

Creating Pathways for Adult Learners



**A Visioning Document for the
Illinois Adult Education and Family Literacy Program:
Continuing Our Work to Meet Adult Learners' Needs**



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Foreword

In April 2009, the Illinois Community College Board convened the Strategic Planning Task Force to provide initial recommendations for a targeted five-year strategic vision that would lay the foundation for addressing the needs of adult education learners in this struggling economy. The Task Force included practitioners from around the state representing community colleges, literacy councils, school-based programs, correctional education, and community-based organizations. Task Force members are to be commended for their diligence and innovative thinking in developing an exciting vision with significant potential to positively impact the state's workforce and economy.

The Task Force sought to build upon the state's current successful efforts and design creative solutions to address the needs of adult education learners as they face the challenges of the new economy. The Task Force examined data on current and projected state need; learned about promising practices within and outside of the state; and analyzed educational, enrollment, and funding trends. Task Force members recognized the success of the Adult Education programming in Illinois and its evolution into a uniquely specialized and contextualized delivery system to meet the diverse needs of adult education learners. The Task Force also acknowledged, however, that adult education learners are now facing new challenges and barriers in their efforts to reach their potential.

With the high unemployment rate and the demand for more highly skilled workers, the Task Force recognized that the high school diploma and GED[®] are starting points for assisting many adult education learners gain family sustaining employment. Illinois' Adult Education system, however, needs innovative, collaborative, and strategic solutions to offer more Illinoisans the opportunity to further achieve career and educational goals. To that end, the Task Force developed an initial draft visioning document of recommendations and priority actions.

Several mechanisms were then used to gather input from the adult education field and its critical partners:

- Regional focus groups with adult education practitioners were conducted in August to obtain input.
- The document was placed on the Illinois Community College Board website for public review and comment.
- A meeting of key stakeholders was convened in September 2009 to examine the recommendations and determine implications for future collaborative work.
- A meeting of the Illinois Service Center Network was conducted in September 2009 to examine the report and discuss implications for future professional development and resource support needs.
- On September 15-16, 2009, the Task Force examined the feedback, made revisions, and developed a final draft for submission to the Illinois Community College Board.
- ICCB staff approved the document for submission to the Adult Education Advisory Council.
- In October 2009, the Advisory Council reviewed the document and approved the visioning document for submission to the Illinois Community College Board for approval.

The recommendations and priority actions are intended to serve as a broad framework and starting point for future action. This strategic approach encompasses several guiding principles, core elements, and recommendations that are essential to the operationalization of the visioning document. Once the visioning document is approved by the Illinois Community College Board, an operational plan will be developed to specify explicit action steps and time lines that will move Adult Education forward during the next five years.

This “broad framework” approach was taken for several reasons:

- The visioning document encompasses critical elements that require input and collaboration from multiple internal and external partners. Therefore, operationalizing the visioning document cannot and should not be conducted by the Illinois Community College Board in isolation from key stakeholders. A series of collaborative planning meetings will be conducted to ensure that the operational plan fully complements related initiatives currently taking place within the state.
- While a primary focus of the visioning document is to address the needs of adult education learners with postsecondary and employment-related goals, Adult Education serves learners with a variety of goals, not all of which are work-related. All adult education learners, however, benefit from a system that provides clear pathways or roadmaps to assist them in achieving their goals. Whether they want to improve their ability to assist their children with their homework or strengthen their communication skills to acclimate to a new culture, they need to have a clear pathway that will assist them in navigating through the barriers and issues that arise. The operational plan will embrace the full spectrum of adult education learners and services needed to address those needs.
- A well-planned strategic approach to identify promising practices and pilot new strategies and evaluate their short- and long-term impact on learner outcomes will be necessary to fully operationalize the vision.
- The needs of smaller, rural, and/or low-budgeted programs must be explored further to determine feasible options related to accessibility, technology, and staffing issues to ensure equity for adult education learners across the state.
- Finally, pending federal Adult Education legislation may further impact the operational structure of the visioning document.

Overview

Background: Adult Education has a rich history in Illinois of providing services that assist adults in improving their skills, achieving their educational goals, and transitioning to further education or employment. Instruction is designed for adults functioning at the lowest levels of basic skills and English language instruction to advanced levels of learning. As defined by Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Adult Education enables adults to (1) become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency, (2) obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children, and (3) complete a secondary school education.

Adult Education is not developmental education, but it provides for the acquisition of basic skills for adults desiring to prepare for postsecondary education.

Adult Education is not career and technical education, but it provides adults with the foundational skills to successfully complete occupational training courses.

Adult Education is not postsecondary education, but it provides rigorous instruction to assist adult education learners in transitioning successfully into credit-bearing coursework and bypassing developmental coursework.

Adult Education is not a public assistance program, but it provides assistance to TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients in gaining the necessary basic skills to earn a high school credential, qualify for further training, and find sustaining employment.

Illinois has served more than 120,000 learners annually in various instructional areas. The reason for the success of the Adult Education program has been its ability to respond to diverse learner needs.

Serving the Needs

ABE/ASE-GED/HSCR: The Adult Basic Education (ABE), ASE-GED Preparation, and High School Credit (HSCR) programs serve adults who have not completed a high school credential.

English for Speakers of Other Languages: Each year, more than 66,000 immigrants are learning to speak the English language.

EL/Civics: These classes integrate English literacy with civics education to assist immigrants with acclimating to the American culture and gain the skills and knowledge necessary for productive citizenship.

Family Literacy: The state's family literacy programs are bringing parents and children together in their pursuit of educational excellence and reversing the cycle of illiteracy by teaching the families of today in order to impact the generations of tomorrow.

Correctional Education: To assist in reducing recidivism, Adult Education is equipping incarcerated individuals with the basic and life skills needed to sustain meaningful employment upon their release.

Student Achievement in Reading (STAR): Through the use of new evidence-based reading strategies, many adult education learners are being able to finally experience the joy of reading for the first time in their lives.

Workplace Education: Through onsite workplace education programs, the skills of the current workforce are being upgraded to respond to changes in the global marketplace.

Transitions: These specialized courses and services are assisting dislocated workers and other adult education learners with gaining both the academic and college readiness skills needed to transition successfully to postsecondary education.

Bridge Programs: These programs provide adult education learners with contextualized occupation-specific basic skills needed to successfully transition to job training programs in high-growth industries.

In its history of providing services to diverse learner populations, it is evident that:

- **Illinois Adult Education is effective.** The federally funded Adult Education program authorized under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act was one of only four of the U.S. Department of Education's 92 programs that was rated as 'effective' by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. This rating is the highest that a federal program can achieve.¹
 - **Illinois adults are learning.** Illinois consistently exceeds federal performance benchmarks for educational gain.²
 - **Illinois adults are attending.** Through its learner-centered delivery structure provided by highly skilled instructors, the *state's* average for learner attendance hours is *among the highest in the country*.³
 - **Illinois adults are achieving goals.** The state consistently exceeds performance **benchmarks** for assisting adults in obtaining and/or retaining employment.⁴
 - **Illinois adults are transitioning.** The bridge model is assisting Illinois adults in gaining the necessary skills to successfully transition to college and occupational training programs in such areas as healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation.
- **Illinois is a national leader.** Illinois' Adult Education program is a national leader in distance education. *GED-i*, the state's online course for GED® preparation, is being adopted by several other states across the country.
- **Illinois adult educators are dedicated to professional growth.** Through national, state, and local professional development venues, adult educators receive research-based professional staff development, products, and resources. Illinois has a team of professional development staff who provide quality training to the adult education system.
- **Illinois Adult Education values partnerships.** The Adult Education program realizes that addressing the diverse needs of adult education learners requires collaborative relationships that recognize and utilize the strengths of each partner.

