

*One Step Forward Initiative*



# Guide

## to Adult Education for Work

Transforming Adult Education to Grow a Skilled Workforce



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Transforming Adult Education to Grow a Skilled Workforce

## Credits

The content for this Guide was based on research conducted by the Workforce Development Strategies Group (WDSG) at the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), and a research paper commissioned by NCEE and written by Forrest Chisman of the Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL).

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### *One Step Forward Initiative*

In Fall 2007, the WDSG at the National Center on Education and the Economy received a grant from the Walmart Foundation to identify a set of quality indicators for Adult Education for Work—programs geared to helping low-skilled workers acquire the basic skills they need to succeed in the 21st-century workplace and to enhance U.S. firms' competitiveness. The purpose of identifying the elements of Adult Education for Work programs is to:

- (1) Inform the adult education field and its practitioners about the key components of effective programs;
- (2) Stimulate excellence and guide quality improvement in programming in support of Adult Education for Work; and
- (3) Steer new public and private investments into expanded and transformed programming.

This Guide on Adult Education for Work is one of the products produced by the *One Step Forward Initiative*.

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**What is Adult Education for Work?**

*Adult Education for Work, in this Guide, means the education and training low-skilled adults need to become prepared for post-secondary education or training, and for family-sustaining employment and career advancement.*

## INTRODUCTION

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**T**he United States faces an alarming challenge that seriously threatens our competitiveness in the world economy. A large and growing portion of the American workforce lacks critical basic skills and work readiness competencies, posing an acute threat to our nation's economic well-being.

The hard truth:

- The U.S. is the only highly-developed democracy where young adults are less likely to have completed high school than the previous generation.<sup>1</sup>
- Over 1 million young adults drop out of high school each year. More than 12 million adults without a high school credential are in the labor force today.
- At the same time, almost twice as many jobs over the next decade will require a postsecondary credential or college degree, up from 25 percent today to about 45 percent over the next decade.<sup>2</sup>
- And far too many (93 million) score at the lower levels of national assessments of functional literacy skills and are unprepared to enroll in the postsecondary education or job training programs that can prepare them for current and future jobs.<sup>3</sup>

There is a growing consensus about the need to reform our Adult Education and workforce development systems to better enable low-skilled adults, including those without high school credentials, to pursue further education and ultimately family-sustaining employment.

Action is imperative.

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<sup>1</sup> Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance*, 2008, table A1.2a, and National Commission on Adult Literacy, *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce* (New York: National Commission) 2008, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Arlene Dohm and Lynn Shniper, "Occupational Employment Projections to 2016," *Monthly Labor Review*, November 2007, table 5. The Bureau of Labor Statistics characterizes a college degree to include two-year, four-year, and graduate diplomas. BLS describes a postsecondary credential as vocational programs lasting from a few weeks to more than one year, leading to a certificate or other award, but not a degree.

<sup>3</sup> Thirty million adult Americans score at "below basic" literacy level and another 63 million adults can only perform simple literacy tasks, according to the National Center on Education Statistics, *National Assessment of Adult Literacy*, (NAAL, 2003), U.S. Department of Education, 2005.

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The National Commission on Adult Literacy recently concluded that our current Adult Education system is “ill-equipped to meet 21st Century needs” and recommended that the Adult Education and literacy system in this country be transformed into an Adult Education and workforce skills system, with the new mission of attainment of postsecondary and workforce readiness.<sup>4</sup>

The current Adult Education system was simply not designed to meet this goal. For many decades, its major purpose has been to provide basic literacy and English language instruction, and preparation for the GED and other high school equivalency examinations. Providers lack the structure, time, curricula, and resources to prepare individuals to be ready for postsecondary education and for good jobs.

What our nation needs is *Adult Education for Work*.

### About Adult Education for Work

This Guide builds on the recommendations of the National Commission on Adult Literacy to refocus the Adult Education system on the goal of preparing individuals who lack skills to be successful in the workplace. It is intended to jumpstart transformation of the system at the ground level.

This effort involves stepping up service delivery to individuals who lack the fundamental literacy, English language, basic and work readiness skills they need to succeed economically.

Adult Education for Work is part of a broader effort to build a Career Pathways system that moves low-skilled adults through a continua of workforce-oriented Adult Education programs on to postsecondary (degree and non-degree certificate) programs that lead to family-sustaining employment and career advancement.

The underlying assumptions of Adult Education for Work are:

- Work readiness and preparation for postsecondary education and training for all adults is a core mission;
- There is a clear connection to the economic development and workforce development strategies of the region;
- There must be a commitment to creating pathways that move adults through the system as quickly and efficiently as possible; and
- It is critical to partner with other providers in the community to offer the full range of services and supports adults need to persist in and complete Adult Education for Work programs.

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<sup>4</sup> National Commission on Adult Literacy, op. cit., p. vi and p. 15.

These assumptions are based on extensive research and the promising practices of a number of innovative Adult Education programs that prepare their students to succeed in further education and training, work, and careers.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, a significant number of Adult Education programs are at various stages of reshaping their programming to meet these goals. Transformation of the system has begun.

An important caveat. We are not suggesting work readiness and preparation for postsecondary education and training should become the only purpose of Adult Education. There is clearly a role for family literacy, citizenship training, life skills and the other kinds of programming in Adult Education. These are worthy goals and individual programs must shape their focus to fit the needs of their participants.

We are, however, proposing the adoption and expansion of a broad new approach within the Adult Education umbrella that we call Adult Education for Work. This approach focuses on critical preparation for postsecondary education and training and for family-sustaining employment and career advancement.

We strongly believe such a transformed Adult Education system will help provide American employers with the critical workforce they need to remain competitive in a global economy and provide low-skilled individuals with a navigable pathway to future education, work and economic success.

## About this Guide

This Guide outlines the specific steps policymakers, program administrators and providers can take to begin to transform their current Adult Education programs to Adult Education for Work. Specifically, this Guide offers practical advice for getting started and includes the following:

- A rationale for change by answering the questions: What is America's basic skills problem? Why is it a threat to economic competitiveness? Why is our current delivery system inadequate to meet these concerns in the 21st-century economy?
- A vision for how a comprehensive Career Pathways system can be constructed to better meet our nation's skill needs;
- A framework for an effective Adult Education for Work program with twenty-three quality elements (organized in seven focus areas) that are designed to prepare adults for both postsecondary learning and work;

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<sup>5</sup> This conclusion is shared by a broad range of national organizations focused on these issues, and our work draws on their work. These groups include: Jobs for the Future's and the National Council on Workforce Education's *Breaking Through Initiative*; The Joyce Foundation's *Shifting Gears Initiative*; the National Commission on Adult Literacy's working including their report *Reach Higher, America* and the background papers on which it was based; papers written by the Workforce Strategies Center including "Building a Career Pathways System"; papers written by the Center for American Progress including "Lifelong Learning: New Strategies for the Education of Working Adult" by Brian Bosworth; the work of the Center for Law and Social Policy; and the work of The Working Poor Families Project.

## INTRODUCTION

- Benchmarks and promising practices that illustrate examples of quality elements already in action in programs across the country; and
- A self-assessment tool that program administrators and providers can use to evaluate the status of their current program design and offerings against the recommended set of benchmarks, identify gaps, and plan strategically for needed change.

### Who Should Read this Guide?

This Guide is a “must-read” if you work for and/or are involved in program design, delivery, administration, or policy development for one of the stakeholder groups that should be a partner in Adult Education for Work, including:

- Adult Education
- Postsecondary Education and Training (including Community Colleges)
- Career and Technical Education
- Workforce Investment Boards/One-Stop Career Centers
- Economic Development
- TANF Agencies
- Community-based Providers

## WHY ADULT EDUCATION FOR WORK?

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**B**oth adult educators and policymakers have long believed that our Adult Education system for teaching basic skills should serve many goals, including personal enrichment, language and life skills development, increased civic participation, and improved parental responsibilities.<sup>6</sup>

Adult Education for Work proposes building a core strand within the Adult Education system that would add a critical new focus: Helping low-skilled adults attain the basic and/or English language and work readiness skills they need to successfully progress on to postsecondary education or training and progress in high-quality, family-sustaining employment.

Why is this new focus critical? In 2007–2008 alone, three blue ribbon study groups concluded that:<sup>7</sup>

- **Low Skills:** Large parts of our workforce lack the basic skills employers need to build an internationally competitive economy. For example, 90 million adults scored at the lowest levels of the federal government’s 2005 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 18 million adults have no high school diploma or equivalent, and roughly half of adult immigrants living in the United States report that they speak English “less than very well.”
- **An Adult Problem:** Improving our schools alone will not solve the basic skills problem. The number of adults already in the workforce is far greater than the number of school-aged children, and school reform will not fully impact the workforce for many years. An estimated 65% of the American Workforce in 2020 is already beyond the reach of our school system. For the most part, the workforce of the foreseeable future in the United States is the workforce of the present.

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<sup>6</sup> These goals, and the goal of workforce readiness, are not only cited repeatedly in the Adult Education literature, but they are also stated in various terms as the goals of Adult Education in both the legislation authorizing federal aid to Adult Education, “The Adult Education and Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act, and in the authorizing legislation for Adult Education service in most states.

<sup>7</sup> National Center on Education and the Economy, *Tough Choices for Tough Times: Report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass) 2007. National Commission on Adult Literacy, *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce* (New York: National Commission) 2008. Irwin Kirsch, Henry Braun, Kentaro Yamamoto, and Andrew Sum, *America’s Perfect Storm: Three Forces Changing Our Nation’s Future* (Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 2007). The specific points and statistics in this section are drawn from *Reach Higher, America*, 2–10, available at: [www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org](http://www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org).

