

**Joint Advocacy Group Documents**

Developed and Signed by Various Members  
for White House, Congressional, and Administration Leaders

Activity Coordinated by the  
Council for Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL)

Assembled October 20, 2009

## Letter to Legislators in the U.S Senate Regarding Human Capital Investment in the Economic Stimulus Package

January 23, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Edward Kennedy  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Daniel Inouye  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reid, Durbin, Inouye, Harkin, Kennedy, and Murray:

With our country facing extraordinary economic challenges, President Barack Obama's vision of economic recovery is built on a foundation of job creation and the strengthening of our national infrastructure. The organizations writing this letter know that successful rebuilding of our economy through job creation in key industry sectors will only be possible if we help our workers gain the skills and postsecondary credentials needed for those jobs. Therefore, we were very pleased to learn of President Obama's and the Congress's leadership on this issue through the substantial new investments under consideration for workforce education and training in the Senate and House economic stimulus bills, and we are hopeful that adult education can be brought into the package.

Recognizing that the Senate is currently developing its stimulus legislation, we want to encourage a significant investment in education and training programs for America's workers as part of the final economic recovery package. We urge that the Senate provide funding for these programs at levels similar to those proposed in legislation introduced by Senator Murray in S.267, S. 268, and S. 269 totaling \$5.4 billion. We also urge that additional funding of \$500 million per year initially be provided for the essential Title II adult education programs of the Workforce Investment Act, which provide basic skills, English language, and technical training programs to low and moderately skilled workers and potential workers to ensure their access and pathways to the newly-created jobs. With this new investment, Congress is recognizing the seriousness of our crisis with a commitment to our nation's greatest economic resource: our workers.

Even with this increased investment in our human capital, it is vitally important that funding for education and training be invested wisely, in strategies known to be most effective in preparing America's workers for high demand jobs that offer economic opportunities and that contribute to the rebuilding of the U.S. economy. We therefore urge that Congress provide statutory

flexibility so that the implementation of the education and training investments may be targeted to innovative and transformational strategies that:

- Expand successful career pathway efforts to help dislocated, low-skilled, and potential workers build skills that lead to careers and credentials and careers in high-demand sectors and occupations, including, but not limited to, green jobs and healthcare;
- Understand and respond to the needs of state and regional economies, utilizing regional and state partnerships to design and implement strategic plans;
- Expand federal investments in human capital by encouraging system alignment, supporting alternative financing, and leveraging public and private funding for education and training; and
- Ensure that adults who work, particularly low-wage workers, have access to financial assistance for education and training through existing grant programs and education tax initiatives.

Again, we applaud the Congress and the new Administration for making this investment in education and training that will be a critical building block for a revitalized economy. We look forward to continuing our work with you to ensure that these investments are made wisely and result in the highly skilled workforce this nation needs to succeed today and in the future.

Signed,

American Association of Community  
Colleges  
The Aspen Institute  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Corporation for a Skilled Workforce  
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning  
Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

International Association of Jewish  
Vocational Services  
Jobs for the Future  
National Center on Education and the Economy  
Seedco  
The Workforce Alliance  
Workforce Learning Strategies  
Workforce Strategy Center

February 4, 2009

The Honorable Daniel Inouye  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Edward Kennedy  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Johnny Isakson  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Inouye, Cochran, Kennedy, Enzi, Harkin, Specter, Murray, and Isakson:

As organizations committed to a strong national workforce system, we are writing to express our great appreciation for the Senate's inclusion of over \$4 billion in funding for vital employment and training programs in S. 336, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Our nation's ability to emerge quickly from the current recession will rely in considerable measure on our ability to create and place America's workers in good jobs. Our diverse coalition of organizations is focused on producing skilled workers for the emerging job needs all across our economy, whether in infrastructure, green, energy, healthcare or other industries. **Workforce development is a critical component of our economic recovery and a central pillar of economic development that results in the creation of high paying jobs across the economy.**

The challenge before us is immense. Jobless claims are at their highest in twenty-six years: 11.1 million people are unemployed; Another 8 million work only part-time; and hundreds of thousands more are so discouraged that they have left the labor force and are no longer counted on the unemployment rolls. **The unemployment rate for people over 65 is at the highest point in 30 years. And the outlook for youth employment is even more ominous, as only 32.7 percent of teens were able to obtain a summer job this past summer, the lowest level in over sixty years.** Yet we have underinvested in our workforce development system since FY 2001 to the point that it does not have the resources to respond fully and effectively to this crisis.

**It is essential that the Senate at a minimum maintain funding for workforce development programs at the levels included in S. 336 as reported, totaling over \$4 billion for employment and training activities including: \$1 billion for Dislocated Workers; \$500 million for Adults; \$1.2 billion for Youth Employment; \$160 million for Job Corps; \$100 million for YouthBuild; \$200 million for National Emergency Grants; \$250 million for High Growth and Emerging Sector programs; \$400 million for Reemployment Services; \$120 million for the Senior Community Service Employment Program; and \$500**

**million for Vocational Rehabilitation.** Without significant investment in reemployment services and in our human capital, preparing and placing workers (including those with low skill levels and barriers to employment) in good jobs in high demand occupations and sectors, there is a danger that the stimulus will address our cyclical economic challenges, but ignore one of the most pressing threats to U.S. competitiveness -- the skills of the American workforce that are so vital to our future economic success and competitiveness.

Thank you for your leadership in recognizing the need to assist America's workers through these investments in workforce development and transition assistance -- essential to creating new jobs, to helping workers quickly find sustainable employment, and to restoring our economic engine.

Sincerely,

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)  
American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP)  
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)  
Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
The Corps Network  
Easter Seals, Inc.  
Experience Works  
Goodwill Industries International  
International Association of Jewish Vocational Services  
Jobs for the Future  
National Association of Counties (NACO)  
National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA)  
National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB)  
National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP)  
National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE)  
National Workforce Association (NWA)  
National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC)  
United States Conference of Mayors (USCM)  
USA Works!  
Wider Opportunities for Women  
Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment  
The Workforce Alliance  
Workforce Learning Strategies  
Workforce Strategy Center

February 11, 2009

The Honorable David Obey  
Chairman, Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Rangel  
Chairman, Ways and Means Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dave Camp  
Ranking Member,  
Ways and Means Committee  
Washington, DC, 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman  
Chairman, Energy and Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear House Conferees:

The undersigned organizations—representing the labor, environmental, workforce development, and education communities—write to express our thanks for your commitment to workforce development and job training as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. It is vital that we invest in our nation's greatest resource—our people—as part of any economic recovery plan, and the investments in job training included in the recovery legislation begin to ensure that our nation's workers receive the services and supports they need to go back to work and begin rebuilding our economy.

