

English Plus Integration

Shifting the Instructional Paradigm for Immigrant Adult Learners to Support Integration Success

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Executive Summary

While many aspects of immigration policy are hotly contested, few would disagree that once immigrants are admitted to the United States, it is in the country's—and immigrants'—best interest that they and their children successfully integrate into the civic, social, and economic life of their new communities and the nation as a whole. The country's formal expectations for immigrant integration are reflected in requirements that citizenship applicants demonstrate basic proficiency in English as well as knowledge of key aspects of U.S. history and government. However, both immigrants and native-born citizens recognize that successful long-term integration requires a broad understanding of U.S. life and systems, combined with strong English proficiency and other basic skills.

A robust body of research shows that to achieve successful integration, immigrants and refugees need to acquire knowledge related to a wide range of topics. These include the U.S. health care system (e.g., types of health-care providers and insurance options); money and family finance issues (e.g., building a credit history, paying taxes, and asset-building strategies); and how to navigate early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary education systems in order to guide their family's and their own success. Beyond studying to meet citizenship requirements, many immigrants also seek to continue advancing their English literacy, educational attainment, and workforce skills, given the relationships between these assets and their earning potential and ability to better support their family.

For the past 50 years, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes provided via state adult education systems have been the default mechanism to meet immigrants' English acquisition—and, to a limited extent, integration—needs. However, this federal-state partnership system suffers from both a crisis of scale (adult education programs meet less than 4 percent of need nationally) and from serious flaws in the nature and design of instruction when viewed through an immigrant-integration lens. Leeway within the system to support successful integration has steadily narrowed in recent years through, for example, major reductions in support for English and family literacy programs that serve parents of young children.

This trend accelerated with passage in 2014 of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA)—the federal law governing both workforce and adult education programs. While federal adult education provisions formerly allowed a more balanced approach to teaching English and meeting learners' needs in their roles as parents, workers, and citizens, WIOA instituted mandatory performance measures that focus mainly on employment outcomes and the attainment of postsecondary credentials, placing no value on other

essential integration skills or topics. Even the emphasis on English language acquisition is minimized, with ESOL level gains contributing to only one of six performance measures.

Since the performance of ESOL classes is measured primarily by participants' English gains and post-program employment outcomes, important topics and goals related to integration success are generally not conveyed or valued under the existing system. Without adult education programming that is not bound to employment-focused outcome measures, it is extremely difficult to meet the needs of immigrants and refugees seeking to integrate into the social fabric of their communities, support their children's educational success, and ultimately become naturalized citizens.

Similarly, WIOA's outcome measures do not assign value to the technology and digital literacy skills that are essential for both integration and modern life—whether for practicing English or completing online education courses, searching and applying for jobs, or using an online school portal to track children's homework, grades, and other school information. The fact that integration and English proficiency are not accomplished within the space of a 120- to 160-hour course (the average hours students spend in formal ESOL programs)—but over a period of years and many hundreds (if not thousands) of hours of learning—underscores the importance of equipping immigrant adult learners with digital literacy, the ability to navigate available resources, and other self-study skills. With these tools, they can continue along successful integration trajectories long after they have completed a formal course.

Taking stock of these weaknesses in the WIOA-driven design of most current programming, and drawing on research from the integration, adult education, and postsecondary success fields, this policy brief argues for the adoption of a new “English Plus Integration” (EPI) adult education program model to complement the existing system. Built on insights and innovative elements of success-

ful programs already working to expand the scope of adult education, this model would:

- maintain a central focus on English acquisition;
- equip individuals with digital literacy skills to ensure, for example, that students can understand the features of common digital devices, navigate the web, set up and use an email account, and seek and identify relevant online information sources;
- assist students in becoming conversant in a range of integration topics of importance to them and their families—such as the knowledge of U.S. history and civics necessary to become a citizen, an understanding of tax filing rules, or strategies to support their children's or their own education and career success; and
- support students in developing an individual and family success plan before program exit and identifying strategies for achieving their integration goals.

Such a model can be expected to not only make much more effective use of immigrant adult learners' time in a program, it should also result in more effective use of other local integration resources and the strengths of existing organizations and institutions. Currently, for example, an individual might enroll in a program and drop out after several weeks because it moves too slowly, without knowing that a better match for them exists a short distance away; or an individual might delay applying for citizenship due to uncertainty over where to find English-practice resources or affordable legal assistance, though free resources and advice might be available at local libraries.

