



Expanding Career Pathway
Opportunities in Adult Education:
Strategic Directions for Illinois
2018-2023

Draft

Strategic Five-Year Plan

January 2018

Adult Education Strategic Plan Vision Statement

2018-2023

In partnership with other stakeholders, we will create learning opportunities that are aligned with statewide education, training, and employment strategies to ensure all adult learners have access to and success across services that are cohesive, coordinated, and innovative to promote better economic and sustainable career pathways.

Table of Contents

FOREWORD	5
OVERVIEW.....	10
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS	11
ABOUT ILLINOIS ADULT EDUCATION.....	14
STATE DEMOGRAPHICS	19
STATE ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES: ILLINOIS’ NEW ECONOMY AND THE INTENSE DEMAND FOR SKILLS.....	23
ADULT EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN VISION STATEMENT.....	26
GUIDING PRINCIPLES.....	26
STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	28
GOAL #1: IMPROVE OUTCOMES BY SCALING EFFECTIVE MODELS AND STRATEGIES ACROSS THE SYSTEM	29
GOAL #2: INCREASE POSTSECONDARY TRANSITIONS AND CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT	30
GOAL #3: STRENGTHEN COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS	33
GOAL #4: DEVELOP LIFE-LONG CAREER PATHWAYS SYSTEMS & ENABLING TECHNOLOGIES.....	35
CONCLUSION	37
APPENDIX.....	38

Foreword

Adult Education (AE) 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. Illinois' adult education system is an essential partner with the state's businesses and industries, government agencies, elected officials, and economic development and workforce systems, ensuring we have an educated workforce to meet the needs of Illinois' employers. Adult Education, as well as these partners, are working towards the same goal: to provide for the foundational educational and training needs of all learners, and to increase the number of residents with high-quality postsecondary and industry recognized credentials and degrees to meet the demands of the Illinois new economy.

The goals in this plan strongly support Illinois goals, such as the 60% by 2025 for 60% of Illinois's workforce to have a postsecondary credential or college degree by 2015, the *Illinois Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified Plan*, the recent *Illinois Community College Board's Workforce Education Strategic Plan*, the *Report of the Higher Education Commission on the Future of the Workforce*, and the *Illinois Postsecondary Workforce and Readiness Act*, among other key state-driven plans and initiatives.

To advance these shared goals, the Illinois Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 40 was issued in July, 2017 creating the *State-wide Taskforce on the Future Direction of Adult Education and Literacy* within the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) called the "taskforce". The twenty-five members represent: legislators, state commerce and economic opportunity agencies, employment security, human services, workforce development, presidents of higher education institutions, adult education system leaders and practitioners, philanthropy, K-12, community based organizations, among other essential departments, agencies, and stakeholders.

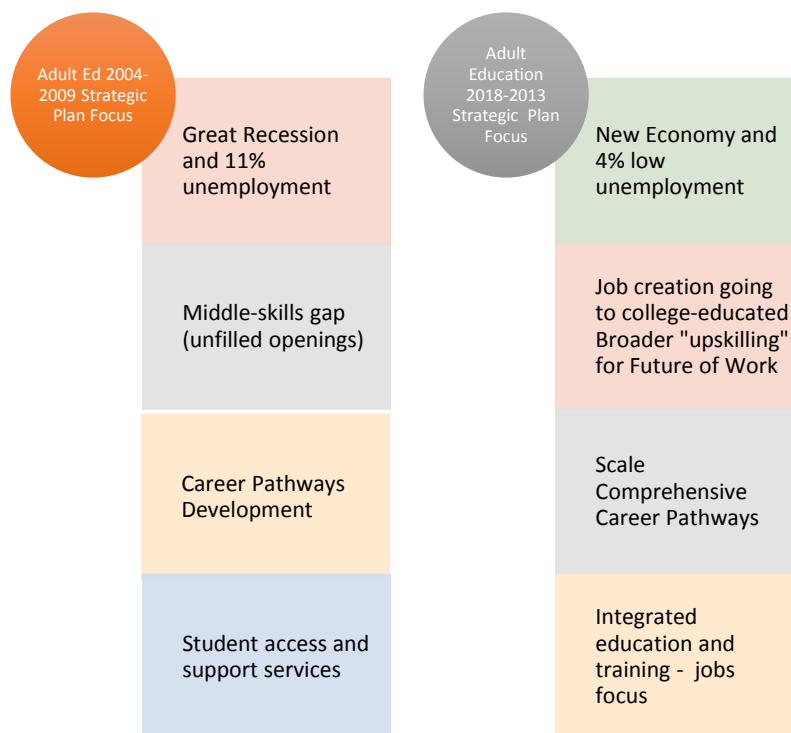
"We are more intentionally aligning Adult Education as the state's foundational workforce development partner."

-Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson, Illinois Community College Board

The taskforce's responsibility is to ensure a strategic five-year visioning plan is developed in 2018 charting a progressive course for the state's nationally recognized Adult Education and Literacy Program. The plan addresses the need for continued development of comprehensive career pathways, college and career readiness, transitions from adult education programs to college and work; foundational learning, English language acquisition, and a more significant focus on enabling technologies to support what will surely be a future of work demanding strong digital literacy skills.

The previous adult education five-year strategic plan from 2004-2009 was a very strong plan. It provided the blueprint for the Adult Education the system during the start of the Great Recession, when unemployment in Illinois was 11%. The 2009 plan had several elements that we will be drawing from; such as career pathways, student support services, and setting the stage for increasing the capacity of the system for integrated skills training. Today, the conditions in Illinois are markedly different. Where almost ten years ago the state was just embarking on the concept of career pathways, Adult Education in 2018 is now a national leader in advancing career and integrated pathways. In 2009, Adult Education was beginning to move toward education and training beyond the High School Equivalency (HSE), now Illinois Adult Education is advancing models that combine basic skills and workforce training leading to a credential and employer needs.

This 2018-2023 plan is all about ***expanding and scaling*** comprehensive career pathways that have been successfully implemented in places across the state, and proactively ***responding to a future of work*** that will demand advanced skills and training in the new economy. To highlight the differences between the plans:



As a taskforce, we developed this plan by thinking about drivers—big disruptive shifts that are likely to reshape the future landscape of Illinois. Although each driver in itself is important when thinking about the future, it is a confluence of several drivers working together that produces true disruptions that Illinois must pay attention to. These key drivers present opportunities but

will also require our systems, programs, and people, to adapt and respond in different ways. We developed this plan, in part, based on the following critical drivers:

- **Scale.** For the past decade, the state’s adult education, community college system, and critical partners, has been deeply engaged in several demonstration projects, such as Shifting Gears supported by the Joyce Foundation, and Accelerating Opportunity, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, developing effective models for underprepared adult learners. This plan will be leveraging this knowledge to expand and scale these effective models, resulting in stronger performance outcomes.
- **Future of Work.** The future of work has real consequences for underprepared adult learners. Some studies report that more than 50% of jobs by 2025 will be independent contractors¹. The changing nature of work is shortening the shelf-life of job-specific skills; with technology and automation impacting millions of jobs, the impact of these changes will be felt disproportionately by people on the lower end of the economic ladder². If we fail to prepare Illinoisans for the future economy, equip adult education, and demand our partners to step up to these challenges, then there is a real possibility that our state’s underprepared adult learners will face quality of employment issues and limited career opportunities.
- **Comprehensive Career Pathways and Regional Partnerships.** As a leader in the state’s career pathways movement, Illinois’ *Adult Education ultimately is the foundation of a comprehensive career pathways system*. Place matters. Illinois has several regional consortia coming together as a strategy to align K-12, adult education, colleges, workforce, economic development, and community based organizations. These efforts are using a career pathways framework, engaging employers in completely different ways; all with the goal to produce a trained workforce, and improve wages. Our plan will be supportive of this emerging regional, place-based work, and will position Illinois Adult Education squarely as the foundation of a career pathways system in our state.
- **Stackable Credentials.** The transition of adult education students to postsecondary education and industry training is critical for the state. A post-secondary education, particularly industry-recognized and stackable credentials, related to jobs in demand, is

“Adult education can no longer be viewed as an end point or a final stage in the transition to work.

Instead, adult education is the foundation of Illinois’ career pathways system.”

-Jennifer Foster, Illinois State Adult Education Director

¹ Shulz, A., & Gill, R. Community Colleges and 21st Century Skills: Skills Panels to Assist Student Career Success. 2014. www.newworldofwork.org

² Bakshi, H., Downing, J., Osborne, M. and Schneider, P. (2017). *The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030*. London: Pearson and Nesta, Oxford Martin School.

still the most important determinant of differences in workers' lifetime earnings and incomes. Strategies to support this transition and credential outcomes will be addressed in this plan.

