



Shifting Gears:  
**State Innovation to  
Advance Workers  
and the Economy  
in the Midwest**

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## About Shifting Gears

The Joyce Foundation's Shifting Gears initiative was launched in 2007 as a state policy change effort in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The goal is to strengthen state postsecondary, adult basic education, and workforce development systems so that more low-skilled workers gain the education, skills and credentials needed to advance and succeed in our changing economy.

For more information on Shifting Gears, please visit [www.shifting-gears.org](http://www.shifting-gears.org).

## About the Joyce Foundation

The Joyce Foundation supports efforts to protect the Great Lakes, to reduce poverty and violence in the region, and to ensure its residents have access to good schools, decent jobs, and strong democracy, and a diverse and thriving culture.

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## About this Publication

This publication is a product of the Joyce Foundation's Shifting Gears initiative. It was prepared by Julie Strawn, with help from the Shifting Gears technical assistance team at CLASP. The author would also like to thank the Shifting Gears states and the Shifting Gears management team for their review of drafts and helpful comments.

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## Executive Summary

The Joyce Foundation's Shifting Gears initiative promotes regional economic growth and opportunity by improving the skills of the workforce in five Midwestern states: Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. (A sixth state, Indiana, participated in the initial phase of Shifting Gears but is not currently involved.) Launched in 2007 and supported by a combined investment of nearly \$16 million in Joyce Foundation and matching state funds, Shifting Gears is helping states to scale up and sustain innovation in adult education, workforce development and postsecondary education. By focusing on state policy change, Shifting Gears is designed to spark lasting reform that enables more adults—particularly those who enter the workforce with lower basic skills or limited English proficiency—to earn postsecondary credentials that lead to good jobs.

Shifting Gears states are charting new paths in postsecondary access and success that matter for future economic prosperity in the Midwest and beyond. A changing economy and changing demographics in the workforce compel us as a country to reach out to adults who may not have entered or completed postsecondary programs in the past, and restructure adult basic education, workforce development, and other postsecondary education programs to better meet these students' needs, and in turn, meet the needs of employers for skilled workers. Our economy over the last twenty years has placed a growing premium on education and training beyond high school; at the same time, trends in worker skills are moving in the wrong direction. Younger workers are less educated than those who are retiring and, over the last two decades, the share of prime-age workers (ages 25 to 49) enrolled in postsecondary education has fallen.<sup>1</sup>

These changes in the economy and in our workforce require more efficient and effective ways of helping adults earn postsecondary credentials that employers value. Right now, too many adults who enroll in education and training programs fail to complete them or to earn credentials that increase their employment and earnings potential. Adults with lower skills who start out in adult basic education, English language services, or college remedial courses are most at risk of not completing a credential.

This report summarizes state actions to address these problems in the Shifting Gears states, with an in-depth look at innovations implemented through Shifting Gears in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin. These Shifting Gears innovations have focused on two approaches to help more adults earn credentials that employers value:

### **Creating New Paths to Credentials and Careers**

State innovation in this area includes breaking longer diploma and degree programs into shorter certificate modules, prioritizing industry and occupational sectors that offer good jobs in career pathways, and offering classes at a wider variety of places, days, and times. Two state efforts with this focus that have been implemented in Shifting Gears are Wisconsin's Regional Industry Skills Education (RISE) Career Pathways and Indiana's College for Working Adults. Shifting Gears states sometimes use the concept of "career pathways" to frame their work in this area. Career pathways "offer a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to get jobs in specific industries, and to advance over time to successfully complete higher levels of education and work in that industry."<sup>2</sup>



## **Connecting Basic Skills to College and Career Success**

Shifting Gears states have also created new “bridge” models that combine basic skills content with workforce readiness, support services, and the knowledge and skills needed for a specific occupation (or cluster of occupations). Some of these bridge models are new programs, others are new types of adult basic or technical education courses, while still others are new co-instructional approaches within existing courses. The common threads among these bridge models are that they contextualize basic skills and English language content to a specific occupational focus, coordinate instruction by basic skills and technical education faculty and staff, and seek to articulate academic and technical content and credentials to the next step in college and career pathways. Shifting Gears work implemented in this area includes Illinois Shifting Gears Bridges, Wisconsin RISE Career Pathway Bridges, and Indiana’s Embedded Skills pilots.

Since 2007, Shifting Gears states have led innovations in policy and practice that help more adults earn postsecondary credentials that improve their economic prospects and those of the communities in which they live. Despite bleak economic and state fiscal environments, where demand by adults for education outstrips resources and supply by wide margins, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin have all managed to make important progress toward their Shifting Gears goals.

As they continue their work, the Shifting Gears states are expanding their scope in two important ways. First, they are beginning to identify and implement ways to provide lower skilled adults with more support to succeed in education, such as more intensive and sustained college and career coaching and more help with meeting the costs of upgrading their skills, both direct (such as tuition, books, and fees) and indirect (such as living expenses, child care, and transportation). Wisconsin’s Opportunity Grants are a leading example of these efforts.

The Shifting Gears states are also reaching out to connect reforms in adult education, workforce development, and postsecondary education to broader conversations in their states about fostering economic growth in partnership with employers and about college access and completion for underrepresented populations. Linking Shifting Gears education reforms more closely to employer workforce needs helps to ensure that the credentials adults complete pay off for them in the labor market. Connecting Shifting Gears to larger state conversations about college completion is important for making sure the needs of working adults are taken into account when the state addresses such issues as how to improve college remediation, how to articulate postsecondary credit and non-credit occupational education, and whether to focus some state postsecondary funding on how well colleges help students succeed.



## Rebuilding Skills as an Engine of Economic Opportunity

Adult basic education students at Moraine Park Technical College in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin participate in an I-BEST welding program that integrates academic content and occupational training. Upon completion of the program, students receive a postsecondary certificate that helps them gain immediate employment but is also an embedded part of a career pathway, should they choose to continue their education. Photos courtesy of Moraine Park Technical College.

The Joyce Foundation's Shifting Gears initiative promotes regional economic growth and opportunity by improving the skills of the workforce in five Midwestern states: Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. (A sixth state, Indiana, participated in the initial phase of Shifting Gears but is not currently involved.) Supported by a combined investment of nearly \$16 million in Joyce Foundation and matching state funds, Shifting Gears is helping states to scale up and sustain innovation in adult education, workforce development, and postsecondary education. Shifting Gears is designed to spark lasting reform by focusing on state policy changes that enable more adults—especially those who enter the workforce with lower basic skills or limited English proficiency—to earn postsecondary credentials that lead to better jobs.

Shifting Gears states are charting new paths to postsecondary access and success that will impact the future economic prosperity of more than just the Midwest. Changes in the U.S. economy and in its workforce compel us as a country to reach out to adults who may not have entered or completed postsecondary programs in the past. Restructuring adult basic education, workforce development, and other postsecondary education programs to better meet the needs of this category of students will in turn help meet the needs of employers for increasing numbers of skilled workers. Innovation in Shifting Gears states can provide useful experience and ideas for other states to use when responding to their own similar economic and demographic changes. Renewed attention from the President and Congress to these issues may offer opportunities for federal policy reform that supports this state and local innovation.



## **A Changing Economy Places a Growing Premium on Education**

The changing structure of our economy over the last twenty years has placed a growing premium on education and training beyond the high school level. Men who have at least a two- or four-year college degree have seen their earnings hold steady. Women with similar credentials have seen their incomes rise. However, the earnings of those holding only a high school diploma have dropped substantially for men, by about a third. Male high school dropouts have fared the worst; their earnings have fallen almost by half.<sup>3</sup> At community colleges, where working adults are likely to enroll, a postsecondary education pays off most for those who pursue education or training in high-wage fields, such as health care, science and engineering, and for those who transfer to four-year colleges and complete their degrees.<sup>4</sup> The increased demand for skilled workers is expected to continue. It is estimated that between 2008 and 2018, almost 30 million new job openings—nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of all openings—will be filled by workers who have at least some postsecondary education and training.<sup>5</sup>

Even in these tough economic times, postsecondary education matters for labor market success. High school dropouts are three times more likely to be unemployed than those with a four-year degree. Workers who completed high school but did not further pursue their education are twice as likely to be unemployed as four-year college graduates. Those with two-year college degrees fall somewhere in the middle – they are less likely to be unemployed than workers with a high school education or less, but they are not as well off as those with a four-year degree.<sup>6</sup> And since one of the biggest costs for adults of postsecondary education is the loss of earnings and work experience while they are in school, a poor job market can be a good time for workers to improve their skills and education if they can obtain financial help to do so.

