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Illinois Community College Board

Summary of Adult Education and Literacy Survey, January 2021

Early January 2020, the ICCB provided a survey to the Adult Education Providers seeking input on the funding for technology due to the COVID-19 pandemic and programs continued need for technical assistance in order to increase student access and achievement. Below is a summary of the feedback provided and the responses to the request for technical assistance.

How were the funds used?

- Feedback indicated that the majority of funding was used to purchase chrome books, tablets, and hotspots to create technology lending libraries and purchase curriculum for remote learning.
- A few programs indicated the funds were used to support staff for technology set up for the newly purchased devices and internal processes for lending libraries.
- One program purchased a whiteboard for virtual instruction so a teacher could work through math instruction via the web conferencing tools.

Were there any unexpected barriers to distributing the technology to students?

- Initially, programs who purchased hotspots struggled with finding data plans that met their needs. (30 day plans versus 90 day plans as an example).
- There has been an increased need for IT support for learners using program devices and training students on technology use needed to be done virtually.
- Coordinating technology pick up times for learners while social distancing was complicated for many students and programs and distributing hardware to large geographic regions was accomplished, but a bit more difficult than anticipated.
- Some of the technology distributed was not compatible with NRS assessments.

How have these technology grants impacted your students?

- Students who have not otherwise been able to engage in instruction were able to participate.
- Students have been empowered to take advantage of our many ESL and Vocational (IET) options.
- One student was able to borrow a laptop when her basement flooded and damaged her computer. She has since returned the laptop and will soon take her last GED test. Having no disruption in her studies was key for her success at this time.
- It has addressed the technology gap that exists for our rural program. Our students now can access material and participate in synchronous and asynchronous learning. It is subtle but having reliable access to technology has increased digital literacy and student confidence. We have experienced higher student retention.

- The grants have been beneficial in placing programming in the position to be effective now and in the future with delivery of education services regardless if programming is in-person or at-a-distance.
- Enabled students to continue in their education. While the digital equity gap became further evident, the barriers of transportation and childcare for students were eliminated.
- A number of our students had children or family members utilizing computers and the internet, and adding additional technology enabled them to overcome technology disparity. Students with complicated schedules appreciate the flexible option to learn online.

Identify the supports that are most needed for the remainder of FY21.

- Perhaps virtual monthly ESL instructor meetings with HSE instructor meetings regionally would help teachers to feel not isolated and to feel supported and heard.
- There is still a need for increased staff capacity to accommodate the large number of students enrolling in classes. Administrative staff is limited in capacity to enroll and test interested students in a timely manner, and instructors are being pushed to the limit of class capacity.
- Funding for technology, staff for intake, and curriculum seat licenses.
- Professional Development and events that allow SME and Stakeholders to share best practices for offering virtual instruction and remote services.
- Statewide recruitment campaign would be helpful.

Identify the supports that are most needed for the remainder of FY21. (In order of selection)

- Statewide student recruitment campaign
- Funding for more technology and curriculum
- Professional development on teaching remotely
- Professional development on teacher stress

The ICCB has been invited to participate in the American Institute of Research's LEAD program. This is a 6-month remote professional development opportunity consisting of webinars, 2 virtual retreat days, and an established Illinois Cohort for up to 30 AE professional coordinators and administrators. The goal is for the participants to develop or enhance leadership skills and establish a thorough understanding of the AEFLA Grant expectations. Would you or one of your key staff members be potentially interested in participating and completing this training?

- 41 out of 50 programs would like this training.

Please consider sharing any ideas or concerns that the ICCB can assist with for the remainder of FY21.

- Information and professional development on recruitment strategies and tools were requested.
- Requests included the need further assistance with how to help very low literacy students during this time via virtual classes.
- AELFA targets were a concern voiced by many respondents.
- NRS assessments were also a concern voiced by many respondents. Suggestions include working with CASAS and TABE to expand student to proctor test ratios. Host more open discussion among providers about what is working and what isn't working.
- Questions about IETs and potential requirements were shared.
- More clarification of hybrid vs face-to-face in writing to be able to refer to.
- I believe we are all doing the best we can in a very difficult situation at the state and local level. Good things have come out of this pandemic. Our remote offerings will be offered when we go back in person as an alternative in programming. Our teachers feel more confident that they can stand and deliver good programming in or outside the classroom.

