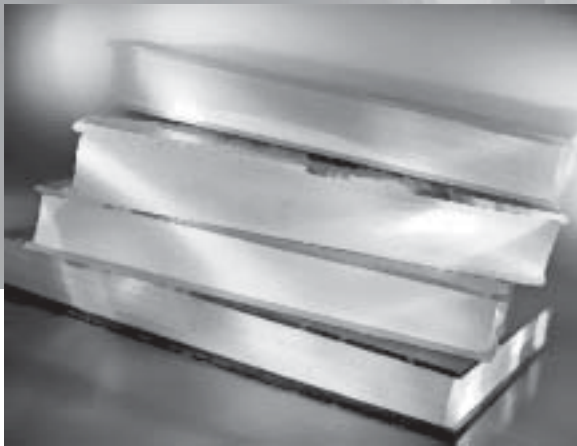
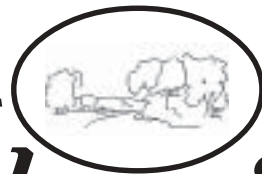




Adult Education in Rural Pennsylvania



THE CENTER FOR



Rural Pennsylvania
A Legislative Agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly

Adult Education in Rural Pennsylvania

A report by
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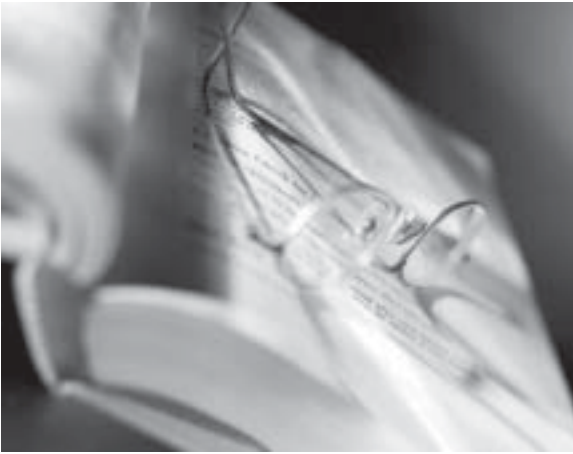
The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy within the Pennsylvania General Assembly. It was created in 1987 under Act 16, the Rural Revitalization Act, to promote and sustain the vitality of Pennsylvania's rural and small communities.

Information contained in this report does not necessarily reflect the views of individual board members or the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. For more information, contact the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, 200 North Third St., Suite 600, Harrisburg, PA 17101, telephone (717) 787-9555, email: info@ruralpa.org.

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Executive Summary



There is a pressing need for adult literacy and basic education programs in rural Pennsylvania. Despite several federal adult literacy and basic skills initiatives organized throughout the last decade, research shows that the infrastructure of adult literacy programs remains inadequate to handle the diverse needs for services. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, there are about 4 million adults in the commonwealth who need adult literacy education. These adults function below the minimum level necessary to succeed in the workforce. However, less than 5 percent of these adults are being served through Pennsylvania adult education programs.

The purpose of this research was to describe the status of and factors that influence adult learning and to provide information to help policymakers foster adult learning programs in rural Pennsylvania. To this end, this study focused on three main areas: adult learners' characteristics and participation patterns, infrastructure for providing services, and funding streams that support literacy and basic education. The study used three types of data sources: focus group discussions of adult education program directors, a survey of adult education program directors, and an analysis of documents from the Pennsylvania Departments of Labor and Industry and Education.

The research found that, in addition to the challenges facing all adult education providers, adult education programs in rural Pennsylvania

face a unique set of challenges and obstacles. These include serving a diverse group of rural adults who need a variety of services, a changing job market, and vast geographic areas with low population densities.

The following considerations, which were derived from the research, take into account unique rural characteristics and provide important information to help policymakers foster successful adult education programs in rural Pennsylvania.

Increase educational opportunities for rural adult learners

- Foster communication and cooperation between career and adult education programs.
- Identify and adjust services to meet the growing needs of ESL (English as a Second Language) students.
- Align public assistance to support rural adult education needs.
- Integrate technology with adult education to meet training needs.

Improve the quality of rural adult education programs

- Implement successful recruiting strategies.
- Identify and implement flexible delivery systems and learner-centered curriculum.
- Provide stronger support services.
- Consider alternative assessments to motivate and empower adult learners.

Reevaluate funding policies and practices for rural adult education programs

- Funding formulas should take rural characteristics into consideration.
- Provide funding for professional development.
- Identify resources to recruit more paid staff and volunteers.

Introduction



Adult literacy issues have drawn considerable attention from educators, businesses, and government. Research indicates that adult education is increasing in the United States (NCES, 2000) in response to the demand for highly trained, qualified individuals in the workforce. Today's highly competitive and technical workplaces require adult workers who have achieved a certain proficiency level in performing basic literacy skills (Norback, 1998).

Research has shown, however, that many adults function at low levels of literacy (Wagner and Venezky, 1999). Although 95 percent of adults in the nation have a reading level of at least fourth grade, almost half of these adults function at a level low enough not to be competitive in the workforce. Studies have shown that earning potential increases with an adult's level of education and literacy proficiency (NCES, 1999; Wagner and Venezky, 1999). In addition, low levels of literacy have been associated with low productivity, poor product quality (Knell, 1990), and costly and dangerous mistakes in the workplace (Mikulecky, 1988).

In addition to lower wages and less potential for economic advancement, low levels of literacy have other adverse consequences. School readiness in children may be difficult to achieve if parents are not equipped to prepare children to

enter school. Studies show that children of parents who had difficulty learning how to read were also at risk for being poor readers (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998).

Adult literacy contributes to achieving personal goals and is beneficial to society, as more literate individuals are often better prepared to participate in community activities and projects (Demetrios, 1997).

Literacy has several meanings in the educational literature and in common usage. There is consensus in the education literature that literacy includes at least the elements of reading, writing, and calculating (Wagner, 1995). Some organizations have proposed broad definitions that include basic skills beyond reading and writing, such as basic life skills needed to function in society. Literacy in this study will refer to reading ability related to the knowledge and skills of understanding information from text and job-related materials, math ability related to applying math operations to perform job or life-related tasks, and basic technology skills necessary to function successfully in society.

Recognizing that many young adults do not possess the necessary skills to enter and advance in the workforce, several educational initiatives were launched in the last decade. However, most of these programs targeted students in the K–12 educational setting. Many individuals in need of improved literacy skills are beyond school age. These adults must be reached through literacy programs targeting the adult population.

Literacy in this study will refer to reading ability related to the knowledge and skills of understanding information from text and job-related materials, math ability related to applying math operations to perform job or life-related tasks, and basic technology skills necessary to function successfully in society.

Despite several federal adult literacy and basic skills initiatives organized throughout the last decade, there is evidence that the infrastructure of adult literacy programs remains inadequate to

handle the diverse needs for services. Based on the National Adult Literacy Survey and the State Adult Literacy Survey in Pennsylvania (ABLEICC, 2002), there are about 4 million adults in Pennsylvania who need adult literacy education. These adults function below the minimum level necessary to succeed in the workforce. However, less than 5 percent of these adults are being served through Pennsylvania adult education programs (ABLE, 2002).

Adult literacy education programs are often viewed as less important than K–12 education (Sticht, 1998). Beder expresses that literacy programs do not receive adequate funding and that services are fragmented with little coordination between agencies, leaving some geographic areas with a lack of adequate programs or overlapping services. He feels that one of the main barriers to successful adult education programs is insufficient information about adult literacy programs (1996). More information about the infrastructure of adult literacy and basic education programs is needed so that coordination efforts can begin.

Pennsylvania's rural areas present unique challenges to providing adult literacy and basic education services. Geographic isolation, funding concerns, and diverse types of rural areas contribute to the challenges facing providers of adult education. Geographic isolation of rural areas contributes to a lack of access to adult education opportunities. Low population densities and lack of convenient locations for rural adults to attend literacy classes are major barriers to participation.

Defining "rural"

For this study, the researcher used the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's county level definition of rural, which is based on population density.

According to Census 2000, the population of Pennsylvania is 12,281,054 and the number of square miles of land in Pennsylvania is 44,820. Therefore, the population density is 274 persons per square mile.

A county is rural when the number of persons per square mile within the county is less than 274. Counties that have 274 persons or more per square mile are considered urban.

Pennsylvania has one of the largest rural populations in the country. Information about the need for adult literacy services and the adequacy of the training available in rural areas is critically important to the state. The economic well-being of these rural areas largely depends on a trained workforce that is able to keep pace with a technologically advancing society.

This study identifies the needs of rural Pennsylvania adults who would benefit from literacy training and examines the current condition of the adult education infrastructure, including funding streams. This information will inform decision-makers on how to allocate resources, coordinate efforts, and address the needs of underserved adults who would benefit from quality adult literacy education services.

Goals and Methodology

To identify adult basic education needs in rural Pennsylvania, this study, which was conducted in 2002 and 2003, focused on three main areas: adult learners' characteristics and participation patterns, infrastructure for providing services, and funding streams that support literacy and basic education. The first step to identifying adult basic education needs, though, was to examine current job market demands for adult literacy skills.

Adult literacy and basic education services in Pennsylvania are provided to residents by a wide range of educational organizations and are regulated by several government agencies. Therefore, an in-depth study of the services and the students they serve required collection and analysis of multiple data sources. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to achieve the project goals. The researchers used three types of data sources: focus group discussions of adult-education program directors, a survey of adult education program directors, and an analysis of documents from the Pennsylvania Departments of Labor and Industry and Education.

Focus Group Discussions

To gain in-depth knowledge about adult literacy education providers and the adults who participate in their programs, the researchers held focus group discussions with directors of adult literacy and basic education organizations in 10 rural

Pennsylvania counties. The focus group discussions also provided an opportunity to validate items asked in the survey described later.