Beyond economic benefits to individual workers, there are other ways in which our society is strengthened by helping more adults enter and succeed in postsecondary education. For workers who are parents, the most important one is that their increased knowledge and educational attainment spills over to their children, whose own education outcomes improve as a result.<sup>7</sup>

For these reasons, Shifting Gears works toward policy changes aimed at helping more workers earn postsecondary credentials that will pay off in the labor market.<sup>8</sup>

## **A Changing Workforce Requires More Attention to Education for Adults**

The changing economy has spurred a broad consensus among policymakers on the need to dramatically increase the number of workers with postsecondary education and training. Policymakers may reasonably wonder, however, why Shifting Gears focuses on adults when a large amount of effort is already invested in helping middle- and high-school students prepare for and complete college. The answer is demographics. The U.S. population is aging, and a growing proportion of our future workforce is already past high school age.

According to the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, even if by 2020 the entire U.S. matches the performance of the best state efforts to help young people graduate from high school, continue to college, and earn degrees, the U.S. would still fall short of closing the gap in the number of skilled workers between the U.S. and the other best-educated countries in the world by at least one million skilled workers. Helping more adults earn postsecondary credentials can compensate in part for our dwindling supply of new high school graduates. However, at this juncture, the trend is moving in the wrong direction; younger workers are less educated than those who are retiring and, over the last two decades, the percentage of prime-age

workers (ages 25 to 49) enrolled in postsecondary education has fallen.<sup>9</sup>

## **Currently Not Enough Adults Succeed in Postsecondary Education**

The changes in the U.S. economy and workforce require use of more efficient and effective ways to help adults earn the postsecondary credentials that employers most value. Currently, too many adults who enroll in education and training programs fail to complete them or earn the credentials that pay off in the labor market. At community colleges, just 35 to 40 percent of adults complete a certificate or two- or four-year degree over six years.<sup>10</sup> Older community college students (age 25 and above) are even less likely to complete credentials than younger ones (although they tend to perform better academically while in college).<sup>11</sup> While there is little reliable national data on adults, one study of adult college completion rates in a dozen states found that only about one in five (19 percent) of adults who began college had earned any kind of postsecondary credential eight years later.<sup>12</sup>

Other factors, in addition to student age, are linked to lower completion rates. For example, college students are less likely to complete their education if they are men or students of color, if they are academically underprepared or part-time students, or if their parents did not go to college. Lower-income students are particularly at risk of not completing postsecondary education programs, regardless of their academic skills. Among college students with high achievement test scores, nearly three-fourths (74 percent) of those from upper-income families complete college, compared to less than a third (29 percent) of those from low-income families.<sup>13</sup> For students in occupational programs, which are the focus of Shifting Gears, job and financial demands are the most common reason that students seeking to earn certificates or degrees drop out, with family demands being the second most common reason for these students leaving school.<sup>14</sup>

Lack of basic academic and English language skills is an especially important barrier to postsecondary access and success, which is why the Shifting Gears initiative focuses on the lower-skilled adult population. More than half of community college students—about 60 percent in several recent studies—enroll in remedial college coursework, known as developmental education, at some point in their college careers.<sup>15</sup> Many others are assessed as needing developmental education but do not enroll.<sup>16</sup> The pool of undereducated adults grows substantially each year, due in part to immigration by lower-skilled adults and also because the number of new high school dropouts each year (more than 400,000 in 2006, for example) far exceeds the annual number of dropouts who earn GEDs or return to earn their diplomas.<sup>17</sup>

Current basic skills services are not effective enough, however, in helping lower-skilled adults start on a path that ends in obtaining postsecondary credentials. Among developmental education students, just 30 to 40 percent complete remedial studies. Adult basic education and English language students typically stay enrolled for less than 100 hours of instruction (roughly the amount needed to advance one grade or English language level). Among GED graduates, research suggests that few earn postsecondary credentials in the first decade after earning a GED; about a third do eventually enroll in postsecondary education and about eight percent ultimately earn a degree.<sup>18</sup>

## **Innovative Education Policies to Improve Success**

Low completion rates in basic skills and postsecondary education and training programs pose a central challenge to meeting the needs of adult students and employer needs for skilled workers. Despite this sobering data, there is a growing consensus on the key elements of a new approach. The Joyce Foundation called attention





to many of these elements at the outset of Shifting Gears in a detailed analysis it funded of state policy barriers and solutions to increasing the skills of working adults.<sup>19</sup> More recently, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems summarized these critical reforms:

- Increase grant aid for part-time students and include help with non-tuition expenses.
- Schedule classes in more flexible ways, e.g., on a wider range of days and times and in less rigid sequences.
- Deliver instruction more creatively, e.g., by combining distance and face-to-face learning.
- Create clearer, more direct, and faster paths to postsecondary credential completion.
- Focus postsecondary education and training more on gaining certificates that have a high value in the labor market.
- Adopt radically different and more effective remedial education strategies.
- Engage in major marketing efforts targeted to adult learners to promote the value of education, the education opportunities available, and the resulting, immediate link to employment.<sup>20</sup>

Shifting Gears states are leading innovations in policy and practice in several of these areas. The two major areas of focus for their work to date have been on creating better paths through postsecondary education for adults and on connecting basic skills services more closely to college and career programs.

### **Creating New Paths to Credentials and Careers**

State innovation in this area includes breaking longer diploma and degree programs into shorter certificate modules, prioritizing industry

and occupational sectors that offer good jobs in career pathways, and offering classes at a wider variety of places, days, and times. Shifting Gears states sometimes use the concept of “career pathways” to frame their work in this area. Career pathways “offer a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to get jobs in specific industries, and to advance over time to successfully complete higher levels of education and work in that industry.”<sup>21</sup> They include “embedded” or “stackable” credentials connected to each step in the pathway. These credentials, such as occupational certificates, have value to employers by themselves, and are also build toward longer technical diplomas and degrees. Two state efforts with this focus that have been implemented in Shifting Gears are Wisconsin’s RISE Career Pathways and Indiana’s College for Working Adults.

### **Connecting Basic Skills to College and Career Success**

Shifting Gears states have also created new “bridge” models that combine basic skills content with workforce readiness, support services, and the knowledge and skills needed for a specific occupation (or cluster of occupations). Some of these bridge models are new programs; others are new types of adult basic or technical education courses; and, there are also models which use new co-instruction approaches within existing courses. The common threads among these bridge models are that they contextualize basic skills and English language content to a specific occupational focus, coordinate instruction by basic skills and technical education faculty and staff, and seek to articulate academic and technical content and credentials to the next step in college and career pathways. Shifting Gears work implemented in this area includes Illinois Shifting Gears Bridges, Wisconsin RISE Career Pathway Bridges, and Indiana’s Embedded Skills pilots. These types of Shifting Gears state innovations

described in more detail in the third section of this paper, “Engineering New Policy Models for a Changing Economy” (see page 13). A central tenet of *Shifting Gears* is that sustaining and scaling up such innovation is only possible when supported by action to align key state policies across adult basic education, postsecondary education, and workforce development systems.

### **New Federal Attention on Adults and Postsecondary Credentials**

*Shifting Gears* states are helping to create blueprints for reform, not only for other states but also for federal policymakers who have a new focus on helping adults increase their skills and earn marketable credentials. For example, the federal economic stimulus package, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA or the Recovery Act), focused substantial new resources on creating education and training pathways to for-credit and non-credit postsecondary credentials.

More recently, the federal health care legislation package enacted in March 2010 includes several important college access and success provisions. The new law expands student aid by increasing Pell grants and making student loan repayment more affordable for low-income borrowers. States will receive more federal assistance to fund

college access activities, such as college outreach and assistance with student aid applications. Two billion dollars is allocated to help workers affected by foreign trade earn postsecondary credentials, through grants to community colleges and other postsecondary institutions to be used to improve programs that serve these workers. Postsecondary institutions with particularly high minority student enrollments, such as historically black colleges and universities and Hispanic-serving institutions, also receive increased federal funding under the law.

The President and Congress may have other major federal policy opportunities over the next several years to help more adults earn marketable postsecondary credentials. These include reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which governs federal job training and adult basic education and English language programs, and reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant, which provides cash assistance to low-income families and funds services that help them find work and advance to better jobs. The Obama administration has signaled that it intends to use WIA reauthorization to continue policy reforms begun under the Recovery Act, particularly those that improve pathways for lower-skilled adults to postsecondary credentials and careers.