Our nation is facing its greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, having lost 3.6 million jobs since December 2007—with nearly half of this job loss occurring in the last three months alone—and the national unemployment rate rising to its highest level in sixteen years. The Obama Administration has therefore set an ambitious but necessary goal of creating or saving between three and four million jobs through investments in a broad range of industries and sectors, including health care, construction, and energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Most of these emerging job opportunities will be middle-skill jobs—requiring education and training beyond high school but less than a 4-year college degree—and even experienced incumbent workers within affected sectors will need to upgrade their skills to master new technologies and techniques. We are therefore heartened to see that both the House and Senate bills contain significant new funding that will begin to restore the damage done by years of disinvestment in our nation's workforce delivery system while establishing new and needed capacity for training services to support emerging and high

demand industries. *We ask that you please consider the following recommendations for any final legislation to help realize the greatest return on these investments:*

### **Department of Labor**

- *Retain* language under both bills that would provide an additional \$2.7 billion in formula funding for adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). This additional funding is an important first step towards restoring a national workforce system that has lost more than \$2 billion in funding since 2001, and will help workers locate employment opportunities and access individualized skills training while allowing states and localities to better serve individuals who have lost employment.
- *Retain* language in both bills establishing a competitive grant program under the U.S. Department of Labor to support worker training in high growth and emerging industries, particularly in energy efficiency and renewable energy and health care sectors. President Obama's economic advisors estimate that the single largest source of job creation will be energy, with infrastructure and health care following close behind—creating a total of nearly 1.1 million jobs. Competitive training grants focused on green jobs and health care jobs are necessary to facilitate the President's commitment to accelerate change in these sectors and provide career opportunities to both men and women, to distressed communities, and to targeted populations in need of special support. *Adopt* the House funding levels of \$750 million for this program, and the House bill's dedication of funding for green job training and prioritization of health care worker training. *Adopt* language in the Senate committee report that would prioritize awards to projects offering immediate strategies for communities to meet their skilled workforce needs in addition to long term approaches to develop targeted industry clusters.
- *Adopt* language in the Senate bill that would prioritize the use of WIA Adult funds for services for low-income and other hard-to-serve populations, including individuals who are long-term unemployed, low-skill, limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and older workers with multiple employment barriers, and which emphasizes the availability of such funding for supportive services and needs-based payments. This language will ensure that federal funds are being used to serve a diversity of workers at all skill levels, including those individuals with the greatest need.
- *Adopt* the provision in the Senate bill allowing workforce investment boards to contract for training services with institutions of higher education, so long as customer choice is not limited. This flexibility will allow boards to allocate scarce resources more efficiently, ensuring speedier implementation of and greater access to effective training services and supports.
- *Adopt* both the House \$500 million funding level and the House language for the dislocated workers assistance national reserve for grants to entities that serve

areas of high unemployment or high poverty to provide employment and training assistance to workers affected by major economic dislocations. Grant applicants must demonstrate that income support, child care, and other supportive services necessary to participate in job training will be available to participants.

- *Adopt* the House funding proposal for the State Unemployment Insurance and Employment Service program at \$500 million. These funds will help ensure that jobseekers have access to critical labor exchange and job placement services at a time of uncertainty.

### **Department of Health and Human Services**

- *Adopt* the House proposal that provides \$600 million to the Health Resources and Services Administration to train nurses, primary care physicians and dentists. This funding will allow much-needed healthcare professionals to access scholarships, loan repayment, and grants for training programs.

### **Department of Transportation**

- *Adopt* the House provision that would provide \$20 million under Section 140(b) of the Highway Act to the Federal Highway Administration Office of Civil Rights to support programs that enhance training opportunities for members of minority groups and women. This funding would help historically underrepresented populations gain the skills they need to take advantage of emerging job opportunities created through infrastructure investments under this legislation.

### **Expanding Access to Higher Education**

- *Retain* the provision under both bills that would establish a temporary American Opportunity tax credit. *Adopt* the language in the House bill that makes 40 percent of the credit refundable. *Modify* the language in both bills to allow all of the expenses that make up the total cost of attendance, as defined by the Higher Education Act, to count towards the credit. Without this modification, low income students that receive Pell Grants and attend low-cost institutions will be shut out of the credit.
- *Adopt* the House proposal to invest an additional \$15.6 billion in the federal Pell Grant program and increase the maximum Pell Grant award by \$500 for the next two years. This additional funding would expand access to higher education for an estimated seven million students who might otherwise have difficulty keeping up with the spiraling costs of a college education.
- *Adopt* the House proposal to include \$490 million for the Federal Work Study program which provides part-time jobs for financially disadvantaged college students, allowing them to earn money to help pay education expenses and immediately stimulating the economy.



Again, we applaud your commitment to job training and education as part of economic recovery efforts. Investing in a skilled workforce will help the federal government and the States realize a greater return on their investments, and ensure that all U.S. workers and businesses have the skills to rebuild the nation's economy and participate in an era of renewed prosperity.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)  
Apollo Alliance  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW)  
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)  
Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL)  
Green For All  
International Association of Jewish Vocational Services (IAJVS)  
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW)  
Jobs for the Future (JFF)  
National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB)  
National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP)  
National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE)  
National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees (NUHHCE)  
PHI – Quality Care through Quality Jobs  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
The Workforce Alliance (TWA)  
Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)  
Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment  
Workforce Learning Strategies  
Workforce Strategy Center

March 5, 2009

The Honorable Hilda Solis  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Labor  
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Solis:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor. We are thrilled that someone with your qualifications and dedication to the skills and success of the American workforce will hold this vitally important office in the Obama Administration. We are also pleased that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which you helped to craft as a Member of Congress and which you will oversee as Secretary of Labor, recognizes the importance of workforce development investments to the rebuilding of the U.S. economy – strengthening our national infrastructure, creating family-sustaining jobs, lifting up the current workforce and potential workers, and investing in our greatest resource, human capital.

