



Expanding Career Pathway Opportunities in Adult Education

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR ILLINOIS

STRATEGIC FIVE-YEAR PLAN • 2018-2023

JANUARY 2018



ADULT EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN VISION STATEMENT

2018-2023

In partnership with other stakeholders, we will create learning opportunities that align 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 opportunities, greater equity, and sustainable career pathways.

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FOREWORD

Adult Education in Illinois has a rich history 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 and its partners are working toward the same goals: providing for the educational and training needs of *all learners* and increasing the number of residents with high-quality postsecondary and industry-recognized credentials and degrees to meet the demands of Illinois' changing economy.

The goals in this plan also align with goals set forth in other key state-driven plans, such as 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***.

To advance these shared goals, Illinois Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 40 was passed in July 2017, creating the ***Statewide Taskforce on the Future Direction of Adult Education and Literacy*** within the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). The 25 taskforce members represent critical stakeholders: legislators; state commerce and economic opportunity agencies; employment security and human services agencies; Adult Education system leaders and practitioners; presidents of higher education institutions; representatives of workforce development and philanthropy; K-12 educators; and community-based organizations.

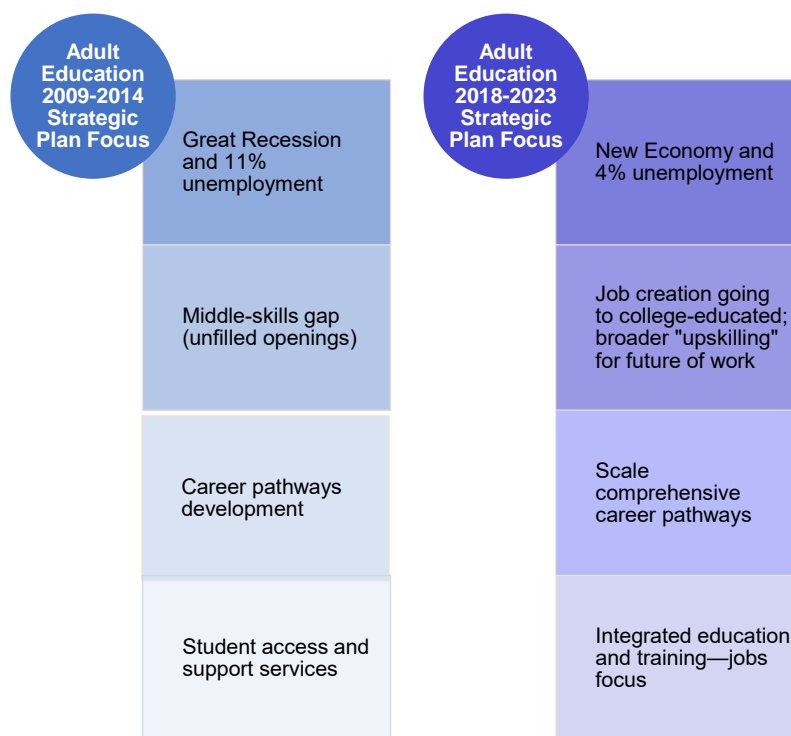
The taskforce's responsibility is to ensure the development of a strategic five-year plan that charts a progressive course for the state's nationally recognized Adult Education and Literacy Program. The plan addresses the need for continued development of comprehensive career pathways, college and career readiness, transitions from Adult Education programs to college and employment, foundational learning, English-language skills, and lifelong learning. It also

places a more significant focus on the integration of technologies to support demand for strong digital literacy skills.

The previous five-year strategic plan for Adult Education, developed in 2009, strengthened the system's foundation. It provided the blueprint for career pathways for the Adult Education system during the start of the Great Recession, when Illinois unemployment jumped to 11 percent. The 2009-2014 plan had several elements that we will be drawing from, such as career pathways, student support services, and setting the stage for enhanced integrated skills training.

In 2018, the conditions in Illinois are markedly different. While almost 10 years ago, the state was just embarking on the concept of career pathways, the Illinois Adult Education system today is a national leader in advancing career and integrated pathways. In 2009, Adult Education was moving toward education and training beyond the High School Equivalency (HSE). Today, Illinois Adult Education is advancing models that combine basic skills and workforce training, leading to a credential and meeting employers' needs. And, we are seeing results: the High School Equivalency rate (HSE) is 10.9 percent (2016 data), down significantly from 16.3 percent in 2004.

This 2018-2023 plan is focused on **expanding and scaling** comprehensive career pathways that have been successfully implemented across the state. This plan is proactively **responding to a future of work** that will demand advanced skills and training in the new economy. The following graphic highlights the differences between the plans.



The taskforce 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, it is a

confluence of several drivers working together that produces true disruptions to which Illinois must pay attention. These key drivers present opportunities but will also require our systems, programs, and people to adapt and respond in different ways.

This plan was developed, in part, based on the following critical drivers:

- **Scale.** For the past decade, the state's Adult Education, career technical education, community college system, and critical partners have been deeply engaged in several projects that have developed effective models for underprepared adult learners. These projects include Shifting Gears, supported by the Joyce Foundation, and Accelerating Opportunity, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The plan will expand and scale these and other effective models, resulting in stronger system performance outcomes.

“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 K. Foster, Deputy Director of Adult Education and Workforce, Illinois Community College Board

- **Future of work.** The future of work has significant consequences for underprepared adult learners. Some studies report that more than 50 percent of jobs will be held by independent contractors by 2025.¹ The changing nature of work is shortening the shelf life of job-specific skills, with technology and automation affecting millions of jobs. The impact of these changes will be felt disproportionately by people on the lower end of the economic ladder.² If we fail to prepare the people of Illinois for the future economy, support Adult Education programs, or demand that our partners step up to these challenges, there is a real possibility that our state's underprepared adult learners will face substantial challenges and limited career opportunities.
- **Comprehensive career pathways and regional partnerships.** As a leader in Illinois' career pathways movement, ***Adult Education ultimately is the foundation of a comprehensive career pathways system.*** In Illinois, several regional groups are working together to align efforts involving K-12, Adult Education, colleges, workforce, economic development, and community-based organizations. These efforts are using a career pathways framework and engaging employers in different ways to produce a trained workforce and to improve wages. Our plan will support these emerging, regional, place-based work efforts 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 postsecondary education, particularly industry recognized and with stackable credentials related to jobs in demand, is the single most important factor for explaining differences in workers' lifetime earnings and incomes. Strategies to support this transition and credential outcomes will be addressed in

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. & Schneider, P. *The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030*. 2017. London: Pearson and Nesta, Oxford Martin School.

this plan given that, by 2020, 70 percent of the jobs in Illinois will require some postsecondary education and training beyond high school.³

