



Enhancing Access: Using Bridge Strategies to Connect IELCE Activities to IET Programs

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The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) activities funded under Section 243 be offered “in combination with” Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs. While there are many ways to implement IELCE in combination with IET, this document illustrates how selected adult education systems are using bridge strategies to deliver IELCE activities to prepare English learners (ELs) for rigorous IET programs.

The **Enhancing Access for Refugees and New Americans** project aims to support adult educators in developing and delivering high-quality IELCE/IET programming in alignment with an immigrant integration approach.

Enhancing Access Spotlights describe and provide examples of specific aspects of IELCE/IET implementation.

The Flexibilities of Bridge Programming

To prepare learners for their next steps in a career pathway, adult education programs offer different types of programming that include bridge programs, on-ramps, preparation courses, pre-IET programs, and bootcamps. For the purposes of this document, the term “bridge” is used to refer to these types of readiness activities, recognizing that states and programs may use other terminology.

As described in the *Compendium of Innovative Practices: Adult Education Bridge Programs and Integrated Education and Training (IET) Programs*, bridge programs are often

“one of the first steps in a career pathway for low-skill adults that support the transition from adult education to the next step in an occupational pathway. By connecting adult education programs (including ABE, ESL, and adult secondary education [ASE]) to community college occupational programs,¹ bridge programs seek to increase the rates at which low-skill adults move into college-level occupational programs, persist in these programs, and obtain postsecondary credentials in industries offering family-sustaining wages and career advancement.”²

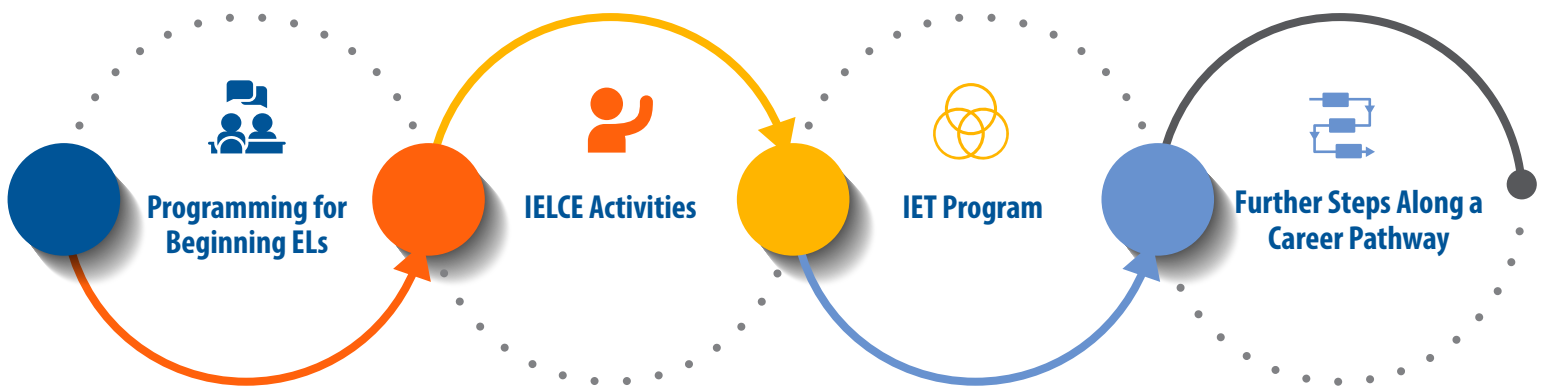
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¹ Bridge programs often connect to occupational programs offered by community colleges, but occupational training can also be delivered by a range of other training providers, including employers, workforce development agencies, and adult education programs.

² Quoted in Alamprese, Judith A., and I-Fang Cheng. 2021. *Compendium of Innovative Practices: Adult Education Bridge Programs and Integrated Education and Training (IET) Programs*. Bethesda, MD: Manhattan Strategy Group; and Rockville, MD: Abt Associates. <https://iincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/compendium-of-innovative-practices-ae-bridge-iet-programs.pdf>

Bridge strategies are particularly relevant to the IELCE context because they can provide ELs with targeted language instruction and/or academic support needed to enter and be successful in an IET program. In this way, IELCE activities can be a critical bridge between generalized English language instruction and workforce training to help ELs move into jobs and careers with family-sustaining wages and career growth potential and opportunities. The IELCE Bridge to IET Framework shown in Exhibit 1 illustrates **one way** in which IELCE activities can prepare learners for IET programs and continuation along a career pathway.