As leading workforce development and adult education/learning organizations from across the country, we know that efforts to rebuild our economy through job creation in key industry sectors, particularly those expanded as the result of the economic stimulus, will only be possible if we help America's workers gain basic and occupational skills and progress on pathways to the postsecondary credentials needed for those jobs. We have spent years learning about and testing best practices and effective approaches in this area. **As you work to implement the ARRA, we want to share what we have learned through our collective work, make recommendations for implementation of the new Act, and offer our assistance to you as you work to create the skilled workforce, including our lowest-skilled adults, needed for sustained economic growth.**

With regard to implementing provisions of the ARRA that are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Labor (DOL), we strongly urge that you encourage policies consistent with the intent of Congress as articulated in both the Conference report on the ARRA and *the intent articulated in the colloquy carried out by Senators Patty Murray and Tom Harkin during Senate consideration of the ARRA as described below*. We believe:

- That funding provided through the Workforce Investment Act formula grants for adults and dislocated workers should be used predominantly for the direct delivery of services

to those who are the most heavily affected by this recession – the low-skilled unemployed and the underemployed.

- That a significant portion of these new resources should be dedicated to training for jobs in high-demand occupations, including green jobs, healthcare, and other high-demand or emerging occupations to meet state and regional economic needs.
- That funding provided through the ARRA for the DOL Adult formula grant program be used in large part to serve priority populations, particularly those with multiple barriers to employment and with low basic skill levels. This will help the least-skilled obtain the education, skills training, and support services they need to secure good jobs in new or growing industry sectors that will enable them to enhance their quality of life and achieve economic self-sufficiency as members of the middle class. And, in the interest of achieving maximum results, we urge further that this program and other DOL adult education programs work cooperatively with related programs in the U.S. Department of Education.
- That the WIA formula grants as well as the Competitive Grants for High Growth and Emerging Industry Sectors provide needed support services and needs-related payments, to the extent possible, to help individuals successfully engage in and complete education and training that leads to credentials and good jobs.
- That the most innovative strategies with proven effectiveness in putting people back to work in high demand occupations, including sector-based and career pathways initiatives, be utilized in carrying out the delivery of these employment and training services. It is imperative that these initiatives: provide the low-skilled, unemployed, and underemployed with the basic and job skills that will enable them to find good, family sustaining jobs; provide the skills that are relevant to local, state, and regional employers; and respond to the needs of state and regional economies – helping to rebuild our nation and U.S. competitiveness.
- That the DOL should clarify that training for high-demand occupations may be provided through the award of contracts to community colleges and other institutions of higher education and to other eligible training providers, as long as a customer's choice is not limited; and clarify that such contracted training may include the provision of WIA Title II adult basic education or English language education services integrated with occupational training, as long as these services are provided as a part of a plan preparing the individual for employment.

**We would very much like to meet with you and other leaders at the Department of Labor, particularly the Assistant Secretary who is chosen to oversee ETA. We suggest the afternoon of March 20 or sometime in April and will follow up with your office to schedule a convenient time.**

We applaud President Obama and the Congress for making this vital investment in education and training that will be critical to our economic recovery. We are confident that you and the Department of Labor will do all in your power to ensure that these investments are made wisely and will lead to the retooling of the American workforce. We pledge our support for these efforts and to working with you in the future in any way that may be helpful to your efforts.

Sincerely,

**American Association of Community Colleges**  
**Center for Law and Social Policy**  
**Center for American Progress**  
**Corporation for a Skilled Workforce**  
**Council for Adult and Experiential Learning**  
**Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy**  
**International Association of Jewish Vocational Services**  
**Jobs for the Future**  
**National Center on Education and the Economy**  
**Seedco**  
**The Workforce Alliance (TWA)**  
**Workforce Learning Strategies**  
**Workforce Strategy Center**

Copy: Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

# Workforce and Education Strategies for Achieving National Economic Priorities – Recommendations for the U.S. Department of Labor

“In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity – it is a pre-requisite. Right now, three-quarters of the fastest-growing occupations require more than a high school diploma. And yet, just over half of our citizens have that level of education. We have one of the highest high school dropout rates of any industrialized nation. And half of the students who begin college never finish. *This is a prescription for economic decline, because we know the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow.*

“And so tonight, *I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training.* This can be community college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma.”

~ Remarks of President Barack Obama, Address to  
Joint Session of Congress, Tuesday, February 24, 2009

As America begins 2009 facing the worst economic crisis in decades, it is clear that the response must be as bold as the crisis is immense. President Obama clearly sees the links between a country’s investment in human capital and its global economic competitiveness. He made job creation and investments in workforce development critical elements of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. He also has challenged every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training.

Building the workforce needed for global economic success and the long-term well-being of our people will take more than an expanded Pell Grant program and new educational tax credits. It also will require that we focus on the needs of our lowest skilled adults and workers and transform our current workforce system so that it is effective, efficient, and responsive to the needs of employers and workers.

As leading adult education and workforce development organizations (see box), we offer strategies and specific action steps to meet our national economic challenges and achieve our priorities.

## National Economic Priorities

- Help those hit hardest by the economic recession
- Restore and grow a strong national economy
- Rebuild the American middle class
- Reinvest in shared prosperity
- Provide opportunity for every American to gain at least one year or more of higher education or career training

### Presented by:

American Association of Community Colleges  
Center for American Progress  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Corporation for a Skilled Workforce  
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning  
Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy  
International Association of Jewish Vocational Services  
Jobs for the Future  
National Center for Business Champions  
National Center on Education and the Economy  
The Workforce Alliance  
Workforce Learning Strategies  
Workforce Strategy Center

## Strategies

The following overarching strategies have begun to emerge in the adult education and workforce fields as key to help us achieve our national economic priorities. Above all, these strategies must provide equal access for low-skilled and disadvantaged individuals, including the “hardest to serve,” so that they may achieve economic prosperity.