- **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 and Technical Education. Illinois has taken important steps to strengthen the partnership between Adult Education and Career and Technical Education. As a result, students and employers are benefiting. Adult Education and Career and Technical Education are primary partners delivering flexible and innovative models that integrate the education, training, and support services needed to prepare learners for not only for a High School Equivalency but for success in the workplace. Why? Time is the enemy for most students, and these models accelerate the time it takes for participants to finish their basic skills instruction, while at the same time providing students with the skills and credentials needed to enter the workforce. The results of this partnership are paying off. Students enrolled in the state's Accelerating Opportunity initiative (branded ICAPS in Illinois), an integrated education and training model, earned more than \$700 more in quarterly wages than the comparison group. This finding is based on a cost-benefit analysis included in the Accelerating Opportunity independent evaluation.⁴
- **Employer and industry partnerships.** The more closely education and training are related to a real job or occupation, the better the results for participants and employers. Illinois' role as a core Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program, as well as a participant in Accelerating Opportunity, has established the state as a leader in the development of integrated education and training models—branded in Illinois as the Integrated Career & Academic Preparation System (ICAPS). The results from this model, which also included relevant work-based learning components, are promising with statistically significant outcomes: ICAPS increased the probability of participants earning a credential by 35 percent versus the comparison group⁵. Adult Education in Illinois has a solid foundation in scaling models that work. Adult Education in Illinois is a leader in integrated training and instruction, but there is still much room for growth in this area. This plan will continue to support the scaling of effective models together with employer partners.⁶
- **College and career readiness/data.** Adult education providers in Illinois are on the leading edge in using up-to-date labor market 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 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 make better decisions about education, training, and job opportunities, all leading to stronger outcomes for students.

³ Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N. & Strohl, J. "Recovery job growth and education requirements through 2020." 2013. Georgetown University.

⁴ Kuehn, D., Anderson, T., Eyster, L., Barnow, B. & Lerman, R. "A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Accelerating Opportunity." 2017. The Urban Institute.

⁵ Anderson, T., Kuehn, D., Eyster, L., Barnow, B. & Lerman, R. "Final Impact Report for Accelerating Opportunity." 2017. The Urban Institute.

⁶ Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., Melton, M & Price, E. W. "Learning while earning: The new normal." 2015. Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University.

As such, this taskforce is looking forward to an exciting future. Recognizing the diversity of learners and vastly different geographies across our urban, suburban, and rural programs, this plan will drive deeper learning, foster work-based learning opportunities, and facilitate partnerships with providers, students, and stakeholders.

The updated strategic plan has been developed to build upon the collective hard work across the Adult Education system and the increased alignment with critical partners. The taskforce believes this plan will ultimately serve all learners but, in particular, will help drive Adult Education's continued role in facilitating stronger connections to postsecondary training and employer partners. The plan accounts for learners with the most need, including those who lack literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. This plan will address the unique and important needs of a growing English language learners and immigrant population. Scaling models that integrate foundational learning with workforce preparation and training in in-demand occupations is also a core goal.

“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 of whom will lead to a stronger Illinois.”

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

When we, as members of the **Statewide Taskforce on the Future Direction of Adult Education 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 are committed to making this happen.

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

– Dr. Karen Hunter Anderson, Executive Director, Illinois Community College Board and Chair of the Statewide Taskforce on the Future Direction of Adult Education and Literacy



OVERVIEW

A skilled workforce is the key to our state's economic development and prosperity. As such, our Adult Education system meets our residents' needs, including the acquisition of foundational literacy and technical skills through effective career pathways with the goal of leading to family-supporting jobs and contributing to a strong state economy.

To advance this goal, the 101st General Assembly enacted the ***Statewide 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 25-member taskforce is composed of legislators and representatives of several state agencies, including commerce and economic opportunity; presidents of higher education institutions; Adult Education practitioners; state school superintendents; representatives from employment security, human services, workforce development, philanthropy, career and technical education, student assistance programs, and other essential departments; community-based organizations; and stakeholders.

The taskforce's charge is to develop a strategic plan, in collaboration with major stakeholders, that considers:

- State demographics
- Educational and economic outcomes
- Current and projected needs of the state's adult residents with low literacy skills and limited English-speaking skills who lack a high school diploma
- 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; innovative approaches to teaching and learning for adults; workforce readiness; and

- Partnerships involving Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partner agencies, higher education, nonprofits, and businesses.

In October 2017, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) convened the **Statewide Taskforce on the Future Direction of Adult Education and Literacy** to lay the groundwork for the plan. Between November 2017 and January 2018, the taskforce developed a draft set of **four initial goal statements** and associated objectives. This process was useful in setting a broad framework for the five-year strategic plan that would lay the foundation for addressing the needs of Adult Education learners and employers in the state. The process of developing this plan is outlined in the following.



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The taskforce took into account strategies to directly address foundational skills as well as the 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.⁷ It is easy to understand why. More than 9 out of every 10 new jobs go to college-educated candidates.⁸ Many residents may never experience Illinois as a "place of opportunity" unless there are changes in how we build comprehensive career pathways that connect more learners to college and careers.

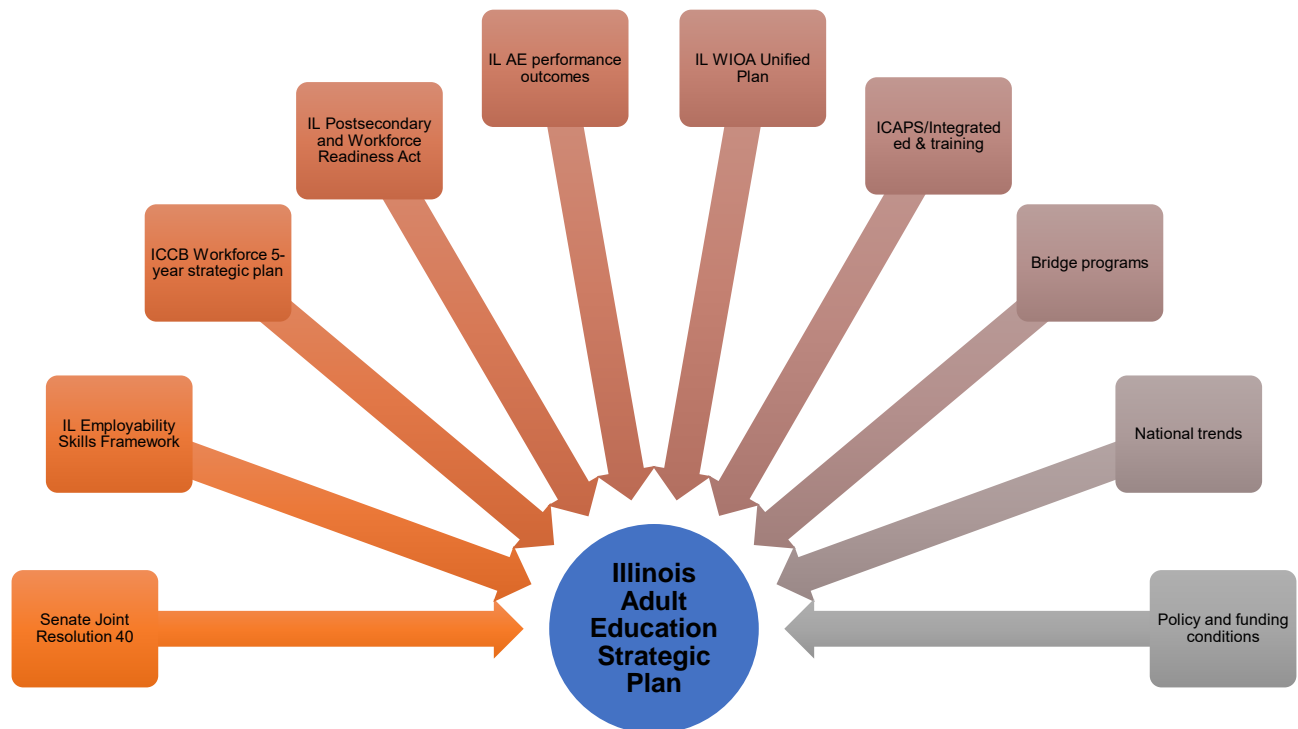
The taskforce engaged in an evidence-based, comprehensive process to develop this plan. The taskforce initially examined several important and related reports, such as the Illinois WIOA Unified Plan, the Illinois Community Board Workforce Education Five-Year Strategic Plan, and the Illinois Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act. In the spirit of collaboration, several public-facing and transparent mechanisms were used to gather input from the Adult Education field and its critical partners. The process and associated timeline included:

