



MODULE C: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Introduction to the PluggedInVA Curriculum Framework

PluggedInVA Instructor's Manual

The PluggedInVA Instructor's Manual was developed for the pilot PluggedInVA project. The Manual contains an overview of the curriculum framework, a detailed description of all of the curriculum's components, suggested teaching strategies and techniques, sample course schedules, and many other instructional resources. While this manual was developed for an Information Technology cohort, it is easily adaptable to any industry.

The PluggedInVA curriculum is an industry-driven framework that helps prepare learners for entry-level work in jobs that pay a life-sustaining wage. The PluggedInVA framework strongly emphasizes the development of technology skills and 21st century skills in preparation for future training and higher education.

An Overview of the curriculum framework is presented here for quick reference and initial planning purposes.

IN THIS MODULE

- Learner outcomes
- PluggedInVA curriculum framework and overview
- Introduction to the core components of the curriculum
- Defining expected outcomes and data to be collected
- Drafting a learner timeline and defining learner expectations
- Sample schedules
- Peer cohorts and retention
- Instructor training

I. Learner Outcomes

Learners who complete a PluggedInVA program, leave with

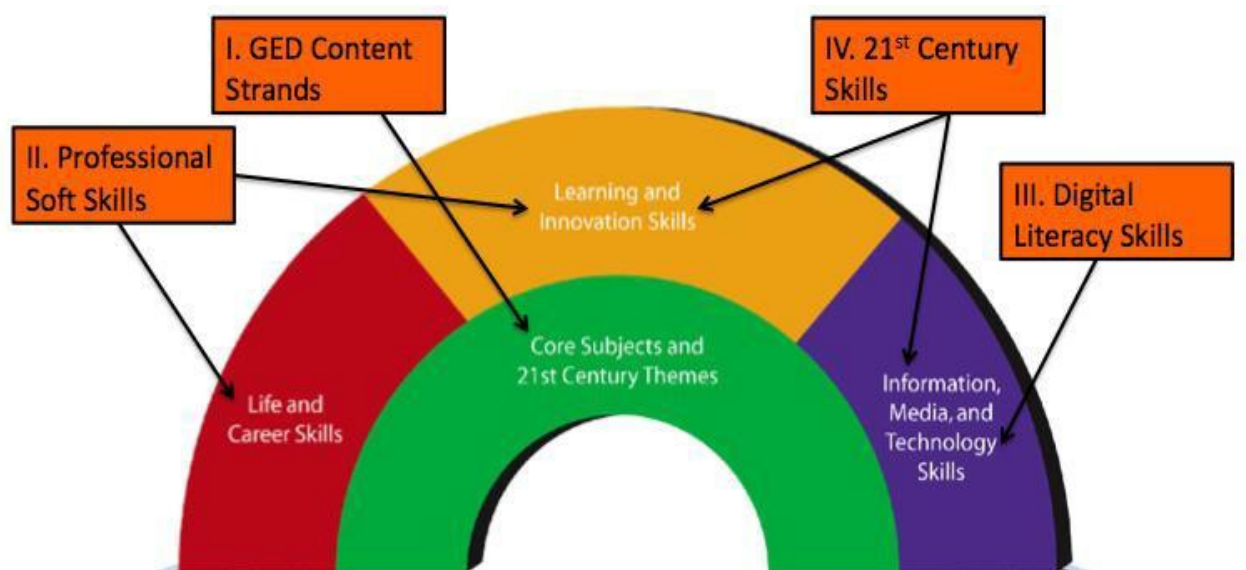
- GED credential
- Career Readiness Certificate (CRC)
- Industry-recognized certificate or credential
- Community college credits (minimum of 12)
- Digital Literacy Certificate
- Professional soft skills training



II. Overview of the PluggedInVA Curriculum Framework

Each PluggedInVA program is approximately six months in duration with five integrated core components:

1. GED Credential and Career Readiness Certificate Preparation
2. Digital Literacy Skills
3. Professional Soft Skills
4. Industry-specific Technical Skills (e.g. Information Technology, Allied Health, Entrepreneurship, Manufacturing, Business Administration)
5. 21st Century Skills



Phase One & Phase Two

The six-month program progresses from an initial emphasis on GED and CRC preparation, along with basic skills instruction, to a greater focus on 21st century skills and professional soft skills.

