

# **BUILDING A HIGHER SKILLED WORKFORCE**

RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS FROM THE  
BRIDGECONNECT NATIONAL SURVEY

**NOVEMBER 2010**

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#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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Julian L. Alssid  
Melissa Goldberg  
Sarah M. Klerk

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bridge programs are a 21st-century idea for helping prepare low-skilled individuals for jobs that require more education. Known by many names—integrated education and training, contextualized learning, embedded skills—bridge programs assist students in obtaining academic, employability, and technical skills they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and training and the labor market.

Bridge programs are suitable for adults who have reading and mathematics skills at or below the ninth-grade level. These individuals may or may not have a high school diploma or GED. Most will have been out of school for a significant amount of time and are not positioned to succeed in postsecondary education and training programs. Bridge programs are housed in community colleges, local school districts, or at workforce agencies or community-based organizations. Their services take the form of GED preparation, English as a Second Language programs, developmental education, or Workforce Investment Act (WIA)-supported career preparation programs.

While anecdotal stories abound about the growing number of bridge programs springing up across the country—likely a response to the numbers of workers seeking education and training who are not yet ready for college level or advanced technical work—the simple fact was that no one had attempted to fully understand the diversity and scale of such programs. This spring, The Joyce Foundation commissioned Workforce Strategy Center

(WSC) to begin to capture a composite picture of bridge programs throughout the United States. The result was the BridgeConnect Survey.

BridgeConnect is a national survey designed to help determine the depth and breadth of bridge programs throughout the country. Quantifying the number and types of programs in operation can help policymakers and funders improve both policy and practice related to adult education. A critical mass of bridge programs may suggest the approach is ready for rigorous evaluation; that an effort to formally identify standard of excellence is warranted; or that it is time to identify strategies for scaling up the most effective programs.

As a part of BridgeConnect, WSC developed a composite profile of the bridge programs completing the survey. These programs serve low-skilled adults and provide them with the English reading and writing as well as math skills required to succeed in a postsecondary credentialing or degree program. They are a mix of pilot, emerging, and mature programs. Their funding support consists of a combination of public and private sources.

<sup>1</sup>Sixty-seven percent of respondents identify that completers of their programs are likely to enroll in further education or training within six months. It should be noted that survey respondents had the option of classifying their bridge program as one course or a series of connected courses. More programs identified their program as a series of connected courses, 296 compared to 103. For the programs that are classified as a series of courses, 69 percent report that their program completers are likely to enter in further education or training within six months, while 62 percent of programs that offer one course reported that their completers are likely to enter within six months.

Nine hundred twenty respondents opened the survey. Specific criteria had to be met in order to complete the survey. Five hundred fifteen programs representing 345 communities in 47 states and Washington, DC, qualified as bridge programs, using these criteria. An additional 80 programs are in a development phase but seem likely to become bridge programs. While the programs appear throughout the country, it is interesting to note that they seem to be concentrated in states where there has been supportive state policy or private foundation investment in bridge programs. For example, the highest concentration of programs responding to the survey is in Illinois (55 respondents) which, as a result of its participation in The Joyce Foundation's Shifting Gears Initiative, has adopted a formal definition of bridge instruction. Other states with a large number of respondents include Pennsylvania (35), California (34) and Ohio (34), all states that have focused on and invested in education and training programs that support low-skilled adults.

#### **BRIDGE PROGRAM SNAPSHOT**

Here is a snapshot of the bridge programs represented in the BridgeConnect survey.

Bridge program participants generally have low educational skills when they enter the programs. In fact, 57 percent of the adults served by survey respondents possess educational skills below the tenth-grade level, with 19 percent below the sixth-grade level. In order to increase educational levels, bridge programs are structured to meet the needs of adult participants. They offer instruction at times and places convenient to working adults, offer a “learning-by-doing” format and allow students to work at their own pace. Most programs are cohort-based, allowing

students to progress through their classes together. The average class size is between ten and 19 students; the average program length is 20 weeks.

By definition, bridge programs have an industry focus. Seventy-five percent of the programs surveyed target allied health. Other occupations or industries served include administrative/office technologies, the construction trades, energy, information technology and manufacturing.

Survey results suggest that bridge program operators use data for program improvement. Respondents collect data on individual participation, completion and retention rates as well as job placement and wage gains, for example. When asked “On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being 'extremely well' and 1 being 'not well at all', how well do you think your bridge program is collecting and using data to improve your bridge program?”, 41 percent of respondents rated themselves a 3 in terms of collecting and using data.

Survey respondents were also asked to share program outcomes. It should be noted that the outcomes are self-reported, and that not all programs offer services in or collect data on all outcome areas. Those caveats noted, some of the more compelling outcomes are the following:

- 39 percent indicated completers earn some degree-bearing college credit
- 67 percent reported their completers are likely to enroll in further education or training within six months<sup>1</sup>
- 50 percent reported their completers are eligible to enter into a degree-track curriculum program.

Another interesting finding was that a striking 830 out of 920 respondents indicated

that they would like to receive information about the results of the study and potential opportunities to network with similar programs.

### CONCLUSIONS

Three conclusions can be reached from this rich survey data about the power of bridge programs and the role they can play in preparing our current and future workforce.

#### **No community of practice exists to advance the field**

First, the data reveal this is a very diverse field of bridge programs, spread around the country and involving many different types of organizations. Currently there are limited opportunities or mechanisms to bring these various groups together. Creating an opportunity to connect these varied programs across the country and provide for shared learning has the potential to further advance the field and robustness of practice.

#### **New questions emerged and new research will be needed**

Second, BridgeConnect surfaced many new questions about the field that cannot be answered with this self-reported data:

- What standards are being used among bridge programs for measuring their success?
- What strategies work best with which populations?
- Which are truly innovative programs?
- Is it possible to bring this work to scale and find efficiencies?

The robust response to BridgeConnect provides ample evidence that the field is now strong enough to merit an in-depth study of these questions and others. With an organized

set of stakeholders to help establish research questions, a national demonstration project could ensue with a goal to collect more participant outcome data.

#### **Diverse set of stakeholders are involved**

Third, the funding sources cited in the survey results indicate diverse combinations of federal, state and philanthropic investments. Funding a community of practice or new research will require new investments. And setting new policy agendas will require consensus and strong organization of the stakeholders involved. If the experience of Illinois, Pennsylvania, California, and Ohio are any indication, these investments are showing results.