# Jumpstarting State Policy Change Through Shifting Gears

Adult basic education and English language learning students at Moraine Park Technical College in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin participate in a RISE culinary arts program that integrates academic education and occupational training. Students who successfully complete this program earn a 7-credit college certificate in culinary arts that can be applied to a longer-term Associate's degree. Photo courtesy of Moraine Park Technical College.

Because Shifting Gears seeks to catalyze state policy changes that sustain and scale up local innovation, the six Midwest states that received grants were asked to convene state policy teams that included, at minimum, staff from across adult basic education, community and technical colleges, and workforce development programs to identify key Shifting Gears policy priorities. Some states also included local education and training providers, nonprofit research and advocacy groups, employers, and economic development agencies. During the first phase, which took place from 2007 to 2009 and is referred to as Shifting Gears 1.0, states worked to create a common vision and detailed plans for policy changes to advance it. The Joyce Foundation is now supporting five of these states in a second phase, known as Shifting Gears 2.0, during which these policy change plans will be implemented, and data, practitioner engagement, and communications strategies will be created to support their local implementation.

These five states are at various stages in Shifting Gears. Illinois and Wisconsin were the first to move to Shifting Gears 2.0, in April 2009. Michigan followed in August 2009, and Ohio and Minnesota in December 2009. (Indiana ended its Shifting Gears work in 2009.) A summary of each state's efforts is included below. More details and information can be found on the Shifting Gears Web site, [www.shifting-gears.org](http://www.shifting-gears.org).



## ILLINOIS SHIFTING GEARS

Shifting Gears in Illinois aims to increase the economic competitiveness of the state by helping more lower-skilled adults advance along career pathways (within a broader Career Clusters framework) and

acquire postsecondary credentials that employers value. Shifting Gears Illinois has specifically focused on creating and strengthening adult basic education and developmental education bridge

programs. These bridge programs integrate basic skills instruction with occupational instruction in key sectors, including manufacturing, health care, and transportation/distribution/logistics. During Shifting Gears 1.0, Illinois funded bridge pilot programs, hosted peer learning on bridges among the community colleges, adult basic education providers, and local Workforce Investment Boards and evaluated outcomes and policy implications of these bridge pilots. The state's Shifting Gears partners, the Illinois Community College Board and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, also adopted a common definition of bridge program core elements for use in adult education, career and technical education, and WIA program funding and reimbursement structures.

Bridges implementation work in Illinois currently centers on building stronger connections between state and local partners. The state is helping local education and training providers, community-based organizations, and employer partners understand how they can use state and federal resources to implement bridge programs. This includes developing common materials for use across agencies and offering joint regional meetings for all key partners on implementing bridge programs. The state is continuing to share with local partners lessons and promising practices for bridge program implementation learned from the initial pilots. A survey of bridge program providers is being conducted to determine how many bridge programs in the state meet the newly adopted common definition.

In addition to bridges implementation, Illinois has two other important priority areas for Shifting Gears 2.0. One area is state-level work to find ways to expand support services for low-income, lower-skilled adults and other at-risk populations who participate in Shifting Gears bridge programs. The second priority area is creating a new website that allows local administrators and decisionmakers greater access

to student transitions data. The website will also incorporate a Career Clusters dimension to state transitions measures. Future data work will include exploring new transitions measures and analyses to help the state track student progress across adult education, developmental education, and career/technical education services and understand better the factors that contribute to student success and completion.



### **NO WORKER LEFT BEHIND: EVERYBODY IN!**

The Michigan Shifting Gears program is called “No Worker Left Behind: Everybody In!” (NWLB: Everybody In!). This effort builds on the state’s “No Worker Left Behind” initiative,

which provides up to two years of tuition at any Michigan community college, university, or other approved training program for workers pursuing credentials in high-demand occupations or emerging industries. Shifting Gears in Michigan also continues work started by the Adult Learning Work Group of the state workforce board, which created a new vision for regional adult learning partnerships. Through “NWLB: Everybody In!,” the state plans to create better on-ramps to NWLB training using regional partnerships between the adult basic, postsecondary, and workforce education systems. State policy changes are underway to secure commitments from the program’s three core partners to align investments in basic skills and postsecondary transitions within regions.

Michigan will prioritize and provide standards for expanding the use of contextualized curricula, modularized programs, integrated basic skills and occupational training programs, and navigation services offered by the adult learning regional partnerships. The state is also providing common tools for use among regional partners, including a standardized intake and planning tool, assessment crosswalks, and definitions of frequently-used

terms. The state plans to connect these regional partnerships to its regional sector strategy, Michigan Skills Alliances. Michigan will use program outcome data to identify performance baselines for system goals, inform policy changes, and build support for system reform. The state is already improving its infrastructure for this data collection and analysis, in part through the inclusion of adult learner data in the state's P-20 data warehouse.



### **FASTTRAC**

The Shifting Gears initiative in Minnesota is called FastTRAC (Training, Resources and Credentialing for Pathways to Sustainable Employment).

The state plans to create FastTRAC programming that

aligns and integrates adult basic education, non-credit occupational training, and for-credit postsecondary certificate and degree programs with various credentials embedded into these pathways that “stack” on each other to build to degrees over time.

During Shifting Gears 1.0, FastTRAC selected seven advanced career pathway programs as “incubators” to test strategies for supporting student success and creating bridge curricula between adult basic education, non-credit occupational training and for-credit postsecondary programs. Minnesota also moved toward the FastTRAC goal of building “integrated data capability” for tracking student success across education and employment programs by adopting a charter for a new longitudinal data system that includes both adult education and college students. Beyond the incubator sites, the state also promoted local adoption of the FastTRAC model by targeting \$2 million in federal Recovery Act funding, \$1 million in state and federal adult basic education funding, and all of Minnesota’s WIA incentive funds for FastTRAC implementation.

During Shifting Gears 2.0, Minnesota plans to create a statewide, branded FastTRAC system through administrative, legislative, and program changes. Its policy agenda focuses on eliminating or reducing commonly-faced barriers to postsecondary education, such as high college and training costs and insufficient student support services. The state also seeks to support instructional innovation such as “blended content,” where basic skills providers work alongside postsecondary instructors to deliver occupationally-focused courses leading to a credential. Finally, FastTRAC efforts will work toward modularizing postsecondary credential, workforce development, and basic skills content.



### **OHIO SHIFTING GEARS**

Through Shifting Gears, Ohio seeks to increase the educational attainment and earnings potential of lower-income working adults by widening their access to postsecondary workforce

education, shortening paths to credentials, and speeding actual progress by reducing interruptions. Ohio recently assembled under one agency its state oversight of universities, community and technical colleges, adult career and technical education (both for-credit and non-credit), and adult literacy and basic skills. All four sectors participate in a new University System of Ohio at the state Board of Regents. In Shifting Gears 1.0, the state’s Policy Advisory Panel, composed of local, state, and national stakeholders, developed recommendations for Shifting Gears state policy changes and related data and communications work. The panel also commissioned a study of education and employment outcomes for college developmental education students and a roadmap for re-designing the state adult career and technical education data system. Statewide and regional meetings were held to introduce Shifting Gears to local

practitioners and showcase promising examples of collaboration among key education and training partners.

Under Shifting Gears 2.0, Ohio is expanding efforts to engage key local stakeholders in refining and implementing its policy change recommendations. The state's policy work will delve deeper in two areas: 1) assessment, advising, and career exploration and, 2) curriculum and instruction. Priorities for the first area include creating statewide standards for use across adult basic education, adult career and technical education, and community college services and establishing a comprehensive, common advisory framework which would assess personal barriers to success and career readiness, as well as academic preparedness.

In the second area, Shifting Gears in Ohio plans to adopt curriculum models that integrate academic, technical, and career readiness content in selected occupational clusters. It will also fund adult education collaborative service delivery models aimed at increasing postsecondary transitions through an integrated curriculum. Ohio plans to expand dual and concurrent enrollment policies so that adults in basic education and career and technical education can earn credits at community and technical colleges.



### **REGIONAL INDUSTRY SKILLS EDUCATION (RISE) INITIATIVE**

Shifting Gears in Wisconsin is known as the Regional Industry Skills Education (RISE) initiative. The goal of the RISE initiative is to help secure good careers for low-income Wisconsin

adults and a skilled workforce for employers by increasing the number of lower-skilled adults who earn postsecondary credentials related to high-demand jobs. RISE seeks to create a state policy environment in which career pathways, including bridge programs, can flourish.