## WHY ADULT EDUCATION FOR WORK?

- **Immigration and Retirements:** The basic skills problem is becoming more serious due to demographic changes. Immigrants will make up most of the net growth in our workforce in coming decades, and most come with low levels of education and limited English proficiency. In addition, the impending retirement of the baby boom generation will create a skilled worker shortage in many high-growth sectors.
- **Low Wage/Dead-End Cycle:** Inadequate basic skills are a major cause of low wages and stagnant incomes. Americans with low basic skills are far more likely to be trapped in low-wage, dead-end jobs. Jobs requiring more skills tend to pay more, even among those with the same level of educational attainment. Among high school graduates, recent research suggests that occupations requiring the highest degree of basic skills competency pay on average 50 percent more than those demanding the least basic skills proficiency.<sup>8</sup>

### The Current Adult Education Response

#### What do we currently include under the Adult Education umbrella?

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) instruction in reading, writing and elementary mathematics for adults whose skills in these areas are below the high school level;
- Adult Secondary Education (ASE) preparation for passing the GED or other high school equivalency tests; and
- English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehending spoken English for non-native speakers of the language.

Collectively, these components teach adults with low levels of education and/or limited English proficiency the “basic skills.” The skills are “basic” in the sense that adult educators consider them to be the minimum literacy and language skills (and in the case of ASE, the minimum level of educational attainment) required to function effectively in American social and economic life.

Increasingly, however, as highlighted by the National Commission Report on Adult Literacy, we are recognizing that Adult Education programs in this country are not currently adequate to lift the millions of individuals in need of basic and work readiness skills on to further education and to good jobs.

#### Why are Adult Education programs inadequate to meet current needs?

- **Inadequate Funding:** In 2008, total funding for Adult Education and Literacy programs in the U.S. equaled only \$2.1 billion, with only \$500 million of that coming from the federal government.

<sup>8</sup> Ray Uhalde and Jeff Strohl, *America In the Global Economy*, A Background Paper for the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, (National Center on Education and the Economy, December 2006), pp. 12–23.

## WHY ADULT EDUCATION FOR WORK?

- **Levels of Service:** Due largely to limited funding, the current system served less than 3 million adults in 2008, while the projected number of adults who might benefit from services is many times that number. As mentioned earlier, 18 million adults lack a high school diploma or the equivalent and more than 90 million adults scored at the lowest levels on the federal National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL).
- **Program Focus:** As summarized in the chart below, the focus of most current Adult Education programs is life skills and personal growth. While laudable goals, alone they do not equip adults to succeed in the fast-paced, knowledge-based economy. The Adult Education for Work initiative would shift the current paradigm and expand the program emphasis by focusing on critical work readiness skills and preparation for postsecondary education and training.

### Moving Towards “New Basics” for Adult Education for Work

<b>Customer</b>	Student is the primary customer	→	Students and employers are the customers
<b>Goal of Curricula</b>	Life skills are the primary goal	→	Work readiness skills and preparation for postsecondary education are the primary goals
<b>Content focus</b>	Applying literacy, numeracy and English language learning to everyday life tasks	→	Literacy and numeracy and English language learning as well as thinking and reasoning skills such as problem solving, team work and following instructions
<b>How work readiness is taught</b>	Might include some employment-related tasks like filling out a job application	→	Teaches basic skills in a work context and stresses good work habits such as punctuality, diligence, communication, and appropriate dress and behavior
<b>Program focus</b>	Driven by students' personal goals, needs and interests	→	Driven by students' employment goals, the skill needs of family-sustaining jobs and the entry requirements for postsecondary education and training
<b>End goal</b>	Most Adult Education students never achieve a GED, much less the postsecondary education that is the key to success in today's economy. <sup>9</sup>	→	Most students achieve a high level of basic and workforce readiness skills and are prepared to enter postsecondary education and training and family-sustaining jobs.

<sup>9</sup>This can be seen from the fact that, nationwide, enrollments in ASE are less than 10% of the enrollments in ABE and ESL combined. See the various annual versions of the “Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Report to Congress” produced by the U.S. Department of Education, at [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/resource/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/resource/index.html). See also: John Tyler, “The General Education Development (GED) Credential: History, Current Research, and Directions for Policy and Practice” Chapter 5 in Review of Adult Learning and Literacy 2005 (Cambridge: National Center for Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005).

## WHY ADULT EDUCATION FOR WORK?

### Why is transition to further education and work so important?

Recent research on the earnings of Adult Education students conducted by the state of Washington (through its I-BEST program) and related studies<sup>10</sup> shows that most Adult Education students achieve significant near term earnings gains only if their basic skills instruction is followed by or combined with at least one year of college and/or completion of a program of specialized technical training ending in a certification. Washington's I-BEST program refers to this as the "tipping point," the time at which students begin to see such earnings gains as a result of their educational achievements.

Unfortunately, most Adult Education students do not reach this tipping point. Even students who have completed the highest levels of Adult Education, including those who obtain high school equivalency certificates, are far more likely than other students to be placed in college developmental or remedial education programs when pursuing further education because they lack the skills required to succeed in postsecondary education. They are also far less likely than other students who enter college to complete postsecondary certificates or degrees.

### The Nation Needs a New System

To meet the skill needs of the nation's employers and to provide greater educational and economic opportunities for America's workers, especially those with the lowest skill levels, we advocate for the development of a new Career Pathways system, with Adult Education for Work programs as the cornerstone.

In a comprehensive Career Pathways learning system, Adult Education for Work would be fully aligned with postsecondary education and training (degree and non-degree technical certificate programs), workforce and supportive service activities (many of which are provided through One-Stop Career Centers), and with regional workforce and economic development strategies, so as to meet the skill needs of existing and emerging regional employers as well as the needs of low-skilled adults. A visual of such a system is shown on page 9.

Under such a system, seamless Career Pathways would be developed and offered that make it far easier for adults—especially those with limited basic skills—to advance through progressive levels of the educational system as quickly as possible. They would gain education and workforce skills of demonstrated value at each level.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *A Skilled and Educated Workforce: An assessment of the number and type of higher education and training credentials required to meet employer demand*, December 2005, a joint report by the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, Olympia Washington, [www.wtb.wa.gov/Pubs/2005\\_Related\\_SEW-1.pdf](http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Pubs/2005_Related_SEW-1.pdf). See also David Prince and Davis Jenkins: *Building Pathways to Success for Low-Skill Adult Students*, (New York: Community College Research Center, 2005).

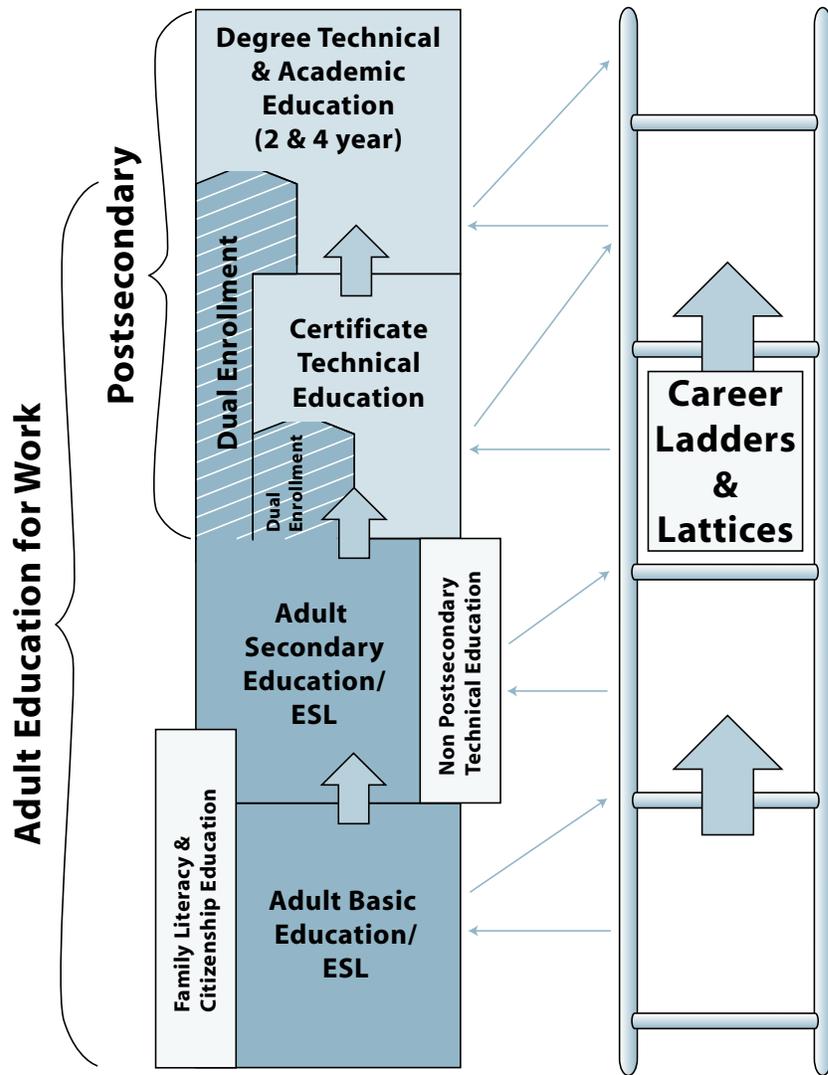
<sup>11</sup> "Career Pathways" is a term for a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector, and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector. An early exponent, from whom this definition is drawn, is the Workforce Strategies Center; see their 2002 report *Building A Career Pathways System: Promising Practices in Community-College Centered Workforce Development*, by Julian L. Alssid, et al. The report is available at: [www.workforcestrategy.org](http://www.workforcestrategy.org).

In this comprehensive Career Pathways system, education and training at every level would be closely aligned with jobs and industries important to local and regional economies. Every level of education and training would afford students the ability to advance at work or in school, with assessments and intermediate certifications articulated to the requirements of the next level of education and employment. Adults could move easily between the labor market and further education and training in order to advance in their careers and upgrade their value added in the workplace.