The survey findings raise a question about attempting to bring together an umbrella group of policymakers, practitioners, funders, researchers, and other stakeholders to determine the implications of all of this work and to help guide new directions.

These conclusions lead to a set of recommendations that will help to formalize this work, ensure good practice, and help the field to mature and do so expeditiously.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

BridgeConnect is showing us that there are myriad efforts underway across the country with many different funding sources, standards, target populations, goals, and outcomes. The policymakers and funders who have been calling for better integration of education, workforce, and economic development are realizing the fruits of their investments in bridge programs. However, along with this complexity comes a need for a new level of effort aimed at understanding what works, developing standards for the field, and pro-

moting promising practice so these efforts can flourish. To that end the following three activities are recommended:

1. **Build a bridge program community of practice** to share results and promote promising practice.
2. **Implement a bridge program demonstration** project that is designed to meet the national standards and **evaluate the results**.
3. **Form a Bridge Program Policy Commission** to review policy and practice at the federal, state and local levels and establish national bridge program standards.

# INTRODUCTION

<sup>2</sup> See National Skills Coalition website, (<http://www.nationalskillcoalition.org/theissues/skills2compete.html>).

<sup>3</sup> Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith and Jeff Strohl, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018, Executive Summary* (Georgetown University Center on Education and The Workforce: June 2010), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Report on the National Commission of Adult Literacy, *Reach Higher America: Overcoming the Crises in the U.S. Workforce*. National Commission on Adult Literacy, June 2008, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> National Skills Coalition, *Toward Ensuring America's Workers The Skills to Compete*, 2009, p. 2.

Every day there are stories of job seekers in the papers, but seldom do these stories focus on the least educated of these job seekers—those who lack a high school diploma or GED. These are the people who have been hit hardest during our nation’s “Great Recession.” These are the people who are in danger of getting left behind as the climb to the middle class becomes steeper. The unemployment rate for individuals with less than a high school education is 15 percent. For people with an Associate’s Degree, it is seven percent. Education providers are taking up the challenge. Across the country, local organizations, governments, and schools have developed new and innovative programs to address this problem by accelerating learning and building the confidence of these workers.

Our economy today demands that more Americans possess postsecondary credentials. The literature is filled with data calling for a new cadre of “middle skill” workers who attain more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree.<sup>2</sup> In fact, some predict that by 2018, two-thirds of the jobs in the American economy will require postsecondary credentialing.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, according to the National Commission on Adult Literacy, 80-90 million adult workers have low basic skills and are not prepared for 21st-century jobs—they lack a high school degree or its equivalent.<sup>4</sup> Low-skilled adults represent a huge potential reservoir of work-

ers to meet the workforce needs of employers—almost one-half of our workforce in 2030 will be composed of today’s working adults.<sup>5</sup> To address this need, a new way of educating and training adults is gaining momentum. Over the last decade, bridge programs have emerged and are often the first step on the way to career-path employment in high-demand, middle- and high-skill occupations.

According to BridgeConnect, a survey commissioned by The Joyce Foundation and conducted by Workforce Strategy Center (WSC), 515 programs representing 345 communities across 47 states and Washington, DC, are training their workforce with bridge

programs. Bridge programs are a 21st-century idea for helping prepare low-skilled individuals for jobs that require more education. Known by many names—integrated education and training, contextualized learning, embedded skills—bridge programs assist students in obtaining the academic, employability, and technical skills they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and training programs and career track employment. Bridge programs are suitable for adults who have reading and mathematics skills at or below the ninth-grade level. These individuals may or may not have a high school diploma or GED. Most will have been out of school for a significant amount of time and are not positioned to succeed in postsecondary education and training programs. Bridge programs are housed in community colleges, local school districts, or at workforce agencies or community-based organizations. Their services take the form of GED preparation, English as a Second Language programs, developmental education, or Workforce Investment Act (WIA)-supported career preparation programs.

Individual policy efforts at the federal and state levels have spurred the development of bridge programs. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration as well as Illinois, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin, and many other states have played a key role in advancing this work. The Obama administration's focus on increasing the number of Americans who attain a postsecondary credential will continue to foster the development of these efforts. Additionally, private funders such as The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, Lumina

Foundation for Education, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, have been supporting bridge programs over the last decade through funding pilot programs, sharing lessons learned, and advocacy.

Against this backdrop, WSC created BridgeConnect, a survey to capture the breadth and depth of bridge programs in the United States. Based upon the responses of 515 bridge programs, this report describes the educational and career track outcomes of program completers, industries of emphasis, program elements, target populations and funding streams. The report also includes feedback received from respondents regarding interest in further information, and offers recommendations for follow-on activities.

# SURVEY DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The BridgeConnect survey instrument, developed by WSC, was based upon a literature review and discussions with key actors in the field. (The survey instrument is included in Appendix A.) More than 50 dissemination partners, including governmental agencies, private funders, workforce intermediaries and professional associations, helped distribute the survey via e-mail.

As an incentive to participate in the survey, respondents were entered into a raffle to win an Apple iPad. The survey was open for five weeks, from August 4th, 2010 to September 10th, 2010.

The level of participation and interest shown in the survey indicates a blossoming field with tremendous potential. The survey data are rich with details about program design, funding, and outcomes. Individuals from all corners—community colleges, senior colleges and universities, school systems, government, community-based organizations, organized labor, and philanthropy—have reached out to WSC requesting the survey results, which are provided below.

# FINDINGS

Out of 920 opened surveys, 515 programs representing 345 communities in 47 states and Washington, DC, met the bridge program classification criteria used by WSC. While the programs appear throughout the country, it is interesting to note that they seem to be concentrated in states where there has been supportive state policy or private foundation investment in bridge programs.

For example, the highest concentration of programs responding to the survey is in Illinois (55 respondents) which, as a result of its participation in The Joyce Foundation's Shifting Gears Initiative, has adopted a formal definition of bridge instruction. Other states with a large number of respondents include Pennsylvania (35), California (34) and Ohio (34), all states that have focused on and invested in education and training programs that support low-skilled adults.

In order to be classified as a bridge program, programs self-identified as possessing at least four of the following program elements. The percentage of bridge programs that utilize each program element is included in parentheses. (Please note that respondents were encouraged to identify all elements that apply to their particular program.)

