

Workforce Training Admissions Guide

*Supporting High School Seniors Entering
Workforce Training Pathways*



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Shared Lane's mission is to support young people to seamlessly transition to career pathways by providing resources for the adults who support them. The guide grew from suggestions by the Expanding Pathways Collaborative of high school counselors and workforce training providers and is shaped by their feedback. It was developed by interviewing a few key NYC workforce training providers who shared insights. Special thanks to Building Skills NYC, The Door, Grace Institute, The Hope Program, Per Scholas, Year Up United. Shared Lane appreciates your commitment to creating this guide, and accepts responsibility for all insights, errors and omissions in this guide. This document is considered a work in progress and feedback is welcome by emailing info@sharedlane.co

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For more information about Shared Lane visit www.sharedlane.co

Introduction

High school graduation should be the launchpad for careers by opening the door to a range of meaningful postsecondary pathways. While many students choose to pursue college, others are interested in fast tracking their career entry. New York City offers a wide and growing ecosystem of career training programs designed to help young adults gain technical skills, industry exposure, and access to early-career opportunities. These are rigorous, structured pathways that prepare young adults for careers across sectors such as technology, healthcare, construction/skilled trades, business operations, hospitality, and more. Workforce training programs play a critical role in preparing the next generation of workers. According to the National Skills Coalition, a majority of jobs (52%) require education or training beyond high school but not necessarily a four-year degree. The pathways students take after high school are not always linear. In NYC, while graduation rates remain steady at around 83%, an estimated 40% of students graduate from high school each year without a clear postsecondary plan. As a system we provide fewer supports to guide these students on their next steps.

Workforce training programs can be a viable option for many of these students. They provide industry-recognized credentials, hands-on experience, and direct entry into growing career fields. However, unlike the college admissions process, which follows a relatively predictable calendar and structure—the workforce training landscape is decentralized and the admissions process can be opaque. Programs have different eligibility requirements, assessments, application processes, and cohort start dates, which can make the system difficult for school staff and students to navigate without guidance. This guide was developed to help counselors, teachers, advisors and any youth facing staff understand this landscape and confidently guide seniors through it. By outlining admissions processes, timelines, common barriers, and readiness expectations, our goal is to equip educators with the tools needed to help students transition into programs that lead to strong early-career opportunities and long-term economic mobility.

Goals

1. Equip counselors with a clear understanding of **WHAT** counselors should know about workforce training programs, **WHO** these training programs are best suited for, **WHEN** students should apply, and **HOW** to guide them effectively through the admissions process
2. Strengthen the pipeline from high school to career training programs
3. Improve student readiness and completion of workforce training provider applications



How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help counselors, advisors, teachers, work-based learning staff, and other student-support professionals to confidently guide seniors pursuing workforce training pathways.

HOW COUNSELORS SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE

- **Identify students who would benefit most:** Use the *Who* section to pinpoint students ready for training programs or needing preparation
- **Integrate into senior advising:** Use timelines, checklists, and process explanations during 1:1 postsecondary counseling
- **Share key sections with students and families:** Provide students and families with readiness expectations, document checklists, and timelines
- **Align spring planning:** Use the admissions timeline when structuring March–June advising and melt-prevention strategies



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NYC Workforce Training Landscape

New York City has a broad and diverse workforce training ecosystem designed to help adults gain practical skills, industry exposure, and access to entry-level career pathways. Workforce programs can be offered through Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), community colleges, stand-alone industry providers, or specialized bootcamps. There are also a vast array of union training programs and registered apprenticeships. These programs exist across many sectors, including technology, construction and the trades, healthcare, human services, business operations, hospitality, and more.

There are a wide range of high-quality, tuition-free programs, many of which are funded to train young people for in-demand careers and connect them directly with employers. In addition to technical training, most providers offer professional development and wraparound services, such as career coaching, job readiness support, case management, and referrals for transportation, financial, or personal needs. Together, these programs serve as a critical bridge between high school and the labor market, helping students build the skills, credentials, and professional behaviors needed to succeed in early-career roles.

