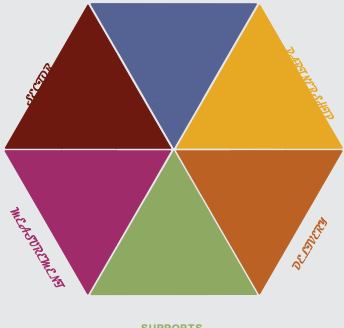# California Career Pathways
Connecting the Work

CLASP studied the core components and criteria incorporated in nine major federal and California-specific career pathways models and legislation. These ingredients were synthesized into a set of six elements that compose high quality systems supporting career pathway programs.

This document reflects the primary components of each major investment in the California career pathways field and shows how these ingredients map to the six elements drawn from CLASP's collective review. Together, these six elements can form an effective, sustainable career pathways system.

By illustrating a six-element model that connects to and reflects the work of all nine major efforts studied, CLASP has generated a device that can help education institutions, workforce development groups, nonprofit and government agencies, funders, and others better understand the many pathways initiatives active today. Most importantly, it can help them see and pursue new possibilities to learn from and join with others to advance the scale, quality, and sustainability of career pathways systems.

Included Models and Legislation

- Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Framework

- California Board of Governors Strong Workforce Task Force

- California Workforce Development Board

- Federal Interagency Career Pathways Toolkit

- Federal Legislation

- Linked Learning Approach and Core Components

- Pathways to Prosperity Network

- Rigorous Programs of Study 10 Elements

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act California Implementation Work Group

BUILDING STRONG SYSTEMS

Every career pathways initiative brings one or more elements that contribute to a strong system.

Visit CACareerPathways.CLASP.org to explore combinations of initiatives that can help strengthen existing activity, start new partnerships, and bring resources together to scale and sustain career pathway systems.

California Career Pathway Program Elements

While career pathways programs take multiple forms, the most effective and sustainable pathways operate within systems that address six core elements.

Core Element	Components	Guiding Questions
Sector	Focusing on an industry with a skills shortage, engaging employers based on occupational targets, and producing skills that are portable (supporting occupational mobility).	What workforce need in the regional/state economy will the career pathway address? How will the skills created be portable and relevant over time?
Design	Building the pathway for a defined population of participants; addressing starting skills levels, featuring course and credential sequencing, providing multiple entry and exit points as well as alignment across settings, and awarding credentials that stack (supporting educational and economic mobility).	Who is the career pathway intended to serve and how will it do so? How is the pathway designed from a participant perspective? How do the educational components connect as participants move between settings and stages?
Partnership	Forming and maintaining collaborations based on shared goals and aligned responsibilities, with defined leadership, governance, and funding.	Who comes together to create, implement, and sustain the career pathway? What resources and responsibilities does each player bring? How do partners find common language as well as articulate and pursue shared goals, while meeting their individual accountabilities?
Delivery	Using participant-focused, evidence-based practices that incorporate contextualized instruction, concurrent remediation, dual enrollment, competency-based education, work-based learning, integrated education, and training.	What instructional strategies will be used to produce results from the career pathway? How does the pathway make use of academic and occupational skill building and work-based learning approaches?
Supports	Providing participants with services based on individual assessment of needs and including active advising, career navigation, case coordination, and referrals to specialized suppliers.	How does the career pathway address the holistic needs of participants to enhance their success? How is equity considered in providing differentiated supports for individual participants?
Measurement	Tracking progress through shared use of data, selection of metrics, and commitment to formative and summative assessment to inform continuous improvement.	How is success defined for the career pathway? How is data assembled to assess success? What is the approach to continuous improvement?

Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Framework

This state-driven, CLASP-led effort identified a framework that defines high quality career pathway systems along with a set of shared performance metrics for measuring and managing success. The Alliance seeks to help policymakers and practitioners build on existing career pathway innovations that provide employers with the skilled workers they need, and offer educational and economic opportunities and credentials for low-income workers.

Here is how Alliance framework criteria maps to the six-element model for strong career pathways systems.

Core Element	Alliance Connection*
Sector	Engage employers and integrate sector strategy principles to ensure multiple employers, business associations, and labor unions are partners in creating demand-driven career pathways.

