

**Linking Research
and Evaluation to
Policy and
Practice in Adult
Education:
Final Report**

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Table of Contents

Preface	i
Introduction	1
Utilization of Research and Evaluation Findings	2
Working Group Meeting.	2
Key Issues in State Policy	3
Strategies for Systemic Improvement	4
Strategies for Packaging and Disseminating Research and Evaluation Findings.....	6
Focus Groups.	7
Summary of Recommendations.	8
Framework for Research, Development, and Technical Assistance Priorities	9
First Symposium.	9
Improving and Supporting Quality Programs	10
Building the Capacity of State Policymakers.....	10
Developing a National Infrastructure.....	11
Second Symposium.	11
Developing Research Priorities.....	12
Developing a Framework.....	19
Monitoring Investments	19
Leveraging Resources	19
Conclusions and Short-Term Priorities.....	23
Recommendations for Priorities.....	24
Next Steps	24
Appendix A List of Members: Adult Education Working Group National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium Committee	
Appendix B Summary of Symposium on State and Federal Investments, August 1997	
Appendix C Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Adult Education	

Preface

This document presents the findings from a series of activities that Abt Associates Inc. has undertaken during 1997-1998 in developing a framework for research, program development, and technical assistance priorities in adult education and in identifying strategies that might be undertaken to promote better use of the results from adult education research and evaluation studies. These activities included the following: 1) facilitation of a meeting of a Working Group of state adult education directors, state staff development directors, and representatives from national voluntary literacy organizations; 2) conduct of two focus groups with adult education program administrators and instructors; and 3) facilitation of two symposia of representatives from the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC). Discussed in this document are recommendations for improving the utilization and transfer of research and evaluation findings in adult education, as well as a framework of adult education priorities based on the information that Abt Associates' staff collected through these activities.

Thanks are given to Cheryl Keenan, chair of the NAEPDC committee and state director of adult education for Pennsylvania and Lennon McLendon, state director of adult education for Virginia, who collaborated in planning the two symposia and in preparing the recommendations from the symposia that were presented to the U.S. Department of Education on behalf of NAEPDC. Appreciation also is extended to David S. Alexander, president of Nine Star Enterprises, Inc.--the staff development provider for adult education in Alaska, who facilitated the focus groups with program administrators and instructors.

This report was prepared by Judith A. Alamprese from Abt Associates Inc., who served as facilitator for the meeting of the Working Group and the two symposia. Abt Associates undertook this work as part of its subcontract from the Research Triangle Institute (RTI). RTI supported this work under their contract #LC92008001 from the U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service.

Introduction

Beginning in 1996, representatives from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) and the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC) began discussing strategies that state directors of adult education could use to provide suggestions to OVAE, other offices in the U.S. Department of Education, and the National Institute for Literacy concerning the types of investments that might be made with the Adult Education Act's National Program Funds, Section 353 funds, and related federal adult education monies. These discussions grew out of the state directors' interest in maximizing the use of the research, program development, and technical assistance projects funded with federal monies in assisting them in their accountability and program improvement efforts. Through these discussions, OVAE's staff also wanted to encourage state directors to support training and development projects with Section 353 funds that complemented and leveraged the National Program investments. The overall concern was that the state and federal research and development funds available in adult education be used in part to meet the needs of state policymakers and local program staff. To address this issue, a committee of representatives from NAEPDC was formed to develop priorities for research, development, and technical assistance in adult education.

As part of the early discussions about the value of research and evaluation in adult education, the U.S. Department of Education determined that information was needed about the ways in which state policymakers and adult education practitioners used research and evaluation findings to guide their work, and steps that might be taken to encourage utilization of these findings. In light of this need, the U.S. Department of Education's Planning and Evaluation Service funded Abt Associates Inc. to carry out a project to examine the factors that promote and inhibit the use of research and evaluation to guide policy and practice.

During 1997-1998, Abt Associates has undertaken a number of activities in developing a framework for research, program development, and technical assistance priorities and in identifying strategies that might be taken to promote better use of the results from adult education research and evaluation studies. These activities were:

- Convened a Working Group of state adult education directors, state staff development directors, and representatives from national voluntary literacy organizations;

- Conducted focus groups with adult education program administrators and instructors to discuss methods for promoting the use of research and evaluation in improving policy and practice; and
- Facilitated two symposia of the NAEPDC committee to specify research and development priorities.

This document discusses the findings from these activities. Included are recommendations for improving the utilization and transfer of research and evaluation findings. Also presented is a framework of adult education research priorities that moves from knowledge development to knowledge application, utilization, and transfer. This framework incorporates the NAEPDC committee's priorities with those identified by other agenda-building efforts underway in adult education.

Utilization of Research and Evaluation Findings

Abt undertook two major activities to explore the extent to which state adult education directors, state adult education staff development directors, and adult education program administrators and instructors use information from research and evaluation studies in their work, and the steps that might be taken to increase this use. One activity was to convene a working group of state adult education directors, staff development directors, and representatives from national literacy organizations to discuss these issues (See Appendix A for a list of the Working Group members), and the second was to conduct focus groups with adult education program administrators and instructors to determine their awareness about the research and evaluation studies that have been undertaken in adult education and the amount and nature of their use.

Working Group Meeting. Six state directors of adult education (Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Oregon, South Carolina, Virginia, Wisconsin), three state staff development directors (Alaska, California, Connecticut), representatives from the two national literacy organizations (Laubach Literacy Action, Literacy Volunteers of America), the director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult and Vocational Education, and representatives from the U.S. Department of Education met on July 31, 1997 for the following purposes:

- To build participants' understanding of the types of research and evaluation activities in adult education that have been conducted, the types of information that have been produced, and the ways in which the topics of funded research and evaluation have reflected national and state concerns; and
- To identify the types of research and evaluation results that can be helpful to state and local adult educators, formats for disseminating these results, and the ways in which these results can be used by state policymakers, staff developers, and local program staff to improve services to adult learners.

Abt Associates' staff performed two types of activities to address the above objectives. First, the meeting facilitator presented an overview of the types of research and evaluation studies that typically are funded with federal monies, with examples of projects in 12 areas of adult education that have been supported during the past five years. The facilitator also presented information from research findings on three approaches to systemic reform in education to stimulate discussion about the uses of research and evaluation in program change, and reviewed key issues in program improvement and dissemination.

Using the facilitator's presentation materials as a stimulus, the meeting participants discussed three issues: 1) key issues emerging in state policy, 2) strategies for systemic improvement in adult education, and 3) strategies for packaging and disseminating research and evaluation findings in adult education.

Key Issues in State Policy. The meeting participants discussed a number of emerging issues as background information for considering the role that research and evaluation might have in facilitating their work in developing and implementing state policy. As needs arise from the federal and state levels, state directors need to be able to anticipate the questions that they will be asked and respond to requests for information about their client populations and the impact of services on these clients' skill development. The meeting participants identified a number of policy questions that they see as important in their work and that might help to guide future research efforts. These are:

- **Developing Policy:** How can state policymakers develop and use policies to facilitate program improvement at the local level? How should state policymakers deal with fluctuating priorities? How do states deal with the changes that are due to welfare reform? How do states move from a goal of social justice to one of achieving economic self-sufficiency?

- **Determining Investments in Services:** Given limited resources, what should we do and for whom? How can we best serve a changing population of learners (e.g., adults with learning difficulties, young adults)? How can we deal with the limited time period we have with adults in program services? How can initiatives be undertaken with other state agencies to leverage our investments? What is the return on our investment in basic skills development?
- **Assessing Impact:** How do we best document the impacts of programs? How do we deal with the marginality of outcomes?