★ **Tip:** For a comprehensive list of Career Training Providers see [New Visions Career Directory](#)

Workforce training offers a non-degree pathway to careers. It is not an ‘easier’ route. Programs are structured, fast-paced, and often full-time, requiring learners to demonstrate maturity, reliability, and consistent follow-through. Providers track clear outcome-based measures, such as the number of students who attain jobs, early industry-recognized credentials, and achieve livable starting wages, to demonstrate program effectiveness. Because many programs are funded to create pathways into in-demand careers, they are designed to lead directly to strong early-career opportunities. While these programs are non-degree by design, they do not preclude future college enrollment; in fact, some providers partner with CUNY to offer credit for prior learning, allowing certifications earned through training programs to count toward a college degree.

★ **Tip:** To explore how workforce programs fit into the broader postsecondary landscape see Shared Lane’s modules [Ready. Set. Go: Career Navigation Module 2 – Get Set: Explore the Promise of Career Training Programs](#) includes slides with facilitator talking points, activities for classroom and a short guide for families

WHAT Counselors Should Convey to Students About Workforce Training Programs

- 1. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:** Eligibility varies by program. Many NYC workforce providers share common requirements – checklist provided in [Appendix 1](#).
- 2. ASSESSMENTS ARE PART OF THE PROCESS:** Many programs require applicants to complete assessments before enrolling. These may include:
 - **Interviews or intake meetings** vary by provider. Some emphasize professionalism and communication, while others assess a student’s commitment, program fit, or readiness to meet full-time expectations
 - **Reading and math evaluations** (ex. [TABE exam](#))
 - **Digital literacy or administrative skill test**
 - **Industry-specific readiness activity**, such as construction try-outs or technology prep module
- 3. WORKFORCE TRAINING IS RIGOROUS AND FAST-MOVING:** Counselors should help students understand these common factors in workforce training programs:
 - Typically short-term – often one year or less
 - Require full-time schedules (typically 30–40 hours/week); a few are part-time (20 hrs/week)
 - Have strict policies about attendance and punctuality
 - Expect professional communication, including responding to emails and phone calls promptly – especially during the application process
 - Comfort interacting with adults of different ages, since workforce training classes are often intergenerational
 - A clear goal of obtaining a job after training – most programs expect graduates to pursue employment immediately and prepare them with industry-recognized credentials
 - Openness to credential stacking, as many students continue their pathways after program completion by earning additional certifications or pursuing a degree aligned with the career interest

★ **Tip:** Curious to see the requirements of a workforce training program? Check out the application process for [Grace Institute](#).

WHO Should Consider Workforce Training Programs

Workforce training programs are well-suited for students who want to build job-ready skills soon after high school and prefer structured, hands-on learning environments. The programs offer a pathway for students who do not pursue college right after high school or who want to explore careers before committing to additional postsecondary education.

Learner Profile

Typically high school students who are a strong fit for workforce training programs demonstrate most, if not all, of the following characteristics:

- **Motivated to enter the workforce quickly** and a desire to move towards independence
- **Education Status:** On track to graduate but without a committed postsecondary plan — no college, job, or training program secured
- **Interest in a specific pathway** — technology, healthcare, skilled trades, hospitality, etc.
- **Academic Level** — Varies; capable of completing hands-on technical work with support
- **Commitment to a full-time schedule** — similar to a job most programs run 30–40 hours/week
- **Interest in hands-on learning** or learning-by-doing rather than long lectures
- **Openness to feedback** and willingness to grow their professional skills
- **General curiosity about careers**



★ **Tip:** Shared Lane's module *Short Term, Big Payoff* includes a section on **Return on Investment** that helps students and families weigh decisions about workforce training, and includes a student activity to consider the difference between a job and a career. See [Ready, Set, Go: Career Navigation](#) module 1.5 and 2.3

WHEN Students Should Apply – Admissions Process & Timeline

Provider admission timelines vary but many NYC workforce training programs follow a similar multi-step admission process. Understanding these steps can help counselors anticipate where students may get stuck and when to intervene.