- Specific criteria to enter and exit the bridge and connections to points on a career pathway (71 percent)
- Contextualized instruction or team teaching that integrates basic reading, math, and language skills with industry/occupation knowledge and skills (72 percent)
- Curriculum for developing skills for professional careers. Examples include working in

teams, self-management, project management, and workplace communications (57 percent)

- Competency-based curriculum designed around, if available, industry-recognized credentials in a target field (52 percent)
- Articulation to other bridges or postsecondary education (65 percent)
- Career development activities that include career exploration and planning, or understanding the world of work (80 percent)
- Academic support services such as academic advising, tutoring, study skills, or coaching that provide students with assistance they need to successfully navigate the process of moving from adult education or remedial coursework to credit or occupational programs (85 percent)
- "Wrap-around" support services such as assessment and counseling, case management, childcare, financial aid, or job and college placement (68 percent)

In addition to the 515 bridge programs that met WSC's bridge program classification criteria, 80 more programs that responded to the survey almost met the bridge program classification criteria, utilizing three of the core elements listed above.

<sup>6</sup> According the United States Department of Education Office of Vocational Adult Education (OVAE), NRS measures the effectiveness of state-administered, federally funded adult education programs. For more information please see the following: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hs/factsh/nrs.html>.

This is a strong indication that more programs are in a development phase.

**PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

Bridge program participants generally have low educational skills when they enter the bridge programs represented in the BridgeConnect survey. In fact, 57 percent of the programs surveyed reported that upon enrollment, the average NRS<sup>6</sup> benchmark level of program participants is 8 to 10 or below, with 19 percent reporting the average level of 5.9 or below.

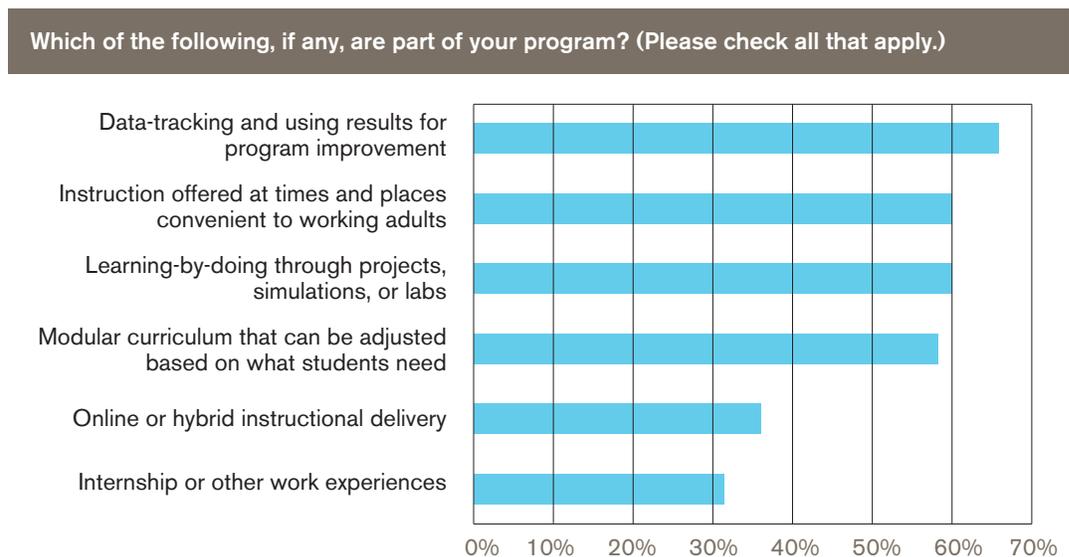
In order to increase educational levels, so that individuals are prepared for higher skilled work, bridge programs are structured to meet the needs of adult participants. For example, 60 percent of programs offer instruction at times and places convenient to working adults, 60 percent of programs offer instruction at times and places convenient to working adults, 58 percent reported that they provide modular curriculum that can be adjusted

based on what students need, and 60 percent structure their programs in a 'learning-by-doing' format. Also, 53 percent permit an adult to be self-paced, which allows flexibility for adult learners to participate when their schedules allow.

Additionally, many programs are composed of a series of connected courses designed to move participants along a career pathway (74 percent). Eighty-one percent of survey respondents reported that programs are cohort based always or part of the time, and 58 percent of cohorts consist of 10 to 19 students.

The average program duration of the survey respondents is 20 weeks. Forty-seven percent of those programs offer classroom instruction for 10 to 20 hours per week. Some programs (39 percent) augment their classroom work with non-classroom activities requiring between 10 and 20 additional hours per week.

**FIGURE 1: PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

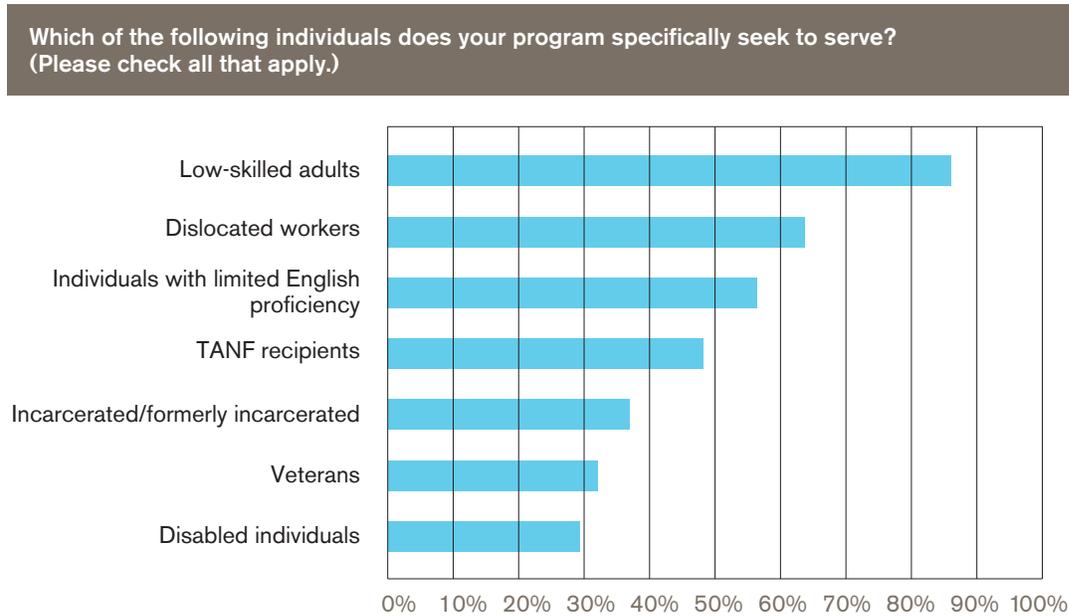


**TARGET POPULATION**

As noted above, bridge programs are developed to address the needs of specific populations. Most programs represented in the survey (86 percent) serve low-skilled adults and many serve dislocated workers (64 percent). Additional target populations include incarcerat-

ed/formerly incarcerated (37 percent), individuals with limited English proficiency (57 percent), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients (48 percent), and veterans (32 percent). Figure 2 below highlights the percentage of programs that serve each of the target populations included in the survey.