As shown in the chart, the education levels in the Career Pathways system include:

- The continua of ABE/ASE and ESL basic skills instruction that form the core of the present Adult Education System, but is reformed as envisioned in this Guide, and referred to as “Adult Education for Work”;
- Non-postsecondary education and training that might lead to a technical certificate, such as through short-term workforce training programs;
- Non-degree postsecondary technical education and training with certification in occupational specialties that may or may not require admission to postsecondary credit programs (including non-credit extension programs offered by community colleges, registered apprenticeship programs, etc.); and
- Postsecondary education at the two- and four-year degree level.

## Career Pathways System



## WHY ADULT EDUCATION FOR WORK?

At present, these various delivery systems and levels of Adult Education are poorly articulated. A new Career Pathways system should knit these levels together by ensuring that adults achieve the requisite skills and a recognized credential, with the ability to ultimately progress to postsecondary education and training without extensive remediation. As a result, Adult Education for Work students should make a much easier transition into postsecondary programs at either the technical non-degree or degree levels.

In a Career Pathways system, progress through these levels would not necessarily be linear. For example, the system should provide support in improving basic skills to postsecondary students who need such assistance. Likewise, some parts of technical training may count toward college certificates or degrees, and some college students may concurrently enroll in non-credit technical education courses. Many programs, including a number of prominent registered apprenticeship programs, incorporate dual enrollment with two-year technical education degree programs. And a growing number of programs integrate basic skills and skills training, such as the I-BEST program.

Despite these complexities, the overall purpose of a Career Pathway system should be to help students improve their workforce readiness as quickly and easily as possible, regardless of the education pathway they choose.

And because credentials are quickly becoming the new currency with employers for reflecting skill acquisition, we advocate for the awarding of certifications to document the progressive accomplishments of individuals, beginning with nationally-recognized career readiness credentials and building to technical education degrees and industry-endorsed certifications.

## Building a Career Pathways System

Constructing an Adult Education for Work program as part of a Career Pathways system will require substantial changes for all key partners, as summarized below.

	Partner Roles and Responsibilities
<b>Key Partners (to ensure a comprehensive systems approach)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult Education administering agencies</li> <li>• Individual Adult Education providers</li> <li>• Postsecondary and technical institutions (especially community colleges)</li> <li>• Workforce Investment Boards</li> <li>• One-Stop Career Centers</li> <li>• Career and technical education</li> <li>• Social services agencies</li> <li>• Community-based, faith-based and volunteer organizations</li> <li>• Others that provide or facilitate Adult Education and supportive services</li> </ul>
<b>Key Drivers (to ensure skills taught meet employer needs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers</li> <li>• Unions</li> <li>• Economic development agencies</li> <li>• Local, state or national occupational certifying agencies</li> </ul>
<b>Key Partner Agreements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree upon the structure, financing and accountability of a system;</li> <li>• Identify the skills required for transitions from one level to the next;</li> <li>• Form articulation agreements that ensure that skills attained will be honored for purposes of transitions;</li> <li>• Ensure that adequate supportive services are provided to help students persist in and successfully complete programs</li> </ul>
<b>Key Changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students receive extensive and ongoing career guidance, instruction in how to use the system, and information on how it benefits them;</li> <li>• The Adult Education for Work curriculum will be contextualized to include applications of job-related tasks;</li> <li>• Instructional methods will be designed to teach work readiness skills and skills will be taught in the context of work;</li> <li>• Transitions between levels clearly articulated with adequate supports;</li> <li>• Highest levels of Adult Education for Work programs will teach skills required to enter postsecondary certificate or degree programs without need for remediation;</li> <li>• GED preparation will be offered and opportunities to prepare for the high school equivalency will be made available but the end goal will be readiness for postsecondary without remediation;</li> <li>• Length of stay will be shortened due to accelerated advancement, high-intensity programming, dual enrollment, and programs that integrate basic skills and technical skills; and</li> <li>• Programs will offer high-intensity “bridge” courses to help students make transitions to postsecondary education.</li> </ul>

## WHY ADULT EDUCATION FOR WORK?

	Partner Roles and Responsibilities
Key Benefits for Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cost savings</li><li>• Shared information on common clients</li><li>• Access to additional, needed support services</li><li>• More clients to show on performance measures</li><li>• Improved outcomes for system participants</li><li>• Increased retention for students in programs</li><li>• Increased retention of employees when given access to training</li><li>• Improved job performance with additional training</li><li>• Channel for recruiting qualified candidates</li></ul>

Transforming the system in this way will require leadership at the community and regional levels. Currently, most communities have no particular individual or institution assigned the responsibility for organizing the many elements that make up a Career Pathways System with Adult Education for Work at its core. It is extremely important for a leader to be designated to organize this effort and for leadership of each partner institution, to commit to a common vision and to clearly understand the benefits of working together. This collaboration will require more than commitment to a common vision however; the partners will also need to agree upon financial and operational models for working together.

An excellent example of a local community that is working toward such a collaborative model is the city of Philadelphia. In 2004, the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board established Excel Philadelphia, a partnership with the Philadelphia Literacy Coalition to address the fundamental misalignment between the skills of the workforce in Philadelphia and the needs of our increasingly knowledge-based economy. This collaborative effort is designed over time to match the literacy levels of residents to the needs of the local economy; develop a formal business plan for leaders in Philadelphia's literacy provider community; and establish a partnership between local literacy providers and CareerLink (the WIA One-Stop centers) to embed literacy services in PA CareerLink centers. A case study of Excel Philadelphia is included on page 37.

## QUALITY ELEMENTS

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**I**n this section, we identify twenty-three quality elements of Adult Education for Work programs divided into seven focus areas. These quality elements are not abstractions. They are based on extensive research and on what a number of innovative Adult Education programs are already doing to prepare their students to succeed in further education and training, work, and careers.

### Seven Focus Areas of Quality Elements

1. Program Design
2. Curriculum and Instruction
3. Assessment and Credentialing
4. High-Quality Teaching
5. Support and Follow-up Services to Encourage Access and Retention
6. Connections to the Business Community; and
7. Monitoring and Accountability Systems

These elements are meant to describe the kind of programs that can help adults effectively and efficiently prepare for postsecondary education and training, and work. We recognize that this list is a tall order that goes well beyond the capacity of any single provider to create and offer. That actually is the point.

Building these kinds of programs is, by necessity, a community-wide effort that requires Adult Education to work together with system partners in the development of Career Pathways systems that provide the full range of services and supports adults need to succeed.

These quality elements can be used by policymakers and practitioners to develop and implement high-performing Adult Education for Work programs; and by students, businesses, community-wide partners, and other stakeholders to identify high-quality programs that will prepare low-skilled adults for further education, work, and careers.

On the following pages, the seven focus areas are discussed and a benchmark is set for each as a high-performance standard. Quality elements are identified—twenty-three in total—that comprise the suggested steps or actions that program administrators can take to transform their current Adult Education programs into effective Adult Education for Work programs.

Examples of promising practices for many of the quality elements are offered to illustrate “Quality Elements in Action.” Case studies of Oregon and Philadelphia are offered to illustrate how these elements can come together in practical application.

## QUALITY ELEMENTS OF ADULT EDUCATION FOR WORK PROGRAMS

### Adult Education for Work Quality Elements

Focus Area	Quality Element
<b>1. Program Design</b>	<p>1-A. Work with all partners to define the role of Adult Education for Work programs in the broader community-wide Career Pathways system.</p> <p>1-B. Provide all students an orientation to Career Pathways.</p> <p>1-C. Help each student develop a “Career Pathways Plan.”</p> <p>1-D. Offer a continuum of instruction from basic skills (including English language) to readiness for postsecondary education and training and work.</p> <p>1-E. Provide programs and supports to ensure a smooth transition from Adult Education for Work programs to postsecondary education and training.</p> <p>1-F. Provide accelerated pathways for students to move ahead as quickly as possible.</p> <p>1-G. Accommodate work and other adult responsibilities.</p>
<b>2. Curriculum and Instruction</b>	<p>2-A. Make postsecondary education and training and work readiness the goal of the curriculum.</p> <p>2-B. Make work a central context for the curriculum.</p> <p>2-C. Use instructional strategies that help students to learn by doing.</p> <p>2-D. Manage the classroom in ways that enhance readiness for postsecondary education and training, and for work.</p> <p>2-E. Make extensive and appropriate use of instructional technology.</p>
<b>3. Assessment and Credentialing</b>	<p>3-A. Use appropriate assessment tools, including assessments of postsecondary and work readiness, to place students, help them develop Career Pathway plans, and periodically assess their progress.</p> <p>3-B. Base advancement policy on assessments of skills and knowledge.</p>
<b>4. High-Quality Teaching</b>	<p>4-A. Require high standards and recognized teaching credentials for adult education teachers.</p> <p>4-B. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities and classroom supports for teachers.</p>
<b>5. Support and Follow-up Services to Encourage Access and Retention</b>	<p>5-A. Make high-quality counseling a priority.</p> <p>5-B. Partner with providers in the community to provide case management services to students, including counseling and social and academic supports.</p>
<b>6. Connections to Business</b>	<p>6-A. Focus instruction on the skill needs of industries and occupations in which there is strong demand for workers.</p> <p>6-B. Develop partnerships with employers.</p>
<b>7. Monitoring and Accountability Systems</b>	<p>7-A. Develop customer-friendly performance information.</p> <p>7-B. Track longitudinal data on learning gains and employment outcomes.</p> <p>7-C. Use data to improve programs.</p>

## Focus Area #1: Program Design

**Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs provide clear pathways for participants, regardless of their skill level at the point of entry, to advance as quickly as possible to postsecondary programs, and ultimately to family-sustaining employment or advancement in their careers.