The 10 focus group counties were selected based on their low populations, fluctuating employment rates, or changing job sectors. These counties were also selected so that all major rural geographic regions of the state were represented.

About 43 adult-education service provider directors in the 10 selected counties were invited to participate in the focus group discussions, and 28 did so.

The protocol for the focus group discussions was developed based on conversations with regional marketing analysts and higher education council directors.

Adult Education Provider Survey

To obtain quantitative data for the study, all 151 directors of adult basic education and literacy provider organizations in Pennsylvania were surveyed. The survey provided the following information related to the goals and objectives of the study:

- The nature of provider organizations.
 - Types of services and programs provided to rural adults.
 - Characteristics of adult learners being served.
 - Needs for successful rural programs.
 - Sources of funding for adult education providers.
 - Issues, such as recruiting students, flexible scheduling, and unique needs and accommodations for rural adult learners.
- Survey development included

Focus Group Counties by Region	
Northwest	Elk and Forest
Northeast	Bradford, Pike, Sullivan, Tioga, and Wayne
Central	Centre
South central	Huntingdon
Southwest	Bedford

a literature review to identify critical issues. Focus group participant feedback was used to check the content validity of the preliminary instrument, and the survey was piloted among some focus group participants.

The survey gathered information on provider organizations, including services provided; the adult learners the organizations serve; and issues that need to be addressed to ensure the success of adult literacy and basic education in Pennsylvania. An overarching issue was the importance of adult education in view of the current labor market.

The provider survey, a cover letter explaining the survey, and a pre-addressed, stamped envelope were mailed to all 151 directors of adult basic education and adult education agencies listed in the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Program Directory for the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE). Follow-up letters were sent to those who did not return the survey within four weeks, and a second follow-up letter or phone call was also used. Of the 151 surveys mailed, 99 were completed and returned for a return rate of 66 percent.

State Agency Document Analysis

In addition to the focus group discussions and survey, the researchers used documentation from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry

(L&I) and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to meet the project goals.

L&I regional marketing analysts monitor labor market fluctuations and identify job skills necessary to obtain employment. Interviews with these marketing analysts and L&I's website provided data on rural labor market issues. The interviews addressed two key areas: changes in job sectors in rural areas of the state, and necessary literacy and adult basic skills to be employed in the current labor market.

Three sources were used from PDE. First, Pennsylvania Family Literacy Program Profiles provided program descriptions and information related to program partnerships and local evaluation mechanisms. Most importantly, this document provided information about funding resources and the numbers of children and families being served. Second, demographic data from the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education included background characteristics of adult learners, such as gender, age, race, and education level. And third, the ABLE Program Directory provided information about Pennsylvania adult education providers on the types of programs and services offered, counties in which the programs operated, the number of students served, the number of paid staff, the number of volunteers, and course availability.

Project Results



To provide a background for the need for adult education programs in rural Pennsylvania, the researchers used a survey and focus groups to explore the skill needs for adults in the current job market. Adult education providers noted in the focus group discussions that the top need for future and incumbent employees of commonwealth businesses was GED preparation. One discussion identified the driving force behind the need for adult education as the shift from an industrial to a service-based economy. While some companies had requested providers to address specific job skills, such as welding, word processing, blueprint reading, computer technology, and certification training, the majority was seeking employees who could read directions and manuals, compute math calculations, such as fractions, and engage in problem solving. In addition, employers wanted employees who could interact and communicate with the public and who possessed basic interpersonal skills. There was also a growing need for people skills, which include anger/conflict management, etiquette, and time management.

The survey asked program coordinators to rank the top five adult education skills needed for a job in the current labor market. Rural and urban providers identified the same top four needs as follows:

- 1) Reading comprehension,
- 2) Effective communication,
- 3) Writing skills, and
- 4) Problem solving skills.

Rural providers ranked interpersonal relationship skills fifth, while urban providers ranked time management skills fifth. More than 30 percent of survey respondents ranked reading

comprehension as the most needed skill. Not in either top five list were: math skills; life skills, which include social, interpersonal, cognitive and emotional coping skills; job search skills; job retention skills, which include communication, problem solving, interpersonal, and thinking skills; job readiness skills; Internet use; word processing; and career-related computer skills.

Characteristics of Rural Adult Education Program Participants

Demographic characteristics

According to the adult education provider survey, 52 percent of rural program participants were female. In focus group discussions, rural providers also reported more women than men in the programs. Many female participants were single or teenage mothers who have dropped out of high school due to pregnancies. Many were choosing to continue their education to keep up with their children, assist children with school readiness, and to stop the intergenerational transfer of illiteracy and poverty. These women were more likely than men to participate in Family Literacy Programs and they accounted for a large proportion of the unemployed learners.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education divides adult learners into five age categories: 16-18 years, 19-24 years, 25-44 years, 45-59 years, and 60 years and older.

Most adult learners in both rural (82 percent) and urban (83 percent) programs were age 19 to 59, which the research considers workforce age. The 16-to-18-age range largely accounts for high school dropouts. In rural areas, 15 percent of the adult learners fell in this age range. Twenty-eight

Age of Adult Education Program Participants, Rural and Urban Pennsylvania



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, ABLE

percent of the rural adult learners were young adults, ages 19 to 24, who may have been attempting to enter the workforce.

Focus group discussions revealed that while the participants in Family Literacy programs in rural areas tended to be young mothers, adult learners of all ages participated in the other adult education programs. Younger participants tended to be displaced homemakers, laid-off workers seeking other or better employment, and recent high school dropouts.

Many older participants were retirees. Adult education providers concurred that the older participants generally participated in adult education programs for the socialization aspect.

According to PDE data, the race/ethnicity of 49 percent of participants in Pennsylvania adult education programs was white/other. This was true for 80 percent of rural adult learners and 42 percent of learners in urban programs.

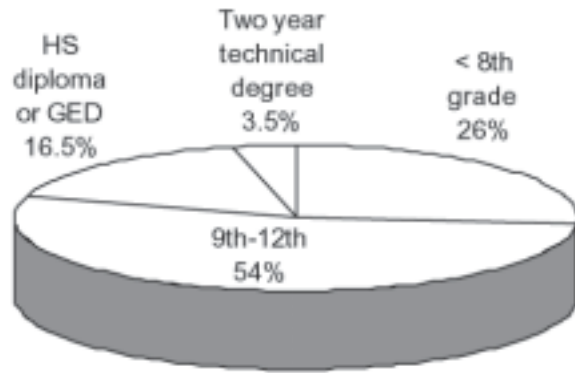
Rural adult education providers reported that some rural minorities were in need of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction while others participated in the Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), or General Educational Development (GED) programs. The minority population in rural areas included permanent residents, students, families of professionals and workers in businesses that were foreign-owned or operated by immigrants. There has been a recent influx of minorities into counties near the New York and New Jersey borders. Many of these minority families live in Pennsylvania and work in New York or New Jersey.

Education and skill levels

The provider survey asked for the highest level of education completed by adult learners upon entering the program. The survey also asked for reading levels and math skills since these skills are tested upon program entry.

Education levels were broken into four categories:

Education Levels of Rural Adult Education Program Participants



Source: Adult Education Provider Survey

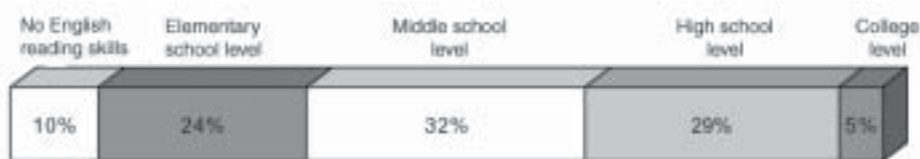
ries: below 8th grade, 9th to 12th grade, high school diploma or GED, and a two-year or technical degree. About one-quarter of the rural adult learners reported an educational level below 8th grade while more than half reported a 9th to 12th grade education, slightly higher than in urban areas. So in all, 80 percent of rural adult learners have not earned a high school diploma. Less than 4 percent entered adult education programs with a two-year technical degree or post-secondary degree.

Adult learners in both rural and urban programs enter with diverse but generally low-level reading skills. About one in 10 program participants had no English reading skills. Most of the adult learners in rural programs had low-level reading abilities. One-fourth (24 percent) read at an elementary school level. By contrast, very few of the rural and urban adult learners could read on a college level when they entered the programs.

According to PDE data, only 43 percent of the rural learners could write well enough to fill out a job application compared with 54 percent of urban learners.

PDE data also supplied the immigrant and English proficiency status of Pennsylvania adult

Reading Skills of Adult Education Program Participants, Rural Pennsylvania

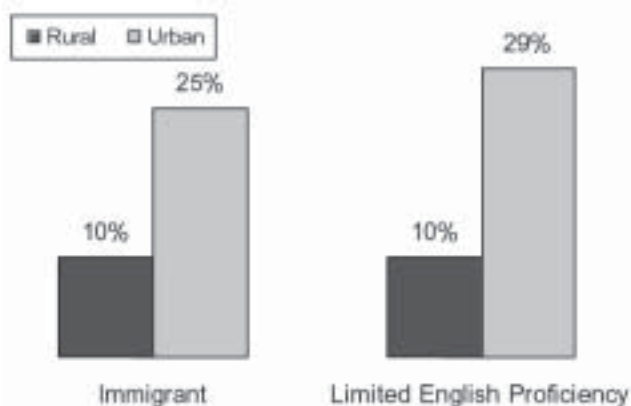


Source: Adult Education Provider Survey

learners. About 10 percent of rural adult learners were immigrants and the same percentage had limited English proficiency. This percentage mirrors the data found in the survey. According to Census 2000, about 5 percent of all Pennsylvania adults were foreign born.