- **Innovative Integrated Education and Training Models.** Underprepared adult learners and those with multiple barriers to employment benefit from coordinated strategies across Adult Education and Career Technical Education (CTE). Illinois has taken very important steps to strengthen the partnership between Adult Education and Career Technical Education. As a result, students and employers are benefitting. Adult Education and Career Technical Education are primary partners now delivering flexible, innovative training models that integrate the education, training, and support services needed to prepare learners for not just a High School Equivalency, but for success in the workplace. Why? Time is the enemy for most students, and these integrated models accelerate the time it takes for participants to finish their basic skills instruction, while at the same time gaining skills and credentials to enter the workforce. This working partnership between AE and CTE reduces tax payer costs and increases student wages.
- **Employer and Industry Partnerships.** The more closely education is contextualized and training is related to a real job or occupation, the better the results for participants and employers. Illinois was one of several states that participated in Accelerating Opportunity (branded Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System - ICAPS). The results from this integrated training model, which also included relevant work-based learning components are promising with statistically significant outcomes – ICAPS increased the probability of earning a credential by 30%. Adult Education, and local providers, has a very solid foundation to scale even models and work with employers. Other studies³ by Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce point to the positive relationship between "learning and earning." Adult education in Illinois has been a leader in integrated instruction, but we still have much room for growth in this area. This plan will continue to support the scaling of learn and earn models.
- **College and Career Readiness/Data.** Adult education providers in Illinois have been on the leading edge of utilizing up-to-date labor market data, or to information and guidance about career and training opportunities, when designing and implementing programs. This labor market alignment was realized with the Shifting Gears initiative in 2006, and

³ [Carnevale, Anthony P., Nicole Smith, Michelle Melton, and Eric W. Price. "Learning while earning: The new normal." Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University \(2015\).](#)

Anthony Carnevale, et al. *College is Just the Beginning: The Employer Role in \$1.1 Trillion Postsecondary Education and Training System*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2015

extended into deeper labor market analyses with Accelerating Opportunity from 2010-2016. College and career readiness is a robust area where Illinois Adult Education has the opportunity to embed elements that can help individuals to make better decisions about education, training and job opportunities, all leading to stronger outcomes.

As such, this taskforce is looking forward to an exciting future. This updated plan has the potential to build and scale from the collective hard work across the Adult Education, and the deep work with critical partners. We believe this plan can help drive Adult Education's continued role in facilitating stronger connections to postsecondary training and employer partners. We will ensure the plan accounts for learners with the most need, including those who lack the literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, and will scale models that pair foundational skill building with workforce preparation and training in in-demand occupations is also a core goal. This plan will also address the unique and important needs from a growing English as a Second and immigrant population.

Recognizing the diversity of learners, and vastly different geographies across our urban, suburban, and rural programs, we hope this plan, as a broad framework, will catalyze deeper learning, foster work-based learning opportunities, and foster partnerships with providers, students, and stakeholders.

When we, as members of the ***State-wide Taskforce on the Future Direction of Adult Education (AE) and Literacy, and the leadership at the Illinois Community College Board***, look back in 10 or 20 years, will this plan be credited for its progressive approach, clear blueprint for action, and decisive strategies? Will the plan be broadly accepted in the field, implemented with a sense of urgency, and contain the right structures, resources, innovations and policy conditions to drive scale and positive outcomes? Did our governing leaders provide the best supports? Did the intent and spirit of the plan make its way to the talented providers in the field, across all corners of the state, in order for them to make the best decisions and bring the strategies to life? We hope so.

"Ultimately, we hope this plan works for not only the next five years, but for the next generation of leaders, programs, students, and partners, that follow - all leading to a stronger Illinois."

- Dr. Peggy Heinrich, Interim Vice President of Teaching, Learning, and Student Development, Elgin Community College and Taskforce member

We are honored to come together to co-develop this five-year strategic plan. We greatly value and welcome your input and comments about this plan and look forward to an exciting future.

- Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson, Chair of the ***State-wide Taskforce on the Future Direction of Adult Education and Literacy, and the leadership at the Illinois Community College Board***

Overview

A skilled population is the key to our state’s sustainable economic development and prosperity. As such, our Adult Education system meets the needs of our residents, including the acquisition of basic literacy, and technical skills through effective career pathways; all with the goal of leading to good jobs and contributing to a strong state economy.

To advance this goal, the 101st General Assembly enacted the ***State-wide Taskforce on the Future Direction of Adult Education and Literacy*** within the Illinois Community College Board (called the “taskforce”) as directed in SJR 40 issued in July, 2017. The twenty-five members represent: legislators and several state departments, including: commerce and economic opportunity, employment security, human services, workforce development, presidents of higher education institutions, adult education practitioners, philanthropy, state superintendent of education, career-technical education, student assistance, community based organizations, adult and continuing education, among other essential departments, state agencies, and stakeholders.

The taskforce’s responsibility is to ensure a strategic five-year visioning plan is developed in 2018 within a collaborative approach with major stakeholders, is evidenced informed, and includes

- State demographics
- Educational and economic outcomes
- Current and projected needs of the State's adult residents with low literacy skills, without a high school diploma, and those who have limited English speaking skills
- Options for adults without a high school diploma
- Federal Adult Education funding guidelines
- Student pipeline issues, including college and career readiness, transitions to college and/or training
- Programs, and postsecondary retention, transfer, and graduation rates
- Core elements: curriculum and instruction, professional development, assessment, and program design; productivity and accountability; innovation in approaches to teaching and learning for adult learners; workforce readiness; and
- Partnerships involving, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partner agencies, higher education, nonprofits, and business.

“A skilled workforce contributes to a thriving state economy. This plan intends to better support Adult Education’s capacity to connect basic skills to skills training.”

Illinois Senator Chuck Weaver, and taskforce member

In November 2017, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) convened the ***State-wide Taskforce on the Future Direction of Adult Education and Literacy*** to lay the groundwork for the draft plan. The taskforce developed a draft set of ***four initial goal statements*** and associated objectives from November through December 2017, setting a broad framework for this five-year strategic vision that would lay the foundation for addressing the needs of adult education

learners *and employers* in the state. The process to develop this important strategic document is outlined below.

Strategic Planning Process

The taskforce took into account strategies to directly address the foundational skills as well as advanced training needed in today's new economy. Why? Because struggles to enter and stay in the workforce are hardest for those without a high school diploma. They are twice as likely as their college-educated peers to be out of work.⁴ It is easy to understand why. More than 9 of every 10 new jobs go to college-educated candidates.⁵ For many residents, they may never experience Illinois as "place of opportunity."

Struggles to enter and stay in the workforce are hardest for those without a high school diploma. They are twice as likely as their college-educated peers to be out of work.

The taskforce engaged in a comprehensive process to develop this plan. Several public-facing and transparent mechanisms have been and are being utilized to gather input from the adult education field and its critical partners during this first phase of the planning. The process and associated time-line are as follows:

- Regional focus groups with adult education practitioners were conducted in summer, 2017 by ICCB staff to obtain input.
- The document from the regional meetings was placed on the Illinois Community College Board website for public review and comment.
- A webinar sponsored by the Illinois Community College Board to outline the taskforce objectives, plans, and process to co-develop the five-year strategic plan, was conducted on October 12, 2017. Over 400 adult education practitioners and key partners were invited. The webinar was recorded and made publicly available.
- On October 23, 2017, the taskforce convened an in-person initial meeting to examine state and national adult learner data, program and participant trends, and promising models, and developed a draft set of four strategic goal areas. The taskforce meeting included a time period for public comment.
- Following the initial taskforce meeting October 23, the taskforce implemented a plan to further refine and develop draft goal objectives for each of the four goal areas; this was

⁴ Joe Weisenthal, "The Massive Difference In Unemployment Between Those Who Do And Don't Have A College Degree," June 8, 2013, <http://www.businessinsider.com/college-vs-no-college-unemployment-rates-2013-6>.

⁵ Anthony P. Carnevale, Tamara Jayasundera, and Artem Gulish, *America's Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have-Nots* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2016).

accomplished by sub-dividing into “goal teams” with an additional sub-group to draft the taskforce Vision Statement. Each goal team participated in a minimum of three facilitated conference calls to refine their respective strategic goal, and draft a set of goal objectives. All of the calls occurred between October 24-December 15, 2017.

- In preparation for the release of the draft five-year strategic plan on January 16, 2018 the Illinois Community College Board provided four opportunities for public comment; two in-person informational meetings were held across the state (Bloomington and Palos Hills), a state-wide webinar on January 9, 2018, and the posting of the draft strategic plan in early January, 2018.
- On January, 16, 2017 the taskforce met to discuss the draft plan, consider public feedback, and make revisions.
- A draft of the complete plan was presented for public comment in mid-January and extended through the end of January, 2018. The Illinois Community College Board, following all public comment and revisions, will submit the final plan to the Illinois General Assembly on or before January 31, 2018.