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>All skills are integrated throughout the entire 6-month program.</p> <p>Co-enrollment with a postsecondary institution runs through both phases of the curriculum framework.</p> | <p>Phase One</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GED Preparation and Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) ▪ Professional Soft Skills (PSS) ▪ Digital Literacy Skills (DL) and Industry- specific Contextualized Curriculum (CC) ▪ 21st Century Skills <p>Mini- capstone Project</p> |
| <p>Active business participation runs throughout the entirety of the 6-month program.</p> <p>Work on the final Capstone Project should run for three of the six months.</p> | <p>Phase Two</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contextualized Curriculum (GED if needed, CRC, and 21st century skills) ▪ Industry-specific Technical Skills ▪ Technology Integration ▪ Professional Soft Skills <p>Capstone Project</p> |

The focus on instruction shifts throughout the six months. The PluggedInVA curriculum is divided into two Phases to reflect this shift; however, all five core components should be integrated into instruction from the beginning of the program.

Phase One will lay the foundation for Phase Two, preparing learners for their Capstone Projects.

III. Introduction to the core components of the curriculum

Below is a brief introduction to each of the curriculum components. Each component is covered in more detail in the PluggedInVA Instructors Manual.

▶ GED Curriculum and Career Readiness Certificate (CRC)

Completion of the GED credential and CRC is emphasized from the beginning of the program. As an individual learner earns these certificates, he or she will focus more time on the Digital Literacy certificates. Once all learners enrolled in the program successfully complete both the GED and CRC components, the GED Curriculum and Career Readiness core content will be replaced with an increased emphasis on the development of Professional Soft Skills and 21st century skills.

▶ Digital Literacy Skills (DL)

All learners will complete the Microsoft Digital Literacy Certificate (MSDL) or an equivalent credential. Instructors will make connections between the skills developed through the MSDL certifications and GED preparation with an emphasis on how various digital skills are applied in the specific content area of study (i.e. technology, allied health, manufacturing, etc.).

▶ Industry-specific technical skills

Business and industry partners, as well as community college instructors, will help identify industry-specific skills and competencies to integrate into the GED curriculum. Additionally, community college courses will be selected to prepare learners with the knowledge and skills they will need to enter employment or to continue on to more advanced career training.

CTE Career Clusters



Additional information about entry-level knowledge and skills requirement can be found on the [CTE Career Clusters website](#). The site lists the knowledge and skill sets for 16 career clusters, including healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology.

[Virginia's CTE Resource](#)

This site includes a comprehensive list of careers, each with task lists and competencies accompanied by learning resources, such as lesson plans and activities, that may be used and adapted by an instructor.

► Postsecondary Readiness

Incorporate academic readiness into the curriculum. Study skills and strategies for academic stress should be explicitly taught and consistently included in the curriculum.

The following list is a good place to start.

- Time management
- Intensity and rigor (amount of reading and time commitment)
- Note-taking (reading and listening)
- Asking questions (approaching instructors and staff for needs)
- Online learning platforms (Blackboard)
- Writing (templates)
- Reading strategies (e.g., scanning, previewing, using context clues)
- Citing Sources / Academic Integrity

Resources for postsecondary readiness

These resources may be useful in determining the academic readiness skills your learners need to succeed in postsecondary coursework and training. The first resource, The National College Transitions Network, also includes resources and materials for use in the classroom.

[National College Transitions Network \(NCTN\)](#)

The mission of the National College Transition Network is to strengthen policy and practice related to college and career readiness of adult learners. The NCTN works with adult education programs, professional development providers, and

policymakers to enable adult learners to succeed in postsecondary education that leads to jobs with family sustaining wages.

[National Commission on Adult Literacy](#)

“Challenges in Assessing for Postsecondary Readiness”

This Policy Brief examines the major assessments in use today to measure adult learning gains and determine student placements – e.g., BEST, CASAS, TABE, COMPASS, ASSET, and ACCUPLACER in terms of their use and issues of alignment. Special attention is given to the GED as it relates to postsecondary readiness, and to issues of alignment between the skills needed to pass the GED and those needed for placement in a non-remediated college curriculum. On pages 16-18, the authors offer several recommendations to resolve the problems and challenges identified.

[American Youth Policy Forum](#)

This issue brief discusses a multitude of barriers to postsecondary access as well as the barriers to postsecondary success. While the barriers discussed present a significant obstacle for many students, it is important to understand that each individual can experience multiple and varying barriers throughout life. For the purposes of this issue brief, the term "postsecondary" refers to the scope of higher education: two- and four-year colleges and universities, technical schools, apprenticeships, and certificate programs.

