



POLICY BRIEF

**WORKPLACE EDUCATION:
TWENTY STATE PERSPECTIVES**

Prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy

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FOREWORD

This Policy Brief was developed for the August 20th meeting of the National Commission on Adult Literacy. While its publication does not necessarily reflect conclusions of the Commission, we are pleased to make it available as a public service.

Other materials developed for the August 20th meeting include: a Policy Brief by senior researcher Julie Strawn of the Center for Law and Social Policy (*Policies to Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Alignment*—scheduled for release soon); a Policy Brief by Stephen Reder of Portland State University (Adult Education and Postsecondary Success—released 9/4/07); and a special perspectives paper developed by Tony Peyton of the National Center for Family Literacy (*Family Literacy in Adult Education: The Federal and State Support Role*—to be released soon).

A current listing of commissioners and honorary commissioners of the National Commission on Adult Literacy is given on the next page.

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William White – President and Chairman, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation; Leads Mott’s pioneering work in community education. Member, President Ronald Reagan’s Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives; Observer, Carter Center’s Delegation to the Palestinian Elections.

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POLICY BRIEF

Workplace Education: Twenty State Perspectives

by James T. Parker

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The U.S. Department of Labor forecasts that by 2012 the U.S. economy will have the largest workforce in the nation's history—more than 162 million people. Impressive as that figure may sound, it will not be enough to fill the more than 165 million jobs projected to be available. The shortage of 3 million workers is just part of the story, however. Millions of other jobs will go unfilled because workers lack the specialized skills required to fill the vacancies. The government estimates a shortage of more than 10 million skilled workers by 2012. [E. Rice, Innovative Employee Solutions, 2006]

A. INTRODUCTION

From 1989 until 1998 the U.S. Department of Education administered the National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Program. During that period, over \$130 million supported some 300 projects where adult education programs partnered with thousands of businesses, agencies, and organizations to provide work-based skills to employees. While only seven state adult education programs were funded to provide statewide services, six of those states have continued support for these programs. Although workplace education services are not federally mandated, many additional states have also developed state-supported and state-directed workplace education programs.

This paper describes eight aspects of workplace education programs in 20 states: Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

The aspects are: (1) how workplace programs are funded, (2) levels of effort for the past two years, (3) connections, partnerships, and/or strategic plans implemented by workplace education programs,

(4) how states measure outcomes or determine success, (5) the nature of workplace education outcomes achieved, (6) challenges or barriers faced by states, (7) what the states consider to be the key elements of success in their workplace education efforts, and (8) what future policy options states would like to consider. States were encouraged to review the information and data they provided for the publication of the 2004 national report on workplace education: *The State of Workplace Education in the States: A Policy Perspective* - <http://www.work-basedlearning.org/public.cfm#5> . This publication was also used to initially identify states to be included in this Policy Brief.

The 20 states (of 22 contacted) responded in a substantive manner to the above questions. Following review of the responses, the states were categorized into one of three groups, or Models: State Systems (there were 10), Leadership States (8), and States in the Process of Development (2).

For purposes of this study, the term “Workplace Education” means contextualized basic skill instructional programs for incumbent workers. It also means work-based pre-employment or employability programs often developed in partnership with employers, trade associations, unions, and economic development organizations. It does not mean regular (not work-context) adult education instruction.

This policy brief includes: aggregated responses to the eight questions sorted by the state types, a set of seven policy options that are informed by the state responses, overall conclusions of the findings, profiles of the 20 states, web-based references and resources, and the project questionnaire.

B. POLICY MODEL: STATE SYSTEM

Ten state workplace education programs are considered comprehensive systems because they are characterized by a majority of these factors: provision of statewide services, collaboration with partners and alignment of partner roles, state staff position(s) dedicated to workplace education, program or instructor certification or standards, certification of skills attained by learners, state leadership to local programs, and sponsorship of program improvement/development. Based on questionnaire responses, states fitting these criteria are: Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

1. How are State System programs funded?

Many states dedicate set amounts of federal and/or state funds for workplace education, while others have established a system that relies on local program investment of federal, state and/or local dollars. Some programs have access to other agency and private funding to cover services, such as the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I, employers, state training funds, and economic development agency dollars. In-kind and cost sharing funding is often required of program partners. Annual budgets run from \$400,000 to several million dollars each year, depending on level of program priority, overall funds available to local programs, partnership investments, and special initiative or developmental allocations. The median average of those states that identified funding amounts is over \$1 million for 2006. Recent year-to-year funding levels for these State Systems appear remarkably stable, indicating the priority given to workplace education. See Appendix A for state-by-state details.

2. What is the level of effort in State Systems?

The count of programs in any given state depends on how "program" is defined. It is a variable of adult education program sites plus employer-based and other non-educational sites. Some states support "centers" and other types of program clusters. For example, Arkansas funds 21 WAGE centers representing 170 "participating service providers." And Connecticut funds 22 grants serving 50 employers. Keeping these definitional limitations in mind, the average number of programs in State Systems is 31- 44 for 2006.

Identifying numbers and learning gains of adults served – for both incumbent workers and learners in pre-employment programs – has proven difficult for state and federal adult education programs because workplace education assessments and other outcome indicators often do not match National Reporting System (NRS) academic criteria. However, State Systems indicate that they often serve hundreds, thousands, in a couple of cases even tens of thousands more adults in workplace education basic skill programs than those reported to the federal NRS. For example, the NRS count for one major workplace education state program represents only 3 percent of enrollments. The average number of adults served by states identifying 2006 enrollment numbers is over one thousand learners.

3. What partnerships do State Systems support?

Employers are, of course, high on the list of partners. Thirteen partnership agencies/organizations are identified by State Systems. In descending order they are: Workforce Development, One Stops, Economic Development, Higher Education, Community Colleges, State Workforce Investment Boards, Health and Human Services, Career Systems, Employment Agencies, Chambers of Commerce, Justice Department, Unions, and Public Welfare. In some states, these partnerships provide substantial funding to support special workplace education efforts. For example, Minnesota received \$750,000 in Incentive Grant funding for program development.