Changing Times: Adult Education's history of responding to learner needs is critical during these challenging times. Whether a learner's goals are related to personal self-improvement, family literacy, further training, or employment, undereducated adults in Illinois need a system that provides clear pathways and support.

Undereducated adults are now being faced with significant barriers to self sufficiency because of a high unemployment rate and a severely struggling state economy, with little or no relief in sight. Illinois' economy is transforming to one that demands new skills, knowledge, and credentials. The numbers are startling.

- **More than 1.4 million Illinois adults, or 15 percent of the adult population 18 years of age and older, do not possess a high school diploma or equivalent.**⁵

¹ ExpectMore.gov, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/expectmore/summary/10000180.2006.html>

² National Reporting System Table 4, FY 06, 07, 08.

³ National Reporting System Table 4, FY 08.

⁴ National Reporting System Table 5, FY 06, 07, 08.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. 2005-2007 American Community Survey. Sex by Age by Educational Attainment Data Set.

- **Nearly one of every seven Illinoisans is an immigrant (1.77 million out of 12.8 million). More than 900,000 of them between the ages of 18–64 speak English less than ‘very well.’⁶**
- **Almost 44 percent of Illinois’ eight million adults over the age of 18 have not yet completed any college coursework.⁷**

Middle-skill jobs, which require more than a high school diploma or equivalent but less than a four-year degree, currently make up the largest segment of jobs in the Illinois economy⁸, and will continue to do so for years to come. While these middle-skill jobs offer new opportunities, employers still have job vacancies because too many workers lack the needed skills. **Unlike in the past, Illinois workers can no longer expect to hold a family-sustaining job with only a high school diploma or equivalent.** Illinois must ensure workers are prepared to thrive in this new world and, currently, far too many are not.

Adult Education offers solutions. The bridge model and college transitions classes are two examples of the specialized programs being offered to assist adult education learners in preparing for further education and training. To provide greater educational and economic opportunities, we must strategically expand this existing work and continue to identify emerging workforce needs and solutions.

Along with ABE/ASE, English language acquisition, EL Civics, family literacy, correctional education, life skills, and the other kinds of programming in Adult Education, work readiness and college/training transitions represent critical components in the continuum of Adult Education services. In this continuum, all facets of the Adult Education system are contributors to the success of adult education learners as we look to the future.

As a result of a continuum of services, Adult Education is positioned to play a pivotal role in Illinois’ economy and join with other partners to create a comprehensive system of learning for adults that enables them to prosper in this new economic environment.

Clearer Pathways for All Adult Education Learners. The tremendous scale of need in our state demands a strong vision for substantial, sustainable impact. It is absolutely crucial to the state’s prosperity that large-scale efforts be undertaken to continuously improve outcomes for adult learners, employers, and communities. Undereducated adults in Illinois need hope – and they need to have options for realizing their potential. Because of financial obligations, a lack of up-to-date technical and employability skills, and/or weak academic foundations, they feel that the door to a better life is closed to them. They need to see there are clear pathways to assist them reach their goals.

The Illinois Adult Education program, coordinated by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), has made significant strides during the past several years to address these basic skills issues and provide a pathway for learners. In conjunction with several partners, the ICCB has developed and adopted a statewide definition (see page 32, Definitions) of bridge program instruction which is the foundation for development of instructional program design to assist learners in preparation for postsecondary education and/or employment opportunities. This

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. 2005-2007 American Community Survey. Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English data set.

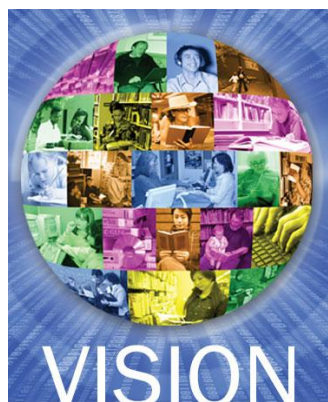
⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. 2005-2007 American Community Survey. Sex by Age by Educational Attainment Data Set.

⁸ Illinois’ Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs written for the Skills2Compete-Illinois campaign by The Workforce Alliance (TWA), Washington, D.C., as part of its national Skills2Compete Campaign.

bridge definition includes three critical elements: contextualization instruction, career development, and transition services (see page 32, Definitions).

During the next five years, the Illinois adult education program will continue to refine and strengthen efforts to provide clearer direction and support for **all** adult education learners, regardless of their goals and/or functioning levels. We will assist each adult education learner in developing a pathway with realistic benchmarks for success.

The primary focus of this visioning document is the development of a pathways system that leads to further education, training, and/or employment. In light of the current economic conditions within the state, we recognize the need to focus energy and resources on assisting learners with employment goals to reach their fullest potential.



Our Vision:

We envision Adult Education as the foundation of a career pathways system that prepares adult learners for economic self sufficiency.

To achieve this vision, we will partner with adult education learners and key stakeholders to provide a clear direction, quality instruction, and targeted support for achieving learner goals through further education, occupational training, and/or sustaining employment.

Consistent with the career pathways model outlined by the Center for Occupational Research and Development⁹, the Illinois Career Cluster Model, and other pathway models, our vision calls for:

- Multiple entry points for various functioning levels of adult education learners that are aligned to clearly identified benchmarks and credentials, certifications, and/or degrees that lead to employment in high-growth, family-sustaining jobs, including middle-skill and emerging 'green' jobs;
- Stackable certificates at non-postsecondary and postsecondary levels that allow adult education learners to progress through the career ladder with tangible evidence of work readiness;
- Options for accelerated learning so adults can move ahead as quickly as possible;
- Industry-focused curricula that prepare participants for employment and career advancement in designated industries;
- Personal and academic support services essential to learner success;
- Exposure at all levels that further education/training and family sustaining jobs are a possibility;
- Transferrable workplace skills, such as critical thinking, financial literacy, life skills, and study skills, integrated at all levels; and

⁹ Hinckley, Richard and Hull, Dan. 2009. *Adult Career Pathways: Providing a Second Chance in Public Education*. Center for Occupational Research and Development.

- Partnerships with community and government agencies that can maximize the resources necessary for a seamless career cluster framework.

An Urgent Call to Action: *The recommendations in this document require an urgent call to action to create the solutions Illinois workers need, to invest additional funds to prepare Illinoisans to compete in the new economy, and to better coordinate existing state workforce and training resources.*

The Adult Education system cannot and should not accomplish this vision alone. In order to respond to this call, it will require partnering with various stakeholders in order to achieve the vision of Adult Education. Fortunately, initial work has already begun in several important aspects of the development process through the *Shifting Gears* initiative funded by the Joyce Foundation, the Illinois Career Cluster Model, the Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success, the P-20 curriculum and data alignment projects, and other related efforts. The scale of need for basic skills development and postsecondary attainment is tremendous and goes beyond the scope and capacity of an individual program or institution.

The recommendations and priority actions in this document are intended to serve as a broad framework and starting point for future action over the next five years. This strategic approach encompasses several guiding principles, core elements, and recommendations that are essential to the operationalization of the visioning document. A series of collaborative planning meetings will be conducted to ensure that the operational plan fully complements similar or related initiatives currently taking place within the state.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As we move forward with this approach, several guiding principles will assist in clarifying and defining our vision.

- **Responsiveness:** We recognize that earning a high school diploma or equivalent is no longer sufficient for adult education learners and employers. We promote work readiness and further education through postsecondary or occupational training as the new standard for adult education learners. We maintain flexibility to ensure that the needs of all learners, work-related and non-work related, are addressed. We will balance the need to respond to the growing immigrant population with the needs of other learners to ensure that all Illinoisans have an opportunity for success.
- **Collaboration:** We know that we cannot develop the career pathways system alone. The development and implementation of the career pathways system will require consistent input, planning, shared activities, and support from a variety of stakeholders at many levels and across private and public sectors. We will engage a range of partners in offering services for adult education learners that support and move them along clear and accessible pathways toward their goals. An 'open source' concept will be embraced that enables the sharing of curricula and resources within and across partnering agencies.
- **Innovation:** We must employ creative, innovative thinking and approaches in program delivery that builds meaningful pathways for adult education learners; supports accelerated options toward credentials, certifications and/or degrees; and fosters learners' leadership skills and entrepreneurial thinking. We must examine trends and

projections to anticipate emerging workforce needs and take strategic action to address those needs now.

