



National Coalition For Literacy

111th Congress

Reauthorization of the Adult Education and
Family Literacy Act

Recommendations
of the
National Coalition for Literacy

WIA Overview
February 2, 2009

The National Coalition for Literacy is a membership organization of national organizations, each of which provides critical services for adult learners. The Coalition has assessed the history of WIA implementation since 1998 and developed a number of recommendations that would strengthen the provisions of the new bill and, as a result, the services provided to adult learners across the country. The recommendations are in two parts:

- 1. This cover document identifies four critical issues and six major issues related to reauthorization of WIA.**

- 2. Attached to this cover document is a side-by-side document that includes our recommended changes to Title II of WIA, compared with the current legislation. We believe these changes will enable adult education to reach and better serve the undereducated adults and adults with limited English proficiency that would benefit from services.**

Should you have questions regarding any of these recommendations, please contact Ms. Lynn Selmsler at 703-560-5541, lcselmsler@cox.net or Dr. Lennox McLendon at 202-624-5250, dc2@ncsdae.org.

CRITICAL ISSUES:

1. **Infrastructure Services (TITLE I):** *The Coalition supports a separate line item to support operation of one stop delivery systems. The current system and proposals from the 109th Congress do not work for adult education.*

The National Evaluation of Adult Education identified linkage with at least five other agencies as one of the characteristics of effective adult education programs—because undereducated adults need an education but often need other services to stabilize their lives. As a result, adult educators believe in coordinating services. However, wrenching limited administrative funds from one under-funded provider to pay administrative costs of another is not the answer. Implementation since 1998 has shown that such provisions can lead to resentment and can actually be counterproductive to collaboration. A separate line item for One Stop infrastructure will facilitate not hinder collaboration.

2. **State Leadership (TITLE II—Section 223):** *The Coalition supports returning state leadership to a funding level of 15%.*

Restoration of the State Leadership capacity will enable states to meet performance standards, assessment standards, accountability goals and program quality goals.

Prior to the implementation of WIA in 1998, adult education was required to spend a minimum of 15% of state grants to prepare and support teachers and provide other program improvement activities. In 1998, WIA incorporated performance measures, increased accountability, and added program improvement requirements while reducing funds available for professional development and program improvement initiatives that are needed to incorporate those changes. WIA reduced state leadership funds to a maximum of 12.5%-- fewer dollars with greater demand for professional development and accountability. States need the resources to comply with program requirements.

3. **Incentive Grants (TITLE I):** *The Coalition supports eliminating incentive grants allowing those funds to be added to the formula grants to the states.*

If incentive grants are to be continued, we support uncoupling incentive grants and including a separate incentive grant program in Title II.

There is a high demand for adult education services. The adult education state directors have recently documented waiting lists in nearly every state. Taking critical service dollars from states for incentive grants is unwise, particularly when many states do not benefit from incentive grant funds. For example, in program year 2006-2007 twenty-four (24) state adult education programs met or exceeded their performance standards but were unable to benefit from the incentive grants because their Title I partners did not meet theirs.

Furthermore, many states do not benefit from incentive grant funds even if they are returned to the state—the funds are sent to partner agencies.

If incentive grants must be maintained, at least they should be uncoupled from partner agencies. Uncoupling incentive grants will reward state adult education services that work hard and meet their performance standards.

4. Research Center within the National Institute for Adult Literacy (Title II, Section 242). *The Coalition supports the creation of a research center within the National Institute for Literacy.*

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) decided in 2007 to discontinue funding the only research center on adult literacy. With most research within the Department of Education focused on K-12 education, this was a major loss for the adult education field. In an era where there is an increased focus on using instruction based on scientifically-based research, the IES decision places adult education, with limited research, at a distinct disadvantage. We are, therefore, proposing to fund a research center through the National Institute for Adult Literacy. This center will equip the field with the research it requires to continually improve instruction and produce better outcomes for students.

In addition to the four critical items listed above, we have attached a list of additional issues of tremendous importance to the adult education community.