4. How do State Systems measure learning outcomes and program successes?

State Systems show considerable creativity in the development of their measurement systems for workplace education. Some are customized measures. Others are standardized commercial products. Many use both standardized/NRS-recognized (typically CASAS, TABE) and workplace context instruments to measure learning outcomes. Skill certifications such as the WorkKeys, Essential Skills, Career-Readiness, and National Work Readiness credentials/systems are also important to many of these efforts. Alternative measures include: computer literacy, partner-derived objectives, writing samples, a "foundation skills rubric," and other work-context measures.

A number of program success indicators are used by State Systems. Most-mentioned are the number of certifications earned and numbers of companies and workers served. Others are training efficiencies, success of participants in technical training, and the extent of service to the existing workforce. Evaluation techniques include focus groups and participant/employer evaluations.

5. What workplace education outcomes are achieved by State Systems?

Or, put another way, what outcomes do these states value most? Benefits for employees and their employers are the outcomes indicated by most State Systems. These include:

- Eligibility for advance training
- Eligibility for career ladder opportunities
- Continuation to postsecondary education
- Positive employer feedback in areas such as customer service, accuracy of work, and productivity gains
- Enhanced employee retention and promotability
- Improved team performance
- Ability to understand, learn, and apply new information
- Increased ability to implement new technologies
- Improved health and safety record
- Job upgrades
- Increased wages
- Decreased absenteeism
- Acquiring a GED certificate
- Employees identify and articulate their skills to help them with job search and promotion opportunities.

Other notable valued outcomes are the mastery of competencies and subsequent awarding of certificates, and Returns-on-Investment (ROI) to companies. Examples from Indiana include a 114 percent return from 20 workers with limited English proficiency who learned to perform self-inspection of product quality, and an overall state ROI of 148 percent for companies that invested in workplace education programs.

6. What State System elements indicate workplace education program success?

State responses are particularly thoughtful and articulate in identifying elements of success. The limited length of this Policy Brief does not allow all elements to be fully presented, but following is a summary of actual statements by respondents:

- (AR) Dedication, persistence, and a desire to help students.
- (CT) The designation of workplace education as a priority area by the State Department of Education through advocacy and oversight by a dedicated Department consultant; and funding of Program Improvement Project grants.
- State-level leadership through a state Workforce Coordinating Committee, staffed by a wide range of stakeholders and driven by regional coordination of workforce investment boards.
- Support for system capacity building and professional development through funding of an Adult Training and Development Network.
- Strong programs are typically led by local adult education directors who clearly see the connections between adult education and job success, work closely with their business community, bring an entrepreneurial perspective to adult education, and empower staff to work effectively with employers and employees.

- (IN) The Workforce Education Project continues and expands on the success of the English Works program, funded by a WIA incentive grant award. Adherence to this workplace education model has been a key to the success of our workplace education efforts.
- (KY) Strong support from state level leadership, including dedicated funding.
- Long history of partnerships with state, local, and professional economic development agencies.
- Representation on executive board level agencies, such as the State Workforce Investment Board, local Workforce Investment Areas, the Association for Economic Development, the Kentucky Association for Economic Development, and the Bluegrass State Skills Corporation.
- State workplace staff who are well trained in workplace project design.
- Providers willing to accept the challenge.
- (MA) The planning period, whereby new partnerships are funded to conduct a workplace needs assessment to determine capacity and readiness to support an on-site classroom-based instructional program.
- The planning and evaluation team, the governing body of the partnership comprised of key stakeholders, responsible for program oversight, including setting policies, determining goals, and collecting and evaluating data for program improvement.
- Workplace education policies, including 50 percent minimum release time, 4 hours per week, and at least 32 weeks per year of instruction.
- (MN) According to evaluations by ABE providers involved with the project, the most successful elements are: the network comprised of large cities and smaller districts, which engendered support and ideas that spread from city to city; the overall training process; regional and industry group meetings; the project website; having a “point” person that locals could count on; and a brochure and marketing information to help sell the program.
- (MS) The community colleges have a strong 40-year history of working with businesses and industries and have always been responsible for workforce education. Workplace literacy programs work with industrial training coordinators who assist with getting a ‘foot in the door.’ Good, well-trained instructors, and lots of time and money spent training instructors to work in an industry setting.
- (NY) Strong and very helpful connections with organized labor and the State Business Council.
- (OH) Programs that maintain workplace education components have strong collaborations with public and private partners, including the business community. They are supported through a State Resource Center that provides workplace education professional development. The state

adult education office maintains strong partnerships with other state agency partners and the Governor's Workforce Policy Board.

- (PA) The program provides an extensive menu of support for work-based basic skills instruction to provider agencies. Support includes customized professional development, technical assistance, and seed funding for affiliate agencies. Additional statewide projects with a work focus have led to high visibility of the Foundation Skills Framework. This has added to the overall awareness of the importance of providing work-based training as adult education's role in the workforce development system.

7. What barriers and challenges do State Systems face?

Among the 10 State System respondents, funding is the single most mentioned barrier to successful workplace education efforts. The issue is manifested in several forms, as illustrated by the comments:

- Maintaining programs without additional funding is especially difficult for smaller programs and for keeping equipment and instruction up-to-date.
- It is hard to procure flexible funding that allows providers to serve employers on an on-going, as-needed basis.
- Additional funding streams or resources are needed for implementing company-based projects.

Since workplace education is mostly an elective activity for locals, programs are challenged to find staff that can be responsive to the needs of employers. It is also a challenge to provide programs of sufficient intensity, duration, and customization to meet these needs. Providing sufficient release time for employees, job layoffs, production schedules, and frequent management turnover are further challenges, as are inconsistent attendance, need for multi-level classes, and lack of support from supervisors.