**FIGURE 2: TARGET POPULATION**



### INDUSTRY FOCUS

To help target training and education to career-path jobs, bridge programs focus on high-wage occupations that offer employment opportunities for individuals to enter and advance in their careers. It is not surprising, then, that 75 percent of bridge programs surveyed target allied health, which offers well-developed career paths. Additionally, 40

percent offer programming in administrative/office technologies; 35 percent target the construction/trades; 28 percent, energy/green energy; 33 percent, information technology; and 34 percent, manufacturing industries. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of targeted industries. Please note that some programs target more than one industry.

FIGURE 3: INDUSTRY FOCUS

Please choose the industry focus of your bridge program. (If you can run programs for more than one industry, please check all that apply.)

Allied Health	75%
Administration/Office Technologies	40%
Construction/Trades	35%
Manufacturing	34%
Information Technology	33%
Energy/Green Energy	28%
Automotive/Transportation	21%
Logistics/Warehousing	11%
Biotechnology	9%

### PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Bridge programs are led by a variety of agencies such as community-based organizations, workforce development agencies, and community colleges. It is often the case that organizations work together to implement bridge programs, as bridge program participants frequently require a range of services to help them succeed. As shown in Figure 4 below,

respondents reported that community or technical colleges are implementation partners in 66 percent of bridge programs, workforce development agencies in 60 percent, community-based organizations in 46 percent, government entities in 29 percent, secondary educational/vocational in 30 percent, and industry associations or groups in 23 percent.

**FIGURE 4: IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS**

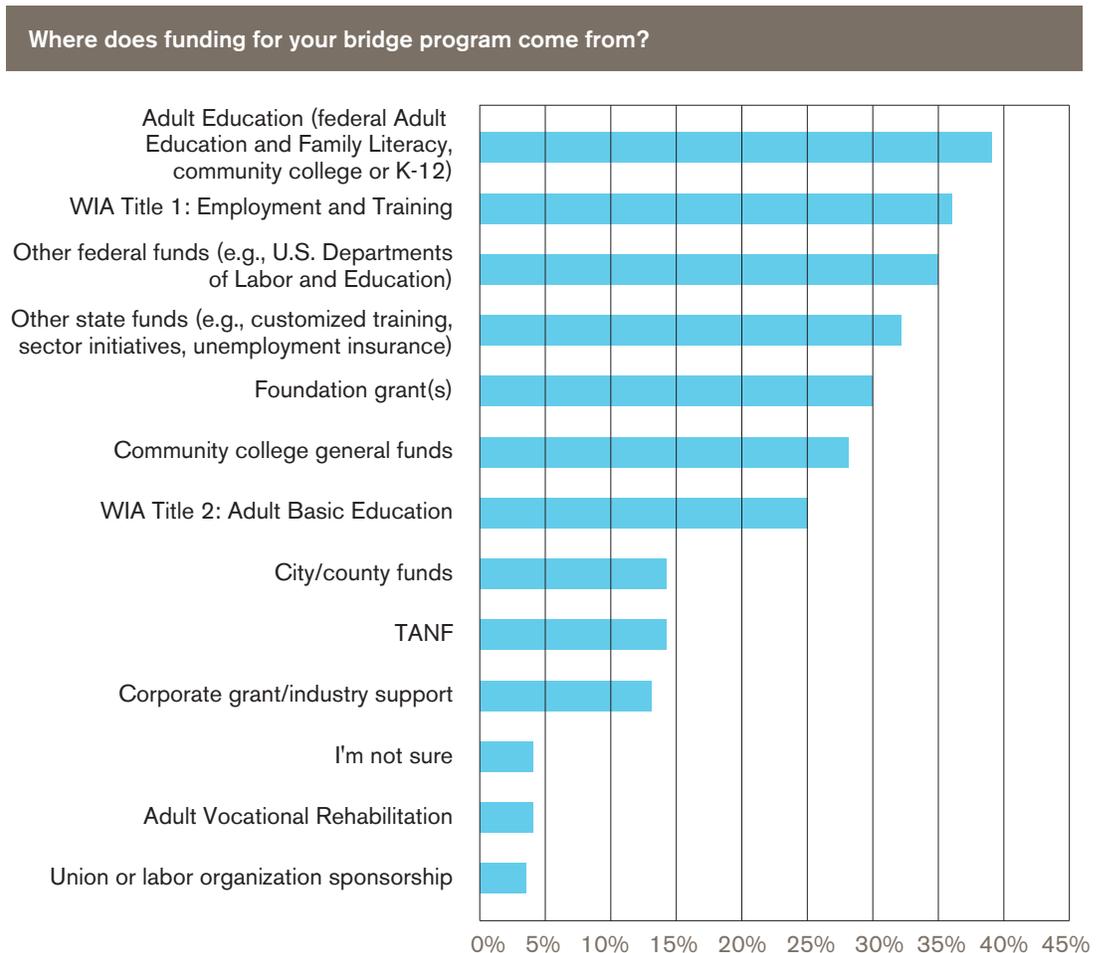
Please indicate which of the following is an active partner that helps implement your bridge program. (Please check all that apply.)	
Community or technical college	66%
Workforce development agency	60%
Community-based organization	46%
Secondary education/vocational school	30%
Governmental entity	29%
Industry association or group	23%
Union or labor organization	11%
Faith-based organization	9%

**FUNDING**

Bridge programs are supported by a host of federal, state, local, and private funding streams. About 40 percent of responding programs are funded with Adult Education dollars (federal Adult Education and Family Literacy, community college or K-12); 36 percent are supported with Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title 1: Employment and Training funds; and 35 percent use other federal funds (e.g.,

U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Education). Additional funding sources include other state funds such as customized training, sector initiative, and unemployment insurance (32 percent); foundation grants (30 percent); community college general funds (28 percent); and corporate grant/industry support (13 percent). See Figure 5 below.