Exhibit 1. IELCE Bridge to IET Framework



- This type of programming typically focuses on English language instruction.

Required Components:

- English language acquisition
- Instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation

Optional Components:

- Career exploration to help ELs determine next steps and general workforce preparation activities
- Bridge activities including vocabulary, workforce preparation, and/or civics instruction specific to the occupational area of the IET program
- Bridge supports such as navigation and advising

- IET programs must integrate language instruction, workforce training, and workforce preparation activities.

- Further steps could include participation in education/training programs to earn postsecondary or workforce credentials, participation in pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship programs, and/or continuing to upskill to progress in one's career field.

Benefits of IELCE Bridges to IET Programs

By developing explicit connections to the occupational content area of the IET, the benefits of conceptualizing IELCE as a bridge to IET include:

- **Participants build the skills that will be needed for their next step.** This could include building sector-related language skills, developing relevant reading or mathematics skills, and exploring industry-related career paths.
- **Participants increase their understanding of short- and long-term career opportunities** and prepare their education, training, and employment plan accordingly.
- **Participants are directly connected to an IET program** or to other education and training opportunities and understand how to transition to their next steps in the IET program and along the career pathway.
- **Programs can help learners assess their “fit” for an IET program**, which could include supporting credential evaluation and/or translation when the credential is relevant to the IET program.³



Bridge programs are a flexible approach that can be designed to meet organizational and programmatic constraints, support learner persistence and completion, and prepare learners for the training requirements of the occupational sector of the career pathway. The following bridge programs, identified through a landscape scan⁴ of the research and existing practices related to IELCE activities and IET programs that serve ELs, illustrate bridge strategies at the state, regional, and program level. The examples focus on flexible approaches to connecting English language acquisition (ELA) instruction, including IELCE activities, to IET programming.

³ Referring to use of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funds, OCTAE Program Memo 19-2 states that “States and eligible providers may use AEFLA funds to pay for occupational certificates and/or credentials within an AEFLA-funded IET program, consistent with the requirements of the AEFLA program regulations at 34 C.F.R. §463.36. Generally, the certificates and credentials must be necessary to achieve the purposes of the IET program as described in 34 C.F.R. §§463.36-463.38” (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-19-2.pdf>).

⁴ The landscape scan was conducted by the Enhancing Access for Refugees and New Americans project. Many of the resources identified through the landscape scan are available on the project's web pages: <https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/refugeesandnewamericans>.

Bridges in the Field

Integrated Digital English Acceleration (I-DEA) Program⁵

- ✓ State bridge program model
- ✓ Prepares emerging English learners for IET programs

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) oversees the Integrated Basic Education and Skills

Training (I-BEST⁶) model and supports local institutions' implementation of IET courses. However, many I-BEST programs require participants to have English proficiency at a level 4 or above. To help prepare ELs for I-BEST courses, Washington SBCTC has developed programming that builds the language, navigation, and workforce preparation skills necessary for success in I-BEST IET as well as next steps along a career pathway.

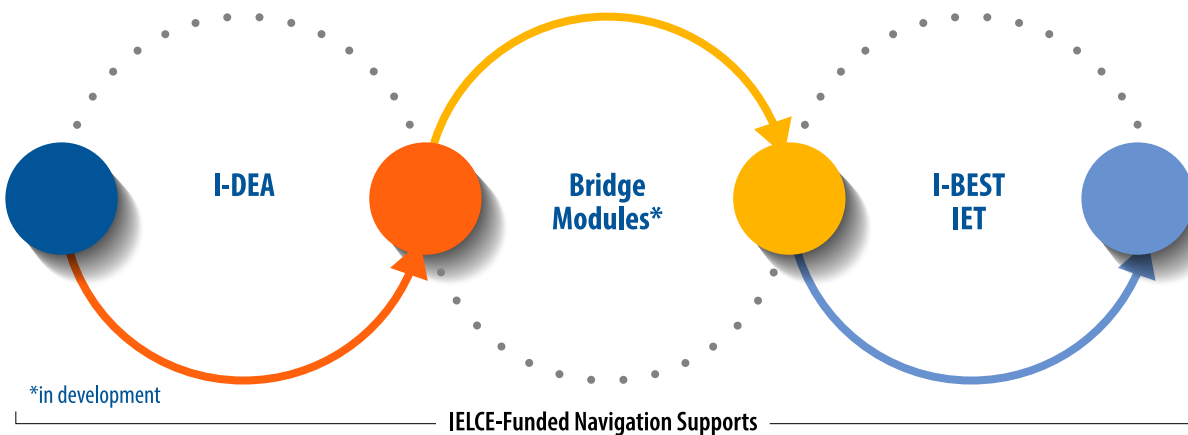
Through 31 week-long modules, I-DEA builds the contextualized English language skills, digital skills, and other relevant workforce preparation skills of ELs with English proficiency at levels 1–3. Research shows

positive outcomes for I-DEA participants: “Overall, student learning gains are 9 to 12 percent higher than the gains of English language learners in traditional programs.”⁷

