

# **IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS**

## **Service Model Components**

The following are the service components and design considerations of a multiple pathway model to help individuals with significant barriers to employment achieve economic security and a satisfying attachment to the labor market. The model assumes that an intervention of some sort is needed to achieve these goals, including interventions that prevent an individual from going off course from a track towards success (i.e., preventing dropping out of high school or college). Intervention, therefore, also includes risk assessment and early detection of risky characteristics.

The model also assumes that a range of services, via various providers and funding streams will be braided together according to the needs of the individual participant; that there is “no wrong door”—an individual will be gently lead to the appropriate entry point; that all roads lead to gainful employment; that the right pathway is available for each participant to access, persist and succeed; that all skill development activities are contextualized to career goals, integrated with real world work experience wherever possible, and include income earning whenever possible; and that industry (employers and labor) views itself at least as a true partner in the model and optimally as a co-investor.

## **Service Model Components and Considerations**

### **Core Values of the Model:**

Staff Professional Development & Cross-Training for Effective Outreach/Awareness: For participants to be availed of the opportunity to achieve meaningful attachment to the labor market and economic security using a multiple pathways approach, the first requirement is for front-line service delivery staff at all intake points to be thoroughly knowledgeable of the programs and services available across the system and to understand the combination of programs and services to call upon for every career pathway in order to effectively support participants first at intake and subsequently during triage and follow up. To that end, initial and ongoing orientation (even cross-training) of front-line staff to the programs and services available across the system is critical.

Customer Choice & Strength or Asset-Based Programming: The model honors the assets and interests of each potential and enrolled participant, at every stage of service delivery. Guidance is provided about the full range of possibilities available to each individual at the point in time for which they are seeking services. The model takes into account that participant desires may change as they engage in services, learn more about their abilities and interests, and about new career options. Service plans are designed with the participant to achieve the participant’s desired outcomes, with adequate periodic check-ins and adjustments to ensure continued plan appropriateness and effectiveness.

Coaching & Navigation: Together effective coaching and navigation will provide the momentum—the positive forward movement—for individuals in transition. Coaching provides guidance and also the cheer-leading that is often missing in the lives of the vulnerable,

disadvantaged, and disenfranchised. Navigation provides assistance to move between and among services and into the workforce. Eventually, through the experience of active engagement in programs, with support from staff as both coaches and guides, participants will learn to value and cheer for themselves, and will learn about problem-solving and self-advocacy. Whenever possible, the model encourages single points of contact for coaches and navigators (often the same individual), to eliminate the difficulties of transition from service to service.

### **Model Components:**

Intake: First interview to determine individual's immediate needs; initial thoughts of participant on career interests; compile information on educational and job history; any information on barriers to employment, accessing education and training, and persisting in either education or employment; determine eligibility for all services, funding and other resources. If possible, identify evidence to select potential effective learning modalities (learning styles or successful prior learning experiences).

Triage and Follow-up: based on intake information, make immediate determination about need for support services, readiness to pursue education, training, employment, or a combination, and make appropriate referrals based on determination. Triage agent will follow-up with participant or referral site to ensure smooth transition, or to re-direct the individual when warranted.

Assessment of Academic Levels, Interests, Aptitudes, Learning Needs/Accommodations, and Learning Styles: an individual should be able to enter a career pathway program at whatever stage is appropriate to the individual's level of functioning at that time, and be able to move up and down the line as either skill development is achieved or additional or remedial skill development is needed. Assessment may take on various forms, such as standardized tests, criterion referencing, personal interviews, hands-on skill trials, and portfolio development, and should be tied to a credentialing process that is accepted by the targeted industry.

Career and Educational Exploration and Guidance: All participants, but especially those with little or no prior work experience need sufficient information with which to make career decisions and appropriate educational choices. A well-formed career and educational exploration component will enable an individual to select an occupation based on his or her interests, needs and capabilities. Career exploration modules should include information on the viability of non-traditional occupations for women.

Participant Pathway and Outcome Plan: Every participant will work with staff to develop a service plan with clearly articulated and measureable outcomes. Staff will facilitate a conversation with the participant that leads to understanding of the participant's interests; passions; assets, including current capabilities and experience; learning style; immediate needs; and career goals. Staff then facilitates the participant's development of his or her pathway and outcome plan, providing necessary information and guidance along the way. The plan is considered to be a "live" document, subject to change as the participant learns about new career and education options and/or discovers new areas of interest and capacity.

Counseling/Case Management/ Coaching: The counselor helps the participant to interpret

information that she or he obtains upon entrance to and throughout participation in the program in both career and life domain terms. For the disadvantaged individual, career counseling/case management is also the thread that runs throughout the multiple stages of program participation, assisting with transition points, and overcoming barriers to persistence. At a minimum, the counselor/case manager provides a continuing point of reference or program identification throughout participation, and motivates through acknowledgement of milestones, small or great, that the participant achieves. The system will avoid assigning multiple case managers for one participant, but if this becomes necessary, case managers will work as a team to provide support to the person in order to streamline and expedite services.

Support Services: The role of the counselor/case manager includes assisting the participant in learning about and obtaining support services when needed by individuals to overcome barriers to employment that may be encountered along their career pathway. For many who make up disadvantaged populations their success along a career path is inextricably linked to their ability to overcome significant barriers and obstacles that require a variety of social, medical, behavioral, economic and other support services. These services, in tandem with occupational skill development and other components of the career pathway, enable individuals with barriers to employment to become and remain attached to the labor market.