During Shifting Gears 1.0, Wisconsin defined the RISE initiative's target population and middle-skill career job opportunities. It created a technical college "pipeline" data set to explore postsecondary transition and completion rates among adult education and developmental education students. The RISE initiative began to roll out its career pathways vision by specifying the operational elements of the RISE career pathways model and funding local development of prototype career pathway and bridge curricula, as well as regional projects to engage industry in career pathway work. The state also convened stakeholders throughout the technical college and workforce development systems to increase understanding of the workforce challenges facing Wisconsin and how use of RISE career pathways and bridges are part of the solution.

As part of Shifting Gears 2.0, Wisconsin is working to address workforce development and technical college system policy challenges to implementing RISE career pathway and bridge programs statewide. RISE has been pursuing administrative policy changes within the technical college and the workforce development systems to remove disincentives to scaling up career pathway programs, including bridge instruction, that may exist in funding and performance measurement policies. Another priority policy area for RISE is expanding financial aid to career pathway and bridge program participants, such as through the Department of Workforce Development's Opportunity Grant pilots and possible new services to Food Stamp (SNAP) recipients. As part of its continuing efforts to engage local stakeholders in RISE work, the state is conducting a deeper analysis of its adult learner pipeline data and extending the analysis to the local technical college level. Finally, the state is working to ensure cross-collaboration between RISE and a new Wisconsin Industry Partnerships initiative so that RISE goals and outcomes are linked to the state's regional sector strategies.



## Engineering New Policy Models for a Changing Economy

(Left) An Associate Dean looks after a grandson of two of the graduates from a Shifting Gears pilot program at Black Hawk College in East Moline, IL that contextualizes English language learning with occupational content. (Right) English language learners from this pilot bridge program pose before receiving a 10-credit certificate in Warehousing and Distribution. Photos courtesy of Esti Young, Black Hawk College.

As they move beyond the planning phase into implementation in Shifting Gears, the states' central focus is on aligning state funding and policies behind their new visions for providing more seamless, effective, and flexible adult basic education, workforce development, and postsecondary education services to adults. State policy changes are intended to build innovative practices that are core to the new vision into state funding mechanisms and accountability systems, and to supply practical tools (such as curricula and professional development) to enable local education and training partners to work together across program lines to jointly achieve success for their students.

The table on page 14 categorizes the primary Shifting Gears state approaches by the problems they are trying to address and the

key elements of solutions they are pursuing. In Illinois and Wisconsin, state policy change efforts are continuing during Shifting Gears 2.0, the implementation phase. Indiana's Shifting Gears work ended after its Shifting Gears 1.0 planning and local experimentation phase; however, the state continues to work toward adult basic education, workforce development and postsecondary education reform in other ways. Several new models for policy and practice implemented by these three states are summarized in this section of the report.

Three other Shifting Gears states, Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio, are finalizing their visions and recommendations for state policy changes needed to implement them. Innovations in these states will be the focus of a future Shifting Gears policy brief.

Problem	Solution Focus Areas	Innovations in Shifting Gears States
<p><b>Too few adults complete postsecondary credentials.</b></p>	<p><b>Focus: Create new paths to credentials and careers.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Chunk” diploma and degree programs into shorter modules so that it is easier for adults to complete programs over time.</li> <li>• Prioritize career pathways in industry and occupational sectors that offer good jobs and career paths.</li> <li>• Offer wider variety of places, days, and times for classes.</li> <li>• Deliver instruction more flexibly, combining distance and classroom learning.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Wisconsin</b> RISE Career Pathways</p> <p><b>Indiana</b> College for Working Adults</p> <p><b>Illinois</b> Shifting Gears Bridges</p> <p>In planning or pilot phase:  <b>Minnesota</b> FastTRAC,  <b>Ohio</b> Shifting Gears</p>
<p><b>Too few basic skills students transition to and complete postsecondary programs.</b></p>	<p><b>Focus: Connect basic skills instruction to college and career success.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combine adult basic education, workforce readiness, and technical knowledge and skills needed for a specific occupation (or cluster of occupations).</li> <li>• Contextualize basic skills and English language content to the program’s occupational focus.</li> <li>• Coordinate instruction, including through team teaching, by basic skills and technical education faculty and staff.</li> <li>• Use dual enrollment by adults in basic skills and technical education courses.</li> <li>• Articulate academic and technical content and credentials to the next step in a career pathway.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Illinois</b> Shifting Gears Bridges</p> <p>Bridge Instruction in  <b>Wisconsin</b> RISE Career Pathways</p> <p><b>Indiana</b> Embedded Skills Pilots</p> <p>In planning or pilot phase:  <b>Minnesota</b> FastTRAC,  <b>Michigan</b> No Worker Left Behind: Everybody In!,  <b>Ohio</b> Shifting Gears</p>



## New Pathways to Credentials and Careers

The Shifting Gears states are pursuing a variety of state policy changes to support innovation that creates new ways for more adults to complete postsecondary credentials valued by employers. Wisconsin's RISE initiative centers on creating career pathways that offer new technical certificates and diplomas embedded within one- and two-year diploma and degree programs. Indiana chose to broaden options for adult learners using a new delivery format for associate degree programs, called the College for Working Adults, which is designed to help them complete college more quickly.

As noted earlier, the concept of career pathways is being used by several Shifting Gears states and means "a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to get jobs in specific industries, and to advance over time to successfully complete higher levels of education and work in that industry."<sup>24</sup> Common elements of a career pathways approach include:

- Strategic efforts at the state and regional levels to create and maintain partnerships of employers, education and training providers, community-based organizations, and others in key business and industry occupational clusters.
- Multiple entry and exit points, with marketable postsecondary credentials at each step of the pathway. Some students might enter a career pathway in high school; others might enter as adults through adult basic education, job training, or college credit classes.
- Innovations in program content and delivery, such as contextualization of basic skills, flexible delivery and scheduling, and modularized degree programs.

- Support services (provided by community organizations, colleges, and others).
- Engagement of employers—in pathway development, worksite training, and financial support for worker learning—to address common regional workforce skill needs.



### WISCONSIN'S RISE CAREER PATHWAYS

feature new modular degrees and technical diplomas within the Wisconsin Technical College System. The RISE initiative provides an avenue for local technical colleges to break longer

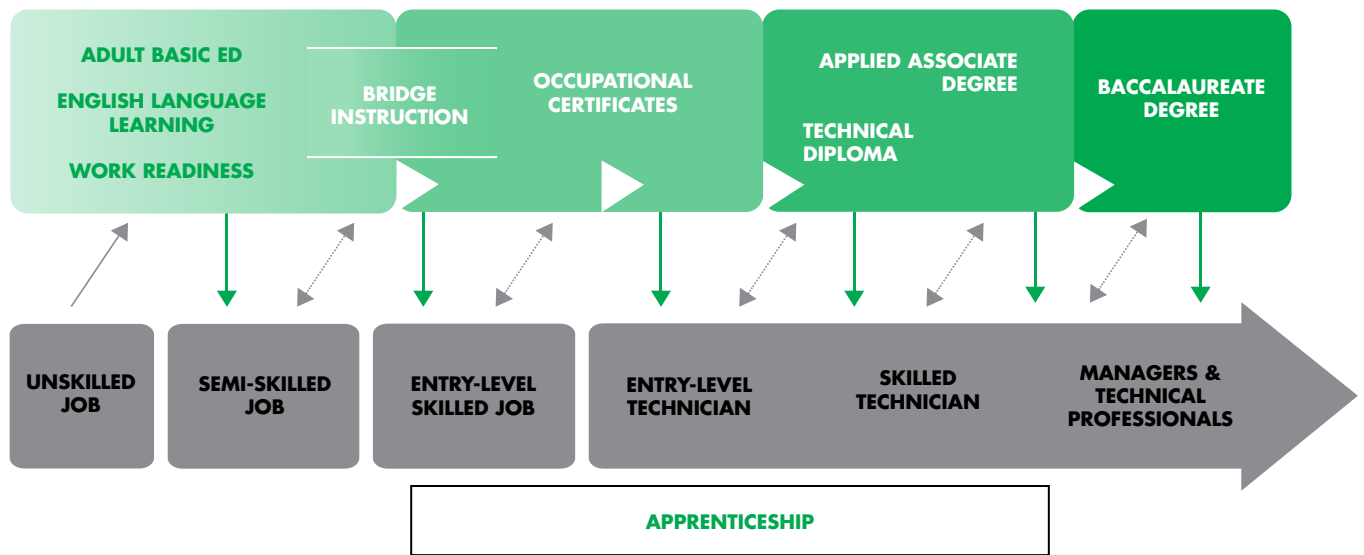
programs into shorter modules and certificates that are easier for adults to complete quickly and can be tracked at the state level for accountability and funding purposes. RISE career pathways (Figure 1) are connected through common guidelines (both short definitions and more detailed operational elements) to complementary policies in workforce development efforts overseen by the state Department of Workforce Development, such as federal WIA services and apprenticeships, Opportunity Grants student aid pilots, and the new Wisconsin Industry Partnership initiative.