- **Alignment:** We must align assessment, curriculum, and instruction to pathway options to ensure that learners have multiple entry and exit points that build upon each other. Pathway exit points must be aligned to various employment opportunities and matched to expected salary levels. We must develop articulation agreements and standardized pathways among institutions to ensure learning efforts will be recognized across various institutions. Strategically aligned funding will be required to support a comprehensive adult learning strategy.
- **Contextualization:** We must inventively develop learners' basic skills in the context of practical applications and occupational skills so they quickly grasp the relevance of learning and remain engaged in programs until they gain necessary skills and/or earn needed credentials.
- **Accountability:** We must promote shared responsibility for common outcomes among partners within the state's adult learning infrastructure. Data collection procedures must result in valid and reliable performance data that represent outcomes of all learners. Data must be used continuously and strategically to inform decisions, guide program improvements, and evaluate results.
- **Evidence-based Teaching and Learning:** We must integrate innovative teaching methodologies based on research and professional wisdom which focus on learner achievement, higher level critical thinking skills, and workplace skills critical to productive employment.
- **Professional Development:** Central to the effective implementation of the career pathways system is high-quality staff equipped with the skills, knowledge, and support to perform their job responsibilities. All adult educators must have an understanding of their role within the career pathways system and have the requisite skills to perform that role. Instructors involved in specialized areas should have appropriate training and support to ensure quality teaching and learning.

CORE ELEMENTS

The recommendations in this planning document reflect these guiding principles and address several core elements that are critical to the development of a comprehensive career pathways system. These elements include:

- **Assessment, Curriculum, and Instruction**
- **High-Quality Teaching and Professional Development**
- **Support and Follow-Up Services to Encourage Access and Retention**
- **Partnerships**
- **Research, Data, and Accountability**
- **Program Design**

Statement of Need

The Time for Change is Now

Illinois has had a rich tradition of economic prosperity with globally recognized businesses producing cutting edge technologies and high-value services. With the fifth largest state economy in the nation¹⁰, the state has 33 companies ranked in the Fortune 500.¹¹ In addition, the Kauffman report ranked Illinois among the top third of states best positioned to succeed in the new economy.¹²

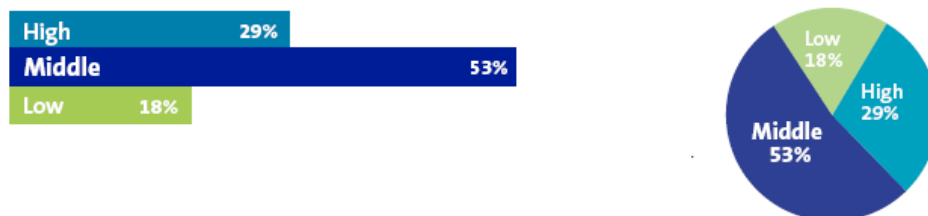
With an unemployment rate approaching 11 percent¹³ and businesses across the state reporting shortfalls in their productivity and growth, Illinois is at a serious crossroads – a crossroads in a brand new economic landscape in unparalleled times. Illinois' economy is transforming to one that demands new skills, knowledge, and credentials, especially postsecondary education. Unlike in the past, Illinois workers can no longer expect to hold a family-sustaining job with only a high school diploma.

Middle-Skill Jobs

According to the *Illinois' Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs*¹⁴, written for the Skills2Compete-Illinois campaign by The Workforce Alliance, middle-skill jobs, which require more than a high school education but less than a four-year degree, currently make up the largest segment of jobs in the Illinois economy and will continue to do so for years to come. More than half of Illinois jobs in 2006 were middle-skill jobs, representing more than three million workers (Figure 1).¹⁵

In Illinois, more than half of all jobs are classified as middle-skill, but only 43 percent of Illinois workers likely have the credentials to fill them.

FIGURE 1. Illinois Jobs by Skill Level, 2006



Source: Calculated by TWA from the Bureau of Labor Statistics website

Middle-skill workers are the police officers and fire fighters who keep us safe in our homes. They are the nurses, therapists, and other medical technicians who keep us healthy. They are the air traffic controllers, electricians, and mechanics who keep our infrastructure up and running. These are local, hands-on jobs, meaning they are unlikely to be outsourced to other countries. Many of these are well-paid jobs, offering Illinois workers a chance at economic security and prosperity.

¹⁰ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. 2007 data. Available at <http://www.bea.gov/regional/gsp/action.cfm>

¹¹ Fortune Magazine. Fortune 500 2008. Available at <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500/2008/>

¹² Atkinson, R. and Correa, D. 2007. *The 2007 State New Economy Index*. The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

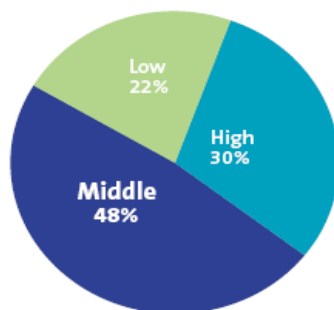
¹³ Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Available at <http://lmi.ides.state.il.us/laus/lausmenu.htm>

¹⁴ *Illinois' Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs* written for the Skills2Compete-Illinois campaign by The Workforce Alliance (TWA), Washington, D.C., as part of its national Skills2Compete Campaign.

¹⁵ *Illinois' Forgotten Middle-Skills Jobs*, op.cit.

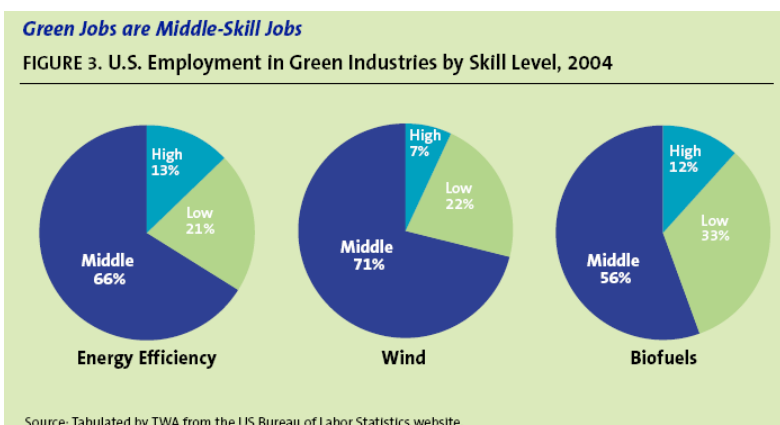
By 2014, the demand for middle-skill workers will have increased during a ten-year period to close to one million job openings — almost half of all job openings expected during this time. This increase compares to low-skill jobs and high-skill jobs, which will account for 23 and 30 percent of openings, respectively (Figure 2).¹⁶

FIGURE 2. Illinois' Total Job Openings by Skill Level, 2004-2014



Source: Calculated by TWA from Illinois Department of Employment Security data.

More than ever before, particularly in light of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, attention is also being given to clean energy industries and technologies which can result in substantial environmental and economic benefits for Illinois. For example, the Chicagoland Green Collar Jobs Initiative brings together a range of workforce development and other community groups to research green-collar employment opportunities and engage stakeholders in the development of programs to help workers prepare for jobs in the green economy. A recent report by the Center on Wisconsin Strategy, the Apollo Alliance, and The Workforce Alliance indicates that the skills needed in the green economy closely mirror the middle-skill demands of the labor market (Figure 3).¹⁷ A sound, innovative approach for training technicians involved in advanced energy equipment — such as fuel cells, wind turbines, solar panels, and hybrid vehicles — holds great promise for Illinois workers.