From one large state: "There are few good assessments to measure computer literacy and a worker's ability to better communicate with customers – two of the biggest reasons why employers invest in workplace literacy." And from another: "A historic barrier for reporting Workplace Education students has been the requirements set forth by NRS. Our programs have indicated that they could be serving hundreds of additional employees if the reporting requirements were different re approved standardized testing for placement and progress, etc. The offer of 'Project-Based Learners' as a voluntary NRS reporting element is not the answer. These students are 'invisible' within states' reporting of other students' achievements."

Still other challenges are unrealistic expectations from companies, such as addressing union issues and recruiting for classes, and, for ESL workplace programs, dealing with basic skills problems in learners' native language.

What is really exciting is that states also have found ways, against all odds it seems, to overcome many of these challenges and barriers.

8. What other policies would State Systems consider in the future to improve the extent and quality of their workplace education services?

From the seven states that responded:

- Create a workforce development fund by blending financial resources from various existing funding sources, corporations, and foundations.
- A special initiative that will create policy for delivering seamless transitions of referral, placement, and success for target populations, such as adults with low basic skills who have some work experience and students who can realistically attain a postsecondary workforce credential within 4 or 5 years.
- Develop memoranda of understanding among all workforce development partners to ensure the statewide institutionalization of workforce education services for employers and their incumbent workers.
- Establish a mechanism for obtaining data from employers and employer organizations in order to meet the changing needs of the 21st Century workforce.
- Focus on training adult education programs to develop and implement fee-for-service projects to further leverage funding.
- Measure business impact to continue to make the case for the value of workplace education.
- Focus on quality in selection and implementation of training projects with companies.
- A “New Framework for Adult Education” includes increased emphasis on workplace educational gains, more emphasis on quality student outcomes, more flexibility in providing adult education services, lower enrollment goals, a revised funding formula, and new opportunities for programs to earn performance funding.
- Identify ways to support effective partnership coordination, contextualized curriculum development, and workplace education consortium models, whereby small businesses may join together to plan and support instructional programs.
- Include an in-kind match, and make funding available to small business and consortia of small businesses at a reduced matching rate.
- Provide requirements for programs that want to position themselves as qualified providers of work-based and/or customized workplace basic skills training. Note: Providers who lack the skills to work effectively with business partners do themselves and the system as a whole a disservice if they promote their capacity but then do not carry through with effective and professional service delivery.
- Require agencies to complete and maintain a certain level of professional development that would result in agency "certification".

- Expand professional development activities among workplace education providers, to share gained knowledge by experienced practitioners and solidify the knowledge of less seasoned instructors.
- Work more closely with workforce partners whose marketing activities identify needs that programs could fill. This would allow agencies to do what they do best while having a demand for workforce services.
- Identify common curriculum themes that cut across all workplace education offerings, and pool them into a single web-based source, to share among providers.
- Courses could be offered on-line or at a school site with fewer distractions than the workplace.
- Incorporate technology into adult learning for the workplace.
- Offer additional Literacy Completion Points per project, to make it worthwhile for smaller districts to provide these courses.
- Provide additional emphasis on contextual learning.
- Basic skills and certification are integral components of our new Governor's plan. The State System is positioned to contribute to this effort.

In addition, the responders suggested consideration of the following, which may have national and state policy implications:

- Develop a standardized, employer-endorsed employability credential.
- Relax the 12 hour-minimum NRS rule in order to accommodate those that need short-term training.
- Develop performance standards for workplace education programs, in addition to the DOE-required NRS approved assessments to measure learning gains.
- Forecast what workplaces in the future will require of adult learners and be ready to step up and meet the challenge.
- Consider two tracks for adult education: one for basic skills and one for workplace education.
- Provide federal funding for incumbent worker education.
- Provide guidance on equity in sharing costs and services across partner agencies under WIA to avoid situations in which a partner agency has reductions in funding but is expected to pay more to support the one-stop system.

- Establish cross-agency systems that make it easier to share data regarding partner agency reporting criteria and participant outcomes to improve the availability of data to use in program improvement and planning.

C. POLICY MODEL: LEADERSHIP

Eight state workplace education programs are defined in this paper as Leadership Systems because they are characterized by providing state workplace education leadership and direction to local programs and the sponsorship of program improvement/development. Many also facilitate collaboration with other supporting agencies. Based on responses to the questions, states fitting these criteria are: California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

1. How are Leadership State programs funded?

There is no typical method of funding these programs. In California, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia, local adult education programs choose to invest state, WIA Title II, Workforce Development (WIA Title I), Economic Development, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other agency funds in workplace education instruction. Local resources are often part of the budget as well. In Georgia, funding for Workplace Literacy Programs comes through local adult literacy programs entering into contractual agreements with employers that sponsor workplace education for their employees. Their Work-based Project Learner Program is funded through state and federal funds.

West Virginia has recently begun fee-for-service in light of dwindling funds and increasing need. Louisiana funds workplace literacy programs through specific workplace literacy grants and Adult Education basic grant funding using state and federal funds. Wisconsin administers local grant programs using state funds exclusively.

2. What is the level of effort for Leadership State programs?

The number of local programs funded in 2006 ranges from seven in Wisconsin to about 50 community colleges in North Carolina. Total enrollments indicated by states for program year 2005-06 are given below.

California - 5066 *

Florida - 9254*

Georgia - 2109

Louisiana - 438

North Carolina - 2739

South Carolina - 7323*

West Virginia - 2239

Wisconsin - 1591

* Taken from NRS table

3. What partnerships do Leadership States support?

Employers and six other agencies/organizations are identified by Leadership States. In descending order they are: Workforce Development, Higher Education, Economic Development, One Stops, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Employment Agencies.

