

Adult Educators and Local WIOA Planning

September 2016

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), reauthorized by Congress in 2014, represents a significant federal investment in adult education. More than \$550 million nationwide is provided under WIOA Title II to support adult basic education, high school equivalency, and English language acquisition. This fact sheet highlights important opportunities for adult educators to engage with partners across the WIOA system to ensure that planning and implementation under the new law is responsive to the needs of adult learners, and makes effective use of adult education partners' expertise.

Why Does Local WIOA Planning Matter for Adult Education?

A new requirement in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act legislation mandates that adult education providers' applications for funding be reviewed by their local workforce development board to ensure alignment with the local WIOA plan. In addition, WIOA requires closer coordination among its core programs – including Title I adult, dislocated worker, and youth workforce programs; Title II adult education programs; and Title IV vocational rehabilitation programs. Given these changes, it is especially important for adult educators to be active participants in their local WIOA planning process.

Which Comes First: State or Local WIOA Planning?

The WIOA statute requires both states and local areas to create plans detailing the vision, strategy, and operations of their adult education and workforce development systems.

State plans were submitted to the federal government in Spring 2016. They will be in effect for four years, but are required to be modified and updated before PY18. Thus, the next round of state planning will commence in late 2017 and early 2018, in advance of the July 1, 2018 start date for PY18.

Local plans are required to be submitted to the governor for their state; the timeline for submission varies by state.

***Note:** WIOA Sec. 106 provides guidelines for states wishing to engage in regional planning across more than one local area. For ease of understanding, this fact sheet uses "local" to refer to both local and regional planning.*



How Does the WIOA Local Planning Process Work?

Local planning is governed by WIOA Sec. 108 and its associated regulations. It is undertaken by the local workforce development board, and must include both strategic and operational elements.

Among the components required in local plans are: analyses of regional economic conditions, local employers' skill needs, the education and skill needs of the local workforce, labor market trends, and current workforce development activities in the local area. In addition, plans must include a description of the local board's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, and the board's strategy to work with the entities that carry out WIOA core programs to align resources available to the local area and achieve the strategic vision and goals.

Who Gets to Sit at the Planning Table?

Local workforce development boards are required to have representatives of adult education serving as board members. Specifically, WIOA Sec. 107 (b)(2)(C) requires that each local board shall include representatives of entities administering education and training activities in the local area, who —

- (i) shall include a representative of eligible providers administering adult education and literacy activities under Title II;¹
- (ii) shall include a representative of institutions of higher education providing workforce investment activities (including community colleges);
- (iii) may include representatives of local educational agencies, and of community-based organizations with demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the education or training needs of individuals with barriers to employment.

Adult educators who have the opportunity to sit on their local workforce board have a variety of potential avenues to provide input to the planning process. They may choose to join a board committee or working group, if one is designated, focusing on WIOA planning. They can suggest board agenda items that examine issues related to adult education and WIOA planning, provide examples of effective strategies, or otherwise

¹ The statute further specifies that if there are multiple Title II providers serving the local area, the adult education representative on the local board shall be appointed from among individuals nominated by the local providers.



inform their colleagues of key considerations related to adult education in the local plan. In addition, they can recommend guest speakers who can present statistical or other information about adult learners in the local workforce to inform the planning process.²

Perhaps most importantly, adult educators who serve as workforce board members can help to identify and illuminate the adult education implications for other populations being served under WIOA, such as participants in Title I Out-of-School Youth programs or Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation programs.

How Can Adult Educators Weigh In if They're Not at the Table?

Adult educators who are *not* members of their local workforce board still have opportunities to engage in the local planning process. The WIOA statute mandates that draft local plans be made available to the public for a 30-day comment period. To obtain a local plan, adult educators should [contact their local workforce development board](#).

When submitting comments on a local plan, it is not necessary to comment on all aspects of the plan. Rather, adult educators can choose sections where they feel best equipped to comment, such as:

- Analysis of the education and skill levels of the local workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment
- Analysis of the existing education, training, and workforce development activities in the region, including the strengths and weaknesses of those services
- The plan's strategic vision and goals
- The proposed strategy to work with WIOA core programs to align resources and achieve the strategic vision and goals.

In particular, adult educators may want to identify specific ways that local boards can capitalize on adult education expertise to meet WIOA's mandates. These could include: incorporating Title II partners in the design and implementation of career pathways; formalizing a policy on participant co-enrollment in Title I/Title II programs; drawing on input from Title II partners in identifying employers' skill needs and developing industry sector partnerships; and/or developing robust integrated education and training policies and programs that braid funding across multiple sources.

² See below for recommended sources of statistical information on local demographics.



Adult educators may also find it helpful to draw on statistical information about the educational level and language skills of the local workforce to inform their comments. Such information is available from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey at <https://factfinder.census.gov> . In addition, the Migration Policy Institute has created fact sheets based on Census data that highlight WIOA-eligible individuals in 20 states and 25 counties, available at: www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrants-and-wioa-services-comparison-sociodemographic-characteristics-native-and-foreign

What's the Big Picture?

The primary reason to engage with the local WIOA planning process is not to produce the plan *per se*. Rather, it is to help shape what the plan represents – a guide for the implementation of WIOA services at the community level. In addition, participating in the planning process can help to establish or solidify relationships between adult educators and other partners in the workforce system, ensuring that the unique role and contributions of adult education are recognized and incorporated into the broader understanding of skills and opportunity.

Finally, participating in WIOA planning provides adult educators with the opportunity to lift up and codify good local practices in the plan. If there are aspects of the existing system that are working well – whether they are referral relationships, training collaborations, or career pathway coordination – documenting such practices in the local plan can help to ensure they persist over the long term, and can also inspire other partners to adopt the practices.