Design	Career pathways include three essential features:
	
	• Well-connected and transparent education, training, support services, and credentials within specific sectors or cross-sector occupations (often delivered via multiple linked and aligned programs).
	
	• Multiple entry points that enable well-prepared students, as well as targeted populations with limited education, skills, English, and work experiences, to successfully enter the career pathway. Targeted populations served by career pathways may include:
	
	  – Adult education or other lower-skilled adult students
	  – English language learners
	  – Offenders or ex-offenders
	  – High school students
	  – Disconnected or "opportunity" youth
	  – Some former military personnel
	  – Unemployed or under-employed adults
	  – Others
	
	• Multiple exit points at successively higher levels that lead to self- or family-supporting employment and are aligned with subsequent entry points.

Partnership

Commit to a shared vision and strategy for industry sector-based career pathways for youth and adults, and for building, scaling, and dynamically sustaining career pathway systems.

Collaborate to make resources available by identifying, prioritizing, and leveraging resources for career pathway systems, partnerships, and programs.

Implement supportive policies for career pathway systems, pathways, and programs.

Delivery

Implement and integrate evidence-based practices and processes within the regional/local career pathway systems. This includes participant-focused education and training that meets each participant's needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles both inside and outside the classroom. This also includes employment services and work experiences as an essential function within career pathways.

Supports

Integrated practices and processes include support services and career navigation assistance as an essential function within career pathways.

Measurement

Use data and shared measures to assess, demonstrate, and improve participant outcomes.

*Source: Shared Vision, Strong Systems: Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Framework 1.0

California Board of Governors Strong Workforce Task Force

The <u>Task Force</u> is comprised of knowledgeable leaders from across the community college system, the business community, labor, public agencies involved in workforce training, community based organizations, K-12 policy, and other groups. This Task Force has been commissioned with a goal to increase individual and regional economic competitiveness by providing California's workforce with relevant skills and quality credentials that match employer needs and fuel a strong economy. Stakeholder meetings around the state identified career pathways as a framework for systemic change and further defined key elements of effective career pathways.

Here is how Task Force elements map to the six-element model for strong career pathways systems.

Core Element	Task Force Connection*
Sector	Dialogue between colleges and employers can help ensure that career pathways incorporate skills and certifications that align with industry needs and provide employment in high-value fields. Likewise, career pathways offer a clear model for deeper relationships and increased goal alignment between colleges and industry.
Design	Career pathways include clearly marked on-ramps and off-ramps that enable students to enter, re-enter, and exit at multiple points. Support for students transitioning across systems can increase access to college and encourage completion, especially among low-income and underserved students transitioning to community colleges.
Partnership	To continue the momentum of career pathways in California, the Task Force calls for collaboration between K-12 school districts, postsecondary institutions, the workforce system, and employers.
Delivery	Pathways coursework should integrate student-centered training in academic skills, technical skills, and backward mapping to ensure that courses are aligned and sequenced at all levels of the pathway, enabling students to seamlessly transition from one level to the next. Curricula should be rigorous and contextualized in real-world applications.

Delivery (continued)	Strategies that allow learners to simultaneously pursue multiple steps in a pathway can accelerate their educational and career advancement while maintaining the quality and integrity of required learning. These may include program redesign, apprenticeships, credit for prior learning, and dual enrollment.
	Work-based learning, such as internships and project-based learning opportunities, can help students apply their knowledge, gain valuable hands-on experience, and develop the day-one readiness and foundational skills necessary to secure and succeed in the labor market.
Supports	Proactive and integrated career navigation structures and routines that engage students, provide up-to-date information, identify in-demand occupations and essential job skills, offer information about the quality and cost of education and training programs, and identify the most efficient routes to valuable credentials and good jobs.
	Academic support services and wraparound services such as providing remediation, transportation, childcare, and textbooks and supplies can prevent these obstacles from derailing a student's movement along a career pathway. Services may also include counseling, access to role models and mentors, flexible schedules, and access to financial aid and other public benefits.
Measurement	Measurement goals for the Task Force include:
	• Track expansion of student success for both "completers" and "skill builders."
	• Provide workforce outcome data and labor market info and analysis to support career technical education.
	• Remove regulatory and statutory barriers for data sharing about governmental entities for program improvement.
	• Align outcome measures for all state-funded career technical education initiatives and streamline grant reporting to these metrics.