(Contextualized) Basic Education Skills: Generally, the literacy and numeracy skills required to function adequately in day-to-day living, including in unskilled employment. Basic skills are also a foundation for entry into and progress within the chosen occupation, they are a platform of skills and knowledge on which career-specific education and training is built. Because evidence clearly indicates that contextualized basic skills education improves and quickens the attainment of desired learning outcomes, this model only includes a contextualized option.

(Contextualized) English-as-a-Second-Language: The level of English proficiency, including speaking reading, writing, and listening, that is required to enter or progress within the selected occupational area. Because evidence clearly indicates that contextualized ESL improves and quickens the attainment of desired learning outcomes, this model only includes a contextualized option.

Work Readiness Instruction and Assessment: Preparation on how to get a job and how to keep a job. Work readiness instruction informs individuals about the structure and culture of the workplace, and about what makes an individual a valuable employee—beyond specific occupational skills. Topics in this component may include, but are not limited to, communication skills, decision-making/problem-solving, team building/team work, quality practices, following instructions, relationship with authority figures, leadership skills, personal growth, stress management, health and hygiene, and dealing with difficult people/situations. Assessment should include behavioral demonstrations of material learned and not rely solely on standardized test formats. Therefore, work readiness is best addressed when embedded into education or training program, not as a stand alone component. If at all possible, work readiness of each participant should be validated by an employer, an endorsement which will be more favorably accepted by a hiring employer.

Development of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities for Job Entry: Skill development here refers

not just to those skills needed to enter the field, but also to the building of a foundation of skills to prepare for advancement within the field. Wherever possible, skill development activities should be work-integrated, which may include work-relevant project-based learning in the classroom or on-line, industry guest lecturers, or participant experience in the workplace of any type, from job-shadows to mentorship, through paid internships and apprenticeships. Paid work experience or earn and learn models are the optimal design, but understandably the most difficult to achieve and sustain. Skill development activities will be appropriate to the learning styles, interests and capabilities of each participant. Early intake and assessments will help determine the appropriate pathway and point of entry for each individual. Development options may include education, training, on-the-job training, or any combination thereof.

Skills Upgrading for Occupational Progress: Skills development beyond the point of occupational entry (first employment during program participation). Skills upgrading should be tied to a credentialing process that is accepted by industry employers. In cases where a credentialing process doesn't already exist, establishment of a process that will be recognized by local employers should be established. Employer engagement on skills standards and credentials is described in the next section.

Employer Engagement/Job Development/Job Placement: Working with employers to determine which jobs are currently available, which jobs are projected to become available, and what the skill requirements are for available jobs. Employers should be engaged to help inform curriculum design, to ensure that skill development activities are work-integrated, to enhance program offerings, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in meeting industry's needs. Staff responsible for job development/job placement and faculty responsible for curriculum development and delivery will work closely with industry representatives to ensure that curriculum and materials for skill development are directly applicable to the workplace, and that participants are adequately prepared to meet employer skill demands once on the job. This is an on-going process as curriculum may need to be altered or enhanced as new jobs become available and/or if participants demonstrate an inability to perform effectively on the job.

Post Job Placement Support for the Participant and Hiring Employer: Once an individual enters employment who has had little or no previous work experience, and regardless of effective pre-placement services, any number of factors can influence continued employment status: daycare, transportation, required accommodations, interpersonal issues, family difficulties, medical needs, and court involvement are some examples. Or an individual may require additional skill development in particular areas in order to do the job well. Support services for program participants will involve periodic contact, information and referral for necessary services, and, when necessary, advocacy for the individual on the job. For the hiring employer, a relationship should be established with the supervisor or human resources director to periodically check on the employer's satisfaction with the new employee, identify any issues that might threaten the worker's success on the job, and find solutions to ensure continued employment, employer satisfaction and employer willingness to hire again from the program. Whenever possible, post-placement contact should occur at the workplace, in order to preserve the time at the business for both the worker and the employer.

Employer Services/ Employer Engagement: Employers must be engaged at all stages of service

design, delivery, and evaluation. The average employer will view participants with significant barriers as risky hires, although may also view involvement with programs as a moral obligation. Employer services for this model require that the employer liaison develop a relationship based on the employer's actual business needs, and the system's ability to help the employer meet those needs. The liaison will work with the employer to determine which business needs can be addressed wholly or partially through workforce development interventions, and make appropriate connections/referrals for workforce development professionals to develop an effective solution. Such business needs generally include, but are not limited to issues of worker productivity, high error or rework rates, workplace accidents, customer dissatisfaction, high employee turnover or absenteeism, or high cost of recruitment and hiring. Solutions generally include some combination of worker or new hire education and training, customized curriculum development, supervisor training, development of new workplace or hiring practices, including career pathway development, exploration of new technology options and accompanying worker training. When issues are identified that are important to the employer and solutions are outside of the realm of workforce development, the employer liaison should make every effort to make an appropriate referral for relevant public business services (to economic development or business service organizations, or specific service providers such as Innovate Washington and Impact Washington). In either case, the employer liaison should follow-up periodically to ensure that the employer is satisfied with the referral and solution, and if not, to seek higher satisfaction options.