4. How do Leadership States measure learning outcomes and program success?

Leadership States also use creativity in the development of measurement systems. They use locally developed and customized measures, as well as standardized commercial products. Seven states use both standardized NRS-recognized (typically CASAS, TABE) and workplace context instruments to measure learning outcomes. West Virginia programs do extensive analysis of the “soft skills” levels of employees in order to pinpoint training that will be most effective, and typically offer several programs at a single company. These workplace programs do not use NRS-based assessments (believing them to be relatively useless with business and industry), so enrollments are not included in the NRS reports. In Florida, measurable outcomes are labeled Literacy Completion Points. These outcomes are reported to the state Department of Education, but are not reported to the NRS. Skill certifications such as the CASAS Workforce Skills Certification, Career-Readiness, and Georgia Work Ready Program credentials/systems are also important to many of these efforts.

Program success indicators used by Leadership States are: number of businesses renewing workplace education agreements, business data on job accident reduction, and attainment of training/instruction competencies.

5. What workplace education outcomes are achieved by Leadership States?

Again, benefits for employees and their employers are outcomes indicated by most State Systems. Responses from the eight Leadership States include:

- Eligibility for advance training
- Increased confidence and participation on the job
- Positive employer feedback in areas such as customer service, accuracy of work, and productivity gains
- Enhanced employee retention
- Enhanced promotability
- Improved team performance
- Increased ability to implement new technologies
- Improved safety record
- Acquiring a GED certificate
- Enhanced English language skills
- Transition into technical education programs
- Learning basic skills for the workplace.

6. What are the elements of Leadership State workplace education program success?

State responses give a variety of elements for their success:

- (CA) Career Technical Education and vocational programs are supported by extensive online resources on Vocational ESL and Vocational Adult Basic Education through the ERIC Archive (the complete database of the former ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education). Many local agencies use these resources to address the literacy challenges of workforce education participants. An Adult Literacy Professional Development Project contains the complete database of the former ERIC system.
- (FL) The flexibility of the curriculum frameworks is a key element that ensures the course offered will successfully meet the needs of the employer, the worker-student, and the program. It provides just enough framework and guidance for these three parties to design a set of criteria and benchmarks of what will be learned, the methods to be used, and the timeline for meeting outcomes.
- (GA) Local industry supports workplace education by allocation of time and funding.
- Workplace education coordinators facilitate relationships and collaborations.
- Excellent communication with local industry to include companies' human resource department and administrative team.
- Having a team of expert instructors.
- Showing results by providing return on investment.
- (LA) Dedicated instructors and businesses seeing the student results and therefore the benefits to the business.
- (NC) Workplace programs have been established since the early 1980s and have had extensive training in our state in setting up such programs. Local community colleges are the first place employers look for meeting all their workplace training needs.
- (SC) The posture of Adult Ed as a key player with other workforce development agencies has helped to make the program successful.
- The commitment of the state office of AE in allocating funds and resources to train instructors for program implementation has also made a difference.
- (WV) Commitment to excellence and because they have closely worked with the WV Development Office.
- "Doing what education entities so often fail to do - listen to the employer and his/her needs before making recommendations as to training. And if the problems in a company are beyond our parameters, we make every effort to refer the company to the appropriate source."

- Trying to make sure that the very best, most qualified trainer is available before offering a class.
- (WI) Partnerships between the community college system and businesses/industry.
- The fact that workplace education is provided to adults at the worksite.
- The need of employees to retain their employment.

7. What barriers and challenges do Leadership States face?

The state respondents offered many insightful comments on challenges to program development and results. Several are summarized below, while others are included as direct quotes:

At least one state does not have authority to collect information on social security numbers, and therefore cannot create a data match system tracking work-related outcomes. Newer workplace education settings require local programs to develop benchmarks that meet the needs of learners and employers. Also, some programs struggle to develop job-specific curricula that meet the needs of employers.

Healthcare and manufacturing industries present a challenge in setting up class schedules that allow a majority of workers to attend class at times of sufficient duration and frequency, and at times when they are not simply too tired to learn.

For one state: “Our main challenge is getting businesses to understand that it should not be importing a GED program to the worksite and that we are not safety trainers for their workforce, rather a provider of services to improve job performance of workers by improving their workplace literacy and numeracy skills through the use of work-specific materials.” For another: “WorkKeys assessments are not recognized at all of the NRS levels and makes it necessary to dual test (with TABE) to demonstrate gains.” And another: “Part of our change in focus (away from workplace education) has been spurred by changes in message from both the U.S. Department of Education and the state department of education. The language we hear from both entities has ignored workforce for the last couple of years, and has emphasized academic rigor and transition to postsecondary or training.”

Another state: “Obviously, the biggest barrier is resources (or lack thereof). We are in desperate need of more personnel and money to adequately meet the workplace needs of the companies throughout the state.” Also, “It would be extremely helpful if either the state or federal governments would recognize the critical need for workplace education, and provide adequate funding for it – funding that is not tied to the NRS (or the No Real Solution, as I like to call it!) or other assessments that do not reflect the realities of the workplace.”

Other major challenges are: finding certified teachers who want to teach in the workplace setting, industry budget cuts which discontinue adult education services, companies closing or moving, and companies opting to internalize training.

Other barriers include: migrant workers who transfer to another area before completion, overtime to meet production deadlines which take students out of classes, and companies moving overseas and closing plants. Finally, there is the issue of test validity in the measuring of customized workplace instruction.

8. What other policies would Leadership States like to consider in the future to improve the extent and quality of their workplace education services?

Six states responded, as follows:

Develop a workplace literacy training program for providers, especially demonstrating how to use job specific materials in the instructional process and developing curriculum for these programs.

Policy considerations that may have national implications:

- Policy that lifts restrictions in generating aggregate and/or individual data matches with social security numbers is needed to more fully measure program success.
- Recognize credential attainment as a legitimate outcome for NRS.
- A wider use of WorkKeys as an assessment instrument for workplace programs would improve the measuring of outcomes.