Wisconsin's policy work to scale up RISE pathways statewide includes steps to:

- Create a new, streamlined state process for approving technical diplomas and recognizing occupational certificates that are embedded within existing Wisconsin Technical College System State Board-approved programs.
- Eliminate state technical college accountability disincentives for students completing RISE certificates. New state performance measures would give technical colleges credit for students who complete RISE-embedded technical certificates, rather than just those students who complete a state



**Figure 1: Wisconsin Career Pathways**



board-approved technical diploma or two-year degree, as is now the case.

- Add new course and program-related codes to the Wisconsin Technical College System Client Reporting System to allow the state to track enrollment and report on student outcomes for courses using RISE bridge instruction, embedded certificates, and embedded technical diplomas.
- Define WIA training as including adult basic education, English language, and occupational training along a career pathway for a high-demand industry. Local workforce boards must spend at least 70 percent of Recovery Act WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker program funds and 35 percent of formula WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker program funds on training and count career pathways and bridges toward this requirement.
- Weave the RISE concept of pathways and bridges into state and local WIA plans for regular federal workforce development funding as well as funding through the Recovery Act. State guidelines require local

Workforce Development Boards to incorporate RISE career pathways principles into training, and the state’s WIA and the Recovery Act plans mirror this focus.

- Expand apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs as part of the RISE career pathway and bridge models. The Department of Workforce Development held joint WIA and apprenticeship training for local WIA program staff, gave grants for development of new health care apprenticeships and is partnering with Community Action Agencies to link initial weatherization training with skilled apprenticeship programs in green construction and energy-related occupations.
- Link RISE career pathways, and related bridge instruction, to the state’s new regional sector strategy, Wisconsin Industry Partnerships. The state is funding regional industry partnerships in targeted growth industries. They embrace a wide definition of “career pathways,” one which incorporates RISE’s critical focus on adult workers, but also prioritizes the transition from secondary to postsecondary education as addressed by Wisconsin’s career clusters and pathways initiative.



## INDIANA'S COLLEGE FOR WORKING ADULTS

was created by Indiana's Ivy Tech Community College, with Shifting Gears support. (Ivy Tech is the state's community college system and functions administratively as a single

college with campuses across the state. It is the only Shifting Gears state whose community or technical college system is structured in this way.) The College for Working Adults (CWA) is designed to enable working students to earn an associate degree in nine different fields within two years, with classes starting every eight weeks. CWA is envisioned as a mix of evening and weekend classes and online instruction, with students

enrolled in groups (cohorts) who move through the program together. It compresses into eight weeks the same amount of instruction that normally takes place during 16 weeks of classes. Students take two courses every eight weeks. (In practice, CWA's format varies somewhat by region and program.) Since statewide rollout of CWA began in 2007, Ivy Tech has learned that the following policies and practices are important for student success in this new format:

- Offer courses as scheduled, regardless of enrollment. Ivy Tech launched the CWA format in the fall of 2007 at 14 campuses statewide. Although initial enrollment fell short of expectations, the state college system stuck with its guarantee to CWA students that

## WISCONSIN RISE CAREER PATHWAYS IN ACTION

Among the Wisconsin technical colleges working on career pathways, three in particular are collaborating with the Wisconsin Technical College System to jointly identify and resolve policy barriers to statewide implementation of RISE career pathways. The policy issues being addressed by the state and the pilots include financial aid, course and program numbering, data and accountability, program approval, and faculty certification related to team teaching for bridge instruction.

Western Technical College offers three levels of Computer Numerical Control/Machining "Skills Institutes" within its one-year technical diploma program.

These Skills Institutes include contextualized basic skills instruction, and each carries six credits toward the technical diploma.

Southwest Wisconsin Technical College has created a RISE career pathway in Culinary Management, with a new, one-semester Food Production Aide certificate embedded within an existing one-year technical Culinary Specialist diploma program, and within the two-year associate degree program in Culinary Management.

Northcentral Technical College has embedded two certificates within a new one-year technical diploma in Manufacturing Electronics Maintenance. Credits earned in this technical diploma program count toward an associate degree that articulates to a bachelor's degree program at the Milwaukee School of Engineering.<sup>25</sup>

the classes they needed would be offered as scheduled for the entire two-year program, regardless of how many students signed up for each class.

- Address students' basic skills needs. Ivy Tech originally designed CWA for students who did not need any basic skills remediation. Since more than two-thirds of first-time degree students who enter Ivy Tech enroll in remediation courses, however, the college soon realized that in order to increase CWA success, it would need to add those basic skills services. In the fall of 2008, Ivy Tech added two remedial blocks of math and English to CWA.
- Help students understand whether an online, compressed format is right for them. Ivy Tech believes CWA is one important strategy, along with others, for increasing access and success to postsecondary degrees for working adults. The intensive format fits some students' needs well, but not all students are ready for the fast pace and the extent of self-directed learning required. CWA students also need a relatively high level of comfort with and access to technology, since the format relies heavily on online distance learning tools.
- Adjust data systems, student aid, online instructional tools, and student services to incorporate the existence of CWA. For example, one important source of student aid, the state-funded TEACH program for education majors, had rules that did not allow the aid to be used for the new CWA format.

### **Connecting Basic Skills to College and Career Success**

Several Shifting Gears states are using bridge models to connect basic skills services more closely to postsecondary education leading to

credentials valued by employers. Shifting Gears work implemented in this area includes Illinois Shifting Gears Bridges, Wisconsin RISE Career Pathway Bridges, and Indiana's Embedded Skills pilots.

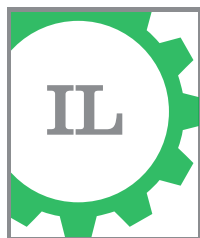
As noted earlier, bridge models combine basic skills content with workforce readiness, support services, and the knowledge and skills needed for a specific occupation (or cluster of occupations). Bridge models may be separate programs; they may be new types of adult basic or technical education courses within an existing program; or they may add co-instruction by basic skills and technical education faculty to existing occupational courses. Some common elements of bridge models are:

- Contextualization of basic skills and English language content to a specific occupation or group of occupations.
- Jointly planned and coordinated instruction by basic skills and technical education faculty and staff, which might include co-instruction.
- Dual enrollment by adults in courses that are have both basic skills and technical education content, and sometimes carry college credit.
- Articulation of the bridge's academic and technical content and credentials to the content and credentials in the next step in a career pathway.
- Support services that help students choose a career pathway, succeed in bridge services, and continue on to employment and further education and training.
- Close partnerships between education and training sectors, and with employers, unions, community-based organizations, and social service agencies.

## BRIDGING BASIC SKILLS AND WORKFORCE EDUCATION IN ILLINOIS

Illinois funded ten Shifting Gears pilot bridge programs in three priority sectors: health care, manufacturing, and transportation/warehousing/logistics. Some of the ten programs integrated developmental education with occupational certificate programs and others integrated adult basic education and English language services with occupational content. For example, Black Hawk College provided skills training, GED preparation, and contextualized English language instruction leading to a Warehousing and Distribution Certificate. Most of the participants in bridges at Black Hawk were English language learners; the college provided a range of support services and creative instructional techniques adapted to these students' particular needs.