- 1. Build longer-term career advancement opportunities for all of America’s workers.** Job seekers need more than quick-fix connections to jobs; they need seamless career pathways that connect all workers – including incumbent workers as well those who are low-skilled, long-term unemployed, or who have other significant barriers to employment – to the education, training, and supports they need to enter and advance in the economy. This will require redesigning adult education and employment and training programs, such as those authorized under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), as pathways to valued postsecondary credentials, employment and career advancement. Federal adult education policy will need to support state and local efforts to build “bridges” from adult education and college developmental education to credit-bearing postsecondary courses and attainment of marketable credentials. Redirected income support programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) can provide the incentives and supports to help people transition to family-supporting employment. Finally, federal higher education policies can be improved so that they provide not only greater access but also support student success.
- 2. Allow flexible services that can be customized to individual circumstances and needs.** No one program model works for everyone. Programs need to tailor services to client and employer needs without artificial restrictions on service delivery modes or what can be counted toward federal requirements. While some job seekers may only need a little career guidance and short-term training to get a good job, others such as returning veterans, ex-offenders, and those leaving welfare for work are likely to have greater employment barriers requiring a more extensive set of interventions, including resources to meet the real cost of participating in training and achieving family-sustaining employment.
- 3. Focus solutions on employers’ workforce needs as well as current and future workers’ career development needs.** Focusing on the education and skills demanded by regional and state economies and employers helps to target workforce investments on high-demand jobs of the future and produce a workforce that meets state, regional, and national economic needs. When appropriate, sector-based approaches to workforce development show great promise for supporting economic growth and creating lasting change in regional labor markets. These and other employer-based initiatives help workers gain the skills and industry-recognized credentials needed to advance; and they develop shared workforce solutions to meet employers’ immediate and longer-term needs for a more skilled and productive workforce in industries or clusters of occupations with advancement opportunities. Additionally, partnering with high-road employers that pay good wages, provide benefits, and otherwise employ good human resource practices can also help to transform low-wage labor markets and promote more inclusive economic growth.
- 4. Leverage regional and state partnerships of key system stakeholders, to maximize innovation, cooperation, and resources around regional and state economic growth strategies.** The adult learning and workforce challenges confronting America are too massive, too complex, and too urgent for any one public or private entity to solve alone. Regional and state partnerships have shown great promise in meeting these challenges. Key community leaders – including civic, business, labor, education, workforce, economic development, and philanthropic leaders – can convene to identify the strengths, challenges, resources, and needs of their regions and to identify, build support, and leverage resources for a shared strategic vision for building a highly-

skilled workforce and a competitive regional economy. These partnerships tend to be highly innovative, have flexible funding, and have high levels of clout. And they are generally more reflective of needs specific to each region and state.

5. **Align key agencies and resources at the federal, state, and local levels, including workforce development, higher education, adult education, and economic development.** The fragmented, underfunded and, at times, conflicting nature of our current policies makes it difficult to craft holistic solutions customized to the needs and circumstances of “hard-to-employ” individuals. Creating seamless pathways to good jobs that pay family sustaining wages requires bringing together different levels and types of education, training, and economic development programs with the shared mission of individual advancement (for both current and future workers) and economic growth. It requires aligning program content across programs with industry requirements, and aligning policies regarding assessment, entry and exit standards, and educational credit and transfer to ease transitions among programs. This is particularly important at this time of economic crisis and severe budgetary constraints.
6. **Establish a robust professional development and staff capacity building system.** These strategies will require workforce development, adult education and postsecondary education practitioners to do business differently. To ensure that the field is prepared to meet the challenges of a new education and workforce system, the federal and state governments will need to invest in professional development systems.
7. **Align accountability measures with these strategies and the realities of longer-term services and training for lower-skilled workers and establish a vigorous program of research and development to support innovation.** While results-oriented accountability has been built into federal workforce programs for more than 20 years, the measures of program performance are fragmented and at times drive service provider behavior in counterproductive ways. The focus on immediate placement outcomes under WIA has resulted in “creaming” and other program distortions that, in fact, have reduced the program’s long-term effectiveness. Rather than continuing this fragmented and counter-productive approach, we need an accountability system that crosses programs and measures each program’s contribution toward the achievement of broader shared goals for the populations in need, not just those directly served by the program. Better data collection and a targeted research strategy are also essential to help the Administration and the WIBs transform how workforce development programs are designed and implemented.
8. **Invest in education, training, and workforce development at a level proportionate to the need.** Current programs are severely under-funded and therefore unable to meet the critical and growing need for middle- and highly-skilled workers. It is critical to increase our investments in workforce education programs and find ways to ensure that those who most need education and training can afford access. In addition, dedicated funding is needed to align programs, foster community partnerships, and enhance the capacity of education providers to carry out changes which accelerate student learning and strengthen connections to employers and local labor market requirements.

## **Recommended Actions by the U.S. Department of Labor**

The U.S. Department of Labor is uniquely positioned to assist the president in his goals for educating our workforce and strengthening our economy. Under new leadership, the department is making important changes in how workforce dollars are spent. Many of these new approaches are helping the entire system respond more effectively to the skill needs of employers and develop the kind of workforce our global economy requires. Yet, there are many ways to improve upon the effectiveness of the department – and

the publicly-funded workforce system as a whole – in addressing the education and skill needs of the workforce.

**1. Transforming the Culture of the Workforce System to Drive Innovation.** Under WIA, the workforce system is required to assist individuals through a staged sequence of services. The strict adherence to this approach does not give the system the flexibility and responsiveness that is needed in order to address the rapidly-changing needs of the global economy. In addition, the workforce system has been slow to adopt emerging innovations and practices such as sector-based initiatives and programs designed around a region’s skill and labor needs, and the system is structured in a way that discourages investments in longer-term education and training in favor of rapid re-employment. The USDOL could pursue a number of different strategies to encourage greater innovation and more rapid dissemination and adoption of effective workforce development programs and practices.