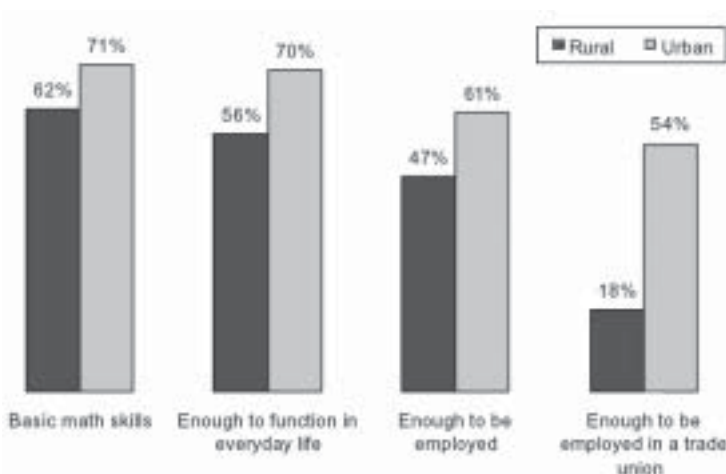
Math skills were reported in the survey as either basic or enough to function in everyday life, be employed, or be employed by a trade union. All math skill areas were lower for rural than for urban adult learners. About 56 percent of the rural learners could perform enough math skills to function in everyday life as compared to 70 percent of urban learners. While 47 percent of

Immigrant Status and English Proficiency of Adult Education Program Participants, Rural and Urban Pennsylvania



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, ABLE

Math Skills of Adult Education Program Participants, Rural and Urban Pennsylvania



Source: Adult Education Provider Survey

rural learners had enough math skills to be employed, 61 percent of the urban learners had these skills. Just 18 percent of rural adult learners could perform enough math skills to be employed by a trade union compared to 54 percent of urban learners.

The focus group discussions also revealed the varying skill levels of program entrants. Some prospective participants were non-readers or read at a 1st or 2nd grade level even though they graduated from high school. Others entered the programs with enough skills to earn a GED in a minimal amount of time.

Employment and public assistance

The unemployment rate for learners in adult education programs in Pennsylvania is markedly higher than the rate of 5.7 for the general population of Pennsylvania (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002).

About one-third, 34 percent, of rural adult education program participants were unemployed, and 27 percent were not available to work, which may include participants with disabilities and those in correctional facilities. These figures are similar to but slightly higher than the urban rates. Focus group participants pointed out that in areas with very small populations, a small fluctuation in employment could greatly affect the unemployment rate. They also indicated that the high unemployment figure for rural learners reflected female participants who outnumbered male participants.

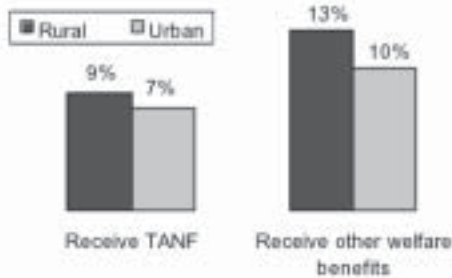
PDE data show whether program participants receive public assistance, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF¹), Supplemental Security Income (SSI²), or other welfare benefits³.

¹ TANF provides monetary assistance for a maximum of five years to families with dependent children whose parents or other responsible relatives are unable to provide basic needs.

² SSI benefits supply financial assistance to a child under the age of 18 who has a physical or mental disability that is expected to last at least 12 months. Normally, these benefits stop at the age of 18, although it is possible for the benefits to continue into adulthood if the adult continues to be disabled and is the child of someone who is receiving Social Security retirement or disability benefits or of someone who has died.

³ Among "other welfare benefits" are SSDI benefits targeted for disabled or blind adults whose disability prohibits them from working. "Other welfare benefits" may also include unemployment compensation for those adults recently unemployed and in search of new employment.

Benefits Received by Adult Education Program Participants, Rural and Urban Pennsylvania



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education

More rural than urban adults learners were identified as disabled, 14 percent and 9 percent, respectively. This higher rural rate, in combination with the higher rate of unemployment for rural adult learners may explain why more rural (13 percent) than urban (10 percent) adult learners received other welfare benefits.

Focus group participants noted that because this information was self-reported and rural people tended to be unwilling to share personal information, the figures reflecting receipt of benefits were likely under-reported.

Unique characteristics of rural adult learners

Focus group discussions revealed some unique characteristics that distinguish rural from urban adult learners. The most important is that the rural lifestyle means living in areas of low population density. One provider noted that the nearest bookstore was 50 miles away. Public transportation tended to be available only in the more highly populated sections of the rural counties and unavailable to the population that was isolated and most in need of educational programs. In addition, some families did not own cars and some adults didn't have driver's licenses. One provider felt that having one adult education program in every community was not enough because people's homes are so widely located.

One issue mentioned frequently was that the rural participants tend to be untrusting of outsiders and respond more openly to tutors and administrators that were from their own community and with whom they had been long acquainted. Some motivational barriers to seeking adult education were also uniquely rural. These are discussed in the following section.

Summary of characteristics of rural adult education program participants

- Participants tend to include more women than men and span the age ranges from young, recent high school dropouts to those in the workforce population to retirees. They are also primarily white, though minority populations seem to be increasing in some rural areas.
- Rural adult learners tended to have very low, yet diverse, education and skill levels.
- The rural adult learner population was more likely than its urban counterpart to be unemployed, disabled, and receiving welfare benefits.
- Low population density and lack of public and private transportation in rural communities have made it difficult for some adults to participate in education programs.

Participation and Retention in Rural Adult Education Programs

Motivators for and barriers to participation

Data from the provider surveys show why adult learners began education programs. The greatest percentage (27 percent) of rural learners wanted to attain a high school diploma or GED. This figure was 16 percent for urban adult learners. Jobs are another big factor, as about 18 percent of both rural and urban participants joined to retain or gain employment.

Factors mentioned in focus group discussions that affect student motivation can be categorized as individual, family, and community factors. Individual motivators outside of education and employment included personal enrichment, requirements of probation or receipt of public assistance benefits, and a need or desire to study English as a second language.

Family factors include the desire to set a good example for one's own children by getting a GED, to help one's children in school, and having the time to concentrate on education now that children were growing up. Community influences included adult education provider collaborations with local businesses to raise awareness and encourage participation in education programs and the requirement by public assistance for employment.

Recruitment Strategies of Adult Education Providers

(percent of responding providers who indicated strategies in each category)

Strategy Type	Rural (of 27)	Urban (of 51)
Word of mouth and other personal contacts	41%	67%
Referral	19%	37%
Flyers, brochures, coupons, business cards, posters, mailings, announcements	59%	47%
Newspaper, cable, radio, TV, web, and other media	56%	71%
Collaboration with other organizations	15%	20%
Outreach, fairs, open houses	4%	12%

Percents do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

Although there are compelling reasons to participate in adult education programs, intrinsic barriers were often difficult to overcome. Focus group participants felt that potential rural learners often dealt with the following deterrents.

- Shame about being illiterate – Since there is often little privacy in small rural communities, adult learners cannot hide their adult education program attendance.
- Educational history – Many adult learners have a history of school failure and do not wish to fail again. Also, many people in rural, depressed areas place little value on education.
- Fear of what education may bring – To leave an area where you grew up and where your family and friends are to get a better job is often not desirable.
- Family experiences – Intergenerational poverty, teen pregnancy, spousal abuse, and drinking were very common and, in some programs, there was a large number of learners who will probably never work. Many have learned to rely on public assistance.

Recruitment strategies

Recruiting students and families was a crucial component to providing services for rural adult education providers. Focus group participants identified the strategies they used to get families and students to participate in their programs. The typical responses fell into four categories: 1) personal contact, 2) community activities, 3) news media, and 4) referrals. Referrals typically came from public assistance and job service offices as well as other social agencies. Community activities included speaking at clubs and organizations, such as the local Lions Club and PTA meetings,

participating in volunteer fairs, and providing talks on college campuses. Other practices were to place brochures and posters in local public facilities or cards in pizza boxes.

Survey respondents also provided recruitment practices in response to an open-ended question.

More than half of rural providers recruited through flyers and other printed materials and

through the news media. Word of mouth was also very important. Providers made significant but not heavy use of referrals and collaboration with other organizations. Overall, higher percentages of urban providers used each type of tactic, except flyers and other printed materials.

Another open-ended survey question asked respondents to identify strategies used to enhance collaboration with other agencies and service providers. Almost half collaborated through meeting with other organizations, hosting training sessions, serving on boards and advisory committees, attending monthly meetings, and giving presentations about their programs. Others provided services to other programs, held cross trainings, and kept email and phone contacts.

Enrollment and completion

PDE data enumerate learners who are enrolled in and who complete adult education programs. A learner must log at least 12 hours to be recognized by PDE as being enrolled. The program is not funded or compensated for any participant who is not enrolled by this definition. Program completion is acknowledged by PDE when a learner completes at least 50 hours of instruction and takes a post-test.

Rural rates of enrollment are lower than urban rates, but completions are higher. In rural Pennsylvania, 69 percent of program entrants become enrolled and 31 percent complete the program. In urban areas, 74 percent enroll and 26 percent complete. See the table on page 14 for data on each rural county.