Strategies for Systemic Improvement. One critical component of developing approaches for using research and evaluation results is determining the types of changes that might occur from their use. As a context for thinking about utilization of research, the meeting participants discussed some of the challenges that they face in designing and implementing systemic change in adult education, and the types of information that might be helpful in these efforts. They also raised the issue of what constitutes a reasonable time frame for change to take place.

In promoting systemic change, participants discussed that it is important to recognize that when a new practice is adopted by a program, a clear presentation of the resulting transformations is critical to dissemination processes. Often the change process is built on the assumption that a policy--a publicly announced set of intentions--combined with an allocation of resources and other provisions will motivate and sustain change-oriented activities at various levels in a system. Change also can be driven by contextual factors that affect the direction of policy as it is delivered to service recipients and professionals at the lowest level of the system. These individuals may in turn be important brokers who interpret the implications of the policy for service delivery.

Participants discussed various applications of these theories of change. For example, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, developers of innovative practices in adult education (e.g., adult education programs disseminated through the U.S. Department of Education's National Diffusion Network as well as with state Section 353 funds) approached the change process in two ways: 1) by working with key change agents in adult education programs, such as coordinators or lead instructors, in training them to use a specific practice, such as a curriculum or instructional approach, or 2) by working with a program's administrator and key change agents in instituting a new practice with multiple components, such as the National External High School Diploma Program. A key difference between the two approaches was the

involvement of the administrator in incorporating the new practice as part of an overall program improvement strategy involving multiple steps, rather than the adoption of a singular practice as a method of improving a program. While singular practices can contribute to program improvement, they need to be considered as one part of a comprehensive improvement strategy. Over time, adult education program staff have recognized that a myriad of factors affect adults' ability to benefit from adult education services and that in order for a program to be effective, it must address this variety of learner needs. Thus, program improvement needs to be viewed systemically, with consideration given to all levels of an organization (e.g., program administrator, coordinator, instructors, counselors, support staff) that may need to be transformed in order to improve the quality of the services that are being provided to learners.

The conditions under which systemic change is likely to occur also were discussed. A number of the meeting participants have been involved in statewide program improvement efforts and reflected on the circumstances that have enabled them to implement changes in learner assessment and other aspects of program operations. One condition is a system's readiness for change. If a new practice is philosophically congruent with an organization's prior practices and users' knowledge, it has a greater likelihood of successful implementation. For example, the National External High School Diploma Program and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) have a greater chance of success in states that already have adopted competency-based education as a program framework (as was the case in Connecticut and Oregon). An innovative practice also will be more likely to be adopted when it is not too complex and is reasonable in cost (neither of which is the case, for example, with the External Diploma Program and has accounted for the reluctance of states to enter into statewide adoptions of the program).

In implementing statewide initiatives, participants emphasized that change takes time and may go through different stages. For example, participants noted that they used a process that involved a pilot phase in which selected programs that have a high readiness for change implemented the new practices first (e.g., Pennsylvania and Connecticut's program improvement initiatives). These pilot sites often are programs that have demonstrated their effectiveness in instructing learners, have developed innovative practices, and/or have staff who are recognized leaders in the state. A state's staff development entity is a key change agent in this process, and a state often engages the assistance of an external consultant to help in planning policy and training activities, and in developing monitoring systems. Through the pilot process, adjustments can be made in the new practices based on their initial implementation, and a corps of early implementers is formed who then can influence their peers in adopting new practices. Key to the success of all of these efforts is coordinated policy, professional development, and

data collection systems that support the change process and produce evidence of the effects of the new practices.

Strategies for Packaging and Disseminating Research and Evaluation Findings. The group's discussion on prior research, emerging policy issues, and strategies for systemic change led to observations and recommendations concerning ways of improving the formats of the information from research and evaluation, as well as strategies for disseminating this information.

Participants noted that a first step is to identify the target audiences for the information--e.g., state policymakers in adult education and/or other agencies; staff developers; program administrators and instructional staff. Often reports are written with no clear audience in mind. One step that the authors can take is to specify the types of individuals who might benefit from the information contained in the report.

Meeting participants made a number of suggestions concerning the analysis and presentation of information in research and evaluation reports. For example, information should be presented in ways that it can be understood by a variety of potential users. Case studies and site descriptions should be written so that readers from various localities can recognize the similarities to their own situations. For example, the site descriptions might include information about the target population of learners being served, key operational aspects of the program, and factors that facilitated and hampered the implementation of the key practices being discussed. To the extent possible, the authors should apply the findings to varied situations so that readers can understand the conditions under which they might use the processes or practices being described. An executive summary should be included that highlights the key findings and possible applications.

Participants discussed various one- and two-way dissemination methods to promote the utilization of research and evaluation results in adult education. The ERIC system provides models that might be considered by individual researchers as well as funding agencies. Practitioners have found formats such as digests, "myths and realities," trends and issues, and practice application briefs to be helpful. The Internet also can provide easier and faster access to reports and publications from the research and evaluation studies that have been undertaken. Because there are few peer-reviewed journals in the field of adult education, researchers are limited in their opportunities to publish and have to rely on vehicles such as ERIC or the federal funder to disseminate the reports. This dissemination often is limited and not targeted to program administrators or practitioners.

While participants recognized the value of one-way dissemination methods, they emphasized the importance of developing and encouraging opportunities for two-way transfer. Participants noted that often they receive research and evaluation reports that either are not related to their current issues or are not formatted for easy dissemination. They suggested that interactive events such as seminars or briefings be held after the publication of major studies so that the key findings can be discussed and possible applications for policy and practice can be reviewed, particularly in terms of the types of technical assistance that can be given to local program staff in using research and evaluation findings. Participants also recommended including in the report summary pages that can be made into overhead transparencies that could be used with various stakeholders.

Other methods for two-way transfer were discussed, such as presentations at state and national adult education conferences and the use of computer conferencing and electronic networks. As part of these discussions, attention should be given to the extent to which staff development providers in a state can incorporate the findings from research and evaluation studies into their activities. One example is the data collection instruments that are used in studies that may be able to be adapted for use in local program evaluation and improvement activities. For example, surveys used in research with staff and learners could be adapted for use by state adult education staff in their monitoring visits or by local program staff in assessing the effects of the program. Instruments used in program evaluations, such as class observation guides, might have utility in training new staff in instructional methods. Overall, the participants noted that much could be done to enhance the ways in which research and evaluation results are packaged and distributed to policymakers and practitioners.

Focus Groups. In order to understand the views of adult education program directors and instructors concerning the utilization of research and evaluation findings, Abt sponsored the conduct of two focus groups in the state of Alaska as a follow-up to the Working Group Meeting. Alaska's director of staff development in adult education conducted these focus groups in conjunction with statewide meetings held in October 1997 and March 1998. Participants included local program directors, representatives from the state literacy council and the State Department of Education, and adult education instructors.

Three themes permeated the discussions--time, access, and format. Focus group participants noted that their busy schedules and the amount of information that is being sent to them often prohibit their careful review of the reports that they do receive. Since many adult education staff are part-time employees, their attention is directed toward activities specifically related to their

responsibilities. In order for them to spend time reading and reviewing research, steps need to be taken to increase the saliency of the information and the way it is presented.

Related to time is access to information. Most focus group participants could not identify reports that they had received from the U.S. Department of Education or other agencies, and noted that most information that they use is sent to them from the state's staff development provider or the State Education Department. Increasingly, participants noted that they are using the Internet to access information from websites such as those maintained by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and the HubIV project sponsored by NIFL. In addition, some participants indicated that they received information from national organizations such as the National Center for Family Literacy.

The third factor discussed concerned the format of research and evaluation information. In general, participants said that shorter formats that summarize key issues and applications to practice would be helpful. Some noted that the "Thursday Notes" distributed by the OVAE's Division of Adult Education was useful, particularly in its references to reports or practices. One opportunity that many practitioners in the state have to participate in interactive sessions is at their annual statewide conference. Efforts that could be made to discuss findings from national studies and their use in program management and instruction at this event would be well received by participants.