The Application Process

While specific requirements vary by provider, most NYC programs follow a similar multi-step application process driven by the learner agency. Applicants are expected to complete each step:

- 1. Initial Contact** – *Students typically begin by completing an online interest form, QR application, or attending an info session.*
 - a.** *Mostly all communications are done via email*
 - b.** *Some providers schedule daytime info sessions (ex. 1pm), which can be difficult for high school seniors to attend. Counselors can request after-school or virtual options to increase participation. Some providers have pre-recorded videos as info sessions.*
- 2. Pre-screen/eligibility call** – *A short conversation to confirm age, basic eligibility, required documents, and program interest*
- 3. Application** – *Students formally apply to the program*
- 4. Assessments** – *May include reading or math tests (ex. TABE), digital assessments, or sector-specific readiness tasks*

Note: Some programs assign pre-work or prep modules that may feel unrelated to the student's intended track. Counselors should reassure students this is normal and encourage them to stay focused on completing required steps.
- 5. Interview/ intake** – *Providers assess professionalism, communication, commitment, and potential barriers such as scheduling, childcare, housing, current income, or technology access.*
- 6. Documents** – *Applicants submit ID, SSN, birth certificate, proof of address, and diploma/transcripts if required.*
- 7. Application Status Update** – *After submitting, applicants will find out their final status – if accepted, rejected, or waitlisted.*
- 8. Final review & enrollment confirmation** – *Providers verify all steps, finalize the learner's application, confirm eligibility, and issue a start date or seat assignment.*

★ **Tip:** Curious to see how an application process works? Learn about the application process at [Per Scholas](#).

Typical Application Runway

- **Fastest:** ~1-2 weeks when documents are ready and assessments are passed (often possible with rolling-intake youth programs or streamlined portals).
- **Moderate:** ~2-4 weeks for programs with info sessions, assessment and interviews
- **Longest:** 4-8+ weeks to align with cohort starts and complete prep assignments.



Cadence Types

- **Cohort-based programs:** Programs operate on fixed start dates, and students are typically expected to apply approximately 1-2 months in advance to complete required preparation steps and meet attendance expectations. Some providers run multiple cohorts throughout the year, which can create additional entry points for students who are not ready to enroll immediately after graduation. Unlike colleges, programs do not follow traditional fall and spring semester cohorts.
- **Rolling or frequent intake programs:** Programs accept applications on a rolling basis or year-round; however, students should still plan for time to complete assessments, intake meetings, and required documentation prior to enrollment.



Suggested Timeline for Counselor Support of Seniors

Time of Year	Counselor Strategies
<p>September – March (Prepare Early)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host Fall workforce readiness workshops or professional coaching sessions, aligned with college application season, that include career exploration, resume and essay support, exposure to workforce training providers, and individualized pathway planning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitate career interest inventories and personality assessments using Xello, Overgrad, MyNextMove, O*NET, etc. ○ Introduce students to the range of NYC workforce training programs using tools such as the New Visions Career Directory. ○ Support students to develop professional communication habits, including using a post-graduation accessible email address, setting up voicemail, and maintaining at least one reliable phone number and email. ● Invite workforce training providers to school’s college and career fairs. ● Encourage participation in career fairs, employer talks, and Shared Lane’s Demo Days. ● Invite alumni or CBO partners for short “career spotlight” conversations. ● Connect with families to discuss the students’ plan and process. Early engagement works! ● Develop and maintain a centralized partnership tracking system to document workforce training providers’ contact information, program offerings, eligibility requirements, timeline and engagement history with the school.
<p>March–May (Application Season)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host application labs so students can complete applications in one sitting. ● Assist students in scheduling and confirming info sessions, assessments, and intake meetings. ● Provide prep for TABE, digital literacy assessments, and program-specific tech modules. Providers will often share the materials to help prospective students prepare for the assessment. ● Support students/families in gathering required documents (ID, SS card/birth certificate, proof of address, diploma/transcript). ● Offer guidance on how to replace missing documents (IDNYC, DMV, SSA). ● Use a simple application tracker to monitor progress. ● Offer email templates for confirmations and follow-ups. ● Confirm student pathways with families as well.

**May–
August
(Summer
Melt
Prevention)**

- Send weekly check-ins via SMS, WhatsApp, or GroupMe to keep students engaged.
- Connect students to workforce readiness bootcamps, orientations, or CBO-led summer supports.
- Help students complete final onboarding steps (document uploads, tech setup, uniform/ID needs).
- Advocate for conditional offers with providers when appropriate (confirming age/diploma status).
- Reconfirm student contact information and establish backup contacts before graduation.
- Support students in planning transportation, daily routines, and time management for their training start date.
- Connect with a 12-month staff member (e.g. Work-Based Learning Coordinator) to see if they can follow up with students during the summer to confirm enrollment and to trouble shoot if necessary.

