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ABSTRACT

This document is intended to help adult education program managers throughout New York become oriented to the world of adult education, handle their new responsibilities as program managers, and obtain up-to-date information to assist them in making educational and administrative decisions. The following are among the topics discussed in the guide's 10 sections: (1) major issues and trends facing adult education programs at the beginning of the new millennium; (2) the need for adult education (suggested goals and roles of adult learners, New York State learning standards); (3) working with adult learners (learning styles, self-directed learning, multiple intelligences, principles of adult education); (4) staffing (characteristics of effective staff, hiring staff, staff retention, motivation, performance correction, professional development); (5) program design and delivery (a customer service philosophy, needs assessment, student retention, intake and orientation, support services, referrals, transition, learner assessment, learner retention); (6) collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships (linkages with other agencies); (7) program evaluation and accountability (summative and formative evaluation, comprehensive performance accountability systems, continuous improvement, compliance) (8) financial management (funding, budgeting, managing cash flow); (9) technology and distance learning (using technology to support administration, instruction, and distance learning); and (10) leadership (leaders' roles as visionaries, advocates, motivators, entrepreneurs, and communicators). (MN)

Guide for Managers of Adult Education Programs

The Hudson River Center for Program Development, in collaboration with the NYS Education Department, has developed a *Guide for Managers of Adult Education Programs*. This guide is an on-line document that will:

- help new program managers become oriented to the world of adult education.
- provide support to new program managers as they take on their new responsibilities.
- serve as an up-to-date resource for program managers making educational and administrative decisions.

The impetus for creating this guide is the large number of program managers retiring in the next few years, resulting in many new administrators starting at the same time. This guide will help smooth that transition.

The Hudson River Center is inviting the participation of those currently involved in adult education to continue providing feedback on this document. The content outline of the document summarizes each of the ten sections and can be accessed by clicking the link in the left column. After you read the guide, please send us your insights and suggestions using the feedback form. Our email address is: smithb@nyadulted.org.

Guide for Program Managers of Adult Education Programs

Content Outline

The Guide for Program Managers of Adult Education Programs is comprised of ten sections. The sections are:

I. **INTRODUCTION** provides a general overview of the guide and highlights major issues and trends that adult education programs face at the beginning of the new millenium. Issues highlighted include the diversity of learners, the Workforce Investment Act, the National Reporting System for Adult Education, staff recruitment and retention, and technology.

II. **THE NEED FOR ADULT EDUCATION** presents statistics documenting the need for adult education, as identified by the National and State Adult Literacy Surveys (NALS and SALS, respectively). The goals and roles of adult learners suggested in Equipped for the Future, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), and the New York State learning standards are also discussed. Finally, the section addresses the challenge posed by the Workforce Investment Act.

III. **WORKING WITH ADULT LEARNERS** discusses the importance of providing instruction that meets the needs and styles of adult learners. Topics include learning styles, self-directed learning, multiple intelligences, and principles of adult education.

IV. **STAFFING** notes the importance of the experience, quality, and skill of instructional staff. Characteristics of effective staff, hiring staff, staff retention, motivation, performance correction, and professional development are all explored.

V. **PROGRAM DESIGN AND DELIVERY** covers the issues that must be considered in developing or operating an adult education program. A customer service philosophy, assessment of needs, and program design are discussed. Program design includes student retention, intake and orientation, instruction, support services and referrals, transition, learner assessment, and learner retention.

VI. **COLLABORATION, COOPERATION, AND PARTNERSHIPS** emphasizes the creation of effective linkages with other agencies to provide more effective services to adult learners. The why and how of building a partnership are addressed.

VII. **PROGRAM EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY** discusses the increased emphasis on accountability in educational programs. Topics include summative and formative evaluation, comprehensive performance accountability system, National Reporting System for Adult Education, continuous improvement, and compliance.

VIII. **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT** provides an overview of funding, developing and managing a budget, managing cash flow and the financial system, and acquiring funding.

IX. **TECHNOLOGY AND DISTANCE LEARNING** enhance instruction and support participation of adult learners through non-traditional options. In addition to technology planning, this section explores using technology to support administration, instruction, and distance learning.

X. **LEADERSHIP** skills are highlighted in this section. Building and maintaining an educational program requires managers to adopt multiple roles: visionary, advocate, motivator, entrepreneur, and communicator. This section also discusses continuous improvement and maintaining balance.

Please use the list on the left to select the section you would like to review.

I. INTRODUCTION

Overview of Adult Education

Adult education is significantly different from K-12 education. First, education for adults is usually not mandatory. Nor is it a full-time endeavor since most adult learners are juggling competing demands, such as family and employment, to make time for achieving their educational goals. And, these goals are diverse, ranging from being able to read to a child to securing employment.

In New York State, program participants range from native-born to new immigrants, from English proficient to no English proficiency, and from trained to unskilled. For those with prior education, too often the experience was negative. To fully appreciate the complexity of adult education, consider the pressing need to move ahead combined with a great deal of life experiences.

The complexity doesn't stop there. Adult educators are working to serve and balance the needs of several masters: the learner, employers, public assistance agencies, and the State Education Department. Additionally, new government initiatives place pressure on adult education programs to produce measurable and substantial results in less time than before.

Challenges and Trends

Assessment and accountability are becoming more public and more pressing, particularly with the advent of welfare reform and workforce development efforts. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires each state to establish benchmarks for performance. The National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) will be implemented to collect data on Title 2 of WIA. Local Workforce Investment Boards will add to these expectations based on the needs of the local workforce.

In the current labor market, employers are hiring more people without basic literacy skills. This makes recruiting and retaining students difficult for education programs since students know they can earn a living at their current level of education. Furthermore, those students whose skills are so weak that they are currently unemployable have, not surprisingly, a great range of needs - needs that must be addressed to not only promote employability, but to actually allow learning to take place. For example, it may be more difficult to secure employment for those who struggle with substance abuse or for those with no employment experience whatsoever. Another group with a similar high level of need is the incarcerated population.

Other public policy decisions impact adult education just as heavily. As many legal immigrants lose eligibility for federal assistance due to immigration reform, adult educators feel pressure to focus on citizenship preparation. The current national valuing of family literacy, as evidenced by its inclusion in the Workforce Investment Act, the Reading Excellence Act, and the Head Start Act Amendments, prompts efforts to integrate such programming at the local level.

In addition to what might be termed "external" factors, professionals in adult education must also address issues that are within their programs. First, and as noted earlier, adult learners must juggle family responsibilities and work demands with educational aspirations. This leads to requests for adult education programs to operate outside of typical school or business hours. It is often difficult to find teachers interested in working evenings and weekends.

Attracting and retaining qualified staff is difficult at best. The limited funding available to support adult education, combined with the part-time nature of some teaching positions, limits staff member's access to adequate benefits, including professional development. This also limits participation in staff meetings, weakening program communication, planning, and evaluation. A tight labor market and upcoming teacher shortage will only lessen the availability of quality staff. Considering that students in New York State's adult education programs collectively speak over 100 different languages, the importance of having a large and varied pool of qualified instructors from which to pull is underscored.

Despite the diversity of adult education students, many of them do share memories of very negative experiences with the education system. Coupled with the pressing day-to-day problems they face, this negativity is a major challenge to adult education programs in retaining students long enough for them to develop the skills necessary for achieving their goals. According to Fellenz and Conti, as many as 60% of new students leave a program within the first six contact hours.[1]

The lure of technology - e.g., working with and learning from computers - can attract students. However, the promise of increased efficiency and effectiveness offered by new technology is contrasted with the challenges of acquiring funding to purchase the necessary equipment and related materials, of training students and staff, and of continuously upgrading the technology which becomes obsolete at an ever faster pace. Programs may need to overcome staff and, paradoxically, student fears about learning and using new technology.

Adult education programs have limited resources. Therefore, it is essential that these programs collaborate and network with a wide variety of community programs to ensure students get the services they need.

The key to facilitating a successful transition from the adult education program to next steps in a learner's life path is to maintain a clear focus on the individual learner's needs, current skills, and goals. Program planning and design should be based on an aggregate of these needs and goals. Recruitment and intake should quickly tap into these goals and help the learners see how this program will help them further their personal life plans. Instruction needs to be individually tailored and delivery must accommodate the learner's needs. Support services must be provided to help learners overcome barriers to attaining their educational goals.

The adult education system has gained credibility in the past several decades, and has become a recognized and valued component of the educational and workforce development systems. However, due to recent changes in focus resulting from welfare reform and the Workforce Investment Act, development of educational skills and abilities has become an outcome secondary to obtaining and retaining employment. Individuals enter the labor market without the skills needed to advance beyond entry-level employment. The challenge for program managers is to continue to advocate for the role of education in workforce development systems and at the local workforce investment boards to ensure that individuals gain the skills needed to move beyond entry-level employment.

The challenges growing out of workforce development efforts, welfare reform, and other factors previously detailed prompted the development of this guide, which will assist managers of adult education programs in the design of appropriate programs and development of problem-solving strategies.

II. THE NEED FOR ADULT EDUCATION

We must prepare people in what nobody knew yesterday, for what nobody knows yet, but for what they will find out tomorrow. Margaret Mead (taken from *Review of Research Integrated Learning* by **Castallo and White**)

The National Adult Literacy Survey of 1993 showed that the skills of more than 40% of all American adults are below the New Basic Skills benchmark (level 3 on the NALS 5-level scale).[1] The International Adult Literacy Survey (1995) confirmed these findings, placing the United States sixth out of seven industrialized countries.[2] (Another national survey is planned for 2002.) Mirroring these national statistics, adult educators in New York State (NYS) face a tremendous challenge:

- According to the 1994 NYS Adult Literacy Survey, approximately 25 percent of all learners served in adult basic education programs function below the sixth grade reading level. Sixty-nine percent of all learners in English for Speakers of Other Language programs function at the lowest two levels of English language proficiency.
- Over half of adult welfare recipients in NYS do not have a high school diploma or equivalent and more than 40 percent have limited literacy skills.[3]
- Almost 50,000 public assistance recipients in NYS have a disability and many of them are unable to obtain work due to disabilities resulting from abuse of alcohol or other drugs.
- Teen parents under age 20 must enroll in an approved program leading to a high school degree or the equivalent if they want to continue to access public assistance.[4]

As implied by the preceding list, the needs of learners in NYS are manifold. In fact, the learners themselves are tremendously diverse. They range from native-born to new immigrants, from English proficient to no English proficiency, from trained to unskilled, and from unemployed to employed. Within this diversity, however, overall learner goals can be distilled into four categories:

1. Access and orientation, including: physical and geographic orientation (reading maps and signs) and psychological and social orientation (knowing what is going on in the world, understanding institutions that impact on one's life, and getting needed information). This connects to typical adult learner goals of getting a job, helping children with schooling, and being an informed and capable citizen.
2. Voice, including all aspects of communication: written and oral communication skills, why and how to speak up so one can be heard, and speaking to people of authority in all parts of one's life.
3. Independent action, including the dual elements of independence and action, being able to: act and communicate for oneself, solve problems, make informed decisions, take actions on behalf of one's family or community, and achieve economic self-sufficiency.
4. Bridge to the future, including: how to be ready for change, continuing life-long learning, adjusting to technological change, and improving family circumstances.[5]

Equipped for the Future recognized the multiple roles of adults. In addition to being a learner, an adult is also a worker, family member, and community member. These multiple roles often compete for a learner's time and attention. In order to fulfill the demands of their multiple roles, adults must develop and continually improve their basic reading and writing, speaking and listening, and functional and workplace skills.

Efforts at the national and state levels have begun to define what skills are necessary to compete in a global economy and to fully function in an ever-changing society. The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) defined the core competencies an individual needs to succeed in today's marketplace. Industry-specific national skill standards moved beyond SCANS in defining necessary competencies. *Equipped for the Future* defined the skills adult learners need to be successful in all aspects of their lives.