Large immigrant-receiving states can quickly become lead actors in piloting higher-value EPI programming either through new, tar-

geted funding or by repurposing a portion of the state contributions they counted in the past as a match of federal funds. Under federal law, states must provide at least 25 percent of all funds expended for adult education in the state (reported as a match of federal WIOA funds)—a requirement that most states significantly exceed. Of the five states with the largest immigrant populations, all except Texas provide roughly four or more times the required contribution.

Most states have traditionally reported all of the funds they put into adult education to federal authorities as part of their annual match of federal dollars. With the passage of WIOA, this has locked hundreds of millions of dollars in state contributions under the law's strict and narrow performance requirements, making it more difficult—if not impossible—for states to meet the integration and learning needs of many of their immigrant and other adult learners. However, the law's maintenance of effort provisions allow states to reduce their match of federal funds by up to 10 percent each year; thus, pulling out and repurposing state dollars not needed to meet the match requirement could prove attractive for states that currently exceed it and wish to invest in higher-impact programming for immigrants and refugees.

While state and local adult education programs are likely partners in efforts to scale EPI programming, many others have also realized the limitations of current approaches and could join in implementing the model. These include employers seeking to offer curriculum models that will provide contextualized English alongside topics that will help workers and their families establish more stable, rooted lives in their local communities. Policymakers and organizations in the early childhood and two-generation-success fields are also likely partners, in light of their goal to engage with low-income families and help both parents and children move out of poverty. Given the limited resources and reach of the current system and the limited time adult learners busy with family and work demands have available to devote to on-site classes, an EPI approach provides a much-needed solution—one that allows

precious class time to be maximally used to equip adults for continued learning beyond the classroom, and that speeds their integration success along multiple individual and family dimensions.

I. Introduction

It is widely understood in the United States and other major immigrant-settlement countries that successful immigration policies and the successful long-term integration of immigrants and their children are two sides of the same coin. Integration—roughly defined as the two-way process through which immigrant and refugee families become part of the civic, economic, and social mainstream of their new country—is best understood as a process that unfolds across a multiyear period and multiple dimensions for both immigrants and refugees as well as their children.

As “baby boomers” retire and a new generation enters the world of work, U.S.-born workers with native-born parents are decreasing both in number and as a share of the working-age population, meaning the U.S. labor market is increasingly reliant on workers who are either immigrants themselves or born in the United States to immigrant parents.¹ From 1980 to 2016, the foreign-born share of the total U.S. population increased from 6.2 to 13.5 percent, while the foreign-born share of individuals in the labor force increased from 6.7 to 17.0 percent—and this is to say nothing of the second generation.² With immigrants and their children set to play an even more significant role in maintaining U.S. economic strength and competitiveness in coming years, questions of whether and how to better support their integration success are more relevant than ever before.

Adult education services provided through a federal-state partnership system are the main vehicle for providing immigrants and refugees with the English—and, to a lesser extent, integration—knowledge and skills necessary for life in the United States. However, the existing

system meets only a small fraction (less than 4 percent) of the needs of all adult learners in the country and is also currently being reshaped by mandatory performance measures to focus largely on employment and postsecondary outcomes. Although this emphasis matches some learners' goals, it denies providers the flexibility to tailor programming to support the more diverse set of needs and objectives that lead immigrants and refugees to adult education programs. In addition, many learners' unpredictable work schedules and family responsibilities limit regular class participation, and those seeking to become fully proficient in English or fill gaps in their basic education frequently lack the time and flexibility to complete what could be hundreds of hours of classroom instruction over several years.

This policy brief reviews these and other limitations of the U.S. adult education system when viewed through an immigrant integration lens. It then argues for the creation of a new adult education program model—English Plus Integration (EPI)—that maintains a central focus on English acquisition while also building critical skills and systems knowledge that are important for long-term integration success. The brief ends with a discussion of how states could begin to pilot and scale an EPI model.

II. Adult Education and Integration Success: Identifying Needs and Filling Gaps

A robust body of research maps the knowledge and skills immigrants and refugees need to successfully integrate into a new society. This research both informs and draws from efforts by governments in the United States and other immigrant-receiving countries that have sought to better support successful integration trajectories for immigrants and their children.

Many of these efforts have identified integration indicators that describe essential competencies immigrants and refugees will ideally

develop to achieve successful integration in their new country.³ The categories most commonly highlighted in these frameworks include knowledge of or competency in civics, education, employment, financial literacy, health, housing, social connections, and technology. Advancing skills in each of these categories enables immigrants and refugees to progress along broader pathways toward civic and economic integration. Importantly, nearly all integration typologies regard acquisition of the new home country's language (or linguistic integration) as a critical step that will directly complement and facilitate integration across most other areas of life.