D. POLICY MODEL: DEVELOPMENTAL

Two states, Texas and Virginia, do not fit the above models because they are in the early stages of development and redevelopment of workplace education programs.

In Texas, state legislation requires the use of federal adult education funds for curriculum and professional development delivery of workforce-related instruction. The Workforce Literacy Resource Team is a tri-agency (Texas Education Agency, Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Workforce Commission) group charged with providing leadership and technical assistance to local adult education providers and their workforce development partners. Also, a Workforce Literacy Resource Center is being developed to assist local adult education programs with curriculum development, resource identification, teacher training, and systems integration. Curriculum has already been developed for the limited English proficient in three industry sectors in which continued employment growth is projected: healthcare, manufacturing, and sales and service. In addition, fourteen adult education programs in ten cities have participated in the piloting of an electronic English as a Second Language program for the food services and hospitality industries. In terms of future policy, a review is needed of the policy that disallows adult education providers from applying directly for Skills Development funding. Access to funds for demonstration projects would help programs partner with postsecondary training providers and job sourcing entities.

Virginia does not directly fund a statewide workplace initiative. Local programs establish workplace programs as needed and requested through partnerships with employers. Often, the employers provide funding for these programs. However, the state-funded Race to GED initiative, now in its third full

year, is a workforce development initiative focused on improving the education level of Virginia's workforce as a path toward retaining existing and attracting new businesses to Virginia. In 2005-06 and in 2006-07, the state used Race to GED funds to support "Bridge" pilot programs in the Healthcare and Hospitality industries. Adult learners work toward the GED, with instruction tailored to fit the industry. As a result, most Bridge program industry partners offer guaranteed interviews to learners who earn a GED and complete the industry-specific portion of the curriculum. In 2005-2006, 759 learners in 54 programs were identified in the NRS data system as "workplace literacy" participants. In terms of future policy, the state will continue to review the Bridge programs as they are implemented statewide. And a recently funded ESOL program that integrates construction concepts and vocabulary into the curriculum will be reviewed for effectiveness and potential for replication.

E. POLICY OPTIONS: The Author's Perspective

Based on responses from the 20 states, the author suggests that the Commission consider the following policy options:

1. State initiatives critical to program success

When a workplace education program is a valued part of a statewide initiative, funding, political support, collaboration, and other positive factors are greatly enhanced. All states have the potential for this policy option. Many of the Leadership and Developmental States are moving toward that status.

Other states have further to go in terms of leadership, statewide policy, funding, political support, etc. Support is needed from all program levels for the planning of integrated statewide initiatives.

2. Statewide professional development needed to improve services

Many states listed professional development as a key to their success in the workplace. Many also indicated the need for additional and more extensive staff training. States that support professional development/resource centers have some advantages in scale, consistency, and cost. Other states should explore the development of such a center. Federal programs in the past have helped support statewide professional development, and should again do so, as part of a national workplace education initiative.

3. National Reporting System (NRS) overdue for reform

States identify NRS policies as a major barrier to developing, maintaining, and reporting the outcomes of their workplace education programs. These policies must be opened up to support workplace education. Specifically, use of work-based, work-context basic skill measurements and certifications should be encouraged and approved by NRS. If NRS insists on validation of these measures than it should support the research needed for improvement and validation...not produce another "unfunded mandate" to burden states.

4. Business return-on-investment data critical for developing partnerships and going-to-scale

Demonstrating to business how workplace education instruction can improve essential employee skills and productivity is an important and challenging sales technique for programs. They need help in documenting return on investment (ROI) for their programs, and ROI studies are needed, as is the broad dissemination of findings to the workplace education field. States that have a handle on this data need venues to share findings and learn even more from other programs.

5. Dissemination systems needed to (again) unite the field

One way to deal with the lack of broad-based information on ROI and other data, as well as innovative program improvement techniques, is to revive the successful dissemination process of the ERIC Clearinghouse and the National Diffusion Network, with a heavy focus on the needs of workplace education programs. Given the current lack of interest in such mechanisms at the federal level, this option may take some time to implement. Generating interest and support for such investments should begin now, with actual legislation drafted and ready for delivery at the appropriate time.

6. National collaboration could help the federal government catch up with state leadership

All 20 states included in this brief have shown leadership in development of state and local workplace education programs. Particularly impressive are the efforts in collaboration with numerous state and local agencies/associations, as well as with business. At the federal level, productive collaboration has been virtually non-existent. States need and deserve better federal assistance to help them be even more successful with services. Congress has also pressed agencies to cooperate and not duplicate workplace/workforce services. It is time to take that requirement to a higher level: Standards for federal agency collaboration should be developed, implemented, and enforced.

7. National adult education system also needs a shot of ROI

Just as business must be “sold” on the benefits of partnership with workplace education efforts, so the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor must pay attention to the educational and economic benefits that are achieved through well-funded and successfully implemented workplace education programs. With a reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act pending (if not imminent), the time is right to propose federal funding of state workplace education programs. To further promote collaboration at all levels, federal legislation covering Higher Education, Commerce, Health and Human Services, and others should contain companion programs to support and fund other aspects of workplace training.

F. CONCLUSION

In order for the policy options discussed above to be fully realized, there is a great need for sustainable funding and cross-agency collaboration to address program fragmentation. Workplace education has real potential for expanding and improving adult education services. Part of that potential has to do with greater attention from governors and other political supporters. Increases in the numbers of skilled employees – from entry to technical levels – are a critical component of economic development for states and the nation. States are moving ahead with policy leadership, not waiting for federal leadership to emerge. A major concern is that competency measurement tools and certification systems are in flux, and not well supported by federal accountability systems. As with all adult education efforts, support for quality professional development is critical to expansion and improvement of quality workplace programs. Many positive initiatives are happening in states, but there are few meaningful mechanisms for adult educators to learn about and benefit from each other’s innovations.

