

Sector Partnerships in Iowa

Sector Partnership Overview

Sector partnerships are increasingly recognized as an effective method for aligning education, economic, and workforce development systems to address industry-identified labor market needs. Sector partnerships are comprised of industries with shared needs, as well as various education, workforce, economic, and community organizations in supportive roles. These partnerships develop and continuously evaluate goals, policies, and service-delivery strategies to meet the needs of employers in a given sector. In doing so, they operate within labor market regions, and are not confined to municipal, county, educational, or state boundaries. Effective sector partnerships are industry-driven, meaning industries identify needs and assume the lead role in developing strategies which address their identified needs.

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The Pathways for Academic Career and Employment (PACE) program provides funding to each of Iowa's 15 community colleges to implement simplified, streamlined, and comprehensive education and training pathways (referred to as "projects" in Iowa Code chapter 260H, the Pathways for Academic Career and Employment Act). These pathways are designed to help eligible participants secure gainful, quality, in-state employment. House File 604, passed by the 2013 Iowa Legislature and signed into law by Governor Branstad, made several modifications to Iowa Code chapter 260H. One modification allowed for the expending of PACE funds for the development and implementation of regional industry sector partnerships.

In 2015, the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation convened the Sector Partnership and Career Pathway Advisory Council (SPAC) to provide state-level feedback on the implementation of sector partnerships and career pathways through the PACE program. The council initially consisted of representatives exclusively from Iowa's 15 community colleges; however, membership was broadened to include representatives from several state agencies, trade unions, and non-profit organizations.

SPAC was tasked with establishing common definitions and expectations for sector partnerships and career pathways for the state of Iowa. After the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the council ensured these definitions aligned with expectations of the new federal statute, as well as other federal guidelines such as the Ability to Benefit (ATB) provision of the Higher Education Act. To better understand the current sector partnership/career pathway landscape, these definitions were utilized in a survey which was sent to each community college, as well as other organizations involved with convening and facilitating sector partnerships. The results of the survey are summarized in a report titled "*Sector Partnership and Career Pathway Advisory Council: Overview and Survey Findings*" available on the Iowa Department of Education's [website](#).

After the passage of WIOA, which contains several provisions that emphasize credential attainment through the use of sector partnerships and career pathways, it was recognized that the SPAC was well positioned to assist with the implementation of these WIOA provisions and, to that end, Iowa's Unified State Plan lays out a vision for the SPAC going forward.

Current Sector Partnership Activities

1. As called for in Iowa's Unified State Plan, the SPAC will be reconfigured into the Sector Partnership Leadership Council (SPLC) which will assume the lead role in the implementation and achievement of objectives related to sector partnerships and career pathways across the state, thereby assuming a more formal advisory role to the state Iowa Workforce Development Board. Currently, the SPLC is undergoing a significant membership reconfiguration with an emphasis on greater business, industry, and employer representation so that the council is truly industry-led and oriented. The SPLC will maintain broad education, workforce development, and economic development representation, and will be convened in August or September 2016.
2. Iowa was the recipient of a U.S. Department of Labor Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant to provide employment-related services to dislocated workers stemming from the Avian Bird Flu outbreak in 2015. The grant provides \$500,000 of the total grant amount to be used on regional planning and strategy activities. Iowa will utilize these funds to:
 - Partner with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) to promote Information Technology sector partnerships and career pathways (see item 4 below). The partnership with CAEL will also involve the training of a cadre of sector partnership facilitators, who will both support existing and assist in cultivating future sector partnerships;
 - Develop a series of Sector Partnership Toolkits to support the development and implementation of sector partnerships in multiple sectors statewide. The first toolkit has been released and is available on the department's [website](#).
 - Support a Future Ready Iowa portal and database to include a database of sector partnerships and career pathways.
3. The fiscal year 2017 education appropriations bill, Senate File 2323, allocates \$200,000 of the \$5,000,000 PACE appropriation to the Iowa Department of Education for implementation of sector partnerships, and authorizes the Iowa Department of Education to create a consultant position to carry-out this work. The goal is to have this position filled in the fall of 2016.

4. Information Technology (IT) has been identified as a priority industry in Iowa. With the encouragement of the Governor's Office, the Iowa Department of Education and Iowa Workforce Development, in partnership with CAEL and the Technology Association of Iowa, have designed and implemented a project that will drive the establishment or maturation of IT sector partnerships and career pathways across the state. Once established, the SPLC will leverage the successes of this IT work into sector partnership and career pathway efforts in other high priority industry sectors.

Sector Partnership Membership

Source: National Governors Association "[Sector Strategies Coming of Age](#)"