This strategic planning process encompasses several guiding principles, core elements, and goal statements that are essential to the operationalization of the document.

Preparation of this strategic plan draft was informed by the review and analysis of several critical state reports, program and policy documents, initiative outcomes, state agency strategic plans, and federal and state legislative mandates; including:

“As a national leader, the role of our Adult Education programs is connecting even more students to viable career pathways.”

State representative, Norrine Hammond, and taskforce member



This review of documents and overall 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 and its local providers in isolation from key stakeholders.
- 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 and comprehensive pathways** to assist them in achieving their goals.
- The needs of **English Language Learners** will continue to be front and center given they now comprise more than half of the state’s Adult Education participants, and that close to 3 million immigrants live and work in Illinois, representing enormous potential for assisting learners into education and training and good jobs. Prior learning assessments, integrated English as a Second Language programs with skills training, advocacy, relevant support services, and continued implementation of English Language Proficiency Standards will be addressed.

About Illinois Adult Education

The Illinois Adult Education and Literacy Program (AE) is supporting this state-wide strategic planning process. The plan is designed to ensure that Illinois's adult education system continues as a national leader in educating a diversity of talented learners. Adult Education is an essential part of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), the third largest system in the country comprised of 48 community colleges. With 81 providers state-wide, Illinois Adult Education is the fourth largest adult education system in the nation.

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 Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), 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.

Illinois is one of fourteen states in the country where Adult Education & Literacy Program is structured within the Illinois Community College System and is housed within a postsecondary education institution. This structure is intended to drive higher transitions of adults with no postsecondary credentials into college workforce, occupational, and/or degree programs.

Drawing from the previous Adult Education Strategic Plan (2004-2009), below is an overview of the role and services of Adult Education⁶.

By the Numbers:

Illinois Adult Education currently serves approximately 64,005 learners annually (2016 data) in various instructional areas such as adult basic and secondary education and English as a Second Language;

81 state funded Adult Education and literacy providers that span a diverse state-wide provider network, including: 37 of the state's 39 community college districts; 22 community based organizations, 8 local education agencies, the Illinois Department of Corrections, 3 faith-based organizations; and 2 four-year colleges and universities

The ICCB distributes approximately \$50,685,320 in state and federal funding to over 80 Adult Education approved providers.

⁶ Creating Pathways for Adult Learners: A Visioning Document for the Illinois Adult Education and Literacy Program: Continuing our Work to Meet Our Learners' Needs. Illinois Community College Board (2004-2009).

Serving diverse needs across Illinois:

Adult Education's history in Illinois of responding to learner and employer needs is strong. As such, Illinois Adult Education is funded by Title II of the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); with a mission to:

- Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency;
- Assist adults who are parents or family members to obtain education and skills that-
 - are necessary to becoming full partners in the educational development of their children; and
 - lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their family;
- Assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma and in the transition to postsecondary education and training, including through career pathways;
- Assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners in improving their reading, writing, speaking and comprehension skills in English; and mathematics skills; and acquiring an understanding of the American system of Government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

Illinois Adult Education offers the following services and programs:

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

English Language Instruction: Each year, more than 66,000 immigrants are learning to speak the English language, the largest segment of students enrolled in IL Adult Education.

EL/Civics: These classes integrate English literacy (EL) 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 whole family.

Correctional Education: To assist in reducing recidivism, and equipping justice-involved individuals with basic and life skills, Adult Education is provided for GED/Hi-Set attainment needed to sustain meaningful employment upon release.

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

Workplace Education: Through onsite workplace education programs, the skills needed in today's workforce are being included in contextualized and co-enrollment programs to respond to changes in the new economy.

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.

Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs combine adult education instruction and the co-enrollment of students into workforce and career technical training programs so that students can earn their High School Equivalency (HSE) *at the same time as a postsecondary credential* of value in the labor market.

The Illinois Adult Education and Literacy Program serves thousands of diverse learners every year, across all parts of the state. AE is a critical partner contributing to postsecondary college readiness. The AE system is uniquely positioned to provide foundational learning and other essential services, and its historic role is critical to the success of the state. In addition to the compelling overview of the role and services AE provides, it is also helpful to outline how and where Adult Education is a core partner:

Adult Education supports college readiness, but is not postsecondary education, it is not a system with accreditation to grant college credit, but it provides rigorous foundational learning and varied programming and instruction to assist adult learners and English as a Second Language learners in gaining skills, completing their High School Equivalency, citizenship, and/or transition successfully into college credit-bearing coursework, bypassing developmental coursework in some cases.

Adult Education has effective models with Career Technical Education, but AE is not Career and Technical Education; Adult Education provides adults with the foundational skills to successfully

complete CTE/occupational training courses; and in Illinois, Adult Education and Career Technical Education has partnered very successfully with nationally recognized integrated education and training programs.

Adult Education prepares students to be college-ready, but is not developmental education; development education is part of the community colleges, and both provide for the acquisition of foundational and basic skills for adults desiring to enter postsecondary education.

Adult Education assists and refers student for public assistance programs, but does not provide assistance, such as TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families); instead AE prepares TANF recipients in gaining the necessary basic skills to earn a high school credential, qualify for further training, and find sustaining employment.

Across many decades of effectively serving the diverse needs of Illinois learners, especially within the context of federal resource allocation challenges, it is clear that:

Illinois is a national leader. Illinois' Adult Education program is the fifth largest in the country and is comprised of both strong system leadership and talented providers in all corners of the state.

Illinois Adult Education is effective. Results from an independent evaluation of the state's participation in ICAPS (an integrated basic skills and training model) are promising with statistically significant outcomes – ICAPS increased the probability of earning a credential by 30% more than the comparison group.

Illinois adults are achieving goals. Illinois consistently exceeds federal performance benchmarks for educational gains. The state consistently exceeds performance **benchmarks** for assisting adults in obtaining and/or retaining employment.

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.

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 professional development system that provides quality training to the adult education system; and is considered one of the strongest in the country.

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, including strong partnerships with Career Technical Education, local workforce system partners, State Workforce Boards, Community Colleges, Illinois Departments of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Employment Security (IDES) Human Services (DHS) – Voc Rehab, not for profit community organizations, philanthropy; and other key stakeholders.

State Demographics

Developing a strong five-year strategic plan calls for understanding state demographics, and data and information to understand Illinois' shift towards a new economy. As such, the following sections presents an overview of state demographics, and economic and educational conditions. The analysis will also account for wages, employment, unemployment, and shadow unemployment, poverty rates, and other key factors, acknowledging the complexities driving state and regional economies and their differences across Illinois.

According to recent Census data, Illinois is the sixth largest state. U.S. Census Bureau estimates released December 2017 show Illinois' population fell by 33,703 people between July 1, 2016 and July 1 2017. Illinois has been part of a population shift and subsequent employment growth, has been from the “Rust Belt” states in the Midwest toward the West Coast, Southwest, and South⁷. The Illinois 2016 Economic Report shows the state has lagged behind national population growth for almost a century and behind employment growth for more than 25-years⁸. Much of the shift in population.

Illinois has about 6.4 Million workers (aged 16-65)⁹ and a November 2017 state unemployment rate of approximately 4.9%; higher than the nation's unemployment rate of 4.1%. This is a significantly improved economic picture over the previous Adult Education Strategic Plan from 2009, where Illinois had an unemployment rate of over 11% in the midst of the Great Recession. For 2017, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research, Illinois has a higher *Shadow Unemployment* rate (discouraged people who are not looking for work, those marginally attached to the labor market, and/or people working part-time but want full-time) at about 11%, higher than the national average of 10%, and has been above average in shadow unemployment rates in all but one year (2006) since 2003¹⁰.

State demographics in Illinois are complex. People living in the nine county Chicago metro area, for example, have differing conditions than people living in Mattoon or Effingham. Therefore, to help us better understand the economic and educational situations of people that live and work in various state geographies, three terms will be used: **Chicago 9-county** area (Cook County and those adjacent), **small metro** (31 counties across Illinois in Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), places like Champaign, Peoria, and Rock Island), and **non-metro** areas (62 counties that are largely rural, places like Effingham and Mt. Vernon). The intent is to provide some useful insights while taking into account the differing contexts across the Chicago 9-county, small metro, and

⁷ U.S. News & World Report, December 20, 2017 edition.