In addition to meeting these skills, learners face the challenge of achieving certain academic standards. For example, the New York State

Education Department, in its mission to raise the knowledge, skill, and opportunity of all people in New York, defined learning standards. Intended for preschoolers through adult students, the standards address seven areas, including career development. The learning standards were specifically connected to adult education practice in the *Adult Education Resource Guide and Learning Standards* (AERG). The Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) supplement to AERG connects the learning standards to adult career and employment goals.

The WIA Challenge

Aside from the emerging emphasis on skill standards, the largest issue currently challenging adult education is welfare reform and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). *The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act* (AEFLA) is the new Title II of WIA. Title II implements a customer-oriented system requiring collaboration, coordination, and accountability at both the state and local levels to ensure the non-duplication of services and the demonstration of program effectiveness. WIA Title II focuses on providing education services to eligible individuals so they can:

- acquire the basic skills necessary to function in society as family members, workers, and citizens.
- continue their education through at least the completion of secondary school.
- participate in training that will enable them to become more employable, productive, and responsible citizens.

WIA requires extensive coordination and collaboration at the local and regional levels. It includes a comprehensive student accountability system with three core indicators: educational gain; placement in employment, retention, postsecondary education, and other education and training programs; and attainment of secondary credentials (GED).

III. WORKING WITH ADULT LEARNERS

To help adult learners develop their skills and achieve learning standards, practitioners must acknowledge the experiences adult learners bring to the educational setting. Some have had early negative education experiences and are hesitant to participate in a formal education program. Some are very self-directed about their learning, while others need a great deal of guidance and support. Adult learners, as with all students, possess a wide array of learning styles, skills, and natural abilities (multiple intelligences).

This diverse mix of learners in the classroom presents a formidable challenge to adult education teachers. It is an issue for program administrators as well, since students will leave if the instruction doesn't connect to their needs and styles.

Learning Styles

Much has been written about learning styles and these styles have been categorized in a number of ways. (One approach to understanding learning styles is presented below.) In dealing with learning styles, it is most important to remember that different students learn best from different approaches. Teachers who are unaware of learning styles will naturally teach from their own style, making learning difficult for students who have a different style. Conversely, teachers who attend to learning styles issues and vary the style they use in their instruction will have a more motivated and more successful group of students.

People generally have a mix of learning styles, with one or two predominating. Often there is a sequence to learning, such as hearing something first and then trying it out. Others may need to read something and then talk about what they've learned for the learning to really sink in.

One structure for understanding learning styles organizes learning into five categories:[1]

1. Visual learners like ideas presented in pictures and diagrams. Even their figures of speech are visual. They learn by watching and sometimes even by doodling.
2. Auditory learners like to listen and to have things explained orally.
3. Kinesthetic learners prefer to learn through hands-on experience. They move or use their bodies to solve problems. They are often involved in sports or other physical activities.
4. Print-oriented learners love to read. They pick up ideas from print quickly and easily remember what they read. They prefer books to movies and would rather read than be told something.
5. Group-interactive learners are most efficient in discussions or other activities that involve working with other people. They like to exchange ideas and understand things better after experiencing them as part of a group process.

Retention rates have been studied per style of instruction.[2] Lecture, reading, audiovisual presentation, and demonstration approaches all produced a less than 30% retention. Adding in a discussion group increased retention to 50%, providing opportunities to practice the learning increased it to 75%, and having learners teach others or put the learning immediately to use in a real-world setting resulted in a 90% retention rate.

Self-Directed Learning Matrix

Learners approach education from a variety of positions. Some come with a sense of direction and a focused set of goals. These learners often want to take charge of their own learning. Others come without a clear sense of direction and with no idea of how to go about learning. They are very dependent and plan to rely completely on the teacher. Many students fall somewhere in between.

The key to promoting effective self-directed learning is understanding each learner's natural place on the continuum between self-directed and dependent. Then, strategies can be developed to help learners gradually move closer toward the more self-directed pole. Developing skills of self-direction and initiative are critical life skills for success at work, in the family, and in the community.

Many learners need the assistance of the teacher or counselor to clarify their goals and to help them design a learning plan. However, some organizations or individual teachers take this too far and tell the students what they need to learn and how they can best learn it. Besides turning off many adult students, educators run the risk of missing out on critical goals for the student or missing out on helpful learning strategies - individual strengths and interests of which the students are often aware. Also, most adult learners will be more invested in learning if they take an active role in the process.

The teacher's natural style is a complicating factor. Some teachers are natural facilitators, allowing self-directed students to chart their own course but leaving more dependent students floundering. Other teachers are more directive and authoritative, providing needed support to dependent learners but quashing the initiative of the self-directed students. Teachers need to be aware of these styles and tendencies and learn how to adjust their styles to meet the diverse and evolving needs of their students.

Multiple Intelligences[3]

Howard Gardner developed a classification of multiple intelligences. He defined intelligence as an ability to solve problems or fashion products that are valued in one or more cultures. The two intelligences that instructional settings traditionally focus on are mathematical/logical abilities (use and appreciation of abstract relations; facility with numbers and logical thinking) and linguistic skills (understanding and using spoken and written language; descriptive, expressive and poetic language abilities). To these, he added:

- *interpersonal* - capacity to recognize and make distinctions among feelings, beliefs, and intentions
- *intrapersonal* - understanding the self and drawing on this to make decisions about viable courses of action; ability to distinguish one's feelings and to anticipate one's reactions to future courses of action
- *spatial* - perceiving and using visual or spatial information; transforming information into visual images
- *musical* - creating, communicating, and understanding meanings made out of sound; ability to deal with patterns of sound
- *body/kinesthetic* - using one's body to "create"; the ability to control or isolate parts of one's body; athletic, creative, fine and gross motor movements
- *naturalist* - ability to understand the natural world; to distinguish among, classify, and use features of the environment; also applies to general classifying and patterning abilities.

Gardner shifted the conversation from "How smart are you?" (e.g., IQ test) to "How are you smart?" (What are your strongest intelligences?). Each intelligence has its own unique characteristics, tools, and processes. Each represents a different way of thinking, solving problems, and learning. As with learning styles, no one has only one intelligence, but rather a combination of intelligences with some predominating over others. People learn best when the information is presented in a way that taps into their strongest intelligence. For example, in learning about angles, students can be asked to:

- make a list of all the angles they see in a classroom
- use their arms and elbows to make five different angles and then sketch them out
- form a group to talk about how angles are used in everyday speech (e.g., "I did a 360.")
- write a poem, song, or rap using words about angles.

Adult educators are as diverse a group as their students. Educators include those trained specifically for adult education, elementary and secondary teachers, tradespeople, craftspeople, health care professionals, politicians, and government workers. In addition to building in strategies for working with the diverse mix of learners each program services, adult education programs need to build in ways for teachers with such varied backgrounds to learn from each other and work together to provide the best education for their students.

Bringing It All Together

There are a number of principles that guide the development of effective adult education programs:[4]

1. Involve learners in program planning and implementation
2. Draw upon learners' experiences as a resource
3. Create a climate that encourages and supports learning
4. Foster a spirit of collaboration
5. Encourage self-directed learning
6. Use small group activities to enhance learning
7. Provide adequate support services

1. **Involve learners in program planning and implementation**

   In operating an adult education program, maintaining a clear focus on individual learners - their needs, current skills, and goals - is vital to success. Involving learners in program planning and design ensures an attentive focus on customer needs and expectations. The overall program design is based on an aggregate of these needs and goals. Learners should also be involved in on-going program assessment to see how well the actual program meets the intended goals.

   Instruction needs to be individually tailored to the learning styles, goals, and life situation of individual learners. In addition, support services have to be provided to assist learners in managing their specific life challenges so they can find the time to further their education. Adult education is not a "one-size-fits-all" proposition.

   Involving learners in program design and implementation is a way to demonstrate the program's respect for the adult learners. To buy into an adult education program, adult learners must feel a sense of both partnership and choice. Adult learners need to be active partners in the design and implementation of their educational program. They need to choose the standards or goals they will be working on, the pace at which they will work, and the schedule they can develop for their education. They need opportunities to be as self-directed as possible. While adult educators and counselors can offer guidance and advice, it is only the individual learner who can decide what s/he is willing to commit to.

   Many adult educators support this concept, but are unable to put it into practice. The diverse needs of learners, part-time nature of the job, and rapid turnover of students all make actively involving students in planning and implementing programs more difficult. To begin the process, consider inviting adult learners to sit on an advisory council or assist with orientation of new students.

2. **Draw upon learners' experiences as a resource**

   Another key to successful adult education programs is providing the learning in a context that makes sense to the learner. The skills and information they are learning should clearly relate to their individual needs, goals, and life experiences. Learners' life experiences can be used as examples in presenting academic instruction. Abstract concepts are better understood when placed in a familiar context.

   In addition, valuing learners' experiences and referring to them during class helps reinforce the underlying respect adult learners expect from the people with whom they interact. This furthers the sense of partnership presented earlier.

   Support this approach by using instructional materials and learning experiences that are based on students' lives/living environment. This helps make the learning more authentic. Materials that are adapted to different student populations are commercially available.

Teachers can build the actual life situations of students into lessons and learning activities.

One example of sharing a life situation[5] is to build a reading and writing activity around the topic of child health and safety for learners who are parents. Learners choose articles/booklets to read about child health and safety. They then summarize in writing what they have learned and present it to the class and/or have a small group discussion about how they can take this information back to their family life.

3. **Create a climate that encourages and supports learning**

The classroom and program environment should reflect mutual respect and trust as the foundation for all interactions. This needs to begin with recruitment and intake and continue through the instructional program and follow-up. Learners should feel better about themselves from participating in the program. They do not need to experience more letdowns and failure. This is not to say that learners should not be challenged academically or confronted when they exhibit disruptive behavior. A supportive climate means that all interactions are based on respect for the learner as an adult and trust in their capacity for learning and growth.

To help develop an effective and supportive learning environment, take into account individual learning styles and multiple intelligences when designing the instructional program, creating lesson plans and learning experiences, and counseling and advising students.

There are many other techniques to positively engage adult learners.[6] The general atmosphere of the program or classroom must be inviting. Adult learners must know that this learning experience will be different from their previous educational experiences as children or teenagers. The arrangement of the classroom can symbolically help change their perceptions about education. Setting up desks in a circle or in small groups, rather than traditional rows, can create a more relaxed and adult environment.

Other ways to make students feel at ease and motivated are to:

- post welcome signs
- implement a peer support system
- encourage the pursuit of small, attainable goals
- incorporate alternative, enjoyable ways of learning, such as field trips or computer-aided instruction
- pass out welcome packets
- arrange occasional social gatherings
- use a balance of instructional strategies, both group and individual
- regularly express genuine praise and encouragement.

Creating an atmosphere of openness and trust helps students talk about their problems. Occasionally, they may need one-on-one time with the teacher. To be ready for times of personal crisis, the teacher should build in extra time or arrange to have another teacher serve as a backup in the classroom. Adult educators can show their support by being willing to discuss learners' problems and ready to refer learners to appropriate resources and/or agencies.

Some type of reinforcement may be helpful, especially during the period when learners struggle to recognize, "What's in it for me?". Rewards should be for very specific accomplishments, such as meeting attendance requirements. Due to their tangibility, certificates are an example of a reward particularly meaningful to students.

It is important for all agencies involved with the adult learner - e.g., adult education program, local Job Service, Department of Social

Services (DSS), probation office - to communicate with one another. Inter-agency coordination and collaboration are essential for ensuring the most efficient provision of services. If, for example, a learner is mandated to attend an adult education class as a condition of probation, both the adult educator and the probation officer must be aware of the learner's expectations and goals.

