

Early Childhood Competency-Based Preparation Pathway



Operational Plan • 2018–2022

Credential Competency & Early Childhood Preparation Pathway

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) have a rich history of partnership. Through their combined direction, a State Competency Leadership Team was established, inclusive of key state agency and higher education institution representatives, to design a work plan to guide collaborative efforts over the next three to five years.

State Goals:

- Build and expand existing work to embed Illinois Gateways Credential competencies into related academic programs at all higher education institutions in the state.
- Develop a robust statewide assessment infrastructure inclusive of data collection points/indicators for a future repository
- Integrate competency framework into Illinois professional development system
- Create a diverse and substantial group of enthusiastic champions for the work

This strategic state work will require four strands of activity with these primary purposes:

- 1. Embedded Competency Framework** – Provide technological expertise and guidance to ensure full utilization and embedding of Gateways Credential competencies within academic programs at all Illinois Higher Education Institutions; identify levels of understanding among faculty and administrators related to competency based education and learning and provide mechanisms to advance knowledge and capacity; define quality metrics and data collection points and processes for a future repository; and establish a best practices exchange.
- 2. Shared Assessment** – Evaluate appropriateness of levels of mastery; build out “task rubrics” that leverage and augment existing work; expand tool boxes of shared assessments; explore virtual assessment space and technology needed for a utilized assessment repository.
- 3. Revised PD System** – Educate providers on how to align training to the competency framework; create and test new approval process with focus on competency alignment; develop trainer awareness of assessment methods; and increase faculty appreciation of work-based learning.
- 4. Funding/Grant Planning** – Scan and determine funders who have the greatest likelihood of providing necessary resources; create repository of funding levers and timelines for targeted funders; align Gateways needs and messages to targeted funders.



Embedded Competency Framework

This work strand is focused primarily on stakeholder engagement with key individuals at entitled institutions.

Focus Area 1: 2018–2019 Determine and Expand Entitled Institutions

Institutions that have aligned with the Illinois Gateways Credential competency frameworks will be recognized as entitled institutions. To receive this recognition, institutions must complete a thorough application and vetting process.

The entitlement process is led by INCCRRA in partnership with a faculty review group under the guidance of the Illinois Department of Human Services. Support from the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Community College Board and Illinois Board of Higher Education will provide the catalyst to achieve 100% engagement among higher education institutions.

2018	Community colleges will complete Gateways Credential entitlement applications based on competency alignment
Spring 2018	Entitled community colleges and the number of institutions needing to revise Gateways Credential entitled applications based on competencies publicly released
2018–2019	Four-year institutions complete Gateways Credential entitlement applications based on competency alignment
Summer 2019	100% of all Illinois two- and four-year higher education institutions have aligned their programs with competencies and are Gateways Credential entitled
Summer 2019	Official state list and Illinois Higher Education maps are published/officially released

Focus Area 2: 2018–2022 Leverage Existing Convenings to Showcase Initiative

Provide stakeholder engagement opportunities by leveraging already planned convenings including (but not limited to):

2018

- Provosts of Public and Community College and Chief Academic Officers
- Chicago Area College of Education Deans
- Chief Academic Officers of Community Colleges
- Community College Vocational Program Deans
- Illinois Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
- Gateways to Opportunity Higher Education Innovation Showcase
- Gateways to Opportunity Higher Education Forum
- Professional Development Advisory Council Annual Meeting
- Illinois Board of Higher Education Academic Leadership Group
- Illinois Head Start Association Director's Institute
- Illinois Early Learning Council Quality Committee
- P-20 Council College & Career Readiness Committee

Embedded Competency Framework Cont.

2019

- Illinois Early Learning Council
- Professional Development Advisory Council
- Advance Illinois
- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- Competency Based Education Network
- Stone Foundation
- Senator Durbin – Education Policy Advisor and Legislative Fellow
- Gateways to Opportunity Higher Education Forum
- Illinois Department of Human Services
- Faculty Statewide Meeting

2019–2022

- State and national opportunities for presentations will be added on an ongoing basis

Members of the Illinois State Competency Leadership Team, inclusive of Illinois Board of Higher Education and INCCRRA, will reach out to event organizers to secure placement on the agenda. Individuals will be selected to speak at these convening on the opportunities presented to institutions and faculty if the institution chooses to participate in the innovative Illinois Early Childhood Education Pathway Preparation program.

