ABE to Credentials
Theory of Change & Assumptions
May 2, 2011
What is a Theory of Change?

- A map showing the general pathways from activities to long-term goals
- Includes interim outcomes along the way
- Illustrates why you do what you do
- Includes assumptions about the bets you are making
Why Create a Theory of Change?

- Ensure alignment across those who plan, implement, and fund the initiative
- Surface assumptions
- Assist with common external messaging
- Provide a framework for assessing progress and impact
Theory of Change Development Process

- Participatory process (leadership team, grantees, funders)
- Drafts reviewed and refined over past two months
- Expect to revisit theory of change at the end of the design period and then at regular intervals
### ABE to Credentials
#### Theory of Change Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current State</th>
<th>Actions to Drive Change</th>
<th>System Outcomes</th>
<th>Student Outcomes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many low-skill adult learners lack necessary postsecondary credentials for family-supporting employment and have no viable path for achieving them</td>
<td>Curricular redesign, culture shift, funding realignment, policy advocacy, peer learning, data tracking, and student support to create career pathways for low-skill adult learners in community college-based ABE, ESL, and ASE programs</td>
<td>Financially sustainable, transparent, and accelerated career pathways for low-skill adults in multiple colleges and diverse states that combine basic skills acquisition with attainment of marketable credentials</td>
<td>At least 25% of target low-skill adults in at least 8 colleges per participating state (18,000 students) attain marketable, stackable, credit-bearing postsecondary credentials that ultimately lead to family-supporting employment, and at least 15 college-level credits without the need to enroll in developmental education</td>
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Long Term Goals

System

- Financially sustainable systems for integration of ABE students into marketable career pathways in college
- Sustained integrated instructional model based on labor market demand
- Colleges engage in continuous, data-driven program improvement
- Deep penetration of model in multiple colleges in diverse states

Students

- High completion of multiple career pathway options for low-skill adults
- Skills, credit accumulation make college completion viable
- Improved job placement and employment results for participating students
Key Domains of Theory of Change

- Levers

- Activities and Outcomes Related to:
  - College & Career Pathways
  - Culture Shift
  - Scale & Sustainability
**Stakeholders & Levers**

**Stakeholders**
Key beneficiaries, implementing or enabling entities, supporters, and funders with a demonstrable interest in the outcomes: community/technical colleges, ABE programs, higher ed agencies & design teams, state policymakers, federal agencies, CBOs, WIBs, employers, students, TA providers, philanthropic partners.

**Levers**
Approaches that can be taken or domains that can be acted on to change behaviors, conditions, or attitudes.

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**College & Career Pathways**
Evidence-based instructional and programmatic models that promote transition to and completion of credentialing programs in high-demand fields. Pathways must include acceleration and dual-enrollment strategies and comprehensive support, and culminate in marketable credentials and college readiness.

**Culture Shift**
The necessary changes in attitude at community colleges, and among policymakers, employers, and ABE students themselves to view those students as valued members of the community college population capable of earning marketable credentials and beyond, and worthy of governmental funding.

**Scale & Sustainability**
The increased percentage of student participation in ABE to Credentials pathways within a set of colleges in multiple states (depth), and the spread of pathway innovations to additional colleges and additional states (breadth); the ability for the innovations to continue over time as evidenced by viable funding mechanisms and the embeddedness of the innovations in the culture, environment, and postsecondary systems of multiple states.

**System**
Governor or coordinating higher education state agencies focused on community colleges and ABE programs, public higher education institutions, related state agencies (e.g., workforce development, labor, commerce), associated employers, and community-based providers working in concert to develop labor-market-ready adults with marketable postsecondary credentials.

**Students**
Low-skill adult learners in community college-based ABE, ESL, and ASE programs.
ABE to Credentials Theory of Change – Path to Impact for System and Students

**Stakeholders & Levers**
- Community/Technical Colleges
- Higher Ed Agencies
- Federal Agencies
- Philanthropic Partners
- Data
- Program Innovation
- Policy
- Financing
- Community/Technical Colleges
- ABE Programs
- State Policymakers
- WIBs & One-Stop
- Employers
- CBOs
- TA Providers
- Students
- ABE
- Credit, Theory of Change – Path to Impact for System and Students
- Philanthropic Partners
- Levers
- Innova,on
- Financing
- Program
- Policy
- Data
- Culture Shift
- College & Career Pathways
- Scale & Sustainability
- System
- Students
- 2-Year Outcomes
- 4-Year Outcomes
- Long- Term Goals

**College & Career Pathways**
- Target faculty professional development
- Engage faculty in course & pathway design, team teaching
- Redesign curriculum
- Create learning networks
- Analyze labor market & engage employers
- Employers actively engage with colleges on pathway development
- 2 viable I-BEST or I-BEST-like pathways per participating college
- Multiple faculty members per college willing & able to deliver integrated curriculum to ABE students
- Implementation reflects emerging evidence & innovation
- Multiple transparent ABE-to-credential pathways aligned with labor market in at least 8 colleges/state
- Pathway approaches are enduring and sustainable in at least 8 colleges/state
- At least 8 colleges/state move ≥ 25% of target students to achieve marketable credentials & college credit without Dev Ed in ≤ 4 years
- Robust, sustainable learning networks drive continuous program improvement