While all of these elements are important in engaging the adult learners, the most important way to increase motivation is to respond to the learners' needs. This begins with a supportive intake process, which helps identify the individual adult learner's goals for starting or returning to an adult education program. Periodic interviews - couched in an informal, non-threatening way - can serve as an ongoing needs assessment to fine-tune the individual learning program.

The outcome or payoff of education must be worth the effort and cost to the "consumer." While adults undertake education for a variety of reasons and with a variety of goals in mind, they are most often focused on getting, retaining, and/or upgrading employment. For nearly all adult learners, the main motivators for learning are to increase their employability and/or to interact more fully with their children (especially around schoolwork) and their community.

Because of the unique characteristics of adult learners, their expectations and goals may not always fit neatly into the academic learning standards. (For more information about the learning standards, see the *Adult Education Resource Guide and Learning Standards.*) Educators and counselors need to help learners see how their goals and needs relate to learning standards. As part of balancing competing demands, adult learners may not choose to master all of the learning standards when they enter an education program. Instead, they may tackle one standard at this time, and then, later, enter another adult education program to tackle another standard.

The New York State Learning Standards clearly define the performance required of students at the elementary, intermediate, and commencement levels to fulfill adult roles as workers, parents, and community participants. The National Reporting System for Adult Education provides twelve literacy levels and indicators in English Language Arts, numeracy, and work skills.[7] Taken together, these performance indicators provide clear direction for what is required to function effectively in the 21st century. While these indicators provide clear, long-range goals for adult learners, they can be overwhelming and discouraging if taken all at once. Educators need to support adult learners in prioritizing and focusing on selected issues.

Integrated, contextualized learning recognizes that the learning standards do not need to be addressed in isolation. For example, as an ELA/vocabulary-building activity, a teacher in an ESOL class may ask class members to reflect on their personal interests. ESOL learners at the beginning level may be able to capture their thoughts by completing the sentence, "I like to . . .". More advanced students can be asked to write an essay about their interests. This combines the ELA and CDOS learning standards into one lesson.

4. **Foster a spirit of collaboration**

Each learner has important skills, experiences, and knowledge to share with the other learners and teachers. Often a well-informed peer can get a concept across to a learner who is not understanding the teacher's instruction. Teachers can pick up examples and contexts from engaged learners that help teach these skills to other students.

Learning to work together in the classroom is an important skill to bring to the workplace. More and more organizations are moving to a team-based environment, and the old model of students working independently in isolation from each other will not give them the skills they need to success in the work world.

Finally, collaboration emphasizes the mutual respect, trust, and partnership discussed earlier.

5. **Encourage self-directed learning**

While collaboration and partnership are important, it is equally important for learners to develop initiative, independence, and a sense of empowerment. Adult learners often know what they want to learn and are hesitant to join a program with a pre-set curriculum. Encouraging them to become more self-directed in achieving their individual goals helps motivate them and encourages them to continue attending the program. Instructional activities need to have a balance between small group, collaborative learning, teacher-led instruction, and self-directed learning.

Once students have begun the program, teachers can advise them on methods they can use to take active charge of their learning: from accessing the library and the Internet, to meeting in small study groups, to developing complex projects they can complete on their own.

6. **Use small group activities to enhance learning**

Small groups allow learners to take a more active role in their learning. It also promotes the collaboration noted earlier, providing increased opportunities for students to learn from and teach their peers. Most people learn best by applying abstract concepts in a concrete situation. Small group activities can provide a concrete context in which to apply (even if it is a simulation) new skills/knowledge.

Small groups can promote a more "learner-centered" environment than a large group setting. These activities provide peer support to the students and help soften the line between student and teacher. Small group learning also takes some of the strain off the teacher who is working with a very diverse class. While the small groups are interacting, the teacher can provide individual attention to those students most in need of support. Finally, small groups are closer to the team environment found in many companies, which helps prepare students for the workworld.

7. **Provide adequate support services**

Given the many challenges most adult learners face, they are generally not able to devote a large amount of time to their education program. These challenges could include the need for transportation, childcare, employment, health services, mental health services, housing/shelter, nutrition, education, etc. By providing support services (directly or through referrals), an education program can help the students resolve or ameliorate some of these challenges, allowing more time for education.

IV. STAFFING

The key to any effective adult education program is the quality of the staff, and, in particular, the skills and commitment of the instructional staff. This guide will focus on teachers, although many of the same issues apply to all program staff.

Teachers' roles vary greatly from program to program and are changing even more due to WIA, the new standards, and other external factors. In addition to providing instruction, teachers may function as counselors, helping students deal with needs they have outside the classroom and/or guiding them in their job search. Teachers might provide referrals to other services and act as caseworkers coordinating and following up on these referrals. Teachers in programs located in a one-stop environment focus primarily on classroom issues, with other specialists available to address the other needs of students. But, even in this context, teachers spend the most time with learners and, therefore, are most aware of the learners' diverse needs. Teachers usually develop the strongest relationship with learners and are often in the best position to successfully offer guidance and support.

Many teachers are part-time and paid on an hourly basis. Programs need to build in time for teachers to work with learners outside of the core schedule and to make and follow-up on referrals. Given the critical role teachers play, programs need to plan for teachers to have time for staff meetings and professional development activities. With the increased emphasis on accountability, teachers also need time to document student progress.

Characteristics of Effective Staff

Characteristics of effective adult education teachers include being:

- enthusiastic about learning and teaching
- well-grounded in effective teaching and assessment methods
- thoroughly familiar with the principles of adult education and the characteristics of adult learners
- flexible enough to teach to multiple learning styles and intelligences
- creative enough to contextualize learning, tapping into students' life experiences
- learner-centered, connecting learning to students' individual goals and expectations
- good listeners and sensitive to cultural diversity issues.

In addition, teachers employed by school districts or BOCES must have an adult education teaching certificate issued by the New York State Education Department. To obtain an adult education teaching certificate, individuals must submit an application that documents specific requirements.

In addition to having expertise in their specific area, counselors, job developers, volunteers, office staff and administrators should have many of the characteristics listed above for teachers. They should be:

- enthusiastic about adults developing academic skills
- familiar with the principles of adult education and the characteristics of adult learners
- flexible enough to work with the varied needs and styles of adult learners
- learner-centered, focusing their work on students' individual goals and expectations
- good listeners and sensitive to cultural diversity issues.

Effective managers and administrators are also key to the program's success. In addition to the qualities listed above, program managers need to be:

- familiar with the rules and regulations related to the operation and funding of adult education programs
- effective leaders: able to inspire, support, and promote the development of the staff
- well organized and good managers of resources
- technologically literate
- skilled in financial management.

Hiring staff

Procedures for recruiting and hiring staff vary from program to program. It is important to follow up-to-date and effective personnel policies and practices. When recruiting for staff, programs must be clear and realistic about the work environment, demands of the job, pay and benefits, advancement opportunities, and expectations. When possible, it is preferable to hire staff who have experience with the cultural background of the majority of the learners.

The employment interview is the first step in hiring effective staff. Program managers should conduct the interview, although they may want to include other staff in the process as well. It can also be helpful to have some experienced adult learners in the interview. Interviewers from a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives can help ensure the selection of the most qualified and appropriate candidates.

In conducting an interview with an array of interviewers, it is important to prepare them in advance. Legal issues related to appropriate interview questions should be reviewed with all interviewers. The criteria for selecting the best candidate should also be discussed and agreed upon in advance. Then, questions should be developed to help assess each candidate against the criteria. Strive for open-ended questions as opposed to questions that can be answered by a simple "yes" or "no".

Instead of asking hypothetical questions, it may be useful to ask candidates to describe actual experiences they have had that demonstrate the qualities the program is looking for in an employee.

Instead of :	Ask this:
How would you handle a situation in which three students all need your attention at once?	Please describe a situation in which several people were demanding your attention at the same time. How did you handle it?

Be sure to leave time in the interview for the candidate to ask questions. Offer to take candidates on a tour of the facility and/or an opportunity to sit in on a learning activity or class. Each candidate should be informed of the hiring timetable. Ask each candidate for a list of professional references and call these references prior to making a final selection. Listen carefully to the input from each of the interviewers and try to reach consensus among the interviewers as to the best candidate. When the group cannot reach consensus, the program manager will need to make the final selection.

Staff Retention

Once a competent staff team has been hired, the program manager needs to focus on retention. To want to stay, people need to be satisfied with the work they do each day, their relationship with the people with whom they regularly interact, and the way they are treated by the program's management. The program manager plays a key role in all three elements of job satisfaction.

If, at the time of the job interview, candidates are given an accurate picture of their job and the work environment, they are more likely to make a good decision about how well they will like the job. Workers must also feel they can meet expectations. Proper qualifications; regular, on-going professional development activities; adequate supervision and support; and realistic expectations are essential ingredients to success on the job.

The program manager can set the tone for positive work relationships among co-workers, learners, administrators, and others involved in the program. This can be accomplished by:

- building in time for staff to meet and collaborate
- providing adequate time for staff to interact with learners
- providing opportunities to meet with others who are involved with the learners outside of the educational activities.

The program manager, as leader of the staff, can work to promote cooperation and collaboration by building a sense of commitment to the mission, developing trust among the staff, promoting open communication, and including staff in important program decisions.

Finally, staff want to feel recognized and appreciated for the work they do, supported in areas in which they are having difficulty, and treated fairly in terms of workload, scheduling, compensation, and advancement. Staff perceptions are as important as the actual facts. Program managers need to maintain frequent and open communication with staff to remain aware of staff members' concerns, perceptions, and needs.

Motivation

Staff retention also involves motivation. A major challenge for a program manager is to delegate enough responsibility and authority to the staff to allow them to do their best work, but not overload them. This can occur by understanding individual needs, values, and interests.

Each person has a different view of what is most important to him or her at work. Those who are primarily motivated by money will be disappointed by most programs' inability to pay staff more for outstanding performance. Fortunately, there are many other powerful motivators available to the program manager who understands his/her staff.

Most people value sincere, positive feedback about specific performance areas. It should be given as often as prudent. Feedback dispensed too frequently or about trivial matters can result in employees feeling patronized. Customize feedback to the individual. If Employee A is a private person, provide feedback in a one-to-one session. Employee B likes a crowd, so acknowledge his/her work in public, such as during a staff meeting.

An opportunity to do meaningful, valuable work and to accomplish positive outcomes motivates many people, particularly those in the education field. The nature of the work itself serves as a motivator. However, the motivation becomes even stronger when staff members receive positive feedback on the value of their work and the quality of their outcomes from their supervisor.

Many managers are taught to catch staff mistakes quickly. Too often, this means managers are not acknowledging the positive, high quality work the staff is producing. Managers need to catch their employees doing things well and let them know regularly that they are appreciated.

The ability to learn and grow in a job is also important to many people. Professional development, discussed below, can be a good motivator as well as a strategy for improving the quality of the program.

Motivating others rests with the ability to understand each person's individual needs, values, and interests. Careful observation of the work performed and regular communication with the worker will reveal his/her workstyle. Workstyles are a delicate mix of the worker's environment, education, upbringing, personality, experiences, temperament, and learning style. At the risk of gross oversimplification, some contrasting workstyles are presented below.

Some people . . .	While others . . .

. . . savor the challenge in a job and are eager to take on expanded responsibilities. They work harder under pressure.	. . . prefer the regular, steady nature of a job. They do their best work when they are not overly stressed.
. . . like a lot of contact with their supervisor and colleagues. Interpersonal interaction is a positive motivator for them.	. . . like to be left alone to do their job as much as possible. Delegation and independence are key motivators for them.
. . . like to be given a lot of detail about what needs to be done.	. . . want to be given the big picture so they can fill in the details on how to achieve the goals.