Summary of Recommendations. The findings from the Working Group meeting of adult education state directors, staff development directors, and representatives from national literacy organizations as well as the focus groups with program directors and instructors indicate that a number of steps can be taken to improve the utilization of research and evaluation findings in adult education. The key recommendations are the following:

- Define the target populations: Be clear about the stakeholders who might benefit from the research and evaluation findings and indicate whom the intended beneficiaries are in the document;
- Present the analyses of findings so that varied users can interpret them: Provide examples of the key findings in a variety of contexts so that the potential users can understand their applicability. Where possible, contrast the study's findings to national or state data so that they can be interpreted and used;

- Synthesize findings in formats that are user-oriented: Present the key results in an executive summary that can be disseminated and in formats such as digests, practice application briefs, and trends and issues summaries;
- Provide opportunities for interactive discussion about findings. Conduct sessions on major research and evaluation studies at national and state conferences, seminars, and meetings, as well as through the use of computer conferencing. Provide syntheses of the findings that then can be used in state meetings; and
- Specify the applications from the research and evaluation for policy and practice. Clearly state the ways in which study findings may be used in state and local policy with illustrative examples. Disseminate products from studies, such as survey instruments and class observation guides, which may be used in state and local evaluations and training.

Framework for Research, Development, and Technical Assistance Priorities

First Symposium. The U.S. Department of Education sponsored two symposia with the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium committee that focused on developing a framework for research, development, and technical assistance in adult education which could guide future federal and state investments as well as encourage greater utilization and application of current investments. The first symposium was held on August 26-27, 1997 and involved state directors and one local representative from 11 states and the Executive Director of Laubach Literacy Action (see Appendix A for a list of participants and Appendix B for a summary of the meeting). At this meeting, the facilitator presented a summary of the types of adult education projects that have been supported with federal funds and the topic areas that have been investigated in these projects. This review indicated that while many of the projects address issues of timely importance to state directors and local practitioners, they are not necessarily linked to produce a coherent body of knowledge. The state and national literacy program representatives then discussed the initiatives that they are conducting to stimulate program improvement and develop accountability systems. From this discussion, the participants began to identify the key emerging issues that they face in administering state adult education programs.

The participants in the first symposium specified three areas in which further research, development, and technical assistance are needed in adult education. These are:

- Improving and supporting quality programs;
- Building capacity of state policymakers within and across agencies; and
- Developing a national infrastructure.

Improving and Supporting Quality Programs. To address the increasing emphasis on program improvement in adult education prompted, in part, by the federal accountability and standards requirements, state adult education and national volunteer program staff recognize their need for information about effective practices for serving subpopulations of learners. During the symposium, participants noted that as programs serve a diverse learner population in terms of demographic characteristics and learning needs, different types of service delivery models--including formats and location for instruction as well as the integration of support services--are necessary to address adequately the needs of learners enrolling in adult education programs. In order for states to engage in program improvement initiatives, they need information about the operation and cost of program models, methods for training and technical assistance, and techniques for examining the relationship between program operations and learner outcomes.

Building the Capacity of State Policymakers. State staff participating in the symposium discussed at length the importance of state policy as a lever for program change, and their need for technical assistance in the use of policy to promote improvement. While the location and status of a state's adult education office varies across states, there is an overarching set of issues about the development and use of state policy that is common among state policymakers. Key areas in which information is needed are ways to use program and learner data in making decisions; processes for conducting state initiatives and "going to scale" with effective practices; methods for measuring program and learner outcomes as well as building value for the collection and use of data at the local level; and strategies for coordinating with other state agencies funding services for the adult learner population.

Developing a National Infrastructure. While the majority of funds used to support adult education services is from the states, symposium participants emphasized the need for a national infrastructure to support their work in the states. Much discussion was focused on the potential of the value-added of information from national studies and projects that states can use in positioning their state data and in improving their services. Because state funding for research

and technical assistance is limited, efforts to leverage these dollars with national activities would be helpful to states. Furthermore, increased national dissemination of information and products would benefit all state and local adult education programs.

In addition to areas for research, the participants recommended steps that can be taken in the design and implementation of research that would facilitate its utilization by policymakers and practitioners. This information was used as the basis for the second symposium that was convened on February 24, 1998. The intent of this meeting was to continue the work begun in the first symposium in developing a framework and priorities for research, development, and technical assistance, and in providing recommendations to the U.S. Department of Education regarding national investments in adult education research and development.

Second Symposium. The objectives of the second symposium were the following:

- Refine the research and development framework established in the first symposium in light of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and related efforts to identify a national research agenda for adult education;
- Identify short-term priorities for the National Programs investments based on this framework;
- Identify methods to ensure that current and future research undertaken with National Programs funding will be used in policy and practice; and
- Identify strategies for leveraging state research, evaluation, and development monies in light of the framework for National Programs investments.

The format for the second symposium meeting was similar to that used in the Working Group meeting previously discussed. The facilitator prepared a presentation and materials that were used to stimulate discussion on the topics listed above. The facilitator then refined the materials based on the results of the symposium discussion.

Developing Research Priorities. A key objective of the second symposium was to develop further the priorities for research, development, and technical assistance in light of the GPRA specifications for adult education (see Appendix C), the recent draft agenda for research and development in adult education that had been prepared by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), and the research agenda for ESL that had been prepared by the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education and the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. As a

first step in refining the priorities identified by NAEPDC committee (or first symposium working group), a cross-analysis was made of the priorities identified by the first symposium working group, by RTI, and in the ESL agenda. Exhibit 1 presents this analysis. As is shown in the exhibit, while the overarching categories in which priorities are listed may be different, there is overlap in terms of the specific priorities that are presented. The common themes across these efforts and perhaps the most important areas in which inquiry is needed are: 1) assessment, 2) instruction, 3) program design, and 4) staff development. However, a key area for the working group not identified through other processes is building the capacity of state policymakers. As a further step to specify a refined set of priorities for the National Programs investments, the meeting facilitator analyzed the two past efforts to define national research agendas in adult education (projects sponsored by the Business Council for Effective Literacy in 1985 and by the Southport Institute in 1990), the overlap between these efforts and the three current agenda-setting activities, and the common themes among all of these. Presented in Exhibit 2 is this analysis. As indicated in this exhibit, six common themes were identified across these effects. These themes concerned effects of environments and contexts on learners, alternative methods for providing instruction and for assessment, and relationships among a number of variables, such as learner characteristics, instructional characteristics, and learner outcomes, as well as relationships among aspects of staff development. One aspect of the agendas that has changed over the years is the complexity of the statement of the priorities. The current agendas contain more statements of relationships among variables as a way of stating the types of studies that are needed to understand the conditions under which learners might best be served.

The final step in refining the NAEPDC committee's priorities for research and development was an examination of the priorities in light of: 1) current investments in adult education research and development supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, the Planning and Evaluation Service, and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, as well as the National Institute for Literacy, and 2) future planned investments as of the time of the meeting. Exhibit 3 presents this information. As shown in the exhibit, the areas with the fewest current or planned investments are building the capacity of state policymakers and the national infrastructure.