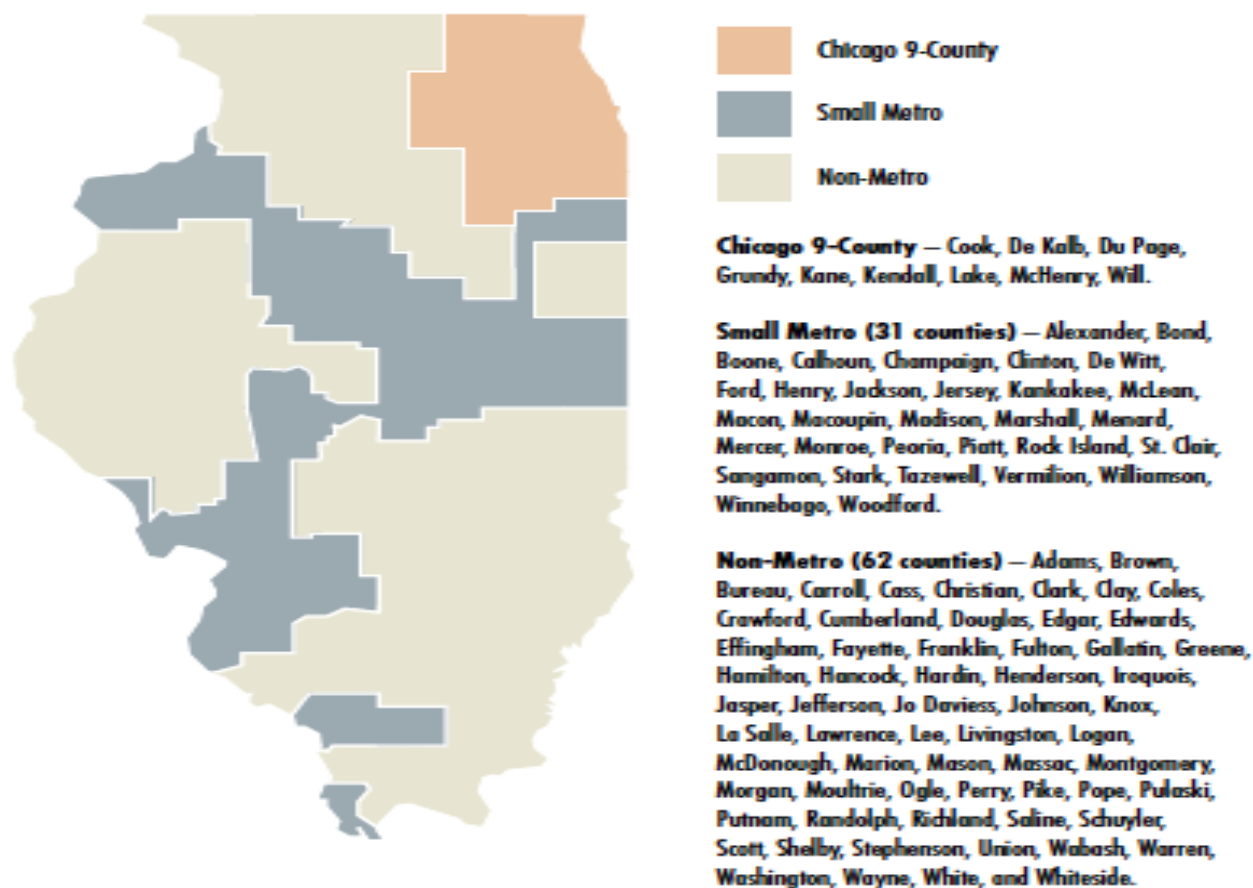
⁸ Bieneman, D., Illinois Department of Employment Security. *Illinois Economic Report* 2016.

⁹ United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Economy at a Glance: Illinois*. <https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.il.htm>.

¹⁰ United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Economy at a Glance: Illinois*. <https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.il.htm>.

non-metro areas, and subsequent strategies to ensure underprepared adult learners are served within our Adult Education system.

Figure 1: Map of Chicago 9-county, small metro, and non-metro regions in Illinois¹¹



The Chicago 9-county region has the largest population share in the prime-age group 25 to 54, and a population with the highest educational attainment and the highest labor force participation rate. The size of the labor force has increased 14 percent in the last 25 years. More employment opportunities are available in growing industries and occupations. The region has the largest proportion of people employed in management, business, science, and art occupations; and sales and office occupations; occupational categories with the highest projected growth. These two occupational categories account for almost two-thirds of the

¹¹ Figure 1: September 2016. **Labor Market Information Facts for the U.S. and Illinois.** Illinois Department of Employment Security, page 22.

employment in the Chicago 9-county region. Average annual wages are also the highest for the Chicago 9-county region across industries¹².

Figure 2: Population by Age Group

	United States	Illinois	Chicago 9-County	Small Metro	Non-Metro
Population, 1 year and older	310,385,254	12,717,641	8,539,056	2,681,183	1,497,402
1 to 4 years	5.2%	5.2%	5.4%	5.0%	4.5%
5 to 17 years	17.3%	17.6%	18.1%	17.0%	16.2%
18 to 24 years	10.1%	9.9%	9.6%	11.0%	9.3%
25 to 34 years	13.6%	14.0%	14.8%	12.9%	11.7%
35 to 44 years	13.1%	13.4%	14.0%	12.3%	11.9%
45 to 54 years	14.3%	14.3%	14.4%	14.1%	14.5%
55 to 64 years	12.4%	12.3%	11.8%	12.9%	13.8%
65 to 74 years	7.7%	7.3%	6.7%	7.9%	9.4%
75 years and older	6.2%	6.1%	5.4%	6.8%	8.6%
55 years and older	26.3%	25.6%	23.9%	27.6%	31.8%

Data Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2010-2014 5-year estimates (Table S0701)

The most concerning issues across the state are happening within the **62 counties that are most rural**. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural America at a Glance Report, these rural counties have the highest proportion of adults 55 and older (31.8% v. 23.9% in the Chicago 9-county region) and continue to lose population. The typical rural county in Illinois would likely have an industry base of agriculture, resource extraction or some manufacturing. These industries have their largest share of employment within the rural counties. These same industries have employment that has been trending downward for years¹³.

Figure 3: Population by Race, and Hispanic Ethnicity

¹² Bieneman, D., Illinois Department of Employment Security. *Illinois Economic Report* 2016.

¹³ The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service. Rural America at a Glance, 2015.

	United States	Illinois	Chicago 9-County	Small Metro	Non-Metro
Population, 1 year and older	310,385,254	12,717,641	8,539,056	2,681,183	1,497,402
One race - White	73.9%	72.6%	65.9%	82.5%	93.1%
One race - Black or African American	12.6%	14.4%	17.1%	11.6%	3.7%
One race - Asian	5.0%	4.9%	6.4%	2.3%	0.6%
Other race(s)	8.5%	8.2%	10.6%	3.7%	2.5%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	16.8%	16.2%	21.8%	5.2%	3.8%

Data Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2010-2014 5-year estimates (Table S0701)

The Chicago 9-county region, as depicted in Figure 3, is the most diverse area of the state with significantly fewer whites (65.9%), significantly more blacks (17.1%), Asians (6.4%), people of other races (10.6%), and Hispanics (21.8%) than the national population. The large amount of diversity in the Chicago 9-county area is balanced by much less diversity in the rest of the state. The Small Metro region has a similar proportion of blacks in its population as the nation. Otherwise there is little racial and ethnic diversity in the Small Metro and Non-Metro regions of the state.

One of the most important elements within the state's demographics is the diversity of immigrants and those who speak a language other than English at home (Figure 4). In the last Adult Education Strategic Plan (2004-2009); nearly 1 in 7 Illinoisans' were immigrants (1.77 Million out of 12.8 Million); and that same trend continues now, with nearly 1.78 people in Illinois who are foreign born from a total state population of 12,717,641.

Figure 4: Population by Nativity and Citizenship

	United States	Illinois	Chicago 9-County	Small Metro	Non-Metro
Population, 1 year and older	310,385,254	12,717,641	8,539,056	2,681,183	1,497,402
%, Native (2010-2014)	86.8%	86.0%	80.9%	95.3%	97.9%
%, Foreign born	13.2%	14.0%	19.1%	4.7%	2.1%
%, Foreign born - Naturalized U.S. citizen	6.1%	6.6%	9.0%	2.0%	0.9%
%, Foreign born - Not a U.S. citizen	7.2%	7.5%	10.0%	2.8%	1.2%

Data Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2010-2014 5-year estimates (Table S0701)

A picture of state demographics also needs to take into account poverty rates and where poverty is most prevalent (Figure 5). Poverty rates among households led by females (no husband present) are higher outside of the Chicago 9-county region, for the combined Small Metro and Non-Metro area. The data also show this rate is growing rapidly. Research confirms that poor

children are less likely to attain high levels of education and more likely to work later in life in low-wage jobs¹⁴. These data have implications for Adult Education programs in rural areas.