**Enrollment and Completion Rates in Adult Education Programs
by Rural Pennsylvania County, 2002**

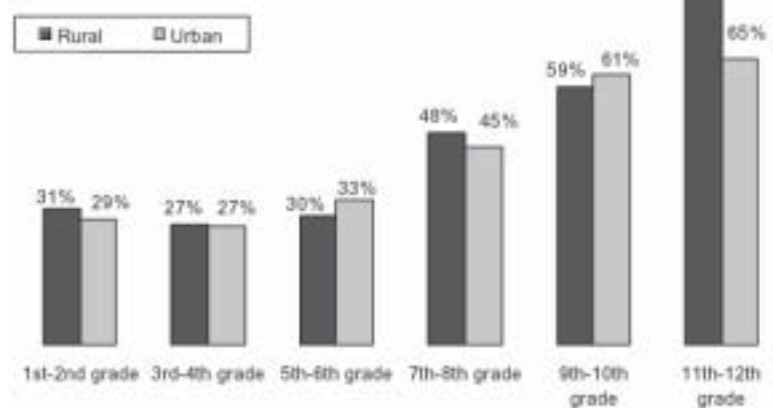
Rural County	Total participants	Enrolled (completed 12+ hours)	Percent enrolled	Completed the program	Percent completed
Urban total	48,340	35,940	74.3%	12,400	25.7%
Rural total	12,463	8,560	68.7%	3,903	31.3%
Adams	352	270	76.7%	82	23.3%
Armstrong	217	122	56.2%	95	43.8%
Bedford	112	94	83.9%	18	16.1%
Bradford	452	283	62.6%	169	37.4%
Butler	388	245	63.1%	143	36.9%
Cameron	25	20	80.0%	5	20.0%
Clarion	135	104	77.0%	31	23.0%
Clearfield	721	415	57.6%	306	42.4%
Clinton	710	633	89.2%	77	10.8%
Columbia	260	151	58.1%	109	41.9%
Crawford	519	351	67.6%	168	32.4%
Elk	99	72	72.7%	27	27.3%
Fayette	743	503	67.7%	240	32.3%
Forest	7	7	100.0%	0	0.0%
Franklin	449	333	74.2%	116	25.8%
Fulton	60	31	51.7%	29	48.3%
Greene	306	174	56.9%	132	43.1%
Huntingdon	437	313	71.6%	124	28.4%
Indiana	278	166	59.7%	112	40.3%
Jefferson	255	178	69.8%	77	30.2%
Juniata	101	72	71.3%	29	28.7%
Lawrence	394	255	64.7%	139	35.3%
Lebanon	601	371	61.7%	230	38.3%
McKean	92	63	68.5%	29	31.5%
Mifflin	474	341	71.9%	133	28.1%
Monroe	709	607	85.6%	102	14.4%
Montour	71	50	70.4%	21	29.6%
Northumberland	489	313	64.0%	176	36.0%
Perry	230	161	70.0%	69	30.0%
Pike	163	108	66.3%	55	33.7%
Potter	37	20	54.1%	17	45.9%
Schuylkill	630	449	71.3%	181	28.7%
Snyder	216	127	58.8%	89	41.2%
Somerset	458	320	69.9%	138	30.1%
Sullivan	12	10	83.3%	2	16.7%
Susquehanna	165	111	67.3%	54	32.7%
Tioga	287	152	53.0%	135	47.0%
Union	192	129	67.2%	63	32.8%
Venango	220	171	77.7%	49	22.3%
Warren	92	52	56.5%	40	43.5%
Wayne	226	157	69.5%	69	30.5%
Wyoming	79	56	70.9%	23	29.1%

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, ABLE

Completion rates were also calculated by grade level ability of learners upon program entry. Rates were calculated by dividing the number of students who took post-tests by those who took post-tests at each level. Adult learners with lower ability levels on entering the program were most likely to drop out while those with higher ability levels upon entering were most likely to complete the program.

Of rural participants who entered at the three elementary school levels, about 30 percent completed the post-test. However, completion rates for the three higher levels climbed to 48 percent for 7th to 8th grade, 59 percent for 9th to 10th grade, and 82 percent for the 11th to 12th grade levels. Urban completion rates were similar, though much lower, at the 11th to 12th grade level. Students entering with 11th to 12th grade abilities might be

Completion Rate by Literacy Level upon Program Entry, Rural and Urban Pennsylvania



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, ABLE

more motivated to complete their programs since their skill levels were high enough to reach their goals in a short period of time.

Dropout rates are high for several reasons. One program coordinator felt that some participants are looking for a quick fix and are often not ready

to commit to the lengthy process of learning. For others the lack of transportation in rural areas creates a barrier and prevents learners from attending classes.

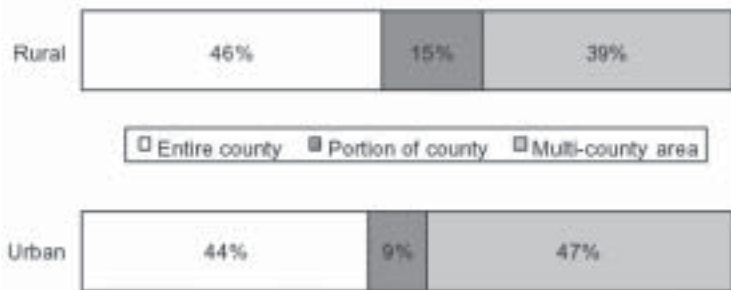
Characteristics of Rural Adult Education Providers Area served

The Department of Education's provider directory, Adult Basic and Literacy Education Services in Pennsylvania (ABLE), shows that 63 percent of adult education programs are located in urban counties while 37 percent are in rural counties. But because adult education providers may serve an area greater or smaller than the county in which they are located, the provider survey asked respondents two clarifying questions to determine the rurality of the population served. One question asked whether the agency served the entire county, a portion of the county, or a multi-county area. Another question asked respondents to categorize the area they serve as predominantly rural, predominantly urban, or mixed rural/urban.

Summary of participation and retention in rural adult education programs

- Motivating factors for participation, aside from employment and attaining a GED, included family issues, requirements of probation, retention of public assistance benefits, and learning English as a second language. Because of this diversity in the reason for participation, providers offer a wide array of education services.
- Many barriers to participation also exist, including embarrassment at being illiterate, little value placed on education, and family history of poverty, abuse, and alcoholism.
- Student retention is a problem for adult education providers: they need to retain students to retain funding and to meet their basic objective of increasing education.
- Students most in need of education because they exhibit low-level skills are also least likely to stay in the programs. The students most likely to complete the programs have skill levels high enough to attain a GED or diploma in a short amount of time.

Service Coverage by Rural and Urban Providers



Source: Adult Education Provider Survey

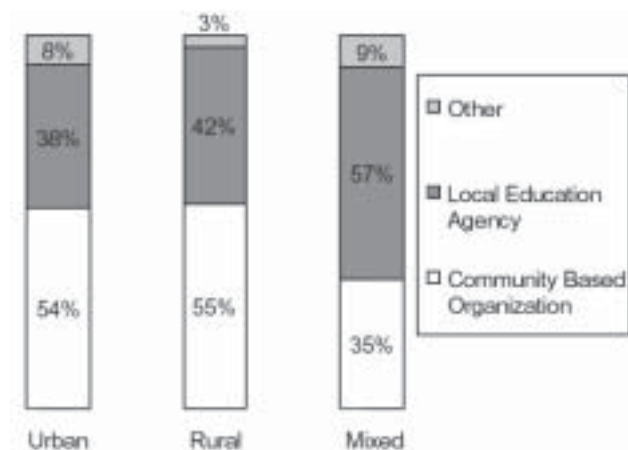
Forty-six percent of rural providers served one entire county and 39 percent served multi-county areas. Urban providers tended to serve multi-county areas. Providers based in rural counties serve an area that is 78 percent rural and 22 percent mixed. On the other hand, 43 percent of the area served by urban-based providers is not entirely urban.

The next few data items in this section are broken down by rural, urban or mixed service area type (rural, urban, mixed) rather than by the rural or urban county location of the provider.

Organization type

ABLE divides provider agencies into three categories: community based organizations; local education agencies (LEAs), which include intermediate units, school districts, and community colleges/post secondary education institutions; and others.

Types of Organization by Rurality of Service Coverage



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, ABLE

More than half of the providers in rural (55 percent) and urban (54 percent) areas are community-based organizations, as are 35 percent of providers in mixed areas. LEAs are the biggest provider in mixed areas at 57 percent and make up about 40 percent of providers in rural and urban areas. Other provider types served less than 10 percent of each of the three area types.

More rural than urban adult education programs were located in correctional institutions (18 versus 10 percent), which may be explained by the fact that more correctional institutions in Pennsylvania are located in rural areas.

Staffing

According to ABLE reports, the staff of adult education providers consists of teachers, tutors, counselors, administrators, and support staff. Paid staff includes administrators, teachers, counselors, and paraprofessionals who often carried more than one responsibility, such as administrator/teacher or teacher/counselor. In 2000-2001, about 30 percent of the staff was paid and 70 percent was volunteers. State Act 143 of 1986 targets 20 percent of grants to be used for training volunteer tutors.

Programs serving rural areas have better student to staff rates than do urban programs. The 21 students per paid staff are about the same as in a regular classroom setting. This better rural rate holds across all program and organization types.

Within rural service areas, those providers offering ESL programs had the most students per paid staff while the other programs were about equal. At the same time though, ESL programs had the lowest number of students per total staff, indicating that volunteers play a big role for these providers.

Also, community based programs have the most students per paid staff member and other types have the fewest. But, as there is only one program in the other category, these data are likely not universally applicable.

The data suggest that volunteers play a key role, especially for the rural/urban mixed providers. Overall, there were fewer staff members, both paid and volunteer, among rural providers.

Services offered

Programs listed in ABE were categorized as follows:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) - Serves adults who are functioning between the grade levels of 0 through 8 and who have minimal competence in reading, writing, and math, are not sufficiently educated to meet the requirements of adult life, and are not sufficiently competent to speak, read or write the English language to allow employment at the level of the adult's real ability.

- General Education Development (GED) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE)- Serve adults who need instruction on skill levels that are normally associated with grades 9 through 12 and who are literate and can function in everyday life, but are not proficient, or do not have a high school diploma.

