



CAREER PREP THAT WORKS

Align Career Preparation to Labor Market Demand

Career preparation programs can create opportunity for individuals, employers, and entire communities. Success is more likely when programs are coordinated across system providers and aligned with labor market demand. When training is connected to workforce needs, learners are more likely to find employment in high-wage, in-demand fields, and employers are better able to build and maintain an effective workforce.

With the right data, you can strategically improve career preparation: aligning programs to the local labor market to benefit everyone in the community.

Our Three-Step Alignment Process

Working with state agencies, Education Northwest developed a three-step process to assess the efficacy and alignment of career preparation programs at a state or regional level:

1

Inventory programs. First, we catalogue programs by sector and type, using the Classification of Instructional Programming taxonomy to help categorize programs. If desired, we can target our analysis to specific types of programs (for example, those serving specific age groups or preparing individuals for careers that require less than a college degree).

2

Map programs to occupations. We crosswalk programs to Standard Occupational Classification codes, searching keywords from course/program descriptions to identify all of the potential occupations that may be a match for program completers.

3

Assess alignment with labor market. We assess the distribution of individuals enrolled in career preparation programs relative to projected labor market demand. For each occupation aligned to one or more programs, we calculate the total number of enrollees per projected job opening to assess the size of the employment pipeline. In partnership with policymakers, we also use labor market data to define high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand jobs, and we assess alignment specifically with these opportunities.

Understanding Your Career Preparation Landscape

Every community has unique strengths and challenges, so we collaborate closely to answer the most important questions facing your community. Our process can answer a range of questions about the operation and efficiency of career preparation programming, such as:

PROGRAM TYPES

- ▶ How many programs are operating, overall and by sector? Which populations are served?
- ▶ In which fields or industries is training offered? What types of occupations are individuals being prepared for?
- ▶ To what extent do programs prepare participants for high-wage, high-skill, high-demand employment?

PROGRAM ALIGNMENT

- ▶ How do the number and type of program offerings align to existing and projected economic needs?
- ▶ How do enrollments compare to occupational forecasts, and in what jobs is under- or over-supply a concern?
- ▶ Are there high-wage, high-skill, high-demand fields in which no career preparation programs exist?

Solutions for Data-Driven Systemic Improvement

Our analyses can surface solutions to strengthen career preparation programming. We make recommendations to help policymakers:



Align programming to labor market demand. Pinpoint mismatches in worker supply and employer demand and identify opportunities to add more lucrative options.



Improve systemic data collection. Build a centralized source of data on annual program enrollments and employee wages to help providers fill employment pipelines and students understand potential career outcomes.

Our Team

Contact **Sarah Asson** (sarah.asson@ednw.org) to learn how to strengthen career preparation programming in your community.



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