Recommended action includes the following:

- a. Strengthen the workforce system
  - i. Offer peer-to-peer technical assistance (between states, local-level entities, etc.).
  - ii. Establish a mentoring program between senior and entry level workforce development professionals.
  - iii. Rebuild the regional office systems, transforming them into Regional Innovation Centers that can provide technical assistance to regions and WIBs.
- b. Promote innovation
  - i. Promote creative use of incentive funding streams through competitive grants.
  - ii. Pending elimination of the sequence of service in reauthorization, discourage a strict adherence to the sequence of services approach that delays individuals from quickly receiving needed assistance. Offer guidance that permits a more customized approach to the needs of individual workers and employers, including allowing broader options in the types of training contracts that can be established.
  - iii. Clarify legislation goals and intents, and encourage innovation and flexibility to meet them. This may require revisiting current interpretations of rules and regulations that are currently discouraging WIBs from carrying out innovative approaches such as career pathways programs.
  - iv. Focus on implementation/rollout of successful pilots and identifying successful ways to bring new programs to scale.
- c. Increasing information and knowledge
  - i. Organize a national network for the rapid diffusion and adoption of innovation.
  - ii. Continue research on identifying strategies that work, innovation, best practices, and effective partnership models – but also find better ways to apply research findings and encourage adoption of proven and promising strategies more quickly.
  - iii. Encourage states and/or regions to develop a real-time system of collecting and disseminating labor market information, particularly for industries identified as key to the rebuilding of our national economy.

**2. Encouraging System Alignment.** The current system is not as efficient as it could be because programs operate independently and within their own “silos.” Greater alignment is needed, not just among programs funded and administered by the USDOL, but also across different agencies, particularly the U.S. Department of Education and, to a lesser extent, the U.S. Departments of Commerce, Energy, and Housing and Urban Development. Some actions that could be taken to achieve greater alignment include the following:



- a. Establish an interagency entity for meaningful integration and planning across a variety of programs and silos, but especially Titles I and II of WIA, TANF, postsecondary education, and economic development.
- b. Work closely with the U.S. Department of Education on the alignment of Titles 1 and 2 of WIA in ways that facilitate the development of career pathways programs and initiatives
- c. Identify barriers to system integration – including funding integration – and provide solutions on how to overcome them. Where barriers cannot be addressed through administrative changes, develop recommendations to policymakers.
- d. In the rebuilding of the regional office system (see 1-a-iii, above), develop the capacity of regional ETA office staff to provide advice and technical assistance to regions, WIBs, adult education programs and other providers on how to navigate existing funding streams and integrate these streams to support innovative programs.

**3. Measuring Success: Reframing Performance and Reporting.** Current performance measures and reporting requirements for USDOL programs are structured in a way that tend to give disproportionate weight to immediate employment as opposed to preparing workers for high-demand careers in a dynamic economy. Given the changing needs of employers and the critical skill needs of our economy, performance measures must be in place that give proper weight to skill and credential attainment – on par with measures such as re-employment and wage gains. Recommended actions include:

- a. Conduct a thorough analysis of current performance measures and reporting requirements. This analysis should identify how success in the workforce system should be measured, what problems exist in the current performance measures, and how the existing performance measures and structures might be changed to achieve greater educational attainment in the workforce. The analysis should also look across different agencies, such as the departments of education and energy, to identify a set of common performance measures that address workforce learning in all of its various forms. If similar research has already been done, release findings to the field to encourage a broader discussion on next steps and implications for the future.
- b. Conduct research to identify empirically-based benchmarks of progress toward family-supporting employment that go beyond current benchmarks of GED, associate’s degree, vocational certificate, etc. An expanded set of benchmarks would include intermediate goals – perhaps combining both credentials and work experience – that are shown to help move people along a pathway to employment at family-sustaining wages.

**4. Reframing the Value and Promoting the Importance of Workforce Development.** Even though many new resources have been committed to workforce development in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, there is still much that needs to be done to educate our leaders on the importance of workforce education and training – not simply a message about how education can help in the “reattachment” of those who have lost their jobs, but also a message about the importance to our economy of longer-term skill building, postsecondary credentials, and career pathways linked to education and training. We encourage the USDOL to focus on a new kind of messaging campaign that can change how public officials view the importance of adult learning and a skilled workforce. Additional messaging campaigns addressed to the American public could describe how the public workforce and adult education systems can help them achieve President Obama’s goal of at least one year of postsecondary learning. Such messaging campaigns are not enough to help us see the results we are looking for – the other courses of action recommended above must also be implemented. Recommended actions include the following:

- a. Develop a messaging campaign that clearly shows the link between workforce skills and economic competitiveness and elevates the visibility of workforce development in Congress and in the White House. This campaign might borrow strategies, tactics and messages from initiatives such as The Workforce Alliance's Skills2Compete or *Reach Higher, America* from the National Commission on Adult Literacy.
- b. Work closely with the U.S. Department of Education on a joint message campaign to encourage more adults to pursue postsecondary learning (echoing the president's charge for every American to get one year of postsecondary education); this campaign can borrow strategies, tactics and messages from similar state campaigns (e.g., Kentucky's GoHigher, Oklahoma's Reach Higher)
- c. Brand workforce development initiatives that are made possible through ARRA

## **Conclusion**

It would be our pleasure to work with the Department to build out these recommendations and continue the discussion regarding how to improve the broader workforce development system to meet our national economic priorities and the educational challenge the president has cast.

# Workforce and Education Strategies for Achieving National Economic Priorities – Recommendations for the U.S. Department of Education

“In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity – it is a pre-requisite. Right now, three-quarters of the fastest-growing occupations require more than a high school diploma. And yet, just over half of our citizens have that level of education. We have one of the highest high school dropout rates of any industrialized nation. And half of the students who begin college never finish. ***This is a prescription for economic decline, because we know the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow.***

“And so tonight, ***I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training.*** This can be community college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma.”

~ Remarks of President Barack Obama, Address to  
Joint Session of Congress, Tuesday, February 24, 2009

As America begins 2009 facing the worst economic crisis in decades, it is clear that the response must be as bold as the crisis is immense. President Obama clearly sees the links between a country’s investment in human capital and its global economic competitiveness. He made job creation and investments in workforce development critical elements of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. He also has challenged every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training.

Building the workforce needed for global economic success and the long-term well-being of our people will take more than an expanded Pell Grant program and new educational tax credits. It also will require that we focus on the needs of our lowest skilled adults and workers and transform our current adult education and workforce activities into a coherent system that is effective, efficient, and responsive to the needs of employers, workers, and future workers.

As leading adult education and workforce development organizations (see box), we offer strategies and specific action steps to meet our national economic challenges and achieve our priorities.