The broad civic, economic, and linguistic trajectories these frameworks describe echo earlier, influential research and standards-based reforms in the adult education field that underscored the need to equip learners to excel in their roles as community members, family leaders, and workers.⁴ They also closely match the current stated purposes of the adult education system, as enumerated in the 2014 *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA). Title II of WIOA states that the federal government, states, and localities should partner to provide adult education services in pursuit of four primary goals:

- 1) to help adult learners become literate, prepare for employment, and achieve economic self-sufficiency;
- 2) to provide parents and/or adult family members with the knowledge and skills to support their children's educational success and improve their families' economic status;
- 3) to help adults earn a high school diploma or equivalent and to support postsecondary transitions; and
- 4) to help English Learners (ELs) improve their language and mathematical skills and develop an understanding of U.S. government, individual freedoms, and civic responsibilities.⁵

However, other provisions in WIOA—particularly the law’s imposition of mandatory performance measures that focus largely on employment and postsecondary outcomes across both workforce and adult education programs⁶—make it difficult, if not impossible, for most states and local programs to meaningfully provide instruction addressing goals beyond the first and third of those contained in the law. The narrow focus of the new mandatory measures crowds out opportunities to support the full range of needs and objectives that adult learners—particularly immigrants and refugees—seek to address through enrollment in adult education programming.

Recognizing the many types of information necessary for immigrants and refugees to pursue any or all of these goals and to achieve long-term integration success in the United States, the EPI instruction model this policy brief proposes combines vital knowledge and integration skills with English language acquisition. The model is designed not just to respond to integration needs and the tension created under WIOA between the adult education system’s goals and its performance mandates, but also to address some of the longstanding constraints of the current system. These include its inability to address more than a tiny portion of the need for adult education services (see Box 1), barriers to long-term attendance that many immigrants and refugees face (see Appendix B), and the need for program designs that formally value equipping participants with the skills to continue learning independently long after the program ends.

Thus, in addition to English instruction, key areas of knowledge and skill development under the EPI model are: an understanding of U.S. history, culture, and local systems; information and skills that promote economic mobility; and broader digital literacy and other strategies for self-directed learning and integration planning. Each of these subject areas are explored below, along with the challenges and opportunities for offering each within the current, WIOA-governed adult education system.

A. English Plus Knowledge of U.S. History, Culture, and Local Systems

Nearly all integration frameworks emphasize the importance of understanding the receiving country’s history and culture, as well as how to navigate important local systems and government procedures. Traditionally, an understanding of U.S. history, government, and civics has been regarded as an indication that immigrants and refugees will uphold and embrace American values and culture. Citizenship applicants have been required to pass a civics and history test since 1950, though many applicants in the 19th and early 20th centuries were also informally tested during the naturalization process.⁷ Currently, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) tests applicants on up to ten questions (selected from a pool of 100 possibilities) related to the U.S. system of government and laws, U.S. history and geography, and integrated civics topics such as holidays and national symbols.⁸

To support educational efforts to provide immigrant and refugee students with the history and civics knowledge necessary to pass the citizenship exam, USCIS maintains a series of references and curriculum-development tools, as well as independent study resources for students.⁹ Because acquiring U.S. history and civics knowledge and naturalizing when legally eligible are common goals among immigrants and refugees, integration-focused adult education models should value and support these and other topics that further their civic integration and community involvement.

Of course, not all aspects of cultural knowledge can be covered by the formal citizenship preparation curriculum. Often, civic and cultural understanding is more abstract, relating to how individuals interact and build ties within their new communities, or how the formal rights and responsibilities of citizenship come into play in everyday life. As a result, many immigrant-serving organizations have developed programs to provide the cultural and systems knowledge associated with successful integration.¹⁰

Box 1. Size and Reach of the Current Adult Education System

The adult education system, which is governed by Title II of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA), serves individuals ages 16 and older who are not enrolled in secondary school and who lack a high school diploma or equivalent, are English Learners, or are “basic skills deficient” (which the law defines as being “unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual’s family, or in society”).

The system meets only a small portion of the need for services each year. In program year 2016, adult education programs served fewer than 1.5 million individuals, including 601,000 individuals in English Language Acquisition (ELA, formerly ESL or ESOL) programs and 117,000 in Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs. This is in comparison to 43.7 million adults in the United States who lack a high school diploma and/or are Limited English Proficient (LEP)—indicating that the system currently has the capacity to meet only 3.4 percent of total need. (See Appendix A for more details.) This disparity is not due to a lack of interest on the part of potential program participants; most adult education programs report lengthy waiting lists for enrollment.