The Gateways Forum will showcase national updates and demonstrate how this work fits in the larger national context. Where possible, national best practices should be shared. Time will be spent via webinars, teleconferences and workshops to educate and train faculty and higher education institution colleagues as well as Professional Development providers on how content can be modularized to allow for greater transfer of competencies from one setting to another. Virtual assessment practices already underway in Illinois (e.g. Southern Illinois University @ Edwardsville) will be highlighted and supported as applicable.

The state team will reinforce key messages that support implementation of the competency framework. Where possible, faculty whose institutions are early adopters will be utilized as peer champions and provided opportunities to share their experiences.

Focus Area 3: 2018–2022 Recognize and Reward Entitled Institutions.

In order to encourage and show appreciation for higher education institutions and faculty who undertake this work, a range of strategies will be used:

2018–2019

- Publicly recognize entitled institutions in all published works on the initiative
- Showcase this initiative at state and national conferences, recognizing entitled institutions where applicable or inviting faculty to partner in national presentations
- Work with the Professional Development Advisory Council to create recommendations for the Illinois Department of Human Services, and other state scholarship funders, that ensure early childhood scholarship funds are directed toward “entitled institutions only”. (Note: this may encourage 100% participation among higher education institutions in the entitlement process.)

Embedded Competency Framework Cont.

- Create an electronic “Seal of Entitlement” with a link to entitlement record that institutions can display on its website or use in promotional materials
- Recognize institutions who have aligned programs with additional Gateways Credentials based on competencies
- Position program leaders as experts who can provide assistance to others in adopting models or creating CBE programs

2020–2022

- Provide opportunities for research, academic scholarship, and access to publication venues
- Provide a structured community of fellow CBE innovators
- Receive access to transfer repository
- Consider creation of opportunities for subsidized funding support, similar to the Education Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) process
- Grant access to benchmark data in aggregate form for quality improvement purposes

Focus Area 4: 2019–2021 Establish Best Practices Exchange

Creation of opportunities for institutional leaders to share best practices with one another is a key asset and driver of quality. This could be done through structured and facilitated communications such as in a virtual collaboration space, an online repository of ideas, or at convenings designed specifically for this purpose.

A Peer Exchange Forum will be considered for 2019 or 2020. This could include an invitation to faculty to bring someone from a different department at their institution, so they could learn more about CBE while positioning entitled institution leaders as expert resources.

Focus Area 5: 2019–2022 Define Quality Metrics/Data Collection Points

Robust data collection processes will drive quality improvement efforts. The State Team and faculty will be key partners in collectively answering, for each Gateways Credential, questions such as these:

- What data could be collected that could be used to determine if an institution has “fully embedded” the competency framework?
- How will one define and know what is a quality offering?
- What are incremental data collection steps?
- How will we know that we are on track?
- What are the points of success we are striving to achieve along the way?
- What resources will be needed at an institutional level? State level?
- What data needs to be collected and how will data collection occur?
- What will a dashboard indicator look like?
- How can this dashboard be used to compare institutions?
- Who will own and/or monitor this process?

Answers to questions noted above will be captured, refined, and disseminated broadly to faculty groups such as ACCESS and ILAECTE for additional feedback. Data collection points will be collected in a pilot phase beginning in 2020 via Gateways Entitled Institutions Annual Updates. Refinement of data collection points and processes will require a lengthy pilot phase and facilitated discussions during 2021 and 2022. Avenues for discussion will include the State Team, two-year and four-year faculty groups, the PDAC Higher Education Committee and other relevant state groups/committees.

Embedded Competency Framework Cont.

Focus Area 6: 2020–2022 Create a Competency (Transfer) Repository System

A state accessible system that supports efficient and transparent sharing or transfer of coursework and/or competency assessment across the various institutions and professional development systems should be created as part of key infrastructure. Such a system would capture the work done to define transfer and competency equivalencies to reduce “rework” and would maximize efficiency.