It is important for program managers to be flexible and to focus on ends, not means. They need to set goals for *what* people should be able to produce. *How* to produce these outcomes is left to the staff. To be effective motivators, program managers must adapt their styles to fit the varied and individual styles of their staff, just as effective teachers must adapt their styles to fit the varied learning styles of students.

Performance Correction

While positive motivation and feedback are essential, they are not always enough to get the best performance from staff. When staff members do not know what is expected of them or do not understand the standards, they are unlikely to perform well. Thus, an important element for promoting effective performance is articulating clear performance expectations and ensuring that staff have the same understanding of these standards as does the program manager.

Performance standards need to be stated in clear, behavioral language. They should describe the desired behavior in a way that can be accurately measured. Performance standards should focus on actions, not on internal states (such as attitude or effort).

Even when expectations are clearly stated and understood, some staff will not be capable of meeting these standards. They may need additional training or individual coaching. Some staff may understand the standards, but may be unaware that they are not meeting the standards; they need corrective feedback. Some staff may not be motivated to do a good job; they need corrective feedback and renewed efforts at motivation. Again, communication is the key skill for the program manager.

Providing corrective feedback can be challenging. People are often defensive when they hear negative comments about their performance. They may react angrily, deny the feedback, or become sullen and give up trying to do a good job. Many managers avoid giving corrective feedback until the situation becomes intolerable; at which point, there is too much to say at once.

Corrective feedback must be given in a timely manner, soon after the inappropriate behavior is observed. The feedback should focus on the behavior, not the person who performed the behavior (this takes some of the "sting" out of the feedback). It should focus on positive change, not on blaming the person for making a mistake (this moves the person towards corrective actions). The feedback should include a statement describing the behavior that was observed, how it differs from the performance standard, and what the negative impact is of the behavior.

Once the feedback is delivered, the recipient needs an opportunity to react. S/he may try to come up with excuses or argue about the feedback. The manager's job here is to listen and be supportive of the person, while continuing to focus on the need for a change in behavior. Once the person has finished venting, apologizing, or explaining, the manager needs to shift the conversation to what kind of performance is desired and what has to happen to enable the person to meet this standard.

If the corrective feedback process is handled well, it can turn around a poorly performing employee. If it is avoided, delayed, or handled punitively, the situation often spirals into worse performance.

Professional Development

As noted above, professional development is one of the important strategies in maintaining effective performance and in building job satisfaction. Professional development can help set high standards for the program by focusing staff on the essential qualities of an effective adult education program and giving them the skills and tools they need to meet these standards. Many professional development activities are carried out through the ten regional Staff Development Consortia.

Currently, New York State adult educators are required to participate in a minimum of five and one-half hours of professional development each year. As we near the implementation of the GED 2002, however, additional professional development is strongly encouraged to ensure that adult educators are adequately prepared to help adult learners meet their individual goals, the New York State standards, and the requirements for the GED 2002.

The program manager needs to actively promote and support professional development activities of staff. Staff need paid time to participate in staff development activities and encouragement to do further professional development on their own. They need time to apply the new skills and strategies they learn, develop new lesson plans, and design new learning experiences.

Staff who are constantly sharpening their skills and staying up-to-date on the latest strategies and technology will be more effective in, and satisfied with, their work as well as more valuable to the program.

V. PROGRAM DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Adult education programs vary tremendously across New York State. Instruction is offered in one-on-one settings at various community locations; in classrooms at BOCES, school districts, community colleges, community-based organizations, correctional facilities, and migrant camps; and through distance learning.

Some locations operate full-time and provide a full array of programs and services including academic instruction, vocational training, job readiness training, and support services such as career counseling and child care. Other locations operate part-time and provide academic instruction alone.

With the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act, all program providers are required to connect to their respective local workforce investment boards. Regardless of the setting and program offerings, the common denominator is a focus on the learner and on continuous improvement.

A Customer Service Philosophy

Whether a new adult education program is being designed or an existing program is seeking to make improvements, a customer service orientation must drive programmatic decisions. There are many customers of an adult education program: learners, partner agencies, and funders. Each has similar and sometimes competing expectations. Balancing these interests is essential for the success of the adult education program.

Learners as Customers

Programs that focus on learners as customers are better able to design their programs to learner needs and interests. This will result in more motivated learners and more relevant programs. It will also increase the likelihood of success in attracting, retaining, and succeeding with learners.

Partners as Customers

Partners, such as collaborating and referral agencies, are other key customers to consider when designing or redesigning the program. These customers include:

schools	local workforce investment boards
employers	family literacy providers
libraries	local departments of labor and social services
the justice system	post-secondary institutions

These agencies may provide learners with support services necessary to ensure success, offer complementing programs and services not available at the primary agency, or simply serve as a source of referrals. Being responsive to the needs of these customers will assist the program in gaining the community support needed for program success. (See Section 6: Collaboration, Cooperation, and Partnerships for more information about working with the broader community.)

Funders as Customers

The funding agency designates specific program activities, program outcomes, and participant outcomes that must be achieved to receive continued funding. Emphasis is on ensuring accountability (discussed in Section 7: Program Evaluation and Accountability).

Assessment of Needs

The basis of design or redesign must begin with a clear understanding of customer needs. This data will drive the program-planning, decision-making process.

In considering the needs, expectations, and requirements of learners, two levels of data should be analyzed: the community as a whole and the specific learner's. Community data will impact decisions concerning program offerings and target populations. Data may include:

- adults without a high school diploma or equivalent
- non-English speaking adults with degrees
- non-English speaking adults without formal education
- future growth occupations in the area
- individuals who did not complete high school
- TANF recipients.

Some of these data can be accessed through public records, surveys, and federal statistics, such as the census.

Once these background data are collected and analyzed, the next step is to talk with potential or actual adult learners to find out their needs, hopes, and expectations. Questions can focus on:

- life/career goals
- barriers to meeting these goals and how education can help
- learning priorities
- ability to physically get to an education program on a regular basis
- other demands on their schedules
- how much time can be put into learning outside of class time
- access to the Internet
- hopes about education: what would excite them?
- fears about education: what would turn them off?
- past educational experiences.

The third level of data that will help guide design or redesign efforts should be collected from other service providers. These service providers may become future partners, collaborators, or referral sources. The data collected through this effort should help to determine what programs and services are available and where gaps exist (services are not available in a particular community or not available at all).

Finally, individual agencies should also consider agency strengths, weaknesses, and gaps. Existing agencies may survey current and former students to assess learner perceptions of the agency. This information will be useful during the recruitment phase of program design and delivery.

Once the data have been collected, it should be aggregated. This information will be critical for the program design phase.

Program Design

Program design is an opportunity for program staff and administrators to review the aggregate data and set program goals and objectives that address the most critical community needs for adult education. Goals should be broad statements of desired, long-range outcomes. Objectives are more specific, measurable statements of short-term, desired outcomes. Goals can stretch over a three- to five-year period. Objectives are generally set for a year or less and will form the basis for the program's on-going assessment.

The design or redesign of an educational program includes seven key functions, all of which are described below:

1. student recruitment
2. intake and orientation
3. instruction
4. support services/referrals
5. transition
6. learner assessment
7. learner retention.

The agency's design or redesign team should consider the role of the agency, the role of partner agencies, and the role of the community in each of these functions. In designing the program, it is often very useful to collaborate with other agencies in the community to avoid duplication or gaps in service. If there are agencies providing the support services needed by the learners, a referral mechanism can be developed to connect the learners with the existing services, rather than replicating the services. Community agencies already working with the potential learners can serve as recruitment feeders for the educational program, limiting the need for extensive recruitment efforts.

In addition, program administrators and staff need to understand the regulatory requirements under which they must operate before they begin designing the program. (See links listed under Resources at the end of this section to access the latest state and federal rules and regulations.) Staff should also be fully aware of and able to utilize best practices in their design. (Some resources for researching best practices are also listed at the end of this section.) Finally, budget considerations will set parameters for the organization as to how extensive an educational program it can develop.

The program design or redesign should be sufficiently flexible to allow for easy adaptation as needed. In addition, the program design should include appropriate professional development for program staff (see previous section) and mechanisms for continuous improvement (see discussion of learner assessment later in this section and of program assessment in Section 7: Program Effectiveness and Accountability).

1. **Student Recruitment**

During the assessment phase of the program design process, learner needs are identified. In the recruitment phase, these needs are converted to answer the complex question "What's in it for me?". A program that can provide a meaningful and legitimate answer easily attracts enough eligible students to maintain program operation.

The first step in the recruitment process is identifying what the program has to offer: services, the method in which they are provided, physical location, the nature of the staff, resources available, etc. The next step is to show how these elements address the needs, wants, goals, and expectations of individual customers. Be sure to take into account the life situation of the customers, the assets they bring to education, barriers they face, and their language, culture, and values.

Remember, the recruitment message has to quickly and convincingly answer "What's in it for me?" for each potential adult learner. It is important to be realistic and not promise more than can be delivered. This tactic will only bring a lot of students to the door who will quickly leave when their needs are not being met as promised. This will result in a great deal of negative advertising. It is important to recognize that word-of-mouth advertising is very effective in disseminating negative or positive messages. Keep in mind learners' concerns and needs as well as their goals: fear of failure, lack of easy access, need for transportation, childcare and/or flexible schedules, etc. The message should be positive, supportive, and inviting.

Recruiting can be addressed in several ways. Marketing professionals, teachers, counselors, learners, or members of the advisory board can conduct formal advertising and recruitment. The easiest way to recruit students is to have them referred by an agency that is already providing other services to them. Look for other natural partners in the community, such as previous program participants, K-12 school staff (who can reach parents in need of educational services), religious organizations, cultural programs, and employers.

There are many other ways to get the word out about the program. Program representatives can attend important community events and speak at churches, neighborhood/cultural centers, community gatherings, and meetings of clubs and other organizations. Programs may also conduct an occasional open house for community members, community leaders, and staff of other agencies. Graduation ceremonies are a nice way of recognizing the achievements of the learners as well as promoting the program.

The media may also be used. Remember that many of the potential customers cannot read well, so do not rely on print alone. Try to access radio and television, in addition to newspapers. Personal appearances can be as effective as printed flyers and brochures. Also keep in mind that some potential customers cannot understand English, so prepare materials in other languages. Media can be used by:

- sending out periodic press releases announcing new offerings and reporting on program success.
- inviting reporters to visit the program to talk to the learners for "human interest" stories.
- tapping into media coverage of related public policy initiatives, such as welfare reform, changes in immigration law, etc. Show how the program is helping address client needs and/or helping that initiative move forward.
- creating media image. Flyers, posters, and brochures can be developed for distribution in community agencies, neighborhood shops, and cultural centers frequented by potential participants. Taped video or audio presentations can be distributed as well.

The above activities will help bring potential participants to the door. But, recruitment does not stop here. It moves to participants registering and attending. Take time to meet with individual learners; discuss their individual goals, expectations and needs; and show them how the program can help them achieve their goals (remember to be optimistic and realistic). Take them on a tour of the program and encourage them to sit in on a beginning class before making a final decision. Another option is for current learners to meet with prospective students over coffee or to take them on a tour. Ask what services are needed to support their participation and make arrangements for appropriate resources or referrals.

It is important to develop, implement, and continually reassess a systematic recruitment program. Savvy companies do not wait until their product or service is not doing well to assess their marketing efforts. Additional information about recruitment and marketing can be found in *Social Marketing: A "How To" Manual* (see listing in Resources section).

2. **Intake and Orientation**

Intake and orientation begin during the recruitment process. From the beginning, it is important to develop a positive relationship with the new learner, helping reduce anxiety and promote a motivated attitude.

The reception area and intake/registration process should be welcoming and comfortable. Paperwork should be kept to a minimum and as unobtrusive as possible. Ask only for critical information at this time: name, contact information, anything needed for establishing eligibility, and information to set some initial goals. Any screening that needs to take place for a learning disability can be scheduled at this time. Waiting time should be limited: interacting with customers should take top priority.

