

Adult Education--National Workplace Literacy Program (CFDA No. 84.198)

I. Legislation

Adult Education Act, Part C, Section 371, P.L. 100-297, as amended by the National Literacy Act of 1991, P.L. 102-73 (20 U.S.C. 1211) (expires September 30, 1997).

II. Funding History

| <u>Fiscal Year</u> | <u>Appropriation</u> |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1988 | \$9,574,000 |
| 1989 | 11,856,000 |
| 1990 | 19,726,000 |
| 1991 | 19,251,000 |
| 1992 | 21,751,000 |
| 1993 | 18,906,000 |
| 1994 | 18,906,000 |
| 1995 | 12,736,000 |
| 1996 | 0 |

III. Analysis of Program Performance

A. Goals and Objectives

This program supports demonstration projects designed to improve the productivity of the workforce by providing literacy training to meet workplace needs.

B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals

Services Supported

The National Workplace Literacy Program (NWLP) funds competitive demonstration grants for programs involving partnerships among (1) business, industry, labor organizations, or private industry councils; (2) state education agencies, local education agencies, institutions of higher education, or schools including adult literacy and other basic skills services and activities; and (3) employment and training agencies or community-based organizations.

Programs use a variety of approaches to provide workplace literacy training: providing adult secondary education that may lead to the completion of a high school diploma or its equivalent; providing literacy training for adults with limited English proficiency; updating basic skills to meet the changing needs of the workplace; improving the competency of adult workers in speaking, listening, reasoning, and problem solving; and providing educational counseling. Funds may also be used to provide transportation and child care outside working hours, in order to permit adult workers to participate in the program.

Strategic Initiative

Beginning in FY 1993, the period for grants was lengthened from 18 months to three years. This change gave programs additional time to develop and demonstrate work-based curriculum and teaching methods such as simulations and team-learning approaches, and provided a more reasonable instructional timetable. Projects are in the third and final year of the grant, and will end late 1997 and early 1998.

C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness

Each NWLP project is accountable for meeting federal requirements as well as for achieving its own objectives and goals related to both project and learner outcomes as established in each project's funded application.

Preliminary data from the Department's national Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Workplace Literacy Programs indicate that approximately 14,000 learners were served by workplace literacy projects during the first 12 months of federal funding. Also during this time, it was found that only 10 percent of participants had taken more than one course from the workplace literacy program, reflecting a tendency for companies to serve more workers rather than increase the number of courses per worker. Some 33 percent of employers offered partial paid release time to allow workers to take instruction; and 27 percent of employers offered complete paid release time. In addition to these data, workplace literacy project reports indicate that participating employees are obtaining high school diplomas or completing the GED, are taking on more job responsibilities, and in some cases have received job promotions. Projects also report that some employees are enrolling in training beyond that provided under the NWLP grant. Business partners report that employees participating in the program have fewer absences, stay with the company longer, and have shown improved job productivity.

Projects are refining and field-testing job-specific curricula and training modules, some of which will be on interactive multimedia software, suitable for distance learning and appropriate for replication.

Site visits and reports by grantees have revealed unintended consequences unique to participating projects. Employees indicate that they are using their new knowledge outside the workplace, especially in the home. Participants say they are spending more time helping their children with homework and reading books and other information. Participants seem to be more interested in community activities and indicate that the knowledge gained is also transferring to life skills such as personal banking.

Many businesses not involved in the original partnerships have expressed interest in establishing programs at their work sites.

IV. Planned Studies

No new studies beyond the ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of workplace literacy programs are planned to assess this program. The evaluation will assess "what works" in workplace literacy by taking a detailed look at workplace literacy projects funded in FY 1993 under the National Workplace Literacy Program. A final report will be available in 1997.

V. Sources of Information

Program files.

VI. Contacts for Further Information

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