In fiscal year (FY) 2018, the federal government appropriated nearly \$617 million for adult education, which was allocated to states through a population-based formula. While WIOA requires states to contribute at least 25 percent of the adult education funds spent in the state (reported as a match of federal WIOA funds), most states exceed this minimum match. In recent years, states contributed almost seven times as much funding to the adult education system as is required by WIOA. California, the state that is home to the most immigrants, contributes nearly 13 times the amount of funding required. Together, the ten states with the largest immigrant populations put about eight times as much state funding into the adult education system as is required. (See Appendix C for more details.)

Note: The federal government awards general adult education and IELCE funds to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico; it awards general adult education funds without IELCE to American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, and the Virgin Islands.

Sources: Memorandum from Cheryl Keenan, Director, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, to State Directors of Adult Education, *Estimated Adult Education Award Amounts for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018*, April 17, 2018, www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/2018-allocation-memo.pdf; Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of pooled 2012–16 American Community Survey (ACS) data; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, “Financial Section—Table FFR2. Final Report – Total Allocation (All States; Program Years 2016–18)” (dataset, National Reporting System, accessed June 25, 2018), <https://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/login.cfm>; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, “Statistical Section—Table 3. Participants by Program Type and Age (All States; Program Year 2016)” (dataset, National Reporting System, accessed June 25, 2018), <https://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/login.cfm>; WIOA, Public Law 113-128, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 128 (2014): 1425, Title II, Sections 3 and 203, www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-113publ128/pdf/PLAW-113publ128.pdf.

These and lessons from other notable efforts can inform this portion of an integration curriculum, including the U.S. Department of State’s domestic Cultural Orientation program, through which local resettlement agencies provide refugees with basic cultural information and tips on navigating systems soon after arrival to aid their adjustment to life in the

United States. The 15 subject areas covered range from safety and community resources to understanding basic personal finance and the U.S. education system.¹¹ Though the model focuses only on short-term “survival knowledge” rather than longer-term integration skills, its design and outcomes could be used to inform a more comprehensive model.

Meanwhile, other publicly available resources have been developed to improve immigrants' and refugees' understanding of local and national systems in the medium to long term when they are no longer enrolled in formal education programs. These efforts have ranged from multimedia resources such as We Speak NYC (formerly We Are New York)—an educational television program with corresponding workbook lessons and free community classes designed to help immigrants learn English and to inform them of resources available in New York City¹²—to general guidebooks that detail advice on navigating systems in the United States, such as *Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants*—a national-level reference book created by USCIS and available in 14 languages.¹³

Challenges and Opportunities under the Current Adult Education System

Though much is known about the types of U.S. history, culture, and local systems knowledge that support integration success, the existing formal adult education system misses the chance to support the civic integration of many immigrants and refugees as a result of its focus on limited language level gains and high school equivalency attainment. Although these and other types of knowledge are necessary for integration success, the system does not assign value to them, focusing more narrowly on education and language level gains as measured by the U.S. Department of Education's National Reporting System (NRS).¹⁴ While these and the several employment and postsecondary-related outcomes that govern the system are certainly legitimate (see Box 2), the crowding-out effect that the mandatory performance measures have on the other important public policy aims of the adult education system creates a need for more comprehensive approaches.

In the past, many of the needs relating to civics and cultural understanding could be addressed through the English Literacy and Civics Education (EL/Civics) program. EL/Civics was established to be “an educational program that emphasizes contextualized instruction on

the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and U.S. history and government to help students acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members.”¹⁵ Rather than strengthening this program and supporting its objectives, WIOA replaced EL/Civics with a new approach—Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE)—that no longer values and incentivizes these outcomes.

IELCE combines job training and civics education and is less well-suited to supporting lower-level learners and those with other-than-employment goals. Under Section 243 of WIOA, IELCE must be implemented in combination with Integrated Education and Training (IET) using 12 percent of a state's federal adult education formula funds.¹⁶ When civics education is provided in combination with IET, the resulting program design makes it extremely difficult to serve learners at the lowest levels, as many of these individuals lack the prerequisite knowledge and skills to pursue this more advanced level of workforce training.¹⁷ Furthermore, the IET requirement limits the provider's ability to focus on civics education, instead centering the program on workforce knowledge that may or may not be relevant to immigrant students' needs. Although some providers report being able to blend civics education with, for example, digital literacy, as federal program guidance evolves such flexibility in defining the program's training component may change.