Once equivalencies have been established, this searchable data base would “store” the decision. This could link to or maximize the already existing Illinois Articulation Initiative (course transfer) and INCCRRA’s Data Tracking Program which supports a statewide Registry and provides individual Professional Development Records for over 100,000 individuals in Illinois.

Once a particular set of trainings or specific course content is equivalent to a given competency, that decision will be stored in this system so that when the question arises again, there is no need for a “new” decision. This capability will reduce both wasted time and the risk of inconsistent decision-making. Additionally, the system will allow for both courses and trainings to be housed in and accessed through the platform.

Shared Assessment 2019–2022

This work strand is focused primarily on (1) increasing faculty efficacy in utilizing rubrics paired with aligned assessments and collection of tools currently in use at institutions and (2) building awareness and understanding of assessment practices and rubrics among non-institutional professional development providers. A key aspect of competency-based learning and education is the identification and utilization of shared rubrics paired with faculty education on consistency in assessment practices.

Phase I of this work will secure the necessary knowledge and infrastructure relating to assessment practices among higher education institutions (2019-2020).

To engage faculty in understanding the role of assessment in competency-based learning and education, and to support movement toward cohesive statewide practices, a group of “Faculty Fellows” will be convened. Under the leadership of state experts and consultants, the Faculty Fellows will review all Gateways Credentials and their underlying competencies, analyze corresponding existing rubrics and assessments to:

Focus Area 1: 2019 Evaluate Appropriateness of Levels of Mastery

Faculty Fellows will be convened to consider the utility of proposed levels of mastery and competencies for every Gateways Credential.

To ensure the required demonstrations of competence within the Gateways Credentials accurately reflect what is expected for performance, these levels will be examined and validated for their appropriateness. Faculty Fellows, as subject matter experts representing a range of Illinois higher education institutions, will complete this review.

Focus Area 2: 2019 Build Out “Task Rubrics” to Augment Existing Work

Using the existing “master rubrics” as a solid start, create formative and task rubrics. The level of specificity provided by formative and task rubrics will allow for transfer equivalencies to more easily be determined based on demonstrated performance on a given assessment.

The task rubrics will allow for the modularization of the master rubrics, which will provide institutions with more confidence and transparency with establishing equivalencies. This work would include a review of the “leveling” for the master rubrics, answering the question: “Are the rubrics targeted at the correct level of learning?”; Evaluation of assessment tools to verify alignment to designated levels of mastery; and a continuous improvement process, complete with peer reviews.

Shared Assessment 2019–2022 Cont.

A team of committed skeptic/champions (Faculty Fellows) who can represent the work to other faculty and support the development of these more transparently scaffolded “sub-rubrics” will be convened to undertake this work.

Focus Area 3: 2019–2020 Assessment Alignment and Tool Collection

It is important to align the competency framework, master rubrics, formative rubrics, and task rubrics to the assessment tools and rubrics being used by institutional providers, including practicum and clinical assessments. The Faculty Fellows performing this work, under the guidance of state experts, will gain a baseline understanding of what assessments are currently being used by a review of existing assessment tools and their corresponding rubrics. These tools should be reviewed against master rubrics, task rubrics, and transfer equivalencies.

The Faculty Fellows should identify what assessment tools need refinement and make suggestions for improvement. Additional assessment tools in use across all institutions should be collected and shared. Plans should be developed to continue the collection (and refinement practices) in the future and included in a virtual assessment sharing space. Due to the complexity of this work, faculty overseeing the administration of master assessments and rubrics should be trained on the proper and consistent use of these tools.

Focus Area 4: 2019–2020 Explore Virtual Assessment Space and Technology Needs

A review of the University of Central Florida’s virtual assessment for simulations should be incorporated. Work has already initiated through Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. Philanthropic funding paired with state agency sustainable funding (e.g. Illinois Community College Board Perkins V Funding) will be leveraged to ensure that promising technology solutions are incorporated into assessment planning.

