

Planning Questions

Use this resource to:

- Identify potential goals for your career ladder: Consider ways to achieve high-quality implementation in a timeframe that meets expectations, based on the resources that are likely to be available. Your approach can be developmental, starting simply and building in additional components as resources and interest allows.
- Identify benefits for workforce intermediaries.
- Determine if a career ladder will meet the expressed needs of local employers and workers.
- Plan expansion to an appropriate scale for sustainability: Carry out planning process with partnership members; based on market analysis, expand industry support; based on public benefits of program, expand public financial support and/or political support; seek alternative funding sources, both public and private.

This resource addresses key questions for consideration when determining whether or not to develop a career ladder.

The model that you develop for your career ladder initiative may or may not be similar to the examples this guide provides. Your region's needs and the capacity of your organization and your partners will be the key determinants shaping the structure and operation of the career ladder you create. In this context, you will want to use available resources to design an initiative that produces clear benefits for employers and workers—and that can be implemented in a timeframe that meets their expectations. Your approach can be developmental, starting simply and adding components as resources and interest allow. Considering these key questions will help you to determine the goals for your career ladder.

■ Key Questions

Do you want to start at a large scale or at a small scale, with plans to grow over time? Depending on the breadth and depth of employer support for the initiative, as well as your capacity as an intermediary, you will need to determine the scale of your efforts. Pilot projects that are designed to prove a model often target workers in a specific industry and a limited number of employers, with the objective of gradually generating broader support. Large-scale projects often emerge as a response to unusually high demand for skilled labor and tend to originate in existing workforce development activities, such as labor-management negotiated training programs.

Which occupations will be easiest to build into career ladders, given the regional economy and labor market? What occupations have the highest demand for particular skills and will continue to for the foreseeable future? Among these occupations, which require similar skills, moving from less well-developed skills to more well-developed?

Do the occupations that it is important to address fit within one career ladder or more than one? How many career ladders do you want to develop at first? In the long run?

Which employers are interested in participating initially? These may be companies with the most pressing workforce needs, or companies with which an intermediary has worked on other workforce development initiatives. Is it possible to build a career ladder based on the occupations of their workers? Which employers are likely to participate after the program has a track record of successful operation?

From where will workers come to fill the skill needs of the occupations in the career ladder? From companies that have poor opportunities for promotion, high turnover, and large numbers of workers with low skills and little work experience? From a recruitment/screening agency (such as One-Stops, staffing firms, workforce development service providers, or TANF agencies)? Or from both?

To what extent do occupations potentially forming the career ladder build the skills and provide the credentials necessary to prepare workers to be candidates for each succeeding occupational tier?

What combination of restructuring occupations and providing education/training services will build skills that are not developed in the occupations that compose the career ladder? What portable credentials can you use to measure the skills developed by education/training, especially as determined by the attainment of industry-standard credentials?

What support services will make it possible for individuals to participate in recruitment/screening activities? What support services will enable them to work successfully in career ladder occupations and learn effectively in education/training?

What organization should staff the career ladder initiative and manage its day-to-day operations?