pathway interim milestones and outcomes.

**Partner engagement by the City, as new processes are defined:** Solicit feedback and input from service providers on contracting with the City, with the goal of determining how the process can be made more efficient and inclusive.

**Professional development for frontline and leadership staff:** Support intensive sessions from programmatic experts – i.e. programs that are up and running locally or nationally to teach local programs the challenges, processes in place, and the successes.



The words featured on the cover represent responses from Learning Lab attendees to the question, “What one word describes how you currently feel about career pathways?”

## Next Steps

In response to the feedback from Career Pathways Learning Lab participants regarding critical next steps, sponsoring entities are engaging in the following activities:

- **Developing shared data and measures:** WKDEV is finalizing a set of Common Metrics, which will be included in all workforce development-oriented concept papers, RFPs, and contracts issued by City agencies.
- **Provision of academic advising and career navigation:** CUNY Central will release a student advisement tool for use in college success and continuing education programs. The event's sponsoring entities are developing plans to create career navigation tools, informed by current labor market intelligence.
- **Strengthening of policies supportive of career pathways:** WKDEV will work with City agencies and other partners locally to gather information on how current policies facilitate and obstruct career pathway development. NYATEP will engage with the state workforce board, and States departments of Labor and Education to ensure state policy defined as part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act implementation is supportive of career pathways development.
- **Securing additional resources:** NYATEP will advocate to the State legislature for increased statewide resources to support sectoral approaches and career pathways, including funding to expand availability of adult basic education, literacy, job training and workforce services.
- **Opportunities for networking and partnership building:** Drawing on information such as NYCETC's provider survey and WKDEV's snapshot of City workforce programs, partners will develop opportunities for communication and partnership building across providers.

For more information on the Career Pathways framework developed by the Center for Law and Social Policy, visit

<http://www.clasp.org/issues/postsecondary/pages/career-pathways-explained>

To access the WKDEV Career Pathways report, visit

<http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/careerpathways/downloads/pdf/career-pathways-full-report.pdf>

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*“If you’re doing it alone, it’s not a career pathway.”*

— Judy Mortrude, Director, Alliance for Quality Career Pathways, Center for Law and Social Policy

