

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 numeracyⁱ. 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 wagesⁱⁱ.

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 incarceratedⁱⁱⁱ.

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^{iv}.

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^v.

References

ⁱExplore 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

ⁱⁱEconomic 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>

ⁱⁱⁱU.S. Census Bureau (2016). American Community Survey.

^{iv}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

^vBureau 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

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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 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