**Quality Elements:** To do this, Adult Education for Work programs should:

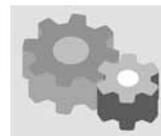
### 1-A. Work with all partners to define the role of Adult Education for Work programs in the broader community-wide Career Pathways system.

Adult Education for Work programs and providers should have a clear understanding about how they fit into a broader Career Pathways system for students. Each provider should be knowledgeable about students' education and career goals and understand how each step along the education continuum—and the content of each course—will contribute to the career progression of each student. They should know which programs their students transitioned from and what program options they have as they move ahead. Efforts should be made to align course content and to make transitions seamless. They should also know how and where available counseling and support services are provided and ensure that students are connected to these services.

### 1-B. Provide all students an orientation to Career Pathways.

At present, most Adult Education programs provide only short and unsystematic orientation services to students, and those services primarily focus on administrative issues (such as where and how to register, class schedules, and materials required). As a result, too few students are aware of the different ways in which programs can benefit them, and too few have very clear or far-reaching goals. Adult Education for Work programs should develop orientation strategies that provide students with information about the

## IN ACTION



**1-A.** Some communities are beginning to define the broader Career Pathways system and the role of Adult Education within it.

**Oregon's Pathways to Advancement Initiative** focuses on helping adults transition into community college to prepare for jobs in growth industries. As part of this initiative, each community college is developing occupational roadmaps in growth industries that explain for students, faculty and advisors what jobs are available in different industries including salary levels and descriptions of what the jobs entail, what education and training and certification or degrees are required for these occupations; what career progression in the industry is; how long required training takes; what is required to enter the occupation; and where to go to get more information and to receive training.

For example, **Portland Community College (PCC)** has a roadmap for a computer education program that describes the courses needed, certifications available and labor market information for the certified occupations. The entrance requirements include admission to the college with a "map" starting at GED/high school diploma level or below GED/high school diploma level. For those without an entry credential, PCC's adult basic education, ESL and GED preparation programs are the starting point.

*For more information see:*  
[www.worksourceoregon.org/index.php/component/content/127?task=view](http://www.worksourceoregon.org/index.php/component/content/127?task=view) and  
[www.breakingthroughcc.org](http://www.breakingthroughcc.org)



### IN ACTION

**1-D.** Some leading programs have recognized the need to align Adult Education with entry requirements for postsecondary programs without the need for developmental education and have begun to rethink how the upper levels of Adult Education are structured.

Some programs in Kentucky administer “gateway tests” to their higher-level Adult Education students, and build the curricula of their higher-level courses to include the skills required to pass these tests. In these programs, passing the “gateway” tests is effectively the exit criterion for Adult Education.

Some programs report that they encourage students to remain in GED preparation courses until they can pass the GED with a score that is high enough that it indicates the students will be able to directly enter academic studies.

Other Adult Education programs like those in the states of **Kentucky** and **Arkansas** offer students opportunities to work towards a WorkKeys credential, based on assessments of work readiness developed by the ACT. These are promising developments that hopefully will lead to more systematic rethinking of the structure of programs.

*For more information, see:*

[www.kyae.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/2D5ECA6B-50A7-4FFF-B09C-1D0A97BC49B6/0/](http://www.kyae.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/2D5ECA6B-50A7-4FFF-B09C-1D0A97BC49B6/0/)  
[EmplyrsGuideKECGenericBro.pdf](#) and [www.dwe.arkansas.gov/AdultEd/WAGE.pdf](http://www.dwe.arkansas.gov/AdultEd/WAGE.pdf)  
[www.breakingthroughcc.org](http://www.breakingthroughcc.org)

regional labor market (available through state employment offices or local One-Stop Career Centers); career options in growth industries that would provide family-sustaining employment; and education and training pathways to prepare for them for those jobs.

### **1-C. Help each student develop a “Career Pathways Plan.”**

All Adult Education for Work students should have what we call a “Career Pathways Plan.” This plan would involve an initial assessment of a student’s skills, specify the sequence of Adult Education and other courses that students must complete, estimate how long it would take, identify what certifications or credits would be awarded at various points along the way, and identify/connect students with needed additional supports (such as counseling, financial aid, childcare, academic tutoring, etc.). While labor intensive, such a plan is key to helping motivate low-skilled adults make informed decisions and navigate the complex system.

### **1-D. Offer a continuum of instruction from basic skills (including English Language) to readiness for postsecondary education and training and work.**

The end point of Adult Education for Work should not be the GED. Research suggests that passing the GED does not ensure that students have the skills needed for success in postsecondary education or the workplace. Adult Education for Work programs and postsecondary institutions should work together to ensure that skills attained through Adult Education align with entry requirements for postsecondary programs without the need for developmental education. And Adult Education must also keep abreast of the skills, many of which are the same, needed for success in the workplace and consider their attainment as key goals of programming.

### 1-E. Provide programs and supports to ensure a smooth transition from Adult Education for Work programs to postsecondary education and training.

Even though many Adult Education students indicate that enrolling in postsecondary education is a goal, only a small percentage actually do so and many of those are placed in developmental courses and/or do not complete academic programs. Several models have emerged as innovative strategies to help transition students at the upper-level of Adult Education into postsecondary education and training. These programs target students who are almost ready for postsecondary but have specific gaps in their academic skills or the soft skills and supports needed to succeed in a college environment. These include: 1) short bridge courses that focus on filling in specific gaps in academic/basic skills content; 2) college preparation courses that focus on “soft” skills, counseling, etc.; and 3) transition courses that focus on both specific basic skills and soft skills needed for college. These kinds of initiatives require clearly defined articulation agreements between Adult Education and postsecondary education and training institutions.

### 1-F. Provide accelerated pathways for students to move ahead as quickly as possible.

Adult Education for Work programs should offer accelerated pathways allowing students to move ahead as soon as they are ready to higher levels of basic skills, and on to postsecondary education or training that leads to employment in good jobs and progression in a career. While the goal is acceleration, programs should also be clear about realistic timelines and goals that can be met. Accelerated pathway strategies include: high-intensity programs; programs that integrate basic skills with college-level technical skills training; dual enrollment/dual credit programs where students are co-enrolled in adult and postsecondary education or training concurrently; and technology-assisted, self-paced programs.

#### IN ACTION



**I-F.** In 2004 the **Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)** developed the **Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)** program, pairing Adult Education (ABE, GED, and ESL) with professional/technical programming in its community college system. I-BEST was designed to provide expanded educational access and support for Adult Education students, allowing them to progress further and faster along Career Pathways.

In the I-BEST program, basic skills students are dually enrolled in Adult Education and postsecondary training programs -- getting the benefit of support from basic skills instructors while earning one year of college credit toward a professional/technical certificate or degree. The SBCTC is giving 1.75 FTE for approved I-BEST models to encourage these programs.

The I-BEST model is developed through a collaboration between the ESL/ABE and technical instructors who work on curricula that integrates basic skills competencies with those of the technical program. To qualify for the 1.75 FTE, the state requires a 50% overlap in instructional time. This means that both content and basic skills instructors must be present in the classroom for at least half of the total time of instruction.

I-BEST began as a demonstration at 10 sites in 2004 and now there are at least 128 different I-BEST programs offered at 34 colleges across the state. In addition to the accelerated time-frame, additional benefits to students include additional assistance with homework, projects, and test preparation. The I-BEST model also seeks to create clear "pathways" for students that will help them to earn a livable wage and become employed in high-demand jobs. Some benefits to the college are the earning of enhanced FTE and better transition rates between basic skills and other programs on campus.

Information from the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges Research Report No. 05-2. For more information: see [www.sbctc.ctc.edu](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu)

## QUALITY ELEMENTS OF ADULT EDUCATION FOR WORK PROGRAMS



### IN ACTION

**1-G. Pima Community College Workplace Education Program in Tucson, AZ** has a Workplace Education Program that partners with over 80 employers in the area offering on-site ESL, basic skills and GED classes to low-skilled employees. Employers provide the learning space, which makes it very convenient for students, and pay full costs for the teachers. In some cases, they provide release time to employees as well. The funding is supplemented by the Arizona Department of Education. Pima College's program was initially started in 1988 when the US Department of Education funded pilot workplace education programs in the states.

For more information, see [www.pima.edu](http://www.pima.edu) or call 520-884-8628 or see <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/wpprofiles.doc>

### 1-G. Accommodate work and other adult responsibilities.

Logistical problems are a major barrier to persistence. Adult Education for Work programs should offer classes in accessible locations at times that accommodate the needs of working and non-working adults and employers.

### Focus Area #2: Curriculum and Instruction

**Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs adopt curricula and instructional practices that support adults as they prepare for family-sustaining jobs and career advancement. Among the strategies necessary to achieve this include: 1) ensure that curricula covers the full range of basic and work readiness skills needed for entry into and success in postsecondary education and training, as well as in the workplace; and 2) use a range of resources and instructional techniques that optimize both educational gains and work readiness.

**Quality Elements:** To do this, Adult Education for Work programs should:

#### 2-A. Make postsecondary education and training and work readiness the goal of the curriculum.

In order for Adult Education for Work students to be prepared for postsecondary education without remediation and for work, Adult Education curricula should be aligned with the entry requirements of postsecondary education programs and impart basic work readiness skills. Adult Education for Work programs should work with their regional education and employer partners to identify the skills required for success and then design the curricula to ensure that students master those skills. This does not mean only a redesign of the higher end of Adult Education. This requires a “backwards design” starting with the end goal of readiness for postsecondary education and family-sustaining work, and rethinking of each level of Adult Education to ensure that students are taught successive levels of skills to reach that goal.