APPENDIX A

Workplace Education State Profiles

Arkansas' WAGE Program is an Adult Ed Program designed for the unemployed and underemployed to gain basic academic skills to become employed and stay successful in the workplace. Students in WAGE have the option of earning three certificates: Employability, Clerical, and Industrial. These certificates are based on the SCANS competencies. WAGE is not a specially funded program. Local programs that go through the WAGE certification process use existing money from their Adult Ed program budget. Presently, there are 21 WAGE Centers located across Arkansas with 259 business/industry partners, 170 service providers, 2554 students enrolled and 528 total certificates awarded. Each center has a local Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from business and industry in their area. Other WAGE alliance members include State Departments of Human Services, Workforce Services, Higher Education, Economic Development Commission, Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Centers, Career Pathways, and Employment Agencies. Beginning in July 2007, programs will begin using KeyTrain, a computer-based training system for improving basic skills measured by the WorkKeys system.

California workplace education programs are funded through the state adult education block entitlement and through WIA Title II. Local public schools and grantees may also have funding from other sources such as WIA Title I grants or partnerships with business or industry. Local programs determine their level of involvement in workplace education. In 2006 a statewide survey measured adult education partnerships. Fifty-eight percent of WIA Title II responding agencies noted partnerships with local businesses, and 43% with employment agencies. More than two-thirds noted that they interacted with their One-Stops. Local agencies determine the types of workplace assessments used within their instructional programs. Some agencies provide certificates of completion or competence. There is no statewide standard for use of workplace assessments or certificates. However, many local agencies use CASAS workplace assessments. California also participates in a national Workforce Skills Certification workgroup convened by CASAS.

In **Connecticut**, 22 federally funded local grants support workplace education for a total of \$1,030,000 per year. Other workplace education services have been paid for by participating employers, incumbent worker training dollars through WIA Title I, or Department of Labor job training funds. Connecticut workplace providers serve between thirty and fifty employers per year and approximately 500 employees annually. The majority of Connecticut's workplace programs are English as a Second Language. A Workforce Coordinating Committee has developed a coordinated system to respond to employer needs with fast, flexible and comprehensive education and training solutions. Committee membership represents stakeholders from across Connecticut's public workforce development system. Adult education programs that have been trained in the Department's Workforce Education Model are active members of the Adult Education at Work network.

Florida's Workplace programs are funded through budget line items directly to school districts and community colleges as part of adult general education funds. These funds are not identified separately by category. The number of workplace education sites in Florida for the past two years is twenty to thirty. The number of students in hotel and resort industries is ten to fifty at each site; hospitals, five to ten; manufacturing, ten to fifteen. Local programs initiate collaborative partnerships with businesses to provide workplace development activities. The state pays a specified amount that is set annually by the legislature for each outcome. Measurable outcomes are labeled Literacy Completion Points (LCP). These outcomes are reported to the state Department of Education, but are not reported to the NRS. Major workplace education programs target service industries in larger urban populations. Smaller workplace offerings are provided in the healthcare industry and in manufacturing.

In **Georgia**, funding for Work Place Literacy Programs comes through local adult literacy programs entering into contractual agreements with employers that sponsor workplace education for their employees. However, the GA Work-based Project Learner Program is funded through state and federal funds. In the past two years more than 1150 workers have been served, and almost 3000 adults have enrolled in the Work-based Project Learner Program. Georgia offers employers a Tax Credit for Adult Basic Education Skills programs based on employees completing the program. The state AE office coordinates workplace learning efforts of the 37 local adult literacy programs, and provides training, technical assistance, and statewide marketing efforts. In 2006 Georgia implemented the Work Ready Program. Through this portable assessment-based certification, Georgian's job skills are linked with education to enhance the economic development of the state. Workplace education outcomes include greater employee retention, development of computer skills, and transitioning of students into technical education programs.

The goal of the **Indiana** Workforce Education Project is to develop a statewide system of workforce basic skills education delivery by building the capacity of the adult education system. The Adult Education Works in Indiana Workforce Education Project is funded primarily with federal adult education funds, supplemented with employer resources such as worker wages and incentives, training space, and classroom materials. Where possible, funds are leveraged from state training grants. In 2006-07 incentive grant funds provided \$58,000 to implement computer literacy and workforce certification assessments in Indiana workplace programs. During 2006-07 the total project budget was almost \$1.2 million. Last year 98 classes were conducted in 60 Indiana companies, serving 1,074 workers. Workers received an average of 66 hours of instruction. Three regional workforce education specialists assist adult education programs, coordinate and implement all phases of workforce education programming, develop strategic alliances, and leverage available resources at the local and regional level. An ROI study on the project indicates a 148% return on investment for funding workplace education programs.

Kentucky was one of the states to be competitively funded under the National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Program. It allocated over \$3 million in state general funds for workplace activities from 2005-07. Services were provided to over 100,000 individuals in workplace related projects in 2004-2006, with over 3000 entities served. Partnerships include Cabinet for Economic Development, state and local Workforce Investment Boards, local economic development agencies and other workforce development agencies. These partnerships have lead to the adoption of the Kentucky Employability Certificate and the Kentucky Manufacturing Skills Standard Certificate, along with and an increase of adult education services. 13,530 Kentucky Employability Certificates and 3,519 Kentucky Manufacturing Skills Standards Basic Level certificates have been issued in Kentucky since 2002. A "New Framework for Adult Education" includes increased emphasis on workplace educational gains, more emphasis on quality student outcomes, more flexibility in providing services, lower enrollment goals, a revised funding formula, and new opportunities for programs to earn performance funding.