A gap analysis of the technology needed to support a transfer repository and/or a competency repository in comparison to the technology currently available should be conducted. Likely a robust, competency-based platform will be needed to support these efforts. However, it may be possible to leverage existing products if they can be easily modified. Existing systems and contracts should be evaluated to determine if these systems can support this type of innovation or offer a suitable alternative method. Funding for future technology solutions should be determined, and a list of potential new and existing vendors to support this work should be created.

Focus Area 5: 2019–2020 Broad dissemination and Faculty Buy-in

A series of regional meetings throughout Illinois will be held in Fall of 2019 to share and disseminate the work of the Faculty Fellows. Additionally, the expert consultants leading the Faculty Fellows project will draft a report incorporating all the work accomplished. Faculty participating in the project will be encouraged to publish research and/or findings and to share with colleagues at their institution, around the state, and at a national level.

The Gateways 2020 Higher Education Forum will feature experts in competency-based education and learning, experts in assessment practices, and allow opportunities for faculty to increase pedagogy and learn from each other.



Revised Professional Development 2018–2022

This strand of work focuses on transforming the existing professional development in two phases to a fully competency-based system by 2022.

All Gateways Credentials have been intentionally designed to recognize the inclusion of high-quality training (within specific parameters) in meeting credential educational requirements. Currently, less than 10% of trainings are Gateways Credential Approved, yet a significant number of individuals utilize trainings to mitigate gaps in their education and meet credential requirements.

The move to a competency-based teacher preparation system presents a unique opportunity for the Professional Development System in Illinois to map trainings to competencies, and Gateways Credential, in a more robust and meaningful way. Trainings aligned with competencies will better meet the field's needs, maximize training efficacy, and increase both system efficiency and cost effectiveness by counting toward credential attainment.

Focus Area 1: 2018 Lay the Groundwork to Educate Providers on How to Align Training to Competency Framework

In order to require all credential-approved training to be aligned to the competency framework, time must be spent educating providers on best practices in competency-based learning, the competency framework, and to create quality CBE professional development content. This training will take place during a series of provider events.

Introduce Idea - February 7, 2018 Webinar with PD Strategic Leadership Team of Training Providers

- Overview movement of Gateways Credentials to Competencies
- Explanation of competencies
- Discussion/Plan to shift from time-based trainings to competency-based for credentials
- What does this mean for PD System?

Unpack CBE During February 22, 2018 PD Leadership Team face-to Face meeting - opening with Webinar

- What is CBE?
- Use C-BEN's Quality Framework
- Instructions on accessing competency framework
- ID what a CBE PD looks like
- How to align PD to course work at college
- Need a training program on how to put together a CBE PD
- Last from 10 AM–Noon; recorded so others can watch later on demand

Illinois Trainer Network June 2018 Workshop

- Help design new CBE training program
- Use existing program and ID competency gaps
- Build crosswalk to new CBE model
- Last from 10 AM–3 PM, perhaps even longer; recorded so others can watch later on demand

Focus Area 2: 2019 Create Training Alignment to Competencies

In 2018, foundational work was laid via the Illinois Trainers Network to build statewide understanding that the Gateways Credentials had moved to a competency basis, and of the importance of assessments in competency-based education and learning.

Revised Professional Development 2018–2022 Cont.

In 2019, to build understanding and develop capacity among professional development providers, already planned convening's will be leveraged.

- Increase knowledge, capacity and understanding of competencies among non- institutional providers and key entities (trainers and authorized entities/state agencies) via Illinois Trainers Network, CCR&R Training Days, Webinars etc.
- Embed utilization of competencies within all state training infra-structure (non-institutional providers)
- Increase number of trainings that count toward Gateways Credentials through rigorous competency alignment; and
- Develop capacity among institutional providers to recognize, utilize and build on non-institutional provider trainings.

Beginning in January of 2019, a pilot phase will initiate with key state training partners to test supports and resources needed for new trainings to align with Gateways Credential competency frameworks.

