



# IET STRATEGIES IN ACTION SERIES

## Promising Practices for Integrated Education and Training Pathways to Postsecondary Education

Integrated education and training (IET) programs incorporate adult education and literacy, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training concurrently and contextually. These programs offer an approach to support adult learners as they advance along their career pathways, transitioning to postsecondary education and obtaining what the U.S. Department of Labor recently characterized as “good jobs,” or quality jobs.<sup>i</sup> By definition, good jobs provide workers with important features such as job security and good working conditions, empowerment and representation, and opportunities for skill and career advancement.

Obtaining postsecondary credentials and degrees are important for employment and wage advancement. Individuals with credentials have on average a 10% higher income than those with a high school diploma only.<sup>ii</sup> Moreover, postsecondary opportunities and credentials tied to credit-bearing coursework bear higher average wages than those which are noncredit.<sup>iii</sup> Therefore, the purpose of this summary is to explore how IET providers can connect IET programs to credit-bearing postsecondary education and credentials.

### Promising Practices and Supporting Strategies to Link IET to Postsecondary Education

This summary highlights promising practices for how IET providers can connect IET programs to credit-bearing credentials and pathways to associate degrees. To illustrate these promising practices, we describe a list of strategies that is not exhaustive but represents several approaches to achieving the goal of connecting

*The **ADVANCE IET** project provides training and resources to assist adult educators in developing, strengthening, and scaling IET programs that effectively support adult learner pathways to high-quality careers.*

*This summary is the first in a six-part series, **IET Strategies in Action**, intended to provide adult educators with a snapshot view of the ways in which some IET programs have implemented IET models and practices that serve diverse student populations in a variety of settings.*

IET program to postsecondary opportunities. Each of the strategies is described briefly below and then illustrated by program examples. As shown through the examples, programs often implement multiple strategies concurrently to bring about the desired program goals.

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### Four Strategies to Link IET to Postsecondary Education (PSE)

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**Co-enroll in High School Equivalency and Postsecondary Education** to enable students to begin earning college credits while pursuing an HSE diploma. Co-enrollment accelerates student learning and progress toward credential attainment, employment, and career advancement.

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**Leverage Braided Funding** to pay for wraparound support services and high-quality instruction, and to offset costs such as supplies and textbooks. Federal financial aid may be accessed through the Ability to Benefit provision to support students' participation in college-credit bearing training classes, while they are preparing to complete their high school equivalency (HSE).

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**Use Alternatives to Standardized Assessment** means moving beyond high-stakes tests such as those for HSE or college placement tests to multiple assessment measures of readiness, progress, and achievement. These alternatives include competency-based and prior learning assessments. College and career readiness exams undermeasure students' potential for success in postsecondary education, and this is especially the case for Black and Latinx students.<sup>iv</sup> Therefore, alternative assessment measures support the goal of increasing equitable access to postsecondary education.

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**Create a Pathway from IET to Associate Degree** by embedding credential attainment and credit-bearing coursework in the IET curriculum that is aligned with a pathway to an associate degree. Other routes to credit include articulation agreements; memoranda of understanding; and credit for prior learning, which might be implemented to enable students who complete a noncredit IET to progress in a credit-based pathway.

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## Strategies in Action: Linking IET to Postsecondary Education

The examples that follow reflect how IET programs use multiple strategies, often implemented simultaneously and intentionally, to effectively create an IET postsecondary pathway. For example, awarding credit for prior learning—an alternative to standardized assessment—is a method that can be used to extend IET to credit-bearing postsecondary pathways, and braiding various funding sources

can offset the cost of tuition for credit-bearing courses. The following snapshots also demonstrate that adult education programs, whether located in community colleges, community-based organizations, or other settings, can build partnerships and pathways from IET to postsecondary education.

### **Strategy 1: Co-enrolling in High School Equivalency and Postsecondary Education at Bristol Community College**

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Adult education students at Bristol Community College in Southeastern Massachusetts who are interested in clean water technology have the opportunity to earn their high school equivalency, gain industry certifications for quality jobs, and begin earning college credits toward a degree program through the [Bridge to Clean Water Technology](#) IET program. Eligible students are automatically enrolled in HSE classes (if they do not already have their HSE), as well as two college-level courses. Students need at least a seventh grade level score on math and reading assessments prior to entrance.

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The two courses (seven credits) provide students with the training and skills necessary for an entry-level position in wastewater treatment while preparing them for the certification exam. The Blue Center for Water Technologies lab on campus provides students with hands-on experience. College faculty members teach the related courses, and an adult education instructor supports instruction. Students who complete the Clean Water program can then transfer into Bristol's [Transition to College](#) program, in which they can receive additional free courses toward Bristol's [Clean Water Quality Professional Technician Certificate](#) program (twenty-six college credits). This IET program serves as a solid base for continuing toward a degree with **courses transferring** to Bristol's Engineering Technology degree programs. Though intensive for students to work toward an **HSE and the certification concurrently**, staff employ strategies such as tutoring and flexible deadlines to support students.