► Professional Soft Skills (PSS)

Instructors are encouraged to use readings from and discussion of the text *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R. Covey. As appropriate, professional soft skills, which connect to this text, the GED, and CRC content, will be incorporated into classroom activities and discussions from the start of the program and as “teachable moments” arise. Professional soft skills will be viewed as a thread that runs through all content areas of the curriculum.

The program developers recommend using the text *The Etiquette Advantage in Business: Personal Skills for Professional Success* (Post & Post, 2009) or a similar text as an additional resource to guide instruction in professional soft skills.

Resources

[Soft Skills Video Series](#) with Companion Instructor and Student Guides
[Resources with Videos and Handouts](#)

[7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Steven Covey](#), summary

[The Etiquette Advantage in Business](#), Peggy and Peter Post

► 21st Century Skills (21C)

During Phase One of the program, learners will engage in activities that emphasize the development of 21st century skills (21C) that are essential for today's workplace. 21st century skills include teamwork, communication, critical thinking, innovation and creativity, as well as diversity awareness.

Learners will apply these skills as they engage in collaborative group activities, information challenges, mini capstone projects, and participate in online communities (e.g. Blackboard, blogs, wikis, etc.).

► Information Challenges

Information challenges are short, contextualized questions that are designed to initiate collaborative-style, discovery learning. Each information challenge is designed to provide an opportunity for learners to develop, apply, and/or demonstrate a specific inquiry process skill or skill set needed for successful completion of the capstone project(s).

Provide learners with a description of information challenges as a collaborative learning activity in which all work will be completed with a partner or in small groups. Explain how these challenges will be used to integrate and apply skills across all core content areas (GED, PSS, DL/CC, & 21C). Information challenges need to focus on learners' development, application, and demonstration of skills related to the inquiry process used to complete the capstone projects.

Examples of information challenge questions are provided throughout the PluggedInVA Instructors Manual.

► Mini-Capstone Projects

Capstone Projects will be used to help integrate and apply the knowledge and strategies learned in the *PluggedInVA* core content. During Phase One, learners will engage with information challenges as part of mini-capstone projects that will emphasize the development and application of skill sets across all core content areas (GED, CRC, PSS, DL/CC, & 21C). Learners will explore and investigate issues that challenge the local community or relate to future jobs in the targeted workplace environment.

Completing the information challenges and mini-capstone project will require learners to follow the procedures as part of an inquiry process as listed below:

1. Identify an issue that is a challenge to the local community or related to future jobs in the targeted workplace environment(s).
2. Locate information from multiple resources and in multiple formats related to the identified challenge.
3. Critically evaluate information to determine that which is the most relevant, reliable, and accurate in addressing the identified challenge.
4. Synthesize information from multiple perspectives across multiple formats into a clear and concise presentation that will be delivered in both textual and oral formats.
5. Communicate the results using a strategic plan to address the identified challenge.

► Capstone project

The Capstone project is the cornerstone of the *PluggedInVA* curriculum framework. This project should reflect a need in the community. Work on this begins three months into the six-month program. Learners will build on the skills they have already developed through weekly information challenges and mini-capstones, technology instruction, and industry-related instruction to demonstrate

- 21st century skills,
- technology skills,
- teamwork and collaboration,
- and professional soft skills.

PluggedInVA participants will deliver a formal presentation of their capstone projects to an audience that may include local business leaders and employers, postsecondary staff and faculty, adult education program staff, and other invested community members.

Capstone Projects will be used to help integrate and apply the knowledge and strategies learned in the *PluggedInVA* core content. As part of a collaborative team, learners will explore and investigate either previously identified or newly identified issues. Each team will focus on a different topic of interest, following the same process as outlined for completion of the mini-capstone project.

Past PluggedInVA capstone projects have included

- the creation of a website for a local business,
- building and donating a computer for a local research center,
- designing an outdoor community space,
- developing marketing materials for a local research and education center,
- creating and publishing a class book,
- creating a proposal for a small business,
- and completing an energy audit of a building for a weatherization cohort.

As the cornerstone of the PluggedInVA framework, the capstone projects are presented in a public, semi-formal presentation where community members, business leaders, local politicians, teachers, and family of the learners are invited to attend and participate.