Louisiana funds workplace literacy programs through specific workplace literacy grants and Adult Education basic grant funding using state and federal funds. They have served 856 clients over the past two years in workplace literacy programs in all regions of the state. Forty percent of enrollments were not able to be NRS-reported. The state also supports WorkKeys assessments, used for pre-employment and work skills testing through a collaborative effort by the Louisiana Departments of Education and Labor and the Workforce Commission. In 2007, Specific Workplace Literacy Grant partners included a shipyard, piping company, food processors, and wood products manufacturers. Regular state and federal grants partnered with school districts and car manufacturers. Outcomes include reduction of on-the-job accidents, promotions, and functional level completions.

Massachusetts was one of the states to be competitively funded under the National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Program. Their workplace education initiative is supported through state funding of about \$1.5 million each year. In 2007 they funded 27 programs, running at least 36 weeks per year. The adult education state program partners with the workforce development system in the implementation of industry sector initiatives for workers in health care and industries with high growth projections or in critical industry sectors in regions across the state. The goal is to improve worker, workplace, and industry competitiveness, as well as to facilitate career ladder/lattice strategies for employees. Programs collect data through standardized assessments, writing samples, role-plays, surveys of workers and supervisors, etc. Successful outcomes of the MA workplace education programs include: promotions, job upgrades, increased wages, better productivity, increased retention of employees, reduction in errors, increased communication across functions, decreased absenteeism, and improved safety.

Minnesota's three-year workforce education initiative provided funding to ABE consortia across the state to supplement regular ABE funding for providing workforce education at employer sites. This additional funding allowed for training and a statewide support network. In this three-year period over 3400 workers were served in classes held on-site or in collaboration with a business. The total investment in workplace education was over \$2.5mil. ABE consortia across the state are encouraged to partner with their local community and technical colleges in providing workforce education. All programs use the appropriate modalities of CASAS, TABE, along with customized assessments to measure success in workplace programs. In September 2007, six ABE sites along with their Workforce Center partners will be piloting the National Work Readiness Credential. St Paul Public Schools ABE is also piloting an Essential Skills Credential based on the Level C series of the CASAS, including reading, writing, listening, and math.

Mississippi conducts both pre-employment and employability classes. All community colleges are represented on the State Rapid Response Team in order to assist incumbent or dislocated workers. Each year \$20mil is set aside for workforce education from state funds. For the last two years \$1.8mil of these funds has been invested in basic skills classes. None of the over 800 workers served since 2006 are counted in Mississippi's NRS report. The community college system targets for workforce training include existing and dislocated workers, veterans, offenders/ex-offenders, older youth, and mature workers. Partnerships are formed statewide with all One-Stop Centers. Community colleges have a strong history of working with businesses and industries. Adult programs collaborate with industrial training coordinators who assist with getting their 'feet in the door'. Another key to success is well-trained instructors; the state spends considerable time and money training instructors to work in an industry setting. MS is now working on offering a CRC certificate with involvement of WorkKeys.

New York was one of the states that were competitively funded under the National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Program. For each of the past two years, this state has provided \$1,000,000 in WIA Title II funding dedicated to workplace literacy programs. An additional \$1,376,000 is provided in state money. Approximately 18,000 are served each year. Twelve programs are funded under WIA and the state funding goes to the Consortium for Worker Education, which funds an additional 29 programs. Partnerships are made through local and state Workforce Investment Boards, unions, and employers. Outcomes include increased worker safety, increased worker productivity, attainment of new skills (i.e. computer literacy and job specific skills) and increased English oral proficiency. Half of the students served are English language learners. Strong connections with organized labor and the New York State Business Council have been very helpful to this program.

North Carolina NRS workplace figures show 2,739 adults served in 2005-2006 at workplace sites. However, actual enrollment was much greater because programs assessed over 4,523 employees that year. Classes were held in 122 companies throughout the state. Local programs often work in partnership with the community college's economic workforce area. Each college has a person to assess the educational needs of the workforce in the service area. Workplace literacy programs are often the first classes set up in local businesses. The state provides Career Readiness Certificates based on WorkKeys assessments. NC has provided workplace programs

since the early 1980's, sponsoring extensive training in setting up such programs. Workplace programs are funded with both state (\$60mil) and federal (\$15mil) funds, but there is no separate accounting for workplace education expenditures.

In **Ohio**, the ABLÉ system collaborates at the state and local levels with the WIA One-Stop system as well as the Ohio Department of Education's Adult Workforce Education (AWE) programs. ABLÉ provides workplace-contextualized remediation as a part of these other workforce and economic development systems and, when appropriate, works directly with employers to meet their incumbent workers' needs. Ohio ABLÉ is also ramping up its WorkKeys Career-Readiness Credential (CRC) system, in partnership with the AWE and WIA One-Stop systems. All Ohio ABLÉ Workplace Education outcomes are reported within the domain of the NRS. In the past two years 34 programs have served almost 1500 adults. These programs have strong collaborations with public and private partners, including the business community. They are also supported by the Northwest ABLÉ Resource Center that provides Workplace Education professional development statewide. The State ABLÉ Office maintains strong partnerships with other state agency partners and the Governor's Workforce Policy Board.

Pennsylvania's Workplace education investment is about \$400,000 each year. Local Adult Education programs providing workplace training document cost sharing from the business partner. Generally, the cost sharing is an in-kind match, although guidelines require employers to pay participating learners at least half of their wages while participating in training. The 2006 match was over \$120,000. In 2004-06, local programs provided training to 616 incumbent workers. An additional 959 learners participated in work-based basic skills instruction in ABLÉ classrooms. Provider agencies are all members of regional coalitions that represent adult education in the local Workforce Investment Areas. The state AE program collaborates with the Department of Public Welfare to serve TANF clients in selected counties and provides for competitive grants totaling \$7.5 million. Career Gateway is a collaborative effort of four state agencies: Education, Labor & Industry, Workforce Development, and Higher Education. It is supported with Incentive Grant funds.