Exhibit 1 Cross-Analysis of Priorities

Symposium Working Group ¹	RTI ²	ESL Agenda ³
<p>Research and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Who are subgroups of adult learners who might be served and the changing characteristics of these subgroups ■ Effective models of service delivery system and data on these models ■ Effective models of integrating services ■ Models for transitioning learners between programs in support of lifelong learning ■ New approaches to service delivery (e.g., use of volunteers, contexts for services) ■ Relationship between characteristics of instruction and learner gains ■ Methods for assessing learners' skills ■ What are adequate working conditions and teaching standards for supporting effective instruction <p>Improving Quality Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Different methods for serving subpopulations ■ Costs/methods for alternative delivery systems, including distance learning ■ Staff development packages describing services ■ Processes for packaging products and materials ■ Staff development for program administrators to support effective service delivery 	<p>Adult Learning and Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How do adults learn ■ How are adults' needs changing ■ What motivates adults to participate/persist in adult education ■ How can programs/national initiatives attract students ■ How can programs respond better to students' needs ■ What are implications of how adults learn in formal and informal settings for programs <p>Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How effective are instructional models (What works best in what context, effects of time on task, effects of teacher characteristics, learning outside of classroom) ■ Need for print materials, computer programs, curriculum 	<p>Adult ESL Learners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is range and variation of oral English and English literacy activities needed by ESL learners ■ What are roles of native language literacy ■ How can classroom instruction build on knowledge, experiences ■ Role of language/literacy in family, work, community and relationship to programs ■ Participation patterns of ESL learners <p>Program Design and Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Types and methods of data collection ■ Program features ■ Types of instructional practices ■ Use of technology ■ Models for transitioning between programs ■ Services to learners not formally enrolled

Exhibit 1 (Cont.) Cross-Analysis of Priorities

Symposium Working Group ¹	RTI ²	ESL Agenda ³
<p>Building Capacity of State Policymakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strategies for state staff to use in providing leadership within and across agencies ■ Processes for adapting policies in light of political requirements and contexts ■ “How to” develop State policy ■ “How to” use data to improve policy and practice ■ “How to” run a State initiative and institutionalize its results ■ Processes for defining and measuring program outcomes ■ Processes for developing initiatives to stimulate change and build a value for change 	<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Need for specifying outcomes for adult education ■ Need for techniques for assessing learner progress ■ Need for methods for assessing program effectiveness <p>Staff Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New approaches to staff development involving practitioners 	<p>Teacher Preparation and Staff Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What are professional development needs of ESL teachers ■ What are the characteristics of effective teachers ■ What employment conditions support effective teachers ■ What are relationships among staff training, program quality, and learner achievement ■ How do researchers and practitioners inform each other
<p>National Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Need for quality national database ■ Need for coordinated research agenda ■ Synthesis of past research to identify gaps ■ Need for coordination across agencies (funding, data reporting) ■ Need for dissemination and marketing of lifelong learning at national, state and local levels ■ Need for data on projecting the changing population of adult learners 	<p>Service Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ways of establishing an integrated service delivery system 	<p>Assessment and Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What are methods for assessing adult ESL learner progress and achievement ■ What are methods for measuring the impact of participation in ESL programs and on participants’ lives

¹ Alamprese, J. (1997). **Summary of Symposium on State and Federal Investments**. Bethesda: Abt Associates Inc.

² Research Triangle Institute (1998). **Setting a National Agenda for Research and Development in Adult Education and Literacy (Draft)**. Research Triangle Park.

³ National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education and National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (n.d.). **Toward a Research Agenda for ESL**.

Exhibit 2
Analysis: Past Priorities, Current Priorities, Common Themes

PAST PRIORITIES¹	OVERLAP OF PRIORITIES²	COMMON THEMES
<p>Research and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop new tools for staff development, learner assessment, program evaluation ■ Identify exemplary models of literacy programs and practices ■ Conduct research on adult learning (development of critical thinking skills, learning in context, development of beginning reading skills, acquisition of ESL skills) ■ Conduct research in adult literacy programming: staff development (content and processes for staff development, certification models), instruction (effective teaching and classroom management, use of computers), performance standards, learner assessment procedures (factors associated with learner gains) 	<p>Research and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Who are the subpopulation of adults who can benefit from services: A, C ■ How do adults learn: A, B, C, D ■ What are implications of learning theory for instruction: B, C, D ■ How does the environment affect learning: B, C ■ What are effective instructional practices: A, B, C, D ■ What are new approaches for service delivery in and out of the classroom: A, B, C, D ■ What are effective models of integrating services: A, C ■ What are effective uses of technology: A, B, C, D ■ What is relationship between characteristics of instruction/programs and learner gains: A, B, C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Effects of learners on environment and environment on learners ■ Learning in different contexts; in and out of class; formal and informal ■ Alternative methods for providing instruction ■ Relationship among learner characteristics, program and instructional characteristics, and learner outcomes ■ Multiple modes of assessment and documenting program impacts ■ Relationship among content of staff development, current knowledge of staff, and methods for staff development

Exhibit 2 (Contd.)
Analysis: Past Priorities, Current Priorities, Common Themes

PAST PRIORITIES ¹	OVERLAP OF PRIORITIES ²	COMMON THEMES
<p>Program Capacity Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Disseminate findings from research and development projects to local programs ■ Expand technical assistance capacity of federal, state, and local groups ■ Develop program evaluation capacity within states ■ Develop new service delivery systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What are processes for defining and measuring program/learner outcomes (new assessment instruments and procedures, program evaluation): A, B, C, D ■ What are different models for and effective approaches to staff development: A, B, C, D 	
<p>National infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish national institute on adult learning, with focus on literacy ■ Increase capacity of national literacy organizations to serve local literacy programs ■ Conduct public awareness activities to create interest in and support for literacy from public/private sectors ■ Coordinate literacy activities across federal agencies 	<p>Dissemination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Need for models of disseminating research findings to practitioners: A, B, C, D ■ Need to develop new materials and tools for improving practice: A, B, D <p>Development of State Capacity: A, D</p> <p>Development of National Infrastructure: A, D</p>	

¹ McCune D. and Alamprese, J. (1985). **Turning Illiteracy Around: An Agency for National Action**. New York: Business Council for Effective Literacy. Alamprese, J. (1990). "Strengthening the Knowledge Base in Adult Literacy: The Research Imperative" in Chisman, F. and Associates. **Leadership for Literacy**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

² A=Symposium B=RTI C=ESL Agenda D=Past Priority

Exhibit 3
Priorities, Current Investments, and Future Investments

SYMPOSIUM WORKING GROUP	CURRENT INVESTMENTS	FUTURE INVESTMENTS
<p>Research and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Who are subgroups of adult learners who might be served ■ Effective models of service delivery system ■ Effective models of integrating services ■ New approaches to service delivery (e.g., use of volunteers, contexts for services) ■ Relationship between characteristics of instruction and learner gains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adult Diagnostic Reading Survey ■ Identification of Effective Adult ESL Programs ■ “What Works” Evaluation for Adult ABE Students ■ Equipped for the Future ■ NCSALL: Learner Motivation, GED Impact, Adult Development, Adult Multiple Intelligences, Literacy Practices of Adult Learners, Health and Adult Literacy, Staff Development Study, Assessment Study, Longitudinal Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Study of Adult Learning and Cognitive Development ■ Project on Individual Literacy Proficiency Assessment ■ Improving Effectiveness of Demonstration and Experimental Projects in Adult Education ■ What We Learned from Federally Funded Workplace Literacy Programs ■ Star Schools Literacy Link Evaluation ■ Strategies for Cooperation/Funding ■ International Seminar on IALS
<p>Improving Quality Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Different methods for serving subpopulations ■ Costs/methods for alternative delivery systems, including distance learning ■ Staff development packages describing services ■ Processes for packaging products and materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Building Professional Development Partnerships for Adult Education (Pro-Net) ■ Instructional Technology SBIR ■ Learning Disabilities System Change Initiative in One-Stop Learning Centers ■ Disabilities Center ■ NCSALL Practitioner Dissemination and Research Network ■ NIFL Fellows Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improving Technology in Service Delivery ■ Distance Learning Initiative ■ State Partnerships for a New Crossroads Cafe Family Literacy Series and the Adult Literacy Media Alliance ■ A Technology “Tool Box” ■ NIFL Disabilities Training Phase ■ Commissioned Papers

Exhibit 3 (Contd.)