Lewis and Clark College integrated basic skills and manufacturing occupational content (focused on process operations and water treatment), used team teaching, and provided a counselor for bridge participants in a blended online and in-class learning format. Lewis and Clark's bridge had a particularly high degree of collaboration among adult basic education, developmental education, and career/technical education faculty as they created and offered team-taught bridge curriculum. The college created two new applied math courses as a result of its bridge program work.<sup>26</sup>



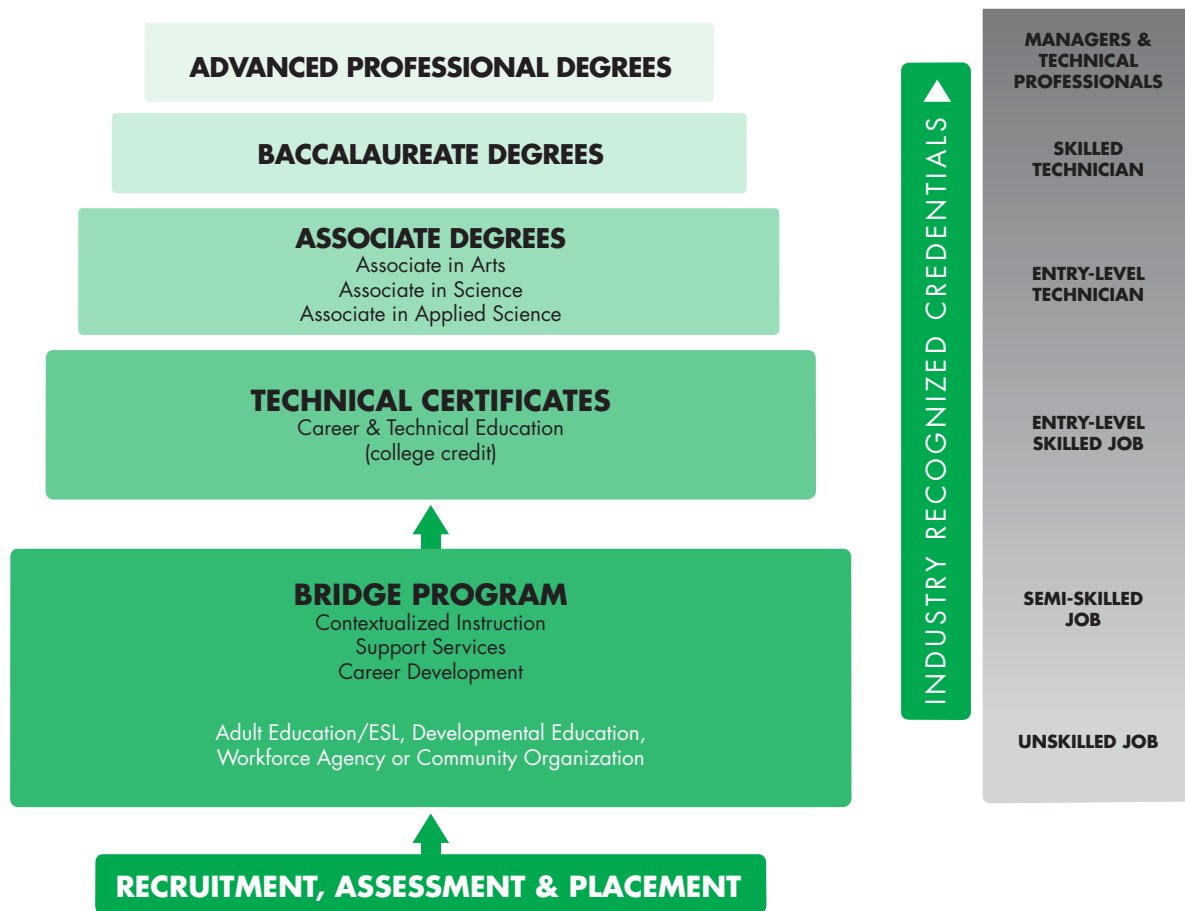
### ILLINOIS' SHIFTING GEARS BRIDGE PROGRAMS

began as pilots in three priority economic sectors through a partnership of the Illinois Community College Board and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

These first efforts helped the state develop and refine a single, common definition for bridge programs for use in funding and tracking these services within existing adult basic education, workforce development, and career and technical education funding streams. Bridges in Illinois must have three components: basic skills instruction contextualized to specific industry clusters and occupations, career development, and transition services. Designed to serve students whose skills range

from the sixth-grade-level or low/intermediate English as a Second Language (ESL)-level through pre-college, bridges in Illinois prepare students to enter employment and credit coursework in one of four priority sectors: health care, manufacturing, information technology, and transportation/warehousing/logistics. Almost 20 adult education bridge programs are currently approved or in the approval process. The state is in the process of connecting Shifting Gears bridges more closely to the state's broader career pathways initiative, Illinois Career Clusters, which has 16 career clusters identified under the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (see Figure 2 on page 20).

**Figure 2: Illinois Bridges to Post-Secondary Education and Employment**



To facilitate the coordinated use of funds from adult basic education, career and technical education, and WIA sources in support of bridge programming, Illinois has woven this bridge definition into state policy. Illinois' goals are to:

- Adopt the new state bridge definition for purposes of bridge course review within adult basic education, career and technical education, and WIA funding streams.
- Revise the state's definition of WIA training to allow bridge programs to count toward meeting the state requirement for local workforce areas to spend at least 40 percent of adult and dislocated worker funding on training.
- Create new bridge program classification structures and course codes for adult basic education, developmental education and career and technical education. Developmental education bridge programs meeting the new definition qualify for a higher reimbursement rate than regular developmental education courses because they are more expensive to operate.
- Continue to use state discretionary funds strategically to support bridge program design and implementation. The adult basic education office of the Illinois Community College Board, for example, issued two rounds of competitive grants in 2009 for

bridge programs and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity gave priority in awarding the federal Recovery Act funds to bridge programs for incumbent workers that meet the new state definition.

- Issue policy guidance to local adult basic education programs on the different ways in which federal and state adult basic education funds can support the three core elements of bridge programs.
- Approve the new “Adult Basic Education Strategic Vision.” The Illinois Community College Board developed this vision in meetings throughout the state and formally

adopted it in November 2009. It provides the basis for future state grants and contracts with local adult basic education providers.

- Link Shifting Gears bridges more closely to regional and sector workforce needs by ensuring they are part of career pathways in the Illinois Career Clusters framework. Career Clusters are “groups of occupations and industries that have in common a set of foundational knowledge and skills.” The federal Perkins career-technical education law has spurred national recognition of 16 career clusters, with many career pathways in each cluster.

## PARTNERING WITH EMPLOYERS IN ILLINOIS

In Illinois the Shifting Gears initiative supported a partnership between Oakton Community College and a retirement home, Presbyterian Homes, to offer a bridge program that helped current nursing assistants increase their skills and advance in a nursing career pathway. These partners created a 16-week bridge program combining developmental education with the technical occupational content needed to gain entrance to prerequisite courses for the college’s Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) program, revived specifically for the retirement home employer partner. The bridge program was open to full-time employees, who were a mix of new hires and long-time staff. Some bridge services took place at the worksite.

Presbyterian Homes paid tuition for its students, and residents contributed to a scholarship fund for other expenses. To help contain costs, Oakton charged in-district tuition for all bridge students regardless of their address because the employer partner’s main campus is within the district. While the program was designed to serve workers with at least a ninth-grade-level education, in practice the college had to be flexible and adapt services to the skills of the existing Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) workforce, who had educational levels which ranged from the sixth grade to college level. Most of the students were single parents and first-generation college students. Almost all of the students completed the CNA to LPN bridge and continued working for Presbyterian Homes; about half of the students went on to enroll in other college courses.<sup>27</sup>

- Create standardized curricula for bridges aligned with pathways in priority sectors. The Illinois Community College Board, with funding support from Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, is creating standardized curricula for bridges, beginning with the health care sector, and will expand this to other career clusters over time.
- Incorporate additional performance measures for bridge programs into the state’s data systems so that education and training services and outcomes, as well as employment and earnings, can be tracked over time at the student level for bridge participants. The state also hopes to use transition measures developed for Shifting Gears bridge programs to measure Illinois Community College Board transition performance more broadly, and to link these transition measures to the Illinois Career Cluster framework.
- Make student transition data available to colleges and adult basic education providers in a web-based format to help them improve their program performance.