- English as a Second Language (ESL)-ESL is part of ABE with instruction designed for adults with limited English proficiency who were not born in the United States or whose

Student to Staff Comparisons by Rurality of Service Coverage and Rural Comparisons by Program and Organization Type

	Number of Providers	Students/Paid Staff	Students/Total Staff (paid and volunteer)
Rurality of Service Coverage			
Urban	90	39	11
Rural	28	21	5
Mixed	22	27	8
Total (all programs)	140	33	9
Rural Program Type			
Family literacy	17	21	6
ABE	28	21	5
ESL	17	26	5
GED	16	22	6
Rural Organization Type			
Community-based	15	24	4
Local Education Agency	12	21	7
Other	1	2	1

native language is other than English, come from environments where language other than English is dominant, and who are American Indian or Alaska Natives and who come from environments where a language other than English has a significant impact on proficiency in the English language.

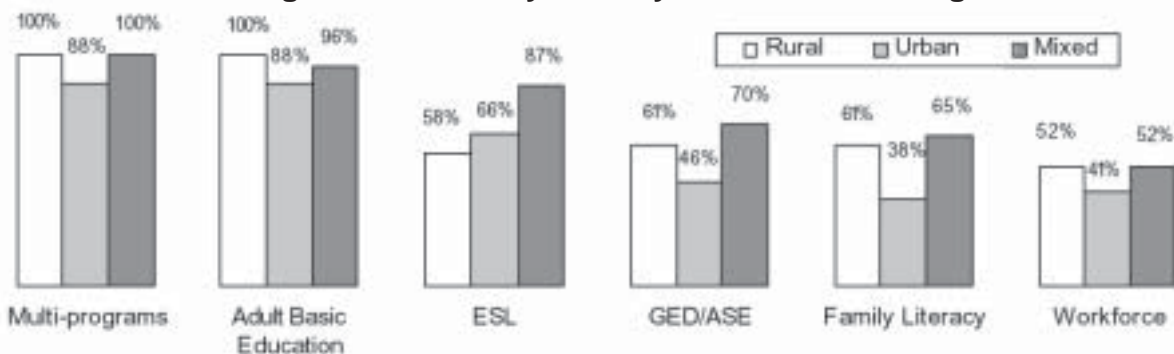
- Family Literacy – Even Start and Act 143 Family Literacy programs are designed to improve the educational opportunities of families by integrating adult education and early childhood education. The goals

are to improve the parents' basic skills, support children's development and early literacy skills, and increase the parents' skill and knowledge about their rights and responsibilities as their children's first teachers.

- Workforce – Instruction in ABE, ASE/GED, and ESL with a strong relationship between skills taught and the education requirements of actual jobs.

In 2002, all the rural and rural/urban mixed adult education providers offered multiple programs, as did 88 percent of urban providers. Further break-

Programs Offered by Rurality of Service Coverage



downs reveal that all the rural providers, 96 percent of mixed, and 88 percent of urban providers offered ABE. Fifty-eight percent of rural, 66 percent of urban, and 87 percent of mixed providers offered ESL.

Providers serving mixed areas were more likely than rural and urban providers to offer ESL, GED/ASE, family literacy, and workplace programs. Rural programs were more likely than urban programs to offer all of these except ESL.

Despite a variety of rural programs offered, some focus group participants felt that there was a need for adaptive programs to match the local job market needs. These local needs were in regard to specific local businesses, such as a meat packing plant.

Flexibility in addressing student needs

In addition to offering multiple programs, providers may offer a variety of class times and individualized instruction to increase the accessibility of programs. Class times are available from two sources, ABLE and the provider survey conducted for this study.

Class Times Offered by Rurality of Service Coverage

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	All three times
Urban	92%	89%	77%	67%
Rural	100%	90%	84%	79%
Rural/Urban Mixed	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education

ABLE data from 2002 show that all providers serving mixed areas offered classes in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings. Morning was the most common class time for rural and urban providers and evening the least common.

The survey data show different results. Rural and urban providers similarly offered individualized instruction and flexible class scheduling times throughout the week, but urban providers have slightly more diverse times. In general, most providers had individualized instruction, but only about one-third of providers offered classes on the weekend.

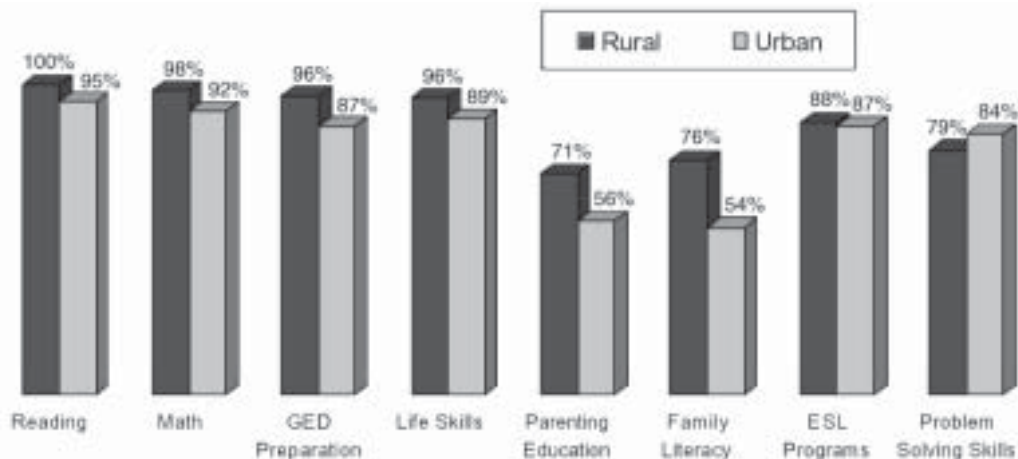
Skills training

Adult education programs provide skills training in four general areas: basic, computer, job, and learning.

Basic Skills: For the purpose of this study, basic skills are the ability to function as a literate adult and to perform everyday functions. Programs teaching basic skills are reading, math, GED preparation, life skills, parenting education, family literacy, ESL, and problem solving skills.

According to the provider survey, almost all Pennsylvania adult education providers offered reading, math, GED preparation, and life skills, the more traditional skills associated with adult education. Rural and urban providers were similar in their rates of offering these traditional basic skills, though rural rates were slightly higher.

Basic Skills Instruction Offered by Rural and Urban Providers



Source: Adult Education Provider Survey

Rural providers offered family literacy and parenting education programs at much higher rates than did urban providers. ESL offering was similar among rural and urban providers with more than 85 percent in each area offering this program. It is worth noting that some urban providers offered ESL as their only program. Problem solving skills is the only program offered more by urban providers.

Computer Skills: Computer skills are those needed to compete with the changing technology in the workforce and everyday life. Programs teaching computer skills consist of basic computer skills, word processing, Internet use, software training, graphic design, and web page design.

Survey results show that 79 percent of rural adult education providers offered basic computer skills and 60 percent offered word processing skills. More advanced skills, such as graphic and web page design, were offered by a small percentage of rural providers. Rural providers were more likely to offer basic computer, Internet, and web design training while urban providers had more frequent provision of word processing, software, and graphic design training.

Although instruction in many computer skills was offered, focus group discussions revealed that much of the computer equipment was outdated, additional software was needed, and telephone lines and the ability to access distance learning were not readily available. Focus group discussions also revealed a lack of access to computers that students may use on a regular basis.

Job Skills: Job skills are those needed to find, obtain, and retain employment. Most rural providers offer job search (76 percent) and job retention

(71 percent) skills training, but a higher percentage of urban providers offer each of these (82 and 85 percent, respectively).

Learning Skills: Learning skills training includes learning strategies, active listening, and public speaking. Rural and urban adult education providers offered similar percentages of instruction in learning strategies and active listening skills. However, urban providers (47 percent) were much more likely than rural providers (28 percent) to offer instruction in public speaking.

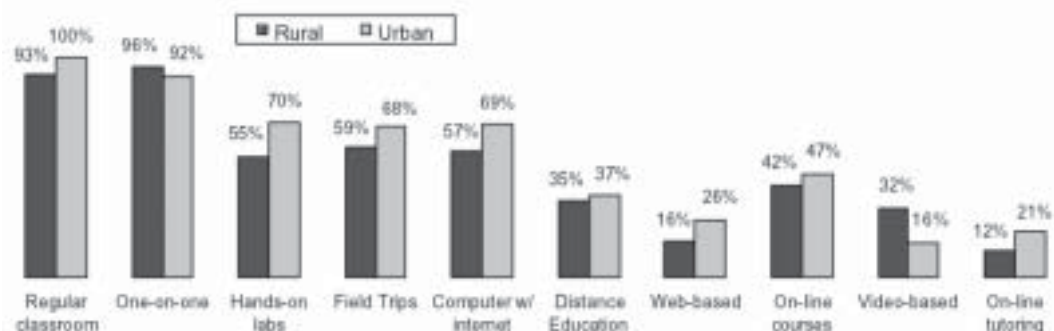
Instructional strategies

Instructional strategies include 10 general methods of providing instruction. The traditional methods of regular classroom instruction and one-on-one instruction were the most widely used and were similarly represented among rural and urban providers.

Hands-on labs and field trips, also more traditional methods of instruction, and computers with Internet access were also widely used instructional strategies by both rural and urban providers. Not many providers, especially in rural areas, used web-based courses and on-line tutoring. Video-based instruction is the only instruction strategy used more by rural than urban providers, perhaps due to the lower expense of this type of technology.