Priorities, Current Investments, and Future Investments

SYMPOSIUM WORKING GROUP	CURRENT INVESTMENTS	FUTURE INVESTMENTS
<p>Building Capacity of State Policymakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leadership training in working within/across agencies ■ Processes for adapting policies in light of political requirements ■ “How to” develop State policy ■ “How to” use data to improve policy and practice ■ “How to” run a State initiative and institutionalize its results ■ Processes for defining and measuring program outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Even Start Agency Cooperation and Collaboration Project ■ ProNet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Research to Practice Project ■ Commissioned Papers ■ NIFL: Policy Research
<p>National Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Need for quality national database ■ Need for coordinated research agenda ■ Synthesis of past research to identify gaps ■ Need for coordination across agencies (funding, data reporting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Reporting System ■ LINCIS Project ■ Public Awareness Campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ LINCIS - Specialized Collections ■ Commissioned Papers

In light of these analyses, the symposium participants discussed minor changes and identified a final list of priorities. This is the list that is presented in Exhibit 1 for the Symposium Working Group.

Developing a Framework. Once the participants specified the priorities for research, development, and technical assistance, they discussed an overall framework that could be used to examine the types of projects that are funded from research to dissemination. This framework, which is presented in Exhibit 4, is intended to be used as a guide for monitoring the types of investments that are made in order to ensure that a variety of activities in knowledge development, knowledge application and utilization, and knowledge transfer are undertaken in key priority areas. This approach is aimed at addressing the shortcomings of previous investments in adult education in which projects have been primarily focused on knowledge development with less emphasis on knowledge application and transfer. As one example of the use of this framework, the meeting facilitator presented an illustrative example of how the activities in Abt Associates' current Study of Effective Programs and Practices for First-Level Learners funded by the U.S. Department of Education reflect the main categories on the framework. This illustration is presented in Exhibit 5.

Monitoring Investments. The symposium participants continued the discussion begun in the first meeting concerning guidelines that federal and state officials can use in developing study procurements and in monitoring these studies. A refined set of guidelines is presented in Exhibit 6. These guidelines, which were developed to address some of the problems encountered in previous federally funded studies such as the feasibility of the research design and the critical relevance of the research questions, are intended as a resource for officials to use to facilitate their work.

Leveraging Resources. An ongoing concern of the U.S. Department of Education and state adult education offices is the need to leverage federal and state resources in supporting research, development, and technical assistance. The symposium participants discussed several questions that could be considered by federal and state officials in crafting their investments in order to build upon prior work and ensure the utilization of results. These questions were the following:

- What issues/areas/problems have been addressed previously?
- What have we learned from this research and how definitive were the findings?

Exhibit 4
Revised Framework for Research, Development
and Technical Assistance Priorities in Adult Education

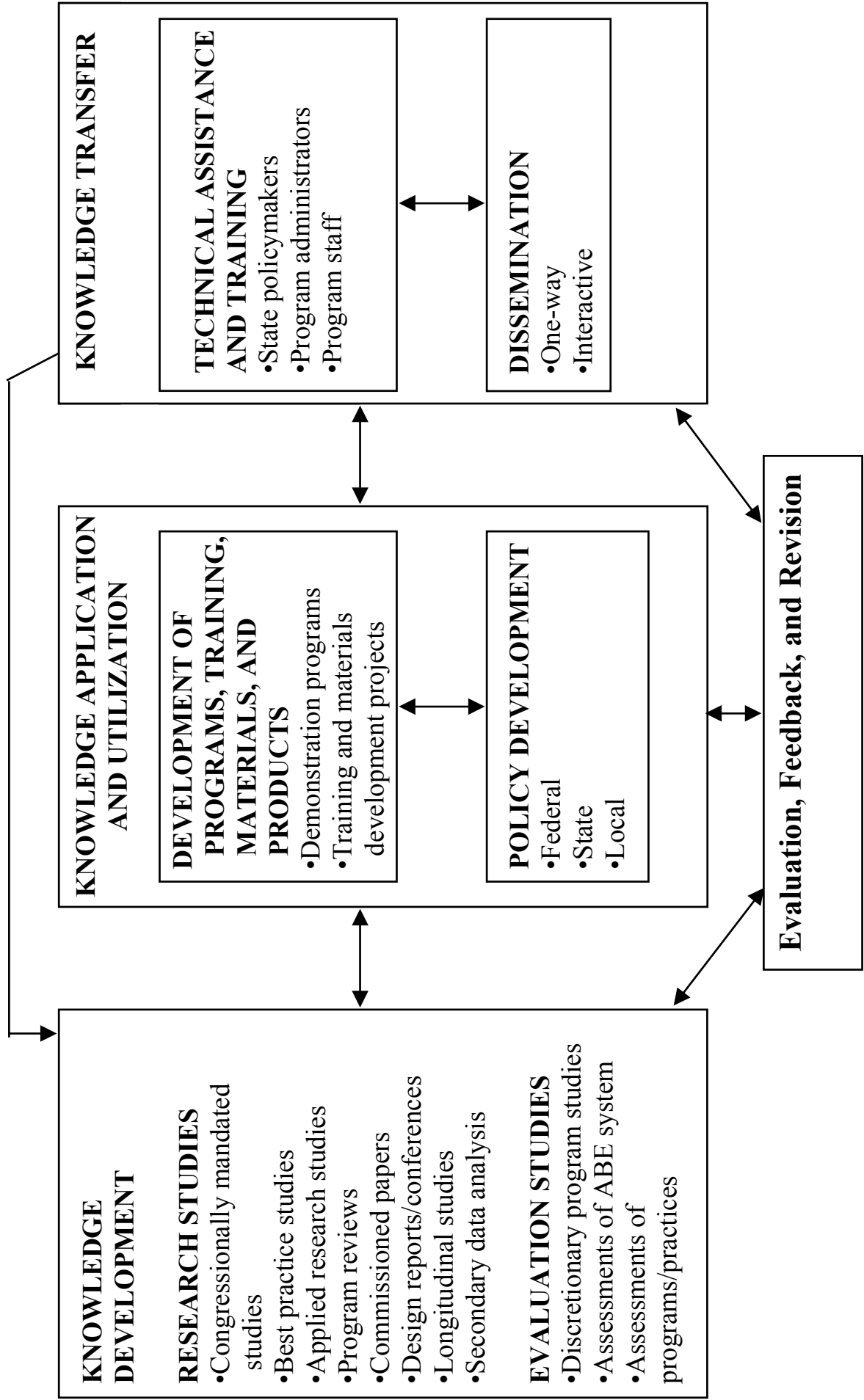


Exhibit 5

Revised Framework: Illustrative Example of Study of Effective ABE Programs and Practices

Research

- Identify sites and conduct case studies of promising programs for serving first-level learners
- Document instructional strategies and test capacity of programs to collect data in four sites
- Conduct pilot test of promising instructional and organizational strategies in multiple sites
- Conduct strategy evaluation study to test organizational and instructional practices in a variety of sites
- Identify methods for program evaluation

Development of Programs, Training, Materials, and Products

- Train strategy evaluation sites to test instructional practices and organizational strategies (in coordination with states)
- Develop materials on instructional practices and organizational management based on study findings

Policy Development

- Identify lessons learned for state policy through pilot/strategy evaluation studies
- Consult with Working Group of State Directors and Staff Development Directors to identify strategies for implementing policy for funding/providing technical assistance
- Consult with Working Group in identifying program evaluation processes

Technical Assistance and Training

- Through Working Group activities, identify applications of study findings to state and national staff development activities
- Pilot staff development applications in training of sites for Strategy Evaluation Study
- Provide technical assistance to State Directors in program evaluation

Dissemination

- Disseminate study reports and briefs
- Make presentations at national and state meetings/conference

Exhibit 6
GUIDELINES FOR PROCUREMENTS AND MONITORING STUDIES

- Make sure that the research builds upon prior work and that this prior work is identified in developing the framework for conducting the research;
- Assess the quality of the research questions, the extent to which they can be answered, and whether the answers will provide useful information to policymakers, practitioners, and/or other researchers;
- Test the feasibility of the research design (e.g., conducting experimental designs with adult education programs) before moving forward with the research;
- Assess the availability and quality of the data that can be collected to address the research questions (s) before determining the data collection procedures;
- Test the relevance of the proposed research to key programmatic and policy issues in adult education (e.g., the extent to which the research is designed to answer questions from key groups);
- Assure that there is a consistency in the use of language and definitions of concepts in carrying out the research; and
- Develop a staged dissemination process that takes into consideration the audiences that would benefit from the research and the ways in which research results can best be communicated to audiences.