**WISCONSIN’S RISE CAREER PATHWAY BRIDGES** are intended

for adults—such as newly dislocated workers or current adult basic education or English language students—who need additional academic

or language support to succeed in occupational training. In Wisconsin, career pathway bridges are defined to be part of, or result in, an occupational certificate that is embedded within an approved postsecondary occupational program (Figure 3). These bridges must: 1) combine adult basic education or English language and occupational instruction, ideally as part of a career pathways certificate; 2) use contextualized instructional strategies—like team-

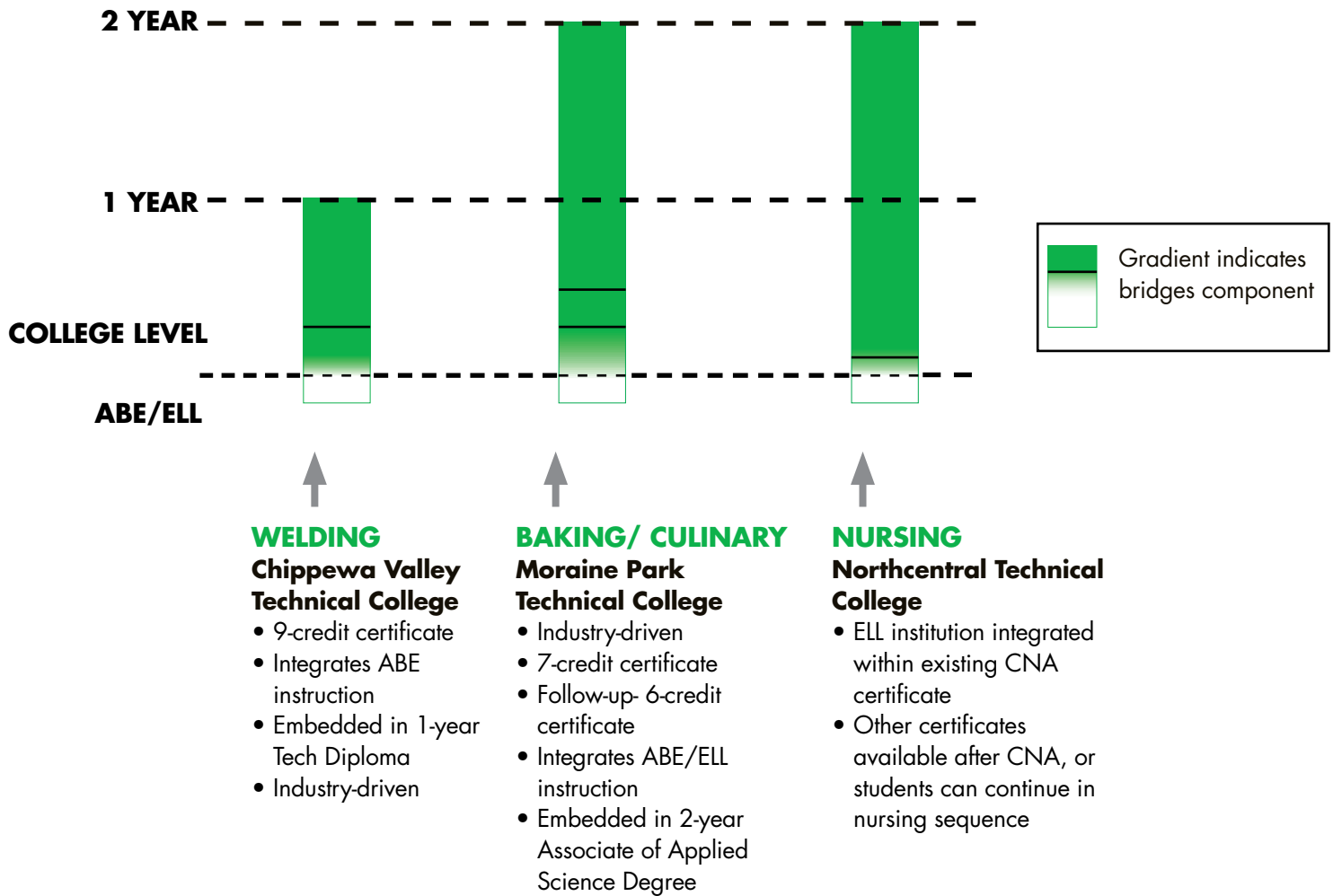
teaching, labs, or simulations—that have proven effective for students with low literacy levels; 3) reflect active cooperation between postsecondary and non-postsecondary divisions within the technical colleges; and, 4) incorporate career development services.

This RISE career pathways work builds on several years of efforts by the state adult basic education office to create bridge approaches based on Washington State’s I-BEST model, including intensive professional development for adult education and developmental education staff with colleagues from Washington. At least 35 RISE bridges are in operation or development. To seed and sustain bridge instruction, Wisconsin is taking steps to:

- Create and expand RISE career pathway bridge instruction through new Skills Jump Start grants awarded the Department of Workforce Development in February 2010. The state paved the way for these grants by securing a federal WIA waiver that allows it to use up to 10 percent of local WIA funds for such statewide initiatives.
- Restructure the relationship between basic skills and college occupational programming to support career pathways and related bridge instruction. The Wisconsin Technical College System has begun to incorporate RISE career pathway bridges into its guidelines for awarding federal adult basic education funds, and it is considering requiring a more explicit focus on RISE career pathway bridges in state adult basic education funding and local adult basic education plans.
- Explore creating a new option for earning Wisconsin’s High School Equivalency Diploma through completion of a RISE career pathway bridge certificate and demonstration of core academic competencies. The Wisconsin Technical College System and the state Department of Public Instruction are discussing



**Figure 3: Wisconsin Technical College System: RISE Career Pathway Bridges**



whether, under existing state law, RISE career pathway bridges, in combination with certain test scores, could offer a new way for adult learners to earn the state’s alternative high school credential.

- Resolve Wisconsin Technical College System instructor certification issues that may impede implementation of team teaching as part of RISE career pathway bridges.



**INDIANA’S EMBEDDED SKILLS PROGRAMS**

These state pilot programs contextualized basic skills instruction within occupational programs to help students gain the academic foundations needed to move from initial

technical certificates to more advanced ones, and then into degree programs. Through Shifting Gears, Ivy Tech funded five pilots, which combined automotive technology with

developmental math, early education with developmental English, industrial technology with developmental math, and manufacturing technology with developmental English and math. Because Ivy Tech is administratively a single institution, statewide changes in developmental education could potentially be scaled up more easily than in most states. Indiana is considering the following changes in remediation coursework, based on lessons from Shifting Gears and other state efforts:<sup>29</sup>

- Add career and education exploration to Ivy Tech's system-wide course outlines for remedial classes to make the content more relevant to students' career goals. Shifting Gears Embedded Skills pilots and more recent research through the Achieving the Dream initiative both underscored for the state that contextualizing developmental education

can be a powerful strategy for increasing persistence and completion.

- Schedule more of Ivy Tech's remedial classes into eight-week sequences (similar to those in the state's College for Working Adults, see page 17).
- Establish regional advisory boards for Ivy Tech remedial coursework that include developmental education faculty, technical program faculty, student services staff, and external stakeholders, such as local businesses, high schools, and adult basic education. The Automotive Technology Embedded Skills effort at Ivy Tech in Evansville showed that convening such a group helps students connect their basic skills work to industry needs and to their future earnings potential.

## APPLYING MATH IN AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Ivy Tech in Evansville, Indiana created the Automotive Technology embedded skills pilot in 2007 to help its initial certificate students gain the math skills needed to continue on the pathway to an associate degree.

The program identified "math moments" that already existed in its initial three Automotive Tech courses, and used those as starting points to create mini-lessons on math competencies from Ivy Tech's first level of developmental math. The math, which included fractions, decimals, ratios, proportions, and percentages, was contextualized to automotive technology applications, and the embedded skills courses were team taught by automotive technology and math faculty.<sup>30</sup>

These faculty members jointly developed curricula and participated together in professional development designed to prepare the technical faculty to deliver the math mini-lessons in the future.

As of Spring 2010, eight instructors and 170 students were involved in these Automotive Technology Embedded Skills courses. To date, two-thirds of students in the courses have continued on toward an associate degree.



# Conclusion: The Road Ahead

Through Shifting Gears, Midwestern states are helping to map the way to state and federal policy reform that helps more lower-skilled adults earn the postsecondary credentials that employers value. The states are creating new paths to marketable credentials and connecting basic skills services more closely to what adults need for college and career success. Despite bleak nationwide economic and state fiscal environments where demand by adults for education far outstrips resources and supply, the Shifting Gears states have made significant progress toward their goals.

As they continue their efforts, the Shifting Gears states will expand the scope of their work in two important ways. The first is that Shifting Gears states have learned much about what lower-skilled adults need to succeed in education, which includes more intensive and sustained college and career coaching and more help with the costs of upgrading their skills, both direct (such as tuition, books, and fees) and indirect (such as living expenses, child care, and transportation). For the most part, though, Shifting Gears states are just beginning to identify and implement policy and funding solutions for addressing those needs. The Opportunity Grants financial aid pilots in Wisconsin, potential partnerships in several Shifting Gears states to expand supports for students receiving welfare or food stamps, and new models for college and career counseling and transition services in Illinois, Minnesota, and Ohio are promising first steps toward addressing these issues.

