The Landscape of Adult Education and Career Pathways in High-Need Cities: A First Look

- Funded by the federal Institute of Education Sciences.
- Examines how adult basic education and literacy providers in Chicago, Houston, and Miami are integrating career pathway components into their services.
- Chicago, Houston, and Miami are home to 5% of U.S. adults without a high school degree and 10% of limited English-proficient U.S. adults.

83% of Agencies Offer Career Pathways (CP)*

- Chicago: 76%
- Houston: 91%
- Miami: 81%

*According to the following definition: an approach that connects progressive levels of basic skills & postsecondary education, training, & supportive services in specific sectors or cross-sector occupations in a way that optimizes the progress & success of individuals—including those with limited education, English, skills, and/or work experience—in securing marketable credentials, family-supporting employment, & further education & employment opportunities. (CLASP, 2013)

Type of Organization Offering CP

- Community-based organizations (CBOs) (58%)
- School District Adult Education Program (22%)
- Workforce Development Organization (8%)
- Other (5%)
- Postsecondary institution (4%)
- Library (2%)
- K-12 School (1%)

1. Community-based organizations (CBOs) that offered CP were disproportionately located in Chicago (44%).
2. All of these were located in Miami.
3. “Other” included correctional facilities, homeless shelters, etc.

Agencies offered a range of adult education and CP services.

- ESL: 84%
- Employability/work readiness: 76%
- High school diploma/GED classes: 71%
- Job development services: 68%
- Career exploration/awareness: 65%
- Classes leading to specific job opportunities: 56%

“Core” CP services were much less common.

- Classes to transition to postsecondary: 75%
- Classes combining basic skills & career/technical education: 54%
- Short-term certificate program: 49%
- Obtain industry-recognized credential: 44%
- Obtain postsecondary or stackable credential: 40%
- Internships: 35%
- Apprenticeships: 16%

Other services (secondary or postsecondary education): 39%
Other services (employment): 33%

Top Employment Sectors

- Early Childhood Development & Education: 44%
- Health & Medical Technology: 38%
- Information Technology: 30%
- Building Trades & Construction: 29%

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Top 5 Student Characteristics among CP Providers

- 94% Un(der)employed persons
- 92% Immigrants and non-native English speakers
- 92% Parents & caregivers
- 89% Adults who struggle with basic skills
- 80% Out-of-school young adults

Top 3 CP Services with Academic Entry Requirements

- Classes to obtain industry-recognized credential (86%)
- Classes leading to specific job opportunities (86%)
- Classes to obtain postsecondary or stackable credential (85%)

Race/Ethnicity of U.S.-Born Students

- 57% Latino
- 22% Black
- 8% White
- 7% Asian

The remainder were unknown, other, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander.

Measurement of Outcomes

No single measure was used by all agencies to track student outcomes. The top 4 measures were:

- Educational level gains (85%)
- High school/GED diploma (67%)
- Initial employment (55%)
- Attained CP credential (48%)

41% of agencies track data specifically on CP students.

Agencies that offer CP are more likely (than those that did not offer or were developing CP) to measure 9 out of 19 outcomes, including:

1. Attaining a CP credential (54% vs. 7%)
2. Obtaining initial employment (62% vs. 19%)
3. Retaining employment (38% vs. 6%)


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