*Sources: College-to-Career Pathways: Getting from Here to There on the Roadmap for a Stronger California Economy, Recommendations from the California Community Colleges' Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation, and a Strong Economy

California Workforce Development Board

Strategic Plan: July 2013-June 2017

The Federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires the Governor, via the State Board, to submit a WIA/Wagner-Peyser Act (WPA) State Strategic <u>Workforce Development Plan</u> to the U.S. Department of Labor. This plan outlines a five-year strategy for the investment of federal workforce training and employment services dollars. The plan creates a strategic blueprint for action and commits partners to common strategies, goals, and concrete action steps. These actions are noted as short-term or long-term, with assigned partner owners.

Here is how goals, objectives, and actions from the plan map to the six-element model for strong career pathways systems.

Core Element	Strategic Plan Connection*
Sector	Adults Goal, Objective 2: Increase the number of career pathway programs in demand industries. Related action: • Align curricula within pathways to growing and emergent industry sectors. (Long-term, Collective)
Design	Adults Goal, Objective 2, related action: • Support the development of stackable credentials, basic skills on-ramps, and bridge programs that provide for interim achievement with multiple entry and exit points, leading to support services and employability along a career pathway. (Long-term, Collective) Adults Goal, Objective 4, related action: • Replicate/bring to scale the best practices of the "Adult Entry Points of Entry" initiative that promote the development of career pathways and transition programs targeted to incarcerated adults, ex-offenders, and low-skilled adults (those with basic skills in the 6th-8th grade level range). (Long-term, Collective) Youth Goal, Objective 2: Increase opportunities for disconnected youth to transition into postsecondary education and careers. Related action: • Encourage (in collaboration with higher education) successful concurrent enrollment practices among school districts and colleges. (Short-term, CDE)

Partnership

System Alignment and Accountability Goal, Objective 1: Develop and sustain a state-level leadership team to improve state and regional communication, better align state-level efforts, and more effectively respond to barriers and obstacles faced by regions.

Related actions:

- Develop a statewide education and outreach plan that promotes a common vision, goals and language; clarifies roles and responsibilities of state and local workforce partners; and works to identify, access and target additional resources into the system. (Short-term, State Board)
- Align multiple agency state plans to address statewide goals and priorities, and identify and resolve inconsistencies in program measures, goals, and rules to improve program alignment and outcomes. (Long-term, State Board)

Delivery

Adults Goal, Objective 2, related action:

- Prioritize investment in effective CTE and contextualized basic skills approaches. (Long-term, Collective)

Youth Goal, Objective 1, related action:

- Identify and promote best practices on articulation, integration, and collaboration of K-12 and adult education CTE programs to community college pathways, programs and workforce/ employment offerings. (Short-term, CDE)

Adults Goal, Objective 6: Expand availability of and participation in "Earn and Learn" models, such as apprenticeships, where students and workers can build skills while working.

Supports

Adults Goal, Objective 1, related action:

- Provide guidance, strategies, and incentives to local partners to support programs for students in career pathway programs. (Long-term and on-going; involves collective input from educators, WIA service providers, other workforce stakeholders)

Measurement

System Alignment and Accountability Goal, Objective 2: Develop a common workforce accountability system.

Related actions:

- Develop common cross-system metrics, align performance outcome measures, monitor and report annually on progress towards goals. (Long-term, Collective)
- Develop use of data (including EDD base wage file data) to track participants across programs and institutions and into the labor market. (Long-term, Collective)

Measurement (continued)	• Develop standards for certifications of high-performance Local Boards and a policy for allocation of any WIA discretionary funds to high-performance Local Boards pursuant to the Senate Bill 698 (Statutes of 2011). (Short-term, State Board)
	• Create a reporting mechanism that counts CC CTE for fewer than 12 units. (Long-term, California Community Colleges)
	• Work with the DOLETA to develop [WIOA] performance measures and outcomes consistent with the goals of California's Strategic Workforce Development Plan. (Short-term, State Board)

*Source: California Workforce Investment Board Strategic Plan

Federal Interagency Career Pathways Toolkit

This underlined toolkit intends to provide the workforce system with a framework, resources, and tools for state and local partners to develop, implement, and sustain career pathways systems and programs. The toolkit identifies key elements of career pathways to help guide state and local teams through best practices for developing a comprehensive career pathways system.