A gap analysis across all Gateways Credential competencies will be conducted. Intentional development of Credential Approved Trainings will be focused in areas of highest needs. Professional Development providers will be given an opportunity to “design and deliver trainings” that meet credential competency areas of greatest need. The most active training partners/agencies in the state will be identified as “pioneers”. They will be invited to align training with competencies as an initial pilot phase. They will provide feedback on needed resources and technological support in order to launch a second wave of pioneers or testing.

A second phase of testing, phase two, will launch mid-2019 and embed “lessons learned” from the first phase and expand further testing of most successful models. In partnership with the launch of the second phase, a mid-state meeting for selected trainers will be convened to capture in-depth feedback, engage interest, and to inform further refinement of training competency-alignment processes.

Focus Area 3: 2020 Increase Understanding and Acceptance of Non-Classroom Based Learning

To maximize effectiveness for the workforce, higher education institutions must embrace learning that occurs in a work-based setting, outside a traditional classroom environment. State Regional meetings and training will be held for faculty to build an appreciation for high-quality, work-based learning. These facilitated meetings will include training that will focus on how acceptance of competence gained on the job can lead to increased student recruitment and retention.

Focus Area 4: Initiate a 3-year Transition Process for Gateways Registry Approved Training to Competency Alignment (2020-2023)

Beginning July 2020, renewal of Gateways Registry approved trainings will formally incorporate a pathway for competency alignment. Each Registry approved training is valid for three years; allowing for full review of existing trainings (~6,300) by 2023.

The application process for any new Registry training submitted after July 2020 will incorporate competency alignment as a standard process. Additionally, professional development partners will be required to have baseline knowledge about competencies. Technological support will be offered to professional development partners (trainers, organizations) to engage in backwards design of trainings that align with competencies: webinars, technical assistance, guidance/review, and higher ed regional meeting support.

Phase Two 2025–2028

Build awareness of valid and authentic assessment practices among non-institutional professional development providers (2025–2028).

Focus Area 1: Enhance and expand non-institutional professional development provider knowledge of best assessment practices

The initial work described above focuses on institutional assessment practices. However, in order for this effort to have its greatest impact, non-institutional assessments must also be aligned to the competency framework.

Focus Area 2: Increase utilization of valid and authentic assessment practices among non-institutional professional development providers.

Previous work focused on establishing a foundation of understanding through the Illinois Trainers Network on competency-based education and learning and the importance of assessments. In order for this effort to have its greatest impact, non-institutional assessments must be aligned to the competency framework. Strategies will need to be developed for Phase Two that builds capacity within the training system for authentic assessment of competencies.

Funding and Grant Planning

This strand of work is designed to help procure the funding necessary to make all of the proposed plans a reality.

Focus Area 1: Scan and Determine Funders Who Have the Greatest Likelihood of Providing Necessary Resources.

Organizations with an interest in funding projects and elements of projects similar to Gateways will be identified. Funders interested in early childhood, workforce shortages, underserved/low-income populations, diverse populations, college completions, work-based learning, welfare-to-work programs, competency-based education, technological innovations will be ascertained. Information about potential funders, past awards, anticipated future awards, contact information, and deadlines will be captured.

Focus Area 2: 2019–2022 Create Communication Resources

Transparency in messaging and communication in a state system shift is critical. State Team members will broadly share information about the Gateways Credentials and competency-based learning and education with a range of groups and audiences. To ensure consistency in communication, a series of communication tools designed for these specific audiences will be developed:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ■ Advocacy | ■ Professional Development Providers |
| ■ Higher Education Institutions | ■ Practitioners/the Workforce |
| ■ Policy Makers/State Agencies | ■ Funders |

Additionally, key messages will be identified, an FAQ developed, and Draft Slide Deck will be available for members of the State Competency Team to utilize in dissemination of information to key groups. These communication resources will be created and utilized and accompany any funding request or strategy document.

Focus Area 3: 2019–2022 Align Key Messages to Targeted Funders

Determine key messages the State Team wants to convey that supports needed funding and phases of the overall project. Collection of learners, institutional, and provider stories could aid in proving the value and efficacy of these key messages. Data collection is integral to painting the picture about the need for or early results of the project. Helpful resources include workforce data and the IBHE/INCCRRA/ICCB IPEDS data project.



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