

## Who We Are

The Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) represents the system of 65,000 adult educators, administrators and mentors working to improve educational outcomes for adults in the U.S. We work with the 43 million U.S. adults who possess low literacy skills<sup>i</sup>. Across the nation, COABE members work tirelessly to help these underserved adults master the skills they need to compete and build careers – and better futures for themselves, their families and their communities.

**We advocate for more services, more funding, and less waiting.** We promote student resources and the elimination of waiting lists that discourage and delay success. In every State, we support adult education programs that foster essential skills, family literacy and workforce development.

## Our Impact

**Adult Education programs work.** In 2017, 72 percent of adults participating in a federally-funded Adult Education program earned a high school diploma or recognized equivalent, up from 66 percent in 2015<sup>ii</sup>. With increased Adult Education funding and supports, even more adults can become educated and more quickly make progress in earning the skills needed to obtain jobs.

**Adult Education programs are cost-effective, smart investments.** COABE estimates that for every dollar invested in Adult Education, a community receives \$60 back in increased income, property taxes, and savings on welfare and legal system expenses.

**Without Adult Education, low-skilled adults are more likely to be unemployed, in poverty, in poor health or incarcerated.** Low-skilled adults are 2 times more likely to be unemployed; 3 times more likely to be in poverty; 4 times more likely to be in poor health and 8 times more likely to be incarcerated<sup>iii</sup>.

## Current Funding Levels

In FY2020, the Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grant program, Under Title II of WIOA, was funded at \$656.9 million, and Adult Education National Leadership Activities was funded at \$13.7 million for a total of \$670.6 million in funding for Adult Education. The FY2020 funding levels include a \$15 million increase over FY2019 levels.

**In the final FY2021 appropriations bill, we urge Congress to fund Adult Education at least at \$692 million.**

## The Need

**Current Adult Education funding falls far short of meeting the need.** Today, over 43 million people with low literacy levels could benefit from Adult Education and there are at least 3 million people on waiting lists for such services<sup>iv</sup>.

**Too many adults do not have the job and literacy skills needed to participate in today's workforce.** Over 43 million working age Americans lack the skills needed for many of the nation's fastest growing and highest paying jobs. Without increased funding for adult education, these Americans' will be left behind, while at the same time American businesses are struggling to fill over 7 million job openings<sup>v</sup>.

## References

<sup>i</sup>National Center for Education Statistics (2019). Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. (2014). The impact of ABS program participation on long-term economic outcomes, U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>ii</sup>Congressional Justification (2019). Career, Technical, and Adult Education Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Request. U.S. Department of Education. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget20/justifications/m-ctae.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup>U.S. Census Bureau (2016). American Community Survey.

<sup>iv</sup>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2013). *Time for the U.S. to Reskill?: What the Survey of Adult Skills says.* OECD Skills Studies. OECD Publishing.

<sup>v</sup>Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019). Economic news release: Job openings and labor turnover summary.

# ADULT EDUCATION IS AN ECONOMIC CATALYST TO FILL JOBS THAT ARE NEEDED FOR TODAY

## We are

the adult education system of nearly 65,000 leaders, administrators, and educators preparing adults to succeed in a global culture and economy by delivering a world-class education.

## We champion

increased access and investment in adult education, leading to higher quality instruction and greater student outcomes. We employ innovative and effective strategies to reach more adults who struggle with literacy, numeracy, and problem solving.

## We lead

a results-driven adult education system that provides:

- Academic instruction aligned to college and career-readiness standards
- Preparation and coaching for next steps (i.e., college and career) for:
  - Individuals without a high school diploma
  - Individuals with a high school diploma with emergent needs
  - English language learners (ELL) (literacy and civics)
  - Individuals participating in integrated education and training
  - Individuals in corrections facilities

## We equip

adult educators with:

- High-quality professional development
- Innovative instructional strategies
- Research-based models
- Leadership development

## The Challenge...

Low-skilled adults are:

**2X** more likely to be unemployed

**3X** as likely to be in poverty

**4X** as likely to be in poor health

**8X** as likely to be incarcerated

**43**  
million

working age Americans lack the skills needed for many of the nation's fastest growing and highest paying jobs.<sup>i</sup>

**7**  
million

job openings in American could be left unfilled due to a lack of skilled workers.<sup>v</sup>

Low education and skill levels of adults are a fundamental barrier to every major challenge facing the United States, including early childhood education, education reform, economic development, and improving the health and well-being of the nation's families and communities.

## The Results...

**1.5M**

students are enrolled in adult education programs.

**74%**

of adults in our programs are people of color.

**73%**

of adults who participated in federally funded high school equivalency programs and who took all of the HSE subtests attained a HSE or another indicator of high school completion.<sup>ii</sup>

A person with a high school diploma or equivalent earns an average of \$9,620 more per year than a nongraduate.

Go to [www.educateandelevate.org](http://www.educateandelevate.org) to learn more.



**NASDAE**  
National Association of State  
Directors of Adult Education

The award winning Educate & Elevate public awareness campaign is a joint initiative of COABE and NASDAE