Without a platform for civics education that is not bound to employment-training instruction and/or outcomes, the ability of immigrants and refugees to obtain English instruction coupled with key knowledge and resources to integrate into the social fabric of their communities, navigate complex systems, and ultimately become naturalized citizens is greatly reduced. Particularly as the immigrant population in the United States continues to grow, integration-focused programming is more important than ever; yet, the adult education system established under WIOA has made it much more difficult to provide these services.

Box 2. Potential for Crowding-Out and Creaming Effects under WIOA

WIOA took the six performance measures that previously had been mandated for workforce training programs and applied them on a mandatory basis to adult education programs as well. Because these performance measures heavily emphasize employment and postsecondary outcomes, they create a disincentive for adult education programs to serve learners who have other-than-employment goals, since poor performance by students against the six measures could threaten a program's future funding. In addition to this crowding out of learners with other aims, the law's narrow performance measures may also produce a "creaming" effect as programs feel pressure to serve better-prepared students who can more quickly and reliably achieve the law's outcome measures, rather than learners who may be less likely to achieve them.

The six mandatory performance measures and their most salient implications for adult education programs are as follows:

1. Share of participants in unsubsidized employment in the second quarter after program exit
 - *Incentivizes programs to mostly serve individuals who aim to obtain or retain employment*
2. Share of participants in unsubsidized employment in the fourth quarter after program exit
 - *Incentivizes programs to mostly serve individuals who aim to obtain or retain employment*
3. Median earnings of participants in unsubsidized employment in the second quarter after program exit
 - *Incentivizes programs to mostly serve higher-level learners, who are more likely to earn higher wages*
4. Share of participants who earn a postsecondary credential or high school diploma/equivalent within one year of program exit (Attainment of a diploma/equivalent may only be counted if that individual is employed or is enrolled in a program that leads to a postsecondary credential within the year.)
 - *Incentivizes programs to mostly serve higher-level learners with postsecondary or employment goals*
5. Share of participants in a program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment that achieves a measurable skill gain (MSG)
 - *Allows credit for the skill gains of lower-level learners and those with other-than-employment/postsecondary goals, but MSGs are still limited in scope and do not prioritize the wide range of integration knowledge and skills immigrants and refugees need to gain*
6. Effectiveness in serving employers
 - *The means of assessing this measure are still being defined, but it may incentivize programs to mostly serve individuals who aim to obtain or retain employment.*

Another critically important new mandate under WIOA is that all assessments adult education programs use to measure skill gains must be aligned with the national College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards. TABE 11/12—the latest version of a common assessment used in Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs—is aligned to the CCR standards, and a new English Language Acquisition (ELA) assessment that meets the standards will be developed soon. Guidance for TABE 11/12 acknowledges that this means that "test items include higher depths of knowledge and a broader range of topics." The CCR standards could make it difficult to serve students in the lowest levels of ABE and ELA precisely because of this: by elevating the requirements for students at each level, it will likely become particularly difficult to give students with low levels of underlying education the background knowledge and learning supports to complete the curriculum and pass the new assessments for even the lowest program levels. In response, some states have identified the need for "pre-level one" or "on-ramp" courses—for which they cannot receive credit under or use funding tied to the WIOA system.

Sources: Teresa Perrin, *TABE 11/12 Curriculum Guide* (Corvallis, OR: Essential Education Corporation, 2018), <http://maxinemccormick.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/TABE-booklet-From-Essential.pdf>; U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, "WIOA Performance Indicators and Program Specific Performance Measures," updated July 25, 2018, www.doleta.gov/performance/guidance/tools_commonmeasures.cfm.

B. English Plus Economic Integration and Parent/Family Success

As is recognized by the WIOA-driven adult education system, economic integration is a key element in immigrant and refugee families' long-term wellbeing and economic mobility in the United States. In providing support for career pathways and family economic success, an EPI model will ensure that all adult learners—including lower-educated individuals, Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals, and parents of young children—can access these vital services.

1. *Facilitating Workforce Success*

As for native-born Americans, immigrants' earnings from employment are the foundation for economic stability and advancement in the United States. While immigrants are generally eager to work and have employment rates that exceed those of their U.S.-born counterparts,¹⁸ many face barriers to advancing beyond low-wage jobs. These can include limited English proficiency, difficulties obtaining recognition for education and training they obtained abroad, or other specific skill needs. Particularly as the native-born working-age population in the United States shrinks, immigrants and refugees will play a vital role in strengthening local economies and meeting the changing needs of employers. Access to English instruction, credential recognition, and other targeted services therefore stand to help many to advance in the workforce, shore up local economies, and achieve economic mobility and broader integration aims.