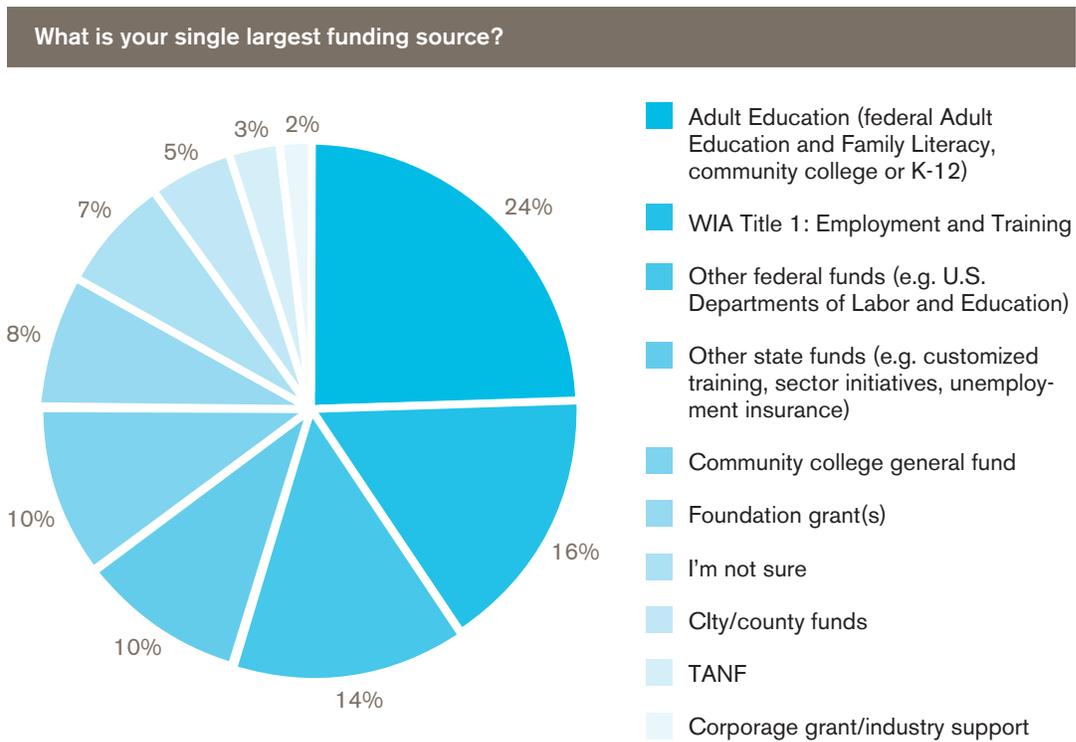
**FIGURE 5: FUNDING SOURCES**



Of the bridge program survey respondents, 24 percent reported Adult Education (federal Adult Education and Family Literacy, community college or K-12) as their single

largest funding source, with WIA Title 1 as the second largest funding source at 17 percent. Figure 6 illustrates the largest funding sources reported by respondents.

**FIGURE 6: LARGEST SINGLE SOURCE OF FUNDING**



<sup>7</sup> The information in the Program Outcomes section is based upon self-reported data from survey respondents.

<sup>8</sup> Please see footnote 3 for more detail on the definition of program.