Figure 5: Population by Poverty Status

	United States	Illinois	Chicago 9-County	Small Metro	Non-Metro
Population, 1 year and older - For whom Poverty Status is determined	302,554,055	12,416,841	8,402,516	2,596,522	1,417,803
Below 100 percent of poverty level	15.5%	14.3%	13.8%	15.7%	14.6%
100 to 149 percent of poverty level	9.6%	8.8%	8.6%	8.6%	10.2%
At or above 150 percent of poverty level	74.9%	76.9%	77.5%	75.7%	75.1%

Data Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2010-2014 5-year estimates (Table S0701)

State Economic and Educational Outcomes: Illinois' New Economy and the Intense Demand for Skills

Illinois has a rich history of economic prosperity with globally recognized businesses producing cutting edge technologies, innovations, and services. The state is the sixth largest economy in the country and home to 36 Fortune 500 companies, including Walgreen's, Caterpillar, and Deere. To place the magnitude of the state's economy in perspective, the Illinois Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2016 was \$768 billion, just slightly higher than the economic output in the Netherlands (\$738 billion), even though employment in Illinois (6.4 million workers) is about 25 percent below the employment level in the Netherlands (8.34 million workers)¹⁵. With about 75% of the state's total land area in farmland, agriculture also accounts for about \$19 Billion annually¹⁶.

According to author and chair of Gallup, Jim Clifton, in his book *"The Coming Jobs War"*, at our current national rate, employers in 2025 will need about **23 million more degree holders** than our nation's colleges and universities will have produced. Perhaps most importantly, approximately two-thirds of the nation's college completion goal will come from **non-traditional students** entering and staying in the pipeline¹⁷. This is one of the most intensive demands for advanced skills our country has ever faced. Fortunately, Adult Education's history in Illinois of responding to learner and employer needs is strong. Adult Education has catalyzed innovative programming, and has continued its strong push toward increasing the number of students

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Perry, M. Newsweek, June 11, 2016 edition. *Economic Output: If States Were Countries*.

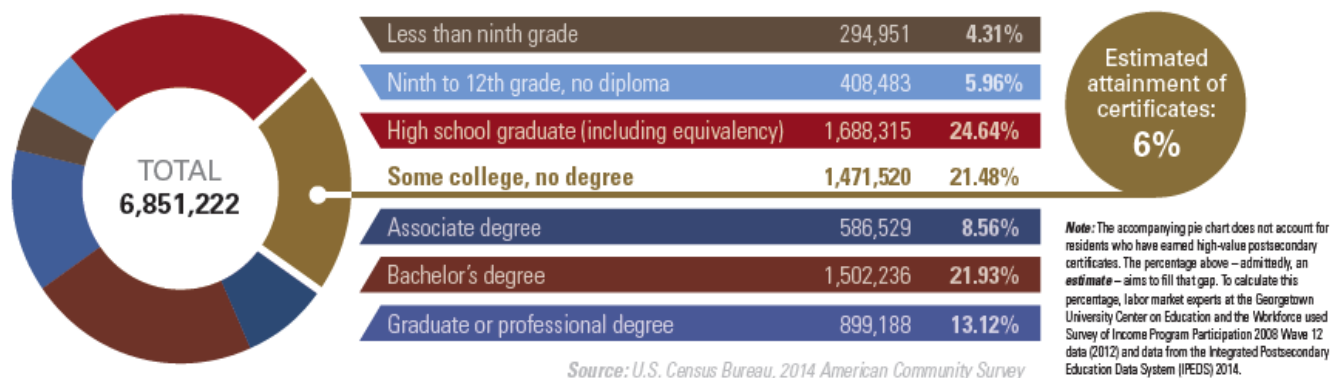
¹⁶ Illinois Department of Agriculture website, 2017: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/About/Pages/Facts-About-Illinois-Agriculture.aspx#h2>.

¹⁷ Clifton, J. 2013. *The Coming Jobs War*. Gallup Press.

without a high school equivalency toward the fulfillment of their goals, including skills development and postsecondary credentials via and career pathways.

There are two critical factors that directly influence state economic conditions: labor force participation rates, and educational levels, both of which can be heavily influenced by the state's Adult Education System.

Figure 6: Levels of Education for Illinois residents, ages 25-64¹⁸



Illinois is one of 26 states committed to attaining 60% high value credentials and degrees by 2025 from the state's working age population, 25-64. Given the intense demand for skills in Illinois, there is immense opportunity for Adult Education to utilize the convening power of the system office, and the strong professional development resources and support offered via Southern Illinois State University for the state's adult educators and partners.

When reviewing Illinois' educational outcomes, there is much to celebrate, and much to work on. The number of residents in Illinois without a high school equivalency is 10.9% (2016 data), down from 16.3% in 2004. However, the need is still great:

- More than 1.1 Million Illinois adults, or about 12 percent of the adult population 18 years of age and older, do not possess a high school diploma or equivalent (2016 data)¹⁹.
- Over 2 Million adults, 18 years of age and older have completed some college, but no degree, representing a substantial proportion of people challenged to compete against job candidates with college degrees²⁰.

¹⁸ A Stronger Nation: Illinois, Lumina Foundation, 2014.

U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Sex by Age by Educational Attainment for the Population 18 Years and Over: Illinois.

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Sex by Age by Educational Attainment for the Population 18 Years and Over: Illinois.

²⁰ Ibid.

Relative to participation in the labor market, as referenced by Figure 6, below, the Chicago 9-county area has the largest proportion of labor market participation rates (LMPR) at 67.7%. Rural counties in Illinois, for example, with 16-19-year-olds, have a LMPR of 45.8%, and in the 32 counties comprising Small metro areas, people 55-64, still working age, are at 64.1%. This represents an opportunity to develop a stronger talent pipeline via Adult Education.

Figure 6: Labor Force Participation, by Age Group

	United States	Illinois	Chicago 9-County	Small Metro	Non-Metro
Total Population, 16 and older	248,775,628	10,170,489	6,784,635	2,160,940	1,224,914
16 and older: LFPR	63.5%	65.9%	67.7%	63.8%	59.5%
16 to 19 years: LFPR	37.0%	38.7%	36.8%	41.0%	45.8%
20 to 24 years: LFPR	72.2%	74.8%	75.4%	73.6%	73.7%
25 to 34 years: LFPR	81.3%	83.9%	84.8%	83.6%	78.0%
35 to 44 years: LFPR	82.1%	83.8%	84.3%	84.0%	79.9%
45 to 54 years: LFPR	80.3%	82.7%	83.6%	82.1%	79.2%
55 to 64 years: LFPR	64.3%	66.8%	68.5%	64.1%	62.6%
65 to 69 years: LFPR	31.2%	32.4%	34.7%	29.2%	27.7%
70 years and older: LFPR	9.9%	9.9%	10.3%	9.3%	9.5%

Data Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2010-2014 5-year estimates (Table B23001)

According to research from the Center for Law and Social Policy, there is a positive relationship between educational attainment and increased income, as well as between educational attainment and labor market mobility²¹. Results of this research point to the significant and positive returns from substantially increasing postsecondary attainment, making the role of Illinois' Adult Education as a central partner in connecting hundreds of thousands of residents without their High School Equivalency to viable training and credentialing programs a critical state priority.

In developing this plan and its set of strategies, AE understands it must be ever more responsive to changing labor market needs in this shift toward a new economy. The plan will expand and enhance Illinois' ability to attract, retain, and grow businesses and develop educational opportunities to support students' success in their learning, as well as their entry and progression into the workforce. It will also enhance the state's future economic and workforce shifts, knowing that adult learners represent a significant population of untapped talent in a changing new economy. A new vision for Illinois' Adult Education will help chart this new course during the next five years.

²¹ Prince, H., and Choitz, V., 2012. The Credential Differential. Center for Law and Social Policy.