The intake process should pick up where recruitment left off in terms of refining learner goals and needs and connecting them to the individual learning program. Whenever possible, the person who first met with the learner during the recruitment process should handle intake so the learner does not have to repeat his/her life story. Initial assessments should be as limited as possible - just get basic information to establish the initial learning program. If extensive pre-testing is needed to establish baseline data for assessments, try to fold some of this into the opening days of class, so the learner's first experience with the program is not a long time sitting with paper and pencil. (If the intake process is onerous for the learner, they probably will not return.)

Orientation should take place as quickly after intake as possible. It is important that learners feel valued and appreciated, not shuffled off into limbo. Orientation should include:

- the school schedule
- an explanation of services the program staff can offer as well as limits on those services
- what to do with questions and concerns
- expectations in terms of homework
- likely timeline for completion of a program
- a tour of the facility
- introductions to key staff
- phone numbers for contacting program staff
- program rules or regulations regarding lateness, absence, and other student-related issues.

3. **Instruction**

Instruction is the heart of the adult education program. Instructional services can include work in traditional classroom settings, self-paced learning with a workbook or computer, one-on-one tutoring (with staff, volunteers, or other learners), individual work with a mentor, on-the-job learning, and distance learning via the Internet. In each of these contexts, the responsibilities of the instructor will vary greatly.

In some programs, teachers only have classroom teaching responsibilities (including lesson plan preparation and correcting student work). In other programs, teachers also provide one-on-one assistance outside of class time. Teachers can be responsible for coordinating volunteer tutors and mentors, doing career counseling with learners, coordinating and monitoring referrals to other services, and handling recruitment, intake and assessment. Teachers need time outside of student-contact time in which to handle these additional responsibilities. Staffing design will depend a great deal on the resources available to the program and the nature of the teaching staff.

There are different types of adult education programs, each focusing on different instructional areas. The three most common areas in adult education are:

- ABE - Adult Basic Education (reading levels 0 - 8)
- GED - Preparation for the Tests of General Educational Development leading to a high school equivalency (HSE) diploma (reading levels 9 - 12+)
- ESOL - English for Speakers of Other Languages

Some programs also offer life skills, family literacy (involving both parents and children in intergenerational activities), occupational education, and training for specific careers. Successful adult education programs design their instruction to address the needs of the adult learners they will be serving and to align with adult education learning principles (noted in Section 3: Working With Adult Learners). Instructional materials, classrooms, and other learning environments need to be designed with these principles in mind as well. It is crucial that instructors clearly understand the difference between teaching children and adults.

Learners should feel welcomed and respected as adults; feel that their cultural background is appreciated; see the connections between their life situation, their goals, and the educational program; and have confidence that the negative experiences of their previous schooling will not be repeated in this program. Books and other learning resources need to be appropriate to the culture and context of adult learners.

Instructional programs for adults need to be scheduled with the needs of the learners in mind. Since many adults work and/or have children, classes may need to be in the evenings, in early mornings, on weekends, or over lunch. Classes held on-site at work may be more convenient for adult learners. Besides the time of day when classes are held, the whole concept of designing and scheduling an adult education program is very different from a K-12 approach. Many adults attend for a short time to achieve a specific goal or milestone and then stop for awhile. Learners may set their initial goal as mastering the math component of the GED. Once that goal is reached, they may stop coming and later return for another section. Other learners may sign on for the whole program in one course.

Adult education programs need to design their instructional programs with outcomes in mind. Adult learners are often in a hurry to complete their education. They need to know *what* they are learning, *why* they are learning it, and *how* they are going to use it. Students can be valuable partners in the learning process - from setting objectives to assessing how they best learn and assessing their actual performance.

The curriculum should be aligned to standards - the NYS Learning Standards (see the *Adult Education Resource Guide and Learning Standards*), the NRS benchmark standards, and the learning standards outlined in *Equipped for the Future*. Periodic individual assessments based on these standards offer teachers and learners the opportunity to reflect on what has been learned and what more remains to be accomplished.

Appropriate placement is essential to delivering quality educational services. Students should be informally assessed at intake. There is no reason for paper and pencil tests at this point. More formal assessments can take place periodically as the learners become more comfortable in the program.

Once assessed, students can be placed in the most appropriate program - one that will build on their current skills, provide appropriate challenges to them, and ensure they leave with the set of skills they need to succeed. In the classroom, team-oriented projects, cooperative learning, and using more advanced students in one-on-on situations to help those with less skills master a lesson all address the challenge of diverse abilities.

4. **Support Services/Referrals**

Adult learners often have a great range of needs that become barriers to learning. These range from lack of transportation, childcare, and funds for educational supplies to serious health or addiction problems, homelessness, or severe emotional problems. Some educational programs are able to offer direct counseling and other support services to respond to these needs. Others respond by providing information, assisting with referrals, and advocating for learners. Educational programs may also offer training on career development, life skills, and employment readiness.

As noted earlier, the welfare reform process and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) have created additional pressures for many adult learners. WIA, with its emphasis on partnerships, also brings new resources to help adult education programs meet many of the non-educational needs of learners. This allows education programs to focus on their specialty - adult education. Section 6: Collaboration, Cooperation, and Partnership explores partnering as a way to help learners address the full range of their needs.

All adult literacy programs are required to make individual and group counseling available to enrolled adult learners. Counseling deals with feelings and attitudes as well as information and skills. Counseling needs to be handled carefully, with great sensitivity and confidentiality. Counseling is not giving advice or guidance, but is drawing out thoughts and feelings from the learner. Certain aspects of counseling are best provided by counseling professionals.

Educational counseling is not therapeutic counseling. Educational counseling focuses primarily on helping learners identify and understand their learning needs and design a program to best meet these needs. Generally, this takes place initially in the intake session when the learner's background and skills are discussed and an educational plan of action is developed. In this session, other problem areas or needs are often identified and appropriate referrals can be offered.

The intake session should be updated periodically through brief individual counseling sessions to explore the learner's progress, update his/her goals, and identify any emerging concerns. In later sessions, information on finding employment, or accessing community resources such as libraries and health services can be offered to learners. Life skills as problem solving, communication, parenting skills, financial management, etc. can also be addressed during these counseling sessions.

Carefully managed referrals often make the difference as to whether adult learners are successful in meeting their needs. The teacher or counselor making the referral can call ahead to alert the agency that a client will be coming in, and, without violating confidentiality, summarize the nature of the concern. It is important to follow up with the learner and/or the agency to be sure the learner followed through on the referral and that his/her needs were met. In some cases, a learner may be accessing the services of several agencies. If one of those agencies provides case management services, that agency can handle the coordination of the referrals. If none of the agencies offer this service, the adult education program, in which the learner is a regular participant, may want to take on the case management function to increase the learner's likelihood of success.

Teachers often have limited time to make and receive phone calls. If a program does not have designated counseling staff, the program manager may be in the best position to develop linkages with other agencies, share this information with the teaching staff, and assist in the case management function.

In addition to the more formal counseling described above, a key support service is to provide a caring, supportive environment for all learners in which their abilities, accomplishments, needs, and differences are respected.

5. Transition

Adult learners are generally in transition - from home/public assistance to work; from incarceration to independence; from no career direction to a career focus. Teachers, counselors, and managers need to be sensitive to learners' needs during times of transition. They will often require additional personal support to help plan for and manage the changes. They may also need to be connected with support services related to their new environment. Helping them connect to new supports will promote their successful transition.

6. Learner Assessment

Assessment of learner skills, abilities, and knowledge is another factor in successful education programs. The assessment process begins at intake to help design the individual learning program and to place the student at the correct starting point. Ongoing assessment measures learner progress and pinpoints areas in need of additional attention. Learner assessments also inform teachers and program managers of the areas in which they are doing well and areas in which they need to develop more effective strategies.

Assessment can serve as a motivator for both students and staff. Learners need to see that they are making regular progress. Structured assessments are a good way to document this progress. The assessment process can reinforce learning since it requires learners to apply the skills they have been taught. Positive feedback gained through assessment further promotes learning by reinforcing the motivation to learn. Likewise, staff stay more motivated when they see they are being effective.

Finally, assessment can help guide the overall program design and answer concerns about program accountability. Positive assessments can support requests for additional funding. (These topics are addressed in more detail in Sections 7 and 8.)

The assessment process need not be formal, foreboding, or complex. In fact, a complex or threatening intake assessment is a major factor in why students drop out at the start of programs. (Sixty percent of learners who will drop out make that decision in the first six hours.) Many adult learners are students who have failed standardized tests in the traditional elementary and secondary educational systems. Being asked to take a similar test at the start of the program can remind them of their previous failure and sap their motivation to give education another try.

An initial assessment can be as simple as having a conversation with a learner who wants to improve English language skills. A discussion about mathematics can also tell a teacher much about the learner's level of math skill. For students with very limited skills and a limited motivation to participate in an educational program, it may be best to defer more formal assessments until after the student has developed a stronger commitment to the program.

At some point early on in the program, the learner's skill level needs to be documented to establish a baseline against which progress can be made. The traditional way to do this is to give norm-referenced or criterion-referenced standardized tests.[1]

Norm-referenced tests compare an individual's performance to the performance of groups of people and shows whether a student knows more or less than other people in this group. Scores are presented in terms of percentiles or grade levels. The General Education Development test (GED) is an example of this kind of test.

Criterion-referenced measures evaluate student performance against skills they are expected to achieve. Their performance is assessed against specific criteria, such as skills needed to master a specific job, specific life skills, etc. The Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is an example of a standardized criterion-referenced assessment. Programs can also develop their own criterion-based assessments focusing on established standards and using teacher observance of learner performance of a task as the means to document competency. This avoids the negative associations with paper and pencil tests and can be a more authentic assessment than standardized tests.

During the course of the program, there are many forms of assessment that can be used as alternatives to the more traditional standardized test. These include the performance-based assessment noted above in which learners are observed on the job or in the classroom performing a specific task. Their performance is measured against a set of criteria developed to define competency in the task. Rubrics are often used to define the criteria. Another version of this is an end-product assessment in which the learner's work is assessed after it is completed. This can involve an on-going portfolio development and assessment or be a final project assessment.

These alternative assessments can measure several different standards at once. A student presentation on a science project can measure competency in the area of scientific knowledge, scientific processes, English language arts skills, public speaking skills, and organizational skills. Assessments can be worked into the educational process, further reducing learner anxiety about testing. Finally, the form of assessment should take into account the individual learner's learning style and predominant intelligences. Some learners prefer written assessments, while others prefer behavior-based assessments.

Some criteria for effective alternative assessments are that they provide information on:

- learner achievement that is useful to the learner and the teacher throughout the instructional process
- learner capabilities that is credible to employers, educational institutions, and funders
- overall program effectiveness and areas needing improvement.[2]

7. **Learner Retention**

There are many barriers to successful completion of an adult education program including other demands on learner time (family and work), serious unmet needs (housing, health, mental health), apprehension related to formal learning, and negative peer pressure. As a result, adult education programs suffer high drop-out rates. Program managers need to design and manage their programs carefully to promote student retention and successful completion.

Careful design starts with the recruitment, intake, and orientation process. Recruitment must target real, priority needs of learners while helping overcome their anxiety about formal education. Promises must be realistic. The intake process and first days of instruction are when the majority of dropouts occur. Intake needs to be user friendly, not cold and overwhelming.

Intake staff, from the receptionist to the counselor, must be welcoming, supportive and helpful. They need to listen to the learner and let the learner know the staff are there to help. Learners need to quickly understand that the educational program will be designed with their needs, goals, and expectations in mind, and that the schedule is flexible and responsive to their individual situation. Initial assessments should be non-threatening, brief, and presented to the learner as a way to help design the appropriate program for them, not as a test to see how smart they are.