To help support ELs as they prepare to transition to an I-BEST IET program, Washington SBCTC allows the use of IELCE funding to support transition supports such as navigators, advising, and bridge coursework.

Additionally, Washington SBCTC is developing bridge modules, which will help support the transition of upper-level ELs to career and college pathways. The bridge modules use a flipped classroom approach to delivering 10 hours of instruction a week (five virtual and five face-to-face). Modules focus on career and college preparation skills including academic listening, note-taking, reading, and writing. The full progression of activities intended to support ELs is illustrated in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2. Washington SBCTC Activities



⁵ <https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/i-dea/default.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/i-best/>

⁷ <https://www.sbctc.edu/resources/documents/about/facts-pubs/idea.pdf>

Career Foundations Course⁸



Regional resource



Provides cross-cutting skill development to prepare ELs for IET programs

Women Employed, a nonprofit organization that provides technical assistance and resources to a consortium of adult

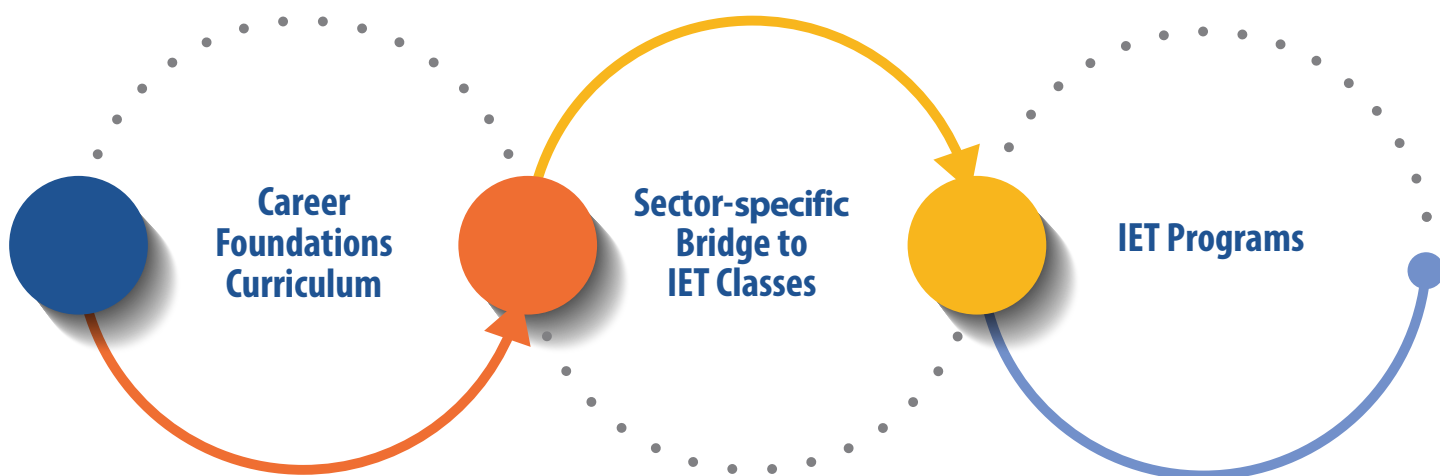
education providers, developed curricula and resources to help ELs prepare for the next steps along their career pathway.

Women Employed also built an open-source [Career Foundations curriculum](#) designed to support learners served by adult education programs across the region as they prepare for and select an IET program offered at a local Chicago community college. Local programs deliver the curriculum through courses in which ELs explore career pathways and build

language, workforce preparation, and civic skills that culminate in the selection of an IET program as a next step and the development of a personalized career plan.

That next step can be the IET bridge classes developed by Women Employed and delivered by the local adult education provider. The IET bridge lesson plans cover key sectors (distribution, early childhood education, health care, hospitality, information technology, logistics, manufacturing, and transportation⁹). The IET bridge classes support adult learners in smoothly transitioning to IET programs at the local Chicago community college. Exhibit 3 shows the flow of preparatory activities in which ELs across the Chicago region can participate.