Focus group results concurred, saying that traditional methods, including one-on-one teaching, regular classroom teaching, and some home-based instruction, were the most widely used methods. Although most providers used regular classroom instruction and one-on-one instruction, focus group discussions revealed that these two strategies looked very different for rural and urban providers. Regular classroom instruction

Instruction Strategies Used by Rural and Urban Providers



Source: Adult Education Provider Survey

for urban providers usually involved a large number of students who worked in small groups and received some one-on-one instruction. For rural providers, regular classroom instruction was most often one-on-one instruction due to few students in the class.

Focus group participants also pointed out the obstacles of using computer technology for instruction. Access to computers in rural areas was not always possible, and the computers were often outdated. Distance education in rural areas was hampered by an inadequate infrastructure including lack of phone lines and cellular service. Providers also felt that distance education, with its absence of a personal teacher/student interaction, did not provide the motivation students needed. For both rural and urban providers, the current funding sources did not allow for upgrades and additions needed to use technology as a significant instructional strategy.

One provider had difficulty securing sites for programs, and even when they used the local

Top Five Program Needs for Successful Adult Basic Education

Rank	Rural	Urban
1	Additional funding from state, federal or business/industry	Additional funding from state, federal or business/industry
2	Increase in full-time staff	Increase in full-time staff
3	Strategies to inform adult learners of the program	Improved computer facilities
4	Strategies to inform adult learners of the programs' benefits	Strategies to inform adult learners of the program
5	TIE: Increase in volunteers and Improved computer facilities	Strategies to inform adult learners of the programs' benefits

Top Five Needs for Successful Adult Learners

Rank	Rural	Urban
1	Motivation to participate in the adult education program	Flexible scheduling for adult students
2	Daycare for adults with young children	Transportation for adults to attend class
3	Transportation for adults to attend class	Career and Educational counseling services for adults
4	Career and Educational counseling services for adults	Motivation to participate in the adult education program
5	Credentials for adult learners	Daycare for adults with young children

school districts, they were not permitted to access the computers. One-on-one instruction for rural providers is similar to home visits, though some don't go directly into homes but meet in neutral locations. One-on-one tutoring is provided throughout the county at a time and place convenient for the tutor and the learner.

Program needs for successful adult education

The survey asked program coordinators to rank the top five factors from a choice of seven needed for successful adult basic education. The only option that didn't make either the rural or urban list was more distance education.

Both rural and urban provid-

Adult Learner Needs Affecting Service Delivery

(percent of responding providers who indicated adult learner need in each category)

Adult Learner Needs	Rural (of 14)	Urban (of 29)
Learner abilities/disabilities (includes low education and	36%	52%
Time (includes scheduling, 1 on 1 tutoring, distant home visits)	29%	14%
Language Issues	29%	7%
Family, childcare, parenting issues (includes poverty)	14%	10%
Behavior, emotional, mental health, motivational	14%	10%
Instructional issues and resources	7%	10%
Transportation	7%	28%
Other (i.e. transient students, deadlines for vocational programs)	21%	3%

Percents do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

Issue Specific Barriers for Rural Adult Education Providers

Issue	Specific barriers
Funding	Not enough in general Need more funding for computers and software Cost for the student
Transportation	Travel from diverse parts of landscape Lack of transportation Parking
Child Care	Lack of child care No daycare available
Requirements for Number of Participants	Difficulty meeting the 20 family minimum Birth to grade 3 requirement is restrictive Agencies are territorial to keep their numbers for funding
Student Motivation	Lack of motivation Difficult to keep students motivated with distance education Little value on education
Geographical Area	County is widespread Distance of travel Scattered services Fragmented services in different, often poor quality, buildings
Technology	Lack of equipment No cell phones Restrictive requirements for computer class (must have reading /math)
Administrative	Lack of staff to meet PDE requirements for Family Literacy Restrictions on how late classes can run Overwhelming paperwork Limited services available

ers ranked additional funding and increasing full-time staff as their top two needs. From the results, it appears that rural providers faced a greater challenge in recruiting and retaining participants than did urban providers.

Learner needs for successful adult education

The survey also asked program coordinators to rank the top five needs from a choice of six needed for successful adult learners. All six reached either the rural or urban list or both.

Rural and urban adult respondents ranked the top learner needs quite differently. While urban providers felt that flexible

scheduling was the most important, rural providers ranked it the last of the six. The greatest similarity was that credentials for adult learners ranked low.

Some students have special needs that affect the way services are delivered. Open-ended survey questions focused on diagnosed and undiagnosed learning disabilities and other special adult learner needs.

The special needs of students vary between urban and rural settings, but the most common factor that affected service delivery in both areas was learners' abilities and disabilities. More than half of urban providers who answered this question noted such issues, as

did more than a third of rural respondents. Time and language issues were more of an issue for rural providers than for urban providers. On the other hand, transportation was a greater concern for urban providers than for rural providers. This may be because rural providers felt they addressed the transportation issue in other portions of the survey.

Barriers and problems facing rural adult education providers

The table above lists barriers named by rural adult education focus group respondents.

Rural providers mentioned lack of transportation and lack of childcare as two of the

biggest obstacles. Few providers offer childcare for evening classes. One provider suggested that childcare might have had an effect on the age of the students that they served and may explain why more students are 45 to 75 years old.

Transportation was important because of the vast areas to be served and the low population density. Rural Pennsylvania providers served participants in remote areas where public transportation was non-existent.

Most families in adult education programs have no car and/or have no driver's license. Funding streams for adult education providers did not provide enough money to fund an adequate transportation system.

Large service areas also often resulted in fragmented services offered in different locations. Facilities can be such a problem that one provider mentioned that the rats and cockroaches in their only available location frequently drove students away

from their services. Because it was often difficult to offer all of the needed programs in areas where a small number of participants lived and to find a facility in which to house the programs, it was frequently necessary to combine programs into one program that would meet diverse needs. One participant noted the difficulty for a small remote staff to have the expertise to handle all the types of programs that even the small group of learners might need.

Summary of characteristics of rural adult education providers

- Two main types of agencies, community-based organizations and local education agencies, provided rural adult education in Pennsylvania.
- About half the rural providers served an entire county, while others served a multi-county area or a portion of a county. The providers located in rural counties almost exclusively served areas they described as predominantly rural. Urban county providers served areas that were urban, mixed, and rural.
- Rural providers had significantly fewer students, paid staff, and volunteer staff than did urban and rural/urban mixed programs.
- Almost all providers offered multiple programs and offered ABE. Rural providers were more likely than urban providers to offer each program except ESL, although more than half of rural providers did offer ESL programs. Some focus group participants felt that there was still a need for adaptive programs to match local job market needs.
- Morning classes were the most widely offered. Rural providers offered evening classes more often than did urban providers.
- Most rural providers offered training in a wide variety of skills. More rural than urban providers offered family literacy and parenting education. Although instruction in many computer skills were offered, focus group discussions revealed that much of the computer equipment was outdated, additional software was needed, and telephone lines and the ability to access distance learning was not readily available.
- Traditional methods of instruction, such as one-on-one teaching, regular classroom teaching, and home-based instruction, were the most widely used strategies. One difficulty with distance education was maintaining student motivation. For rural providers, regular classroom instruction entailed more one-on-one instruction due to small numbers of students per class.
- Rural and urban adult learners and providers had diverse needs to be successful. Rural providers faced a greater challenge in recruiting and retaining participants than did urban providers. Additional funding was the primary need for both rural and urban providers. Motivation to participate, daycare, transportation, and career and educational counseling are important needs of successful learners. Rural providers also saw the need for credentials for adult learners as important.
- Learner abilities and disabilities were the most common factors affecting the delivery of services. Rural providers felt that instructional resources and transportation were issues of special need.

Funding Streams for Rural Adult Education

Funding streams are described in this section in terms of sources, average grant amounts, and state funding program eligibility requirements and funding formulas.

Major funding sources

Respondents to the provider survey were asked to indicate the percentage of their funding that came from federal or state grants, school districts or county government organizations, private individuals, community grants, or donations from businesses.

Rural programs receive nearly all of their funding from government sources. About 83 percent is from state and federal grants and 11 percent from school districts and counties. Businesses and private individuals account for 3 percent and community grants make up the remainder. Urban providers have similar funding sources with a little less coming from governments and more from private sources.

Focus group discussions confirmed that the majority of funding was through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, primarily ABLE. Other Department of Education monies came through Act 143, Summer Reading Funds, and Literacy Corps. Because grants administered by PDE constituted the major source of funding for rural adult education programs, adult education providers must meet the eligibility requirements imposed by PDE to perpetuate their programs.

Federal funds came through the Even Start program. Focus group participants noted that rural communities receive fewer donations from businesses because there are fewer businesses in rural areas.

According to program directors, the fact that rural schools serve not only as the educational center in the community but also as the social center may explain why rural programs receive more financial support from school districts than do urban programs. Many program directors maintain communication with the schools for distributing information about their programs to prospective learners. Some providers send flyers home with school children and speak at PTA meetings.

Participants noted that community grants were generally issued by United Way agencies.

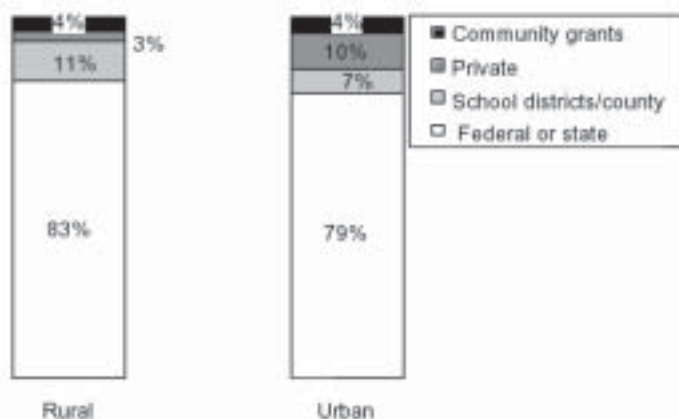
Miscellaneous, minor sources of funding included tutors paying dues, Mental Health/Mental Retardation subcontracts, and other unnamed sources. One rural provider expressed that it is very difficult to find foundations willing to support the area even when the program meets the criteria and guidelines for funding. The administrative work of applying for grants is seen as cumbersome and time-consuming. One coordinator writes 59 grant proposals per year to obtain funding to support her program.