Capstone Project Team Project Management Log

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Capstone Project Description | | | |
| Team Member Names: | | | |
| Tasks | Team member(s) responsible | Due Date | Actions to Complete |
| | | | |

► Rubrics for professional soft skills

In addition to evaluation by the instructor, learners should also self-assess their performance on the capstone project and their development of professional soft skills.

The rubrics below are examples that can be adapted to better fit the learners' needs. The creation or adaptation of a rubric can be done as a group project with instructor guidance, or the instructor may adapt the rubrics to fit the objectives of the project and the course.

[Career and Technical Education \(CTE\)](#)

This PowerPoint presentation introduces students to Virginia's Workplace Readiness Skills for the Commonwealth and the importance of the skills to employers who hire high school graduates and other entry-level workers. The colorful presentation is intended as a stimulus for a general class discussion and suggests ways that workplace skills can be applied and practiced in school and at home.

Employability and Soft Skills Manual, PACTT Alliance

<http://www.pacttalliance.org/documents/Employability%20Manual%20Vol%203%20Final%20Draft.pdf>

This manual contains rubrics and competency checklists for a range of professional soft skills

IV. Defining expected outcomes and data to be collected

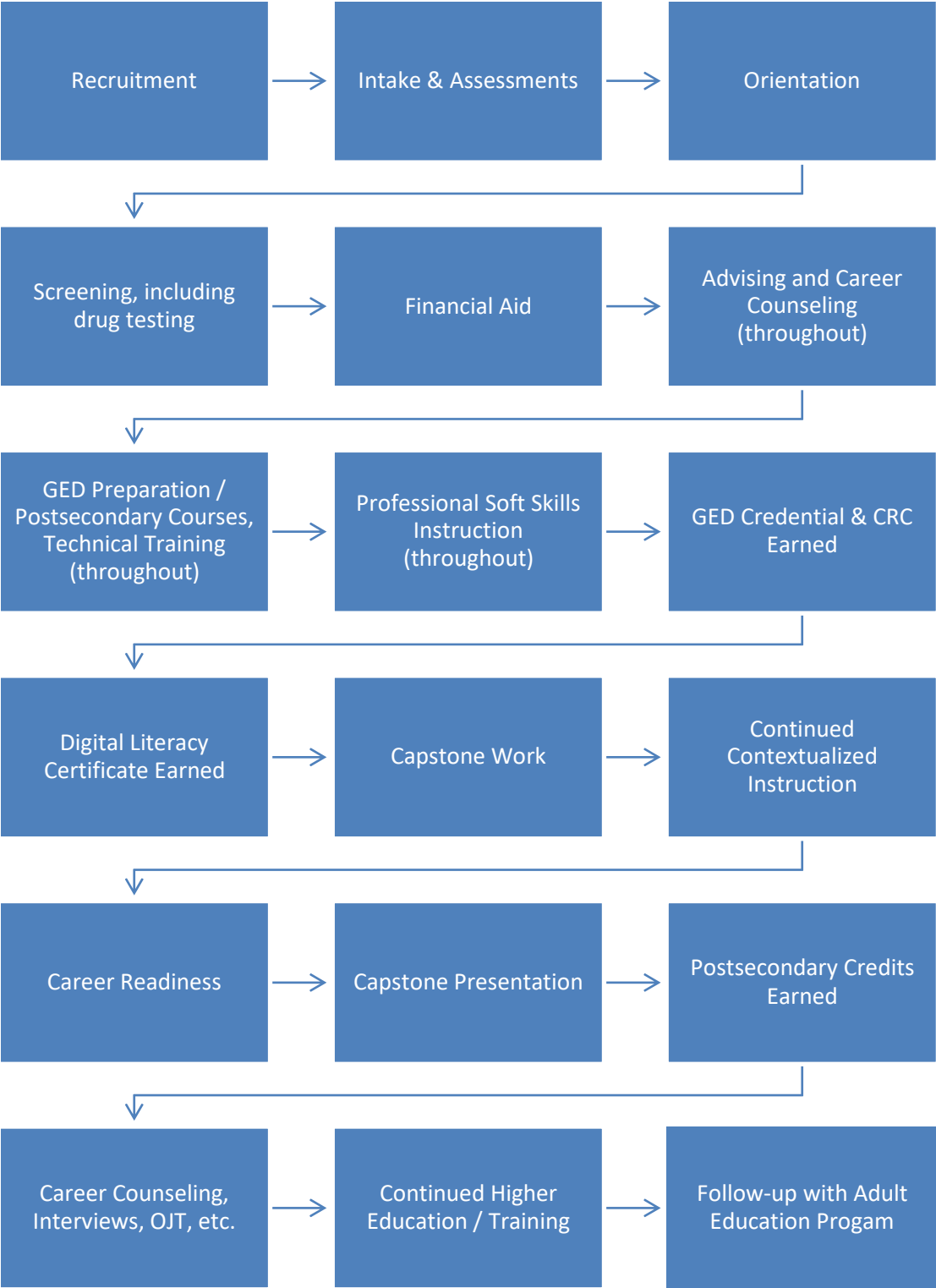
To be completed by an instructor or intake administrator. Also to be updated as the learner progresses through the curriculum.