Adult Education Strategic Plan Vision Statement

In partnership with other stakeholders, we will create learning opportunities that are aligned with statewide education, training, and employment strategies to ensure all adult learners have access to and success across services that are cohesive, coordinated, and innovative to promote better economic and sustainable career pathways.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles align to the Illinois federal performance measures, the intent of the WIOA law, the State Unified Plan, and the content of this strategic plan. The guiding principles were developed to assist the taskforce, and ultimately all stakeholders, in understanding the goals of this strategic plan. These guiding principles ensure the plan reflects the values, mission, intent, and spirit of the goal statements and objectives (to follow):

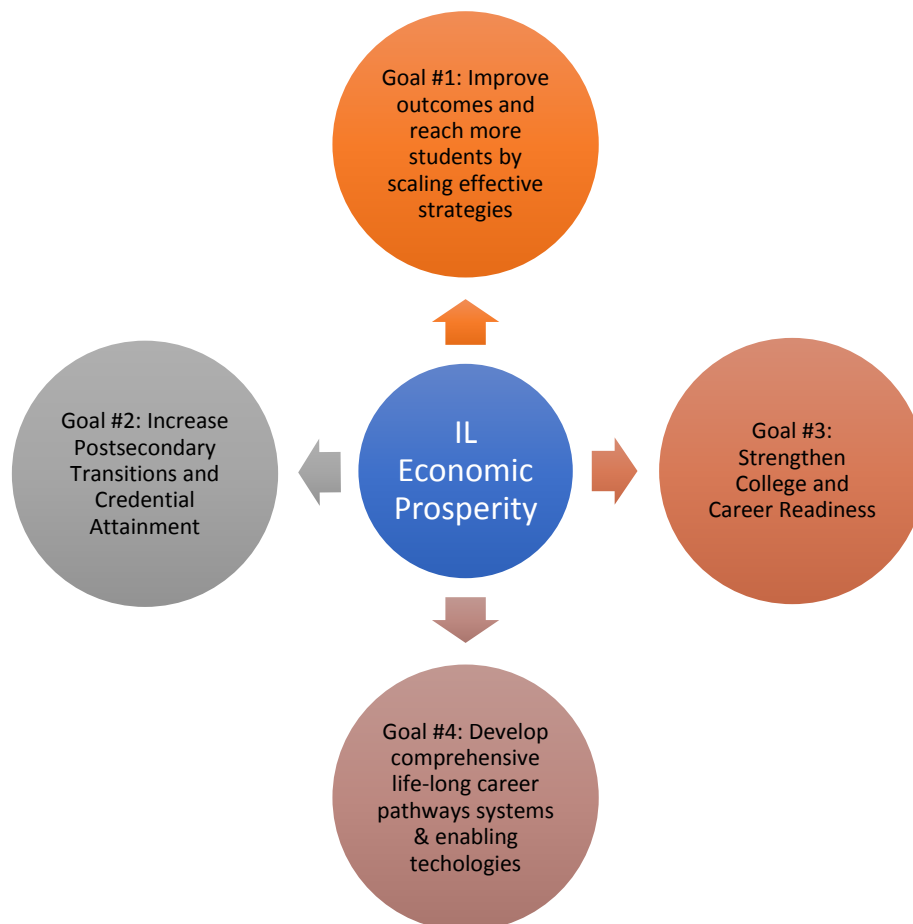
- **Responsiveness and Access:**
 - Understand literacy needs at the state, regional and local level and develop programs and services that meet the needs of all students
 - Develop strategies to decrease the number of students without a high school diploma
 - Connect with business and current labor market employment opportunities at the local and regional levels
 - Ensure all students have access to appropriate educational and career pathway services (i.e., low literacy, English language, and correctional education learners)
- **Innovation:**
 - Create transition frameworks that support student entry into postsecondary education, training, employment, and industry recognized credential attainment
 - Develop and scale instructional frameworks to ensure all students have access to career pathway programs (i.e., Integrated Education and Training (IET) and Bridge Programs)
 - Identify and scale promising practices that promote educational and employment success
 - Develop instructional models that are based on evidence based research, that are contextualized with in-demand occupations, and promote accelerated learning opportunities
- **Collaboration and Alignment:**
 - Collaborate with state partners to ensure integrated service delivery in order to reduce duplication of services
 - Identify external and internal supports that will eliminate or reduce barriers for students
 - Align curriculum with state adult education standards and College and Career Readiness Standards as well as labor market needs

- **Professional Development and Training:**
 - Provide high quality professional development and training both with the adult education system and also in collaboration with partner agencies.
 - Develop ongoing opportunities to enhance staff instructional skills in the development and delivery of instruction
- **Accountability:**
 - Effectively assess educational and employment needs of adult learners to determine the necessary support services
 - Analyze data for decision making, continuous improvement and meeting performance standards
 - Develop funding mechanism to encourage on-going career pathway development, educational attainment, continuous improvement and innovation, and programmatic accountability
- **Technology:**
 - Incorporate the use of technology in the classroom and at a distance including the development of essential workplace skill of cross-technology proficiency needed for the workplace
 - Promote the use of digital literacy in adult education

Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

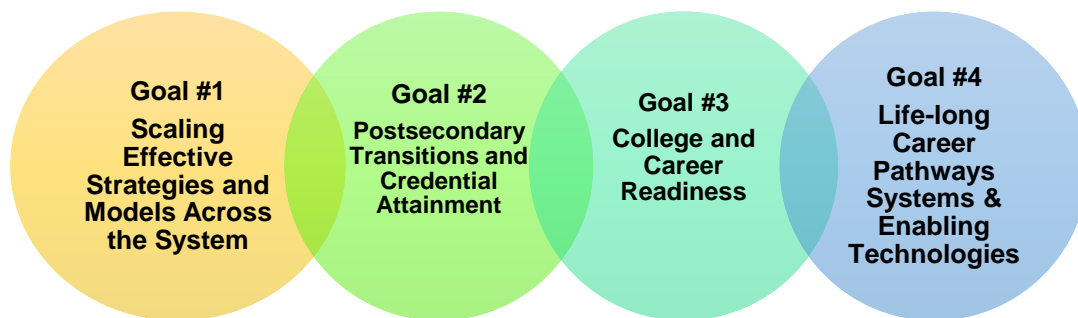
The tremendous scale of need in our state demands a strong vision for substantial, sustainable impact. It is absolutely crucial to the state's prosperity that large-scale efforts be undertaken to continuously improve outcomes for adult learners, employers, and communities. Each of the following goal statements were developed by considering the confluence of key state economic drivers, the need for continued foundational literacy and education, and skill-building across Illinois for our diverse and talented learners, and to equip Adult Education's ability to develop talent, meet employers need, prepare more college-ready students, and put the needed attention into forward thinking areas such as the future of work, comprehensive pathways leading to life-long learning, and enabling technologies to advance scale and digital literacy.

The following four goal statements and associated objectives were developed by taskforce member sub groups. The goal statements are an intentional set of strategies intended to catalyze stronger overall system outcomes.



The goal statements are overlapping and inter-related, designed as a strategic framework to equip the state's talented providers, partners, administrators, employers, and students with

strategies to thrive during the next five years and beyond in what will certainly be a time of accelerated change and need for advanced skill building.



Goal #1: Improve Outcomes by Scaling Effective Models and Strategies Across the System

The dynamics of today's New Economy is calling upon the state's Adult Education system to respond in stronger and more effective ways. The statistics are compelling: Almost 1 Million Illinois residents do not have a high school diploma, approximately 2.8 Million speak a language other than English as their primary language at home, and about 350,000 immigrants reside in Illinois.

With Illinois Adult Education serving about 64,000 students annually, representing a penetration rate of less than 8%, a tremendous need for scale exists in our state.

Fortunately, our Adult Education programs are stepping up to the challenge. There are several proven programs/models/frameworks that already exist in Illinois. Talented adult educators have, over the past decade, tested new innovations, piloted several models, implemented evidence-based programs, all which have the potential for scale across the state. At least four core frameworks or models: 1) bridge programs; 2) Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS); the Illinois Career Cluster Framework; 4) iPathways, the state's online course for High School Equivalency preparation; 5) integrated services; 6) career pathways and bridges definitions; 7) STAR model for literacy; and College and Career Readiness Curriculum, all show great promise for expansion.

This goal is driven by finding ways of building and scaling comprehensive career pathway systems, not just rapid attachment to the labor market, or entry level certifications. The intent of this goal is to create the conditions across every adult education program to find "break-through" ways of expanding these models that we know work, and designing implementation plans that can move from "the what" to "the how" drawing support from state agencies, employers, the workforce system, community based organizations, and other key partners.

The goal team believes this strategic goal will be successful if:

- The field and key partners are provided with the evidence to evaluate these proven models, and can begin planning and implementing what works for all levels of students, including English as a Second Language students, immigrants, and justice-involved/re-entry individuals;
- Time and energy can be devoted toward innovative resources and how to re-allocate existing funds for scaling efforts;
- Local implementation teams can both receive and co-develop professional development to train all levels of stakeholders around needed instructional and curricular re-design;
- Technology platforms that expand the modality and delivery of adult education services can be developed;
- Change management can work to help embed a system ethos for shared responsibility toward scaling and meeting the important goal.

