

Adult Education--Grants to States (CFDA No. 84.003)

I. Legislation

Adult Education Act, P.L.100-297, as amended by National Literacy Act of 1991, P.L. 102-73 (20 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.)(expires September 30, 1997).

II. Funding History

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>	<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>
1967	\$ 26,280,000	1991	\$201,032,000
1970	40,000,000	1992	235,750,000
1975	67,500,000	1993	254,624,000
1980	122,600,000	1994	254,624,000
1985	101,963,000	1995	252,345,000
1990	157,811,000	1996	247,440,000

III. Analysis of Program Performance

A. Goals and Objectives

The goal of Adult Education State Grants is to support programs that assist educationally disadvantaged adults in developing basic skills, including literacy, achieving certification of high school equivalency, and learning English. Adult education serves as a hub for a variety of different programs, including job training and vocational education, family literacy, welfare reform, correctional education, and immigration services. Adult education programs are a gateway to further education and training for both English and non-English speakers.

B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals

The Department awards formula grants to state education agencies, which, in turn, make competitive grants to local adult education providers. Adult education services are delivered by local education agencies (59 percent), community-based organizations (14 percent), postsecondary institutions (15 percent), corrections agencies (4 percent), and other institutions and agencies serving adults (8 percent). States must give preference to local service providers that have demonstrated or can demonstrate a capability to recruit and serve educationally disadvantaged adults (defined generally as those who demonstrate basic skills equivalent to or below the fifth-grade level). In addition, states are required to provide two-year "Gateway Grants" to public housing authorities for literacy programs.

No more than 20 percent of a state's allotment may be used for high school equivalency programs. In addition, a state must use at least 10 percent of its funds to educate incarcerated and other institutionalized adults, and spend at least 15 percent for special demonstration and teacher training projects. Of the funds provided to local providers, generally at least 95 percent must be used for instructional activities.

According to state reports for the 1994-95 program year, more than 3.8 million adults were enrolled in adult education classes: 1.5 million in basic education instruction; 1.4 million in English as a Second Language instruction; and 900,000 in high school-level instruction.

C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness

Objective 1: Improve literacy in the United States.

The 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey found that between 40 and 44 million adults performed in the lowest of five proficiency levels.

Objective 2: Provide adult learners with opportunities to acquire basic foundation skills (including English language acquisition), complete secondary education, and prepare for postsecondary education and work.

During the 1994-95 program year, nearly 350,000 adults obtained their high school diplomas or a GED; another 400,000 achieved basic English proficiency; and almost 300,000 low-level adult basic education students achieved basic skills proficiency. Among other outcomes, almost 270,000 adult learners gained employment or advanced on the job, and some 150,000 adults entered advanced education or training programs.

Objective 3: Provide adult learners at the lowest levels of literacy access to educational opportunities to improve their basic skills.

The Adult Education program continues to target services to those adults most in need of services. Of the more than 3.8 million adults served, 75 percent were in Level I (below grade 8 and English as a Second Language programs). More than 68 percent of the FY 1993 federal allotment was targeted at this level. Minorities make up two-thirds of all adult enrollments.

The Adult Education State Grant program assures access and helps special adult populations acquire the literacy and English language skills necessary for work, citizenship, and further education. In 1995, nearly 178,000 disabled adults were enrolled in adult education classes, and 1.2 million immigrants also participated. The program served over 1.2 million unemployed adults, 469,000 welfare recipients, 297,000 incarcerated adults, and 41,000 homeless adults.

Objective 4: Support State and local performance management systems for accountability and program improvement.

The Adult Education program has faced increasing demands to demonstrate its effectiveness and the value of the instruction it offers. Over the past several years, amendments to the Adult Education Act have strengthened the accountability requirements. The National Literacy Act of 1991 required states to develop indicators of program quality and to use them to judge the effectiveness of local programs and services. All states have adopted indicators of program quality which they are using to evaluate program effectiveness, make program funding decisions, identify technical assistance needs, and improve programs (V.3). States are able to assess areas of strength and weakness in their delivery system and target weak areas for improvement. These indicators represent a critical step in efforts to promote quality in programs, and serve as a strong foundation for states' efforts to be accountable.

The Department is also working with state directors of Adult Education to support the development of a national performance measurement system (See “Planned Studies” below).

Objective 5: Implement statewide professional development systems and professional standards for instructors.

A national evaluation of staff development and special project activity at the state level found value in continuing to set aside funds earmarked for professional development and program improvement (V.4). Recommendations from the study include the following:

- Given the nature of the Adult Education workforce, making special efforts to encourage part-time staff to participate in sustained training.
- Providing job-related incentives for training as one way to professionalize the field.
- Encouraging more collaboration between states in project development and execution and better coordination of federal and state research agendas to reduce duplication of effort and improve dissemination of effective practices.

Several projects are in progress to improve teacher training and Adult Education programs at the federal, states, and local levels. The Department supports a national staff development project--the Adult Literacy Technology Network--that is enabling teachers and training professionals from across the country to develop a research agenda for improving classroom instruction. In addition, a number of states are working together on regional staff development plans to reduce duplication and broaden the dissemination of information. States continue to support literacy resource centers, which play an important role in the states’ training, research, and information networks.

Objective 6: Improve access to quality programs for adult learners by integrating services and leveraging resources.

An initiative supported by the Division of Adult Education and Literacy, the Even Start Family Literacy Program Office, and the National Center for Family Literacy--“Building Alliances for Family Literacy”--has created statewide capacity to deliver strong family literacy services.

Other cooperative activities include support for the “Crossroads Cafe Project,” a distance learning effort of state education agencies, PBS television stations, and local adult education and literacy service providers. This project provides high-quality learning strategies for delivering adult literacy instruction to non-English speakers. In addition, the Department participated in an interagency initiative to identify and select common data elements to be used in multiple federal programs, including adult education, job training, welfare, and vocational education. This was perhaps the first significant interagency effort at the federal level to develop reporting systems for federal programs.

Objective 7: Improve the capacity of the Department of Education’s Division of Adult Education and Literacy to manage for results.

IV. Planned Studies

National Performance Measurement System. In collaboration with state Directors of Adult Education the Department will support the development of a national performance measurement system. The project will have three phases: Phase I will establish the outcomes, measures, and methodology; Phase II will pilot-test a management information system that includes client-level data in selected state and local programs; and Phase III will result in full-scale implementation at the state and local levels.

V. Sources of Information

1. Adult Education Act.
2. Annual Performance, Financial, and Evaluation Reports submitted by states
3. Evaluation Systems in the Adult Education Program: The Role of Quality Indicators (Washington DC: Pelavin Research Institute, March 1996).
4. National Evaluation of the Section 353 Set-Aside for Teacher Training and Innovation in Adult Education (Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, June, 1996).

VI. Contacts for Further Information

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