

**Career Clusters Definitions**

**Career Clusters:** In their simplest form, Career Clusters are groupings of occupations/career specialties used as an organizing tool for curriculum design and instruction. Occupations/career specialties are grouped into the Career Clusters based on the fact that they require a set of common knowledge and skills for career success. The Knowledge and Skills represented by Career Clusters prepare learners for a full range of occupations/career specialties, focusing on the holistic, polished blend of technical, academic and employability knowledge and skills. This approach enhances the more traditional approach to career and technical education in which instruction may focus on one or two occupations and emphasize only specific occupational skills.

**Career Pathways:** In their simplest forms, Pathways are sub-groupings of occupations/career specialties used as an organizing tool for curriculum design and instruction. Occupations/career specialties are grouped into Pathways based on the fact that they require a set of common knowledge and skills for career success.

**Occupations/Career Specialties:** These are particular careers or occupations based on advanced knowledge and skills specific to that career or occupation.

**Knowledge and Skills:** Knowledge and Skills are industry-validated statements that describe what learners/employees need to know and be able to do for career success within a Cluster and/or Pathway.

**Program of Study (curriculum framework):** A program of study is a sequence of instruction (based on recommended standards and knowledge and skills) consisting of coursework, co-curricular activities, work-site learning, service learning and other learning experiences. This sequence of instruction provides preparation for a career.

**Personal Plan of Study:** A Personal Plan of Study is an individual learner's scope and sequence of coursework, co-curricular activities, work-site learning, service learning and other learning experiences based upon his/her chosen career goals and aspirations. The Plan of Study should be revisited periodically (at least on an annual basis) to make adjustments as the interests and career aspirations of a learner change. This is a flexible resource designed to change in concert with the interests and needs of the learner.

*From the former State Career Clusters’ Initiative web site, now Advance CTE: State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work.*