Goal Statement #1 Objectives:

- Develop, expand, or enhance the implementation of both models of ICAPS (model 1 & 2) across the state.
- Develop, expand, or enhance partnerships across the state and provide guidance and professional development to inform partners of the role of comprehensive pathway systems and Adult education programs and their impact within their respective region.
- During the scaling process ensure AE programs are responsive to urgent economic needs and align with economic development regional data, demographic data, and long range comprehensive community plans.
- Influence and support policies and practices that strengthen Adult Education's voice when actively connecting employment and training to the career pathway system and building responsiveness to businesses' needs.
- Develop on-ramps for basic skills students and English Language Learners into the Adult Education comprehensive career pathway systems.
- Support AE programs with a comprehensive professional development plan that engages multiple partners.
- Enhance the effectiveness of cohort models to include mentoring, targeted professional development, promising practices, and partnerships to scale effective programs.

Goal #2: Increase Postsecondary Transitions and Credential Attainment

Skills Matter. In a series of reports in 2013-2014 issued by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE), noted that in 1973 the passport to a middle-class life was a High School Diploma, and that was what 72% of the workforce had back then²². By 2020 70% of all jobs in Illinois will require some postsecondary education beyond high school. Struggles to enter and stay in the workforce are hardest for those without a high school diploma. They are twice as likely as their college-educated peers to be out of work.²³

Illinois has been working on putting in place strong systems to advance the transition of students from adult education into postsecondary pathways and marketable credentials. Currently about 22% of the students from the Illinois Adult Education system successfully transition to postsecondary. While there is much work to do to improve this rate, the system leaders and providers are committed to improving this important indicator. When adult education students do transition to postsecondary, there is advising and guidance to place students into really strong pathways, including short-term and long-term credentials and degrees, like welding, nursing, IT networking, most leading to good-paying jobs and advancement.

To illustrate the transformative changes happening in Adult Education and workforce, by federal mandates in the previous Workforce Innovation Act of 1998, and the updated Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, a comparison of the performance measures is helpful. One of the performance measures under WIA was transition to postsecondary education and training. Now, under current law (WIOA), the emphasis now is to earn a marketable credential or degree. Recognizing that access to postsecondary education is not enough, we must ensure students are earning are credentials that are in-demand.

Figure 7: Comparison of Performance Measures emphasizing participants who obtain a postsecondary between WIA (1998) and WIOA (2014)²⁴

²³ Joe Weisenthal, "The Massive Difference In Unemployment Between Those Who Do And Don't Have A College Degree," June 8, 2013, <http://www.businessinsider.com/college-vs-no-college-unemployment-rates-2013-6>.

²⁴ Side by Side Comparison of Occupational Training, and Adult Education & Family Literacy Provisions in the Workforce Investment Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 2014. National Skills Coalition. www.nationalskillscoalition.org.

THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF 1998 (WIA)**State Performance Accountability System****CORE INDICATORS—**

- Adults and Older Youth (19-21)
 - » Entry into unsubsidized employment
 - » Retention in unsubsidized employment six months after employment entry
 - » Earnings change six months after entry into unsubsidized employment
 - » Credential rate among those who enter into unsubsidized employment
 - » Excludes individuals who participate in only self-service and informational activities
- Dislocated Workers
 - » Same as adult indicators except that earnings replacement rate at six months is measured, rather than earnings change.
- Core Indicators for Younger Youth (14-18)—
 - » Attainment of basic skills and work readiness or occupational skills
 - » Attainment of high school diplomas and their recognized equivalents
 - » Placement and retention in postsecondary education or advanced training, or placement and retention in military service, employment, or qualified apprenticeships
- Customer satisfaction indicators
 - » Customer satisfaction of employers and participants

THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)**CORE INDICATORS FOR TITLE I, TITLE II, TITLE III, AND TITLE IV PROGRAMS—**

- The percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during second quarter after exit
- Percentage of program participants in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit
- Median earnings of participants in unsubsidized employment during second quarter after exit
- Percentage of participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, secondary school diploma or equivalent during participation or within one year after program exit
- Percentage of participants who during a program year are in education that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable gains towards those goals
- Indicators of effectiveness in serving employers

The barriers for adult education students are complex. The adult education systems that were designed decades ago didn't need to account for transitions to postsecondary; student support services. Programs were not necessarily equipped to handle the needs of today's diverse students. For students, they are understandably exiting to the labor market with real needs to work and take care of their families. For others, they are not able to commit to the time or money it might take to earn that postsecondary credential, even though it pays off over the long-term. Fortunately, Illinois' Adult Education System is stepping up to this challenge, and though there is much more work to do, transitions to postsecondary education and training is a priority.

There has been a national movement, including many community colleges in our state, to create "stackable credentials." Stackable credentials are structured to build on each credential or milestone leading to a degree. Stackable credentials represent an opportunity to earn postsecondary credentials that will result in good jobs, but take less time than the 2-6 years for an associate's degree, and will count toward the degree if/when students return. As noted in the comparison chart above, current law is requiring pathways to postsecondary education and training. The objectives below reinforce this priority of moving more students to postsecondary pathways.

Goal #2 Objectives:

- Enable the system to design multiple entry points into postsecondary education 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. Applying break-through strategies that take into account referral systems that need to be fortified and the processes between adult education and postsecondary more clear.

- Actively engage with employers through the development of work-based learning opportunities for adult education students, advisory committees, and curriculum enhancements such as mock interviews, experiential learning, employer-based on-site projects, and other mentoring opportunities.
- Identify and create policy conditions and incentives to facilitate stronger transitions between adult education and postsecondary education.
- Maximize access to support services and financial incentives to ensure seamless transition for AE students.
- Provide comprehensive professional development to adult education providers and other stakeholders on identifying labor market demands and how to demonstrate return on investment for their transition related programs.

Goal #3: Strengthen College and Career Readiness

College and career readiness for underprepared adult students is critical to overall success. Increasingly, students entering the workforce are discovering that they need critical knowledge and skills that are used on a regular basis. They recognize that pursuing a career pathway that pays enough to support a family and provides genuine potential for advancement hinges on being able to perform a set of complex tasks critical for postsecondary success. Leading economists who have examined labor market projections note that key college and career ready knowledge and skills are closely linked to being able to get the training necessary to earn a living wage in high-growth industries.

Adult education has a core function to provide foundational learning skills and to prepare students to be college and career ready. Toward that end, a pivotal study called the *Survey of Adult Skills* from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIACC) significantly advances our understanding of the proficiencies and skills needed for individuals to participate successfully in the workforce and for economies to prosper. PIACC is issued by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) surveying over 40 countries. This survey brings understanding around adults and their level of proficiency in literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy. The level of proficiency and the ability to prepare students for increasing levels of learning is confirmed, essentially world-wide, and is at the heart of what Illinois Adult Education is doing as part of their mission.

A principle finding in the PIACC study: adults with higher proficiency in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments tend to have better outcomes in the labor

market than their less-proficient peers. They have greater chances of being employed and, if employed, of earning higher wages²⁵; and adults who are highly proficient in the skills measured by the survey are likely to be able to make the most of the opportunities created by the technological and structural changes modern societies are going through. Those who struggle to use new technologies are at greater risk of losing out. Adult Education is contributing a compelling role to the state by preparing diverse learners for college and careers, and provides the needed foundational literacy, numeracy, and digital skills to succeed in their pathway.

The importance of having the right skills to succeed to today's and tomorrow's changing economy points to the continued need by Illinois to bolster current efforts in the college and career readiness space. Illinois Adult Education is firmly committed to identifying and implementing even stronger ways to improve student-readiness.

Central to this goal statement is to develop career pathways programs that are 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.

Goal #3 Objectives:

- Expand public and private partnerships through relationships among the adult education system, community colleges, community based organizations, workforce, and employers to provide students with career exploration activities, work-based learning opportunities, and ICAPS/Integrated and Education Training model transition experience.
- Partner with community colleges and four-year colleges and universities to utilize the Federal Ability-to-Benefit provision, which permits students the opportunity to enroll in postsecondary programs without a High School Equivalency, and support the eligibility of Adult Education students. This ensures access to federal financial aid and removes financial barriers toward credential or degree attainment and access to good jobs.
- Identify real world of work expectations to be used in monitoring and evaluating.
- Build partnerships with employer to enhance career pathway programs that meet local employment needs.
- Ensure Adult Education is active and engaged as a member of the Local Workforce Area Integrated Business Services Team.
- Identify defined career pathways in high demand sectors i.e. career ladders, and entry level employment opportunities including apprenticeship and OJT.