⁷ Weisenthal, J. "The Massive Difference In Unemployment Between Those Who Do and Don't Have A College Degree." 2013. <http://www.businessinsider.com/college-vs-no-college-unemployment-rates-2013-6>.

⁸ Carnevale, A. P., Jayasundera, T. & Gulish, A. *America's Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have-Nots*. 2016. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

- A webinar sponsored by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) to outline the taskforce's objectives, plans, and process for developing the five-year strategic plan was conducted on October 12, 2017. More than 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 initial meeting to examine state and national adult learner data, program and participant trends, and promising models. The taskforce also developed a draft set of four strategic goal statements. The meeting included a time period for public comment.
- Following its initial meeting, the taskforce implemented a plan to further refine and develop draft goal objectives for each of the four goal statements. Taskforce members were divided into "goal teams" with an additional subgroup formed to draft the taskforce vision statement. Each team participated in a minimum of three facilitated conference calls to refine its strategic goal and draft a set of goal objectives. All of the calls occurred between October 24 and December 15, 2017.
- To gather input on the draft plan, the ICCB posted the draft plan on its website during the first week in January, with an opportunity for the public to post comments.
- The ICCB also provided four additional opportunities for public comment. Two in-person informational meetings were held across the state (Bloomington and Palos Hills) the week of January 9; a statewide webinar was hosted (and recorded and posted) on January 9; and an opportunity for public comment was provided at the taskforce's final meeting on January 16, 2018.
- On January 16, 2018, the taskforce met to discuss the draft plan and public comments it had received, and made revisions to the final strategic plan.
- The ICCB, following all public comment and revisions, and final edits from the taskforce, will submit the final plan to the Illinois governor and General Assembly on or before January 31, 2018.

As noted, the taskforce committed to a collaborative process that aligned the goals and objectives of this plan to other state plans. Preparation of this strategic plan draft also considered federal WIOA funding guidelines and state legislative mandates as outlined in the following graphic.



This review of documents and overall plan development approach was taken for several reasons:

- The strategic plan encompasses critical elements that require input and **collaboration from multiple internal and external partners**. Therefore, the plan was not developed by the taskforce in isolation from key stakeholders.
- While a primary focus of the plan 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, especially if they return at a future date.
- The needs of **English language learners** and immigrants will continue to be a strong focus given that they comprise more than half of the state's Adult Education participants and close to 1.8 million immigrants reside in Illinois.⁹ These factors represent enormous potential for Adult Education programs to help transition learners into postsecondary education and training and jobs that provide a family-supporting wage. Previous learning assessments, integrated English-language acquisition programs with skills training, advocacy, relevant support services, and continued implementation of English Language Proficiency Standards will be addressed.

⁹ American Immigration Council. "Immigrants in Illinois: State by State." October 2017. www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org.



ABOUT ADULT EDUCATION

The Illinois Adult Education and Literacy Program supports this statewide strategic planning process. The plan is designed to ensure that Illinois' Adult Education system continues as a national leader in educating a diversity of learners. With 81 providers statewide, Illinois Adult Education is among the top five largest Adult Education systems in the nation. The Adult Education Program is administered through the ICCB, which is one of the largest systems in the country, comprised of 48 community colleges in 39 districts.

Illinois Adult Education has a long history of serving the needs of our valued learners. We are deeply committed to assisting all students in attaining their goals, whatever those goals may be. As such, we recognize and acknowledge that our learners are a diverse group. We gratefully serve individuals with a range of education and training needs, from high school stopouts to those with limited literacy and English-language skills, corrections populations, and parents in family literacy programs. Learners in Illinois also encompass many life stages and identities—they are single parents, immigrants, veterans, displaced workers, and at-risk young people, among many others.

Adult Education in Illinois provides 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 those at advanced levels of learning. Along with Adult Basic Education, critical components in the Adult Education continuum include Adult Secondary Education, English literacy, civics, family literacy, correctional education, life skills, and services such as work readiness and college/training transitions. 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 and prepare *a plan that supports all learners*.

Adult education is authorized by federal law through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). In 2014, President Obama signed the WIOA into law, which replaced the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). The WIOA was a bipartisan effort to support innovative strategies to keep pace with changing economic conditions, and it sought to improve coordination between the federal programs that support employment services, workforce development, Adult Education, and vocational rehabilitation activities.

Importance of the WIOA

The WIOA encourages alignment among the four core programs within the law. The core programs consist of: (1) the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth formula programs administered by the Department of Labor (DOL) under Title I; (2) the Adult Education and Literacy program administered by the Department of Education (ED) under Title II; (3) the Wagner-Peyser Act employment services program administered by DOL under Title III; and (4) the programs under Title I of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act administered by the ED under Title IV.

The WIOA is significant in Illinois. State leaders are committed to increasing the coordination of core programs with the submission of the Illinois Unified State Plan. The unified plan makes explicit the strategies and goals of the state and the operational elements that support the plan. The core programs in Illinois also committed to common performance measures and stronger alignment among Adult Education, postsecondary education, and employers. The WIOA also clarified that integrated English literacy and civics education programs may provide workforce training. This is especially important given that English language learners in Illinois now comprise more than 50 percent of the participants.

As defined by Title II of the 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 the Adult Education and Literacy Program is structured within the Illinois Community College System and 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 (2009-2014), the following is an overview of the role and services of Adult Education.¹⁰

¹⁰ Illinois Community College Board. Creating Pathways for Adult Learners: A Visioning Document for the Illinois Adult Education and Literacy Program: Continuing Our Work to Meet Our Learners' Needs. 2009-2014.

By the Numbers

Illinois Adult Education serves approximately 81,000 learners annually (2016 Illinois Adult Education data) in various instructional areas, such as adult basic and secondary education and English-language acquisition.

There are 81 state-funded Adult Education and Literacy providers that span a diverse statewide provider network, including community college districts, community/faith-based organizations, local education agencies, the Illinois Department of Corrections, and four-year colleges and universities.

The ICCB distributes approximately \$50,685,320 in state and federal funding to 81 Adult Education-approved providers.