Exhibit 3. Career Foundations Activities



⁸ <https://womenemployed.org/bridge-programs-and-career-foundations/>

⁹ Lesson plans for these sectors can be found by visiting Illinois' Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS): <https://www.icapsillinois.com/>

Prince George's Community College IELCE/IET Bridge Programs¹⁰



Uses IELCE funds to support bridge and IET programming



Supports learners along a career pathway that includes IELCE activities and bridge and IET programming

The state of Maryland allows local providers who receive IELCE/ IET funds to offer IET bridge programming for learners who need to strengthen their academic and/

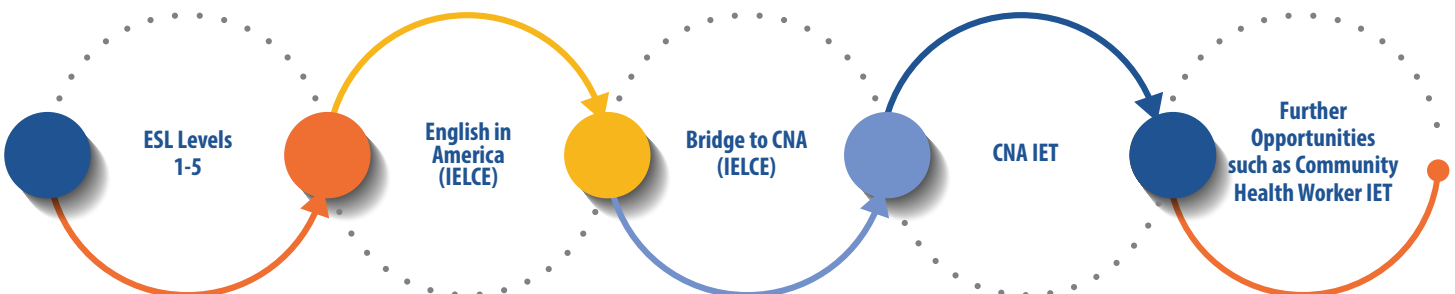
or English language skills in order to ensure learners are prepared to be successful in occupational training IET programs. Prince George's Community College (PGCC) has embraced this bridge approach, using IELCE/ IET funding to support the development of multistep career pathways as shown in Exhibit 4.

PGCC offers ELs the opportunity to begin ELA classes covering [National Reporting System Educational Functioning Levels 1-5](#). Once ELs gain intermediate English language skills, they have the option to participate in two sequential IELCE activities: an English in America class

and a bridge program. The English in America class focuses on English language instruction and career preparation activities such as career exploration, resume building, and interview skills, while also integrating civics content such as learning about the U.S. government and the U.S. health care system.

Through the English in America classes, ELs are able to choose a career field they are interested in pursuing along a career pathway. For two career fields, health care and culinary arts, PGCC offers two bridge-to-IET classes for adult learners. These bridge programs cover relevant vocabulary, academic skills, and workplace preparation skills needed for learners to be successful in their health care or culinary arts IET program. ELs transition from their bridge program to their respective IET program. PGCC has found that learners who participate in the English in America class, the bridge programs, and the IET program have high rates of persistence and completion of the IET.

Exhibit 4. PGCC's IELCE/IET Health Care Career Pathway



¹⁰ <https://www.pgcc.edu/programs-courses/workforce-development-and-continuing-education/>

Using Bridge Strategies to Connect IELCE Activities to IET Programs

This spotlight focuses on bridge strategies and examples for connecting IELCE activities to IET programs. These strategies show how IELCE activities can be provided “in combination with” IET programs, as required under WIOA for the use of Section 243 funds to support IELCE/IET programming. Additional considerations for using bridge strategies to connect IELCE activities to IET programs include:

- State considerations
 - Allowing or making it explicit through policy or guidance that it is allowable to use Section 243 funds to support IELCE activities that bridge to IET programs.
 - Providing technical assistance to Section 243 grantees to better understand this flexibility and explore different approaches to bridge programming.
- Local program considerations
 - Reviewing state guidance regarding IELCE activities to determine how bridge programming can support career pathways and transitions to IET.
 - Identifying existing IET programs that match learners’ career goals and interests.
 - Working with the selected IET instructors to understand the necessary skills, language levels, and other workforce skills that participants need to be successful in the IET program.
 - Designing IELCE activities that bridge directly to an IET program and selecting English language and civics instruction relevant to the IET program.