To effectively support immigrants' long-term economic integration, an EPI model would expose immigrant and refugee learners of various levels of English proficiency, formal education, and professional experience to the knowledge necessary to navigate local employment markets, advance in their career, and understand key factors that will influence their long-term economic integration in the United States. As some programs have already begun to emphasize, this could include strategies to obtain particular knowledge or skills, such as profes-

sional vocabulary, particular software skills, an understanding of U.S. workplace norms and expectations, soft skills, or job search strategies for particular industries.

In its broader approach, the EPI model could be tailored to benefit both immigrants with limited prior education and those who already hold a degree or professional credentials. For lower-educated individuals, programs would support English acquisition and guide learners towards earning a high school diploma or equivalent and at least one year of college credit, given that this combination has been shown to significantly increase students' future earnings.¹⁹ Highly educated but underemployed and/or LEP individuals would similarly be supported in pursuing relicensure, filling gaps in their education or work experience, and/or obtaining professional-level English.

Meeting learner needs such as these is a central goal of the redesign of adult education and workforce services enacted under WIOA. As a result, current program designs—such as guided pathway models—are most aligned with this portion of immigrants' economic integration needs, notwithstanding the small share of need actually met by existing services, or the continued poor record of Title I-funded workforce programs in actually taking steps to meet the needs of low-educated and/or LEP individuals.²⁰ As states seek to improve equitable access to employment and training programs for lower level learners and LEP individuals, an EPI model could serve as an on-ramp into the system for such students (see Box 2).

2. *Lifting Children's Education Trajectories and Promoting Family Economic Success*

Full economic integration, however, requires a more comprehensive set of knowledge and skills than are needed to find and retain a job or advance in the labor market. Immigrants and refugees must also be able to support their children along a trajectory to education and career success, and to provide for their family's economic security by building, protecting, and growing its assets. Therefore, an EPI model

would also need to promote understanding of how parents can support their children’s kindergarten readiness, high school completion, and, ideally, postsecondary degree and credential attainment, along with a range of topics related to their family’s financial stability and economic advancement.²¹

Several of these areas of knowledge and skill are woven together in family economic success models, which seek to prepare individuals to earn a family-sustaining wage and to maintain and grow their financial assets.²² While this type of program design could improve economic success for all subsets of adult learners facing economic challenges, its potential to more holistically support immigrant and refugee families is especially high. Nationwide, 41 percent of foreign-born individuals have incomes below 200 percent of the poverty level, as compared to 29 percent of the native-born population. This poverty gap is even higher for foreign-born parents of young children (ages 0 to 8), 52 percent of whom fall below 200 percent of the poverty level, versus 35 percent of native-born parents of young children.²³

Yet parent-focused programming is in sharp decline in the adult education system. This, despite ample evidence of need, the designation under WIOA of parents as a primary target group for services, and all but unanimous agreement in early childhood policy circles on the critical role of parents in supporting their young children’s cognitive development, preliteracy and literacy skills, and future educational achievement.

3. Challenges and Opportunities under the Current Adult Education System

Under WIOA, the adult education system is charged with making significant strides in aligning its English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and basic education programs with career pathway and workforce integration outcomes. As noted earlier, the law enforces a narrow, disciplined focus on these outcomes via a mandatory performance measurement system that judges both adult education and

workforce training programs on the same six participant outcomes. With just one of the six mandatory measures focused on the types of skill gains made in adult education classes, states and service providers risk consequences for poor performance if they enroll individuals who are not likely to meet the law’s five other mandatory performance measures.²⁴

Under this system, individuals with goals other than employment—such as parents of young children seeking family literacy programs, the elderly, or those interested in citizenship preparation—are therefore among the riskiest individuals to serve since they may fail to meet the four employment-related outcomes of the six that are mandatory measures. This concern persists no matter how effective or high quality a program is, or how exemplary the individual student’s skill gains may have been. Thus, while the needs of some immigrant adult learners can be well-served within the narrow focus WIOA demands of adult education programs, it is clear that many areas of knowledge and skills essential for economic integration and family economic success fall outside that focus.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the law’s narrow performance measures also appear to be playing a direct role in undermining one of its top stated goals—providing parents with the knowledge and skills to support their children’s educational success. Most parents who seek to enroll in family literacy or similar parent-focused programs are motivated by a desire to improve their children’s educational and lifelong success rather than by WIOA’s employment-related goals.²⁵ As more states come to realize that programs designed to help parents support their children’s early learning and longer-term education success have largely been eliminated from adult education system offerings, new solutions may emerge. For example, states investing in high-quality early childhood services could consider meeting some of this need through innovative programming that addresses relevant child development, parenting, English acquisition, and integration success knowledge and skills.