High School Equivalency (HSE) is 10.9 percent (2016 data), down from 16.3 percent in 2004.

Serving Diverse Needs across Illinois

Adult Education in Illinois has a strong history of responding to learner and employer needs. As noted above, Illinois Adult Education is driven by Title II of the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Illinois Adult Education provides the following services and programs:

ABE/ASE/HSCR: The Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE)/High School Equivalency 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 40,000 English language learners are enrolled in Illinois Adult Education with the goal of learning to speak, read, write, and comprehend the English language.

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

Family literacy: The state's family literacy programs bring parents and children together in the pursuit of educational excellence, working to reverse the cycle of illiteracy by teaching the whole family.

Correctional education: This program assists in reducing recidivism and equipping individuals involved with the justice system with basic and life skills needed to sustain meaningful employment upon release.

Student Achievement in Reading (STAR): Using evidence-based reading strategies, many Adult Education learners participate in instruction to experience the joy of reading, often for the first time in their lives.

Workplace education: These programs, conducted on workplace sites, help adults attain the skills they need to succeed in the workplace and to respond to changes in the new economy.

Transitions: These specialized courses and services help dislocated workers and other Adult Education learners gain the academic and college readiness skills they need 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): These programs combine Adult Education instruction and the co-enrollment of students into workforce and career and technical training programs so that students can earn their HSE ***at the same time as a postsecondary credential*** of value in the labor market.

Illinois Adult Education serves thousands of diverse learners every year, across all parts of the state, and is a critical partner contributing to postsecondary college readiness. The Adult Education system is uniquely positioned to provide foundational learning and other essential services, and its historic role is critical to the success of the state's economy. In addition to the overview of the role and services Adult Education provides, it is helpful to outline how and where Adult Education is a core partner, able to effectively connect to various systems and enable adult learners to start on their pathway:

Adult Education supports college readiness but is not postsecondary education. Adult Education is not a system with accreditation to grant college credit. However, it provides rigorous foundational learning and varied programming and instruction to assist all adult learners, including English language learners. Participants gain skills to help them complete their HSE or citizenship requirements and transition successfully into college credit-bearing coursework, even bypassing developmental coursework in some cases.

Adult Education has effective models with career and technical education, but is not career and technical education. Adult Education provides adults with the foundational skills to successfully complete **career and technical education** and occupational training courses. In Illinois, Adult Education and career and technical education have partnered successfully with nationally recognized integrated education and training programs.

Adult Education prepares students to be college ready but is not developmental education. Developmental education is part of the community college system, and both Adult Education and developmental education provide for the acquisition of foundational and basic skills for adults who want to pursue postsecondary education.

Adult Education assists and refers students for public assistance programs but does not provide direct assistance. Instead, Adult Education prepares individuals served by programs like TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) in gaining the necessary skills to earn a high school credential, qualify for further training, and find jobs with a fair living wage.

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 among the top five in the country and is comprised of both strong system leadership and talented providers in all corners of the state.

Illinois Adult Education values partnerships. The Adult Education program realizes that addressing the diverse needs of its learners requires collaborative relationships that recognize and utilize the strengths of its partners, including strong partnerships with state and local workforce boards, community colleges, CTE, the Illinois Departments of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), adult and youth dislocated workers, the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), the Wagner-Peyser Act, the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) and its Vocational Rehabilitation Services, nonprofit community organizations, philanthropic groups, and other key stakeholders.

Illinois Adult Education is an economic imperative for individuals and the state. A robust Adult Education system is critical for the long-term economic prosperity of individuals and the state. High school graduates and those without an HSE may find themselves largely left behind in the coming decade as employer demand for skilled workers with postsecondary degrees continues to surge. Full-time workers with a high school diploma earn almost \$10,000 more per year than those without a diploma. If they have some college, but no degree, they earn almost \$13,000 more on average. People with bachelor's degrees working full time earn about \$24,000 more a year than high school graduates. We also know adults without a high school diploma are

more than twice as likely to be unemployed and almost three times as likely to live in poverty than adults with some college.¹¹

Illinois adult educators are dedicated to professional growth. Through national, state, and local professional development venues, adult educators receive 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 supports families. Studies indicate that parents play a critical role in contributing to their young children's cognitive development, pre-literacy and literacy skills, and future education success. Among Illinois parents living with at least one child ages 0–8, foreign-born parents are 53 times more likely to be limited English proficient and 4.5 times more likely to be low-educated, as compared to their native-born counterparts. Adult Education programs in Illinois fully support parent-focused programs for such families.¹²

Illinois Adult Education is effective. Results from an independent evaluation of the state's participation in ICAPS, an integrated education and training model, are promising with statistically significant outcomes: ICAPS increased the probability of students earning a credential by 35 percent more than the comparison group.¹³ And, students are learning: High School Equivalency rates stand at 10.9 percent (2016 data), down from 16.3 percent in 2004.

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.

¹¹ Brain Research Institute. "High School Drop Out Statistics." July 2017.

¹² Camarota, S. & Ziegler, K. "Immigrants in the United States: A profile of the foreign-born using 2014-2015 Census Bureau." October 2016. Center for Immigration Studies.

¹³ Anderson, T., Kuehn, D., Eyster, L., Barnow, B. & Lerman, R. Final impact report for Accelerating Opportunity." 2017. The Urban Institute.



STATE DEMOGRAPHICS

Developing a strong five-year strategic plan calls for applying state demographics, data, and information to understand Illinois' shift toward a new economy. As such, the following sections present an overview of state demographics, and economic and educational conditions. The analysis will also account for wages, employment, unemployment, 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 in December 2017 show Illinois' population fell by 33,703 people between July 1, 2016, and July 1, 2017. Illinois has been part of a broader population shift, and subsequent employment growth has occurred as people migrate from the “Rust Belt” states in the Midwest to the West Coast, Southwest, and South.¹⁴ The Illinois 2016 Economic Report shows the state has lagged behind national population growth for almost a century and has fallen behind in employment growth for more than 25 years.¹⁵

Illinois has about 6.4 million workers (aged 16–65)¹⁶ and a November 2017 state unemployment rate of approximately 4.9 percent—higher than the nation's unemployment rate of 4.1 percent. This is a significantly improved economic environment compared to the situation faced when the previous Adult Education Strategic Plan was developed in 2009, and Illinois had an unemployment rate of more than 11 percent in the midst of the Great Recession.

For 2017, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research, Illinois has a higher *shadow unemployment* rate (meaning 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

¹⁴ U.S. News & World Report. December 20, 2017, edition.

¹⁵ Bieneman, D. *Illinois Economic Report* 2016. Illinois Department of Employment Security.

