**GUIDED PATHWAYS Planning and Implementation Guide:    
Career Exploration**

Guided Pathways is a framework for learning and transforming your college. In order to fully engage in this work, your college and leadership team will need to commit to significant change and continuous improvement over a long period of time.  Because this type of institutional change is the aggregate of numerous large and small changes and because of the turnovers in staffing, it is important to **document your plans and progress**, as well as to **use project manage tools and change management techniques** to effectively carry out your work.

This **tool is primarily designed** to help your college **design and implement Career Exploration at scale.** Because this Guided Pathways practice spans student services and instruction, it will require collaboration among areas such as counseling, advising, instructional divisions, faculty, career centers, and institutional research.

In addition, you can use the tool to inform current and future staff about the state of Guided Pathways practices at your college.

This tool is aligned with **legislative requirements** from the [Workforce Education and Investment Act SB 5194](https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5194-S2.SL.pdf?q=20241017122338), the legislative action that provides the system with Guided Pathways Funding. SB 5194 states that colleges must have:

Dedicated advising and career counseling that helps students [...] explore possible career and educational choices while also emphasizing early planning.

A student success support infrastructure using programs that the state board for community and technical colleges finds have been effective in closing equity gaps among historically underserved student populations and improve student completion rates. The student success support program must be based on research or documented evidence of success [...] such as [...] Equity competent career development programming.

Career exploration begins during the student onboarding process and should include [structured exploratory experiences](https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/student-success-center/gp-technical-assistance-model) within the first two quarters. Colleges can also provide additional opportunities through career counseling, job exposure, educational planning sessions, classroom experiences, and other creative options. Career exploration is aligned to the Guided Pathways Essential Practices called Structured Exploratory Experiences, Intake, and Classroom Environment and Course Design, but can be embedded in other Essential Practices as well.[[1]](#footnote-2593)

**Before You Begin**

* Who is involved in responding to the prompts below? Why?
* How will the responders reach consensus if they disagree?
* Where will the responses “live,” and how will they be shared with future staff who need to learn about Guided Pathways?

**Step 1: Current State**

*Rate and discuss each statement using the scale below.*

|  |
| --- |
| Quality Scale  1. – We do not have this or practice this.  2. – Not true most of the time.  3. – We do have this or practice this. |

\_\_\_ The college employs dedicated staff trained in career counseling and career pathways, with sufficient capacity to meet student demand.

\_\_\_ Career counselors and/or advisors are trained in equity-minded and anti-racist practices, particularly in relation to career guidance, and their capacity matches student needs.

\_\_\_ Career counselors and advisors focus on helping students explore careers and pathway options, including asking students about their interests, strengths and aspirations.

\_\_\_ The college invests in organized networking opportunities for students in their field of interest, including meeting with peers, faculty, alumni, and employers.

\_\_\_ The college’s foundational and success courses incorporate career exploration activities.

\_\_\_ Students engage in career exploration during mandatory orientation sessions.

\_\_\_ The college collects and analyzes career outlook data, using it to build, redesign, or phase out courses and programs.

\_\_\_ The college actively engages local industries to build career pathways and provide exploration opportunities for students.

\_\_\_ The college website guides students through academic pathways, offering information on related careers and salary expectations.

**Step 2: Future State**

*If you plan to re-design or improve Career Exploration to better align with Guided Pathways goals, discuss the questions below and record your responses.*

What will be the new vision for Career Exploration? Who is responsible for creating and communicating the vision, and by when?

What skills do executive leaders, managers, and career counselors need to execute the vision? How will they gain them, if there are gaps?

What resources will you need, e.g. people, time, or budget? How will you secure them?

What incentives can you provide employees involved in the re-design or improvements? E.g. release time, change in job duties, additional staff, public recognition.

Who will create the action plan(s) to carry out the new vision? What will be included in the action plan(s)? Who will manage it to ensure progress and address challenges? Which supervisor is responsible for supporting the action plan manager? Which project management tools or techniques will you use to carry out the action plan(s)?

**Step 3: Review SBCTC Career Exploration Standards**

*These standards are taken from the 2024-2026 SBCTC Guided Pathways Work Plan. You may choose to rate and discuss the activities below, or you may choose to refer to your work plan. The purpose is to incorporate these standards into your action plans, if they are not already taking place at your college.*

|  |
| --- |
| Quality Scale  1. – We do not have this or practice this.  2. – Not true most of the time.  3. – We do have this or practice this. |

\_\_\_ All new credit students are required to take a career assessment.

\_\_\_ Friction points are addressed to ensure historically underserved students have access to equity-minded career exploration, and they benefit from it.

\_\_\_ Career exploration is embedded in mandatory, structured exploratory experiences within the first two quarters.

\_\_\_ Students are support to choose a pathway upon enrollment and confirm a program or

degree within no more than two quarters.

1. Definitions of Guided Pathways Essential Practices are posted on the Student Success Center website at the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges. https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/student-success-center/gp-technical-assistance-model [↑](#footnote-ref-2593)