The instructional program needs to be geared to the individual styles of the learners and follow the key principles of adult education. Teachers, counselors, and managers should regularly monitor learner satisfaction with the educational program, related support services, communication, and complaint resolution. Early problems that are not addressed can quickly expand and result in learners leaving the program. Many adult learners with limited communication skills will not bring their concerns to staff. Therefore, it is important to monitor how learners are feeling about the program and to quickly identify and resolve areas of concern.

One other important tool for promoting overall student retention is to conduct exit interviews with all students when they leave the program. Sometimes learners will be more forthcoming with negative feedback once they know they are leaving. Previously unidentified issues may be brought up, giving the program an opportunity to make corrections for current and future students.

VI. COLLABORATION, COOPERATION, AND PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction

As noted earlier, adult learners often require a variety of services, typically beyond the scope of most adult education programs, to overcome barriers to full participation in the education program. In addition, many programs have difficulty recruiting and retaining students. Building effective linkages with other agencies and community leaders can help adult education programs with both concerns. It can broaden, strengthen, and improve delivery, enabling more comprehensive services. It can also increase referrals to the program.

Developing effective working relationships with other agencies and others in the community takes careful cultivation. The manner in which agencies work together can range from a formal, structured *partnership* with memoranda of understanding specifying roles and responsibilities, to a *collaboration* where agencies work together on a specific project, to informal, on-going *cooperation* where agencies share information and provide referrals. Building a formal partnership is hard work. It is often best to start with a less formal collaboration or cooperative effort and let the partnership grow.

Why Collaborate?

By working together, agencies can:

- provide more accurate and effective referrals
- build community support
- provide a more comprehensive array of services
- share resources (including personnel) to expand services
- secure joint funding
- eliminate unnecessary duplication of services
- report client data back to other programs to help track the success of their "graduates."

The mission of adult education - to enable adults to successfully negotiate challenges at home, at work, and in the community - overlaps with that of many other programs Adult educators should focus on what they do best: helping adults develop skills related to literacy, numeracy, language, and critical thinking. For other needs, learners can be referred to appropriate community agencies.

Besides providing a comprehensive package of services, collaboration can also help adult education programs reach and retain students. Community agencies that have contact with adults in need of educational strengthening can make supportive referrals to the education program. This may result in greater retention since learners will have someone encouraging them to follow through on the referral. The support person can also help the learner resolve issues that interfere with success, such as transportation, daycare, health care, or problems with specific teachers, program regulations, or scheduling.

Finally, all community programs need local political support to gain funding, access clients, and maintain a place in the service network. Through collaborative efforts, adult education programs can gain such support, transforming competitors into partners.

How to Build a Partnership

"Stakeholder" is a term frequently mentioned in discussing partnerships. A stakeholder is any individual or any agency with an interest or stake in the program or in the program's clients. For adult education programs, stakeholders might include:

- students and their families
- Department of Social Services
- employers
- Department of Labor
- churches
- Probation Department
- community centers
- Health Department
- libraries
- the Housing Authority
- education funders and regulators
- Head Start or daycare programs
- mental health providers
- the local workforce investment board
- community or support service agencies
- other local educational/vocational programs.

Stakeholders are potential partners. Learn as much as possible about their goals, mission, services, schedule, and desired outcomes. Then, explore the possible benefits of working collaboratively. If there is sufficient interest, establishing a partnership can be pursued.

Whether developing an informal collaboration or a formal partnership amongst stakeholders, there are several key issues that need to be addressed. The more formal the partnership, the more time should be allocated right at the start to address these issues. They include:

- defining a common mission/vision for the partnership
- identifying roles and responsibilities of individual partners
- clarifying the benefits of partnering
- building effective communication mechanisms
- ensuring that members feel valued and that their role is meaningful
- selecting evaluation criteria and processes.

The first step in building an effective partnership is to clearly define a mission/vision with specific goals and outcomes. The more focused and narrowly defined the partnership's mission, the easier it will be to get started. All members must have a stake in the issue around which the partnership is formed.

After defining the mission and goals, the partners need to identify roles and responsibilities for each member. These roles should be strategically assigned to ensure that the partnership is capable of achieving its mission. Members should handle the areas in which they are most skilled and have the greatest stake. It is important that all members have roles they consider meaningful and significant.

In a formal partnership, a substantial amount of time should be allocated right at the start to defining the mission, roles, and responsibilities for the partnership overall and for each member in the partnership. This discussion should address how decisions will be made, how funds will be allocated, how communication will be handled, and how meetings will be run. These decisions need to be reviewed periodically and revised as needed to keep the partnership functioning effectively.

Partners need to see that the partnership (or collaboration) will result in tangible benefits for themselves and for the clients they serve. While all stakeholders are committed to providing quality services for their clients, they are also committed to their individual success and survival. WIIFM ("What's in it for me?") was discussed earlier in terms of recruiting students. The same principle applies to agency collaboration.

Participating in a collaborative effort must be mutually beneficial and the benefits must outweigh the costs for all involved. To be successful, each partner must make a commitment to accomplishing the cooperative mission.

The benefits of collaborating may be directly related to a program's current year goals or for promoting future growth to better serve learners. All program staff need to recognize the benefits if they are to willingly participate in the collaboration. In developing linkages and building partnerships, it is important to bring program staff on board early. Staff can visit other agencies, meet with their staff, and brainstorm vehicles for cooperation and collaboration. From these discussions, a consensus should emerge as to whether the benefits of collaboration are worth the investment of time and resources.

Another key component to effective partnerships is clear and frequent communication. Partners must be able to easily communicate about individual clients, the overall partnership, and other pertinent issues. This can occur through periodic meetings, by regular written communication, by phone, and electronically, via email or live "chats". In all communications, it is critical that client confidentiality be carefully maintained.

Partnerships cannot be effective unless there is a feeling of inclusion and respect among all members. Members should share leadership, authority, and decision making. All participants need to be valued for the resources they bring to the partnership and need to feel that they have influence in the partnership's decisions. As each partner brings something to the group that the others don't have, a sense of interdependence will develop. Group discussions should be guided by ground rules that promote positive interaction. Diversity should be welcomed and appreciated.

Whatever the level of collaboration - from informal cooperation to a formal partnership, it is important to conduct annual evaluations to assess the productivity and outcomes of the partnership. All partners should have a role in identifying the outcomes that will be evaluated and the criteria against which they will be measured. The evaluations will help determine the overall cost/benefit of the collaboration to programs and to clients and ways to increase benefits and reduce costs.

Partnerships Unique to Adult Education

Two specific partnerships relate directly to adult education programs: the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) established under WIA and adult education advisory councils.

The WIB is a partnership mandated for many local programs, including adult education. Federal and state regulations specify much of the structure for this formal partnership. Locally developed memoranda of understanding further define roles and responsibilities.

The goal of this partnership is to develop a comprehensive network of services promoting employability. Assessment of basic skills and educational needs is a core service of the local one-stop, comprehensive service center established under WIA. Additional adult education and family literacy services can be provided at the one-stop center or can be accessed via the coordinated referral system established by the local WIB. At least one member of the WIB must be an education provider.

Another specific type of partnership that adult education programs may want to consider is an advisory council. Adult education programs are publicly supported and are often managed by a public agency. Involvement of community representatives (stakeholders) on an advisory council can help build community support, help focus program design to meeting real community needs, and help increase cooperation with other community agencies. An advisory council provides input and feedback to program management, including the operating board of the agency (e.g., school board, board of directors). It can also help with program operation.

The role of the advisory council and the scope of issues it will address needs to be clearly defined by program management before any members are recruited. If members are to stay involved, the council needs to have a substantive role with meaningful responsibilities. Some of the tasks with which an advisory council could assist include:

- surveying the needs and interests of the community in regard to adult education
- planning the education program
- recruiting students
- evaluating the program and presenting progress reports to the governing board
- publicizing the program
- serving as a link between the program and community organizations
- obtaining financial assistance and additional services from public and private sectors
- serving as a speakers' bureau to service groups, social agencies, and community organizations
- locating education and training opportunities for adult learners.

When recruiting members to serve on an advisory council, it is important to represent the geographic, cultural, socio-economic, and political diversity of the service area. Characteristics to consider in selecting candidates include those with:

- power and influence in the community
- ability to access resources and build linkages with agencies, potential learners, funders, volunteers, and local media
- special talents that can help further the program (e.g., legal, financial, construction skills, etc.)
- knowledge of adult learner needs and interests (e.g., current program participants and program graduates).

Program managers need to keep their councils informed about on-going activities, successes, challenges, problems, etc. If program staff can provide clerical support to the council, this will help it function more effectively, particularly in its public relations/communication role. By partnering with learners and other community members through an advisory council, an adult education program can expand its human resources, build stronger connections to learners, and ensure that the program is focused on the most critical needs of the local community.

Barriers to Collaboration

There are many challenges to successful collaboration. Among the most common reasons for collaborations failing to work are:

- lack of clarity or differing interpretations of goals, roles, and responsibilities.
- hidden agendas. Partners have individual goals for the partnership that they don't share with each other.
- competition for funding or clients.
- killer meetings. Successful collaborators need to meet periodically to stay up-to-date and resolve issues. However, long, unfocused, and unproductive meetings discourage people from attending. Communication then breaks down.
- culture clash. Partnerships develop their own institutional culture, which may not be compatible with the cultures of the individual member organizations. This makes it difficult for some member organizations to remain in the partnership.
- power. Individual partners need to relinquish some control to the partnership overall.
- conflicts in rules and regulations affecting participating agencies that make them focus on different client groups, different timetables, or different strategies.

There are additional barriers when working in partnership with disenfranchised learners (people with low literacy skills, immigrants with limited skills, non-English speakers, ex-inmates, etc.) and their families. These clients have little experience working in formal committees. They may not understand the role of a board or council member or the parliamentary process. Hence, they are hesitant about speaking in a formal setting. It may take longer to digest and fully understand informational materials.

Despite these challenges, there are many benefits to having learner representatives serve on community partnerships, advisory councils, boards, or committees. They bring an important perspective to the group. Learner involvement in program planning and evaluation can build ownership among the learners and provide targeted input to the program. To overcome the barriers to their participation, try to:

- have other members of the group act as mentors (one-on-one) with learners.
- provide extra background or briefing materials in advance of meetings.
- keep meetings short and focused
- establish a separate committee made up of learners to develop positions on issues. Several representatives of this group bring the committee's positions to the full group.
- appoint three or more learners to a committee or board (never appoint only one or two) due to the feeling of safety in numbers.

VII. PROGRAM EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Nationally, there is movement towards achieving high learning standards and promoting accountability in education. Increasingly, funders are reviewing a program's results to determine future funding. As adult education programs progress into the new customer service environment established by the Workforce Investment Act, programs must be able to document results to attract new customers and to become part of the local workforce investment board. Programs must achieve the state performance standards, operate in compliance with federal and state regulations, and create an organizational atmosphere of continuous improvement.

Summative and Formative Evaluation

Before discussing specific state performance indicators, it is important to have an understanding of the two kinds of program evaluation systems: summative and formative. Summative evaluations are a summary of the results of the program over a specified period. They study the success of a program in meeting its outcomes and objectives. The results of these evaluations are typically sent to funders, regulators, and other interested stakeholders. The National Reporting System for Adult Education is an example of a summative evaluation. For adult education programs, summative evaluations generally measure program success in having learners achieve the following:

- development of literacy skills/educational gain
- attainment of educational completion (GED or HS diploma)
- placement in a job or a further educational program
- job retention over a specific period of time.

