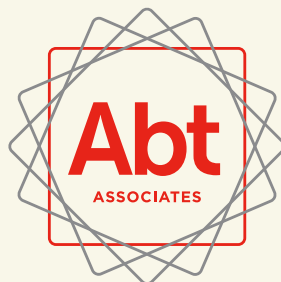


ABT ASSOCIATES

# Supporting Education Strategies to Improve Skills, Employment, and Earnings



BOLD  
THINKERS  
DRIVING  
REAL-WORLD  
IMPACT

Abt Associates leads the field in research and evaluation of **career pathways** systems, an important innovation for advancing the employment and earnings prospects of low-income and low-skilled individuals. Career pathways are articulated steps to help individuals succeed in postsecondary education and training and to enter and advance in occupations that provide opportunities for long-term economic success. Using evidence-based strategies, Abt also provides technical assistance to states and local entities as they develop, implement, and evaluate career pathways systems.

## Specialties

- Experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation approaches, including multi-arm experimental studies
- Implementation studies that examine program design and operations, organizational capacity and scale, and partnership experiences to provide lessons for policy and practice
- Cost-benefit studies
- Evidence-based technical assistance
- Effective recruitment strategies and scaling of promising programs to facilitate evaluation
- Collaboration with practitioners and policymakers to ensure results are relevant and used in the field

## Our Work in Career Pathways Research and Evaluation

### *The Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE) Evaluation*

Abt is conducting a 10-year random assignment evaluation of nine promising career pathways strategies that aim to increase employment and self-sufficiency among low-income, low-skilled adults and youth. The study, funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), is the first rigorous evaluation of career pathways strategies nationwide. PACE uses an experimental study design to assess the impact of these interventions on educational attainment, employment and earnings, and other outcomes. In addition to program-specific impact studies, the evaluation includes implementation studies and cost data collection activities.

### *Evaluations of the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG)*

HHS funds the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG), a federal program with two important intertwined goals: training low-income adults for careers in health care and addressing the nations' shortage of skilled health care workers. Abt Associates has played a key role in supporting the HPOG program since 2010

through five key efforts. For the first round of HPOG grants, Abt developed a grantee performance monitoring and information tracking system and is conducting an impact evaluation and a national implementation evaluation. Abt designed the national evaluation and information tracking system for the second round of HPOG grants.

Abt is also conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the second round of grants, which includes an impact evaluation, an implementation study, and a cost-benefit study. The impact evaluations will determine if the HPOG Program overall increased the degree to which Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients and other low-income adults completed training and obtained family-wage jobs in healthcare. It will also explore which practices and policies are associated with variations in impacts on educational and economic outcomes. The implementation studies of the grants will describe the context, management and administration, substantive services, activities and outcomes of grantees' program. Finally, the evaluation and system design for the Next Generation of HPOG presents an exciting opportunity to shape and learn from the next wave of healthcare education and training programs for low-income adults.

### *Assessing Intermediate Outcomes of Career Pathways*

Building on the evaluations of PACE and the first round of HPOG grants, Abt will collect and analyze data on the intermediate outcomes of participants in these two studies. Funded by HHS's ACF, the Career Pathways Intermediate Outcomes Evaluation will estimate impacts of the programs on educational attainment, earnings, and economic well-being three years after the evaluations started, allowing them to have two additional years for participants beyond the earlier evaluations' time frames in order for participants to advance their education or training and make progress in their careers.

The study will also take advantage of outcomes measured at 15 months to analyze intermediate steps that lead to success three years after enrollment in the education and training programs. As part of this project, Abt will also synthesize findings across the evaluations of PACE and the first round of HPOG grants.

### *Green Jobs-Health Care Impact Evaluation*

The Department of Labor (DOL) provides grants to partnerships of workforce agencies, training providers, and employers to provide training programs in a range of industries and occupations. In 2009, two of these grant initiatives (Pathways Out of Poverty and Health Care and Other High Growth Industries) awarded 93 grants for training in the "green" energy and health care sectors. Of these four are being rigorously evaluated as part of Green Jobs and Health Care Impact Evaluation.