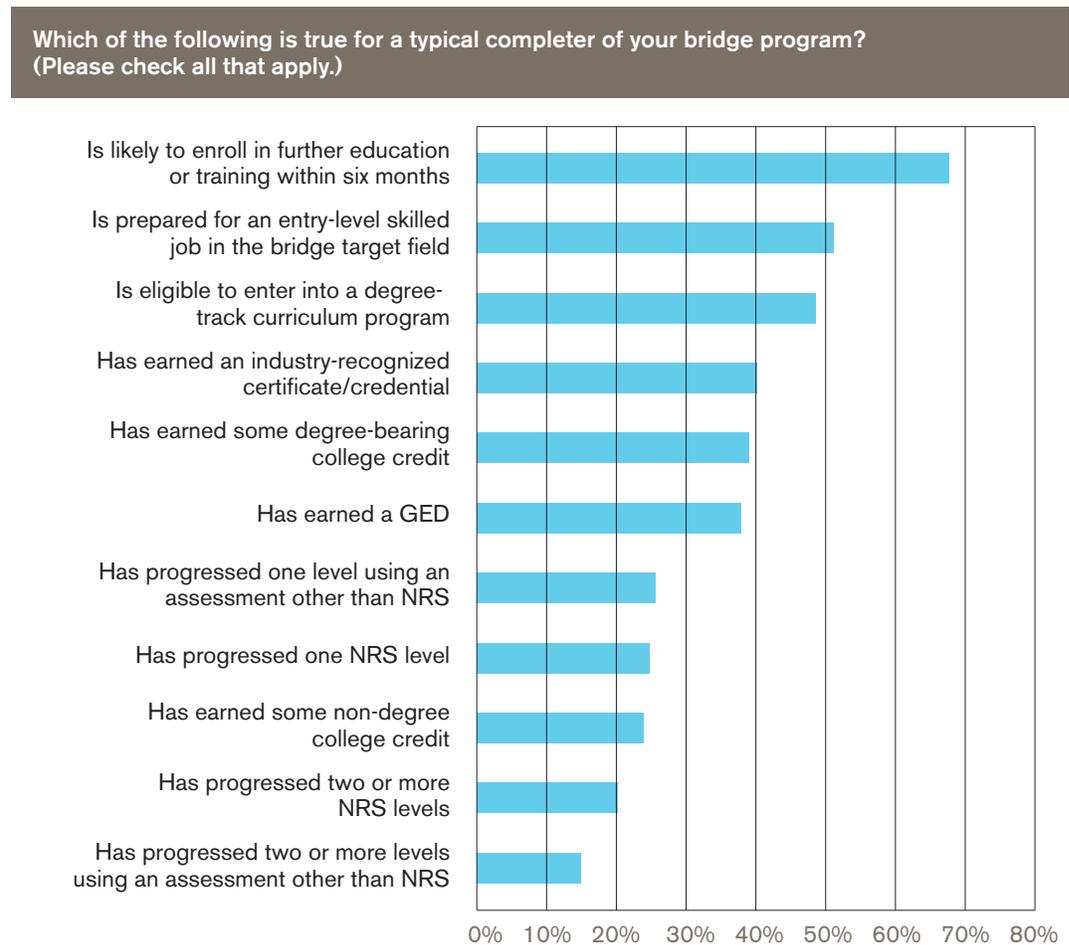
**PROGRAM OUTCOMES<sup>7</sup>**

Survey respondents reported the following outcomes for typical program completers.<sup>8</sup> Thirty-eight percent indicated completers earn a GED, 39 percent reported their completers earn some degree-bearing college credit, and 50 percent reported that their completers are eligible to enter into a degree-track curriculum program.

With respect to job preparation, 40 per-

cent of bridge programs reported that their program completers earn an industry-recognized certificate/credential, and more than 50 percent of programs indicated that completers are prepared for an entry-level job in the target field. Sixty-seven percent of programs reported that their completers are likely to enroll in further education or training within six months (see Figure 7).

**FIGURE 7: PROGRAM OUTCOMES**



### USES OF DATA

Survey results suggest that bridge program operators collect and use data for program improvement. Some examples of the data bridge programs collect, and the percent of programs collecting the data, are listed below.

- Individual participation, such as attendance, classroom participation and advancement (94 percent)
- Completion rates (93 percent)
- Retention rates (85 percent)
- Enrollment rates for subsequent education or training in the target field (67 percent)
- Persistence/completion rates in subsequent education and training programs in the target field (46 percent)
- Job placement (57 percent)
- Wages (35 percent)

When asked “On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being 'extremely well' and 1 being 'not well at all', how well do you think your bridge program is collecting and using data to improve your bridge program?”, 41 percent of respondents rated themselves a 3 in terms of collecting and using data with another 32 percent rating themselves a 4.

### INTEREST FROM THE FIELD

One of the more compelling findings from BridgeConnect was the level of engagement and feedback from survey respondents. A striking 830 out of 920 respondents indicated that they would like to receive information about the results of the study and potential opportunities to network with similar programs. Sample requests include “I would like to see what other states are using to create career pathways for their participants, and how these services are integrated within the workforce system” and “what...schools are doing to assure students are successful beyond the bridge courses.” The request for information varies from individuals interested in discussing best practices, program development, return on investment calculations, funding, program expansion, and sustainability. The list goes on, but the underlying theme is that individuals want to work with and learn from one another.

# CONCLUSIONS

Three conclusions can be reached from this rich survey data about the power of bridge programs and the role they can play in preparing our current and future workforce.

**No community of practice exists to advance the field**

First, the data reveal this is a very diverse field of bridge programs, spread around the country and involving many different types of organizations. Currently there are limited opportunities or mechanisms to bring these various groups together. Creating an opportunity to connect the various programs across the country and provide for shared learning has the potential to further advance the field and robustness of practice.

**New questions emerged and new research will be needed**

Second, BridgeConnect surfaced many new questions about the field that cannot be answered with this self-reported data:

- What standards are being used among bridge programs for measuring their success?
- What strategies work best with which populations?
- Which are truly innovative programs?
- Is it possible to bring this work to scale and find efficiencies?

The robust response to BridgeConnect provides ample evidence that the field is now

strong enough to merit an in-depth study of these questions and others. With an organized set of stakeholders to help establish research questions, a national demonstration project could ensue with a goal to collect more participant outcome data.

**Diverse set of stakeholders are involved**

Third, the funding sources cited in the survey results indicate diverse combinations of federal, state, and philanthropic investments. Funding a community of practice or new research will require new investments. And setting new policy agendas will require consensus and strong organization of the stakeholders involved. If the experience of Illinois, Pennsylvania, California, and Ohio are any indication, these investments are showing results.

The survey results raise a question about attempting to bring together an umbrella group of policymakers, practitioners, funders, researchers, and other stakeholders to determine the implications of all of this work and to help guide new directions.

These conclusions lead us to a set of recommendations that will help to formalize this work, ensure good practice, and help the field to mature and do so expeditiously.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

BridgeConnect is showing us that there are myriad efforts underway across the country with many different funding sources, standards, target populations, goals, and outcomes. The policymakers and funders who have been calling for better integration of education, workforce, and economic development are realizing the fruits of their investments in bridge programs.

However, along with this complexity comes a need for a new level of effort aimed at understanding what works, developing standards for the field, and promoting promising practice so these efforts can flourish. To that end we recommend the following three activities:

**1. Build a bridge program community of practice** to share results and promote promising practice. This community should leverage the expertise of national, regional, and local organizations that have a stake in bridge programs.

**2. Implement a bridge program demonstration** project that is designed to meet the

national standards and **evaluate the results**. The demonstration should include a cross-section of bridge programs that reflects the diversity of funding, students, and program models.

**3. Form a Bridge Program Policy Commission** to review policy and practice at the federal, state, and local levels and establish national bridge program standards. The Commission should be jointly convened by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education and should include policymakers, practitioners, researchers, philanthropists, employers, labor, and other relevant stakeholders.

# SURVEY INSTRUMENT

## 1 | WELCOME

Many adults need support accessing and completing postsecondary programs that lead to credentials of value in the labor market. *Bridge programs* are a 21st century idea for helping prepare low-skilled individuals for jobs that require more education. Known by many names—e.g., integrated education and training, contextualized learning, embedded skills—bridge programs assist students in obtaining the necessary academic, employability, and technical skills they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and training programs. These programs are developing across the country, and *The Joyce Foundation* has asked *Workforce Strategy Center* to learn more about them by conducting a nationwide survey.

The survey will help find out more about the pioneers in the field who are designing and implementing such programs. We want you to be counted. This will be the first national survey to document experimentation in the field to bridge adults to the credentials they need to advance to better jobs.

It will inform policy makers about this growing field and begin to create more connections between bridge programs.

We are asking respondents to provide us with contact information. This will enable us to begin to develop a community of practitioners and raffle off an Apple iPad to one lucky respondent. Contact information will be kept confidential.

