



YouthBuild USA

Competency Models & Mapping

A Topic in Brief of the Sector Strategy How-to Guide

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Overview of Topic in Brief

This brief introduces competency models and mapping as a tool to align and integrate career pathways with a sector strategy. Competency mapping can guide YouthBuild programs with selecting training, curriculum, and credentials that align with industry-validated work readiness standards and competencies. Sector-focused career pathways ensure real-world industry context, specific career placement and progression steps for participants, and alignment with employer needs.

When to Use Competency Models & Mapping

YouthBuild programs can work alongside employers and additional partners to design and deliver training using competency models contextualized to their employer partners' needs during the **Design & Implement** stage.

Competency models should be reviewed and evaluated regularly during the **Build & Evolve** stage due to the constantly evolving labor market and industry needs.

Uses of Competency Models & Mapping

YouthBuild programs can use competency models and mapping in the following ways:



Engage partners to develop employer-driven career pathways



Create career exploration activities for participants



Design competency-based curricula and training

Sector Strategy Alignment Checkpoint



Career Pathway Development Stages

Design & Implement
Build & Evolve



The ETA Sector Strategy Implementation Framework

Data-Informed Decision Making
Industry Engagement
Sector-Based Service Delivery



YouthBuild Program Reflection

1. What is your program currently doing to design sector-driven career pathways?
2. What curricula or training are you using that addresses foundational and technical competencies?
3. Who are you working with to develop career pathways?

Key Definitions

In order to know how to use competency models and mapping to design and implement career pathways, it is helpful to understand the key features of a successful career pathway. The Construction Plus Framework key elements align to the following definition of career pathways:

Definition of a Career Pathway

WIOA defines a career pathway as “a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services” that:

- aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the state or regional economy involved;
- prepares an individual to be successful in a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including registered apprenticeships;
- includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual’s education and career goals;
- includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
- organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable;
- enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its state-recognized equivalent, and at least one recognized postsecondary credential; and
- helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

[Source: 2016 Career Pathways Joint Letter](#)

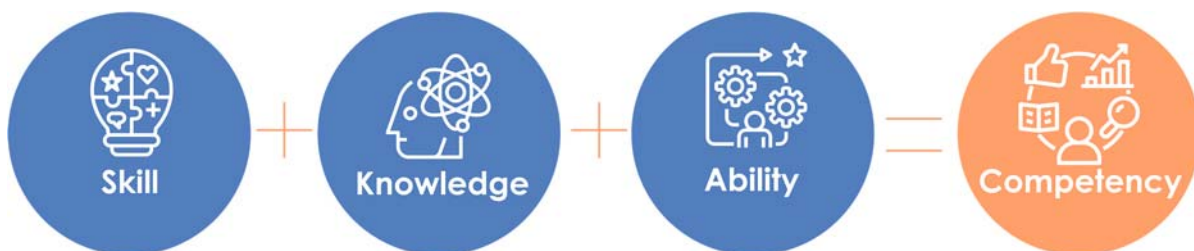
At a systems level, career pathways can address barriers to employment and redesign workforce systems to be more accessible for all workers. For example, YouthBuild programs may work with employers to reevaluate the minimum requirements to enter an industry to create more accessible entry points. On a programmatic level, they offer a clear sequence of education coursework and/or training credentials aligned with employer-validated work readiness standards and competencies ([DOL Career Pathway Toolkit](#)).