Shifting Gears states are also expanding their efforts in a second way. They are reaching out to connect Shifting Gears reforms to broader, related conversations in the state about fostering economic growth in partnership with employers

and about college access and completion for underrepresented populations. Wisconsin Industry Partnerships and Illinois Career Clusters are two examples noted where Shifting Gears is placing education reform for adult learners in the context of larger state sector and industry initiatives. Broadening the conversation in this way is also providing a mechanism in these two states for linking efforts to create college and career paths for high school students to similar Shifting Gears work on behalf of adults. This wider focus also helps to highlight important questions about how initial reform efforts for adults connect to larger state conversations about college completion, such as how best to improve college remediation, how to articulate postsecondary for-credit and non-credit occupational courses and programs, and whether to base some state postsecondary funding on institutional performance.

As they engaged in initial planning and early implementation of Shifting Gears, Midwestern states have already made significant contributions to debates on how states and the federal government should reform adult basic education, workforce development, and postsecondary education to respond to the changing needs of our economy and our workforce. Over the next several years, Shifting Gears states will continue to lead innovations in policy and practice that help more adults earn postsecondary credentials that improve their economic prospects and that of the communities in which they live.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Patrick J. Kelly, "Improving the Re-Entry Pipeline: Non-Traditional Aged Adults Enrolling and Succeeding in Postsecondary Education," presentation, Pell Institute, Addressing the Employment and Education Needs of Adults: A Dialog, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, January 19, 2010.

<sup>2</sup>Davis Jenkins. *Career Pathways: Aligning Public Resources to Support Individual and Regional Economic Advancement in the Knowledge Economy*. Workforce Strategy Center, August 2006.

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<sup>3</sup>Susan Dynarski and David Deming, *Into College, Out of Poverty? Policies to Increase the Postsecondary Attainment of the Poor*, National Bureau for Economic Research, Working Paper 15387 (citing 2005 College Board statistics), 2009.

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<sup>4</sup>Diana Furchtgott-Roth, Louis Jacobson, and Christine Mokher, *Strengthening Community Colleges Influence on Economic Mobility*, Economic Mobility Project, Pew Charitable Trusts, 2009.

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<sup>5</sup>Anthony P. Carnevale, *Postsecondary Education As We Know It Is Not Enough*, prepared for Georgetown University and Urban Institute, Conference on Reducing Poverty and Economic Distress after the Recovery Act, April 2010.

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<sup>6</sup>U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment Projections*, "Education Pays," December 2009.

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<sup>7</sup>Katherine Magnuson, *Investing in the Adult Workforce: An Opportunity to Improve Children's Life Chances*, prepared for The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Initiative on Investing in Workforce Development, March 2007.

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<sup>8</sup>The Shifting Gears Initiative supports state policy efforts that are designed to improve pathways for lower-skilled adults to progress in the education pipeline from adult education and non-credit short-term training to postsecondary, credit-based education. Postsecondary education credentials include non-credit and credit-bearing certificates and degrees offered by accredited higher education institutions. Workers should be supported to pursue credentials that have value in the labor market. To inform this work, states are encouraged to use data to measure labor market outcomes to assess the economic impacts longitudinally tied to education and credential attainment. In some *exceptional* cases, Shifting Gears efforts will include pathways that do not lead to a postsecondary educational credential, such as those within an apprenticeship system, if data exists to demonstrate labor market value from these training pursuits.

<sup>9</sup>Kelly, "Improving the Re-Entry Pipeline."

<sup>10</sup>Thomas Bailey and Jim Jacobs, "Can Community Colleges Rise to the Occasion?," *American Prospect*, Volume 20, No. 9, October 2009.

<sup>11</sup>Sue Clery, *Data Notes*, Volume 3, No. 2, JBL Associates for Achieving the Dream, March/April 2008.

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<sup>13</sup> Dynarski and Deming, 2009.

<sup>14</sup>*Students Entering and Leaving Postsecondary Occupational Education: 1995-2001*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, March 2007, as cited in Jennifer Wheary and Viany Orozco, *Graduated Success: Sustainable Economic Opportunity Through One- and Two-Year Credentials*, Demos, February 2010.

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<sup>17</sup>James J. Heckman and Paul A. LaFontaine, "The declining American high school graduation rate: Evidence, sources, and consequences," *NBER Reporter* 1. (2008). As of 2007, about one in six young adults (6.2 million people between the ages of 16 and 24) were not in school and did not have a high school diploma. While some of these dropouts do eventually earn a GED, the number of GEDs awarded annually to young adults (271,055 to the 16- to 24-year-old age group in 2007) is far less than the number of new dropouts annually. See Andrew Sum, *Left Behind in America: The Nation's Dropout Crisis*, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, and the Chicago Alternative Schools Network, May 2009.

<sup>18</sup>Julie Strawn, *Policies to Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Alignment*, National Commission on Adult Literacy, Center for Advancement of Adult Literacy, September 2007.

<sup>19</sup>Christopher Mazzeo, Brandon Roberts, Christopher Spence, and Julie Strawn. *Working Together: Aligning State Systems and Policies for Individual and Regional Prosperity*. Workforce Strategy Center, December 2006.

<sup>20</sup>Kelly, "Improving the Re-Entry Pipeline."

<sup>21</sup>Davis Jenkins. *Career Pathways: Aligning Public Resources to Support Individual and Regional Economic Advancement in the Knowledge Economy*. Workforce Strategy Center, August 2006.

[http://www.workforcestrategy.org/images/pdfs/publications/WSC\\_pathways8.17.06.pdf](http://www.workforcestrategy.org/images/pdfs/publications/WSC_pathways8.17.06.pdf)

<sup>22</sup>All state policy agenda and action plans are available on the Shifting Gears website, [www.shifting-gears.org](http://www.shifting-gears.org).

<sup>23</sup>For more detail on the structure of the Shifting Gears initiative, see Brandon Roberts and Derek Price, *Educating Adult Workers: The Shifting Gears Approach to Systems Change*, Joyce Foundation and Shifting Gears, 2009.

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<sup>24</sup>Davis Jenkins. *Career Pathways: Aligning Public Resources to Support Individual and Regional Economic Advancement in the Knowledge Economy*. Workforce Strategy Center, August 2006.

[http://www.workforcestrategy.org/images/pdfs/publications/WSC\\_pathways8.17.06.pdf](http://www.workforcestrategy.org/images/pdfs/publications/WSC_pathways8.17.06.pdf)

<sup>25</sup>*RISE Policy Update*. Wisconsin Technical College System, September 2009.

<sup>26</sup>"Inside the Black Box." *OCCRL Update*, Vol. 21, No. 1. Office of Community College Research and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Fall 2009.

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<sup>27</sup>Debra D. Bragg, Timothy Harmon, Catherine L. Kirby, and Sujung Kim. *Initial Results of Illinois Shifting Gears Pilot Demonstration*. Office of Community College Research and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, June 2009.

[http://occrll.illinois.edu/files/Projects/shifting\\_gears/Report/SG\\_Eval\\_Report%20PRINT.pdf](http://occrll.illinois.edu/files/Projects/shifting_gears/Report/SG_Eval_Report%20PRINT.pdf)

<sup>28</sup>Maria Kennon and Don Doucette, presentation, "Update on Pilot Projects for Remedial Education at Ivy Tech," June 2009.

[http://www.in.gov/che/files/June\\_09\\_CHE\\_presentation\\_remedial\\_pilots\\_-\\_edited.ppt](http://www.in.gov/che/files/June_09_CHE_presentation_remedial_pilots_-_edited.ppt)

<sup>29</sup>*Contextualized Teaching and Learning: A Faculty Primer*. The Basic Skills Initiative, Chancellor's Office, California Community College System, Spring 2009.

<http://www.cccbsi.org/Websites/basicskills/Images/CTL.pdf>

See also *Final Report to Joyce Foundation on Shifting Gears*. Ivy Tech Community College, April 2009.

# Notes

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## Shifting Gears Management Team

The following key Joyce Foundation partners help Shifting Gears states to better develop, manage, assess, measure and communicate this work.

- CLASP (Center for Law and Social Policy) provides ongoing policy guidance to all states and coordinates communications efforts between states and partners, including maintenance of the Shifting Gears web site and distribution of a quarterly newsletter.
- The Workforce Strategy Center (WSC) provides peer learning experiences through conferences and Webinars.
- Brandon Roberts + Associates designs and implements the Shifting Gears initiative evaluation process, with assistance from Derek Price, Ph.D., of DVP-Praxis, Ltd.
- Davis Jenkins, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate, Community College Research Center, Teacher's College, Columbia University, and Tim Harmon, research coordinator with the Office of Community College Research and Leadership at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign advise the state grantees on using state data to inform improvements to policy and practice.
- Douglas Gould & Co. (PublicVoice) provides communications and advocacy support and technical assistance to the states.

### For more information:

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