Competency Models In Action:

LATTC uses Competency Models for Career Pathways and Stackable Credentials

Introduction

Los Angeles Trade and Technical College (LATTC) is using a sector-based workforce development strategy to help students earn stackable credentials and advance along career pathways. Program planners are customizing the basic Building Blocks version to create competency model frameworks in support of these initiatives. LATTC developed a competency model for the Utility Industry using it to inform industry partnerships, support curriculum development, define career ladders, and provide a framework for stackable credentials.

Workforce Development Strategy

The Regional Economic Development Institute (REDI) is a career and technical education applied research, training, and technical assistance center based at LATTC. REDI's mission is to "strengthen the regional economy through the design, delivery, and dissemination of state-of-the art workforce development, vocational and basic skills education and training programs."

REDI attempts to break the mold of traditional community college programs by emphasizing:
1) Evidence based workforce development and educational strategies,
2) High wage and high growth sectors,
3) Universal skills and contextualized learning,
4) Industry led curricula design,
5) Alignment of the educational and career pathways in high wage sectors, and
6) Special attention to the needs of disadvantaged populations.

Program planners and curriculum developers work in collaboration with representatives from industry, labor, community organizations, and public institutions. First, the staff gather labor market and occupational information. Next, they work with their partners to identify workforce challenges, green issues, and existing resources. They use this information to develop a broad competency model framework for the sector. They share the models with administrators, department chairs, and faculty, so that the skill requirements for local jobs are understood. The models also provide a foundation for additional elements of the initiative, such as specific occupation profiles, career pathways, and stackable credentials. LATTC then designs training programs to incorporate all the existing resources and research. The goal is to develop a highly skilled workforce while connecting low-wage workers to high-wage jobs and industries.
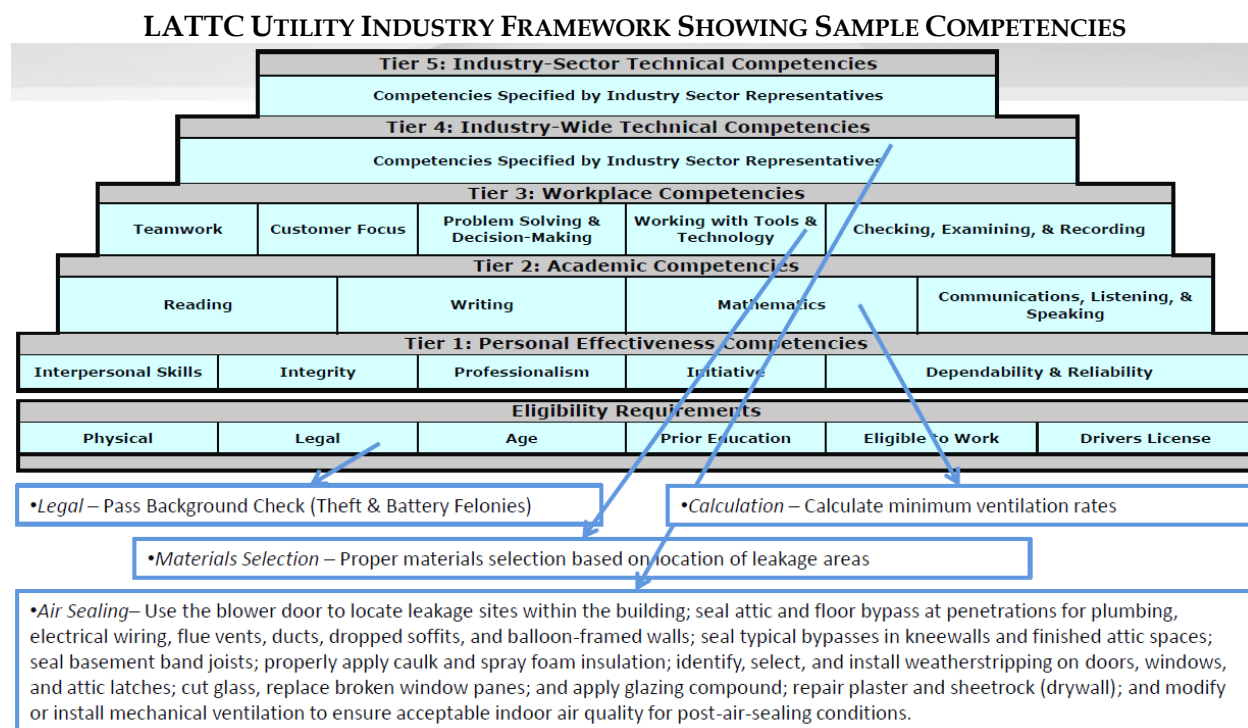
LATTC serves many individuals with limited English proficiency, academic experience, and foundational skills. To help these students advance along career pathways, LATTC offers short-term programs designed to prepare individuals for entry-level occupations and LATTC uses Competency Models for Career Pathways and Stackable Credentials 2 apprenticeships. In

addition, the LATTC bridge academy prepares individuals with the skills required for success in college certificate and degree programs. Competency models have been especially effective in supporting these preparatory programs by defining the basic skills required for entry-level employment in local sectors.

Developing and Using Competency Models

Based on its strong employment prospects in the region, LATTC chose the Energy-Utilities sector for investment. LATTC developed the Utility Industry Competency Model Framework to support the sector-based initiative. To prepare the model, LATTC customized the tiered framework used by ETA to reflect local skill requirements.

LATTC adds a tier to its competency models called *Eligibility Requirements*. Positioned at the base of the framework, this tier describes requirements related to physical ability, legal issues, age, education, work eligibility, and the need for a driver's license. This tier informs students and faculty about explicit requirements workers must meet to obtain employment, making it especially important for helping entry-level workers establish the first step on a career pathway.

LATTC UTILITY INDUSTRY FRAMEWORK SHOWING SAMPLE COMPETENCIES

LATTC used the completed Utility Industry Framework as a foundation for developing the Weatherization Installer Occupation Profile. The Occupation Profile builds out the occupational level of the model, incorporating specific requirements for credentials and certifications. It adds occupation-specific information such as job description, salary range, and employment outlook. The Occupational Profile becomes part of the Energy Efficiency Career Pathway Map, which demonstrates how weatherization installers and related occupations can advance to other occupations in the field.

[Stackable Certificates and Degrees](link) are under development to incorporate the competency model framework. While these programs will be tailored to specific needs, they will have several elements in common. The first certificate in the 'stack' is a 'fundamentals' certificate, which will focus on industry-wide and industry-sector competencies. The second certificate focuses on occupation level knowledge and skills, and links with an industry-recognized credential if applicable. The AA/AS degree is the third point in the 'stack'. This program design provides options for individuals to pursue multiple career paths and leads to multiple credentials.

Conclusion

LATTC is using all these resources to support the development of curricula and education programs. Efforts are underway to develop competency models for additional sectors, such as Hospitality and Transportation. LATTC plans to continue using the frameworks to develop tools supporting workforce development in these and additional targeted sectors. These projects support a workforce development strategy with a special emphasis on unemployed and underemployed populations. By defining the specific competency needs for entry-level positions, the programs help individuals overcome employment barriers, achieve the necessary competencies, and find entry-level employment that will allow them to advance along career pathways.

Related Links

Los Angeles Trade and Technical College
http://college.lattc.edu/

Regional Economic Development Institute
http://college.lattc.edu/redi/

LATTC: Green Resources and Tools
http://college.lattc.edu/green/resources-and-tools/

Competency Model Clearinghouse
https://www.careeronestop.org/competencymodel/home.aspx