Formative evaluations, on the other hand, are for internal use to study program effectiveness on an on-going basis. Program staff use formative evaluations to determine the effectiveness of specific strategies. Those strategies that are effective are continued and expanded, while those that are not are discontinued or modified. Formative evaluations are designed as early warning systems for areas where the program is not doing well, so corrective actions can be taken quickly to get the program back on track. Formative evaluations might study:

- educational needs the program is meeting most effectively
- educational strategies most effective in a particular community
- recruitment and retention strategies resulting in the best student mix
- the greatest barriers to learning.

Comprehensive Performance Accountability System

Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires all states to establish a comprehensive performance accountability system. Such a system assesses the effectiveness of eligible agencies in achieving continuous improvement of adult education programs. According to the US Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education:

At the core of the adult education performance system are the number of adult learners who complete one or more educational functioning levels during the program years. ...The remaining core measures are follow-up measures collected after the adult leaves the program. These measures include:

- *high school completion*
- *entered postsecondary education or training*
- *entered employment and retained employment.*

These measures only apply to adult learners who enter the program with goals related to one or more of these core measures.(July 2000)

The core outcome measures are summarized below:

Topic	Measures	Categories or Definitions
Core Outcome Measures		
Educational Gains	Educational gains	Educational functioning levels in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and functional areas
Follow-up Measures	Entered employment	Learners who obtain a job by the first quarter after exit quarter
	Retained employment	Learners who remain employed in the third quarter after program exit
	Receipt of secondary school diploma or GED	Learners who obtain a GED, secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent
	Placement in postsecondary education or training	Learners enrolling in a postsecondary educational or occupational skills program building on prior services or training received

Each state negotiated levels of performance measures for July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2001 and July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002. In New York State, local agencies receiving grants from the NYSED are expected to achieve the performance levels listed below.

Core Outcome Measures	Negotiated Performance Level	
	7/1/00--6/30/01	7/1/01--6/30/02
Beginning ABE Literacy	14%	17%
Beginning Basic Education	14%	17%
Low Intermediate Basic Education	22%	25%
High Intermediate Basic Education	22%	25%
Low Adult Secondary Education	26%	30%
Beginning ESL Literacy	14%	16%
Beginning ESL	15%	16%
Low Intermediate ESL	21%	22%
High Intermediate ESL	21%	22%
Low Advanced ESL	20%	22%
High Advanced ESL	20%	22%
Attained High School or Equivalent Diploma	42%	44%
Entered Employment	20%	25%
Retained Employment	20%	25%
Entered Postsecondary Education or Training	20%	25%

National Reporting System for Adult Education

To support the documentation of the performance indicators and the management of the adult education delivery system, the USDOE worked with Pelavin Associates to develop the National Reporting System for Adult Education. The National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) is an annual report that state education agencies use to submit data on funded adult education programs. The report includes participant demographics, learner gains, and learner outcomes. In New York State, this report was amended to include information on program and service offerings.

The NRS and the performance indicators necessitate the use of an individual student record system (ISR). An ISR is a computerized database that allows interested stakeholders, notably adult education providers and the state education agency, to conduct analysis to support continuous improvement.

There is a wide variety of computer software that will support an ISR system. Some software applications may be used right "off-the-shelf" and others require local programs to design a custom application. Program managers should consult with managers from other agencies to identify software applications that are currently used and determine pros and cons before purchasing and implementing a system.

Continuous Improvement

While much of the drive of the performance indicator movement is towards accountability, an equally important aspect is to use the data collected to improve the delivery of instructional and support services. Continuous improvement may be approached in two ways. The first is to review the summative data of the program. This data is submitted to funders. Analysis of this data will enable program managers to review the results of the overall adult education program and make modifications in the future. The drawback of using a summative analysis of the adult education program and services is that the program is already completed and no action can be taken to improve program results.

To make adjustments to program and service delivery during, instead of after, the program year, managers and staff can use a formative evaluation. It may review recruitment and marketing, retention, and learner gains. Whether evaluations are formal or informal, it is important to obtain sufficient and reliable data to make informed decisions. An example of a formative evaluation is the comparison of pre-and post-test data on learner gains. Did the learner achieve the desired gain? If yes, what worked well and can be replicated for other learners in other classes? If the learner did not achieve the desired gain, why not? What other instructional strategies or curriculum could be used? Strategies that are working well should be expanded and replicated. Areas that are weak need to have new strategies developed to provide stronger outcomes.

Changes should be implemented incrementally. Slow, steady changes that are carefully assessed are often more effective in the long run than massive, radical changes implemented quickly. It is important to continually monitor and measure changes in the program to be sure that the new design is resulting in the desired outcome.

Compliance

Compliance is the process by which a program manager ensures that the adult education program is operating within the rules and regulations of the funder. This includes:

- learner eligibility in programs and services
- student data that must be collected at in-take as well as upon exiting of the program
- documentation of student attendance
- documentation of revenue and expenditures

- the number of learners that may be enrolled in a class.

It is important for program mangers to understand the slight differences among funding sources. Knowing these differences may enable the adult education program to work with the local workforce investment board and provide programs to a population not previously served. Not knowing the differences may result in an audit exception or closing of the program.

VIII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

An agency's ability to offer high quality and effective programs depends upon its ability to secure and manage funds. In many cases, the budget office is responsible for financial management while the program manager attends to the delivery of services. Managers of smaller programs, however, often find themselves responsible for both services and finances. Regardless of the situation, all program managers should know, at least, the fundamentals of funding and financial management.

Overview of funding

In New York State, there are several categories of funding that may support an adult education program. The main categories are as follows:

- **Grants** are generally awarded by the New York State Education Department. Upon approval, an agency receives advance payment prior to the delivery of services. To review budget guidelines, visit the New York State Education Department on-line.
- **State aid** is typically generated by school districts and BOCES based on student attendance. Employment Preparation Education State Aid (EPE) is an hourly reimbursement used to support adult education programs.
- **Contracts** are generally used by other New York State agencies and county agencies. Upon execution of the contract, the provider operates programs and services and is reimbursed after a specified period. Please note that the New York State Education Department is required to execute contracts for agencies other than school districts and BOCES.
- **Tuition** is a fixed fee charged by the program provider. Tuition may be paid by the student or by a local agency on behalf of the student.
- **Performance-based contracts** are generally used by county agencies. These contracts establish expectations for student outcomes, typically employment. Once the student outcome is documented, the agency is reimbursed for programs and services.

Each funding source delineates its allowable expenses, funding cycle, program operation dates, and reporting requirements. To ensure compliance, the program manager should become familiar with the requirements of each funding source used to support the program. Understanding fund requirements will also enable the program manager to "blend" fund sources and maximize existing resources.

Developing a Budget

A budget is a document that estimates the financial resources that will be available to, and the financial demands that will be placed upon, a program. It is a forecast, generally 12 or more months in advance, of revenue and expenses. A budget must be as accurate as possible because it will often be the basis for funding agreements. The estimates actually become boundaries within which programs must operate. Additionally, a budget serves three major purposes:

- *Budgets help agencies plan accurately.* Decisions about implementing a program as planned versus scaling back somewhat can be made only after determining the cost of running a program as well as expected revenue.
- *Budgets provide funders with an itemized breakdown of anticipated program expenses.* With this information, funders can release funds to the program and monitor the program's expenditures in accordance to rules, regulations, and priorities.
- *Budgets provide a framework* against which income and expenses can be monitored on a regular basis over the course of the year.

There are several types of budgets. An operating budget shows the annual cost for running an agency and the annual revenue that is expected, according to the fiscal year of the agency. A program budget shows the operating costs and revenues of a specific program. It may be based on the fiscal year of the funder instead of the fiscal year of the agency. A start-up budget includes one-time costs for starting a program. These costs might includes purchasing or renovating a facility, hiring staff or consultants prior to actual start of the program, initial development of curricula or materials, etc.

Every agency should have a combined annual operating budget, and each separately funded program should also have its own budget. All programs should contribute revenue to the overall expenses of the agency, including a portion of facility costs, administrative costs (bookkeeping, top management, liability insurance, auditing, etc.), basic telephone service, etc. Budgets are generally developed on an annual basis or are based on the length of a program cycle (e.g., a summer program has a new budget each year for its 8-week session).

Designing a New Program

The first step in developing a budget for a new program is to identify what is needed: number and type of staff; space, equipment, and materials; and other important resources, such as insurance, maintenance, utilities, consultants, dues/fees, etc.

Once identified, each of those items must be assigned a cost. What salary will staff receive? What benefits will they receive? (Union contracts or personnel policies may determine these issues.) The agency's human resources office will know which staff positions are eligible for which benefits (e.g., Are part-time staff eligible for full, partial, or no benefits?) and how much benefits cost.

An allocation for the program's share of overall administrative expenses must be included. This allocation is often based on the percentage the program represents of the agency's overall budget, staff, and/or number of students served.

Operating an On-going Program

For an on-going program, expenses for the next funding cycle can be estimated by adding inflation, planned salary increases, benefit changes, and the like to current operating expenses. Any and all anticipated changes in the program for the coming year should be studied. Will these changes require additional resources or result in a reduction of expenditures?

Whether designing a new program or operating an existing one, keep in mind that each funding source can ask for different levels of detail and may classify expenses slightly differently. Some funders ask only for category totals (e.g., total salaries, total fringe benefits), while others ask for line-item detail (e.g., salaries for each staff person, fringe benefits detailed in terms of health insurance, social security, worker's compensation). Expenses might also be classified into different categories. Liability insurance could be its own line item, could be lumped into a category for all insurance, or could be included under contracted expenses.

Many funders divide the budget into two or three major sections with personnel costs (salary and fringe benefits) being in one section and non-personnel costs in other sections (e.g. contracted services, maintenance and operation). However, others may divide a budget into program-related costs and administrative costs. The bottom line is to read budget forms carefully before completing them.

Requirements of and restrictions imposed by funding sources must also be thoroughly understood. Funding Source A sets a limit on the amount of money that can be used for administrative purposes while Funding Source B limits what can be used for fringe benefits. Funding Source C prefers a formula based on the number of learners served or number of hours of service. Some funders allow for indirect costs; others require all costs to be itemized. Each funding source has its own client eligibility requirements and starting/ending dates.

Once the expenses have been calculated, it is time to address the other half of a budget: revenue. Program income and expenditure totals must match. When calculating revenue, it is perhaps most prudent to be conservative, basing estimates on worst-case, rather than best-case, scenarios. If, for example, part of the revenue is based on tuition, never expect full payment due to unfilled seats or delinquent learners.

In the case of insufficient revenue, it may be possible to access additional sources of funding. If not, expenditures must be reduced. If the budget is still unbalanced and further cuts would compromise the program, it may be necessary to scale back the original design of the program. Working with an electronic spreadsheet or other financial software makes this process more manageable.

Upon achieving a balanced budget, all of the information should be put together in the format requested, and on the forms provided, by the provider. To minimize rejection due to clerical oversight, be sure to provide all the information requested and submit within the timeframe specified. This document will become part of the agency's contract with its funder.

The agency will be expected to operate within the bounds of this budget. Generally, it is unlikely that the total amount of funding will increase within the same year. In that regard, the bottom line is inflexible. However, other lines in the budget usually may be modified with the funder's advance approval. Prior to the start of the contract, the program manager or fiscal officer should be very clear on how budget modifications or amendments are handled. Some funding sources limit the number of amendments, while others allow a certain percentage of variance without seeking prior approval. Agencies might be allowed to move money from different staff lines within the salary section, but not between major sections of a budget (e.g., salary, maintenance and operation, contracted services).

Managing a budget

As the program year commences, it is important to compare actual revenue and expenditures to the ones estimated in the budget. If discrepancies occur, it will be necessary to bring the budget back into balance. For example, an unexpected increase in health insurance costs might be offset by delaying purchase of new equipment or by reducing part-time staff hours. Remember to complete the budget amendments required by the funding source.