C. English Plus Digital Literacy and Other Self-Directed Learning Skills

Given the short amount of time many immigrants and refugees are able to spend in formal classes, the length of the language acquisition process, and the broad range of subject areas involved in achieving integration success, helping students build the skills to continue learning and accessing information and resources after their class time has ended is essential. Research has demonstrated that self-study, which can be encouraged by incorporating self-directed learning skills into a traditional program, continues to improve learning outcomes after program completion.²⁶ As use of technology becomes more ubiquitous and free online learning platforms grow in number and scope, digital literacy has emerged as the most important lifelong-learning skill. An effective integration-focused program should therefore help students to develop both their digital literacy and other resources or skills for self-directed study, such as an individualized learning plan.

1. Digital Literacy

Because digital literacy skills are quickly becoming the most important means to support lifelong learning after program exit, fostering them is a key element of an EPI model. Innovation and scaling of approaches to impart these skills are the most obvious and promising way to open up learning opportunities for the many immigrants and refugees whose work schedules and family obligations limit their participation in traditional classroom-based instruction. Distance learning platforms increasingly allow adult learners to build their English skills with instruction tailored to the level and content most appropriate for their learning needs and goals, providing “anytime, anywhere” learning models that allow users to pursue new skills in spite of demanding or unpredictable schedules or other barriers to long-term class attendance.

Online learning platforms that can both be incorporated into a formal adult education program and support independent learning are particularly useful for promoting the development of self-study skills and habits, as students

can continue to use the same program after course completion without needing to learn to navigate a new interface. One pioneer in the digital platform arena is USA Learns, a free website and mobile app created and maintained by the Sacramento County Office of Education, which offers beginning and intermediate ESOL courses and citizenship lessons.²⁷ In addition to being available to students independently, USA Learns is used as a tool by approximately 4,500 adult English teachers across the country, most heavily in California, Florida, and Texas,²⁸ many of whom use the platform within their local programs as a distance learning support.²⁹

Additionally, the internet itself serves as an invaluable informal platform for practicing reading, or even listening, in English to further hone language skills in an everyday, applied context. Since practice and self-study are instrumental in advancing long-term educational and integration outcomes outside of a formal program,³⁰ it is easy to see how digital literacy skills can unlock the door to a wide array of paths toward lifelong-learning success.

Still, as the focus on digital learning grows, programs and administrators must also contend with the challenges of device and internet access. Although the share of U.S. adults who use the internet has increased dramatically in recent years—rising from 52 percent in 2000 to 89 percent in 2018—much of the target adult education population, such as those without a high school diploma, low-income individuals, and/or those in rural areas, are among the least likely to have reliable internet access.³¹ While this is a significant challenge facing the technology field more broadly, some adult education pioneers are using mobile phone learning programs to reach some of the millions of potential adult learners not served via the formal system. For instance, the California Labor Federation coordinated MOBILE UP, a mobile learning program that taught English and provided vocational training and personalized career counseling. The program could be used anytime and anywhere on cell phones—both simple and smart—allowing participants to learn around their work schedules.³²

2. Individualized Learning Plans and Navigation Support

While the impacts of providing advising or other educational planning supports as part of adult education programs have not been examined in depth, extensive studies of secondary and postsecondary student experiences have affirmed their critical importance. For example, research has shown that community college students are often overwhelmed by the challenges of navigating postsecondary education systems; these students are more likely to persist and succeed in their studies if they have access to proven planning tools and an advising system that informs their choices and reduces bureaucratic barriers.³³ With their essential role of supporting student success widely acknowledged and reasonably well-funded in postsecondary contexts, it is startling to juxtapose the virtual absence of planning and advising elements in adult education programs—where, arguably, many students’ information needs and/or life challenges are likely to be more numerous than those of students who have already succeeded in matriculating into two- or four-year colleges.