In **South Carolina** workplace education funding is both state and federal, with Vocational Rehabilitation funds now used heavily for Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) training. Currently at least 40 AE programs offer employability skills programs using CRC. Partnerships are with the WIA system (One-Stops), Voc Rehab, Corrections, local school districts, and local economic development partnerships. Success is measured in educational gains on NRS as well as with credentialing. Since July 2005, Adult Ed. has been responsible either directly or in partnership with other agencies for the awarding of 3,000 certificates. . The posture of Adult Ed as a key player with other workforce development agencies has helped to make the program successful. The commitment of the state office of AE in allocating funds and resources to train instructors for program implementation has also made a difference.

Texas is a state in the process of developing a statewide workplace education system. State legislation requires the use of federal adult education funds for curriculum and professional development delivery of workforce-related instruction. The Workforce Literacy Resource Team is a tri-agency (Texas Education Agency, Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Workforce Commission) group charged with providing leadership and technical assistance to local adult education providers and their workforce development partners. Also, a Workforce Literacy Resource Center is being developed to assist local adult education programs with curriculum development, resource identification, teacher training, and systems integration. Curriculum has already been developed for the limited English proficient in three industry sectors in which continued employment growth is projected: healthcare, manufacturing, and sales and service. In addition, fourteen adult education programs in ten cities have participated in the piloting of an electronic English as a Second Language program for the food services and hospitality industries.

Virginia does not directly fund a statewide workplace initiative. Local programs establish workplace programs as needed and requested through partnerships with employers. Often, the employers provide funding for these programs. However, the state-funded Race to GED initiative, now in its third full year, is a workforce development initiative focused on improving the education level of Virginia's workforce as a path toward retaining existing and attracting new businesses to Virginia. In 2005-06 and in 2006-07, the state used Race to GED funds to support "Bridge" pilot programs in the Healthcare and Hospitality industries. Adult learners work toward the GED, with instruction tailored to fit the industry. As a result, most Bridge program industry partners offer guaranteed interviews to learners who earn a GED and complete the industry-specific portion of the curriculum. In 2005-2006, 759 learners in 54 programs were identified in the NRS data system as "workplace literacy" participants.

West Virginia's Workplace Education Program has been funded for the past two years using 70% state dollars, 25% Workforce Investment Region money, and approximately 5% federal dollars. The state has recently begun fee-for-service in light of dwindling funds and increasing need. During the past 2 years WV has served 600 employees annually in over 30 different programs. They do extensive analysis of the "soft skills" levels of employees in order to pinpoint training that will be most effective, and typically offer several programs at a single company. From its inception, the WV Workplace Education Program has worked closely with the state's Development Office. Programs collaborate with community colleges, and are represented on the Business Service Units of 4 of the 7 Workforce Investment Boards. Workplace programs do not use NRS-based assessments (believing them to be relatively useless with business and industry), so enrollments are not included in the NRS reports. Some regions of the state are using work-based certificates on a pilot basis, but this has not been embraced statewide.

Wisconsin was one of the states to be competitively funded under the National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Program. This program administers two workplace grant programs using state funds: Workplace ABE and Workplace Advancement Training Grants. Workplace ABE provides customized ABE/ESL instruction at the worksite for employees in order for them to retain employment. Total funding for 2006 and 2007 was \$ 800,000. Some 1600 workers were served in 2006. Workplace Advancement Training Grants promote increased investment in the development of incumbent workers and to improve Wisconsin's business' productivity and competitiveness. Total funding for FY 2006 and 2007 was \$2,000,000. Partnerships between community colleges and business/industry are supported by strategic plans of the Wisconsin's Governor "GROW WISCONSIN". Outcomes achieved via workplace education are: basic skills improvement, workplace safety, employment retention, financial literacy, basic computer skills, team work, increased communication, and productivity.

APPENDIX B

References and Resources

Preparing for the Workforce Shortage

http://www.innovativeemployeesolutions.com/knowledge/articles_04/05-article-02.html

DTI Report

<http://www.work-basedlearning.org/public.cfm#5>

National Reporting System state data

<http://wdcrobcopl01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/tables/index.cfm>

Dare to Dream report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy

www.nationalcommissiononadulthoodliteracy.org (or www.caalusa.org)

California Professional Development Project

<http://www.calpro-online.org/>

Adult Education Works in Indiana Workforce Education Project

<http://www.adultedworks.org/AdultEdWorks>

Kentucky's New Framework

<http://www.kyae.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/5D218E65-A7CE-4536-B77B-2D101638A341/0/ANewFrameworkforAdultEducation.pdf>

Massachusetts Policy Manual

http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/Grants/grants07/rfp/doc/538_494_j.doc

Minnesota planning grant

http://www.gwdc.org/others/joyce_grant_index.htm

North Carolina Career Readiness Certification

<http://www.crenc.com/>

Ohio Career Readiness Credential Project

<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=959&ContentID=15789&Content=16343>

Pennsylvania Workforce Education

<http://www.pawerc.org/foundationsskills/site/default.asp>

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire

Workplace Education: Policy Perspectives from Selected States

Please describe:

1. How your workplace programs are funded and in what amounts (for the past two years). Please include all relevant resources - federal, state, and other funding sources (approximate figures are okay).
2. Your level of effort for the past two years in terms of the number of workers provided basic skills service and the number of programs (approximates are okay – include NRS and other state data).
3. The connections, partnerships, and/or strategic plans implemented by your workplace education programs as part of economic development and workforce development initiatives.
4. How your state measures outcomes or determines success of these efforts - including information on the workplace assessments and/or employability certificates your programs use to determine outcomes (whether NRS-based or not).
5. The nature (kinds) of the workplace education outcomes that have been achieved by your programs.
6. Challenges or barriers faced or overcome in order to measure and achieve desired outcomes.
7. What you consider to be the key elements of success in your workplace education efforts (what has made it work)?
8. Also, based on your experiences, are there other policy options that you would like to consider in the future to improve the extent and quality of your workplace education services?