
Competency Models In Action:

Building Career Pathways in Information Technology Occupations

February 2014

Introduction

WestEd, a nonprofit research, development and service agency focused on excellence and equity in education, is using a five-year, \$5,000,000 H-1B Technical Skills Training (TST) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to address the future needs of San Francisco’s information communications technology (ICT) workforce. The agency is working with industry, education, and government partners to establish career pathways and provide unemployed individuals and incumbent workers with education, training, placement and support services in high-demand ICT occupations.

The Workforce Need

The ICT sector in San Francisco is facing challenges. Even as a large pool of workers search for jobs, IT sector employers struggle to fill critical positions due to a skills gap in the available workforce. Incumbent IT workers need additional training to remain competitive.* To address these challenges, WestEd and its partners have developed career pathways for four ICT occupational areas in high-demand in San Francisco: Networking and Security; IT Support and Database Administration; Programming; and Multimedia and Design. The selection of these career pathways was informed by state and local labor market information and industry partners.

Approach

The project is implementing three strategies to effectively recruit, assess, enroll, educate, graduate and place unemployed workers, and up-skill incumbent workers to position them for career advancement. The three strategies are: 1) collaborative sector leadership through a team with a history of successful partnership and featuring a consortium of employers which advises and supports the project; 2) a sector strategy model establishing clearly defined career pathways, with an emphasis on increasing access for veterans and underrepresented and underserved populations; and 3) integrated education, training, work experience and support services.†

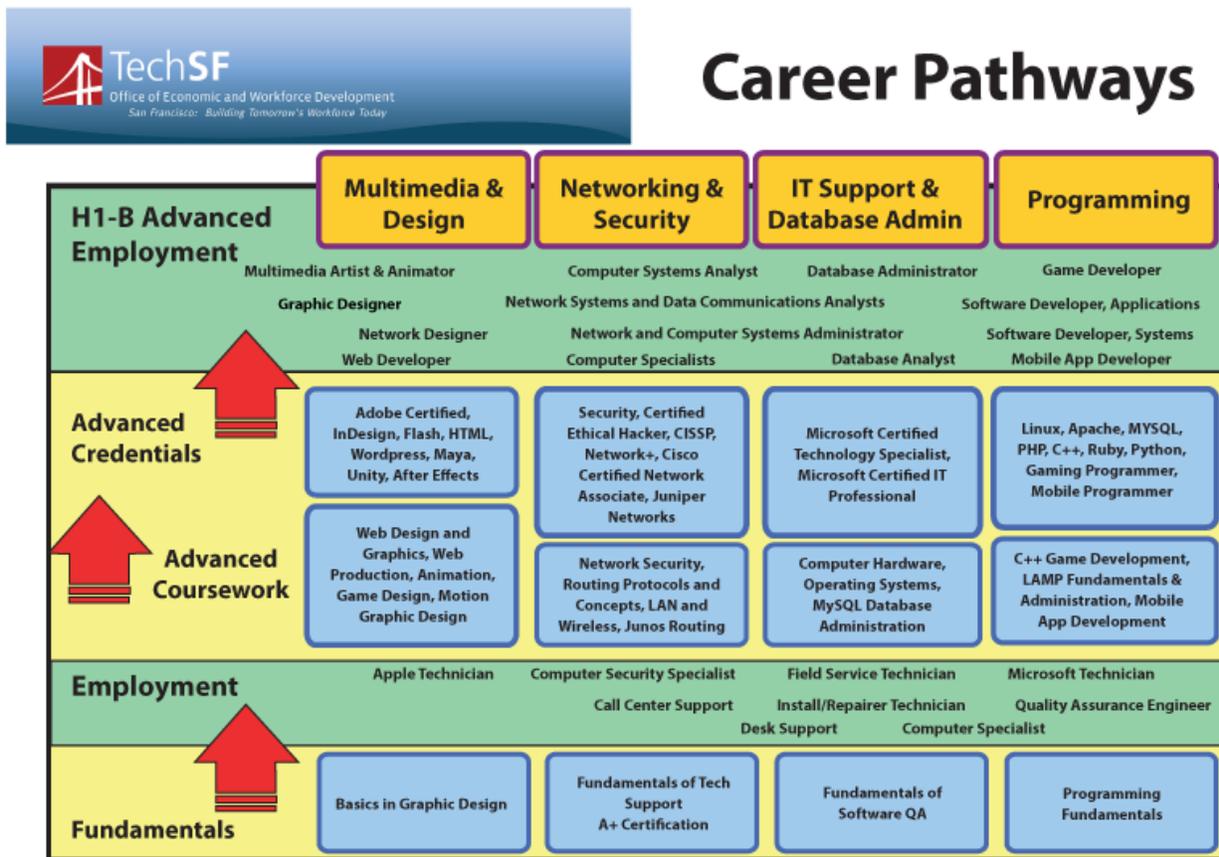
“We work with a wide range of partners to achieve our goals,” says Ursula Bischoff, Project Director. On the private side, we work with IBM and AT&T, to address the needs of incumbent workers. On the public side, we partner with the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development to develop training programs for the long-term unemployed, which we’ve branded ‘TechSF’. Major ICT employers, including Jawbone, Google, Twitter, Zynga, Salesforce and many others, and our education partners, City College of San Francisco and San Francisco State University, collaborate with us to inform curricula that meet ICT employer needs. The project also partners with three community-based organizations—Bay Area Video

*WestEd TST Technical Proposal

† WestEd TST Abstract/Executive Summary

Coalition, Bayview Hunters Point Center for Arts and Technology, and Year Up Bay Area—that specialize in working with populations underrepresented in the ICT sector. We are also working with the Mid-Pacific Information Communications Technology Center (MPICT) at City College to build collaborative networks and leverage resources emerging from their initiatives.”

“Our goal is to develop fully articulated career pathways, whether for young adults recently out of high school or mid-career professionals,” says Bischoff. “We use the Information Technology Competency Model (ITCM) as a touchstone to guide discussions on how to build pathways that link students to training opportunities. Our pathways enable job seekers to sharpen their skills and build ICT portfolios. The ITCM helps demonstrate their qualifications. What really matters in the ICT industry is showing what you can do. Our project provides an opportunity for students in a career pathway to showcase their work—e.g., code, videos, and websites—in public and online forums.”



WestEd and its partners have also developed a Pathways Matrix that outlines activities that sector partners can perform to build skills at each tier of the ITCM. Complementing this product is an Access/Barriers chart that relies on research to help identify innovative models and practices, as a means to focus efforts on projects that address specific barriers to accessing and completing instruction in ICT pathways.

Next Steps

“When we met with our partners, we created a vision,” says Bischoff. “We wanted to develop projects and enlist others to help us execute them. WestEd is bringing a technical assistance and research-based approach to building career pathways that will help make this effort sustainable beyond the life of the grant.”

Related Links

TechSF Project Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etS47FgRQd4>

WestEd

<http://www.wested.org>

San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development

<http://www.workforcedevelopmentsf.org/trainingprograms>

MPICT

<http://www.mpict.org>

Bay Area Video Coalition

www.bavc.org

Bayview Hunters Point Center for Arts and Technology

www.baycat.org

Year Up Bay Area

www.yearup.org