#### IN ACTION



**2-A** Many community colleges around the country are addressing the shift in focus of Adult Education from merely attaining a GED to entry and success in postsecondary education and training. The **Breaking Through Initiative**, sponsored by Jobs for the Future and the National Council on Workforce Education, is organizing this effort across the country. One of their sites, **Jefferson Community College in Kentucky**, has partnered with the Adult Education system, to create an integrated and coordinated Adult Education/developmental education system focused on transitioning adults efficiently and seamlessly into college. Adults are co-enrolled in Adult Education and in college. Adult Education classes include additional work on skills needed for success in college (including research and report writing). Enrollment of GED graduates in credit community college has steadily increased.

*For more information, see [Breaking Through: Helping Low-Skilled Adults Enter and Succeed in College and Careers](#), November 2004, [www.breakingthroughcc.org](http://www.breakingthroughcc.org)*

In its **Bridge-to-College Preparatory Program, Dorcas Place Family Literacy Center**, a non-profit organization in Providence, RI offers access to college for low income and first generation adult students with a GED or high school diploma. The one semester Bridge Program pays for the students' first class at the Community College of Rhode Island, for which they receive college credit. Students participate in workshops at the college that include library and computer orientation, introduction to different programs at the college, Accuplacer testing and financial aid counseling. Students also receive academic, personal and career counseling at Dorcas Place. During the summer, Bridge students take an enrichment class that prepares them for the college life and have the opportunity to visit college campuses and cultural sites in the community as well as neighboring states.

*For more information, see <http://www.dorcasplace.org/programs/collegeprep.html>*



### IN ACTION

#### **2-C. The Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC)**

in Chicago is a community-based organization that prepares unemployed adults, many of whom have literacy and numeracy barriers, for entry-level employment. Project-based learning, which engages students in performing real workplace tasks, is the centerpiece strategy for its Careers in Manufacturing Program. The classroom simulates a job shop, with two “shifts” and student “managers.” Each shift is given work orders for the day, including prints for the project that they are going to make, which involves applied math and reading skills. As a team, students must decide how to get the job done, and organize themselves to do it. This puts a premium on problem-solving and organizational skills. In a sense, it’s like prototyping work.

*For more information, please contact:*  
Juan Del Castillo, Advanced Skills Coordinator at  
juand@jane-addams.org or 773-935-5017.

#### **2-B. Make work a central context for the curriculum.**

Work readiness preparation should be an integral and explicit part of curriculum in all Adult Education for Work programs, not just an add-on. A key strategy for doing this is to focus the curriculum on a particular career area or occupational cluster. This provides relevancy to learning, context on a chosen Career Pathway, and an opportunity to learn both academic skills and work readiness skills concurrently that will make the student more employable. This will require a shift from the current emphasis on contextualized learning focused on “life skills” such as writing a letter to a friend, reading a menu, etc., to contextualized learning focused on the skills needed in a chosen occupation identified in a Career Pathway plan or to industries in high demand in the region.

#### **2-C. Use instructional strategies that help students to learn by doing.**

Classroom instruction for both basic and work readiness skills should be based on up-to-date adult learning theory. Adults learn best when information is relevant, practical and the objectives are clear—and they learn best by doing. Instructional strategies that not only provide students with the content they need to learn, but that also give students guided practice in applying this content to real problems and projects, and that consolidate learning by encouraging discussions with their peers and teachers are the key to success. Best practice strategies like project-based learning and student study circles offer students opportunities to learn to “think aloud” with their peers about how they are using information to solve problems. They also allow students to practice working in groups, communicate with their peers and teachers, and develop other types of higher-order thinking skills.

### 2-D. Manage the classroom in ways that enhance readiness for postsecondary education and training, and for work.

The “open entry/open exit” design of most Adult Education programs allows students maximum flexibility to enter programs at any time and to work at their own pace, but this program design also presents serious challenges for teachers and students. “Open entry/open exit” programs often have a different mix of students in each class session which makes it difficult for teachers to create structured classroom environments and to teach lessons that connect and build on one another. At times, it also does not encourage students to progress or reach an end credential. An alternative promising approach to organizing classes is “managed enrollment.” In managed enrollment classes, students enter a class at one or a few specific times during any semester or other specific timeframe and students are expected to stay for the entire timeframe. This allows the teacher time to plan and encourages students to learn a coherent “chunk” of material.

In addition to considering alternative program structures, classrooms should simulate a workplace environment where behaviors expected in the workplace (e.g., timeliness, assignment completion, proper attire) are required.

#### IN ACTION



**2-D.** The managed enrollment approach is used by **Seminole Community College**'s non-credit ESL program where students can only enroll in class at the beginning of each semester. This structure allows them to set a high bar for class participation, and in this sense simulates the demands of the workplace and of postsecondary programs. Students are allowed a certain number of absences, but if they exceed that number they are dropped from the program. Students who arrive late are marked absent. Assignments are graded, and students whose grades fall below a certain point cannot advance to the next level of instruction. The college dress code applies to all students.

*For more information, see:*

Sandy Ares and Beth Larson, “Seminole Community College” in *Torchlights in ESL: Five Community College Profiles* (New York, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2007).



### IN ACTION

**2-E.** One of the foremost examples of a web-based instructional program is **English For All**, a free multimedia system for adult ESL students. The program is calibrated to a number of widely used curricular guidelines—including California's Model Standards for ESL. The system includes:

- Four stand-alone videos (on the Internet or in CD-ROM), containing real-life stories in twenty, fifteen-minute episodes. Each episode features a Wizard, who explains language and skill content throughout each story.
- Interactive student activities and assessments.
- A course management system for teachers to track student progress.
- Print materials downloadable in PDF format.
- Guides for teachers, including information on the competencies in each episode.

The lessons in *English for All* track to the student's answers as well as to the episodes, which become progressively more difficult. The student may review his/her answers with those that are correct and view the videos and lessons repeatedly.

**For more information, see:**  
<http://www.myefa.org>.

### 2-E. Make extensive and appropriate use of instructional technology.

Most Adult Education programs incorporate instructional technology in some way—often through referring students to learning labs as after-class assignments—but most programs consider technology to be an instructional aide, rather than a central component of basic skills or other workforce preparation courses. Even so, technology-based instruction for low-skilled adults has expanded dramatically in recent years. Sophisticated and accessible (low-cost or free) CD-ROM and Internet-based options for interactive and experiential learning allow new learning technology to provide voice, image and text-based learning that has many of the features of the best classroom instruction. Appropriate use of technology can provide individual attention for particular learning styles, opportunities to work and solve problems in groups, exposure to the world of work and employers, and a progressive but not intimidating learning experience. When used in conjunction with face-to-face instructor/mentor support, the resulting blended learning experience has been proven to be as effective as an instructor-led, classroom-based experience alone, and sometimes more effective.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Mary McCain, *Leapfrogging Over the Status Quo: E-Learning and the Challenge of Adult Literacy* (Boston: Jobs for the Future, 2001).

## Focus Area #3: Assessment and Credentialing

**Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs use effective diagnostic assessments of student proficiency and progress for determining students' basic and workforce readiness skills to help them enter and advance along Career Pathways as quickly as possible. In addition, both personal and academic barriers to progress should be identified to enable the design of individualized instructional interventions and needed support services.

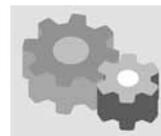
**Quality Elements:** To do this, Adult Education for Work programs should:

### 3-A. Use appropriate assessment tools, including assessments of postsecondary and work readiness, to place students, help them develop Career Pathway plans, and periodically assess their progress.

Most high quality Adult Education programs use multiple strategies to assess student proficiency and learning gains.<sup>13</sup> Typically this includes not only standardized ABE and ESL tests (such as the TABE, CASAS, and BEST Plus), but also tests developed to reflect the specialized nature of their programs, portfolios of student work, and professional judgments of teachers to determine student progress and needs. Adult Education for Work programs should also use tools that measure postsecondary and work readiness to ensure successful transition into postsecondary education and work. For postsecondary education and training, readiness programs may consider making use of the “gateway” tests (like Compass and Accuplacer) that are commonly used by colleges to determine developmental education needs. In addition, SAT and ACT tests might be another way to measure postsecondary readiness, since these are used to determine admission to college. For work readiness, programs can use tests designed to measure work readiness, like ACT's WorkKeys, CASAS' Workforce Skills

<sup>13</sup> See Mellard and Anderson, *Challenges in Assessing*, op. cit. See also: Forrest P. Chisman and JoAnn Crandall, *Passing the Torch: Strategies for Innovation in Community College ESL* (New York: Council For Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2007), pp. 43–47.

## IN ACTION



**3-A. Ohio** is developing a system of “**stackable certificates**” to provide clear and accessible pathways for adults seeking to advance their education and prepare for careers. Stackable certificates will certify that an individual has specific skills needed for the workplace and for postsecondary education. In addition, the system of stackable certificates will connect pre-college academic work to credit-bearing career and technical coursework and, ultimately, to a degree. Individuals will be able to earn a certificate, which they apply towards college credit. Under the current plan, state legislation directed the Ohio Board of Regents in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Education to develop standards for three pre-college certificates (Basic Skills Certificate, Advanced Skills Certificate and College and Work Ready Certificate). College-level certificates will certify technical and occupational skills in demand occupations in the state and in regions. The state is currently piloting these certificates in different regions of the state. State legislation also directed the Ohio Board of Regents in collaboration with the state's public two year colleges to develop and implement a statewide program of competency-based, low cost non-credit and credit bearing modules and courses in core subjects to culminate in state certificates.

*For more information, contact: Ohio Board of Regents @ [www.regents.ohio.gov](http://www.regents.ohio.gov) or Community Research Partners @ [www.communityresearchpartners.org](http://www.communityresearchpartners.org).*



### IN ACTION

**3-B.** Several different groups have developed certifications of workforce readiness that are being used by states, community colleges and employers across the country.

The **American Council on Testing (ACT)** has developed the National Career Readiness Certificate, based on its WorkKeys assessments ([www.act.com/workkeys](http://www.act.com/workkeys)).