¹⁶ Illinois' Forgotten Middle-Skills Jobs, op.cit.

¹⁷ Illinois' Forgotten Middle-Skills Jobs, op.cit.

The Middle Skill Gap

While these emerging industries offer new opportunities, employers still have job vacancies because too many workers lack the needed skills. **In Illinois, more than half of all jobs are classified as middle skill, but only 43 percent of Illinois workers likely have the credentials to fill them.** That gap will widen as more workers retire and if Illinois' middle-skill educational attainment continues to decline.

Current trends show a dramatic decline in resources for middle-skill training combined with an accelerating retirement of middle-skill workers — leaving a pool of workers with inadequate skills or training to fill these jobs. This trend means that thousands of well-paying and rewarding jobs are already going unfilled in the state today, in industries that are and will be essential to Illinois' economic revitalization.

Illinois educational projections (Figs. 4 and 5)¹⁸ suggest that the shortage of workers to fill middle-skill jobs is likely to worsen. During the 15 years between 1989 and 2004, the state saw a growth in residents with educational attainment at the high- and middle-skill levels and a decrease in those at the low-skill level. **But the state will see a significant change in these trends over the subsequent 15 years, when the proportion of low-skill workers in Illinois' workforce is likely to increase at the same time that the percentage of middle-skill workers is projected to decline.**

Research shows that one year of college-level credit plus a credential made the biggest difference or "tipping point" in earnings after leaving college. ESL students who reached this point or beyond earned \$7,000 more per year than ESL students who were unable to reach the one-year tipping point in their postsecondary education and training (Prince and Jenkins, 2005).

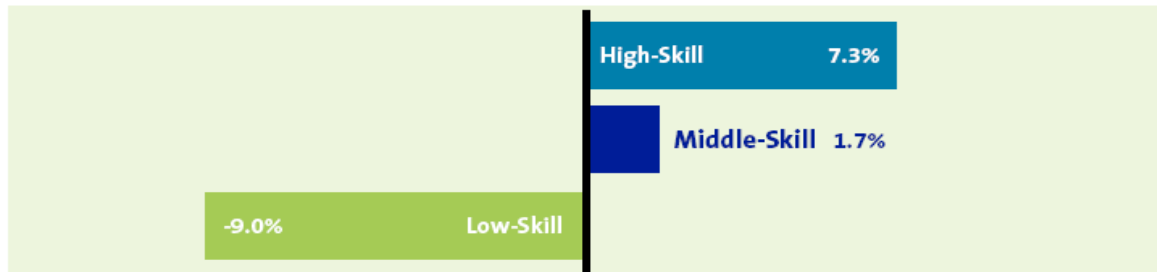
This trend is due, in part, to the retirement of middle-skill, blue-collar workers who are less likely to delay retirement than high-skill, white-collar workers. Immigration trends are likely to do little to offset middle-skill attrition, as most workforce growth in the state due to immigrants moving in to the state will likely occur at the low-end of the skill spectrum or at the high-end of the skill spectrum (for example, engineers brought in from overseas through H-1B visas).

These educational, retirement, and immigration trends, if not addressed, will only exacerbate the mismatch between the skill needs of Illinois businesses and the state's available workforce, stifling economic growth and limiting opportunity for thousands of Illinois workers to advance within the state's economy.¹⁹ Adult education learners who lack the basic and technical skills needed for productive employment will fall farther and farther behind.

¹⁸ Illinois' Forgotten Middle-Skills Jobs, op.cit.

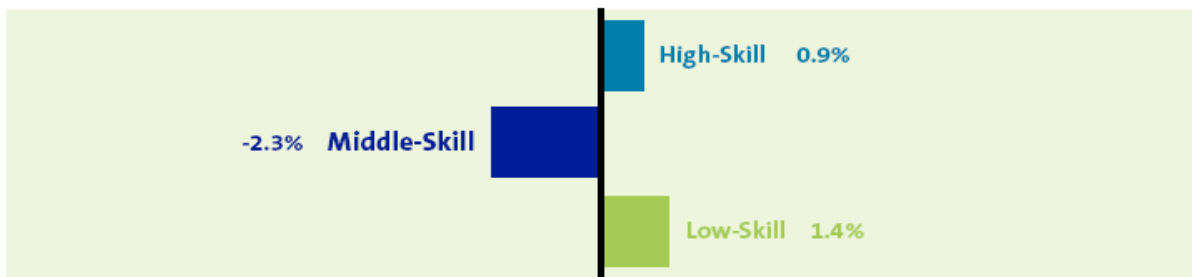
¹⁹ Illinois' Forgotten Middle-Skills Jobs, op.cit.

Figure 4: Percentage Change in Illinois Educational Attainment, 1989-2004



Source: Calculated by TWA using December 1989 and 2004 CPS data

Figure 5: Projected Percentage Change in Illinois Educational Attainment 2004-2020



Source: Current attainment calculated by TWA using December 2004 CPS data. 2020 attainment projected by TWA using demographic data from the December 2005 CPS data and population projections calculated by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

In addition, the *Illinois Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs* report states that:

- **Shortages in healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation/logistics will worsen.** If current trends hold, Illinois will experience a shortage of 21,000 nurses by the year 2020.
- A survey of Illinois manufacturers found that more than 80 percent of employers in the non-durable manufacturing industry noted that applicants' **basic skills were the primary hiring difficulty** for heavy and tractor trailer truck drivers, a job that offers a median starting wage of \$25 an hour.
- Middle-skill jobs expected to grow by 2014 in Illinois include **carpenters with a median earning of \$52,400; auto mechanics with a median earning of \$34,600; and heavy truck drivers with a median earning of \$38,500.**

Future Trends

- *Middle-skill job growth*
- *Shortage of nurses by 2020*
- *Accelerated retirement of middle-skill workers*
- *Decline in resources for middle-skill training*
- *High percentage of workers' lacking basic skills*
- *Increase in low-skill immigrants*

- **Two-thirds of the people who will be in Illinois' workforce in the year 2020 were already working adults in 2005**—long past the traditional high school to college pipeline.

As indicated in the report, a major obstacle to addressing Illinois' middle-skill gap is the growing number of residents who are not academically ready to enter the education and training programs that would prepare them for these jobs. An employer survey conducted for the Metropolitan Workforce Boards of Chicago reveals that inadequate basic and technical skills are significant limitations for employers across a variety of industries and occupations. For example, more than 80 percent of employers in the non-durable manufacturing industry noted that applicants' basic skills were the primary hiring difficulty for heavy and tractor trailer truck drivers, a job that offers a median starting wage of \$25 an hour. For cabinetmakers and bench carpenters—positions that start at over \$24 per hour—100 percent of employers identified a lack of technical skills as their primary hiring difficulty.²⁰

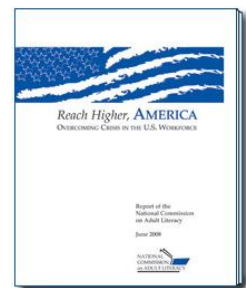
While these shortages certainly limit the productivity and competitiveness of specific firms and industries, there are other reasons for Illinois to worry about a lack of skilled workers. As the state's population ages, for example, nurses and other healthcare professionals will be increasingly important—and increasingly scarce.

Ensuring that Illinois has a sufficient number of workers prepared to take these available jobs, both now and in the future, is an investment not just in our workforce but also in the health and well being of our citizens and our communities.

Illinois' Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs

Holzer and Lerman point out in "America's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs"²¹ that the data supporting education demand projections likely underplay the need for more broadly based basic skills education. Despite the increases in U.S. educational attainment over the last 20 years, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL)²² indicates only a slight increase in quantitative skills between 1992 and 2003, and no improvement at all for prose and document literacy.