Here is how the toolkit elements map to the six-element model for strong career pathways systems.

Core Element	Toolkit Connection*
Sector	Sectors and industries are selected and are partners and co-investors in the development of career pathways systems.
Design	Career pathways programs provide a clear sequence of education courses and credentials that meet the skill needs of high-demand industries.
Partnership	A cross-agency leadership team clarifies roles and responsibilities of participating partners and gains high-level supports from political leaders for an integrated career pathways system.
Delivery	Sequenced education and training courses provide work-based learning and credentials, combined with continual seamless support systems to prepare individuals—regardless of their skill levels at the point of entry—for postsecondary education, training, and employment. Likewise, the career technical education system (CTE) requires a clear sequence of courses that must align with postsecondary education and the workforce training systems in order for youth to benefit from a career pathways system.
Supports	Academic support services are designed specifically to retain participants in their selected career pathway, and to lessen the burden of obstacles for students such as English language learners and those who lack college readiness skills by arranging for tutoring or other services. Supportive services may also provide basic needs such as food, shelter, transportation, and childcare.
Measurement	Appropriate measures and evaluation methods are in place to support continuous improvement of the career pathways system.

*Source: Career Pathways Toolkit, DOLETA

Federal Legislation

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Career Pathways/Higher Education Act Ability to Benefit

Within federal legislation, two distinct systems contain an identical definition of career pathways. This mirroring holds potential to align career pathways development and implementation with access to federal financial aid.

The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act defines career pathways, encourages implementation of career pathways approaches that support secondary and postsecondary education and training for youth and adults, and makes the development of career pathways strategies a required function of the state and local workforce boards and a permissible activity under all parts of the Act.

Meanwhile, the Ability to Benefit (ATB) provision in the federal Higher Education Act allows low-skilled individuals to access necessary workforce training and education that can help lift them out of poverty.

Here is how WIOA/HEA legislation maps to the six-element model for strong career pathways systems.

Core Element	WIOA/HEA Connection*
Sector	The legislation defines career pathways as a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that align with the skills and needs of industries in the economy of the State or regional economy involved. Local workforce boards must lead efforts to engage employers, and develop and implement strategies such as industry and sector partnerships.
Design	Career pathways prepare an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options and credentials, including registered apprenticeships. WIOA identifies 13 barriers to employment, including basic skill deficiency and limited English proficiency.
Partnership	A local board, with representatives of secondary and postsecondary education programs, shall lead efforts in the local area to develop and implement career pathways by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services that are needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers to employment.
Delivery	Education and training are integrated through a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.
	Postsecondary credentials include certificates of completion of apprenticeship, and WIOA career services include internship and work experiences linked to careers.

Supports

The career pathway definition includes counseling services to support individuals in achieving their education and career goals.

Measurement

WIOA encourages shared accountability among its core programs by including the following provisions:

- Common performance measures (Measurable Skills Gain, credential attainment, employment in the second and fourth quarter after program exit, median earnings second quarter after exit, effectiveness in serving employers)

- Federal-state sanctions policy

- Unified planning

- Goal setting process

- Standard reporting requirements

- Eligible training provider data policy

- Career pathways

*Sources: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 Public Law No. 113-128; Higher Education Act Public Law No. 113-235, Section 484(d)(2)

Linked Learning Approach and Core Components

Linked Learning is a proven approach to education that combines college-focused academics, work-based learning, and intensive student supports. Core components of Linked Learning programs help make learning relevant and ensure students graduate with the skills and confidence to succeed in college, career, and life.

Here is how the Linked Learning approach maps to the six-element model for strong career pathways systems.