| Expected Outcomes | Target Date (s) | Partner Responsible for Collecting Data | Notes |
|---|------------------------|--|--------------|
| GED Attainment | | | |
| Career Readiness Credentials (CRCs) | | | |
| MS Office Digital Literacy Certificates | | | |
| College Credits | | | |
| Career Exposure / Work Experience | | | |
| Postsecondary Enrollment | | | |
| Capstone Project Presentation | | | |
| Industry-recognized Credentials Attained | | | |
| Employment | | | |
| On-the-job training, apprenticeship, or other job training | | | |
| Add any additional assessment tools below | | | |
| Other | | | |

| Other Measurable Skills | Target Date | Evaluation Method (e.g., rubric, public presentation, digital portfolio, assessment) |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--|
| Professional Soft Skills | | |
| Technology Integration | | |
| 21st Century Skills | | |
| Workplace Readiness | | |
| Other | | |

V. Draft learner timeline with all PluggedInVA Components

Before, during, and after their time in the PluggedInVA program, learners will go through all of the steps in the following graphic. Develop a learner timeline that fits your PluggedInVA program. Share it with learners so that they will fully understand the commitment needed to complete the program and also so they can prepare themselves for the next steps in the timeline.



VI. Defining Learner Expectations

Draft an overview of learner expectations and responsibilities for the duration of the program that are connected to expectations typically found in a work environment.

The rigor and intensity of PluggedInVA programs are more strenuous than our learners are typically used to. Stressing the importance of attendance, participation, and integrity from the very beginning is important to the success of the cohort.

Following is a short list of essential learner expectations. Instructors and facilitators are encouraged to add to this list of expectations to meet their own instructional needs.

PluggedInVA learners are expected to:

- Arrive on time for every instructional session and stay to the end of each session.
- Participate in all instructional activities.
- Prepare assignments to meet stated deadlines.
- Work appropriately and productively with other learners.
- Demonstrate responsibility, integrity, and ethical behavior.
- Notify the instructor and project team members of unavoidable absences before the class meeting or as soon as possible afterwards.
- Make arrangements to obtain information or to complete activities missed due to absences.

Individualized Learning Plan

Work with the learner to complete this learning plan. Revisit this plan throughout the program and make adjustments as necessary.

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Name | Date |
| GED Goal Statement (<i>Example: I will earn my GED credential by April 5.</i>) | |
| Steps completed toward GED goal | |
| CRC Goal Statement: (<i>Example: I will earn my CRC at the Silver Level by May 1.</i>) | |
| Steps completed toward CRC goal: (<i>Example: Finished the Job Profiling section</i>) | |
| Digital Literacy (DL) Goal Statement: (<i>Example: I plan to complete the MSDL certification by April 20.</i>) | |
| Steps completed toward DL goal: (<i>Example: Finished the Computer Basics modular on March 12</i>) | |

| |
|---|
| Post-secondary Education and Training Goal Statement |
| |

| |
|------------------------------|
| Career Goal Statement |
| |

VII. Develop weekly instructional schedule

The PluggedInVA schedule typically requires 15 to 20 hours of instruction, including courses at the postsecondary institution.

This sample schedule below shows four three-hour blocks of instruction. Each block of instruction at the adult education center should include time for all four integrated core content areas: Contextualized GED Instruction, 21st Century Skills, Technology Integration, and Professional Soft Skills.