**Culture Shift**
- Engage champions
- Launch strategic communications
- Track data on ABE students
- Promote access to campus resources for students
- Growing awareness of problem/solutions by colleges, employers, states
- Greater ABE student access to campus resources
- ABE students seen as important population/pipeline in institutions
- ABE students seek college & career pathways
- States, colleges invest in ABE data tracking
- ABE students supported (in academics, financial aid, college/career counseling) & integrated into colleges
- Students have knowledge of range of available supports
- Faculty, administrators & policymakers demonstrate commitment to ABE student success

**Scale & Sustainability**
- Identify multi-sector resources
- Identify & advocate for removal of policy barriers in all sectors
- Provide state tools for cost-benefit analysis
- Some financial aid barriers removed; ≥ 2 states successfully using models for ABE students to access Pell grants
- Colleges & students gain access to untapped state, federal & employer funding to support pathways
- Capacity, tools & data available in states & colleges to conduct cost-benefit analysis
- Colleges and states have greater capacity to track ABE student progress/outcomes & to link data to labor market
- States, colleges, employers & initiative partners understand costs & ROI
- 3-4 viable financing models, including repurposed funding
- Participation at tipping point in multiple colleges (≥ 40% of target students)
- Sufficient data to inform replication
- First 4 states have changed policies to support scale beyond first 8 institutions
- Some federal policy barriers to financial aid & sustainable funding removed

**System**
- Financially sustainable systems for integration of ABE students into marketable career pathways in college
- Consistent information flow on labor market demand & supply between business & colleges
- Colleges engage in continuous, data-driven program improvement
- Deep penetration of model in multiple colleges in diverse states

**Students**
- High completion of multiple career pathway options for low-skill adults
- Skills, credit accumulation make college completion viable
- Improved job placement & employment results for participating students
Accessible career pathways to stackable, marketable credentials & credits + Greater Student Success

Key Stakeholders and Partnerships

TA Providers → Community & Technical Colleges, ABE Programs → Business/WIBs/One-Stops → Philanthropic Resources

Economic Development → CBOs/Service Agencies

Federal Agencies (OVAE, DOL, HHS) → Higher Ed Agencies & Design Teams

Students

State Policymakers
Assumptions Embedded in ABE to Credentials
Theory of Change

- Distilled from discussions and documents
- Impact planning and implementation
- Should catalyze strategy discussions
  *(What would happen if a key assumption proved false?)*
## Assumptions Embedded in ABE to Credentials Strategy - 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Enabling Environment for Change</th>
<th>Financing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ This is a high-leverage population of students to target (the numbers, receptivity, and potential of these students will yield substantial and positive results)</td>
<td>▪ Necessary data will be available and useable in a timely way</td>
<td>▪ The initiative leadership members will be able to understand and communicate program costs clearly in 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Many students would utilize these pathways and programs to help them obtain the family-supporting jobs they want if system barriers to pursuing those pathways were removed</td>
<td>▪ Partners in this initiative will be able to identify and move necessary policy changes</td>
<td>▪ The goals can be accomplished by repurposing or braiding existing money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Students will persist and stack credentials</td>
<td>▪ Emerging evidence and the resources from this initiative can change attitudes about this population enough to propel systems change and investment</td>
<td>▪ State, institutional, and political will to repurpose or braid existing money exists or can be created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Strategy won’t have negative consequences for more highly-skilled students (or benefits to low-skill students outweigh the costs)</td>
<td>▪ The model is durable despite economic environment</td>
<td>▪ It is possible to create a financially sustainable model beyond the life of this initiative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ It is possible to achieve the broad level of faculty support necessary to scale the model</td>
<td>▪ Multiple states will be able to solve the “financial aid problem” (access to aid for those without GED or diploma, and eligibility of contextualized technical programs)</td>
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<td>▪ This effort can be seen as part of the completion agenda and benefit from momentum around completion</td>
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## Assumptions Embedded in ABE to Credentials Strategy - 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor Market Value</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Scalability/Replicability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ I-BEST-like programs can lead to demonstrable and significant wage gains for program graduates</td>
<td>▪ Four years is enough time for colleges to redesign their programs and deliver on target outcomes</td>
<td>▪ I-BEST is replicable as more than a small pilot outside of Washington State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ The kinds of credentials these programs will produce are enough to create family-supporting wages for graduates, though it may take more than 1 credential</td>
<td>▪ The numerical targets are achievable in 4 years</td>
<td>▪ Success with this model in a few colleges will ignite change in others in their state and elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Employers will generate demand for these credentials and students</td>
<td>▪ The kinds of policy changes that will be necessary can be achieved in 2-3 years</td>
<td>▪ The initiative can collect good enough data and evidence to support fidelity in replication</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Compelling evidence will be available after 4 years</td>
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Next Steps

- Reflect on theory of change and assumptions
- Submit any major concerns to JFF by May 13
- Consider how the theory of change can inform design work and future implementation
- Use list of assumptions in internal strategy discussions
Contact Information

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