HOW to Apply: Student Readiness & Common Barriers

The Shared Reality: Barriers Students Commonly Experience

Workforce training operates more like a workplace than a classroom. Students must adjust to new expectations, communication norms, and adult responsibilities. Understanding common **enrollment** and **persistence** patterns can help counselors anticipate where students may need support before graduation. The sections below distinguish between risks that affect initial enrollment and challenges that emerge after students begin training, along with strategies counselors can use to prepare seniors for each stage.

ENROLLMENT RISK	
Risks That Prevent Students From ENROLLING	Counselor Strategies to Support Successful Enrollment During Senior Year
Starting but not finishing applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host application labs where students complete the full application in one sitting. Break the application into small steps and set mini-deadlines. Have students send you screenshots of submission pages to confirm progress.
Missing info sessions or not confirming attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send calendar invites or text reminders 24 hours and 1 hour before sessions. Request after-school or virtual options for seniors when daytime sessions conflict with school schedules. Have students practice confirmation emails (“I confirm I will attend...”).
Slow responses to providers’ emails/calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up professional student emails and ensure they’re added to their phone. Practice email-checking routines (e.g., check every day at 3 p.m.). Add provider numbers to contacts to avoid missed calls. Run a “reply in 10 minutes” drill to build responsiveness habits.
Document gaps (IDs, proof of address, diploma)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start document collection early (March) and complete a Document Packet. Help students gather: State ID/IDNYC/Passport; SS card/birth certificate; proof of NYC residency (phone bill, ConEd bill, lease). Host “Get Your ID Days” with scanners available.

<p>Assessment hurdles (reading/math, digital skills, tech prep)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide practice materials (TABE samples, digital literacy checklists, typing tests, etc.). ● Offer school-based prep sessions or use free online tools. ● Explain that some pre-work may feel unrelated, but completing it is required to move forward.
<p>Phone changes or disconnections that break communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Require students to provide two backup contacts (trusted adult or friend). ● Encourage saving provider numbers and using email as the stable communication channel. ● Help students set up voicemail and ensure the inbox is not full.

	PERSISTENCE RISK
Common Challenges Students Face AFTER Starting Workforce Training Programs	Counselor Strategies to Prepare Seniors for Persistence and Program Completion
<p>Punctuality / attendance in full-time schedules (30–40 hrs/week)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Talk openly about what a full-time schedule feels like. ● Use school-based routines to practice punctuality (mock “first week of training”). ● Help students plan transit routes and commuting time. ● Have students set alarms and create a morning routine.
<p>Time management & task follow-through</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teach simple tools: Google Calendar, to-do lists, reminders. ● Review how to break tasks into smaller steps (“chunking”). ● Practice submitting items <i>before</i> deadlines.
<p>Professional communication (email tone, returning calls, updates)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Run an email etiquette mini-lesson: greetings, subject lines, sign-offs. ● Have students practice emailing confirmations, reschedules, and follow-ups. ● Require students to check email daily (e.g., 3 p.m. check routine). ● Set up voicemail and practice returning calls.
<p>Following instructions & receiving feedback without shutting down</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Practice following multi-step instructions in advising tasks. ● Model how to respond to feedback (“Thank you—here’s how I will adjust”). ● Use role plays where students receive constructive criticism. ● Normalize that feedback in training ≠ failure.

Self-advocacy (asking for help early)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teach sentence starters for self-advocacy (e.g., “I’m struggling with... Can we talk?”). ● Practice emailing instructors or counselors for clarification. ● Reinforce that early communication prevents consequences later. ● Use role-play to build comfort speaking up.
Life stability (housing, childcare, family obligations, financial pressure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Talk realistically about how these factors affect training. ● Connect students to CBO case management early (May/June) so support is ready when training starts. ● Teach students to proactively disclose potential conflicts during intake. ● Help students identify backup options (childcare, transit, schedule).
<p>★ Tip: Shared Lane’s module <i>Engage with Career Training Programs</i> includes a slide deck on the admissions process and an activity in which students visualize the components of the application process. See Ready, Set, Go: Career Navigation modules 3.3 and 3.4</p>	

Readiness Skills That Matter Most

Workforce training programs look closely at a student's professional readiness, and these behaviors often reveal themselves during the application process; including in email communication, attendance at info sessions, assessment completion, and responsiveness to next steps. These skills are part of how programs determine whether a student is ready for a fast-paced, full-time environment. Counselors can play a powerful role in helping seniors strengthen them before graduation.