Staff credit the support of local employers, and the local labor market needs of the industry as crucial to the success of this program. At career awareness events held at the beginning of the semester, the new cohort hears from industry professionals about their opportunities in their plants and makes connections with those in the field. During the program, the classes visit partner companies' plants, participate in mock interviews with local industry professionals, and attend weekly classes on workforce preparation skills such as cover letter and resume writing. Upon completion of the program, many students receive positions at local plants such as municipal and private plants, some with annual wages of more than \$50,000.

## Strategy 2: Leveraging Braided Funding at the International Institute of Minnesota

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The [International Institute of Minnesota](#) (IIM) supports immigrants and refugees in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area in their efforts to access and succeed in long-term care jobs and pathways to nursing training through its [Medical Careers Pathway](#). To date, almost 2,600 graduates have found employment as Certified Nursing Assistants in long-term care positions, and another 700 have been employed as nurses and other healthcare professionals. IIM attributes its success in health care career pathways to responsiveness to IET alumni who were interested in nursing but needed additional academic support. In response, IIM developed the College Readiness Academy, which is a semester-long class that addresses academic subjects such as reading, writing, note-taking and other study skills.

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Through IIM's partnership with Saint Paul College and Minneapolis Community and Technical College, students earn college credit for the College Readiness Academy. Graduates of the academy have a higher completion rate for their first year of college compared with the state average. IIM leverages **braided funding** from the Minnesota Department of Education (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act), Department of Employment and Economic Development, and a variety of philanthropic foundations, to support students in the academy. AEFLA funding is used to pay navigators, who have been identified as key to students' success, because they help students access support services, apply for financial aid, enroll in classes, prepare resumes and apply for jobs. This community-based organization's strong collaboration with local community colleges has resulted in students' ability to obtain college credit through their programming.

### Strategy 3: Using Alternatives to Standardized Assessment at Hawthorne Adult Education Center

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Because of a growing need for a skilled and diverse workforce at Mayo Clinic and Olmsted County in Rochester, Minnesota, [Hawthorne Adult Education Center](#) at Rochester Public Schools partnered with [Rochester Community and Technical College](#) (RCTC) and Workforce Development, Inc., to establish the [Bridges to Careers](#) program. This program provides career pathways in health care and administrative office professionals that have been IET approved and are implemented in partnership with Mayo Clinic, Olmsted County, other health care facilities, Rochester Public Schools, and other local businesses. These pathways include a Certified Nursing Assistant certification, an Advanced Hospital Nursing Assistant certificate, Phlebotomy Preparation courses, a Pharmacy Tech preparation course, and office support certificate, among others.

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The program implements **alternatives to standardized assessment** through their partnership with Rochester County Technical College (RCTC). Hawthorne Education Center has agreements with RCTC that allows students to earn developmental college credits before they transition to RCTC. The students in Bridges to Careers who complete their developmental English and reading classes at Hawthorne are placed directly into college English without taking a standardized college placement test. This works, in part, because the leaders of the core partners meet regularly to discuss the current pathways, requirements, needs, and challenges of the learners and workforce. Together, they problem-solve issues preventing students from entering or completing the program and determine requirements necessary to satisfy each partner. It is this strong partnership that enables Hawthorne staff to provide these important opportunities for their students.

## Strategy 4: Putting It All Together by Creating a Pathway from IET to Associate Degree

The following section highlights how staff at Amarillo College and Mt. Hood Community College combined several of the strategies, including developing an IET to associate degree pathway, to link IET to postsecondary education.

### Amarillo College

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At [Amarillo College](#), in Texas, [Career Ready You](#) IET programs are designed to make the pathway from the adult education bridge program to IET to college as clear and free of barriers as possible for students.

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A Career Ready You IET program is the first step on a potential **pathway to credit-bearing courses and an associate degree**. Currently, Career Ready You offers four different pathways: Business, Education, Health Services, and Industry (which includes degrees related to aerospace, HVAC, and manufacturing). Students can make interim gains by earning stackable micro-credentials and certifications on the pathway to the associate degrees. The first two classes (six credits) in the pathway are funded by the program at no cost to the student.



The program uses **braided funding** from sources such as (1) federal financial aid through the Ability to Benefit provision to pay for credit-bearing course tuition and (2) Adult Education and Family Literacy Act grants to pay for materials and resources and career navigators who assist students with accessing financial aid and other supports. Through the Ability to Benefit provision, once students complete those six credits, they are eligible to apply for federal financial aid, even if they have not yet completed their HSE. Career Ready You students are supported by career navigators, who help students decide on the program that is the best fit, maintain contact throughout training, and assist students with career exploration and matriculation into Amarillo College.