Core Element	Linked Learning Connection*
Sector	Career pathways are organized around industry-sector themes in target industries with local labor market value, contributing to a self-sustaining regional infrastructure that enables occupational mobility. For example, sector themes include engineering, health care, performing arts, energy, and law.
Design	Linked Learning integrates four core components: 1. Rigorous academics that prepare students to take credit-bearing college-level courses and be university admissible upon graduation from high school, maximize articulation between high school and postsecondary programs of study, and facilitate and accelerate completion of postsecondary credentials, certificates, and degrees. 2. Technical training that is embedded through a sequence of classes and integrated with academic content standards, aligned with career opportunities in a variety of high-need, high-skill occupations, including opportunities for stackable certificates, credentials, or degrees where relevant. 3. Work-based learning sequences that reach from middle school career awareness and exploration into postsecondary training and education, providing opportunities to apply core academic content and technical training while developing the skills, competencies, and dispositions that are critical to workplace success. 4. Comprehensive support services that are embedded as central components of a program of study, address unique needs of individual students, and include academic and socio-emotional supports to ensure equity of access, opportunity, and success.

Partnership

Pathway staff, school and district leaders, and other partners share responsibility for program effectiveness and accountability for student outcomes. These stakeholders assure that conditions are in place to establish and sustain pathway quality. The pathway engages a formal advisory board that serves as an organizing structure to effectively engage a core of stakeholders, including business, postsecondary, and community partners. A Community of Practice is also formed by pathway teachers, typically a grade-level interdisciplinary team.

Delivery

The Linked Learning model includes integrated academic instruction and career technical education, with a focus on work-based learning.

Supports

A network of comprehensive, personalized student support services advance equity of access and success. Services include support for:

- Academic learning
- Technical learning
- Workplace learning
- College and career knowledge
- Social and emotional learning

Measurement

Results of Linked Learning implementation are measured through student success outcomes: students complete high school on time, earn a postsecondary credential by age 25, and engage in work that can sustain a family. Data is used to inform and improve professional practice and to revise the pathway improvement plan.

*Source: Linked Learning: Essential Elements for Pathway Quality Descriptors

Pathways to Prosperity Network

In 2012, Jobs for the Future and the Harvard Graduate School of Education—in collaboration with states and regions—launched the Pathways to Prosperity Network to re-envision how our education system, from K-12 through college, partners with employers and prepares young people for success. The Network seeks to ensure that many more youth complete high school, attain postsecondary credentials with currency in the labor market, and get launched on careers while leaving open the prospect of further education. Part of this work includes a STEM-focused curriculum redesign to develop career pathways that span grades 9-14, enabling students to transition smoothly through high school, into higher education, and onto family-supporting careers.

Here is how the Network's approach maps to the six-element model for strong career pathways systems.

Core Element	Network Connection*
Sector	Pathways are intended to connect and align high schools with community and technical colleges and industry certification programs in growing sectors of the economy. Pathways states are generally concentrating on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields such as information technology, health care, and advanced manufacturing.
Design	A key lever for implementation of the Pathways to Prosperity framework is grades 9-14 career pathways with clear structures, timelines, costs, and requirements that link and integrate high school and community college curricula and align both with labor market needs.
Partnership	A cross-agency state leadership team that cuts across sectors is needed to lead collaborative efforts between the typically disparate K-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems. This team should include representatives from state agencies responsible for economic development, commerce, workforce and labor, and K-12 and higher education, along with nonprofit and industry sector leaders.
Delivery	Network recommendations include that states better integrate academic and career and technical education (CTE) programs, and elevate the profile of these programs as a means to develop crucial STEM skills. Per this direction, states should explore incentives that encourage businesses to get involved in pathways efforts and provide all students enrolled in a career pathway an opportunity to participate in work-based learning, including job shadowing, paid or unpaid internships, virtual and group experiences, and paid part-time and/or summer employment.

Supports

A key lever for implementation of the Pathways to Prosperity framework is an early and sustained career information and advising system strong enough to help students and families make informed choices about education and careers. Intermediary organizations can play an important role by supporting the development and implementation of career education and work-based learning opportunities.