We anticipate the survey will take 15-20 minutes to complete. Respondents will receive updates about this project and its results, if they wish.

We are interested in all of the bridge programs you operate. If you operate multiple bridge programs, please complete the entire survey for each program. We ask that the person with firsthand knowledge of the program, e.g., the program administrator, completes the survey. This will help us collect an accurate program count.

The survey covers the following topic areas:

- about your organization
- target participants and industry focus
- program information
- bridge characteristics
- typical outcomes for students
- data collection

If you do not complete the survey in one sitting you may return later to finish (You must use the same computer and browser.). **The survey deadline is Friday, September 10, 2010.** Survey respondents will be entered into a raffle and one lucky winner will receive an Apple iPad. Drawing to be held after survey closes.

Please click Next to begin.

## 2 | ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION

Reminder: If you operate or sponsor more than one bridge program, please fill this survey out for just one. When you complete the survey you will have the opportunity to fill out the survey on an additional program.

### 1. Which of the following best describes your organization? (Please check all that apply.)

- Community-based organization
- Community or technical college
- Faith-based organization
- Governmental entity
- Industry association or group
- Secondary educational/vocational school
- Union or labor organization
- Workforce development agency

Other (please specify)

### 2. Which of the following best describes the type of bridge program you operate or sponsor? (Please check all that apply.)

- Adult Basic Education
- Developmental education - community or technical college
- GED/Adult high school
- Technical/vocational program - community or technical college
- Community-based training
- Union-sponsored training

Other (please specify)

### \*3. Contact Information. (Contact information will be kept confidential.)

Name:

Organization:

Address:

Address 2:

City/Town:

State:

ZIP:

Email address:

**3. Would you like to receive information about the results of this project and potential opportunities to network with similar programs?**

Yes

No

### **3 | TARGET PARTICIPANTS AND INDUSTRY FOCUS**

Reminder: If you operate or sponsor more than one bridge program, please fill this survey out for just one. When you complete the survey you will have the opportunity to fill out the survey on an additional program.

**5. Which of the following best describes the type of bridge program you operate or sponsor? (Please check all that apply.)**

Disabled individuals

Dislocated workers

Incarcerated/formerly incarcerated

Individuals with limited English proficiency

Low-skilled adults

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients

Veterans

Other (please specify)

**6. What measures or tools are you using to assess participant skill level? (Please check all that apply.)**

- ACCUPLACER
- ASSET
- Basic Achievement Skills Inventory (BASl)
- Basic English Skills Test (BEST)
- BEST Literacy
- BEST Plus
- Better Edition of Structure Tests (BESTEL)
- Combined English Language Skills Assessment (CELSA)
- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)
- COMPASS
- Diagnostic Assessment of Reading (DAR)
- English as a Second Language Assessment (ESLOA)
- LaRue Reading Skills Assessment for Preiterate Students
- Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Tests (MAPT)
- Reading Evaluation Diagnosis (READ)
- RWA (REEP Writing Assessment)
- Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)
- Versant for English (Versant)
- Wonderlic Basic Skills Test (WBST)
- WorkKeys

Other (please specify)

**7. If you use one of the assessment tools approved by NRS, what is the average NRS benchmark level of a participant when he or she first enrolls in your bridge program?**

- 0 to 3.9
- 4 to 5.9
- 6 to 7.9
- 8 to 10
- Unknown

**8. If you use any assessment other than NRS, what is the average participant enrollment level?**

**9. By definition, bridge programs feed into educational pathways that target specific fields. Please choose the industry focus of your bridge program. (If you run programs for more than one industry, please check all that apply.)**

- Administrative/Office Technologies
- Allied Health
- Automotive/Transportation
- Biotechnology
- Construction/Trades
- Energy/Green Energy
- Information Technology
- Logistics/Warehousing
- Manufacturing

Other (please specify)

## 4 | PROGRAM INFORMATION

Reminder: If you operate or sponsor more than one bridge program, please fill this survey out for just one. When you complete the survey you will have the opportunity to fill out the survey on an additional program.

**10. Please indicate which of the following is an active partner that helps implement your bridge program. (Please check all that apply.)**

- Community-based organization
- Community or technical college
- Faith-based organization
- Governmental entity
- Industry association or group
- Secondary educational/vocational school
- Union or labor organization
- Workforce development agency

Other (please specify)

**11. Where does funding for your bridge program come from? (Please check all that apply.)**

- Adult Education (e.g., federal Adult Education and Family Literacy, community college or K-12)
- Adult Vocational Rehabilitation
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
- Workforce Investment Act Title 1: Employment & Training
- Workforce Investment Act Title 2: Adult Basic Education
- Other federal funds (e.g., US Dept. of Labor, US Dept. of Education)
- Other state funds (e.g., customized training, sector initiative, unemployment insurance)
- Foundation grant(s)
- City/county funds
- Community college general funds
- Corporate grant/industry support
- Union or labor organization sponsorship
- I'm not sure

Other (please specify)

**12. What is your single LARGEST funding source?**

- Adult Education (e.g., federal Adult Education and Family Literacy, community college or K-12)
- Adult Vocational Rehabilitation
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
- Workforce Investment Act Title 1: Employment & Training
- Other federal funds (e.g., US Dept. of Labor, US Dept. of Education)
- Other state funds (e.g., customized training, sector initiative, unemployment insurance)
- Foundation grant(s)
- City/county funds
- Community college general funds
- Corporate grant/industry support
- Union or labor organization sponsorship
- I'm not sure

Other (please specify)

## 5 | BRIDGE CHARACTERISTICS

Reminder: If you operate or sponsor more than one bridge program, please fill this survey out for just one. When you complete the survey you will have the opportunity to fill out the survey on an additional program.

**\*13. Please check which of the following elements is part of your bridge program. (Please check all that apply.)**

- Specific criteria to enter and exit the bridge and connections to points on a career pathway
- Contextualized instruction or team teaching that integrates basic reading, math, and language skills with industry/occupation knowledge and skills
- Curriculum for developing skills for professional careers (e.g., working in teams, self management, project management, workplace communications, etc.)
- Competency-based curriculum designed around, if available, industry-recognized credentials in a target field
- Articulation to other bridges or postsecondary education
- Career development activities that include career exploration and planning, or understanding the world of work
- Academic support services such as academic advising, tutoring, study skills, or coaching that provide students with assistance they need to successfully navigate the process of moving from adult education or remedial coursework to credit or occupational programs
- "Wrap-around" support services such as assessment and counseling, case management, childcare, financial aid, or job and college placement

Other (please specify)

**\*14. Under Question 13 above, did you identify 4 or more elements that are part of your bridge program?**

- Yes
- No

## 6 | ADDITIONAL BRIDGE CHARACTERISTICS

Reminder: If you operate or sponsor more than one bridge program, please fill this survey out for just one. When you complete the survey you will have the opportunity to fill out the survey on an additional program.