- What other projects are addressing this topic and what are their findings?
- What new issues/areas/problems on the topic have emerged since the previous work?
- What questions on the topic need further exploration or have not yet been addressed?
- What stage(s) in the research to practice cycle has the work addressed? What stages have yet to be addressed?

Conclusions and Short-Term Priorities. Based on the work undertaken by the participants in the two symposia, the following observations and priorities were submitted to the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education by the NAEPDC committee on behalf of the state directors of adult education. While a number of federal agencies investing research and development monies in adult education have identified areas of needed research and development, the symposia represented the first effort to conduct systematic cross-analysis of the multiple research and development activities. This analysis led to the following conclusions: 1) There is a consensus across these efforts on the areas of needed research and development; 2) There is a match between current and planned investments and identified needs; and 3) There is a consensus among stakeholders that research and development investments must move forward to support a system of lifelong learning that emphasizes employment, education, and training.

- While research and evaluation is necessary, it is not sufficient in and of itself to move the field of adult education toward its goal. A framework that views research and evaluation as a “knowledge development” phase that is supported by investments in “knowledge application and utilization” and “knowledge transfer” is critical to supporting real program improvement in adult education.
- The ability of OVAE to meet its goals under GPRA is dependent on: 1) its strategic use of the National Programs account, and 2) its ability to leverage its investments through partnerships with states. Strategic use of funds includes relating past, present, and future investments and using what is learned to evaluate the quality of programs and inform future steps. Partnering with states requires the development of critical relationships with states, especially in building state-level capacity to integrate research and development into practice, develop program improvement initiatives, and ultimately improve learner outcomes. Defining a process to leverage state research and development investments against federal investments will support the GPRA objectives.

Recommendations for Priorities. As a result of the second symposium, the NAEPDC committee recommended that the framework for research, development, and technical assistance (Exhibit 4) and the questions listed under *Leveraging Resources* above be used prior to funding activities in the recommended areas. The two areas the committee recommended for consideration in OVAE's FY98 spending plan were the following:

- Building the capacity of state policymakers in order to implement systemic change and develop supports to the change process; and
- Implementing assessment and accountability systems that are related to program improvement and accountability and that enable staff at local and state levels to use data in managing and evaluating the delivery of services.

While the second area concerning implementing accountability systems is being addressed at an initial level in one currently funded project, more assistance is needed in this area. Furthermore, the current National Programs agenda does not include a substantial project to build the capacity of state policymakers--a key area of need for state staff.

Next Steps. Based on the work undertaken in the two symposia and the recommendations made to the Assistant Secretary regarding FY98 funding priorities, the committee needs to discuss further suggestions for the FY99 and FY00 plans. Additional work also is required in determining appropriate processes for monitoring the current National Programs investments and in specifying the ways in which federal and state investments might best be leveraged.

While the Federal offices involved in funding adult education research, development, and technical assistance have an important role to play in coordinating their efforts and in targeting their funds to key areas of need identified by adult education policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, state and local adult education programs also have a responsibility in promoting the use of research and evaluation results in improving practice. State adult education offices can urge their staff development providers to develop and update their services using the findings from recent studies. In developing program improvement initiatives, state staff can draw upon research in diffusion and change in structuring their initiatives, and can utilize evaluation methods in determining the effectiveness of the practices being implemented and the processes that should be "taken to scale" in a state based on the results of a pilot test. At the local level, program administrators can convene their staff to discuss the ways in which data can be used in program improvement, and can encourage staff to incorporate new practices into their delivery of services and to assess the effectiveness of these practices.

Appendix A

List of Members:

Adult Education Working Group

National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium Committee

Appendix A
ADULT EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

STATE DIRECTORS OF ADULT EDUCATION

Sam Drew
State Director
Office of Community Education
South Carolina Department of Education

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Associate Director
Adult and Employment Training
Virginia Department of Education

Mary Ann Jackson
ABE Consultant
Wisconsin Technical College
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Roberta Pawloski
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Connecticut Department of Education

Cheryl Keenan
Director, Bureau of Adult
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Pennsylvania Department of Education

Sharlene Walker
Team Leader, Human Resource
Partnerships
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The Ohio State University

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**NATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM
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Sharlene Walker
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Appendix B

Summary of Symposium on State and Federal Investments

Summary of Symposium on State and Federal Investments

November 13, 1997

Submitted to:
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Vocational and
Adult Education
and
Planning and Evaluation
Service

Submitted by:
Judith A. Alamprese
Abt Associates Inc.

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) convened a Symposium on State and Federal Investments in Adult Education on August 26-27, 1997 for the following purposes:

- Identify options and strategies for state directors of adult education and other key stakeholders to use in providing suggestions to the U.S. Department of Education regarding National Programs and Section 353 funds;
- Review current and past national investments;
- Present key state policy and programmatic initiatives;
- Identify emerging issues in the administration of adult education programs; and
- Identify gaps in research, program development, and technical assistance.

State directors of adult education and one representative from 11 states and the Executive Director of Laubach Literacy Action formed the group in order to discuss options and strategies for state and Federal investments. Representatives from OVAE, the Planning and Evaluation Service (PES), and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), as well as from organizations carrying out research and evaluation were present at the meeting. Judith A. Alamprese from Abt Associates Inc. served as facilitator and prepared this summary report. This document presents a synopsis of the discussion from this meeting and incorporates the information delivered in presentations made by the U.S. Department of Education staff, the symposium's facilitator, and the participants representing states and national organizations, as well as the comments and recommendations made by participants.

Mission and Expectations in Federal and State Investments

In developing the plan for the National Programs account, the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) aims at supporting projects that improve the field the field of adult education and literacy at the state and local levels. A number of questions are important for DAEL to consider in creating this plan. These are:

- How can the quality of state data submitted to DAEL be improved?
- How can the integration of systems enhance investments?
- How can partnerships with foundations be developed and maintained?
- How can projects be synchronized that are supported by Federal agencies?

- How can the outcomes from projects be organized so that governors and other policymakers know the value of the research?
- What can be done to show the relationship between professional development opportunities and practitioner outcomes? and
- What is the impact on adult education programs in those states where there is a high turnover among state leaders?

DAEL will support projects in 1997 that address some of these issues. These projects include a synthesis of the results from eight years of funding of workplace literacy programs; continued support for professional development through an enhancement to PRO-NET; the further development of a quality national data system; and support for the development of concept papers on the use of technology in adult education.

Another issue concerning the Federal and state investment in research and development discussed during the symposium is the decline of Federal resources and the increasing diversity of the adult education delivery system. Because of these factors, states must continuously develop partnerships with other agencies, organizations, and foundations to maintain program funding. It was suggested that Section 353 monies be leveraged with funding with other agencies and that projects supported with these monies be aligned to state policy so that integrated services can be provided at the local level.

States also can leverage monies by working together in funding projects with Section 353 monies to address topics of common interest and benefit. Such projects might be supported through a consortium or other arrangement. Areas in which states might work together are the development of certificate programs, state contracting rules and regulations, and evaluations of workplace and family literacy programs.