The chart below outlines the **readiness skills** programs consistently value and offers practical ways counselors can help students develop or practice these skills while still in high school.

Readiness Skill (valued by WF Providers)	What Counselors Can Do in High School to Strengthen This Skill
Punctuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set expectations for on-time arrival for advising meetings. ● Have students practice planning travel time for mock “training start” days. ● Tie punctuality to real-world consequences (missed intake = lost seat).
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Require students to reply to counselor emails within 24 hours. ● Run “reply drills” where students practice confirming appointments. ● Help students create email signatures and set up notifications on their phones.

Professional Etiquette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teach basic email etiquette (greeting, clarity, tone, sign-off). ● Role-play phone call scripts for confirming info sessions or interviews. ● Have students send thank-you emails after counselor or partner meetings.
Receptiveness to Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Model giving feedback in advising sessions and ask students to restate their plan (“Here’s my next step”). ● Practice short feedback role-plays (“What would you do differently next time?”). ● Normalize feedback as part of workplace culture.
Ability to Follow Instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create small multi-step senior-year tasks (e.g., complete a form → email screenshot → schedule a follow-up). ● Have students repeat instructions back to ensure understanding. ● Check for timely and accurate completion.
Adaptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss how training environments can change quickly (schedule shifts, prep modules, technology platforms). ● Use classroom changes or schedule adjustments as low-stakes practice moments. ● Encourage trying new tasks or roles during school events or WBL activities. ● Coach students on reflection and next steps after rejection, reinforcing that receiving a “no” or not being selected is a common and expected part of the process, not the end. Being rejected now does not mean you can’t apply again.

Appendix

1. Eligibility Document Checklist

Common Workforce Training Application Documents	
Document Type	Examples / Notes
Proof of Identity	<input type="checkbox"/> NYS ID or Driver License <input type="checkbox"/> Passport <input type="checkbox"/> IDNYC card <input type="checkbox"/> For non-US citizen: Permanent Residence Card
Work Authorization <i>(if required)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security Card <input type="checkbox"/> Birth Certificate <i>(Often paired with a state ID)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent Resident Card
Proof of Address <i>(if required)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone bill <input type="checkbox"/> Con Edison / National Grid bill <input type="checkbox"/> Lease or housing agreement <input type="checkbox"/> Official government mail or HRA mail <input type="checkbox"/> NYC Human Resource Administration document or a Shelter Letter
Education Verification <i>(if required)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> High school diploma <input type="checkbox"/> GED/TASC certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Official or Unofficial Transcript
Income Eligibility Documentation <i>(program-specific)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tax documents <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP or SSI benefit letter <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Voucher <input type="checkbox"/> Free/Reduced Price Lunch
Resume	<input type="checkbox"/> Resume listing education, skills, and any experience (and if possible include two references).
Professional Email and Number	<input type="checkbox"/> Post-graduation-accessible email address; working phone number with a voicemail

2. Application Checklist

Application Checklist		
Step	Description	Status
Info Session Attended	The student attended or viewed the program's info session (live or virtual).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online Application	The students must apply on the workforce training site's website	
Assessments Completed	The student scheduled and completed the reading, math, digital literacy, or program-specific assessments.	<input type="checkbox"/>
All Required Documents Uploaded	The student has all required documents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intake / Interview Completed	The student attended intake meetings or interviews to review readiness, commitment, and potential barriers.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Start Date Confirmed	The student received enrollment confirmation, start date, and next steps from the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Resources

These are comprehensive free resources that offer information and student-facing activities to further explore workforce training.

Resource	Description
<u>New Visions Career Directory</u> and <u>Resources for Supporting Students</u>	A clear, easy-to-use directory highlighting cost-effective and tuition-free NYC career training programs. Includes program details such as certifications offered, training length, eligibility requirements, support services, internships, and job placement assistance. Can be easily filtered by sector, borough, etc. Additionally, New Visions toolkit includes professional resources — lesson plans, worksheets, etc. — designed as a ready-to-use companion to the Career Directory.
<u>Shared Lane's Ready, Set, Go: Career Navigation Modules</u>	A toolkit that helps students — and their advisors — build personalized postsecondary plans based on their interests. Developed by Shared Lane in partnership with the NYC Public Schools Office of Student Pathways, the modules include lessons, student facing activities, advising tools and family facing hand-outs.