**15. Which of the following statements most closely resembles your bridge program?**

- Pilot stage
- Emerging program
- Mature program

**16. How many weeks is your bridge program?**

**17. What is the average length of stay of students in your bridge program (in weeks)?**

**18. Does your program allow students to be self-paced?**

- Yes
- No

**19. Which best describes your bridge program?**

- One course
- A series of connected courses

Other (please specify)

**20. How many hours of classroom instruction per week does a typical student in your bridge program receive?**

- Less than 10
- 10 to 20
- 21 to 29
- 30 or more
- It is not seat-time based

**21. How many hours does a typical student in your program spend per week in non-classroom activities (homework, work-based experience, etc.)?**

- Less than 10
- 10 to 20
- 21 to 29
- 30 or more

**22. Which of the following, if any, are part of your program. (Please check all that apply.)**

- Modular curriculum that can be adjusted based on what students need
- Instruction offered at times and places convenient to working adults
- Online or hybrid instructional delivery
- Learning-by-doing through projects, simulations, or labs
- Internship or other work experiences
- Data-tracking and using results for program improvement

Other (please specify)

**\* 23. Is your bridge program cohort-based?**

- Yes
- Partly/Sometimes
- No

## 7 | COHORT SIZE

Reminder: If you operate or sponsor more than one bridge program, please fill this survey out for just one. When you complete the survey you will have the opportunity to fill out the survey on an additional program.

**24. What is the typical number of participants in a cohort?**

- 0 to 9
- 10 to 19
- 20 to 29
- 30 or above

## 8 | TYPICAL OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

Reminder: If you operate or sponsor more than one bridge program, please fill this survey out for just one. When you complete the survey you will have the opportunity to fill out the survey on an additional program.

**25. Which of the following is true for a typical completer of your bridge program? (Please check all that apply.)**

- Has progressed one NRS level
- Has progressed two or more NRS levels
- Has progressed one level using an assessment other than NRS (e.g., ASSET, ACCUPLACER, CASAS, COMPASS)
- Has progressed two or more levels using an assessment other than NRS (e.g., ASSET, ACCUPLACER, CASAS, COMPASS)
- Has earned a GED
- Has earned some degree-bearing college credit
- Has earned some non-degree college credit
- Is eligible to enter into a degree-track curriculum program
- Is likely to enroll in further education or training within six months
- Has earned an industry-recognized certificate/credential
- Is prepared for an entry-level skilled job in the bridge target field

## 9 | DATA COLLECTION

Reminder: If you operate or sponsor more than one bridge program, please fill this survey out for just one. When you complete the survey you will have the opportunity to fill out the survey on an additional program.

**26. Which of the following management and process data do you track for bridge students? (Please check all that apply.)**

- Individual participation (e.g., attendance, classroom participation, advancement)
- Retention rates
- Completion rates
- Enrollment rates for subsequent education or training in the target field
- Persistence/completion rates in subsequent education and training programs in the target field
- Wages
- Job placement

**27. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being 'extremely well' and 1 being 'not well at all', how well do you think your bridge program is collecting and using data to improve your bridge program?**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

## **10 | LEARNING MORE ABOUT BRIDGE PROGRAMS**

Reminder: If you operate or sponsor more than one bridge program, please fill this survey out for just one. When you complete the survey you will have the opportunity to fill out the survey on an additional program.

**28. What topics related to bridge programs would you be interested in learning more about?**

## **11 | SURVEY COMPLETE**

Your survey is now complete.

We greatly appreciate your time and participation. If you requested project updates when previously asked, we will continue to share with you our work in this area.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Workforce Strategy Center.

[Click here](#) to learn more about The Joyce Foundation.

When you click "done" you will be directed to the beginning of the survey and will have the opportunity to fill out the survey on an additional program.

## APPENDIX B

# REFERENCES

**To learn more about bridge programs, please see the following resources.**

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Estrada, R. A., & DuBois, T. (2010). *How to Build Bridge Programs That Fit Into a Career Pathway: A Step-by-Step Guide Based on the Carreras en Salud Program in Chicago*. Instituto Del Progreso Latino. [http://www.iccb.state.il.us/pdf/shifting%20gears/Instituto2010\\_HowToBuildBridgePrograms.pdf](http://www.iccb.state.il.us/pdf/shifting%20gears/Instituto2010_HowToBuildBridgePrograms.pdf)

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Taylor, J. L., & Harmon, T. (2010). *Bridge programs in Illinois: Results of the 2010 Illinois Bridge Status Survey*. Champaign, IL: Office of Community College Research and Leadership, University of Illinois. [http://occrll.illinois.edu/files/Projects/shifting\\_gears/Report/IL\\_Bridge\\_Status\\_Survey\\_Report.pdf](http://occrll.illinois.edu/files/Projects/shifting_gears/Report/IL_Bridge_Status_Survey_Report.pdf)

Valentine, J. L., & Pagac, A. (2010). *Building Bridges in Wisconsin: Connection Working Adults with College Credentials and Career Advancement*. The Center on Wisconsin Strategy, University of Wisconsin-Madison. <http://www.cows.org/pdf/rp-buildingbridges.pdf>

Women Employed Institute (2005). *Bridges to Careers for Low-Skilled Adults: A Program Development Guide, with the Chicago Jobs Council and UIC Great Cities Institute*. <http://www.womenemployed.org/docs/BridgeGuideFinal.pdf>

**WHO WE ARE:**

Workforce Strategy Center (WSC) is one of America's most experienced non-profits working to grow the nation's economy by producing a prosperous and globally competitive workforce. WSC helps workers and business advance by making education and workforce development more responsive to the economy. To learn more about WSC, please visit our website at [www.workforcestrategy.org](http://www.workforcestrategy.org).