

Aligned by Design: WIOA and **Adult Education**

The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which goes into effect on July 1, 2015, provides new opportunities for the public workforce and adult education systems to work together. In particular, the law requires that each state develop a unified plan that describes strategic and operational elements across WIOA's four titles. Thus, WIOA's workforce (Title I) and adult education (Title II) activities will need to be more closely coordinated. This brief outlines some key areas where alignment can occur.

PLANNING

Adult educators should be active participants in the development of a WIOA state plan that describes the state's strategic priorities and operational activities for adult education and workforce preparation. The plan should specifically describe the role of adult education in achieving the plan's priorities. Adult education planning participants should include the state director of adult education as well as a representative array of local program administrators and other practitioners.

Ensuring that the role of adult education is well-documented in plans is especially important because local workforce development boards are now charged with reviewing adult education funding proposals to ensure alignment with local plans. It will be important to ensure that local boards have the necessary capacity and technical expertise in adult education to accurately assess this question.

ONE-STOP CENTERS

WIOA requires the operation of American Job Centers, commonly referred to as "one-stop" centers, in every state. Under WIOA, each local area must have one comprehensive one-stop center that provides access to physical services of the core WIOA programs – including Title II – and other required partners. In addition, local boards continue to be required to establish Memorandums of Understanding with each one-stop partner. Both of these requirements provide opportunities for adult educators to collaborate with workforce system partners

to establish effective referral, co-enrollment, and handoff processes for participants who need both Title I workforce and Title II adult education services.

CAREER PATHWAYS

WIOA requires states and local areas to develop career pathways that align with the skill needs of industries. Career pathways align and integrate education (including Adult Basic Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages), job training, counseling and support services to create accelerated pathways that enable low-skilled adults and youth to obtain a secondary school diploma (or recognized equivalent) and a postsecondary education credential, leading to employment in in-demand occupations.

Adult educators should be closely involved in the development of career pathways in their state, both to facilitate strong institutional connections among career pathways stakeholders in the workforce and education fields, and to ensure that pathways provide meaningful access for individuals who are still acquiring basic skills.

INTEGRATED EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Career pathways include education offered concurrently with and in the same context as general workforce preparation and training for a specific occupation. Under WIOA Title II, adult education providers must offer such "integrated education



and training” either themselves or in partnership with other programs. Adult educators should seek out appropriate partners to ensure that their integrated education and training programs can meet the needs of local participants. In particular, these partners may include one-stop centers and postsecondary Career and Technical Education programs. In addition, adult educators should draw on employer input via sector partnerships (*see below*) to ensure that integrated education and training programs are aligned with local employers’ skill needs.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Local workforce boards must engage employers in order to ensure that workforce investment activities meet the needs of employers and in order to facilitate effective employer utilization of the local workforce development system. WIOA emphasizes the creation and use of industry sector partnerships to serve these and other purposes. Adult educators should determine how their specific expertise in preparing individuals to enter the workforce, and educating incumbent workers, can best inform sector partnership activities.

LABOR MARKET INFORMATION

WIOA requires states and local workforce development boards to disseminate extensive information about workforce and skill

needs in the state. Adult educators can take advantage of this data to inform program development and design, and should also consider how it can enable them to provide more informed guidance about labor market opportunities to adult education participants.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

WIOA includes common performance measures for the six core programs in WIOA, and four of the measures also apply to training providers that want to serve students funded by WIOA Title I. Adult educators should contribute their expertise to discussions with state and federal partners to ensure that common performance measures take into account the activities and outcomes of adult education programs. In particular, adult educators may wish to weigh in on considerations involved in calculating the “measurable skills gain” indicator.

In addition, the Departments of Labor and Education will develop a template for training provider reports that will provide performance and other valuable information for students and potential students. Adult educators can take advantage of the common measures and consumer scorecards in order to provide consistent information to policymakers and the public about program performance.

By working together in these and other ways, adult education programs and other WIOA partners can create a more efficient and effective education and training system that improves education and employment outcomes for individuals and meets employer workforce needs.



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National Skills Coalition is a broad-based coalition of employers, unions, education and training providers, and public officials working toward a vision of an America that grows its economy by investing in its people so that every worker and every industry has the skills to compete and prosper.

Go to www.nationalskillscoalition.org/wioa-implementation to access resources that can support effective WIOA implementation.