¹⁶ United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Economy at a Glance: Illinois*. <https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.il.htm>.

about 11 percent, higher than the national average of 10 percent. The state has been above average in shadow unemployment rates in all but one year (2006) since 2003.¹⁷

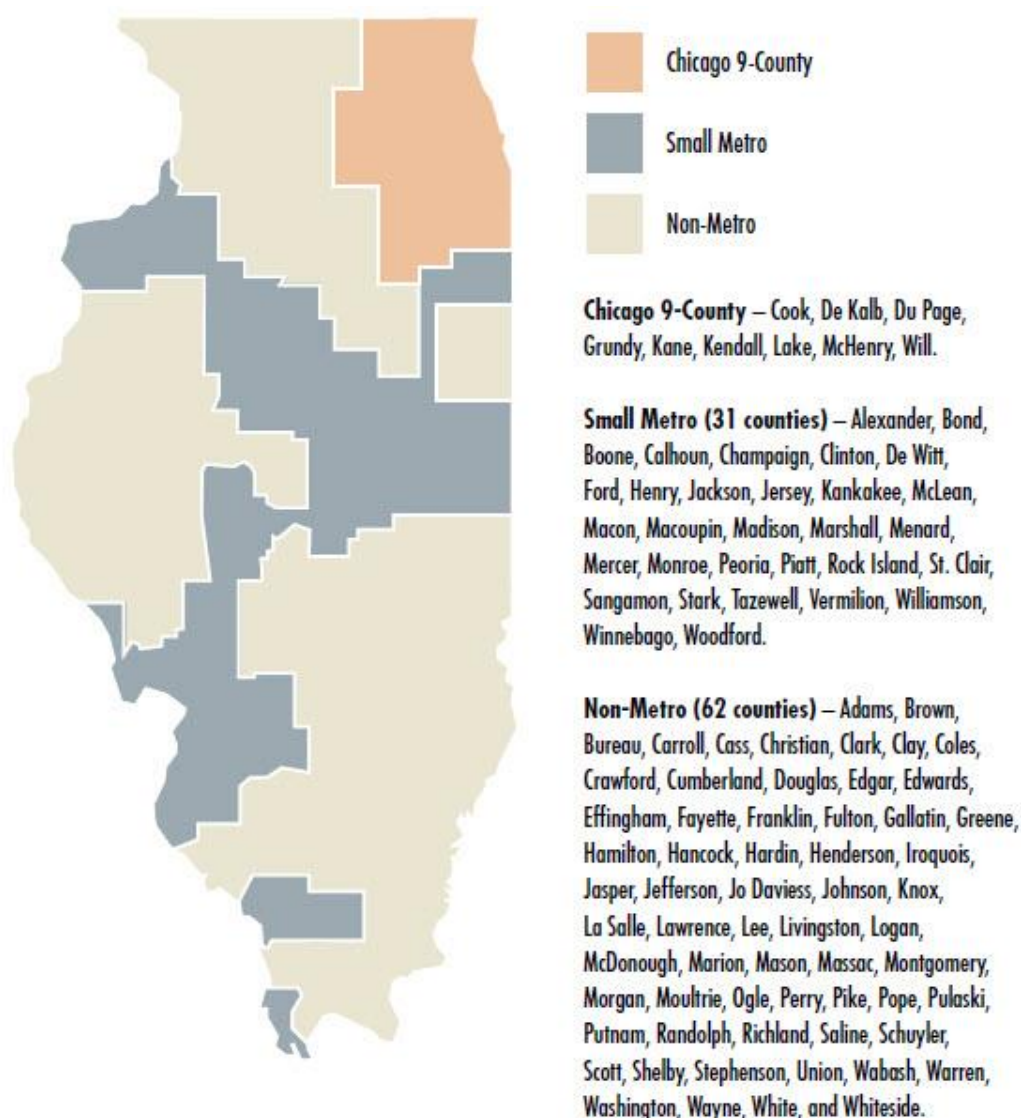
General Trends in Illinois' Regions

State demographics in Illinois are complex. People living in the nine-county Chicago metro area, for example, experience differing conditions than people living in Mattoon or Effingham.

Therefore, to help us better understand the economic and educational situations of people who live and work in various state geographies, three terms will be used: **Chicago 9-county** area (Cook County, as well as DeKalb, Du Page, Grundy, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will), **small metro** areas (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 Mount Vernon). The intent is to provide some useful insights while taking into account the differing contexts across the Chicago 9-county, small metro, and non-metro areas, and subsequent strategies to ensure underprepared adult learners are served effectively within the state's Adult Education system.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Figure 1: Map of Chicago 9-county, small metro, and non-metro regions in Illinois¹⁸



The Chicago 9-county region has the largest population share in the prime age group (25–54 years old), a population with the highest educational attainment, and the highest labor force participation rate. The size of the labor force has increased 14 percent over 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, as well as sales and office occupations. These are the occupational categories with the highest projected growth. These two occupational categories account for almost two-

¹⁸ Figure 1: Labor Market Information Facts for the U.S. and Illinois. Illinois Department of Employment Security. September 2016. Page 22.

thirds of the employment in the Chicago 9-county region. Average annual wages are also the highest for the Chicago 9-county region across industries.¹⁹

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 Service (ACS) 2010-2014 5-year estimates (Table S0701)

The most concerning issues across the state are happening within the **62 counties that are the most rural**. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural America at a Glance Report, these counties have the highest proportion of adults 55 and older (31.8 percent vs. 23.9 percent 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 manufacturing. These industries have the largest share of employment within the rural counties. These same industries have employment that has been trending downward for years.²⁰

¹⁹ Bieneman, D. *Illinois Economic Report* 2016. Illinois Department of Employment Security.

²⁰ United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service. *Rural America at a Glance*. 2015.

Figure 3: Population by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity

	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 Service (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 identifying as white (65.9 percent) and significantly more identifying as black (17.1 percent), Asian (6.4 percent), other races (10.6 percent), and Hispanic (21.8 percent) 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 African-Americans 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.

Importance of Immigrants to Illinois

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 (2009-2014), nearly 1 in 7 Illinoisans were immigrants (1.77 million out of 12.8 million). That same trend continues today, with nearly 1.78 million people in Illinois who are foreign born from a total state population of 12,717,641. Immigrants are making important contributions to the Illinois economy as well; more than 20 percent of businesses in the Chicago metro area are immigrant-owned.²¹ And, nearly half of all immigrants in Illinois (about 48.2 percent) are naturalized citizens.²²

Undocumented immigrant populations are also an important part of Illinois' state economy. More than a quarter of a million U.S. citizens in Illinois live with at least one family member who is undocumented.²³

²¹ "Immigrants in Illinois: State by State." American Immigration Council. October 2017. www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

Figure 4: Population by Birthplace 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 Service (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 spouse 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 children raised in poverty are less likely to attain high levels of education and more likely to work later in life in low-wage jobs.²⁴ By addressing the educational needs of female, single-parent Adult Education students in IL, a cascade effect is set into motion that disrupts generational poverty and promotes educational achievement in the family. These data also 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 Service (ACS) 2010-2014 5-year estimates (Table S0701)

²⁴ Labor Market Information Facts for the U.S. and Illinois. Illinois Department of Employment Security. September 2016.