Employer-sponsored programs

Another funding mechanism is for an employer to implement a literacy program for its employees by applying for a literacy grant and contracting with an adult education provider. The reasons for employers to implement this type of program vary. According to focus group participants, some employers found that their employees lacked basic reading skills to read directions. Other employees lacked basic math skills needed to work on an assembly line and to perform basic functions vital to the business.

Based on information from PDE, employers sponsored a much higher percentage of rural programs (4 percent) than urban programs (1 percent). While employer-sponsored adult education programs constitute a small percentage of the programs administered, there appears to be a greater

Funding Sources for Rural and Urban Adult Education Providers



Source: Adult Education Provider Survey

need in rural areas. This additional responsibility increases the already wide range of services that rural adult education providers administer.

Other funding sources

The 2001 Pennsylvania Family Literacy Program Fiscal Profiles reported the general Even Start and Act 143 funds awarded to family literacy projects located in each county. Act 143 funds were state monies granted through PDE, while Even Start funds were federal monies administered through PDE.

The 43 rural programs that were awarded funding received an average of \$117,675 each, with individual awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$278,675. The 29 urban programs that were awarded funding each received between \$62,672 and \$640,000 for an average of \$171,516, nearly \$50,000 more than the rural average. And the median rural program award of \$80,000 was half the \$160,000 urban median. Although rural programs usually serve fewer learners, the challenge for the rural providers is to meet administrative and overhead costs to support nearly 50 percent more programs with only 2 percent more total funding.

Breaking these funds down, 31 programs in rural counties were supported by Act 143 funds and 12 by Even Start funds. The average Even Start grant amount awarded to rural and urban programs were comparable, probably because funding eligibility requirements for Even Start are based on association with a school district

Median Number Served by Rural and Urban Programs

	Adults	Children	Families
Rural	27	34	20
Urban	53	69	50

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Family Literacy Program Fiscal Profiles 2000/01

or charter school rather than on numbers of participants.

Average Act 143 funds to rural programs are notably less than to urban programs, likely because funding amounts depend on the number of learners in the program. Rural programs serve many fewer learners, as seen in the table above.

The Summer Reading program was initiated during the fiscal year 2000-2001 to expand and intensify summer services in collaboration with public libraries and school districts throughout Pennsylvania. Summer Reading funds were also awarded to adult education programs based on numbers served. The 14 rural family literacy programs receiving these funds got an average of about \$32,000 while the 13 urban programs averaged nearly \$51,000.

Eligibility requirements and funding formulas

The table on page 25 provides information from ABLE 2003 on funding targets, eligibility requirements, and funding ranges for all PDE administered funding.

Funding targets for Act 143, the Workforce Investment Act, and EL/Civics were identified by the numbers of eligible learners in the program. From this

requirement, it appears that these funding targets may favor urban programs. For example, rural programs that serve vast geographic regions of low population density and support multiple sites face great difficulties in recruiting enough participants to comprise units of family literacy as needed for Act 143 funding.

Funding issues – focus group perspective

Rural program directors expressed a concern that PDE didn't understand the unique characteristics of rural areas. These characteristics, such as geographic vastness, low population density, and lack of transportation, resulted in barriers to effective implementation of adult education programs, including difficulty in recruiting the same number of participants as in urban areas. One provider noted that it is very hard for 20 families to meet, and people fall through the holes.

In rural counties, much of the time and expense of the instructors and administrators was spent traveling to various sites rather than instructing. One provider noted that the lack of transportation is especially high in areas where the need for literacy training is also high.

Suggestions for overcoming these barriers included granting more funds to rural areas due to distance and scattered population and supplying more funds for transportation. One provider suggested awarding additional funds for Family Literacy Programs when a unit of 30

Adult Education Funding Administered by the PA Department of Education

Program	Funding Target	Eligibility	Range of funding
Even Start	School districts, charter schools or community-based organizations in partnership with school districts or charter schools	Based on availability of federal monies, needs, and progress toward meeting goals	\$75,000 min. in years 1-8 and \$52,000 min. for years 9+
PA Adult Basic and Family Literacy Act 143 of 1986	Based on number of eligible adults in the program area that: - received public assistance; - were unemployed or displaced homemakers; - did not have certificates of graduation from a secondary school; - were not currently enrolled in adult or family literacy programs; - were minorities; or - had < 5th grade reading level. Demonstrate provisions for client outreach and referral activities	Based on units of family literacy which are defined as groups of 20 families, 20 adults, and 20 children	\$60,000 - \$84,872 per unit of family literacy, including eligible adults not currently enrolled in another state or federally funded adult education program
Workforce Investment Act, Title II, Section 231	Counties of greatest need and based on the numbers of eligible adults who: - were ages 16 to 61; - did not have a secondary school diploma; or - were functioning at grade levels 0-5 and/or have a need for English literacy instruction. Demonstrate provisions for client outreach and referral activities		
Summer Reading	Programs acting in collaboration with public libraries and school districts	To establish this program in 2000-2001, all complete grants submitted prior to the deadline were approved for FY 2003-2004.	
EL (English language)/ Civics	Programs serving students with limited English proficiency and those interested in applying for U.S. citizenship	Based on projected and current enrollment. Agencies meeting 90%+ projected enrollment receive the max available. Others receive pro-rated amount, as available.	Cost per student not to exceed \$450
PA Literacy Corps	Programs that train college students to serve as volunteer adult education instructors	Demonstrate a partnership between a higher education institution and a volunteer-based adult basic and family literacy provider.	

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

families, adults, and children is reached, rather than requiring 40 families, adults, and children (an entire additional unit) before

additional funding is granted. Another suggestion was to integrate a population density factor into the funding formula.

It was felt that rural one-on-one tutoring should not be compared to city agencies with classes.

Funding issues – survey perspective

Three open-ended questions specifically addressed funding issues and allowed respondents

to elaborate on their funding needs. These questions and answers appear in the tables below and on page 27.

What changes, if any, do you feel are necessary in the state funding formula for adult literacy and basic adult education in Pennsylvania?

Response categories	Typical Responses
Funding amount	Increase funding amount: - to pay staff a professional salary and provide health coverage for staff - to pay for costs of GED testing - for transportation and child care - to compensate for federal funding cut and in downturn economy - per student for educational purposes - for needed technology
Accountability	Fewer state initiatives and less complicated paperwork More emphasis on finding out what providers are doing and teaching Funding should not have to be channeled through school district or tech center Formula should include poverty Funding should be performance based More trust by the funding agencies in the service providers Realistic cost per student hours better aligned with student programs
Student Issues	More focus on students More realistic goals for adult learners with longstanding problems as students "Most in need" should be redefined so working poor may have greater access Allow for increased instructional time
Demographics of the service area	Target areas with high unemployment rates Rural one-on-one should not be compared to city agencies with classes; match demographic and geographic trends Rural areas need more money due to distance and scattered population
Assessment	GED students should be required to attend adult education classes before testing

What changes, if any, do you feel are necessary in the state funding management procedures and related policies for adult literacy and basic education in Pennsylvania?

Response category	Typical Responses
Unique county characteristics	Use demographic data to drive funding management Should be based on students served Based on counties' needs not size More understanding and responsiveness to local situation Should be based on quality of the program Allow student satisfaction testimonials to count in program assessment
Paperwork and accountability	Less complicated Unrealistic requirements (12 hrs = enrolled, 50 hrs = retained) Balance accountability with common sense Flexibility to move funds to budget lines as needs are met Accountability requirements need to be streamlined FY reporting does not account for accomplishments of students who split fiscal years Realistic cost per student hours better aligned with student programs Adult education providers are required to collaborate; other government funded groups are not Visit providers on a regular basis
Programs and Services	Set different standards for family literacy and adult education services Students should have something invested in themselves (each pay a little) Not cutting programs
Staff	Increase professional development time
Other	No changes needed More funding for equipment More funding for rental spaces

**If there were additional funding available to you, how would you spend it?
What would be your priorities?**

Response category	Typical Responses:
Increase Student Services and Programs	Increase services and/or hours, especially in unserved areas Increase ESL, GED and specialty classes Provide transportation, home visit components and child care Provide minimum learner incentives and more outreach activities
Staffing	Employ needed staff: instructors, professional counselors, and truant officers Provide more professional development opportunities Increase staff salaries and benefits, such as mileage and insurance Additional support for at-risk participants in post-secondary programs Increase recruiting, training and retention
Update Technology	Update and increase the number of computers (including laptops, software and Internet access) Expand technology integration (to include distance learning)
Office Space, Maintenance, Additional Sites	More comfortable spaces plus space for small groups Secure a central location Additional office space Additional sites (including mobile learning centers)
Recruitment and advertising	Public awareness and advocacy Student recruitment and advertising Get a phone with a listed number for information about the program

Funding issues were the primary concern for both rural and urban providers. Rural directors cited distance and scattered population as reasons for more funding, as transportation costs of staff and learners to travel to various sites was high. Additionally in rural areas, it is necessary to conduct more one-on-one instruction since there are fewer students available for classroom instruction; therefore there is a smaller student to teacher ratio and more funding is needed to pay staff.

As far as management procedures, paperwork and accountability were the most important to directors. In rural counties, this concern accounted for 44 percent of responses. About 25 percent were related to the unique characteristics of rural areas. In urban counties, 35 percent of responses related to paperwork and accountability and just 6 percent related to unique characteristics. Staff issues were more important in urban areas and accounted for 18 percent of responses, compared to the rural 8 percent.