The programs provide occupational training combined with a range of supports to economically disadvantaged, dislocated, and out-of-work populations. The evaluation includes: (1) an impact study to measure the effect of the programs on participants' credential attainment, employment and earnings, and overall financial circumstances, and (2) an implementation study examined program operations, including participant recruitment practices, training and supports provided, key partner roles and responsibilities, and participation patterns of program enrollees.

### *Evaluation of Ready to Work Grant Program*

Also for DOL, Abt is conducting an evaluation of the Ready to Work grant program. In 2013, Ready to Work funds were awarded to 23 grantees to improve employment prospects for long-term unemployed individuals through a range of training strategies, including career pathways approaches and work-based strategies. The evaluation includes an implementation and impact study of four

of these grantee programs and will provide critical information on effectiveness strategies for improving the education and economic outcomes of program enrollees as well as lessons and best practices for the design, implementation, and operation of the training programs. Unlike many traditional workforce development initiatives, the Ready to Work grant program focuses on occupations and industries for which employers are using H-1B visas to hire foreign workers for jobs, and are generally defined as middle to high skill-level. Abt's design and execution of this evaluation will provide insight into these critical career pathways program levels.



### *Evaluation of Round 4 Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training Grants (TAACCCT)*

The TAACCCT grants provide funding to community colleges for developing innovative training programs that serve unemployed and underemployed adults and prepare them for high-wage, high-skill occupations. Under a DOL contract, Abt is conducting a multi-faceted study of grantees that involves 1) an impact study of up to five grantees to determine the effect of the grant on training and employment outcomes for service recipients; 2) an implementation study based on visits to a subset of grantees and a survey of all colleges participating in grants; 3) technical assistance and peer learning opportunities for grantee third-party evaluators to help improve the rigor of their evaluations; and 4) an employer engagement study.

### *Study of Effects of Accelerated Basic Skills Instruction on Adults' GED Attainment and Enrollment in Postsecondary Education*

Under funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, Abt is conducting a study with Oregon's Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) to investigate the impacts of adult learners' participation in the Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills Transition to Education and Work Initiative (OPABS). OPABS helps low-skilled adults move from Adult Basic Skills programs to postsecondary education. The study is examining OPABS participants' development of basic skills, attainment of a General Educational Development (GED) credential, enrollment in postsecondary education, and attainment of postsecondary credits and credentials.



### *Evaluation of the Bridges to Career Opportunities Model*

Under funding from the Corporation for National & Community Service's Social Innovation Fund, Abt is evaluating the Bridges to Career Opportunities (BCO) model developed by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and implemented by community-based organizations. The Bridge to Career Opportunities intervention includes a bridge program and the Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) model. Through the delivery of contextualized basic skills education, the bridge program prepares adults to enter occupational skills training courses. The FOC model is comprised of financial education and coaching, employment services, and supportive services. Abt's evaluation is assessing the impact of the BCO model on participants' education, employment, and financial well-being.

## **Career Pathways Technical Assistance**

### *Technical Assistance for States Developing Career Pathways Systems*

Abt is partnering with Manhattan Strategies Group and CORD Communications in a Department of Education-funded project to provide multi-tiered technical assistance to support integration and scaling of state career pathways systems. Adult education offices in 13 states are receiving customized assistance to strengthen and expand their career pathways systems in local communities. As part of their local career pathways expansion, states are conducting pilot tests of adult basic education (ABE) providers' activities to build local partnerships and facilitate ABE participants' enrollment in postsecondary education and attainment of jobs. Implementation and outcome data are being collected to develop models for scaling career pathways at the local level.

### **Contact**

For more information on Abt Associates and our work in Career Pathways Research, Evaluation, and Technical Assistance, contact:

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**Abt Associates** is a mission-driven, global leader in research and program implementation in the fields of health, social and environmental policy, and international development. Known for its rigorous approach to solving complex challenges, Abt Associates is regularly ranked as one of the top 20 global research firms and one of the top 40 international development innovators. The company has multiple offices in the U.S. and program offices in more than 60 countries.