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 Walgreens, Caterpillar, and John Deere. To place the magnitude of the state's economy in perspective, the Illinois

With about 75 percent of the state's total land area in farmland, agriculture also accounts for about \$19 billion annually.²⁶

While there are positive trending economic indicators in Illinois, a 2017 economic study prepared by Moody's Analytics for the State of Illinois Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability suggests the state trails most of the Midwest in key metrics. According to Moody's, the state's performance gap will narrow over the next several years, but with lackluster public finances and a struggling manufacturing economy, Illinois will face challenges. Longer term, businesses in Illinois have what they need—talent, access to capital and customers, and transportation hubs.²⁷

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**

²⁵ Perry, M. *Economic Output: If States Were Countries*. Newsweek. June 11, 2016, edition.

²⁶ Illinois Department of Agriculture website. 2017. <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/About/Pages/Facts-About-Illinois-Agriculture.aspx#h2>.

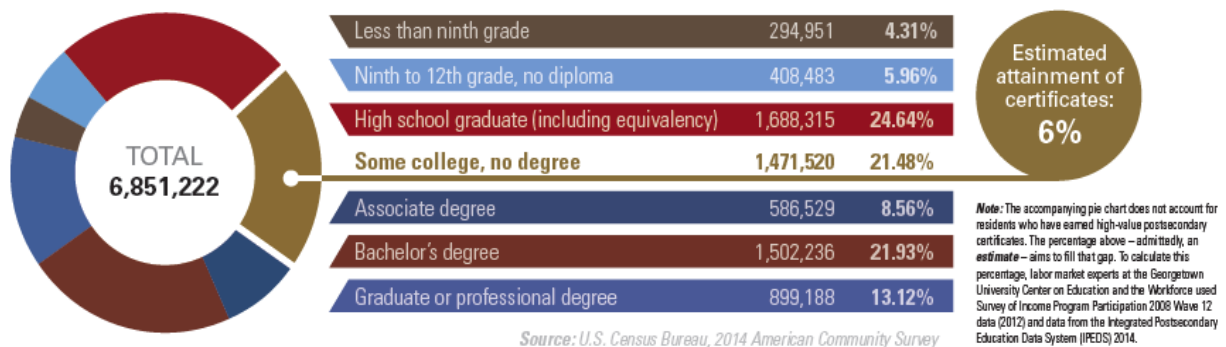
²⁷ Crane, S. Moody's Analytics. State of Illinois Economic Forecast: 2017.

students (adult learners who are not high-school age) entering and staying in the pipeline.²⁸ This is one of the most intensive demands for advanced skills our country has ever faced. The role of Illinois Adult Education to help prepare non-traditional learners is pivotal.

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 without a high school equivalency toward the fulfillment of their goals, including skills development and postsecondary credentials via 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 25-64²⁹



Illinois is one of twenty-six states committed to attaining 60 percent high-value credentials (ones that are in demand and pay good wages) 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 resources and support offered via the Adult Education professional development network 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 an HSE is 10.9 percent (2016 data), down from 16.3 percent 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).³⁰

²⁸ Clifton, J. *The Coming Jobs War*. 2013. Gallup Press.

²⁹ A Stronger Nation: Illinois. 2014. Lumina Foundation.

³⁰ 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.

- More than 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 degrees.³¹

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

Figure 7: 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 Service (ACS) 2010-2014 5-year estimates (Table B23001)

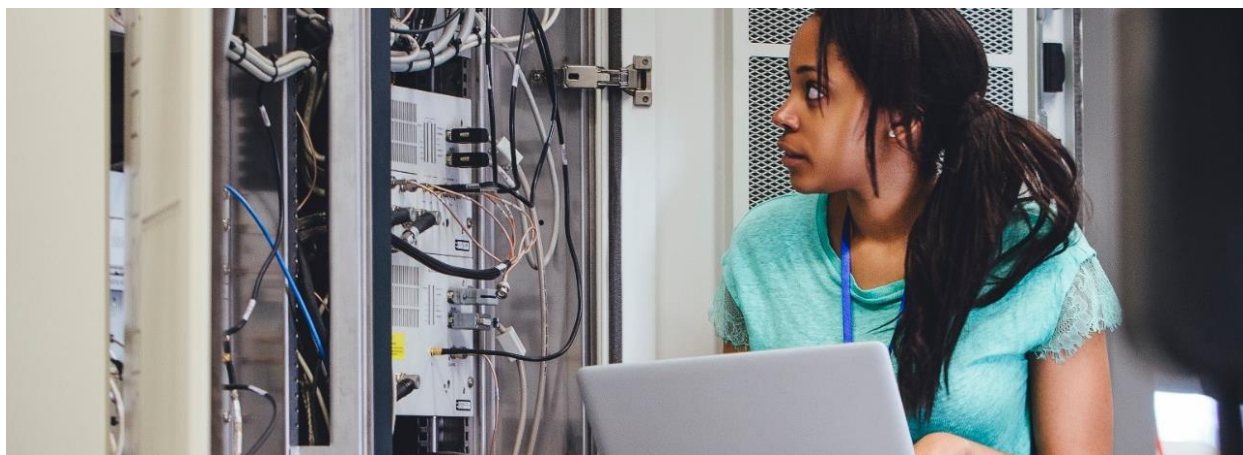
According to research from the Center for Law and Social Policy, there is a positive relationship between educational attainment and increased income, as well as between educational attainment and labor market mobility.³² Results of this research point to the significant and positive returns from substantially increasing postsecondary attainment, making Illinois Adult Education’s role as a central partner in connecting hundreds of thousands of residents without their HSE to viable training and credentialing programs a critical state priority.

In developing this plan and its set of strategies, Adult Education 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

³¹ Ibid.

³² Prince, H. & Choitz, V., 2012. The Credential Differential. Center for Law and Social Policy.

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. Therefore, in partnership with the local workforce boards, and other key partners, Adult Education has the opportunity to coordinate services and align curriculum that is consistent with state, local, and regional workforce efforts to ensure the strategies outlined in this plan lead to high-demand employment opportunities. By serving the needs of employers and deepening commitments to be labor-market responsive, we will ensure a new vision for Illinois' Adult Education during the next five years.



ADULT EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN VISION STATEMENT

In partnership with other stakeholders, we will create learning opportunities that align 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 opportunities, greater equity, 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. The following guiding principles also reflect the need for services for **all** adult learners and are aligned with the values, mission, intent, and spirit of the goal statements and objectives outlined in this this plan.