## National Economic Priorities

- Help those hit hardest by the economic recession
- Restore and grow a strong national economy
- Rebuild the American middle class
- Reinvest in shared prosperity
- Provide opportunity for every American to gain at least one year or more of higher education or career training

### Presented by:

American Association of Community Colleges  
Center for American Progress  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Corporation for a Skilled Workforce  
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning  
Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy  
International Association of Jewish Vocational Services  
Jobs for the Future  
National Center for Business Champions  
National Center on Education and the Economy  
The Workforce Alliance  
Workforce Learning Strategies  
Workforce Strategy Center

## Strategies

The following overarching strategies have begun to emerge in the adult education and workforce fields as essential to help us achieve our national economic priorities. Above all, these strategies must: provide equal access for low-skilled and disadvantaged individuals, including the “hardest to serve,” so that they may achieve economic prosperity.

- 1. Invest in education, training, and workforce development at a level proportionate to the need.** Current programs are severely under-funded and therefore unable to meet the critical and growing need for middle and highly skilled workers. We must increase our investments in adult education and workforce learning programs and find ways to ensure that those who most need education and training can afford access, including those with limited English proficiency. In addition, dedicated funding is needed to align programs, foster community partnerships, and enhance the capacity of education providers to carry out changes which accelerate student learning and strengthen connections to employers and local labor market requirements.
- 2. Build longer-term career advancement opportunities for all of America’s workers.** Lower-skilled adults need more than just an assortment of reading, math, and English language courses disconnected from employment, postsecondary education, and career advancement. Adult education programs should be recast as the starting point on career pathways programs that will help adults enter growing fields and secure jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage. This will require redesigning adult education and employment and training programs, such as those authorized under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), as pathways to valued postsecondary credentials, employment, and career advancement. Federal adult education policy will need to support state and local efforts to build “bridges” from adult education and college developmental education to credit-bearing postsecondary courses and attainment of marketable credentials. Redirected income support programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) can provide the incentives and supports to help people transition to family-supporting employment. Finally, federal higher education policies can be improved so that they provide not only greater access to low-income adults and youth but also support student success.
- 3. Leverage regional and state partnerships of key system stakeholders, to maximize innovation, cooperation, and resources around regional and state economic growth strategies.** The adult learning and workforce challenges confronting America are too massive, too complex, and too urgent for any one public or private entity to solve alone. Regional and state partnerships have shown great promise in meeting these challenges. Key community leaders – including civic, business, labor, education, workforce, economic development, and philanthropic leaders – can convene to identify the strengths, challenges, resources, and needs of their regions and to identify, build support, and leverage resources for a shared strategic vision for building a highly skilled workforce and a competitive regional economy. These partnerships tend to be highly innovative, have flexible funding, and have high levels of clout. And they are generally more reflective of needs specific to each region and state.
- 4. Align key agencies and resources at the federal, state, and local levels, including workforce development, higher education, adult education, and economic development.** The fragmented, underfunded and, at times, conflicting nature of our current policies makes it difficult to craft holistic solutions customized to the needs and circumstances of “hard-to-employ” individuals. Creating seamless pathways to good jobs that pay family-sustaining wages requires bringing together different levels and types of education, training, and economic

development programs with the shared mission of individual advancement (for both current and future workers) and economic growth. It requires aligning program content across programs with industry requirements, and aligning policies regarding assessment, entry and exit standards, and educational credit and transfer to ease transitions among programs. This is particularly important at this time of economic crisis and severe budgetary constraints.

5. **Establish a robust professional development and staff capacity-building system.** These strategies will require workforce development, adult education, and postsecondary education practitioners to do business differently. To ensure that the field is prepared to meet the challenges of a new education and workforce system, the federal and state governments will need to invest in professional development systems.
6. **Align accountability measures with these strategies and the realities of longer-term services and training for lower-skilled workers and establish a vigorous program of research and development to support innovation.** While results-oriented accountability has been built into federal workforce programs for more than 20 years, a focus on outcome measurement is largely absent from adult learning programs. We need an accountability system that crosses programs and agencies, and which supports not only the goal of stable employment but also skill building and attainment of postsecondary credentials. Better data collection and a targeted research strategy is also essential to help the Administration and the states transform how adult education and workforce development programs are designed and implemented.
7. **Allow flexible services that can be customized to individual circumstances and needs.** No one program model works for everyone. Programs need to tailor services to client and employer needs without artificial restrictions on service delivery modes or what can be counted toward federal requirements. While some job seekers may only need a little career guidance and short-term training to get a good job, others such as returning veterans, ex-offenders, and those leaving welfare for work are likely to have greater employment barriers requiring a more extensive set of interventions, including resources to meet the real cost of participating in training and to achieving family-sustaining employment.
8. **Focus solutions on employers' workforce needs as well as workers' career development needs.** Focusing on the education and skills demanded by regional and state economies and employers helps to target education and training investments on high demand jobs of the future and produce a workforce that meets state, regional, and national economic needs. When appropriate, sector-based approaches to workforce development show great promise for supporting economic growth and creating lasting change in regional labor markets. These and other employer-based initiatives help workers gain the skills and industry-recognized credentials needed to advance; and they develop shared workforce solutions to meet employers' immediate and longer-term needs for a more skilled and productive workforce in industries or clusters of occupations that provide advancement opportunities. Additionally, partnering with high-road employers that pay good wages, provide benefits, and otherwise employ good human resource practices can also help to transform low-wage labor markets and promote more inclusive economic growth.

## **Recommended Actions by the U.S. Department of Education**

The U.S. Department of Education is uniquely positioned to assist the president in his goals for educating our workforce, particularly individuals with inadequate basic skills. First, however, the entire adult

education system must be transformed to reflect the critical role it plays in our nation's economic future. This will require additional changes in how success is defined and measured, how the agency works with the U.S. Department of Labor and other entities, and what kinds of messages need to be advanced in the larger policymaking and public arenas.

**1. Transform adult education culture, funding and structure to address the needs of the global economy.** Currently, the adult education system is without a clear mission and purpose. At a time when the skills of our workforce are essential to our nation's economic recovery, a contemporary direction is needed. Adult education must be transformed so that it is seen by all as an important entry-point for low-skilled workers to longer-term education and training for 21<sup>st</sup> Century credentials and careers and so that it has a shared purpose with workforce development groups toward higher educational outcome goals. Clear links and pathways to both postsecondary education and workforce development need to be established. Increased funding is needed to transform the system so that it, and more students, can reach these goals. The adult education system must have the incentives, competency, flexibility and responsiveness that are needed to address the rapidly-changing needs of the global economy. Innovation cannot be limited to programs funded through the national leadership funds, but must be seeded through the entire program. Recommended action includes the following:

- a. Develop a new mission statement for adult education that casts it as the entry point for lower-skilled individuals to access broader education, particularly education and job training opportunities that lead to postsecondary credentials and career pathways programs (as set forth in the final report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, *Reach Higher America*.)
- b. Develop new regulations and policies (or clarify existing ones) to encourage the development of adult education programs whose educational goals are aligned with the entrance requirements of community college degree and certificate programs, and which have established clear pathways and referral procedures from adult education programs to postsecondary credential programs.
- c. Encourage state innovation by clarifying that existing legislation and applicable regulation allow for partnerships with adult education, postsecondary, and workforce programs, as well as the integration of basic and occupational skills services (e.g., ESL, reading, writing, math, and the soft skills essential for success in college and on the job) and linkages to career pathways programs.
- d. Identify model programs for dissemination, and provide support for replication and development of similarly innovative approaches.
- e. Develop a real-time system of collecting and disseminating information on adult learner needs and the labor market, so that such information can inform program policy and practice at the state and national levels.
- f. Develop and deploy technology on a large scale to help expand adult education and workforce skills services.
- g. Provide incentives for states to establish the professional qualifications required by adult education and workforce skills instructors and counselors, and to implement high-quality professional development programs.

**2. Measuring Success: Performance and Reporting.** Current performance measures and reporting requirements for adult education and English literacy programs do not give sufficient weight to skill and credential attainment—on par with measures such as educational and employment status gains. Given the critical skill needs of our economy and the importance of all adult education students achieving marketable skills that pay off in the labor market, performance measures need to

reflect these priorities. We recommend that the Department of Education carry out the following activities:

- a. Conduct a thorough analysis of current National Reporting System performance measures and reporting requirements. This analysis should review the effectiveness of the National Reporting System in incenting and documenting continuous program improvement, especially toward more effective practices for helping students achieve postsecondary and career goals quickly. It should identify how success in an adult education and workforce skills system should be measured, what problems exist in the current performance measures, and how the existing performance measures and structures can be changed to promote greater educational and skills attainment and their certification. Since we recommend that career and postsecondary success be the new goal of the program, outcomes to that effect should be measured for all students. The analysis should also identify a set of common performance measures that could be used across different agencies (e.g., Labor, Energy) to address workforce and adult learning in all of its various forms.
- b. In partnership with the Department of Labor, conduct research to identify empirically-based benchmarks of progress toward family-supporting employment that go beyond current benchmarks of GED, entry into postsecondary education and training, and entry into employment. The expanded set of benchmarks would include intermediate goals – perhaps combining both credentials and work experience – that are shown to help move people along a pathway to employment at family-sustaining wages.
- c. Establish a nationally-anchored data system in which states are expected to track program enrollments and student progress toward specified outcome goals over a period of several years.

**3. System alignment.** The current adult education and workforce systems operate independently and within their own “silos,” which contributes to inefficiencies. Greater alignment is needed, not just among programs funded and administered by ED, but also across different agencies, particularly the U.S. Department of Labor and also the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Commerce, Housing and Urban Development, Justice and Veterans Affairs. Recommended actions include:

- a. Establish an interagency entity for meaningful integration and planning across a variety of programs and silos, but especially Titles I and II of WIA, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, postsecondary education, Perkins career and technical education and economic development.
- b. Work closely with the U.S. Department of Labor on the alignment of Titles I and II of WIA in ways that facilitate the development of career pathways, including an initial emphasis on postsecondary transitions for adult education participants at all skill levels, and incumbent worker education programs.
- c. Forge closer ties between OVAE and the Department’s Office of Postsecondary Education, recognizing that an increasing number of students entering postsecondary education are coming through routes other than high school, including adult education and English literacy programs.
- d. Identify barriers to system integration – including funding integration – and provide solutions on how to overcome them. Where barriers cannot be addressed through administrative changes, develop recommendations to policymakers.
- e. Provide advice and technical assistance to regions, adult education programs, WIBs, and other providers on how to navigate existing funding streams and integrate these streams to support innovative programs.
- f. Create incentives for companies to invest in basic skills training and further education of their low-skilled workers.

**4. Reframing the value and promoting the importance of adult education and workforce skills development.** Although many new resources were committed for workforce development in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, none were directly allocated for adult education. In addition, adult education funding at the federal level has remained largely flat over the past several years, with several states cutting funding even before the recession hit. Adult education and related education and training providers need to educate our leaders about the importance of basic and soft skills development in helping low-skilled and limited English proficient individuals gain marketable credentials that lead to family-supporting jobs. In addition, we need to encourage more low-skill adults to gain the necessary literacy, English language, and workforce skills to succeed in the labor market. We encourage the Department of Education to focus on a new kind of messaging campaign that can change how public officials view the importance of adult learning and a skilled workforce. Additional messaging campaigns addressed to the American public could describe how the public workforce and adult education systems can help them achieve President Obama's goal of at least one year of postsecondary learning. Such messaging campaigns are not enough to help us see the results we are looking for – the other courses of action recommended above must also be implemented. Recommended actions include the following:

- a. Develop a messaging campaign that clearly shows the link between adult education, workforce development and economic competitiveness and elevates the visibility of adult education and workforce skills development in Congress and in the White House. This campaign might borrow strategies, tactics and messages from initiatives such as The Workforce Alliance's Skills2Compete or *Reach Higher, America* from the National Commission on Adult Literacy.
- b. Work closely with the U.S. Department of Labor, the Department of Education's Offices of Postsecondary Education and Vocational and Adult Education, and the National Institute for Literacy, on a joint message campaign to encourage more adults to pursue postsecondary learning (echoing the president's charge for every American to get one year of postsecondary education); this campaign can borrow strategies, tactics and messages from similar state campaigns (e.g., Kentucky's GoHigher, Oklahoma's Reach Higher).
- c. Emphasize to Congress that when parents are educated and skilled, their children are far more likely to succeed in school.
- d. Emphasize to Congress that when nonviolent offenders are provided with marketable job skills, the potential for reducing future crime and increasing safety at the community level is enormous.

