



New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission

Dennis M. Bone, *Chairman*

Chris Christie, *Governor*

PROPOSED POLICY RESOLUTION: SETC #2015-06

SUBJECT: SCALES Policy Recommendations: Adult Basic Education - WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

Purpose

The importance of New Jersey's adult literacy system to the overall success of the state's public workforce system is clearly and concisely articulated throughout New Jersey's combined state plan under WIOA.

Background

The State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES) focuses on improving the adult literacy delivery system. It is a bipartisan body created within the SETC by statute in 1999 to facilitate state and local policy development, planning and oversight in consultation with stakeholders in the area of adult literacy education.

In July 2015, SCALES created a taskforce that consisted of current SCALES members and local area adult basic education practitioners and experts. The taskforce held weekly conference calls and reported to the broader SCALES members through quarterly meetings. Over three months, SCALES was able to focus on three policy initiatives that can effectively strengthen both New Jersey's adult literacy system and the public workforce system. The recommendations are provided here as the **Adult Basic Education - WIOA Title II Policy Recommendations** framework document.

For more than ten years, federal program aid coming from the Workforce Investment Act has been allotted to a lead agency in each county or workforce area. The lead agency selects other eligible agencies in the region to also deliver adult literacy services, and manages the funding and compiles the required fiscal and programmatic data and reports. The grants are not managed by the local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). The aid is awarded directly to the lead agency, based on an annual application process to the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJLWD). The role of each WDB has been to review and comment on the application before it is submitted to NJLWD to ensure alignment with the local area's WDB plan.

Because no individual program has the resources and expertise to provide appropriate services to learners at each stage of their chosen career pathway, collaboration between programs is a necessity, rather than a luxury. WIOA requires programs at the regional and local levels to coordinate their activities in order to place career pathways at the heart of various services. For adult literacy learners to successfully navigate their chosen career pathway, there needs to be a partnership between adult literacy providers, postsecondary education and the employer system. SCALES will recommend three over-arching policy initiatives that have the potential to positively direct the adult literacy system in a more substantial role within New Jersey's public workforce system.

Upon formal resolution by the SETC, the policy will be posted on the SETC website and shared with the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, LWDBs, and One-Stop Career Centers. Subsequently, the policy will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as part of the New Jersey Combined State Plan.

RESOLUTION: The State Employment and Training Commission accepts the policy recommendations in the attached Adult Basic Education - WIOA Title II Policy Recommendations framework document provided by SCALES, for incorporation into New Jersey's Combined State Plan.

Commission Approval: November 10, 2015

SCALES Policy Recommendations
ADULT BASIC EDUCATION
WIOA TITLE II ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT

This Act provides most of the aid for adult literacy, adult secondary education and English-as-Second Language in New Jersey. The purpose of the adult literacy programs is to enable undereducated adults to obtain the knowledge and skills for employment and economic self-sufficiency, and to succeed in their roles as family members and citizens.

Major Changes for Adult Literacy Programs As Required by WIOA

- Performance accountability measures focus primarily on employment outcomes, not on basic skills;
- Career pathways are emphasized as the way to move learners through adult literacy to postsecondary education and family-sustaining employment;
- It will be necessary for adult literacy to establish and maintain working partnerships with a variety of other programs and organizations if it is to achieve its goals under WIOA;
- The emphasis changes from enrolling students in “siloed” programs to transitioning them into postsecondary education and family-sustaining employment.

Policy Recommendations for the NJ State Employment and Training Commission

- 1. How do we ensure that all levels of adult learners are adequately served by the New Jersey Workforce System?**
 - The educational needs of all learners, including access to career pathways, must be considered in designing the Workforce System. This is particularly true in respect to lower-level learners.
 - Programs need to tailor curriculum to each student’s level;
 - For all level of learners, the Workforce System needs to provide the support (e.g. counseling, financial aid) that is necessary for progress through career pathways;
 - For lower-level students, there needs to be recognition of realistic student outcomes, including indicators of “measurable skill gains”.

- 2. How do we develop and support the program partnerships that are necessary to enable adult learners to move through adult literacy to postsecondary education and family-sustaining employment?**
 - State, regional and local collaborations are necessary if the Workforce System is to meet its goals. This is true because individual programs and

organizations alone cannot develop the programs that are necessary for students to transition from adult literacy to postsecondary education and family-sustaining employment. Assistance in developing and maintaining partnerships must be provided at all levels and local WDB plans must specify how One-Stop programs will be coordinated to promote partnerships.

- Local planning must include identifying, combining and coordinating multiple sources of funding and directing the resulting “consolidated” funding to adult literacy goal attainment.
- WDB plans for local and regional adult education networks will require that WDBs establish active Adult Literacy Councils representing all literacy providers in the area.

3. How to develop the skills and knowledge adult literacy teachers, administrators and counselors need to function effectively in the New Jersey Workforce System?

- The state must develop, and adequately fund, a comprehensive, ongoing professional development system that enables adult literacy staff to meet new WIOA requirements,
- The state must require WDBS to conduct joint planning and training for One-Stop, adult literacy and WDB staff directed toward establishing partnerships, resource sharing and appropriate and necessary student referrals
- Professional development must utilize multiple delivery modes to reach part-time and other hard to reach staff. This includes a mix of in-person meetings, synchronous online events and resources made available online.