²⁵ OECD (2016), Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en>

- Embed the Essential Employability Skills Framework across the Adult Education curriculum, and IET/ICAPS models - ideally through work-based components that complement classroom-based academic work.
- Align Adult Education with the ICCB Workforce Education Strategic Plan where appropriate via systems alignment and partnership development efforts.
- Leverage financial support for ICAPS/IET models through partnerships with public and private funding streams (examples include: SNAP funds, ISAC, etc.)
- Strengthen alignment and service integration across local WIOA core and required partner agencies to support career pathway program development including provision of student support services. (Including legislative issues and social issues)
- The College and Career Standards will be used to consistently align K-12 expectations so that all students – whatever their pathway to graduation – will have access to the preparation they need for entry into beginning college level courses (without the need for developmental education).
 - Emphasis on the intermediate level AE Learner since this is cohort of AE students with the largest number of exits from the program
- Connect and maintain key state organizational workforce drivers/organizations such as chambers of commerce, economic development councils, key industries, etc. to adult education partners to ensure that curriculum is meeting the changing needs of the state's future workforce and successful graduates are obtaining immediate employability standards.
- Expand funding models to include flexibility in state fund use by providers to not only support direct instruction, but the additional support services to ensure successful completion of curriculum and transition into the workforce.

Goal #4: Develop life-long Career Pathways Systems & Enabling Technologies

As noted, today's economy is in the midst of a significant, transformational shift. Currently, one in three Americans is an independent contractor, not formally attached to traditional employers. It is expected that by 2020, more than 50% of our national workforce will be freelance²⁶. The importance of having the right skills to succeed to today's and tomorrow's changing economy has enormous implications for our state's most underprepared adult learners, and the systems like Adult Education that serve them. In others words, teaching students how to develop their playbook of career and life strategies to guide their choices in a rapidly changing world is key. The emphasis around this strategic goal is to further equip our state's adult educators, career

²⁶ Shulz, A., & Gill, R. *Community Colleges and 21st Century Skills: Skills Panels to Assist Student Career Success*. 2014. www.newworldofwork.org.

counselors, college advisors, and the students themselves, in strategizing for career and life options amid choices, rather than for linear career pathways that may not endure.

Several organizations, such as labor unions, policy think tanks, business consulting firms, and non-profits like Digital Promise and KnowledgeWorks Foundation, are focusing on new economy shifts and the changes needed in our approaches as we consider shifts in work, learning, and technologies.

These organizations and a growing body of research has largely identified four key drivers that this taskforce considered when developing this goal for the strategic plan: 1) the changing nature of work is shortening the shelf-life of job-specific skills, making it more necessary to have core skills like “the ability to learn,” “adaptability,” and “communication” and “collaboration”; 2) programs will need to partner to develop flexible and diverse pathways and programs, pointing to the value of integrated education and training, need for stronger prior learning assessments, or other co-enrollment strategies; 3) support adult learners through the Re-skilling and Upskilling process, knowing that life-long learning will be the new norm; and 4) support enabling technologies that provide students with the flexible modalities, distance learning opportunities, and other uses of technologies that help students learn on their own schedule and in more personalized ways²⁷.

To begin, what is meant by life-long learning? Every person, at every stage of their life should have lifelong learning opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to fulfil their aspirations and contribute to their work and to their society.

Lifelong learning is about meeting the diverse and context-specific learning needs of our age groups, including the acquisition of basic literacy, and technical skills through both formal education and effective alternative pathways to learning. Adult learning and education, career and technical training and literacy, and digital literacy, all represent significant components of the lifelong learning process. In a life-long learning context, an ideal (entire) education system is designed to facilitate lifelong and ‘lifewide’ learning and the creation of formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities for people of all ages.

Digital literacy and a skilled workforce is key our state’s sustainable economic development and stability. This strategic goal, in addition to recommending life-long learning objectives, notes the underlying need for the continued focus by Illinois Adult Education on digital literacy. The taskforce strongly recommends continued attention on infusing technology and enabling technologies within the curriculum, as part of work-based learning settings, and through-out the classroom learning experience. This is a goal not for technology sake, but to ensure our adult learners have access to current technologies, training and embedded skills development to apply

²⁷ Prince, K. Saveri, A., and Swanson, J. 2017. *The Future of Learning: Redefining Readiness from the Inside Out*. KnowledgeWorks Foundation.

and understand processes with smart machines, computer applications, and the ability to compete in the labor market.

Goal #4 Objectives:

- Expand the quantity and enhance the quality of existing partnerships and leveraging those partnership to extend services and resources that have proven effective in bridge programs or IETs to other levels of adult education. (example: case managers/ career navigators).
- Expand and incentivize innovative models that emphasize work based learning (for example: Learn and Earn Models) across Illinois by leveraging employer partnerships.
- Integrate essential employability skills, agile learning skills, and technology skills into all levels of instruction to help students become labor market adaptable.
- Develop a comprehensive technology framework for adult education program design and instruction that meets the needs of students with varied levels of digital literacy and foundational skills. This framework should address the use of technology in providing greater student access, instruction strategies and methods for using technology, and program design models that ensure flexibility to meet the changing technological landscape of the workforce.
- Use technology to create “just in time” learning opportunities that equip students with strategies to address life-long learning needs and build workplace skills.
- Expand student knowledge of career pathways and services available in the career pathway system.
- Create prior learning assessment options to assist with student placement.

Conclusion

The Illinois Adult Education & Literacy Program significantly contributes to our state’s economic well-being. Adult Education is the foundation of career pathways in our state, and scale and a focus on the future of work will guide the next five years and beyond. Adult education has a set of system and local provider leaders that 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. As we look toward an exciting future, we see this strategic plan shaping and supporting the development of a comprehensive career pathways system that partners with business, workforce, partnering organizations, and postsecondary institutions, all leading to further education, training, and/or employment.

Appendix

Members of the State-wide Taskforce on the Future Direction of Adult Education and Literacy within the Community College Board

Executive Director, Illinois Community College Board, Chair of the Taskforce

Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson, Executive Director
Illinois Community College Board

Chair, Illinois Community College Board Designee

Dr. Nick Kachiroubas, Board Member
Illinois Community College Board

Illinois Secretary of Education Designee

Emily Bastedo, Senior Advisor to the Governor
Office of Governor Bruce Rauner

Illinois Secretary of State Designee

Beth Paoli, Literacy Consultant
Illinois State Library Secretary of State

State Superintendent, Illinois Board of Education Designee

Shayla Grantham, Principal Consultant, College and Career Readiness
Illinois State Board of Education

Executive Director, Illinois Board of Higher Education Designee

Amanda Winters, Assistant Director
Illinois Board of Higher Education

Illinois Student Assistance Commission Designee

Eddie Brambila
Managing Director, Partnerships

Executive Director, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Designee

Lisa Jones, Manager, Office of Employment and Training
Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

Executive Director, Department of Employment Security

Jeff Mays, Executive Director
Illinois Department of Employment Security

Executive Director, Department of Human Services Designee

LaTanya Law-Fountain, Associate Director of Workforce Development
Department of Human Services

President of the Illinois Senate Designee

Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, Senator

Minority Leader of the Senate Designee

Chuck Weaver, Senator

Speaker of The House of Representatives Designee

Thaddeus Jones, Representative

Minority Leader of The House of Representatives Designee

Norrine Hammond, Representative

Regional Superintendents of Schools Representative Designee

Julie Wollerman, Regional Superintendent of Schools

Illinois Adult and Continuing Educator's Association (IACEA)

Tawanna Nickens, IACEA President

Community College President Designee

Dr. Terri Winfree, President Prairie State College

Philanthropic Organization

Sharon Bush, Managing Director, Grand Victoria Foundation

Adult Education Non-Profit, Community Based Organization

Stephen Richard Alderson, Instituto Del Progreso Latino

Community College Adult Education Representative

Peggy Heinrich, Interim Vice President of Teaching, Learning and Student Development
Elgin Community College

Local Education Agency providing Adult Education

Arlene Anderson, Director of Adult Education
Urbana District 116

Postsecondary Career and Technical Education Program

Dr. Joanne Kantner, Vice President of Instruction,
Kishwaukee College

FACILITATOR

Dr. Barbara Endel, Senior Program Director, Jobs for the Future

STAFF

Jennifer Foster, Deputy Director of Adult Education and Workforce, Illinois Community College Board & State Adult Education Director

Dr. Aimee Julian, Director
Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support, Illinois State University

Dr. Casey Anderson, Technology Coordinator,
Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support, Illinois State University

Dr. Brian Durham, Deputy Director of Career and Technical Education, Illinois Community College Board

Matt Berry, Legislative and External Affairs Liaison, Illinois Community College Board

Jamil Steele, Senior Director of Adult Education and Literacy, Illinois Community College Board

Lavon Nelson, Senior Director of Workforce Development, Illinois Community College Board

Ben McDaniel, Director for Adult Education Data and Accountability, Illinois Community College Board

Nora Rossman, Office Administrator, Illinois Community College Board