

# Wisconsin Industry Partnerships: A Pathway to Skill and Opportunity

Industry partnerships facilitate and build an education and training system responsive to and driven by the needs of workers and employers. Career pathways and bridges provide the routes for workers to move up in the labor force by giving them the skills that employers need. **Together, industry partnerships and career pathways and bridges are the foundation of stronger opportunity and a stronger economy in Wisconsin.**

Industry Partnerships and Career Pathways and Bridges will **move the Wisconsin economy forward and strengthen opportunity and skills for working Wisconsinites by:**

- Providing Wisconsinites with the credentials they need to move up into better jobs;
- Developing highly skilled workers to meet the needs of Wisconsin’s employers; and
- Enhancing Wisconsin’s economy by building skills and opportunity.

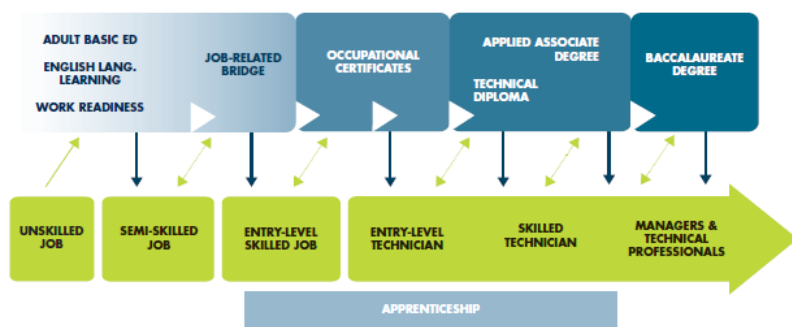
The current economic crisis has focused increasing attention on the most pressing needs of both workers and businesses in the state. Fortunately, Wisconsin is already working to provide the foundation to build stronger, more responsive skills systems as we move toward recovery through **RISE**, which focuses on career pathways and bridges for adult workers, and **Wisconsin Industry Partnerships (WIP)**. We offer here a bit of background and key terms from these two closely linked efforts.

## Career Pathways and Bridges: The RISE Initiative

As Wisconsin’s labor force ages and diversifies, Wisconsin is working hard to build the skills and productivity of **our existing adult workforce** in order to ensure a strong economy in the future. Led by the **Department of Workforce Development** and the **Wisconsin Technical College System**, RISE pays particular attention to the unique training needs of adult workers, emphasizing the “Career Pathway” model of skills acquisition and credentialing. **A Career Pathway** is a way of organizing college- level occupational training as a sequence of certificates that leads adult learners in attainable steps toward better jobs and a degree or technical diploma. Each step improves the learner’s career and earning opportunities and provides a skill set wanted by an industry or industry sector. **Career Pathway Bridges** help adults in need of basic skills or English Language Learning succeed in career pathways. Bridges consist of courses that link basic skills development with occupational skills development and accelerate the transition from pre-college to college level work.

For more detailed description of career pathways and bridges, see RISE Guidelines at [risepartnership.org](http://risepartnership.org)

## CAREER PATHWAYS



## **Wisconsin Industry Partnerships (WIP)**

Wisconsin Industry Partnerships (WIP) works to ensure that the system change required to move career pathways forward in the state is informed by employer-driven demand for specific skills in targeted regional growth industries. This is accomplished by promoting the Industry Partnerships model of workforce and economic development.

Wisconsin Industry Partnerships embraces a wide definition of “career pathways,” one which, of course, incorporates RISE’s critical focus on adult workers, but one which also prioritizes the transition from secondary to post-secondary education as addressed by Wisconsin’s career clusters and pathways initiative.

Industry Partnerships are formed at the regional level to ensure that employers in key industry sectors can connect to employees with the skills they need to grow and that job seekers and workers in these industry sectors receive the skills and training they need to secure good paying jobs. Industry Partnerships match industry leadership with support from multiple partners: workforce development organizations, educational institutions, training providers, industry and trade associations, organized labor, economic development groups, community-based organizations, local government agencies, and private foundations.

### **Successful Industry Partnerships:**

- Define the partnership region based on labor-market analysis; develop goals, a work plan, and target outcomes based on clear identification of workforce challenges; and establish a mechanism to identify and track measurable goals.
- Include a vision and plan for building a leadership framework in the region; leverage financial resources and in-kind support; and promote ongoing communication between employers, workers, training providers, and service agencies.
- Anticipate industry skill gaps and work to close them, focus workforce training and development efforts on improving regional industry competitiveness, and address common workforce challenges; all work that is aided with career pathway concepts and tools.
- Focus on developing and promoting middle skill jobs within the targeted industry sector, develop career pathways to allow employees to advance within the industry, develop or apply industry credentials, address the needs of special populations (low-income populations or those with barriers to employment), and assist educational and training institutions in aligning curriculum and programs to meet industry demands.

Strong leadership in the state from DWD and the multiple public and private partners listed below, along with generous support from the Joyce Foundation, has spurred real progress on Industry Partnerships and Career Pathways and Bridges. That’s the foundation to make training work better for Wisconsin’s workforce and employers. Continuing forward in cooperation will ensure that we are building skills to respond to industry demand, and in ways that allow workers to move up. The result will be stronger opportunity for workers, a stronger workforce for employers, and a better future for our state.

### **Industry Partnerships and Career Pathways in Wisconsin are made possible through leadership from the following public and private partners:**

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) • Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS)  
Wisconsin Department of Commerce • Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI)  
UW-System/UW Extension • Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU)  
Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS)