

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title II: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

Overview: The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA, Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) provides states with funding for a variety of services to help adults develop basic skills (e.g., reading, writing, math, English language acquisition), transition to postsecondary education and training, and gain employment. The adult education, English language instruction, and integrated education and training that WIOA Title II supports can open doors to career pathway programs for those with low skills or limited English abilities.

Type of Program: Formula grants to states and localities. States must distribute 82.5 percent of their federal allocation to local providers, with the balance allotted for state leadership activities (12.5 percent) and administrative expenses (5 percent). States must award local grants or contracts through a competitive process that provides “direct and equitable” access to federal adult education funds by all types of eligible program providers (e.g., school districts, community colleges, libraries, community-based organizations, public housing authorities, and other public or private nonprofit entities).

Eligibility and Targeting: Eligibility is limited to adults who are at least 16 years of age and not currently enrolled, or required to be enrolled, in high school. Additional eligibility criteria include one of more of the following: basic skills deficient; lack a high school diploma or its equivalent; function below the level of a high school graduate (even if the individual has a high school credential); or unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

Services/Program Support: The purpose of the Act is to help adults increase literacy and numeracy activities necessary to complete a high school education, transition to postsecondary education and training, and obtain employment. The Act funds adult education and literacy services, including workplace literacy, family literacy programs, and English language services.

Non-federal Funds: States are required to provide a match using non-federal funds amounting to at least 25 percent of the total funds spent on adult education in the state. This match may be cash or in-kind.

HOW PROGRAM CAN SUPPORT CAREER PATHWAYS

The strong emphasis federal adult education law places on preparation for employment and postsecondary education and training fits well with career pathway approaches. For example, states must describe how adult education and literacy activities will be integrated with other adult education, career development, and employment and training activities. Title II local plans are reviewed by the Local Workforce Development Boards.

Title II performance metrics are the same as those in Title I (adult, youth, and dislocated worker):

- Percent employed at the second and fourth quarter after exit;
- Median earnings in that employment;
- Percent who obtained a secondary diploma or postsecondary credential during participation or within one year after exit;

- Percent in an education or training program leading to a postsecondary credential that are making a measurable skill gain; and
- Service to employers.

Federal law provides substantial flexibility on how adult education funds can be used for eligible individuals and allowable services. When academic and English language services below the postsecondary level are provided to adults as part of career pathway, this can shorten the timeline to postsecondary credentials, improve transitions to further education, reduce costs, and decrease the need for developmental education.³²

Specifically, federal adult education funds can be used to:³³

Support development of academic and English language components of career pathway programs, as long as the services are below the postsecondary level. This might include, for example, creating curricula that are contextualized to occupational pathways or seeding innovation of new delivery formats, such as dual enrollment or learning communities.

Fund operational costs of integrated education and training services. The term “integrated education and training” means a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement (WIOA, Sec.203(11)). For example, federal adult education funds could pay for an adult education instructor to teach the academic and English language portions of a program that integrates basic skills and English language content with occupational training in a co-instruction format.³⁴

Reward performance for achieving goals beyond what is traditionally expected, such as setting state goals that complement federal ones for postsecondary transition and credential completion by adult education students. States could also set goals for reducing the

need for developmental education among adult education students who enter college.

Provide support services to promote persistence in and completion of adult education and transitions to postsecondary education and training or employment. This might include helping fund transition coordinators who connect students with the resources needed to overcome academic and personal challenges.

Washington’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program delivers adult education and occupational training using faculty teams, which help advance students along pathways that carry college credit and result in recognized job credentials. I-BEST pilot programs were funded by WIA Title II state leadership funds, Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act state leadership dollars, and general state appropriations. Local I-BEST programs are currently supported through state and federal adult education funds, student tuition, and an enhanced reimbursement rate of 1.75 per full-time equivalent student for I-BEST enrollments. This enhanced reimbursement rate helps offset the additional costs of the I-BEST model.

Wisconsin’s Career Pathways initiative promotes adult career pathway development throughout the technical college and workforce development systems, including bridges that combine basic academic, English language, and occupational content. Students receive college credit toward an approved occupational program and benefit from contextualized instructional strategies (e.g., team teaching, labs, simulations) and career development activities. Colleges are reconfiguring postsecondary programs with high employer demand into stackable credentials, offering adult learners an increasing number of career pathway options. Colleges increased the use of WIA Title II grant funds (which they receive as providers) for career pathways. Wisconsin’s career pathways are also supported by other sources of state and federal funds.

Illinois uses state and federal adult education funds for career pathway bridges that contextualize basic academic and English language skills to occupations in high-de-

mand industry sectors. After piloting this bridge model, Illinois is now implementing it statewide and connecting the bridges to the 16 career clusters defined under the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. The goal is to bridge the instructional gap between the initial skills of individuals and what they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and career pathway employment. The Illinois ICAPS model integrates Adult Basic Education and Career and Technical Education. State leadership funds are used to provide professional development and technical assistance to bridge program providers to promote statewide consistency in how basic components are integrated into these models.

FEDERAL FUNDS TO STATES

State leadership funds (12.5 percent of funds) can be used to:

- Develop and disseminate curricula;
- Develop content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways;
- Integrate adult education and English language learning with occupational skills training;
- Promote linkages with employers;
- Develop and implement transitions from adult education to postsecondary education;
- Promote linkages with higher education;
- Provide professional development;
- Benchmark and reward performance; and
- Coordinate adult education with existing support services, such as transportation and child care.

FEDERAL FUNDS TO LOCAL PROVIDERS

Funds distributed to local providers must be used to establish or operate one or more programs that provide services or instruction to participants in adult education and literacy, including workplace literacy services, family literacy services, and English literacy programs. Local adult education or English language programs can partner with community colleges and vocational education providers to support the creation and implementation of career pathways. In addition, local providers can contextualize basic skills content and integrate basic skills with workforce education.

States and local programs must report adult education and English language student outcomes in the National Reporting System (NRS) for federally supported students enrolled in career pathways, just as they do for other adult education students receiving federally funded services.

PROGRAM LIMITATIONS

Local providers must use federal adult education funds to provide adult education and literacy services, including workplace literacy services, family literacy services, or English literacy services. These services must be below the postsecondary level.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATES

Given the flexibility of federal adult education funds and the competitive process for awarding local funds, states can use them strategically to support career pathways for lower-skilled adults and out-of-school youth. States can use these funds to:

- Deliver integrated education and training (IET) by contextualizing academic content to specific occupations and career pathways;
- Dually or concurrently enroll students in adult education or English language services and postsecondary education and training, with the adult education funds covering the services below the postsecondary level (including the adult education/English language portion of the educational program), as well as related supports;
- Align curricula and assessments across adult education, postsecondary education, and job training programs;
- Create new delivery models (e.g., IET) that help students progress faster through college and career pathways, and require local providers to adopt the most promising models through the competitive grant process;
- Create incentives for local programs to focus on postsecondary preparation and success by offering enhanced funding for career pathway transition models (as Washington has done with I-BEST) and by setting targets for local programs to improve the transition and success rates of adult education

students in college and career pathways;

- Consider the ways in which state funds beyond the required state match, if accounted for separately, can be used to support career pathway efforts in even more flexible ways;
- Support meaningful and active cross-agency partnerships and collaboration; and
- Support professional development for new instructional methods (e.g., team teaching) that are commonly used in career pathway programs.