OTHER MAJOR ISSUES

In addition to the four critical issues listed above, the following are the other important issues for the members of the Coalition:

1. **National Institute for Adult Literacy (Title II, Section 242) — We support focusing the work of the National Institute for Literacy on adult education, the purpose for which it was created.** We propose changing the name of the Institute to the National Institute for Adult Literacy, which will reflect this change. The field has grown to rely on NIFL's support and services. Adult education has no other resource for its broad-based needs. We support dividing the Institute into two parts, one to carry out its responsibilities under No Child Left Behind and the other to focus on adult education and family literacy.
2. **One Stop Special Rule (Title I) --** In some states the chief executive officer responsible for adult education is constitutionally separate from the Governor. Therefore, WIA provisions that grant the Governor certain authority need a special rule in those cases. We support the inclusion of a Special Rule (along the lines of the Senate provision from the 109th Congress) **that accommodates those constitutional cases wherein the chief executive officer will consult with the Governor on matters related to the WIA delivery system.**
3. **Adult Education as Mandatory Partner on State Workforce Investment Boards (Title I) –** As the State Workforce Investment Board makes decisions affecting adult education programs within each state, there should be an individual on the Board with firsthand knowledge of adult education programs, how they operate within the state, the population they serve, and options for coordinating services for undereducated adults. Only 5 adult education state directors serve on state WIBs. State Superintendents (22), Community College Presidents (5) and others (15) represent adult education. (USDOE, 2005). Agency heads such as State Superintendents and Community College Presidents that are familiar with the details of every individual program under their purview are rare. Familiarity with the details of adult education is essential to capitalizing on opportunities to develop critical partnerships and improve comprehensive services for undereducated adults. By sitting on the state WIB, the state director can avail the agency of those opportunities.

4. **EL/Civics Program (Title II)** – At the present time, the EL/Civics program exists on a year-to-year basis through the appropriations process. **We propose to make this program a permanent part of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.** It addresses the needs of a rapidly increasing portion of those adults in need of adult education services. Individuals in need of English literacy (English as a Second Language) services already comprise approximately half of the basic adult education program.

5. **Career and College Pathways (Title II)** -- Many states have developed dual and concurrent enrollment programs with college and technical programs enabling adult learners to progress quickly toward certifications. The Coalition has added Career and College Pathways to the purpose of the Act and has added a definition of those activities. This definition acknowledges and encourages the expansion of those collaborative efforts between the adult education program and the local provider of occupational training and postsecondary education services. It is easier to teach reading, math, and English in the context of a trade in which an adult is interested. Helping adults gain certification in high demand jobs as quickly as possible benefits the individual and the community. **SPECIAL RULE:** Because there has been some concern regarding Adult Education and Family Literacy Act funds being used for occupational training, a special rule is included to ensure the funds are used as Congress intended.

6. **Assistant Secretary for Adult Education (Title II)** - Adult education services are critical to the success of other federal initiatives: job training, public health, welfare, aging, education, and crime to name a few. As a result, partnerships between adult education and each of these agencies can provide more effective services for the adult clients and more productive performance for the agencies. The major stumbling block for collaboration at the local service level has been reported to be the inconsistency of rules and policy at the federal level. In order to facilitate interaction and collaboration between those agencies, a federal manager of rank and singular responsibility is required. To that end, **Adult Education and Family Literacy should be administered by an Assistant Secretary for Adult Education and Literacy.**

The adult education and family literacy professionals throughout the country are committed to continuing to improve the quality of adult education and literacy services. We appreciate the guidance Congress has provided with the implementation of the performance indicators, and we feel our learners and our practitioners have benefited from this focus on quality. Our

suggestions in these documents carry on that continuous improvement tradition.

The accompanying documents provide the background and details that hopefully give you insights into each of our positions.

Feel free to **contact Ms. Lynn Selmsler at 703-560-5541 or by e-mail at lcselmsler@cox.net or Dr. Lennox McLendon at 202-624-5250 or by email at dc2@ncsdae.org**)

We look forward to working with you to produce reauthorized legislation that will continue to guide our program improvement.