Program managers should seriously consider using a financial management system that is computer-based. Such a system should accommodate multiple funding streams on varied funding cycles so that reports fitting the unique requirements of each funder can be generated. In the case of a single primary funder, a computer-based system will probably more easily allow creation of internal budget and bookkeeping practices that are compatible with the system used by the funder.

There are a number of commercial accounting software packages that can handle this demand. Once such a system is set up, the budget for the agency overall and for each funding stream can be entered in the system, and income and expenses can be automatically compared to the budget on a monthly (or more frequent) basis. Very detailed financial records are a tremendous support to managing budgets.

Managing cash flow

Too often, a balanced budget is threatened by the realities of program operation. Expenses are incurred day by day, but revenue can be delayed by reimbursement procedures, errors in processing, or delays in state budget approvals. Therein lies the problem: How do programs maintain sufficient funds to meet current expenses?

Program managers need to monitor the rate at which funds are coming into and going out of a program. It is generally preferable to maintain an excess balance in the account, known as a "fund balance" or "excess revenue", which can be carried over from year to year to help cover temporary shortfalls. If a positive fund balance cannot be generated, it may be necessary to consider one of the following actions:

- ***Accelerating revenue***. Some funders will provide an advance to help offset a delay in reimbursement. Others will expedite reimbursement when there is a problem. Discounts can be offered to fee payers if they pay early (although this will reduce total revenue for the year).
- ***Delaying payments***. Vendors may be willing to allow a delayed payment schedule or to suspend finance charges. Paying salaries and taxes should never be delayed, since failure to be timely can result in legal action.
- ***Borrowing money***. Although additional costs will be incurred, arranging a loan is generally preferable to shutting down temporarily from a lack of positive cash flow. Cash flow shortfalls should be apparent well in advance. As soon as the possibility of a shortfall is detected, negotiations about preparing a line of credit should begin. Most banks or lending institutions are willing to arrange a loan if the reason for the cash flow problem is clearly presented. The bank or lending institution will require documentation of the program's budget and funding commitment.

Managing the Financial System

As noted above, it is very helpful to have the financial record-keeping system set up in an electronic format to facilitate recording and reporting detailed financial information. In addition to the actual records kept, the process by which funds are handled and recorded is extremely important. All financial records should be maintained for at least seven years.

There are a number of standard controls that should be established in any financial management system, such as:

- Signed invoices, verifying that the products or services were received and that the expenditure was approved, accompany all expenditures.
- Once paid, the invoices are filed with check numbers and payment dates noted on them.
- Only checks with preprinted numbers are used.
- If there are many individual tuition payments, pre-numbered receipts for all income are used.
- Records of equipment and other assets are maintained. Inventories are conducted periodically.
- All fiscal staff are covered under fidelity insurance.

A key principle of financial management is "separation of controls". Dividing the responsibilities for financial management among a number of individuals helps ensure that funds are handled accurately and opportunities for fraud or embezzlement are greatly reduced. Some of the basic separations are that:

- The person writing checks should not be approved to sign any checks.
- Two people should sign all checks over a specified dollar amount (set by the board).
- Someone other than the bookkeeper should receive and reconcile bank statements.
- Someone other than the bookkeeper should authorize writing off bad debts or other assets.
- Collection of cash should be under the control of two people whenever possible.
- If checks arrive in the mail, two people should open the mail together.
- All income should be deposited in the bank at once. Someone other than the people who open the mail or receive the income should make the deposit.

In managing a financial system, there are several reports to prepare on a monthly basis. They should include a listing of all expenditures and revenues that month; a summary of expenditures and revenue by category for that month and for the year to date; and a comparison (by category subtotals) of actual and projected expenditures and revenues for that month and year to date. Significant variations in actual as compared to projected numbers should be explained in writing as footnotes to the report. These reports should be reviewed by managers outside the financial management system and/or members of the board of directors/school board (or its finance committee).

Acquiring Funding

Adult education programs generally receive their core operating funds from the State Education Department. Additional funds can be received from the local Workforce Investment Board, tuition paid by the County Department of Social Services, the local school district, or the local BOCES. Funds can also be raised through writing grants to private foundations (including local foundations such as the United Way), applying for special competitive grants from state and federal governments, seeking donations from local or national corporations, and holding fund raisers such as cultural events, auctions, or book sales.

As noted in previous sections of this guide, successfully acquiring funding rests on:

- a clear, specific, and community-focused mission statement and set of measurable outcome objectives.
- a proven track record. Documentation of learners' educational gains and successful performance upon completing the program can only help.
- a clear program design showing the strengths of the program.
- specific requests that match the priorities of the potential funding source. The exact dollar amount, what it will be used for, and the outcomes it will produce should be presented to the funder.
- the ability to properly manage the funds: a good bookkeeping system, adequate internal controls, and good financial reports.

The Federal Register, the NYS Contract Reporter, and many websites list funding opportunities from the state and federal government. There are several publications (hard copy and on-line) that report on funding opportunities. The Foundation Center (available in many public libraries and on-line) has information about private foundations. The local United Way may also have information about local funding opportunities. The local Workforce Investment Board has funds available through WIA.

IX. TECHNOLOGY AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Innovations in technology, including computers, database software, wireless communication, and the Internet, present great opportunities to adult education programs. Used effectively, these innovations can reduce administrative overhead costs, increase the effectiveness of education, and help meet the scheduling needs of learners. Technology is a tool to help an organization meet its educational and organizational goals and objectives. However, without adequate planning, it can become very costly and drain resources from services to learners.

Technology Planning

The first step in using technology is to develop a plan. The planning process can help programs identify and prioritize areas of need and technological strategies for addressing these needs. The planning process also looks at ways to evaluate, purchase, implement, and use technology. The technology plan needs to be tied to the organization's overall plan (as discussed in Section 5: Program Design and Delivery), which typically spans between three and five years.

At the beginning of the planning process, the organization needs to look at the state of its current technology. What is already in place? What seems to be working well? What needs improvement? The next step is to explore the possibilities technology can offer and determine cost-effective technological solutions to program needs. This may be accomplished by talking with other programs and vendors, reading current journals, and conducting research on the Internet.

Once the potential options are identified, an implementation plan prioritizing the various components of the technology plan can be developed. (For specific steps of a technology plan, visit CyberLiteracy New York online.) Remember to build professional development into the budget for the technology plan. Also note that technology is an ongoing investment; hardware and software will need to be updated periodically.

Using Technology to Support Administration

Technology can provide increased efficiency in agency administration through word processing, database management, financial management, fax and Internet communication, local area computer networks, and improved telephone systems. It also increases efficiency in maintaining student records, reporting on student assessments, and analyzing student assessment results. Technology can assist with student recruitment and registration, even allowing for off-site electronic registration. When face-to-face staff meetings are not convenient, technology can facilitate staff communication.

Using Technology to Support Instruction

Technology offers new methods for providing education, such as computer-based instruction in which students learn at their own pace and with increased privacy in a one-on-one environment. It also offers immediate feedback and opportunities for a multi-media approach, tapping into the varied and multiple intelligences of learners. As with any new endeavor, however, the value of technology must be assessed in regard to its cost. Most technology costs lie in the initial investment, but on-going maintenance and upgrade costs exist as well. It is also important to factor in costs for staff training and decreased efficiency during the initial learning curve. Visit CyberLiteracy New York online for more information on integrating technology into the classroom.

Using Technology for Distance Learning

Technology offers an opportunity for vastly improved distance learning. Communication between learner and instructor is sped up from the weeks it took during early correspondence courses to mere minutes. New technologies also allow for live interaction via teleconferencing or the Internet. This is especially intriguing in cases where:

- scheduling or transportation barriers limit learners' access to the school site
- costs for classroom space exceed the costs of distance learning technology
- small class sizes result in a very high cost per pupil for services.

Distance learning allows learners access to instruction 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in time blocks most conducive to learning. Flexibility in scheduling is, thereby, greatly enhanced. For example, distance learning allows learners and instructors to:

- conference outside of class time without having to physically meet at the school
- submit and review assignments between class sessions
- utilize computer-based instruction without having to go to the school site.

Since many adult education instructors are part time, this flexibility in scheduling can be an incentive in attracting quality instructors. For more information on distance learning, please visit CyberLiteracy New York on-line.

X. LEADERSHIP

Earlier sections of this guide describe the varied functions of a program manager: staffing, partnering, program planning, maintaining accountability, budgeting, and using technology. All of these functions are critical in the day-to-day operation of an education program. One trait that is often overlooked is the value of leadership. More than management, leadership denotes a role of visionary, advocate, motivator, entrepreneur, communicator, and continuous improvement.

Visionary

A vision or mission statement can mobilize and energize a staff and help create an organizational identity within a community. The responsibility for setting the vision or mission for the program rests with the program manager or the governing board. The vision or mission should be clear, powerful, and create a compelling future for the organization. This vision will serve as the compass for the organization's future growth. As the organization's leader, it is the program manager's responsibility to advocate and ensure that resources, program planning, and staffing are consistent with the vision and mission.

Advocate

The program manager is also an advocate - for the learners, for the staff, for the organization, for partners, and for the community. Within any organization or community, there are multiple priorities and, too often, adult education is not a "hot" topic. The program manager must promote the importance, relevance, and benefits of investing in adult education efforts.

Motivator

The program manager is responsible for recruiting, hiring, and managing staff. The program manager as leader is challenged to create an environment that enables all staff to do their best work. It is the program manager's responsibility to delegate responsibility and authority to each member of the team, as appropriate, and provide the necessary support to them. This delegation will energize the staff since they will have a greater stake in the program and will free up the program manager's time to engage in other activities.

Entrepreneur

Management may be viewed as maintenance of a program in existence. Leaders, however, take the existing program and ensure that it is positioned well now and for the future. A leader capitalizes on the past accomplishments of the program to open doors to new endeavors.

Communicator

A leader is responsible for working with a variety of people and groups - from adult learners to other community service providers, from advisory boards to government officials. To be effective in this role, the leader must be a strong communicator and problem solver. The leader must be able to listen to the concerns and interests of all parties and develop strategies that effectively meet divergent interests. Having a collaborative leadership style is essential when trying to balance the needs of many stakeholders.

Continuous Improvement

An important characteristic of a good leader is a focus on continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is small incremental steps building upon existing strengths and overcoming deficiencies. By focusing gently on continuous improvement, a program can regularly reinvent itself to address changing demands without overloading the staff with massive changes and disruptions.

One key to successful continuous improvement is the acceptance of some degree of risk. Unsuccessful actions are inevitable in the experimentation process. However, the leader needs to set the tone that failures and mistakes are opportunities for learning, not actions to be punished. By helping the staff analyze small failures, solutions for moving the program forward will surface.

Maintaining a Balance

Probably one of the most difficult aspects of a leader is maintaining a balance between the role of program manager and leader. The leader needs to stay focused on the big picture, looking at the overall program operation and productivity, while juggling lots of details. The program manager, meanwhile, needs to keep a close eye on the budget, on student outcomes and student satisfaction, on changes in the funding arena or regulations, on staff morale, and on the concerns of other stakeholders. This involves a great deal of careful listening, careful observation, and analysis. It is very difficult to stay in touch with the details while maintaining a leadership role that focuses on the big picture goals.

One solution to this challenge is to set clear outcomes and hold staff accountable for achieving the outcomes. The manager's job is to monitor the program's results, praising people who achieve them and coaching those who don't. If the manager becomes too enmeshed in accomplishing the detailed work, s/he will not be available to fulfill the responsibilities of a leader.

Guide for Managers of Adult Education Programs

After you have completed the guide, please send us your comments. It will be very helpful if you address at least the following in your email:

1. What insights can you share with us about the guide?
2. What additional issues need to be addressed in the guide?
3. Please list any resources that might be helpful to us in updating the guide.

Thank you for your help!

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