- **Responsiveness and Access:**
 - Understand literacy needs at the state, regional, and local level through research, and develop programs and services that utilize evidence-informed practices to meet the needs of all students
 - Develop strategies to decrease the number of students without a high school diploma
 - Connect with businesses and current labor market employment opportunities at the local and regional levels
 - Establish a foundation of cultural awareness to ensure a better understanding of the adult learners and their needs
 - Ensure strategies are in place to market and build awareness about adult education programs

- Ensure all students have equitable access to appropriate educational and career pathway services and connections to the labor market
- **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 that the diverse adult learner population has access to career pathways programs (i.e., ICAPS and Bridge Programs)
 - Identify and scale promising practices that promote educational and employment success
 - Develop instructional models that are based on evidence-based research, contextualize 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 improve quality of instruction in the development and delivery of instruction
- **Accountability:**
 - Assess educational and employment needs of adult learners to determine the necessary support services
 - Analyze data for decision making, research, continuous improvement, and meeting performance standards
 - Develop a funding mechanism to encourage ongoing career pathways development, educational attainment, continuous improvement and innovation, and programmatic accountability
- **Technology:**
 - Incorporate and integrate the training and use of technology in the classroom (for both students and instructional/support staff) and at a distance to promote cross-technology proficiency and application needed for the workplace
 - Promote the use of digital literacy in Adult Education for stronger transitions to the labor market
 - Ensure student technology competencies by encouraging programs to include problem-solving in technology-rich environments as part of the services and curricular offerings

Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

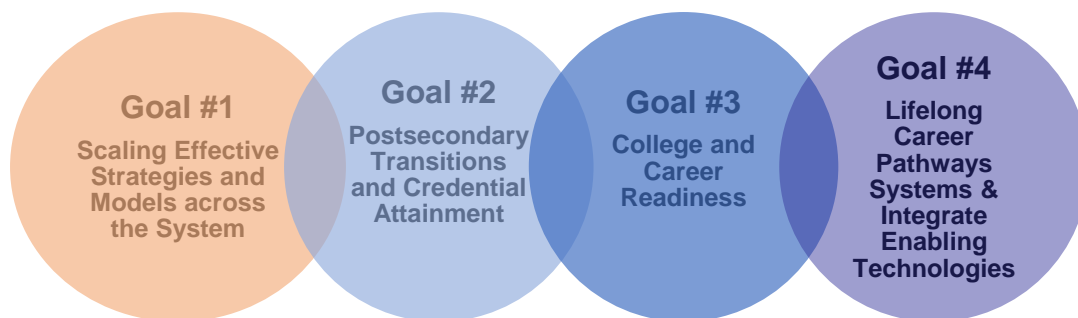
There are challenges in our state demanding a strong vision for substantial, sustainable impact. It is crucial to the state's prosperity that large-scale efforts be undertaken to continuously improve outcomes for adult learners, employers, and communities.

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
- Skill-building across Illinois for our diverse and talented learners
- The need to equip Adult Education with the ability to develop talent, meet employers' needs, and prepare more college-ready students
- The ability to focus attention into forward-thinking areas, such as the future of work, comprehensive pathways leading to lifelong learning, connections to employment, and integrate enabling technologies to advance scale and digital literacy.

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

The goal statements are overlapping and interrelated, 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 demand that the state's Adult Education system respond in stronger and more effective ways. The statistics are compelling: More than 1 million Illinois residents do not have a high school credential, approximately 1.78 million (about 14.2 percent of the population) are immigrants, and at least a quarter of a million U.S. citizens in Illinois live with a family member who is undocumented.³³

With Illinois Adult Education serving about **81,000** students annually, representing a penetration rate of between 4 and 8 percent, 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, and implemented evidence-based programs, all which have the potential for scale across the state. Core frameworks or models include: (1) bridge programs; (2) Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS); (3) the Illinois Career Cluster Framework; (4) iPathways, the state's online course for HSE preparation; (5) integrated services; (6) career pathways and bridges definitions; (7) STAR model for literacy instruction; and (8) College and Career Readiness Curriculum. All of these models and frameworks show great promise for expansion.

This goal is driven by finding ways of building and scaling comprehensive career pathways 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 breakthrough ways of expanding these proven models, and design 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.

Therefore, scale can be defined as expansion occurring within programs where additional pathways are developed—for example, moving from career pathways in information, advanced manufacturing, and healthcare to transportation and logistics, engineering technologies, etc., which opens the door for more students. Scale also means expanding to additional program locations. If there are approximately 25–30 colleges/providers offering ICAPS or Integrated and Education Training models, providing these services to additional parts of the state where these types of programs are unavailable is effective scaling.

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 to more successfully attempt and complete their goals.
- Time and energy can be devoted to innovative resources and how to re-allocate existing funds for scaling efforts.

³³ American Immigration Council. Fact Sheet: Immigrants in Illinois. October 2017. www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org.

- 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 this important goal.

Goal Statement #1 Objectives:

- Develop, expand, and enhance the implementation of both models of ICAPS (model 1 & 2) across the state.
- Explore the use of other innovative Integrated Education and Training Models that facilitate implementation and contextualization at the regional and local level.
- 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.
- Ensure Adult Education remains responsive to emerging labor market needs and aligns with economic development regional data, demographic data, and long-range comprehensive community plans through all stages of the scaling process.
- Influence and support policies and practices that strengthen Adult Education's voice when actively connecting employment and training to the career pathways system and building responsiveness to businesses' needs.
- Develop on-ramps for all students, including basic skills students and English language learners, into the Adult Education comprehensive career pathways systems.
- Support Adult Education programs with a comprehensive professional development plan that engages Adult Education and multiple partners.
- Enhance the effectiveness of practitioner 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 issued by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) in 2013-2014, it was noted that in 1973, the passport to a middle-class life was a high school diploma, and that was what 72 percent of the workforce had.³⁴ By 2020, 70 percent 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.³⁵

Illinois has been working to put strong systems in place to advance the transition of students from Adult Education into postsecondary pathways and marketable credentials. On average, about 18 percent of students from the Illinois Adult Education system successfully transition to postsecondary programs and another 39 percent enter employment. While there is much work to do to improve these transition rates, the system leaders and providers are committed to continuing the alignment of services and implementation of effective models to promote comprehensive pathways.

As reflected throughout this plan, Illinois Adult Education is adapting to the needs of today's economy. This shift is an important response to the 2014 re-authorization of the nation's workforce system, the WIOA, which includes the Adult Education system. Figure 7 illustrates the transformative changes happening in Adult Education and the workforce. A comparison of the performance measures between the previous Workforce Innovation Act (WIA) of 1998 and the updated WIOA is helpful.

Recognizing that access to postsecondary education is not enough, the WIOA was written to also ensure students are accessing postsecondary education and earning credentials that are in demand. One of the performance measures under the WIA (1998) was the transition to postsecondary education and training. Now, under the current WIOA (2014) law, there is an explicit emphasis to earn a marketable credential or degree. Additionally, the WIOA clarified that services for Integrated English Literacy and Civics (IEL/CE) must include education services that enable adult English language learners to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. The WIOA also clarified that it must include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation. Perhaps most importantly, the WIOA includes support for integrated education and training. This provision supports the state's commitment to equity and economic mobility for *all students*.

³⁵ Weisenthal, J. "The Massive Difference In Unemployment Between Those Who Do and Don't Have A College Degree." 2013. <http://www.businessinsider.com/college-vs-no-college-unemployment-rates-2013-6>.

Figure 7: Comparison of Performance Measures Emphasizing Participants who Obtain a Postsecondary Credential between WIA (1998) and WIOA (2014)³⁶

Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) State Performance Accountability System	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
Core Indicators	Core Indicators for Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV Programs
<p><i>Adults and Older Youth (19-21)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 only in self-service and informational activities <p><i>Dislocated Workers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Same as adult indicators except that earnings replacement rate at six months in measured, rather than earnings change <p><i>Younger Youth (14-18)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 <p><i>Customer Satisfaction Indicators:</i> Customer satisfaction of employers and participants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 these goals ▪ Indicators of effectiveness in serving employers

The barriers for Adult Education students are complex. The Adult Education systems that were designed decades ago did not need to account for transitions to postsecondary or student support services. Programs were not necessarily equipped to respond to the needs of today's diverse learners. Students are understandably leaving the program to find jobs because of real needs to work and take care of their families. Others are unable 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 are a priority.