Definition of Competency and Competency Model

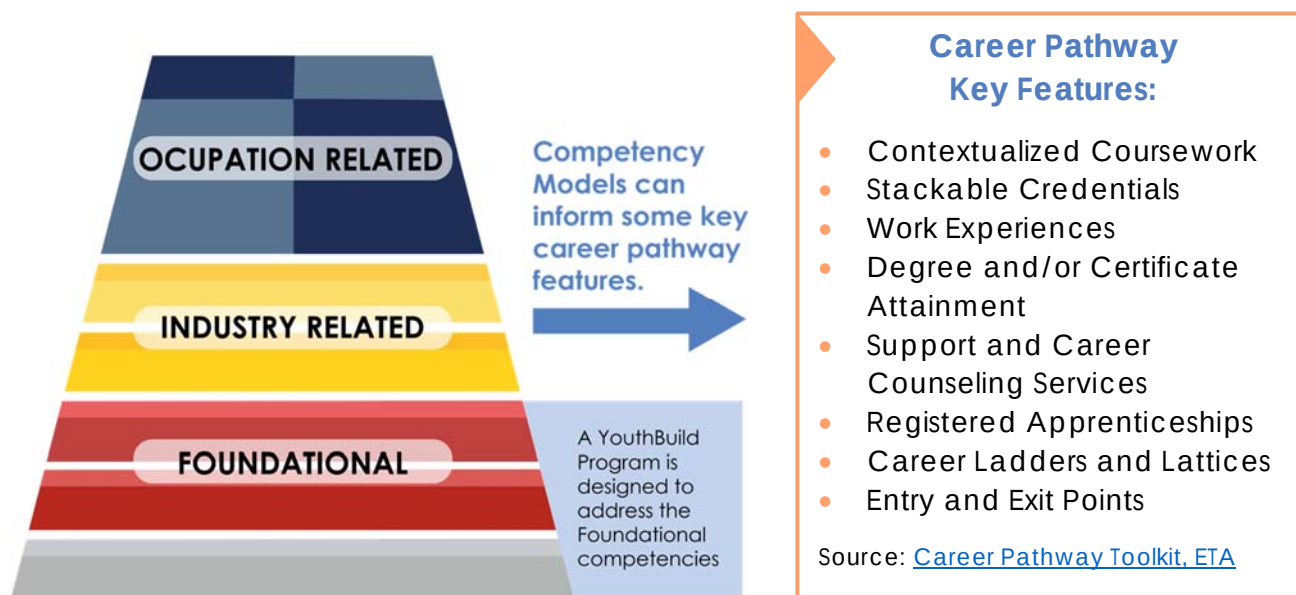
Competency: [CareerOneStop](#) defines a competency as, “the capability to apply or use a set of related knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully perform critical work functions or tasks in a defined work setting.”

Competency Models: A competency model is a collection of competencies that together define successful performance in a particular work setting. The [Employment Training Competency Models](#) are organized by tiers that represent the competencies needed to be ready to enter the workplace leading up to competencies that require more specialized knowledge and technical competencies.



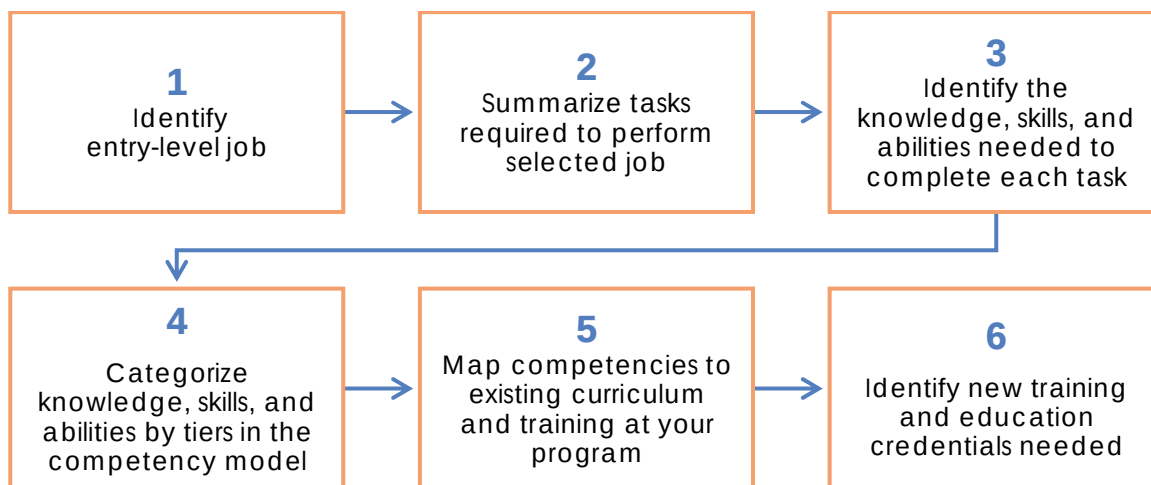
Competency Mapping & Career Pathway Design

Competency mapping is a process that can inform the design and delivery of career pathways by categorizing competencies by job or occupation. It requires the active engagement of industry partners and workforce training providers throughout the process to identify key tasks needed to perform in a job and the core knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to accomplish them.



