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Goal 1 Comment: Goal 1: Increase educational attainment to match best-performing U.S. states and world countries.

This Goal is confusing to navigate because it has three recommendations and the reader is not clearly guided as to where each recommendation starts and ends. We recommend restating the recommendation before each discussion section, i.e:

(page 2) Change “Achievement Gap” to: Recommendation 1: “Increase success of students at each stage of the P-20 education pipeline to eliminate achievement gaps.” It would also help to add the phrase “traditional-age” students, since adult students are covered in Rec. 2.

(page 8) Change “Adult Learners,” to: Recommendation 2: Increase the number of adults reentering and completing credentials,”

(page 11) Change Geographic Disparities to: “Reduce geographic disparities in educational attainment.”

Goal 1, Recommendation 2, Strategies (p. 10), add to A. Provide Resources to Help Adult Students Complete a Postsecondary Credential:

1)REVISE: Ensure adequate and appropriate funding for adult education programs, GED completion, college transition support, and specialized training such as occupational bridge programs, leading to postsecondary certificates and degrees.

3) REVISE: Ensure place-bound students have adequate and appropriate academic, career development, and support services to complete a college credential.

5) ADD: Improve transition rates of students from remedial education to credit coursework by providing options for specialized programs such as contextualized education and dual remedial-credit enrollment.

6) ADD: Establish high-quality professional development programs for adult education and remedial education instruction, including training in teaching occupationally contextualized courses that connect students faster to credit coursework and better jobs.

REVISE: B. Establish Partnerships with Employers and Community Organizations Aimed at Adult Learners (p. 11)

Action Step (1) (REVISE): Establish regional partnerships between education institutions and agencies and employers to improve education attainment for adult learners, including incumbent workers, particularly in high-wage, high-demand fields.

Add Action Step:

4) Establish partnerships between community organizations and education institutions to provide new entryways into college for low-skilled residents and provide supports to enable them to complete their programs.

Performance Measures

ADD: The goal of performance measurement should be to develop a state data system that will track individual students over time, so that data will track Illinois’ progress in moving students along an educational and career pipeline. (Note: This point also applies to Recommendation 1).

Also add:

A. Increase the number of adults reentering education and completing a postsecondary credential.

- 3) REVISE: Certificates and degrees awarded to adults age 25-44...(as stated)
 - 4) ADD: Number of adults age 25-44 reaching identified benchmarks or “tipping points,” such as completion of one year of college credit plus a credential
 - 5) ADD: Employment in field of related education and training and wages over time.
 - 6) ADD: Time-to-degree
 - 7) ADD: Number of adults transferring from two-year to four-year institutions.
- See also “Key Performance Measures and Benchmarks for Community Colleges,”
<http://www.achievingthedream.org/pdfs/publicpolicy/powertoolsXS.pdf>.

B. Benchmarked against

- 1) Illinois trends over one, five, and ten-year periods (this is similar to Goal 3)

Goal 3 Comment: Goal 3: Increase number of quality postsecondary credentials to meet demands of the economy.

Comment: This goal does not reflect the needs of low-skilled adults already in the workforce. While some of this has now been transferred to Goal 1, Goal 3 should still reflect that the educational pipeline begins at the low-skill end and leads to achievement of associates and baccalaureate degrees for this population.

REVISE last sentence of introductory paragraph: -- Illinois must increase both the number of high school graduates and the number of working-age adults who are attaining quality postsecondary credentials in order to remain competitive and to meet future workforce demands.

REVISE Recommendation 2: Improve transitions all along the educational pipeline, including adult education to postsecondary, remedial to college-level classes, and between associate and baccalaureate degree levels.

Replace the shortened versions of the restated recommendations (pp. 2, 6, & 8) with the clearer:

Recommendation 1: Increase the number of people with quality postsecondary credentials.

Recommendation 2: Improve transitions all along the educational pipeline.

Recommendation 3: Increase the number of postsecondary degrees in fields of critical skills shortages.

Page 2 add a bullet:

·There are significant leaks in the pipeline of working-age adults attempting to return to school to complete certificates and degrees in high-demand fields.