Review of Current and Past National Investments

Critical to the discussion of future research, development, and technical assistance priorities in adult education is an understanding of past investments in these areas. The symposium's facilitator presented a summary of the types of projects that have been supported with Federal funding and the topic areas that have been investigated in these projects.

Federal funds have been used to support the following types of research and development projects:

- Congressionally mandated studies and evaluations;
- Best practice studies;

- Applied research studies;
- Program reviews;
- Commissioned papers;
- Technical assistance projects in which materials are developed; and
- Small studies to support a new initiative or upcoming legislation, including surveys, literature reviews, state of practice descriptions, and syntheses of information.

These projects have addressed a variety of topics, including workplace literacy, education for the homeless, English as a second language, adult basic education, family literacy, accountability and assessment, staff development, interagency coordination, literacy in prisons, national assessments of literacy, technology, and a national agenda for literacy and adult basic education. While the studies conducted in workplace literacy have been the most numerous, they have not been designed to cumulate in a body of knowledge that builds from a base. Because many of the projects supported with Federal funds are carried out as Congressionally mandated studies or in response to specific departmental needs, the studies are not necessarily linked to produce a coherent body of knowledge. As a result, the findings from the projects have not been as well utilized by adult education policymakers and practitioners--a need that is important to address in thinking about the future of the National Programs account.

State Policy and Programmatic Initiatives

Representatives from the states and Laubach Literacy Action described several initiatives that have been carried out or are underway to develop accountability systems and improve the quality of local adult education programs. **Alabama** has developed job specific workplace literacy programs and has worked with approximately 600 companies over the past five years. The state also has created a Family Education Plan and has actively involved the Workforce Development Council in the education of adults. In **Virginia**, a Student Teacher Evaluation Planning (STEP) process was developed that allows teachers a specified time to talk with learners in planning. Part-time regional adult education specialist positions were created for rural areas, which has resulted in an increase in learner retention in rural programs.

Connecticut began its work in developing an accountability system in 1986 with Section 353 and state funds. Some challenges in creating the system included instituting “user groups” that could use the data from an automated database to manage programs. The lessons learned from this experience were that it is critical to build local ownership in any new process that is instituted, providing information in formats and amounts that can be easily understood is helpful, and offering training in the use of computers facilitates local programs’ use of the system.

Vermont began in 1983 with five years of level funding. The State Board required the development of a Strategic Plan for adult basic education, which was prompted by factors such as the lack of education services for higher-level learners, an incoherent structure for policymaking, and learner retention and recruitment problems. In 1994 a new initiative began that expanded the levels and quality of adult basic education programs, renamed the Literacy Board as the Adult Basic Education Board, and restructured and integrated governance for all adult education programs in Vermont.

Pennsylvania also has developed a system to improve the quality and accountability of programs. Through Project EQuAL, Educational Quality for Adult Literacy, the capacity of local adult education programs to collect and use data about their learners and their programs has been developed. The results from EQuAL are being used to specify statewide performance standards, improve evaluation of local programs, and support the implementation of standards and evaluation processes through training and technical assistance. In addition, these changes have results in more alignment with state policy and the integration of programs in the system.

In an effort to address the problems associated with high learner dropout rates and high teacher turnover, **Minnesota** provided training in areas such as collaboration, organizational development, and counseling. The training in collaboration resulted in a regional system of service providers. **Illinois** has used Section 353 funds to support a project that will address the needs of adults with learning disabilities. Surveys of teachers' needs have been conducted and programs are working to meet the needs of learners.

When **Wisconsin's** program evaluation data indicated that the scope and sequence of materials being used in adult basic education programs did not match, a statewide task force comprised of representatives from community-based organizations and 16 colleges was formed to undertake a State Curriculum Initiative. This activity began six years ago and is now fully implemented. Part of the success of the initiative was due to efforts to involve all stakeholders and provide them with opportunities to take leadership role in guiding its efforts.

Idaho has focused on staff development and distance education to improve program services. Idaho also has developed training modules in conjunction with the states in the Northwest that are used to orient new instructors and further develop the skills of current adult basic education staff. **Oregon** began in 1988 to reinvent adult education. The need to align services and reduce the duplication of services was one reason for this effort. A number of activities have been undertaken in this process, including the implementation of statewide assessment procedures, the emphasis on interagency coordination at the state and community college levels, and the development of a comprehensive staff development system to support and encourage staff and program change.

Laubach Literacy Action has been involved in a process to encourage quality volunteer programs through the creation of program standards and the consideration of the development of a voluntary

accreditation process. Laubach also is considering ways to expand the types of technical assistance that can be provided to programs to assist them in meeting the program standards.

Emerging Issues in the Administration of Adult Education Programs

The discussion of initiatives undertaken by the states and Laubach Literacy Action revealed a set of issues that these entities are addressing as they develop policies and provide support to local service providers. The issues are the following:

- Obtaining visibility for adult education within states agencies and across state agencies about the importance of adult education and the role of basic skills in preparing clients who are served by human services and job training agencies to become economically self-sufficient;
- Providing frameworks, curricula, and processes for local adult education staff to use in improving their programs, including strategies for using technology effectively, procedures and materials for teaching basic skills in the contexts of the workplace, family, and other environments, and processes for effective instruction;
- Implementing assessment and accountability systems that are related to program improvement and that enable staff at the classroom, program, and state levels to use data in managing and evaluating the services delivered to adult learners;
- Building the capacity and skills of local program staff to deliver quality services through the development of train-the-trainer and technical assistance systems;
- Developing statewide systems for the delivery of adult education services that reflect coordinated policies and practices; and
- Developing state initiatives to stimulate program improvement and other reforms, and encouraging the routinization of practices begun in the initiatives.

In addressing these issues, participants noted that they have learned a variety of lessons that are important to consider in developing initiatives and policies to support program improvement. These lessons are the following:

- Change is slow and most often takes place in stages. One strategy used by states has been to carry out new initiatives using a multi-stage process that involves supporting a limited number of programs (i.e., pilot programs) to experiment with a new practice or program and encouraging the developing of teams in a program to implement the practice so that it has a greater likelihood of becoming part of a program's ongoing services or structure;

- Organizations (and the individuals within these organizations) are at different stages of readiness for change, and this readiness should be assessed prior to beginning an initiative;
- At the local level, there is a tension among providers between following a structure or models in improving services and developing their own new practices. One effective strategy has been to provide models that enable local staff to attempt to replicate practices for a period of time, and then customize them so that they match a local program’s philosophy, needs, and structure;
- Sometimes models or practices need to be “repackaged” for appropriate use by local programs;
- There needs to be flexibility in implementing initiatives. This flexibility should include a capacity to respond to factors such as political changes and new requirements that may arise while an initiative is being carried out;
- All parts of a system need to be integrated to have effective change; that is, while an initiative may address change in one program area (e.g., assessment) in the beginning, this change will have an impact on other program areas that need to be considered in the overall change effort; and
- Accountability should be used to incent change in a positive way so that it is viewed as a state requirement that can be used by local program staff to improve practice.

Gaps in Research, Program Development, and Technical Assistance

In discussing the types of research, development, and technical assistance that are needed to support adult education policy and practice, the participants recommended a number of steps that can be taken in the design and implementation of research that would facilitate its utilization by policymakers and practitioners. These were:

- Make sure that the research builds upon prior work and that this prior work is identified in developing the framework for conducting the research;
- Assess the quality of the research questions, the extent to which they can be answered, and whether the answers will provide useful information to policymakers, practitioners, and/or other researchers;
- Test the feasibility of the research design (e.g., conducting experimental designs with adult education programs) before moving forward with the research;

- Assess the availability and quality of the data that can be collected to address the research question(s) before determining the data collection procedures;
- Test the relevance of the proposed research to key programmatic and policy issues in adult education (e.g., the extent to which the research is designed to answer questions from key groups);
- Assure that there is a consistency in the use of language and definitions of concepts in carrying out the research; and
- Develop a staged dissemination process that takes into consideration the audiences that would benefit from the research and the ways in which research results can best be communicated to these audiences.