The **Comprehensive Student Assessment System (CASAS)** has developed Workforce Skills Certificates and Road to Work Readiness transcripts ([www.casas.com](http://www.casas.com)).

There is also a **National Work Readiness Credential** based on an assessment of the Equipped for the Future adult education standards ([www.workreadiness.com](http://www.workreadiness.com))

Certifications and Road to Work Readiness Transcripts, and Equipped for the Future's National Work Readiness Credential assessments.

Counselors and/or teachers should also use an array of assessment tools to determine ongoing progress towards meeting the goals defined in Career Pathway plans.

### **3-B. Base advancement policy on assessments of skills and knowledge.**

In Adult Education for Work programs, students' transitions to higher levels of instruction should be based on frequent assessments designed to determine if they have mastered the necessary skills for such advancement, rather than after a certain number of hours of instruction or semesters of attendance. Frequent assessments should make it possible for students to make transitions once they have achieved the necessary skills. Research on at least one large Adult Education program suggests that many students who have mastered ESL levels waste a great deal of time waiting for semester breaks before they can advance.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Steven Spurling, Sharon Seymour, and Forrest Chisman, *Pathways and Outcomes: Tracking ESL Student Performance* (New York: Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2007). Available at: [www.caalusa.org](http://www.caalusa.org).

### Focus Area #4: High-Quality Teaching

**Benchmark:** Instructional staff in Adult Education for Work programs have specialized educational training in adult learning and workforce preparation and have the ability to apply such knowledge and skills in the provision of high-quality instruction. Teachers should have ongoing professional development opportunities and classroom supports.

**Quality Elements:** To do this, Adult Education for Work programs should:

#### 4-A. Require high standards and recognized teaching credentials for Adult Education teachers.

Teachers should have specialized professional preparation for teaching in Adult Education and Career Pathways programs, just as K–12 teachers must have degrees in elementary and secondary education and certifications in their area of specialty. Unfortunately, many states have no professional qualifications for Adult Education teachers, and most of those who do require only a K–12 teaching degree.<sup>15</sup>

With few standards for teachers in Adult Education, Adult Education for Work programs should require the highest possible level of professional qualification for full time staff, and this should ideally be a graduate degree for teaching Adult Education in their area of specialty. While establishing requirements for part-time staff who comprise the majority of the Adult Education teaching force presents a difficult challenge, such requirements should be pursued especially if paired with incentives for professional development.

In addition to the lack of professional standards for Adult Education in general, there appear to be no formal academic training programs or certifications for Adult Education

<sup>15</sup> JoAnn Crandall, Genesis Ingersoll, and Jacqueline Lopez, “Adult ESL Teacher Credentialing and Certification,” CAELA Brief (Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics 2008). Strictly speaking, this research applies only to adult ESL teacher qualifications, but teacher qualifications (or the lack thereof) are the same for ABE/ASE and ESL in most states.

#### IN ACTION



**4-A. Lake County Community College** in Illinois has established a six-course TESOL certification program for the benefit of its own part-time teachers and high school ESL teachers. It requires all of its part-time teachers to either have this certification or be working toward it, and provides them with free tuition. Some organizations, such as the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), provide structured professional training for Adult Education teachers. CAL’s programs are for ESL teachers.

*For more information, see:*  
<http://www.clcillinois.edu/adulted/index.asp>



### IN ACTION

**4-B. Through The System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES),** the Massachusetts Department of Education has established and funded a voluntary licensure process for adult basic skills educators, based on rigorous professional standards. The state has also made available standards for Adult Basic Education, curriculum frameworks for reading, mathematics and ESL and lesson plans and offers a full calendar of workshops for ABE teachers in the state.

California has also made notable efforts to provide a wide array of professional training through its OTAN and Calpro systems.

*For more information, see:* [www.sabes.org](http://www.sabes.org); [www.otan.dri.us](http://www.otan.dri.us); [www.calpro-online.org](http://www.calpro-online.org)

teachers who specialize in workforce preparation. This is a key issue as teaching Adult Education for Work represents a new kind of job description. In the absence of formal education programs, Master Teacher and peer mentoring systems can and should be implemented for adult and workforce education teachers. Local workforce investment systems and One-Stop Career Centers may have resources and/or staff to support training and professional development opportunities in workforce education in their regions.

#### **4-B. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities and classroom supports for teachers.**

Regardless of how advanced their credentials or skills may be, all teachers and counselors need continuing professional development to keep up with the state of the art. As a result, Adult Education for Work programs should provide ongoing and extensive professional development for teaching and counseling staff on the most current and innovative curriculum and instructional strategies, including technology advances for teaching ABE, ESL, GED preparation, and work readiness skills to adults.

This would require significantly more time and funding devoted to such activities. While most states currently require Adult Education programs to provide at least some professional development to teachers and at times to other staff members, these requirements and the paid release time offered are often minimal, with professional development opportunities not exceeding a few days per year. The employment structure for Adult Education—with many instructors who are part time, with low pay and high turnover—makes investing in professional development a low priority. This will have to change significantly.

In the meantime, Adult Education for Work programs should encourage and guide staff in accessing appropriate opportunities through professional seminars and training sessions provided by public and private agencies, expert consultants, peer learning from colleagues in other

programs at professional meetings, Internet resources, training offered by vendors and professional literature. Staff can also learn innovative instructional and management approaches when they are called upon to develop new curricula, or work on grants from foundations or government agencies to evaluate new approaches to adult learning.



### IN ACTION

**5-A.** In Adult Education Programs at **Seminole Community College**, counseling functions are performed by several program specialists whose overall task is to troubleshoot problems with student progress that are identified by teachers, assessment data, administrators, or the students themselves. Programs that are too small to employ counseling staff or other program specialists may form partnerships with local colleges such as Seminole, or possibly One-Stop Career Centers, to perform these functions. Alternatively, they may wish to invest in developing the expertise of teachers to provide counseling services. In one instance of this sort, **South Texas College** (in McAllen) arranged for 80 teachers to be trained in a model for providing comprehensive support to low-income students.

*For more information, see:*

Sandy Ares and Beth Larson, "Seminole Community College" in *Torchlights in ESL: Five Community College Profiles* (New York, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2007) and Amy Blair, Peace Bransberger, and Maureen Conway, *Sector Initiatives and Community Colleges: Working Together to Provide Education for Low-Wage Working Adults* (Washington D.C., The Aspen Institute 2007). [www.aspenwsi.org/publications/07-009.pdf](http://www.aspenwsi.org/publications/07-009.pdf)

## Focus Area #5: Support and Follow-up Services to Encourage Access and Retention

**Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs should provide comprehensive supports to students to reduce personal barriers to retention and progress.

**Quality Elements:** To do this, Adult Education for Work programs should:

### 5-A. Make high-quality counseling a priority.

Counseling is critical in Adult Education for Work programs to help students decide on a Career Pathway and help them persist in their programs and make successful transitions along the way. In practice, most counseling in Adult Education programs is provided by teachers, who usually do not have enough time or training to carry out this task in addition to their other responsibilities.

All Adult Education for Work programs should ensure that their students have access to counselors who have the qualifications to help them develop "Career Pathway plans," make transitions along the education continuum, and access other needed services like childcare, transportation, and academic supports. While it would be optimum for programs to have full-time professional counselors on staff, it is unrealistic to expect that all Adult Education programs will be able to do this. One option is for programs to arrange for qualified counselors employed by partner programs such as with One-Stop Career Centers or community colleges as part of a community-wide Career Pathways partnership. In cases where teachers serve as counselors, programs need to ensure that they are qualified to provide these services. Whoever the counselors are, they too will need ongoing professional development.

### 5-B. Partner with providers in the community to provide case management services to students, including counseling and social and academic supports.

No matter how strong the motivation, the responsibilities of adult life and the personal barriers of low-skilled students make it challenging to engage in educational activities for very long. Since Career Pathways systems require years of commitment, programs cannot succeed unless they make more systematic efforts to help students overcome personal barriers and complete Career Pathways more quickly (through high-intensity instruction, dual enrollment, or other accelerated initiatives).

Because many individual Adult Education programs do not have the services, resources or the expertise to address the range of personal barriers that their students face, it is critically important that Adult Education for Work programs develop a systematic method for referring students to partners like those listed below, and ensure that they receive the services they need.

#### Potential Support Providers

- One-Stop Career Centers
- TANF Programs
- Public Social Service Agencies
- Community-based, faith-based and volunteer organizations
- Immigrant Support Agencies
- Postsecondary Institutions (including Community Colleges)
- Employers
- Labor Unions

#### IN ACTION



**5-B.** Although few, if any, Adult Education Programs have extensive partnerships with social service agencies, examples of ad hoc partnerships suggest that this can be highly beneficial in achieving workforce readiness goals. One such example is **City College of San Francisco's** VIP program, operated in partnership with the city of Oakland's TANF program. The college provides welfare recipients with very low levels of English proficiency 20 hours per week of high-intensity ESL instruction, which is coordinated with workforce preparation services offered by the TANF program. Like other TANF beneficiaries, students in this program receive income supports and a "wrap around" package of other social services. Research by the college indicates that VIP students advance far more ESL levels in far less time than do comparable students in the college's regular ESL program, and almost 30 percent of them continue their ESL studies after they have completed the program—which, in most cases, is after they have been placed in low wage jobs.