ICCB and PDN Response to the Survey

- ***Virtual Learning Communities*** offered throughout the spring 2021 semester will provide adult educators the opportunity to collaborate and communicate with peers while earning PD hours.
    - [ABE/ASE Virtual Learning Community - Spring 2021 Cohort](#)
    - [ICAPS/IET Learning Community](#)
    - [Bridge Learning Community](#)
    - ALRC and Burlington English are coordinating to offer a Virtual Learning Community for users of Burlington English. Meeting dates are January 29, March 26, and May 21. There are separate tracks for administrators and instructors.

- During winter- spring 2021, ALRC is offering the following professional development opportunities to improve remote teaching and learning:
    - 3 **Learn from the Tech-Xpert** trainings. Topics include using Google Docs, Bitmoji Classroom, and Wakelet. Two are 2-part trainings where demonstration is given on the first day, participants try it out during the following week, then reconvene to share experiences.
    - 14 **Tech Help Sessions** (2 per week) are being rolled out starting at the end of January to assist instructors with strengthening specific Zoom-related skills to improve online teaching.
    - Six of the Northern Conference sessions by featured speaker SMEs were recorded and will be available in iLEARN by early February. All address techniques for effective virtual instruction.

- Regional Administrator Networking Meetings
    - Regions I & II: Feb 2 at 10:00 am, May 4 at 10:00 am
    - Regions III & IV: [Jan 28 at 10:00 am](#), [April 6 at 10:00 am](#)

- The Excellence in Adult Education site has a [Promising Practices for Distance Education](#) section that highlights successful tools and practices that programs have implemented this past year. Administrators are encouraged to contact any program in that section to ask questions or get more information.

- Resources to Address Remote Testing Challenges
    - ***Remote Testing in Illinois: Promising Practices Webinar Recording*** – December 8, 2020
        - [Link to recording](#)
        - [Link to slides](#) (Please note the contact slide near the end with administrator emails - you are encouraged to contact anyone on this list regarding remote assessment.)
    - The Excellence in Adult Education site [Promising Practices for Distance Education](#) section includes PDN-vetted remote testing tools that programs have implemented to scale up remote testing.
    - Advice to programs: Make sure you double check the system requirements for the remote assessments you use to ensure compatibility with any devices <u>before</u> purchasing and distributing devices to students.
    - [CASAS Remote Testing in Illinois: Considerations & Guidelines recorded webinar for administrators](#) - June 8, 2020
    - Illinois Remote Proctor Training for CASAS iLearn course - [How to access course](#)
    - [Administering BEST Plus Virtually recorded webinar](#)
    - Remote Testing Proctors for Hire List - contact Dawn Hughes at dj-hughes2@wiu.edu for access to the listing

- The [Upcoming PD](#) section of the excellence website offers information on all upcoming PD offerings from the PDN, most of which are focused on virtual instruction.

- The [Distance Education Resources](#) section of the excellence website offers a variety of archived webinars on teaching in a remote environment, along with a distance education resource list and discussion board. The archived webinars are also available as courses in iLearn for the opportunity to earn PD hours.

- Upcoming virtual conferences featuring SMEs and Stakeholders
    - [ITBE](#)- Feb 26-27, 2021
    - [IACEA](#) - March 2021
    - [COABE](#) - March 21-24, 2021
    - [TESOL](#) - March 24-27, 2021
    - [WIOA Summit](#) - April 27-28, 2021

- Recent PDN virtual conferences - access to recorded sessions
    - [Forum for Excellence](#) - September 2020

- ○ Northern Adult Education Conference - December 2020. Select recorded sessions will be available in iLearn in early February 2021.

- Recruitment Campaign Resources
  - ○ ICSPS/SIPDC Webinar series on Recruitment, Engagement, and Retention
  - ○ How to Up Your Recruitment: Strategies, Tips, and Tricks-- ICAPS/IET and Bridge
  - ○ How to offer ICAPS/IET Training Component and Bridges Virtually or as a Hybrid
  - ○ COABE's #MoveAheadwithADULTED
  - ○ ProLiteracy's Advocacy Toolkit for Adult Education and Literacy

- Teacher Stress PD
  - ○ Support for Trauma-Informed Education in Postsecondary Systems (STEPS) webinar series ICSPS
  - ○ ICSPS Thriving in a Virtual Work Place Resources
  - ○ Resilient Educator Toolkit

- Resources to assist very low level literacy students with virtual classes
  - ○ PDN has mentors who volunteer to assist other instructors with students who have low or no tech
  - ○ Effective Ways to Serve Students with Low/No Technology Access recorded webinar
  - ○ Tips and Tricks for Teaching Beginning Level ELLs Remotely recorded webinar

- Resources to address barriers of distance learning
  - ○ Considering Equity and Inclusion in Online Teaching
  - ○ Promising Practices - Excellence website