A recent report from the National Commission on Adult Literacy (NCAL) entitled *Reach Higher, America*²³ confirms that the nation—and Illinois—are facing substantial gaps when it comes to basic skills. NCAL cites evidence that 93 million adults nationally lack the literacy to participate in postsecondary education and training required for the jobs of the future. Tens of millions of Americans face significant educational barriers, including lack of a high school education or inadequate English language skills. Forty percent of all college learners and nearly two-thirds of two-year college learners must take at least one remedial course.



²⁰ Metropolitan Workforce Boards of Chicago, 2004. Job Vacancy Survey Final Report: Durable and Non-Durable Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing, Wholesale Trade.

²¹ Holzer, Harry and Robert Lerman, 2007. America's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs: Education and Training Requirements in the Next Decade and Beyond, commissioned by Skills2Compete / The Workforce Alliance.

²² National Assessment of Adult Literacy sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/>

²³ *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce* sponsored by the National Commission on Adult Literacy. Available at <http://www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org/report.html>

The numbers of adults in Illinois who are in need of assistance are startling.

- **More than 1.4 million Illinois adults, or 15 percent of the adult population 18 years of age and older, do not possess a high school diploma or equivalent.**²⁴
- **Approximately 66 percent, or 26,803 adult basic and secondary learners, were functioning below an 8th grade level upon enrollment.**²⁵
- **Almost 79 percent of the ESL learners were functioning at a low to intermediate level.**²⁶
- **Only 62 percent of adults without a high school diploma currently participate in the workforce compared to 76 percent for high school completers, 81 percent for those with an associate's degree or some college, and 85 percent for those with a bachelor's degree.**²⁷
- **Of Illinois' eight million adults over the age of 18, 44 percent have not yet completed any college coursework.**²⁸
 - The influx of middle skill jobs will require at least some college.
- **Nearly one of every seven Illinoisans is an immigrant (1.77 million out of 12.8 million). More than 900,000 of them between the ages of 18–64 speak English less than 'very well.'**²⁹
- **Only 1,346 participants in the AEFL program transitioned to an Illinois community college following completion of the basic skills program.**³⁰
 - Community colleges and technical career centers are major gateways for education and training for low-skilled adults. However, too few adult education learners transition to workforce training. If they do transition, it is typically to training for jobs on the lowest rung of the ladder with a small percentage advancing to higher wage and higher skill jobs.

While Illinois' Adult Education and Family Literacy (AEFL) Program¹ coordinated by the Illinois Community College Board ranks fourth nationally in the number of individuals enrolled in adult basic and secondary education and English as a Second Language programs, with nearly 110,000 adult education learners, the state is still only reaching approximately 8 percent of the target population annually.

This is a very large pool of workers who are unable to contribute positively to Illinois' economy.

The training they receive is often not aligned in pathways but based upon a patchwork of credit and noncredit courses. The longer it takes to master basic skills, the less likely adults are to advance from one stage to the next. It is critical, therefore, to find ways to accelerate learning to prepare low-skilled adults for work and to increase their contributions to the state's economy while increasing their capacity for obtaining higher wage positions and career advancement.

²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. 2005-2007 American Community Survey. Sex by Age by Educational Attainment Data Set.

²⁵ Illinois Community College Board. Adult Education and Family Literacy Program 2007-2008 Data Book.

²⁶ Illinois Community College Board. Adult Education and Family Literacy Program 2007-2008 Data Book.

²⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. 2005-2007 American Community Survey. Educational Attainment by Employment Status data set.

²⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. 2005-2007 American Community Survey. Sex by Age by Educational Attainment Data Set.

²⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. 2005-2007 American Community Survey. Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English data set.

³⁰ Illinois Community College Board. Adult Education and Family Literacy Program 2007-2008 Data Book.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Assessment, Curricula, and Instruction

Adopt aligned assessment, curricula, and instructional practices that prepare adults for family-sustaining jobs and career advancement.

Recommendation 2: Support and Follow-Up Services to Encourage Access and Retention

Provide comprehensive student support to reduce personal barriers to retention and progress that promote smooth transitions within and between educational/training providers and into the workforce.

Recommendation 3: High-Quality Teaching and Professional Development

Ensure that all adult educators have ongoing, specialized professional development in the career cluster framework to deliver high-quality instruction and to use classroom support that fosters learner persistence.

Recommendation 4: Partnerships

Build and sustain mutually beneficial relationships with key partners to identify regional skill needs and design and provide career pathways programs that meet those needs.

Recommendation 5: Research, Data, and Accountability

Continue to expand and strengthen the state's accountability system to document, evaluate, and improve student and program outcomes on a continuing basis.

Recommendation 6: Program Design

Design pathways for adult education learners interested in employment or further education, regardless of their skill level at the point of entry.

Recommendations

The Illinois Adult Education program is an integral partner in the state's economic development efforts. The following recommendations and priority actions are intended to serve as a starting point to assist in that effort.

Recommendation 1: Assessment, Curricula, and Instruction

Adopt aligned assessment, curricula, and instructional practices that prepare adults for family-sustaining jobs and career advancement.

To achieve this recommendation, we must:

- Ensure that assessment and curricula cover the full range of basic skills and work readiness skills needed for entry into and success in postsecondary education and training, as well as for success in the workplace, family, and community; and
- Use a range of resources and instructional techniques that optimize both educational gains and work readiness.

Priority Actions: To address aligned assessment, curricula, and instructional issues, we will work with our partners to:

- Make use of assessment tools that measure educational skills and readiness for postsecondary education and work to guide learner placement, planning, and progress in Adult Education by:
 - Identifying a continuum of appropriate assessments from basic skills assessment to work-related and postsecondary assessments, such as career inventories and diagnostic reading assessments in alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
 - Analyzing current state-approved standardized tests to determine alignment with college entrance exams and identify possible knowledge gaps.
 - Evaluating assessment approaches, such as performance-based assessments that programs can use and/or adapt to measure learner progress in work-related skills.
 - Ensuring regular assessment is incorporated into the contextualized curricula as a standard practice.
- Make employment and postsecondary/occupational training major contexts for the curricula by:
 - Researching the entry requirements for postsecondary education and integrated basic skills/occupational training programs for high-growth job clusters and local employment priorities.
 - Aligning and contextualizing basic skills to the advanced skills required for postsecondary education and/or the workforce, including high-demand middle-skills jobs and "green jobs."

- Identifying and reviewing currently developed contextualized curricula within and outside of the state that could be adapted/used within the career cluster framework for bridge courses and integrated instruction.
- Integrating evidence-based strategies for providing explicit instruction involving (1) the teacher's modeling or demonstration of a skill or strategy, (2) a structured and substantial opportunity for learners to practice and apply newly taught skills, and (3) an opportunity for feedback.
- Designing and piloting models of differentiated instruction for learners with various educational needs and programs not having a sufficient number of staff or learners in a particular job cluster or level to justify a stand-alone career pathways class.
- Fully implementing the state ESL and ABE/ASE (when developed) content standards for all functioning levels.
- Integrating transferrable work-related skills, critical thinking, financial literacy, life skills, and study skills into the curriculum for all functioning levels.
- Modeling and reinforcing real world expectations in the classroom that enhance readiness for postsecondary education, training, and employment.
- Developing a bibliography of textbooks, computer software, and other instructional materials that integrate a work-related focus.
- Maximize the use of technology to (1) incorporate distance learning, including work-related skills; (2) integrate technology in the classroom beyond the use of individual software to maximize learning, problem solving, and application; and (3) ensure that learners acquire the technology literacy skills they will need in postsecondary education and the workplace.

Recommendation 2: Support and Follow-Up Services to Encourage Access and Retention

Provide comprehensive student support to reduce personal barriers to retention and progress that promote smooth transitions within and between educational/training providers and into the workforce.