Sample Weekly Schedule

| Schedule | Activity | Location |
|---------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Day One | | |
| 5:00 – 6:00 [GED] | GED / Math Instruction | Classroom |
| 6:00 – 6:30 [PSS] | Professional Soft Skills | Classroom/Computer Lab |
| 6:30 – 7:00 [21C] | Instruction | Computer Lab |
| 7:00 – 8:00 [DL/CC] | Collaborative Learning Activities Contextualized Curriculum | Classroom/Computer Lab |
| Day Two | | |
| 5:00 – 5:30 [DL] | Digital Literacy (self-paced) | Computer Lab |
| 5:30 – 6:00 [PSS] | Business Etiquette | Classroom/Computer Lab |
| 6:00 – 7:00 [21C] | Information Challenge | Classroom |
| 7:00 – 8:00 [DL/CC] | Contextualized Curriculum | Classroom/Computer Lab |
| Day Three | | |
| 5:00 – 6:00 [GED] | GED/Writing Instruction (e.g., goal statement) | Classroom |
| 6:00 – 6:30 [PSS] | Creating a Resume/Writing Applications | Classroom/Computer Lab |
| 6:30 – 7:30 [DL/CC] | Contextualized Curriculum | Classroom |
| 7:30 – 8:00 [21C] | Digital Portfolio | Computer Lab |
| Day Four | | |
| 5:00 – 6:30 [DL/CC] | Contextualized Curriculum | Classroom/Computer Lab |
| 6:30 – 8:00 [FLEX] | Flex Time | Classroom/ Computer Lab |

The sample schedule above allows for some flexibility based upon learners' individual needs. Ideally, content for each class meeting time should allow for team teaching/co-teaching with one GED instructor and one technical/specialized instructor present during all instructional periods. This allows for more seamless integration across the core content areas (i.e. GED/CRC, PSS, DL/CC, technical skills, and 21C).

***When co-teaching with one GED instructor and one technical/specialized instructor is not possible, regular communication between these instructors is important in order to ensure alignment in the curriculum.

The adult education program focuses on enhancing basic and technology skills that are necessary for success both in postsecondary coursework and in the targeted industry.

Adult education instructors will also provide explicit and ongoing instruction in 21st century skills and professional soft skills, both of which are implicit and necessary components of most postsecondary coursework and job training.

VIII. Peer cohorts

Strong peer cohorts are central to the success of the PluggedInVA model. Learners benefit from the support of their peers, knowing that they are experiencing similar challenges and successes. In past cohorts, the learners have formed a tight-knit community, motivating each other toward their goals.

Sample activities to reinforce the peer cohort

- writing out a class mission statement (also a good collaborative writing activity),
- creating a list of class rules and expectations as a class (good for teamwork and collaboration),
- course project work (i.e., information challenges and the capstone projects),
- celebrations as they progress through the program.

► Retention Plan

Inherent in the PluggedInVA model are many effective retention strategies:

- relevant and meaningful contextualized instruction;
- class projects;
- measurable signs of progress;
- lessons that apply to everyday life;
- greater self-efficacy;
- consistent interaction with potential employers;
- and utilization of a variety of instructional methods.

Additionally, a strong peer cohort reinforces the importance of attendance and the motivation to come to class and actively participate

With meaningful learning goals and consistent interaction with the program's business partner(s), the everyday applications and potential rewards of the program are clear,

providing strong motivation to continue in the program.

IX. Instructor Training

Ongoing instructor training and consistent communication are key to ensuring that all elements of the framework are integrated to most effectively meet the needs of the learners.

In addition to regular meetings, PluggedInVA events and activities, or online correspondence, classroom observations, both by other instructors and by supervisors, can be helpful tools in both improving instruction and sharing good practices with other PluggedInVA team members.

The form below may be used and adapted for this purpose.

Sample Classroom Observation

| Classroom Observation | |
|---|-------|
| Instructor: | _____ |
| Name of Class: | _____ |
| Time Class Begins: | _____ |
| Time Class Ends: | _____ |
| Number of Students Enrolled: | _____ |
| Number of Students Present: | _____ |
| _____ | |
| Objectives of the Class | |
| | |
| Content of the Lesson (Academic areas: knowledge and skills that are taught or practiced during the class) | |
| | |
| Professional Soft Skills Taught or Practiced | |

Basic Skills (i.e., writing, reading, math) Covered

Technology Integration

Instructional Methods or Strategies (e.g., groupings, project work, research, presentations, etc.)

Materials and Technology Used

Student Involvement

Approximately what percentage of the students respond and are actively involved during the class?

Approximately what percentage of the students initiate questions and ideas?

What strategies are used for student engagement?

Feedback to Students (e.g., immediate / delayed, explicit / implicit, consistent)

Other Comments