## Conclusion

It would be our pleasure to work with the Department to build out these recommendations and continue the discussion regarding how to improve the broader workforce development system to meet our national economic priorities and the educational challenge the president has cast.



# Policy Change to Strengthen our Workforce

## ***Policy Topic: Transform Adult Education to Ensure More Students Reach Higher***

*Recommendations for Changes to Title II of the Workforce Investment Act*

Presented to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education  
By Leading Workforce Development and Adult Learning Organizations

June 3, 2009

In order to fulfill President Obama’s goal that “every American commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training,” the adult education system must be transformed to reflect the critical role it plays in our nation’s ability to reach that goal. This requires changes to Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, including how success is defined and measured, how closely the Department of Education works with the Department of Labor and other entities, and what kinds of services are provided. Currently, the adult education system is hampered by too little funding and too many goals. While more funding for Title II is essential, adult education must be transformed so that it is seen by all as an important entry-point for low-skilled adults and older youth to longer-term education and training for 21<sup>st</sup> century credentials and careers. More adult education students must succeed in postsecondary education and training and in the workforce. Closer links and pathways to both postsecondary education and workforce development are crucial to ensure all students can attain family-supporting jobs, and gain greater self-efficacy in contributing to the educational success of their children and participating in society.

*An alliance of national workforce development and adult learning organizations is working together to advocate for needed policy changes. The recommendations are in this paper are endorsed by:*

American Association of Community Colleges  
Center for American Progress  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Corporation for a Skilled Workforce  
Corporation for Enterprise Development  
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning  
Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy  
International Association of Jewish Vocational Services  
Jobs for the Future  
National Center for Business Champions  
National Center on Education and the Economy  
Seedco  
The Workforce Alliance  
Workforce Learning Strategies  
Workforce Strategy Center

Our Title II reauthorization recommendations include:

- 1. Developing a new mission statement for adult education that is focused on helping lower-skilled individuals acquire the educational skills needed to achieve postsecondary and career success and attain family-supporting jobs.**

- Revise the WIA Title II purpose and activities to focus on increasing the rate at which all students attain career and postsecondary success. Given the limited federal investment in adult education (\$1 of every \$4 spent on adult education comes from the federal government), it is essential that these dollars be strategically targeted toward supporting better postsecondary and employment outcomes for more students, just as the federal government targets its limited Elementary and Secondary Education investments on promoting particular outcomes. The states can maintain the flexibility to spend their adult education matching dollars as they wish.
- Strengthen state planning requirements to promote closer ties with Title I and achieve greater outcomes for all students. Require state Title II adult education plans to specify how state and local programs will:
  - Plan and collaborate with Title I programs;
  - Help adult education students gain access to career counseling, job placement, and support services by increasing co-enrollment in WIA Title I programs. Set targets that steadily increase the percentage of Title I and II co-enrolled students over time and to promote closer connections between the two titles;
  - Connect with or involve the business community;
  - Describe activities that will move people along career and educational pathways, including readiness for and success in college, job training, employment or career advancement;

## **2. Supporting, seeding, and scaling up innovations that combine basic skills and postsecondary education and training.**

- Support integrated and dual enrollment. The law should explicitly allow services to be provided before or in combination with work or postsecondary education and training and recognize that program strategies can include, but are not limited to, approaches that integrate basic skills and postsecondary education and training content or which may dual or concurrently enroll students in basic skills and postsecondary education and training.
- Provide targeted funding for integrated, dual, and concurrent approaches that combine basic skills and postsecondary education and training. Target \$75 million of federal Title II state grant appropriations to states for seeding and scaling up such approaches that integrate basic skills and postsecondary education and training or which dual or concurrently enroll students in basic skills and postsecondary education and training. Initially distribute \$25 million through formula to states so all states can work on designing new programs. Then provide \$50 million in competitive grants to states that wish to scale up these new efforts. This will help create new and shorter pathways for all students.

## **3. Providing federal support for workplace education programs, placing strong and visible focus on basic skill services to incumbent workers:**

- Fund research, development, and dissemination activities and facilitate communications and provide technical assistance services in planning, development and improvement of programs;
- Fund best practices development; and

- Encourage increased access to workplace education through flexible delivery modes, including weekend, compressed, or accelerated formats, and technology-based strategies to adult education for lower-skilled incumbent workers in federal guidance and technical assistance.
4. **Revamping data collection and performance accountability systems in order to incent and document continuous improvement toward the goal of increasing the rate at which all students achieve readiness for and attain postsecondary and career success leading to increased labor market outcomes.**
- In the interest of building a robust performance management system, the federal government should help states develop state data collection systems that track students on a multi-year basis along pathways across adult education, postsecondary education and training, and into the labor market. Such systems should be anchored to a reformed National Reporting System (NRS). The government should provide funding to states to build their capacity to track adult education students along the pathway using administrative data, rather than student surveys (which are more expensive and provide less reliable data);
  - Reform the NRS to better align the goals of WIA Titles I and II, GED and college and job readiness outcomes, related reporting and performance criteria, and varying realities of state adult skills and economic development needs; and
  - Measure all core outcomes (educational gains, entered employment, retained employment, receipt of secondary school diploma or GED, and entered postsecondary education or training) for all Title II participants. This will establish a baseline of performance. Programs should continue to be required to work with students to establish educational and employment goals, but these goals should not be used in the NRS for purposes of establishing the denominator for measuring performance on core outcomes.
5. **Making explicit that Title II programs can provide services to adults both without and with a high school diploma.**
- Some state and local programs mistakenly believe that service to high school graduates is not allowed by WIA Title II. However, the service criterion in the law is “low skill level”, not exclusively lack of high school diploma. The law should explicitly state that Title II programs can use federal funding to provide services to adults both without and with a high school diploma, or its equivalent, in partnership with community colleges, WIA Title I services, and other providers.