For an in-depth look at each tier, visit [CareerOneStop.org](#)

Snapshot of Competency Mapping



Competency Mapping Checklist

Steps	Tips
Step 1: Identify entry-level jobs or occupations you want to target based on criteria identified (i.e., accessible entry-level education requirements, family-sustaining wages, and opportunities for advancement).	☐ Ask employer partners for a list of entry-level jobs by entry-level requirements and any wage information. ☐ Use labor market information gathered. ☐ Ensure participants are involved in the process to gauge interest.
Step 2: Work with employer partner(s) on developing a list of specific job tasks needed to perform a job.	☐ Ensure that each task is specific enough and tied to a knowledge area, skill, or ability.
Step 3: Label each task statement with a knowledge area, technical or foundation skill, or ability.	☐ Use O*NET to look up examples of abilities and knowledge. ☐ Use O*NET to look up examples of skills.
Step 4: Categorize the identified knowledge areas, skills, and abilities by the tiers in competency models.	☐ Use the Building Blocks Model to categorize by foundational skills to more specialized and technical skills. ☐ YouthBuild programs are designed to incorporate competencies in Tiers 1 through 3, called Foundation Competencies.
Step 5: Map existing curricula, certificates, and industry-recognized credentials to competencies identified to identify gaps in curriculum and training where competencies are not addressed.	☐ Engage staff to identify overlaps between competencies and the existing curricula your program uses.
Step 6: Work with employers to identify new training and industry-recognized credentials to allow participants to enter and advance in an industry.	☐ Use the CareerOneStop certificate finder as a source. ☐ Click here to find technical and subject matter experts by industry, and often, they are industry associations that offer credentials.

Career Pathway Program Design Key Considerations

Education & Credentials

- Is flexible alternative scheduling available?
- Are curricula contextualized?
- Do competencies align with stackable credentials and jobs?
- Are there multiple exit/entry points?

Career Counseling

- Does your program have career exploration activities (i.e., company tours, career assessments, informational interviews)?
- Does your program have career planning in place to support youth with their career goals?
- Does your program have transition to employment or postsecondary education support (i.e., resume writing, mock interviews)?

Training

- What type of training is needed to enter the industry or job (i.e., job shadow, pre-apprenticeship)?
- What type of training is needed when a participant starts the job (i.e., on-the-job training)?
- What type of training is needed to advance (i.e., Registered Apprenticeship)?

Support Services

- Are there solutions in place to provide basic needs of food, shelter, transportation, and childcare? Does your program have resources in place for life skills coaching?
- Does your program have a mentoring program in place?
- Does your program have financial capability programming to support participants with money management?

Competency Mapping Plug and Play Resources

Use the resources below to contextualize to your program. The steps below correspond to the Competency Mapping Checklist.

Entry-Level Job or Occupation: _____

Goal (Step 2): Understand and identify the job tasks needed to perform in a specific job or occupation.

Job Tasks

Goal (Step 3): Label each task with a foundational skill and/or technical skill if applicable.

Job Task	Foundational Skill(s)	Technical Skill(s)

Goal (Step 2 &3): Label each task individually and tie it to a knowledge area and/or ability.

Job Task	Knowledge Area	Ability

Goal (Step 5 and 6): Map competencies to existing or new credentials, certificates, or training, and identify gaps where competencies are not addressed or new training or education offerings.

Knowledge, Skill, Ability	Corresponding Credential or Certificate	Additional Training Needed

Goal (Step 6): Identify new training and industry-recognized credentials that allow participants to enter and advance in an industry.

Degree / Certificate	Entry-Level Requirements	Applicable Careers