Measurement

Each member of the Network crafts an annual Pathways to Prosperity scope of work that details member-specific services and activities. For Early College Designs programs, metrics include graduation rate, number of students earning free college credits while in high school, and number of students earning an associate degree or other postsecondary credential while in high school.

*Source: Pathways to Prosperity Network

Rigorous Programs of Study 10 Elements

Rigorous Programs of Study (RPOS) is a comprehensive, structured approach for delivering academic and career and technical education to prepare students for postsecondary education and career success. RPOS utilizes a framework of 10 supporting elements viewed as instrumental for creating and implementing a high quality, comprehensive program of study (POS).

Here is how the RPOS elements map to the six-element model for strong career pathways systems.

Core Element	RPOS Connection*
Sector	Technical skills assessments. National, state, and/or local assessments provide ongoing information on the extent to which students are attaining the necessary knowledge and skills for entry into and advancement in postsecondary education careers in their chosen POS.
Design	Course sequences. Non-duplicative sequences of secondary and postsecondary courses within a POS ensure that students transition to postsecondary education without duplicating classes or requiring remedial coursework.
	Credit transfer agreements. These agreements provide opportunities for secondary students to be awarded transcripted postsecondary credit at the time the credit is earned.
Partnership	Partnerships. Ongoing relationships among education, business, and other community stakeholders are central to POS design, implementation, and maintenance.
	Legislation and policies. Federal, state, and local legislation or administrative policies promote POS development and implementation.
Delivery	College and career readiness standards. These content standards define what students are expected to know and be able to do in order to enter and advance in college and/or their careers comprise the foundation of a POS.
	Teaching and learning strategies. Innovative and creative instructional approaches enable teachers to integrate academic and technical instruction and students to apply academic and technical learning to their POS coursework.
	Professional development. Sustained, intensive, and focused opportunities for administrators, teachers, and faculty foster POS design, implementation, and maintenance.

Supports

Guidance counseling and academic advising. Resources that help students to make informed decisions about which POS to pursue.

Measurement

Accountability and evaluation systems. Systems and strategies to gather quantitative and qualitative data on both POS components and student outcomes are crucial for ongoing efforts to development and implement POS.

*Source: Career and Technical Programs of Study: A Design Framework, Carl Perkins IV Public Law 109-270

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act California Implementation Work Group

WIOA Program Strategy: Building Career Pathways

The Work Group provides guidance on State-level implementation of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and develops architecture for the Governor's State Strategic Workforce Plan through seven Common Program Strategies—one being "Building Career Pathways." This also includes developing WIOA performance measures and multi-agency metrics, developing policy, catalyzing systems alignment and regional collaboration, and determining any needed governance changes.

Here is how the Work Group's program strategies and WIOA legislation map to the six-element model for strong career pathways systems.

Core Element	Work Group Connection*
Sector	Local workforce boards lead area efforts between a diverse range of employers to expand employment and career advancement opportunities for workforce development system participants within in-demand industry sectors or occupations.
Design	Local workforce boards—with representatives of secondary and postsecondary education programs—lead area efforts to develop and implement career pathways by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers to employment. Pathways design should also include a full range of secondary and postsecondary credentials.
Partnership	The following core programs are overseen by the state workforce board and state agencies at the state level, and local workforce boards and local administrators at the local level: • Title I youth, adult, and dislocated worker • Title II adult education • Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Services • Career technical education

Delivery

Education and training are integrated through a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

Postsecondary credentials include certificates of completion of apprenticeship, and WIOA career services include internship and work experiences linked to careers.

Supports

The WIOA career pathway definition includes counseling services to support individuals in achieving their education and career goals.

Measurement

WIOA encourages shared accountability among its core programs by including the following provisions:

- Common performance measures (Measurable Skills Gain, credential attainment, employment in the second and fourth quarter after program exit, median earnings second quarter after exit, effectiveness in serving employers)
- Federal-state sanctions policy
- Unified planning and local planning guidance
- Goal setting process and performance negotiations
- Standard reporting requirements
- Eligible training provider data policy
- Career pathways

It could be possible to identify WIOA-enrolled participants in Adult Education Block Grant programs and California Community College programs through "treatment flags" that track participant progression across data systems.

*Source: California's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan 2016-2020