Recommendation 1, Increase the number of people with quality credentials. Strategies (p. 5):

Overall comment: These strategies are not getting us to the level of meeting the overall goal. To do that, we must focus more on providing higher-quality education. A and B should be reversed in importance and ADD to B (the new “A”), Improve Skill Levels:

- 1) Explore innovative educational approaches such as dual enrollment in adult or remedial education and college-level coursework, upgrading non-credit classes to credit if a student becomes a degree-seeker, upside-down degrees, and occupationally contextualized instruction for adult education and remedial education.

- 2) Ensure that instructors’ skill levels remain current with relevant professional development and required “re-internships” with employers.

3) Bring employers into classrooms and involve them as mentors, and increase the number of students exposed to the world of their future occupations through job-shadowing, internships, and other means.

C. Strengthen Accountability to Demonstrate Quality

ADD:2) Benchmark milestone transition points (see above) and commit to continuous improvement.

(Revised) Recommendation 2, Improve transitions all along the educational pipeline (p. 6)

Add sentence to introduction: In addition, more students, particularly working adults, must enter the pipeline and advance from lower to higher levels so that they may have the opportunity of transferring to a four-year institution.

Add bullet:

·Most students in adult education never complete a postsecondary credential of any kind, and the majority of students in two or more remedial courses never complete 30 hours of college credit.

Add a Strategy (p. 7):

A) Increase opportunities for low-skill adults to complete two-year and four-year degrees

1) For adult education and remedial students, explore innovative educational approaches such as dual enrollment in adult or remedial education and college-level coursework, upgrading non-credit classes to credit if a student becomes a degree-seeker, upside-down degrees, and occupationally contextualized instruction, so that more of these students reach the associate degree benchmark.

2) Work with employers to provide educational advancement opportunities for low-skilled incumbent workers.

Similarly, add to Performance Measures:

1. Percentage of adult education and remedial education students achieving two-year degrees.
2. Percentage of adult education and remedial education students achieving four-year degrees

Goal 4 Comment: Goal 4. Better integrate Illinois' educational, research, and innovation assets to meet economic needs of the state and its regions.

Strengthen the introduction by adding:

Illinois has for the past several years invested in a regional sector-based approach to economic and workforce development. This has involved efforts in each of the state's ten economic development regions to identify the critical skill shortage occupations, estimate the scope and root causes of these shortages, and develop regional solutions to address the shortages. These economic development efforts are increasingly being connected to the P-20 educational pipeline, including advancement of working age adults.

Strategies (p. 6)

B. Develop cutting-edge educational programs....

Action Steps: ADD:

4) Increase the number of minority students attaining associates and bachelor's degrees in math- and science-intensive fields.

Comment: Introduction. Comment: Overall, the Introduction does a good job of laying out the case for why Illinois needs a strong public agenda for college and career success to ensure the economic and social well-being of the state and its residents into the future. However, it needs to make a stronger connection between postsecondary education and the state's economic health as well as the importance of educating the current workforce. To that end, we suggest:

Tale of Two States: Add two important points:

- From the recent report, "Illinois' Forgotten Middle-Skills Jobs" (Sept. 2008): "Here in Illinois, 51 percent of all jobs are classified as middle-skill, but only 43 percent of Illinois workers likely have the education and training required to fill these positions" (p. 11)., with "greater pain" being felt in high-growth industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation and logistics.

- "Two-thirds of the people who will be in Illinois' workforce in the year 2020 were already working adults – that is, long past the traditional high school-to-college pipeline – in 2005 (Forgotten Middle, Figure 7, 2020 Pyramid)" (p. 16).

- Under the subsection Meet students where they are (p. 9) add:

- All students, but particularly first-generation college students, need to engage in education and career planning prior to beginning classes to develop a coordinated year-by-year education plan. This is not possible today, where community college student to advisor ratios average 800:1.

- Currently, remedial education is a necessity and a reality for both returning adults and the large numbers of academically under-prepared high school graduates. We need to improve remedial education while we are working to make it unnecessary for recent high school graduates.

- (REVISE last sentence) Adult basic skills, English-as-a-Second-Language, and GED courses need to reflect crosscutting competencies and workforce skills and actively work to connect students to postsecondary education.

- Under the subsection, Forge partnerships for economic development (p. 10):

- (Add as a last sentence): Partnerships should develop career pathways, with the priority on high-wage, high-demand fields, that provide clear stop-out points connected to labor market increments for those who need to combine work with postsecondary education.

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