The pathway is made smoother through the use of **alternatives to standardized assessment** and holistic advising, which are used by the Amarillo bridge program to determine student readiness for IET programs. Multiple assessment measures consider students' grades, attendance, completed English language arts portion of HSE, and ability to navigate Blackboard, the college's learning management system. Further, once enrolled in an adult education program, students can access a host of student services and supports as a result of efforts to integrate adult education in the wider college community.

Staff at Amarillo College attribute their success in connecting IET participants to postsecondary opportunities to the belief, also promoted by the college leadership, that adult learners belong and can thrive as college students with the appropriate support. For example, after success with an adult education instructor in the co-teaching model, this cost for co-teaching faculty has been integrated into these departments' budgets.

## Mt. Hood Community College

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The [Adult Basic Skills Department](#) at Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) champions IET, which the department refers to as "[Accelerated Supported Instruction](#)," as an effective approach to integrating marginalized populations into career pathways programs in high-demand occupations. Through popular career pathways programs like their IET Teaching Assistant pathway for Early Childhood Education and Family Studies, IET Welding, and IET Machining, they achieve a completion rate of between 75 percent and 94 percent. Using these data, MHCC staff were able to make the case for additional sources of program funding.

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Students are supported through **braiding funding** from federal sources such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I, WIOA Title II, and other state-based funding streams. For students interested in programs that qualify as career pathways, MHCC uses 140 tuition awards to support student coursework and finds alternative scholarship funds to support students who do not qualify for financial aid.



MHCC staff intentionally design **IET programs with the option to extend the pathway to an associate degree**. For example, in the Early Childhood Education pathway, the certificate can be completed in one year and comes with a wage increase for those working in early childhood education. After completing this certificate, students can apply all certificate credits toward a two-year Associate of Applied Science Degree in Early Childhood Education.

MHCC maintains partnerships with other institutions that allow it to continue developing initiatives and funding opportunities. For example, MHCC's partnership with the local One-Stop Career Center informs the college's career pathways development and enables MHCC to have grant-funded job coaches stationed there to support students' transition to employment. Job coaches are funded through Title I, Title IB, and Title II dollars, a process and collaboration that requires time, transparency, and communication. Additionally, staff are responsive to local labor market needs, and use that information to build new relationships within the

college. Staff identified a community need for multilingual childcare and ultimately collaborated with a childcare resource and referral center within the college to develop a pathway to a credential that is industry-recognized, national, and portable.

## Conclusion

These examples illustrate how adult education providers can use strategies such as pathways to associate degrees, braided funding, co-enrollment, and alternative assessment measures to develop IET programs that extend career pathways to postsecondary education. With the support of partnerships such as employers, other adult education providers, and within community college systems, adult education providers are enabled to offer comprehensive support services and link IET participants directly to

postsecondary education options for career advancement. Through explicit design, IET programs have the potential to provide more equitable access to educational and career advancement to adult learners from marginalized communities and can accelerate the completion of postsecondary credentials and/or college degrees.

## Questions for Reflection

- How can these examples be applied to your IET program context and setting?
- How can these strategies help you meet IET learner, program, and partner goals?
- Which of these strategies would help you advance your IET program development?
- What partnerships do you have in place, and what partnerships do you need to develop to implement these strategies?



## Further Reading

Alamprese, Judith A., and I-Fang Cheng. *Compendium of Innovative Practices: Holistic Approach to Adult Education Services*. Advancing Innovation in Adult Education, August 2021. <https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/holistic-approach-adult-education-services.pdf>.

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Peck, Laura R., Deena Schwartz, Julie Strawn, Christopher C. Weiss, Randall Juras, Siobhan Mills de la Rosa, Nathan Greenstein, Tori Morris, Gabriel Durham, and Christopher Lloyd. 2021. "A Meta-Analysis of 46 Career Pathways Impact Evaluations." U.S. Department of Labor; Abt Associates. <https://www.abtassociates.com/files/insights/reports/2022/a-meta-analysis-of-46-career-pathways-impact-evaluations-final-report.pdf>.

## Citations

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<sup>i</sup> "Good Jobs Principles," United States Department of Commerce and United States Department of Labor, <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/goodjobs/Good-Jobs-Summit-Principles-Factsheet.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> Baum, Sandy, Harry Holzer, Grace Luetmer, *Should the Federal Government Fund Short-Term Postsecondary Certificate Programs?* Urban Institute, December 2020, [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103370/should-the-federal-government-fund-short-term-postsecondary-certificate-programs\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103370/should-the-federal-government-fund-short-term-postsecondary-certificate-programs_0_0.pdf).

<sup>iii</sup> Baum, Sandy, Harry Holzer, Grace Luetmer, *Should the Federal Government*.

<sup>iv</sup> Ziyu Zhou, *Undermeasuring: College and Career Readiness Indicators May Not Reflect College and Career Outcomes*, All4Ed, February 27, 2023, <https://all4ed.org/publication/undermeasuring/>.