In addition to discussing methods for improving the use of research, the participants identified three areas in which further research, development, and technical assistance are needed in adult education. These are: 1) improving and supporting quality programs, 2) building capacity of state policymakers within and across agencies, and 3) building a national infrastructure. In considering the types of research and development that are needed to support these areas, the participants discussed current projects that will provide useful information for policy and practice as well as other topics that need to be explored in these areas.

Improving and Supporting Quality Programs. A number of projects currently are being carried out that will provide information that can be used by policymakers and practitioners in designing and implementing quality adult education services. The research studies on effective practices in adult basic education for first-level learners and in English-as-a-second-language programs are two ongoing efforts whose results will provide information about instructional methods and the operation of programs. The operation of programs also will benefit from the findings of studies on the subpopulations of adults who participate in adult education, the long-term outcomes for learners participating in adult education, and the economic impact of the GED that are being sponsored by OERI. The National Institute for Literacy's Equipped for the Future project is an effort that will provide content standards for adult basic education, and staff capacity building is being addressed in Even Start and PRO-NET projects. Future projects that have implications for the adult education field are the Technology Broad Area Announcement, NALS 2, and the GED 2000.

In light of these efforts, the participants discussed a number of issues impacting the quality of adult education programs that warrant further research and development. These were:

- The need for a better understanding of the subpopulations of adults participating in programs and the changing demographic characteristics of the learner subpopulations, including methods for defining subpopulations and assessing learners' skills; staff

training in identifying subpopulations; and information on the types of resources and costs for serving subpopulations;

- The need for different approaches to service delivery and methods for determining the costs of these models (including the financing and use of different models of distance education);
- The need for data on the effectiveness of the current service delivery system and methods for integrating service delivery approaches (e.g., use of volunteers, the delivery of services in the contexts of the family, workplace, and corrections));
- The need for data on the relationship between the characteristics of instruction (e.g., intensity, amount of time) and learner gain; and
- The need for products/packages of materials that describe services that are possible under various conditions.

Building Capacity of State Policymakers. Participants discussed the need for the development of information and the provision of technical assistance in a number of areas related to building capacity among state staff in implementing systemic change in state adult education programs and in developing supports to the change process (e.g., program initiatives, state policies). The issues that should be addressed are the following:

- Strategies for state staff to use in providing leadership within and across agencies (e.g., forming partnerships);
- Processes for using networks to rethink how to deliver services in emerging political contexts; Processes for developing state policy and understanding the various forms that policy can take;
- Strategies for developing initiatives to stimulate change and the varied ways in which an initiative can be implemented;
- Processes for defining and measuring outcomes of the adult education system;
- Strategies for using data within a state's adult education system and between agencies for informing the design of programs and services; and
- Processes for packaging products and materials so that they can be marketed and appeal to a variety of stakeholders.

In framing these issues, the participants discussed the differences among states in terms of the amount of state and local support for adult education, credentialing requirements for staff, the

number of full- and part-time staff, and the effects that these have on a state's adult education program. Other factors influencing states' work are state funding formulas, the relationship of adult education to the K-12 system, and the role of school reform policies in a state. Participants noted that all of these factors are important to consider in developing technical assistance for state adult education staff.

Building a National Infrastructure. The third theme discussed by the participants was the need for a national infrastructure to support state and local adult education activities. Key products and processes that would facilitate this are the following:

- A quality national database that could be used to describe the inputs and outcomes from adult education services and across services offered to adult learners;
- A research agenda that addresses the key issues in building quality programs and state capacity;
- Coordination across agencies in the funding of research and development; and
- The compilation and analysis of past research and development to identify what is known and the gaps in our knowledge base.

Options and Strategies for Next Steps

Conditions. A set of conditions were identified that would influence the group's role in working with the Department of Education. These were:

- This group can be reconvened;
- The timeline for suggesting projects/studies that might be supported is:
 - The FY98 spending plan is to be drafted by February 1998;
 - Work on the preparation of the FY2000 budget will begin in May 1998, with a draft due in June 1998 (there is an interest in having something innovative that can be proposed for the FY2000 budget that will make a difference in the field of adult education); and
 - The Assistant Secretary's testimony on the FY99 budget will be given in March 1998 (this is the same timeline for the National Institute for Literacy budget, which must be approved by its Advisory Board and interagency committee).

Based on these conditions, the participants recommended general steps that the Department of Education should follow in determining investments in adult education. These were:

- In specifying the questions that will be addressed in research and/or development activities, involve representatives from stakeholder groups to ensure that the questions relate to the critical issues that adult education practitioners and policymakers are facing;
- Develop an information base using the findings from research and development that can be disseminated to adult education policymakers, practitioners, and researchers;
- Identify the variety of stakeholders who might benefit from the research and development; and
- Develop and carry out one-way and interactive forms of dissemination to reach the variety of stakeholders.

Strategies. The participants also identified strategies for working with the Department of Education in the following areas: 1) providing recommendations to OVAE, 2) monitoring current and planned investments, and 3) building federal-state partnerships. In addition, activities were identified for obtaining participants’ review of the GPRA outcome indicators for adult education.

Proposed Process for Providing Recommendations to OVAE

- Provide summary of meeting in the “Thursday Notes” and “Shop Talk” discussions;
- Present summary to Coalition’s research committee;
- Reconvene group at AAACE; and
- Develop a priority list.

Proposed Strategies for Monitoring Current and Planned Investments

- Use “working groups” of adult education stakeholders to review activities of funded projects;
- Develop standards for funded projects’ advisory committees and dissemination plans (this group could help to develop these standards; review standards used by other agencies, groups);
- Have members of this group participate in the funded projects’ advisory committees; and
- Review funding in adult education and literacy proposed by other groups (i.e., NIFL, ED/PES, OERI, Dept. Of Labor) to ensure coordination.

Proposed Strategies for Building Federal-State Partnerships (Section 353 and Leadership Funds)

- Identify opportunities for State-Federal joint efforts on topics such as distance education, use of certificates; and
- Develop a process for participation in joint ventures (e.g., development of data systems, workplace literacy, evaluation processes).

Review of GPRA Documents

- Review GPRA in light of meeting discussion; and
- Have a conference call with state representatives to facilitate review.

Appendix C

**Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)
Adult Education**

Appendix C
GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS ACT (GPRA)
ADULT EDUCATION

1. Improve literacy in the U.S.
 - 1.1 Improve literacy.

2. Provide adult learners with opportunities to acquire basic foundation skills (including English language acquisition), complete secondary education, and transition to further education and training and to work.
 - 2.1 Basic skills acquisition.
 - 2.2 Basic English language acquisition.
 - 2.3 Secondary completion.
 - 2.4 Transition to Higher Education.
 - 2.5 Transition to work.

3. Provide adults at the lowest levels of literacy access to educational opportunities to improve their basic foundation skills.
 - 3.1 Educationally disadvantaged.
 - 3.2 Distance learning.
 - 3.3 Welfare-to-Work clients.

4. Implement state and local performance management systems for accountability and program improvement.
 - 4.1 Build performance management capacity.

5. States will implement statewide professional development systems and professional standards for instructors.
 - 5.1 High teaching standards.
 - 5.2 System-wide Professional Development.

6. Improve access to and the quality of programs for adult learners by integrating services and leveraging resources.
 - 6.1 Family literacy.
 - 6.2 Employment and training.

7. Improve and expand knowledge base of strategies that support reform in adult education.
 - 7.1 Customer satisfaction.