*For more information, see: Sharon Seymour, "VESL Immersion Program (VIP) at City College of San Francisco" in Forrest P. Chisman and JoAnn Crandall, *Passing the Torch: Strategies for Innovation in Community College ESL* (New York: Council For Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2007) pp. 148–153.*

*For information on other TANF related programs, see: James Parker, *Workforce Education: Twenty State Perspectives* (New York: National Commission on Adult Literacy, 2007). Available at [www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org](http://www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org), and Amy Blair, et al. *Sector Initiatives* (as referenced above).*



### IN ACTION

**6-A and 6-B.** Here are examples of different types of partnerships with employers:

In Owensboro Kentucky, the local Chamber of Commerce identified allied health professions as a leading growth industry. A partnership between **Owensboro Community College's** Adult Education program and the regional hospital center was formed to assess the workforce skills of both new hires and incumbent workers using the WorkKeys system. Based on these assessments, the college developed a number of basic skills training programs contextualized to the allied health field, most of which took the form of "bridge" programs—filling the gaps between basic or soft skills employees had, relative to the skill levels required for particular occupations.

*For more information, see:* Forrest P. Chisman, *Adult Education and Literacy and Community Colleges in Kentucky (CAAL, 2004)*  
[www.breakingthroughcc.org](http://www.breakingthroughcc.org)

**Texas LEARNS** (the state's Adult Education Agency) has partnered with the Workforce Commission, higher education institutions, employers, and local programs to develop "...demand-driven, industry related curricula appropriate for use with Texas's English language learners" in three industry sectors: healthcare; manufacturing; and sales and service. They have developed industry skill standards for each cluster, conducted task analyses of occupations in particular firms, and developed staff training modules. Texas LEARNS estimates that it would take students approximately 200 hours to complete each entry-level curriculum. Although the curricula are primarily intended to prepare students for entry-level positions, Texas LEARNS believes that they should provide the foundation for transitions to technical or postsecondary education in the industry sectors and expects to develop systems that will facilitate such transitions by students who complete the entry-level curricula.

*For more information, see:*  
[www-tcall.tamu.edu/texasLeArns/docs/aerospondworkfrrc.html](http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/texasLeArns/docs/aerospondworkfrrc.html).

## Focus Area #6: Connections to the Business Community

**Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs ensure that they are meeting local and regional workforce needs by working with individual employers, employer associations, economic development agencies, business and industry to identify the skill needs of regional employers, and ensure alignment between those needs and Adult Education for Work programs and services in their community.

**Quality Elements:** To do this, Adult Education for Work programs should:

### 6-A. Focus instruction on the skill needs of industries and occupations in which there is strong demand for workers.

To be effective in serving both students and the economy, Adult Education for Work must be based on an understanding of the skills required for employment in industry sectors or occupations where adult learners are most likely to find employment. To the extent possible, Adult Education for Work programs should focus on occupational areas based on student career goals. But in classrooms where students have a wide range of occupational goals, a more realistic approach would be to focus contextualized instruction on high-demand occupations or industry sectors/clusters.

To get access to critical information on industry needs and work readiness requirements, Adult Education for Work providers should align their program focus and curriculum with the occupational priorities identified by other institutions in their region that specialize in understanding workforce conditions, such as Workforce Development Boards, One-Stop Career Centers, Chambers of Commerce, community colleges, local economic development agencies, and labor unions.

### 6-B. Develop partnerships with employers.

Developing partnerships with employers is a key strategy in creating programming that meets the needs of employers. These partnerships can vary in focus and in how they are organized. They can be a partnership between a community college or other provider and a particular company, an industry organization, a chamber of commerce, a labor management partnership, or a partnership with a local workforce investment system. The employer partner can help design curriculum or assessments, provide teachers with appropriate technical skills, train teachers, provide internship opportunities for students, give employees time off to participate in education or training, provide training at their worksites, and assist in planning Career Pathways within a field.

#### IN ACTION



#### 6-A and 6-B, continued:

##### **Vocational ESL at Lake County Community College.**

This is a Vocational ESL program (VESL) certificate program in landscape management that was created after several large Chicago-area landscaping firms informed the college's Horticulture Department that they faced a shortage of skilled workers and that most of the current front line employees in the industry had limited English proficiency. In response, the college developed a five-course program (three-credits each) leading to a certificate in Landscape Management that teaches English and landscaping courses in tandem. Lake County also provides integrated vocational programs in automobile technology, office administration, allied health, and HVAC.

This information is based on a working paper developed for CAAL's study of exemplary community college ESL programs.

*For more information, contact:*

Director of the CAAL project at: [forrest@crosslink.net](mailto:forrest@crosslink.net).



### IN ACTION

**7-A.** In **Kentucky, Massachusetts,** and **Washington,** thorough independent evaluations of program performance of Adult Education programs, recommendations for specific improvements or innovations, and a commitment to make those improvements led to substantially greater funding from the state legislatures.

*For more information, see:*

Forrest Chisman, *Adult Education and Literacy in Kentucky*, op. cit. Martin Leibowitz, *Adult Education and Literacy in Community Colleges in Massachusetts* (New York: Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2004).

## Focus Area #7: Monitoring and Accountability Systems

**Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs establish strong monitoring and accountability systems to document, evaluate and improve student and program outcomes on a continuing basis.

**Quality Elements:** To do this, Adult Education for Work programs should:

### 7-A. Develop customer-friendly performance information.

Both students and employers are more likely to make use of Adult Education for Work programs if they have a complete and reliable understanding of program goals and accomplishments. All stakeholders will have greater confidence in programs that have built-in mechanisms for monitoring and improving their performance.

Adult Education for Work programs should be constructed in ways that they can be monitored and evaluated. This requires that programs have clearly defined measures of success for attainment of basic and work readiness skills as well as measures of success for students who make transitions to technical and postsecondary programs. Moreover, these outcomes need to be packaged and communicated to the general public in a consumer-friendly format on a regular basis, so potential clients, employers and the community-at-large can see the value added. Moving towards an Adult Education for Work model can bridge that value beyond mere individual growth to support for the economic well-being of a community and/or region.

### 7-B. Track longitudinal data on learning gains and employment outcomes.

Since it often takes multiple years to attain career goals, Adult Education for Work programs—and Career Pathways systems—should track student progress over several years. In the long run, this will provide much more helpful information about what kinds of strategies and programs serve students best and it is the only way to accurately reflect student outcomes and performance.

Many of the current measures required by states or the federal National Reporting System (NRS) for Adult Education report how many students advance one or more standard levels as measured by standardized tests on an annual basis, and so are of limited value to a transformed system. Adult Education for Work and Career Pathways learning systems, which focus on helping students attain ABE and ESL skills or technical and academic credentials that lead to employment and increased earnings, will, for the vast majority of low-skilled students, require *multiple years* and *transitions* through the Career Pathways learning system components to achieve and show significant gains that, over time, result in family-sustaining employment for students.

### 7-C. Use data to improve programs.

If programs are able to collect data both on student performance in the program and after leaving the program, they should adopt total quality management practices to analyze the data and use it to improve programming. Currently, many programs collect data only to report to various funders and it is not accepted general practice to use that data, or to collect other types of data, for program improvement practices. Adult Education for Work advocates a model more committed to collecting and using data to drive decision making and improve program quality on an ongoing basis.

#### IN ACTION



**7-B. The Wyoming Department of Employment** produces an annual report on the labor market outcomes of graduates from the state's seven community colleges to measure the contribution to workforce development of the State's community college programs. Wyoming has access to UI wage records using agreements with nine neighboring states to track students' social security numbers and the dispersion of the system's graduates in those states, by matching inter-state records with enrollment and graduation records. The state higher education system and individual colleges measure on a regular basis the employment success of their graduates, the earnings of vocational graduates by industry, the transfer rate of academic and vocational graduates, and other topics of special consideration. A recent report, for example, examined how much of Wyoming's investments in nursing programs has resulted in net additions to the healthcare workforce within the state and how many nursing graduates migrate to other states. Access to and utilization of similar data for Adult Education students could provide valuable information on the outcomes of Adult Education for Work and Career Pathways students.

For more information, see:  
[doe.state.wy.us/lmi/](http://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/)



## FINAL NOTES

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**T**his Guide describes the economic urgency of skilling up the American workforce to meet the increasing demands of a global economy. This sense of urgency is magnified by the fact that this country faces an alarming challenge that a large and growing portion of our workforce lacks the critical basic skills and work readiness skills they need to succeed economically. To address this concern, we urge the transformation of the current Adult Education system in this country to an Adult Education for Work system that provides the education and training low-skilled adults need to become prepared for postsecondary education or training that will lead to family-sustaining employment and career advancement.

In this Guide we identify a set of quality elements for Adult Education for Work programs. These are intended to provide practitioners, policymakers and employers with the tools they need to begin this transformation of the Adult Education system that would result in:

- A new focus on work readiness and preparation for postsecondary education and training for all adults as a core mission of the program, with a clear connection to the economic development strategy of the region;
- A commitment to the creation of Career Pathways systems that accelerate learning and move adults through the continuum of education and training as quickly and efficiently as possible; and
- Partnering with other providers in the community to offer the supports adults need to persist and succeed in adult education for work programs.

Constructing such a system will require substantial changes. To be successful, Adult Education for Work and Career Pathways learning systems will require community-wide partnerships between adult education, postsecondary, workforce, and social service providers, as well as employers, unions, and economic development agencies to ensure that the skills taught at all levels meet the workforce needs of both workers and of regional employers. The development of this system will be worth the effort. It will provide greater education and economic opportunities for America's workers, and the skills that the nation's employers and regional economies require to be competitive into the future.

Two short case studies follow: one is about the State of Oregon. The second case is about the city of Philadelphia. Oregon represents one example of a place where a broad set of actors has worked over time to reshape their Adult Education system to become more of a true Career Pathways system. In Philadelphia, the Workforce Investment Board's partnership with the Philadelphia Literacy Coalition is an example of the type of collaboration needed to build a system that is much better at meeting the needs of low-skilled adults.

Finally a Self-Assessment Questionnaire follows the Oregon and Philadelphia case studies. It is intended to gauge your level of readiness to implement the design elements described in this Guide.