Career and educational advising is a critical component in the career cluster framework to ensure that learners understand how learning articulates to employment and the role of education in progressing toward their career goals. Central to this concept is the importance of transitions staff conducting intensive, relevant advising to retain and advance learners along pathways. Using this approach, staff will identify learner barriers and maintain ongoing efforts with the learner to address those barriers.

Transitions staff will also guide learners in navigating various learning pathways. Thus, transitions staff will need a working knowledge of learning pathways and the requirements of programs in other agencies, particularly those which precede or follow programs offered by their agencies. In addition to assisting with identifying barriers and assisting with navigation, transitions staff will also serve as learner advocates and ensure that instructional staff are aware of any learning style or difficulties that require accommodations and/or career pathway interests and goals around which coursework can be contextualized.

Some programs may have access to staff within their agency/program that can fill the role of career and educational advising; others will not. Therefore, collaboration with partnering agencies who can offer support in this area will be extremely important.

Priority Actions: To provide learners with the support and follow-up services they need, we will work with our partners to:

- Explore, identify, and share options for providing high-quality counseling and advising to assist all adult education learners in designing an appropriate social, academic, and/or career pathway and enabling them to persist in the continuum of programs, making successful transitions along the way.
- Promote and coordinate regular outreach by community colleges and other training providers to assist adult education learners in connecting with financial aid and available transitioning services.
- Develop closer partnerships with social service agencies to assist immigrants and refugees with multiple native languages who may have difficulty understanding initial guidance and career counseling.
- Strengthen the identification process of learners with special learning needs and provisions for accommodating those needs.
- Provide support services that empower all learners to take responsibility for self-advocacy.
- Partner with agencies in the community to provide case management services and continued support to assist learners in moving along their chosen career pathways.
- Integrate research-based learner persistence strategies for all adult education learners.

- Provide a structure and support necessary to accommodate work schedules and other responsibilities of adult education learners, including transportation, childcare, and family literacy services.

Recommendation 3: High-Quality Teaching and Professional Development

Ensure that all adult educators have ongoing, specialized professional development in the career cluster framework to deliver high-quality instruction and to use classroom support that fosters student persistence.

Adult Education in Illinois has evolved into a uniquely specialized profession. Teaching within the career cluster framework is a needs-driven specialization within the profession. All adult educators should have an understanding of the framework and their role within it. Career pathways instructors, including those teaching college transitions, bridge programs, or integrated basic skills/occupational training programs, should have specialized training that allows them to transfer those skills and knowledge into effective instruction. Transitions staff should have support and training to assist them in adequately engaging learners in academic and career planning. Now, more than ever, the professional development system will be called upon to continue its research-based work in providing quality professional staff development, products, and resources for the state's adult educators.

Priority Actions: To ensure high-quality teaching and professional development, we will:

- Utilize a statewide professional development task force to design core training for **all** adult educators that addresses work and career readiness skills, such as:
 - Introduction to the career cluster framework;
 - Team building, critical thinking, problem solving, study skills, soft skills, and career assessment;
 - Technology use and integration to enhance and expand technology in instruction;
 - Guidance on contextualized curriculum development; and
 - New models and instructional strategies for contextualized teaching and learning.
- Require all program staff to complete professional development training to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to provide high-quality instruction and services.
- Ensure training and support for administrators and instructors to develop and implement career pathways programs, including transitions, bridge, and integrated basic skills/occupational training classes.
 - Fully acquaint program directors and instructional staff with the structure, benefits, and opportunities of the career pathways system, including strategies for identifying, hiring, and training highly qualified career pathways instructors.
 - Ensure access to and training in a clearinghouse of professionally accepted curricular resources for contextualized instruction, college transitions, and occupation-specific basic skills.
 - Provide training on models of differentiated instruction that will assist programs with limited staff or learners in the development of instruction for a particular job cluster or the delivery of stand-alone career pathways instruction.
 - Maximize the use of technology-based professional development to expand access to relevant career pathways training and resources.
- Design and deliver specialized professional development and support for transitions and data staff.
- Ensure that all instructors and administrators utilize classroom supports that promote career pathways progression and assist learners to manage barriers to participation, build self efficacy, set realistic goals, and see measurable progress.

- Continue research, professional development, and innovative product development to support the needs of all Adult Education practitioners.

Recommendation 4: Partnerships

Build and sustain mutually beneficial relationships with key partners to identify regional and local skill needs and design and provide career pathways programs that meet those needs.

To be effective in serving both learners and the economy, career pathways programs must be based on a shared understanding of the particular skills required for certification or employment in industry sectors or companies where adult education learners are most likely to find family-sustaining career opportunities. An understanding of these skills and employment opportunities will provide the raw materials from which program structures and curricula can be constructed. Individual Adult Education programs do not have the time and resources to develop the career cluster framework on their own, nor should they. Clearly articulated regional collaborative partnerships are needed to effectively implement career pathways. Critical to that development is a clear, common message from intra- and inter-agency partners at the state level.

It is recommended that Area Planning Councils (APCs) and/or other workforce development entities be used to support career pathway partnership development, minimize duplication, and maximize resources. Stakeholders should collaborate to develop partnerships that would support efficient and aligned service delivery and the development of career pathways that address the needs they have identified. Each partnership would be responsible for engaging employers in planning to ensure that programs align with the needs of regional economies. While the partners in each area may vary, they should involve a range of agencies.

In addition to Adult Education, these partnerships may include postsecondary and job training providers, public education, economic development agencies, social service agencies, chambers of commerce, labor unions, employers, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, philanthropic entities, local governmental agencies, and other relevant stakeholders.

Priority Actions: To build and sustain these important relationships, we will work with our partners to:

- Enlist the support of state level intra- and inter-agency partners in developing a common message that encourages participation in adult career pathway partnerships at the local level.
- Develop targeted marketing strategies for specific audiences, including potential learners, employers, policymakers, and partnering agencies.
- Identify roles, recommended membership, necessary support, and effective practices of APCs through action research to inform the design, policy, training and support that will result in productive, sustainable local partnerships for implementation of the career cluster framework.
- Identify and solicit non-AEFLA funding partners, including both private and public sectors, to support and enhance pathways initiatives.

Recommendation 5: Research, Data, and Accountability

Continue to expand and strengthen the state's accountability system to document, evaluate, and improve student and program outcomes on a continuing basis.

Operationalizing the recommendations within this visioning document will require Adult Education's continued commitment to accountability and program improvement. It will require a learning culture in which every adult educator regularly reflects on what is working and what is not, examines research and documented best practices to find strategies that hold promise, pilot tests those strategies, and measures their impact. It will require valid and reliable data on all learners and clear expectations to guide program operations. Through this ongoing commitment to program excellence, Illinois' adult education learners will benefit.

Priority Actions: To ensure an effective, accountable, research-based career cluster framework, we will work with our partners to:

- Research the types of data that will be useful for evaluation, planning, and advocacy.
 - Explore ways to track outcomes for all learners not currently being captured through the system.
 - Explore the use of a statewide learner identification system.
 - Actively participate in the P-20 longitudinal data system.
- Research and analyze data in the development of an Illinois-specific "tipping point" or economic impact measure.
 - Explore other state data relative to tipping points.
 - Analyze student outcomes and employment.
 - Explore integrated training models that allow Adult Education learners to be dually enrolled or concurrently enrolled in basic skills education and high-demand occupational training to accelerate their pathway to the 'tipping point.'
- Consistently use data in making policy, procedural, and funding decisions.
- Provide additional training and support for local providers on using data to improve overall outcomes, including career pathways programs.
- Track longitudinal data on learning gains and employment outcomes and make information available statewide.
- Utilize results with an action research approach to maximize program effectiveness and ensure continuous program improvement.
- Integrate clear guidance and expectations on the career cluster framework into current program applications, monitoring instruments, and evaluation procedures.
- Further develop and utilize a system for tracking supportive services provided to students and evaluate the relationship between the provision of these services and student success.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of programs and instructional services.
- Continue to monitor compliance with state and federal requirements.