Increasing student services and programs, including hours, was of primary importance to rural providers. Staffing issues were the second greatest priority and increasing technology was third. It is interesting to note that technology concerns were of higher priority to urban providers than to rural providers. Recruitment was as important as office space and classrooms to rural

providers, who noted the importance of getting the word out to prospective participants and tutors as well as of keeping the public informed about the importance of adult education programs.

Summary of funding streams for rural adult education

- The primary source of funding for rural adult education programs was state or federal grants administered through PDE. The federal funds seemed to be distributed relatively equally between rural and urban programs, but state funds were distributed according to formulas involving the numbers of eligible learners, which favored urban programs.
- The geographic vastness, low population density, and limited public and private transportation in rural areas made it more difficult for rural programs to enroll high numbers of adult learners. These same barriers also tended to keep rural adult education programs from qualifying for private grants.
- These same factors of low population density and wide geographic areas lead rural providers to incur expenses for the multiple sites and additional travel necessary to provide program access to learners.

Conclusions

Information about the current job market is critical to creating and maintaining high quality education programs that fit the needs of rural Pennsylvania adults and enable them to succeed in a competitive workforce. Changing job markets have resulted in the loss of many jobs in rural areas and a change in the type of basic skills that are needed. The need to shift from an industrial-based economy to a service-based economy was identified as the driving force behind demand for adult education in the workforce.

Employers frequently asked adult education program providers to offer classes, such as GED preparation, to their employees. Some companies requested training in specific job skills related to particular occupations. However, most companies were seeking employees who were proficient at basic skills like reading directions and manuals, computing math calculations, and engaging in problem solving. In addition, employers wanted employees who could interact and communicate with the public and who possessed good interpersonal skills.

Rural adult learners are a diverse group in terms of age, education and skills, family background, reason for enrollment, and specific needs. And rural adult education providers face the challenge of meeting the needs of diverse learners with wide-ranging ability and educational levels. This challenge is made more difficult by the geographic vastness and low population densities in rural areas, making it virtually impossible to group learners by ability and needs.

Although there are many reasons for enrolling in rural adult education programs, including GED attainment, retaining employment or public assistance benefits, and being able to help one's child succeed in school, there is not always a strong motivation for rural adults to enroll. In fact, motivation was the top need identified by providers for successful adult learners.

So, unlike urban providers, who often had more students than they could serve, rural providers had to actively recruit participants to secure the necessary funding for programs to continue. For instance, to receive funding from the Pennsylvania Adult Basic and Family Literacy Act 143 of

1986, a program must serve a unit of 20 families. But according to profiles from the Department of Education, half of all rural programs serve fewer than 20 families, making them ineligible for this funding. Funding criteria that require minimum numbers of program participants favor urban programs, as rural Pennsylvania providers who serve large geographic areas with low population densities have a disadvantage in getting the required number of students in one program.

Many providers serve a wide and varied geographic area while others serve only adults in their own county or locale. In some situations, rural residents must travel outside of their county to receive certain services. This leads to transportation issues as there is little to no public transportation in rural areas and many people who most need adult education services have no other transportation available to them.

All rural providers offered a variety of adult education and literacy programs but faced many challenges in doing so. For example, many offered computer skills training, but much of the equipment was outdated, additional software was needed, and telephone lines and the ability to access distance learning was not readily available.

While rural providers offered instruction in both job search and retention skills, the reluctance of people to move from family and friends and a slow job market in rural Pennsylvania may have contributed to a smaller percentage of rural than urban providers offering instruction in job related skills.

There are other discrepancies between perceived needs and program offerings. Although providers identified communication as the second most needed skill for the job market, just 28 percent offered public speaking instruction.

Instructional strategies were different in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, home-based instruction was common. Many rural providers regularly set up one-on-one tutoring sessions at times and locations convenient or accessible for students. This practice incurs transportation costs for the educators as well as the learners.

Also, urban providers used computers with Internet access and web-based or on-line instruction more than rural providers, but rural providers were twice as likely to use video-based instruc-

tion. The lower expense of this type of technology might account for the wider use among rural providers. Around one-third of rural providers used technology for distance education. However, distance education in rural areas was hampered by an inadequate infrastructure.

In summary, the unique characteristics of rural communities create barriers to effective implementation of adult education programs. Rural providers try to accommodate students' transportation needs by traveling to meet students in locations convenient to the students. However, these accommodations cost time and resources that could otherwise be used on providing more programs and improving instruction. Funding can provide the support structures, such as transportation and childcare, necessary to enable students to attend classes. Funding recommendations by adult education providers included a professional salary and health insurance coverage for staff, transportation and childcare services for students, a new funding formula to require lower minimum participation rates, and funds for technology.

Policy Considerations

In addition to the challenges facing all adult education providers, rural adult education programs in Pennsylvania face a unique set of challenges and obstacles. These include serving a diverse group of rural adults who need a variety of services, a changing job market, and vast geographic areas with low population densities. The following considerations take into account unique rural characteristics and provide critical information to help policymakers foster successful adult education programs in rural Pennsylvania.

Considerations for Increasing Adult Education Opportunities for Rural Learners *Foster communication and cooperation between career and adult education programs*

Data from this study indicate that directors of career and adult education agencies do not regularly communicate and are not aware of the range of services offered by each other. Local collaborative networks between these groups could maximize limited resources. Career centers could regularly update educational agencies with what job skills are currently needed locally so adult education providers can respond appropriately.

Cooperation could facilitate the learners' transition to the workforce as well. For example, an adult learner seeking career assistance could be referred to the local adult literacy and basic education provider when he/she could benefit from such services.

Efforts such as the state CareerLink system, which is currently integrating adult education and literacy services in One-Stop career centers, should be continued to make quality services available to Pennsylvania's rural learners.

Identify and adjust services to meet the growing needs of ESL students

The number of adults needing ESL services is increasing in rural Pennsylvania, particularly in the northeast. When creating adult education policies, legislators should consider the challenges faced by adult education providers in meeting the needs of this growing population.

PDE, as a major player in providing training, should provide guidelines and policies to ensure that the mandatory ESL Certification program is available to the growing number of rural providers needing this training.

Align public assistance to support rural adult education needs

Many rural adults in need of educational services receive welfare or other public assistance. Welfare recipients, particularly those with very low skill levels, often have difficulty completing their literacy training and job preparation before their welfare benefits expire.

Adult education providers may expand efforts to identify welfare recipients who need adult education services earlier, possibly through collaboration with the welfare-authorizing agency, so that adult learners have a longer time in service.

Since the welfare reforms of the mid-90s, state and federal legislation have increased pressure on adult learners to find work. Policymakers should also create policies to provide the means and support to help the adult learner to complete education before finding employment.

Integrate technology with adult education to meet training needs

More and more rural adult learners are looking for technology training as part of their career

preparation. The use of technology should be integrated in all educational phases, including; administrative, recruiting, orientation, content delivery, retention and assessment. Due to the geographic vastness and low population density of rural areas, technology related to distance learning should be emphasized in rural adult education programs. Innovative statewide programs should be fully used to integrate technology in workplace skills training and GED instruction.

Considerations for Improving the Quality of Rural Adult Education Programs

Implement successful recruiting strategies

The findings of this study indicated that the need for adult education programs is high in rural areas, but awareness about available services is low. Successful recruitment techniques, including word-of-mouth campaigns and door-to-door canvassing, could be expanded. These strategies are particularly useful in rural areas where adults are more reluctant to seek out services on their own.

Identify and implement flexible delivery systems and learner-centered curriculum

The high program dropout rate affects both the learner who leaves early and the provider who cannot receive full funding for the instruction the learner received. When developing curriculum, instructors should take into account the stakeholders and community needs, not just the needs of employers or the funding agency. For example, making curriculum more relevant to job needs and applications to daily life could motivate students to complete their programs.

Provide stronger support services

Transportation was one of the main barriers in rural areas due to the vast geographic areas served by a single provider and the lack of a public transportation system. Lack of childcare services or available funds for daycare was also a common barrier to participation. Collaboration efforts may provide effective support services needed for the recruitment and retention of rural adult learners.

Providers should consider alternative assessments to motivate and empower adult learners

Many adult learners who failed in the traditional school setting are reluctant to take tests. A more

student-centered approach using alternative assessments might be more motivating and empowering to students. Program directors could explore alternative assessment methods, such as one-on-one interviews, portfolios, technology-based assessment tools, and assessment tools that incorporate practical life skills. This is particularly important in rural areas where adults in need of services are reluctant to participate in education programs.

Considerations for Funding Policy and Practices for Rural Adult Education Programs

Funding formulas should take rural characteristics into consideration

Many rural providers operate education programs for a small number of diverse and widely dispersed adult learners. These programs often have difficulty receiving financial support because many government funding formulas use the number of learners as a major criteria for funding eligibility, which does not accommodate the uniqueness of the rural setting, with its lower population density and vast geographic areas. At the same time, the cost per rural student is higher than the cost per urban student.

Future funding formulas should take unique rural characteristics, such as geographic vastness and low-population density, into consideration. The formula should provide for costs per-student but also consider the costs related to program size, such as staff, resources, and equipment. Small programs are not as efficient as larger programs but are necessary to serve rural adult learners.

Provide funding for professional development

Funding should be provided to support professional development for rural providers and their staff. Many rural providers are aware of professional development opportunities and are willing to participate, but they do not attend because they lack funds to cover expenses.

Identify additional resources to recruit more paid staff and volunteers

The shortage of both paid and volunteer staff makes it difficult to meet the needs of diverse rural learners spread over a wide geographic region. Government agencies should identify resources to support and staff critically needed adult education programs.

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