### Oregon Case Study: A Work in Progress

Oregon's Career Pathways Initiative and the corollary Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills Transition to Education and Work (OPABS) reflect years of sustained investment in both products and processes (yet is still described by practitioners as "a work in progress.") The components of the model, as described below, illustrate both the spirit and intent of Adult Education for Work as the cornerstone for a Career Pathways system.

**Background:** Phase 1 of the Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills Transition to Education and Work (OPABS) initiative began in fall 2006 and is now completing the Phase 2 extended pilot testing. The initiative:

Builds a pipeline for Adult Basic Skills learners to enter postsecondary education, training programs and high-demand career areas in Health Services, Industrial and Engineering systems, and Business and Management.

Initiates a basic skills SYSTEM change that is sustainable and that develops formal connections to postsecondary education and the workforce system.

Consists of three components:

- (1) "Pre-Bridge" and "Bridge" courses that develop basic skills in math, reading, and writing through integrated occupational information;
- (2) A career/college awareness course that is an integration of academic skills and occupational information to facilitate ABS learners' transition to postsecondary courses and training programs; and
- (3) Advising modules that assist ABS learners in preparing for/entering postsecondary education/training.

Once fully operational, will serve as a foundation/cornerstone for the overall Oregon Career Pathways system (see [www.worksourceoregon.org](http://www.worksourceoregon.org)).

**Example:** Lane Community College in Eugene, OR, developed and piloted a two-term, contextualized bridge math course in all three high-demand career areas. The course is offered to ABSE learners whose skills are at the Adult Secondary Level (9.0+ grade equivalency). The goal of the course is to prepare learners to pass the GED test and to enter either an introductory professional technical course or the pre-requisite course. In addition to the math courses, Lane also piloted an OPABS Career and College Awareness course. This is a reading course that incorporates writing and is intended to provide ABSE learners with information about high-demand occupations and the types of education and training required for these jobs. NOTE: A single staff person at the college serves as the point person for ABE and the OPABS pilot, Career Pathways, and workforce development, which helps facilitate linkages among various programs.

**Expected Outcomes from OPABS:** It is projected that final revisions of the courses and modules will be completed in summer 2009. Products from the expanded pilot activities will include lesson plans for each course constructed on a standard format for easy replication at other colleges, a module on referral of ABS learners to One-Stop services and advising modules to enhance college/career readiness.

*For more information, contact:*

David Moore, Director of Literacy and Skill Development Systems, Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, [David.P.Moore@state.or.us](mailto:David.P.Moore@state.or.us), or 503-378-8668, ext. 375. For additional information on the Oregon system and on exemplary initiatives at Portland Community College see: [www.breakingthroughcc.org](http://www.breakingthroughcc.org)

## Philadelphia Case Study: A Joint Effort of the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board and the Philadelphia Literacy Coalition.

**Background:** In 2004, the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board established **Excel Philadelphia**, a partnership with the Philadelphia Literacy Coalition to address the fundamental misalignment between the skills of the workforce in Philadelphia and the needs of our increasingly knowledge-based economy. Over fifty percent of adults in Philadelphia are low-literate—lacking the basic skills they need to effectively compete in an increasingly knowledge-based economy or successfully complete a post-secondary degree. Consequently, one-half of all job seekers residing in the city can expect to be competitive for only one-third of the jobs that currently exist in the economy—approximately 550,000 individuals qualified for roughly 189,600 jobs.

**Goals:** Excel Philadelphia is designed to raise awareness about the importance of literacy for employers, employees, and the community; increase investments of time, talent, and resources in advancing adult literacy; inform employers about workforce literacy programs available to their employees; and increase the number of employers offering workplace literacy programs customized to specific employer skill sets. With funding from the Verizon and Annie E. Casey Foundations, as well as public funding, the initiative had several phases: completing innovative research comparing the literacy levels of residents to the needs of the local economy; developing a formal business plan for leaders in Philadelphia's literacy provider community; and partnering with local literacy providers and CareerLink (WIA One-Stop) centers to help initiate, study, and document pilot projects to embed literacy services in PA CareerLink centers.

**Program Model:** Philadelphia's CareerLink centers have always provided referrals to literacy services, but these services were only provided upon request and were greatly underutilized. To ramp up their use, the Philadelphia WIB, the PA CareerLink system, and the PA Adult Education System (ABLE) launched a range of intensive models to fully embed literacy services in PA CareerLink centers, as they are key to ensure that workers advance into stable, good-paying jobs with benefits. The Philadelphia WIB obtained additional funding to hire a project manager to document the process, provide technical assistance, and support related activities.

**Expansion and Outcomes:** Expansion of these models is underway, which includes developing and strengthening workplace competencies in specific industries to better align the services with the needs of business. Information has been collected on all aspects of the projects with the goal of identifying best practices and developing replicable models. They have formed Advisory Councils comprised of industry representatives, as well as workforce and literacy providers. And results are promising. Learners on average have increased the equivalent of two grade levels in both reading and math; more than 50 percent secured employment with employment retention rates at 100%. The project is now working to facilitate agreements with the Commonwealth of PA to implement the pilots on a broader scale at multiple sites.

For more information on Excel Philadelphia, see:  
[http://pwib.org/initiatives/excel\\_philadelphia.php](http://pwib.org/initiatives/excel_philadelphia.php)

### Self-Assessment Tool: Are You Ready?

This Guide offers twenty-three quality elements grouped into seven focus areas that serve as the framework for an effective Adult Education for Work system designed to prepare adults for both postsecondary learning and work. Each of the seven focus areas has an established benchmark to serve as a goal toward which local and state programs operators should strive.

Use the self-assessment tool on the following pages to gauge the readiness of your local and/or state program to implement an Adult Education for Work system. You can complete the assessment tool on your own, or you can use it to facilitate a discussion with your local or state planning team.

Step back and think objectively about your current operation. Then evaluate the current status of your program for each quality element on a scale of 1 to 4:

- 1 = no aspect of the quality element in place
- 2 = minimal level/aspect of quality element in place
- 3 = modest level/aspect of quality element in place
- 4 = significant level/aspect of quality element in place

After you have completed the self-assessment, reflect on your ratings. Those quality elements that received mostly 1's and 2's will be where you will need to concentrate the majority of your efforts in making the transition to an Adult Education for Work system.

**I. Program Design—Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs provide clear pathways for participants, regardless of their skill level at the point of entry, to advance as quickly as possible to postsecondary programs, and ultimately to family-sustaining employment or progression in their careers.

Quality Elements				
Work with all partners to define the role of Adult Education for Work programs in the broader community-wide Career Pathways system.	1	2	3	4
Provide all students an orientation to Career Pathways.	1	2	3	4
Help each student develop a "Career Pathways Plan."	1	2	3	4
Offer a continuum of instruction from basic skills (including English Language) to readiness for postsecondary education and training and work.	1	2	3	4
Provide programs and supports to ensure a smooth transition from Adult Education for Work programs to postsecondary education and training.	1	2	3	4
Provide accelerated pathways for students to move ahead as quickly as possible.	1	2	3	4
Accommodate work and other adult responsibilities.	1	2	3	4

**II. Curriculum and Instruction—Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs adopt curricula and instructional practices that support adults as they prepare for family-sustaining jobs and career advancement. Among the strategies necessary to achieve this include: 1) ensure that curricula covers the full range of basic and work readiness skills needed for entry into and success in postsecondary education and training, as well as in the workplace; and 2) use a range of resources and instructional techniques that optimize both educational gains and work readiness.

Quality Elements				
Make postsecondary education and training and work readiness the goal of the curriculum.	1	2	3	4
Make work a central context for the curriculum.	1	2	3	4
Use instructional strategies that help students to learn by doing.	1	2	3	4
Manage the classroom in ways that enhance readiness for postsecondary education and training, and for work.	1	2	3	4
Make extensive and appropriate use of instructional technology.	1	2	3	4

## FINAL NOTES

**III. Assessment and Credentialing—Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs use effective diagnostic assessments of student proficiency and progress for determining students’ basic and workforce readiness skills to help them enter and advance along Career Pathways as quickly as possible. In addition, both personal and academic barriers to progress should be identified to enable the design of individualized instructional interventions and needed support services.

Quality Elements				
Use appropriate assessment tools, including assessments of postsecondary and work readiness, to place students, help them develop Career Pathways plans, and periodically assess their progress.	1	2	3	4
Base advancement policy on assessments of skills and knowledge.	1	2	3	4

**IV. High-Quality Teaching—Benchmark:** Instructional staff in Adult Education for Work programs have specialized educational training in adult learning and workforce preparation and have the ability to apply such knowledge and skills in the provision of high-quality instruction. Teachers should have ongoing professional development opportunities and classroom supports.

Quality Elements				
Require high standards and recognized teaching credentials for Adult Education teachers.	1	2	3	4
Provide ongoing professional development opportunities and classroom supports for teachers.	1	2	3	4

**V. Support and Follow-up Services to Encourage Access and Retention—Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs should provide comprehensive supports to students to reduce personal barriers to retention and progress.

Quality Elements				
Make high-quality counseling a priority.	1	2	3	4
Partner with providers in the community to provide case management services to students, including social and academic supports.	1	2	3	4

**VI. Connections to the Business Community—Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs ensure that they are meeting local and regional workforce needs by working with individual employers, employer associations, economic development agencies, business and industry to identify the skill needs of regional employers and ensure alignment between those needs and Adult Education for Work programs and services in their community.

Quality Elements				
Focus instruction on the skill needs of industries and occupations in which there is a strong demand for workers.	1	2	3	4
Develop partnerships with employers.	1	2	3	4

**VII. Monitoring and Accountability Systems—Benchmark:** Adult Education for Work programs establish strong monitoring and accountability systems to document, evaluate and improve student and program outcomes on a continuing basis.

Quality Elements				
Develop customer-friendly performance information.	1	2	3	4
Track longitudinal data on learning gains and employment outcomes.	1	2	3	4
Use data to improve programs.	1	2	3	4