Recommendation 6: Program Design

Design pathways for adult education learners interested in employment or further education, regardless of their skill level at the point of entry.

When fully developed, the framework will:

- Create distinct educational plans of study that adult education learners can follow from Adult Education to postsecondary education or job training to the workplace.
- Create smooth transitions in the educational pipeline.
- Empower adult education learners through information and experiences they need to make informed educational and career choices.
- Assist counselors/advisors, teachers, and adult education learners in designing individual plans of study.
- Enhancing economic development by connecting adult education with business and industry partnerships.

Priority Actions: To implement a Career Cluster Framework, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Division of the Illinois Community College Board, in collaboration with partnering agencies and organizations, will:

- Continue to work with a multi-agency state-level planning structure to integrate Adult Education programs and services into a Career Cluster Framework.
- Develop a system that includes multiple entry points for various functioning levels of adult education learners that is aligned to clearly identified benchmarks, stackable certificates, and/or degrees that lead to employment in high-growth, family sustaining jobs.
- Partner with postsecondary providers to align assessment, curriculum, learner access, and articulation agreements.
- Integrate financial literacy, life skills, technology, and study skills into all levels of the curriculum.
- Support increased Workforce Investment Act cooperation through the utilization of regional/area planning structures composed of key partners to review regional labor market information, identify high-growth job clusters, and develop clearly articulated regional career pathways clusters (see Recommendation #5 for more specifics).
- Develop and/or expand piloting of learning options, such as bridge courses, integrated education and training, accelerated learning, and technology-based instruction.
- Develop and/or expand intensive learning options appropriate for low to intermediate adult education learners.
- Utilize the Illinois Service Center Network and the Illinois Adult and Continuing Educators Association to identify, coordinate, and share promising practices among adult education providers, including a continuum of contextualized instruction from basic skills to readiness for postsecondary education and training (see Recommendation #1).

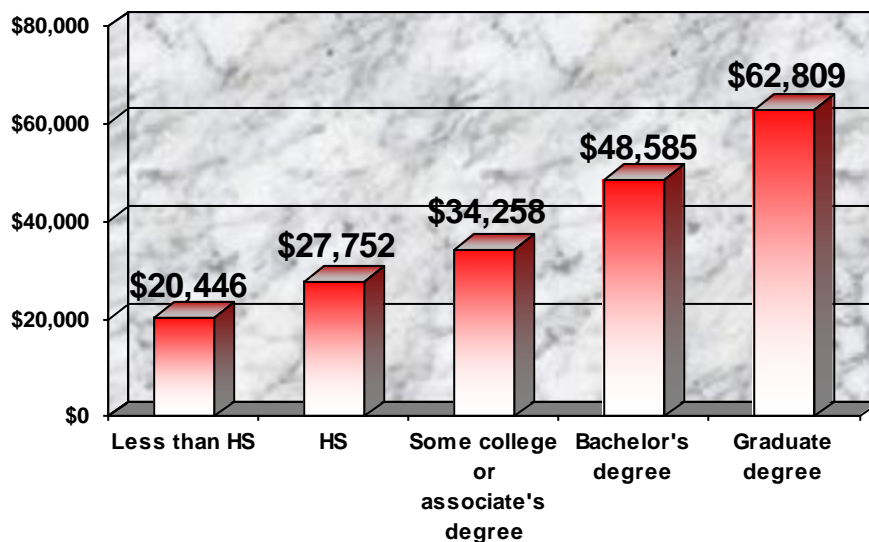
- Develop an effective career planning process that utilizes individual plans of study and provides orientation and goal setting for adult education learners to make informed educational and career choices (see Recommendation #2).
- Work with partners to develop a strong student support services component to increase access, provide smooth transitions within and between educational providers, and increase learner retention (see Recommendation #2).
- Identify and disseminate best practice models for learner orientation, goal setting, educational/career advising, and evidence-based instructional delivery.
- Develop clear expectations and guidance on effective program planning and delivery of a Career Cluster Framework through a deliberate phased-in approach that provides ample time for delivering professional development to local providers in all aspects of the framework, piloting and evaluating new strategies, and developing necessary mechanisms to support the infrastructure of the career pathways system.
- Continue to seek private and public funding/resources to support the career cluster framework, including options for increased use of transition staff for adult education learners.

Impact of the Career Cluster Framework

The impact of the career cluster framework will be significant in terms of higher personal incomes, increased educational achievement for future generations, greater levels of fiscal responsibility, higher rates of job creation and economic growth, higher rates of citizenship and civic engagement, and the increased ability to leverage additional funding for Adult Education in Illinois.

Higher personal incomes

Increased educational achievement typically results in increased wages. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 – 2007 American Community Survey, Illinois workers with at least some college or an associate's degree earn approximately \$14,000 more annually than a worker with less than a high school diploma. Over a 30-year period, that amounts to increased earnings of more than \$420,000 for an Illinois worker.



In addition, education is critical to ensuring that individuals gain, retain, or improve employment and earn wages even during periods of high unemployment. The unemployment rate for workers without a high school diploma tends to jump disproportionately during uncertain economic times. For example, Illinois' unemployment rate for adults without a high school diploma is 11 percent compared to 4 percent unemployment for adults with some college.

Higher levels of educational achievement for future generations

Perceptions about learning and standards for achievement are transmitted from parents to children, playing a significant role in determining the levels of education children will pursue. Parents who have had affirming learning experiences and have benefited from continuing education will pass these positive messages to their children, thus increasing the likelihood that children will pursue continuing education.

Children's literacy levels are strongly linked to the educational level of their parents, especially their mothers. Parental income and marital status are both important predictors of success in

school, but neither is as significant as having a mother (or primary caregiver) who completed high school. Children of parents who are unemployed and have not completed high school are five times more likely to drop out than children of employed parents.³¹

Higher levels of fiscal responsibility

A report released by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northwestern University³² reveals the substantial fiscal burden that residents lacking high school diplomas impose on Illinois. Given the lower average annual earnings of employed high school dropouts and their much higher rates of year-round joblessness, they can be expected to pay considerably fewer dollars in Social Security payroll taxes and state/federal income taxes than their better-educated peers in both the state and the nation. High school dropouts also impose higher fiscal burdens on state and federal governments than persons with high school diplomas because they are more likely to depend on government for cash and non-cash transfer incomes, such as food stamps and rental subsidies, to support themselves.

The average high school graduate paid \$1,692 more in taxes in 2004-2005 than he or she received in cash and in-kind benefits from the government. Individuals with some college education, including an associate's degree, paid \$4,397 more than they received. In contrast, the average Illinois adult with less than a high school diploma paid \$1,275 dollars **less** in taxes than he or she received in benefits that year.

Higher rates of job creation and economic growth

Employers are seeking opportunities in markets that are emerging within the new economy. The influx of middle-skill job openings (including new jobs and replacement) will account for almost half of all openings between 2004 and 2014. Many of these middle-skill positions are well-paid jobs, offering median earnings that exceed the Illinois overall 2006 median of \$31,637.

Illinois will be able to attract employers who strongly value a workforce that has the skills, knowledge, and credentials required to meet their needs. A skilled workforce attracts higher end employers and provides the vital human capital necessary for existing employers to expand more rapidly. When we meet the expansion of opportunities in the new economy with an equal or greater increase in the number of workers who have the appropriate training for these occupations and careers, we can expect job creation and economic growth.

