

## 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 51.4 million low-skilled adults in literacy and the 75.1 million low-skilled adults in numeracy<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.** According to a recent study “unemployed residents with prior U.S. work experience who enrolled in an employment-focused English course boosted their earnings by an average of more than \$7,100 annually two years after starting the program, compared with unemployed non-English speakers who weren’t in the program.” With increased Adult Education funding and supports, even more adults can improve their English language skills and earn higher wages<sup>ii</sup>.

**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 fiscal year (FY) 2021, the Adult Education State Grant program, under Title II of WIOA, was funded at \$674.9 million. The FY2021 funding level includes a \$18 million increase over FY2020 levels.

**We urge Congress to double funding for the Adult Education State Grant program over the next 5 years to \$1.35 billion. To reach that goal, we need to increase funding by roughly \$135 million per year. Therefore, we call on Congress to provide at least \$810 million for the Adult Education State Grant program in the FY2022 appropriations bill.**

## The Need

**Current Adult Education funding falls far short of meeting the need.** Today, over 51.4 million low-skilled adults in literacy and 75.1 million low-skilled adults in numeracy could benefit from Adult Education. Before the pandemic, there were millions of individuals on waiting lists for adult education services, and we expect this number to rise as the nation turns toward recovery<sup>iv</sup>.

**Too many adults do not have the job and literacy skills to participate in today’s workforce.** Pre pandemic, over 43 million working age Americans lacked the skills needed for many of the nation’s fastest growing and highest paid jobs. Without increased funding for adult education, these Americans will continue to be left behind, especially as many individuals are turning to skilling and education to prepare to re-enter the job market<sup>v</sup>.

## References

<sup>i</sup>Explore how U.S. adults compare to their international peers and see the latest 2017 U.S. results. [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/current\\_results.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/current_results.asp)

<sup>ii</sup>Economic Mobility Corporation (2020) Stepping Up: Interim Findings on JVS Boston’s English for Advancement Show Large Earnings Gains. <https://economicmobilitycorp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SteppingUp.pdf>

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

<sup>iv</sup>Explore how U.S. adults compare to their international peers and see the latest 2017 U.S. results. [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/current\\_results.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/current_results.asp)

<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 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 51.4 million low-skilled adults in literacy and the 75.1 million low-skilled adults in numeracy.

## 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.

**51.4 Million** low-skilled adults in literacy

**75.1 Million** low-skilled adults in numeracy

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...

**1.5 Million**

students are enrolled in adult education programs.

**74%**

of adults in our programs are people of color.

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.

**COABE**

COALITION ON ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

**educate&  
elevate**  
ADULT EDUCATION  
An Investment in America's Future



**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



### THE REPERCUSSIONS: LACK OF SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE

**64%**

A Fall 2019 study<sup>1</sup> of 600 HR leaders surveyed found that 64% said there is a skills gap in their company, up 52% from the 2018 report.

**40%**

A significant share of employers (40%) estimate that a skill is usable for 4 years or less. Fast-paced obsolescence escalates the need for employers to hire or upskill workers when gaps form.

**44%**

Additionally 44% said it was more difficult to fill their skills gap than it was in 2018, and 42% said the skills gap was making their company less efficient.

HR leaders increasingly say **needed skills** are temporary.

**90%**

While 68% of employers say a degree is used to validate hard skills, nearly all (90%) of surveyed employers said they would hire a candidate that doesn't have a 4-year college degree.

A college degree **isn't** the only pathway.



### THE ENTRY POINT: ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education can be highly effective in preparing students for the world of work by teaching them contextualized workplace competencies and study skills that help them to become lifelong learners. These competencies are important for success in today's economic landscape as they align students' skills with the market demands of business and industry.

As part of the Workforce System and its partners funded by the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA), Adult Education provides an entry-point into job training and employment for 1.5 million adults each year by serving students with high school equivalency, industry-recognized training and credentials and wrap around services.



1. Closing the Skills Gap 2019 Study. Future Workplace.  
<https://workplacetrends.com/closing-the-skills-gap-2019-study/>



# ADULT EDUCATION

## A Business Strategy for Employers

Wagner-Peyser Services

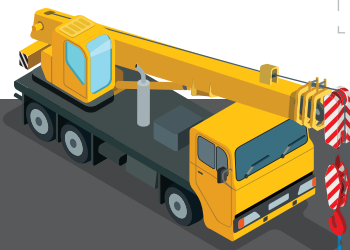
Workforce Development Boards and the American Job Centers

### ADULT ED WORKFORCE SYSTEM PARTNERS

Departments of Vocational Rehabilitation

Community Colleges

Departments of Social Services

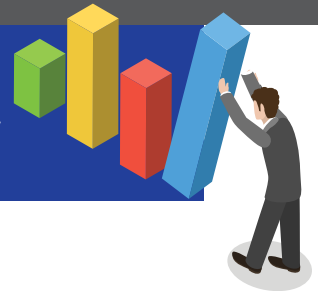


The WIOA Adult Education system prepares America's adults for family-sustaining levels of employment:

- fortifies critical academic skills
- integrates instruction with workplace essential skills and in-demand job training
- provides English Language instruction and citizenship classes
- prepares adults in High School Equivalency (HSE)

# 72%

of those entering adult education programs with the stated goal of achieving their high school equivalency met that goal within a year.



## The Workforce Employers Need: ADULT LEARNERS

The Adult Education System of 1.5 million adult learners are working to upskill for jobs that provide family sustaining wages. Additionally 44,000 learners are receiving specialized instruction for in demand jobs that are available locally through Integrated Education Training (IET) that provide basic reading/writing/math skills at the same time and in the same context as career training for jobs available locally through partnerships with business and industry. This provides business with a more skilled workforce that fills immediate needs while accelerating the academic progress for the adult learner. IETs have resulted in much greater skills and completion rates for program participants. Nationally 44,000 of the 1.5 million adult learners are participating in IETs, however all adult learners are attending adult education programs to upskill for employment purposes.

### About the Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE):

We represent the system of 65,000 adult educators who serve more than 1.5 million adult learners nationwide. We provide leadership, professional development, advocacy, and communication for our members.

# 1.5 MILLION

Adult learners are engaged in Adult Education to upskill for a better career

# 60%

are not currently working; those that are working are typically underemployed

# 63%

are working aged:  
**25-54**