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 student readiness levels and credentials, certifications, and/or degrees that lead to employment in high-growth, family-supporting jobs.

³⁶ Side by Side Comparison of Occupational Training, and Adult Education and Family Literacy Provisions in the Workforce Investment Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 2014. National Skills Coalition. www.nationalskillscoalition.org.

- Drive stronger transitions to postsecondary partners by applying breakthrough strategies to enhance referral systems (that need to be fortified) and the processes between Adult Education and postsecondary education into account.
- Actively engage with employers through the development of work-based learning opportunities, apprenticeships, and other learn and earn models 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. Partner with community colleges and four-year colleges and universities to utilize the Federal Ability-to-Benefit provision, which give students the opportunity to enroll in postsecondary programs without an HSE, 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.
- Leverage and maximize access to support services and financial incentives to ensure seamless transitions for Adult Education students.
- Provide comprehensive professional development and training to Adult Education providers and other stakeholders on identifying labor market demands and how to demonstrate return on investment for their transition-related programs and the benefit to students, employers, and the regional economy.

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 in the workplace. 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 that are critical for postsecondary and workplace 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.

Core functions of Adult Education are to provide foundational learning 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. The PIACC is issued by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which surveyed more than 40 countries. The survey provides information about adults and their level of proficiency in literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. The findings of the PIACC confirm that the level of proficiency and the ability to prepare students for increasing levels of learning are critical needs in education systems across the world, and are at the heart of what Illinois Adult Education is doing as part of its mission.

A principle finding in the PIACC study is that 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 a greater chance of being employed and, if employed, of earning higher wages.³⁷ 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 playing a compelling role in contributing to the state's economic stability by preparing diverse learners for college and careers and providing the needed foundational literacy, numeracy, and digital skills to succeed in their pathway.

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

Central to Goal #3 is the drive 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-supporting career

³⁷ OECD. Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills. OECD Skills Studies. 2016. Paris: OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en>.

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 Education and Training model transition experience.
- Embed the Essential Employability Skills Framework across the Adult Education curriculum and incorporate on-ramps to Adult Education and IET/ICAPS with “fast track” models or accelerated learning strategies—and design and integrate work-based learning components that enhance classroom-based academic work.
- Align Adult Education with the other key state-driven plans, such as the ***Illinois Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified Plan***; the ***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***, where appropriate via system alignment and partnership development efforts.
- Leverage financial support for ICAPS/IET models through partnerships with public and private funding streams (examples include Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program funds, Illinois Student Assistance Commission, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Foster Care for Postsecondary attainment, etc.).
- Strengthen alignment and service integration across local WIOA core and required partner agencies to support career pathways program development, including provision of student support services (including legislative issues and social issues).
- Use Illinois College and Career Readiness Standards 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 postsecondary education and training (without the need for developmental education).
 - Emphasis on the intermediate level Adult Education learner since this is the cohort of Adult Education students with the largest number of exits from the program
- Connect and maintain relationships with key state organizational workforce drivers/organizations, such as chambers of commerce, economic development councils, and key industries to Adult Education partners to ensure that the 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 support direct instruction and fund additional support services that ensure successful completion of curriculum and transition into the workforce.

Goal #4: Develop Lifelong Career Pathways Systems and Integrate 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 percent of our national workforce will be freelance.³⁸

The importance of having the right skills to succeed in today's and tomorrow's changing economy has enormous implications for our state's most underprepared adult learners and the systems, such as Adult Education, that serve them. In other 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 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 nonprofits 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, have largely identified four key drivers that the 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 need partnerships to enable the development of flexible and diverse pathways and programs, pointing to the value of integrated education and training, and the need for stronger prior learning assessments or other co-enrollment strategies;
- (3) the need to support adult learners through the re-skilling and upskilling process, knowing that lifelong learning will be the new norm; and
- 4) the need to support and integrate 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 ways.³⁹

To begin, what is meant by lifelong learning? All people, at every stage of their life, should have educational opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to fulfill their aspirations and contribute to their work and to their community.

Lifelong learning is about meeting the diverse and context-specific learning needs of various 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

³⁸ Shulz, A. & Gill, R. *Community Colleges and 21st Century Skills: Skills Panels to Assist Student Career Success*. 2014. www.newworldofwork.org.

³⁹ Prince, K., Saveri, A. & Swanson, J. *The Future of Learning: Redefining Readiness from the Inside Out*. 2017. KnowledgeWorks Foundation.

and technical training and literacy, and digital literacy all represent significant components of the lifelong learning process. In a lifelong learning context, an ideal (entire) education system is designed to facilitate lifelong learning and the creation of formal, non-formal, and informal learning opportunities for people of all ages.

Digital literacy and a skilled workforce are key to the state's sustainable economic development and stability. This strategic goal, in addition to recommending lifelong learning objectives, highlights the underlying need for the continued focus of Illinois Adult Education on digital literacy. The taskforce strongly recommends continued attention on infusing technology and integrate enabling technologies within the curriculum, as part of work-based learning settings, and throughout the classroom learning experience. This is a goal not for technology's sake but to ensure our adult learners have access to current technologies, training, and embedded skills development to apply and understand processes with smart machines and computer applications in order to compete in the labor market.

Goal #4 Objectives:

- Expand the quantity and enhance the quality of existing partnerships, and leverage those partnerships to extend services and resources that have proven effective in bridge programs or IETs to other levels of Adult Education (for 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 the Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework, 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 lifelong learning needs and build workplace skills.
 - Use teaching methodologies that reinforce classroom skills by incorporating technology
- 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 and Literacy Program significantly contributes to the state's economic well-being, with Adult Education as the foundation of career pathways. As such, the strategies outlined in this plan will guide the system's efforts over the next five years and beyond. Adult Education in Illinois has strong leadership at the system and local levels with leaders who 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 the state looks forward to an exciting future, this strategic plan will help drive the continued development of a comprehensive career pathways system that partners with businesses, workforce education, community-based organizations, civic leadership, and postsecondary institutions, all leading to further education, training, and/or employment resulting in family-supporting wages and a vibrant state economy.

APPENDIX

Members of the Statewide 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, Community 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 Nonprofit, Community-Based Organization

Stephen Richard Alderson,
Adult Education Director
Instituto Del Progreso Latino

Community College Adult Education Representative

Dr. Peggy Heinrich,
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

STAFF

Jennifer K. Foster, Deputy Director for Adult Education and Workforce, Illinois Community College Board & State Adult Education Director

Dr. Aime'e 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 for Academic Affairs, Illinois Community College Board

Matt Berry, Deputy Director for Legislative and External Affairs, Illinois Community College Board

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

Lavon Nelson, Senior Director for 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

FACILITATOR

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



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