Higher rates of citizenship and civic engagement

There is a strong correlation between levels of citizenship and civic engagement and levels of educational attainment. For example, 39.5 percent of registered voters with less than a high school diploma voted in the 2004 Presidential elections, as compared to 68.9 percent of registered voters with at least some college. Additionally, workers who are better educated and better paid are more likely to engage in their communities as critical drivers of economic vitality at both the local and national levels.³³

Increased ability to leverage additional funding for Adult Education

³¹ National Institute for Literacy. Literacy for the 21st Century.

³² An Assessment of the Labor Market, Income, Health, Social, and Fiscal Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: Findings for Illinois Adults in the 21st Century, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northwestern University. Available at http://www.clms.neu.edu/publication/documents/An_Assessment_of_the_Consequences_of_Dropping_Out_of_High_School_in_Illinois.pdf

³³ Transforming Michigan's Adult Learning Infrastructure, A Report to the Council for Labor and Economic Growth from the CLEG Low-Wage Worker Advancement Committee's Adult Learning Work Group, 2009.

Often when any organization initiates substantial change, one of the first concerns is, "How can we do this without additional funding?" While additional funding for Adult Education is certainly needed and justified, the prospects may appear to be dim given the current federal and state economic outlook. However, this new vision creates opportunities to leverage external resources through partnerships with key stakeholders.

For example, within President Obama's proposed *American Graduation Initiative: Stronger American Skills through Community Colleges*, there is a call for:

- Building partnerships with businesses and the workforce investment system to create career pathways where workers can earn new credentials and promotions step-by-step, worksite education programs to build basic skills, and curriculum coordinated with internship and job placements, and
- Improving remedial and adult education programs, accelerating learners' progress, and integrating developmental classes into academic and vocational classes.

Furthermore, while adult education alone is not an allowable expenditure through WIA Title I training vouchers, adult education and literacy activities provided in combination with training services leading to employment is an approved activity.

Therefore, the impact of a career cluster model can result in external funding sources that are currently not available through the traditional Adult Education approach.

Moving Forward

Proposed federal adult education legislation, influenced by the *Reach Higher, America* report, is calling upon state adult education systems to create seamless pathways of services that will support adult education learners throughout the pipeline starting from the lowest levels of basic skills or English language proficiency to postsecondary education, training, and employment. National leaders are encouraging delivery systems that coordinate and integrate adult education and literacy services with workforce development and postsecondary education and training opportunities across agencies and programs. During an interview with the Washington Post in April 2009, President Obama pointed out the success of the I-BEST model, an integrated training program that combines basic skills with occupational training.

We must harness this current interest in adult learning policy and practice and the proven track record of the Illinois Adult Education system to ensure that we, along with our partners, provide our state's residents with access to lifelong learning and economic prosperity.

The job will not be an easy one. With the majority of adult education learners entering the program functioning at the lowest literacy levels, assisting them with transition to employment, further education, or job training will take time and energy.

There are no quick fixes. Accomplishing this vision will take diligence and patience. It will require a strategic approach that values data-driven decision making based on piloting and evaluating new strategies to determine their impact. It will require a true spirit of collaboration and willingness to work in earnest across multiple agencies and organizations.

We have the talent to make this work. We have the passion to make this work. Through a clear direction, quality instruction, and targeted support, all adult education learners can find pathways to success. We will continue this work in the development of a more extensive plan which details the activities to make this a reality.



Definitions

NOTE: Below is a glossary of some of the terms used in this document. It is not all-inclusive, however, because some terms need to be collaboratively defined to ensure that all partners in the Illinois Adult Education system have a common understanding, similar to the process used for the common bridge definition.

Adult education learners - individuals who have attained 16 years of age; who are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and who:

- lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society; and
- do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; or
- have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
- are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) - courses of instruction in mathematics, reading, language, and workforce readiness skills for adults functioning at an 8th grade level or below.

Adult Secondary Education (ASE) - courses through which an adult education learner prepares to take the General Educational Development (GED®) Test or receives high school credit that leads to a high school diploma; courses are designed for learners functioning at a 9th grade level or above.

Accelerated learning - programs that value integration and intensity to assist learners in moving forward as quickly as possible, such as bridge classes, dual enrollment in adult education and occupational training, or GED® Fast Track classes.

Bridge Program definition – programs that prepare adults with limited academic or limited English skills to enter and succeed in credit-bearing postsecondary education and training leading to career-path employment in high-demand, middle- and high-skilled occupations. The goal of bridge programs is to sequentially bridge the gap between the initial skills of individuals and what they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and career-path employment. These programs must include three core elements: Contextualized Instruction, Career Development, and Transition Services.

- *Contextualized instruction* integrates basic reading, math, and language skills and industry/occupation knowledge.
- *Career development* includes career exploration, career planning within a career area, and understanding the world of work (specific elements depend upon the level of the bridge program and on whether participants are already incumbent workers in the specific field).
- *Transition services* provide students with the information and assistance they need to successfully navigate the process of moving from adult education or remedial coursework to credit or occupational programs. Services may include (as needed and available) academic advising, tutoring, study skills, coaching, and referrals to individual support services; e.g., transportation and child care.

Career cluster framework – the ‘umbrella’ term used to represent a coordinated system of career clusters, career pathways, and programs of learners that organizes educational preparation and occupational choices into a unified concept.

Career clusters – groups of occupations and industries that have in common a set of foundational knowledge and skills. There are 16 nationally recognized clusters within which are multiple career pathways.

Career pathway – multi-year programs of academic and technical study that align adult education, postsecondary education, and/or occupational training to create pathways to attaining recognized credentials that qualify individuals for career advancement in projected employment opportunities.

Career pathways instructor – an adult education instructor who teaches a specialized class that explicitly focuses on transitioning learners to postsecondary, bridging adult education learners to occupation-specific training through sequential or dual-enrollment training, or other related adult education/postsecondary-specific courses.

English as a Second Language (ESL) – a program of instruction designed to help individuals of limited English proficiency achieve competence in the English language.

Explicit instruction - the intentional design and delivery of information by the teacher to the learners. It begins with (1) the teacher's modeling or demonstration of the skill or strategy, (2) a structured and substantial opportunity for learners to practice and apply newly taught skills and knowledge under the teacher's direction and guidance, and (3) an opportunity for feedback.

Integrated education and training - training that combines workforce education for a specific occupation or occupational cluster with English literacy instruction or other adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide for dual enrollment.

Programs of study – sequences of courses that incorporate nonduplicative progression of secondary and postsecondary elements that include both academic and career and technical education content

Technology literacy – the knowledge and skills in using contemporary information; communication and learning technologies in a manner necessary for successful lifelong learning; and citizenship in the knowledge-based, digital, and global 21st century. This type of literacy includes the abilities to effectively communicate and collaborate; to analyze and solve problems; to access evaluate, manage, and create information in order to increase information literacy; and to do so in a safe and ethical manner.

Workplace skills – the combination of basic skills, critical thinking skills and life skills with competency in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems and working with technology, and other skills necessary for success in the workplace.

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Illinois Department of Human Services

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Illinois Shifting Gears Working Group

Southern Illinois Professional Development Center

Women Employed

Illinois Community College Board

Adult Education and Family Literacy Staff

Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson – Vice President for Adult Education and Institutional Support

Jennifer K. Foster – Senior Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy/State Director for GED Testing Administration

Marilyn Schmidt – Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy

Nelson Aguiar – Associate Director for ESL and Immigrant Issues

David Baker – Associate Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy – Professional Development

Jay Brooks – Associate Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy – Data System Support Specialist

Tisha Smith – Associate Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy – Program Compliance

Kelly Alongi – Associate Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy – Program Support Specialist – Region IV

Ben Greer – Associate Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy – Program Support Specialist – Region I

Jennifer Miller – Associate Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy – Program Support Specialist – Region III

Anna Nakashima – Associate Director for Adult Education and Family Literacy – Program Support Specialist - Region II

Nora Rossman – Office Support Associate

Leann Arsenault – GED Testing Clerk