Recognizing that barriers including language, culture, and systems knowledge may be stumbling blocks for immigrant adult learners, the EPI model would ensure that before program exit, students develop learning plans outlining their personal integration and family economic success goals along with practical steps for achieving them. Common goals may include becoming a citizen, helping a child graduate high school and enroll in college, opening a small business, or earning a professional certification. This planning process would also include practical considerations—for instance, identifying online practice resources to prepare to meet the English and history requirements for citizenship, or information on reputable area colleges, career pathway program requirements, and tuition and financial aid policies in order to support family decision-making around a child’s or parent’s postsecondary options.

3. Challenges and Opportunities under the Current Adult Education System

As with several of the other integration-focused program elements described above, WIOA’s outcome measures do not assign value to digital literacy development (despite the law’s acknowledgement of its importance) or require student supports such as advising or education pathway planning. With regard to digital literacy, most of the system’s efforts to harness technology’s benefits for learners are either confined to task-based learning or are focused on boosting students’ test scores at the end of a short-term course. This narrow focus misses the opportunity to impart broad technology and digital literacy skills to enable lifelong learning, which can make vastly greater student gains possible after program exit.

Nevertheless, some states have embraced digital literacy requirements and assessments that could serve as models for other state-based or national efforts to directly value and incentivize these learning outcomes. For example, Minnesota adopted statewide digital literacy standards for its adult education system in 2014.³⁴ There, the Northstar Digital Literacy Project defines and assesses basic computer and internet usage skills and awards certificates that qualify as employment credentials. Northstar currently has approved testing sites in 35 states plus the District of Columbia, as well as several locations abroad,³⁵ but the skills it measures are assigned no performance value under the federal WIOA system. Though a time when digital literacy skills are valued on par with the system’s educational gain measures appears a long way off, states and others that recognize the obvious and urgent need to move in this direction can pilot and scale program models—including EPI—that place a heavy focus on these skills.

Similarly, student support services such as advising and creation of education or integration pathway plans are not formal elements of the current, WIOA-driven system; however, their value is widely recognized, especially for

immigrants and refugees. For example, career counseling and pathway navigation support are central features of programs that successfully assist immigrants with foreign degrees or credentials who wish to avoid under- or unemployment—a phenomenon referred to as “brain waste.” Barriers such as licensing regulations, limited technical vocabulary in English, gaps in training, lack of social capital, and employer bias often make it difficult for foreign-trained professionals who immigrate to the United States to return to their fields.³⁶ Programs such as the Welcome Back Initiative—a network of ten centers in nine states that work with foreign-trained medical professionals³⁷—demonstrate the importance of program elements such as credential evaluation, counseling on career and educational options, and developing plans for pursuing required credentials and licenses.

Recently developed navigator programs in states such as Michigan³⁸ and New York³⁹ also provide models for guiding individuals through this type of planning process while offering longer-term support and referrals as they work toward their goals. Notably, many of these programs build on existing strengths and resources within immigrant and refugee communities to overcome potential challenges, such as supporting language access through multilingual navigators.

In sum, while information and skills to support civic and economic integration, family economic success, digital literacy, and integration/education pathway planning are critically important for immigrants’ long-term integration success, and while the adult education system is best positioned—and, in many states, intended—to meet these needs, the existing system’s structure does not allow it to do so. Yet, innovative initiatives both large and small are recognizing the system’s shortcomings and demonstrating ways to address them. What nearly all of these efforts have in common is that they provide value and gains outside the federal law’s narrow, mandatory performance requirements. Fortunately, with large

immigrant-receiving states both placing a high value on effective integration and contributing far more to adult education services than the federal government, opportunities to move forward in better equipping students with the knowledge and resources needed to navigate the complex, multi-year path toward English proficiency, civic integration, and economic mobility are readily available.

III. Looking Ahead: Implementation Opportunities

Implementing and scaling an EPI instructional model holds great promise to expand the scope of adult education to key integration topics and skills, and to meet the needs of a more diverse cross-section of adult immigrant and refugee learners. Doing so will require development of program standards, curriculum frameworks and materials, and professional development resources, along with policy shifts and funding for programs that will ultimately pilot and scale the model. States are ideally suited to take on these roles for several reasons: the existing expertise within their adult education systems for doing so; the need for frameworks and course content to specifically reflect a particular state’s laws, systems, and integration and learning pathways; and the opportunity many states have to repurpose some of their existing adult education funds (or provide new funds) for this new type of program. Employers, private funders, libraries, education institutions, community organizations, and many others can also play central roles in developing and piloting the model.

Several statewide efforts have already blazed a path toward adult education program designs that emphasize a broad cross-section of integration knowledge. Most notably, Washington State’s community and technical college system has created the Integrated Digital English Acceleration (I-DEA) program that combines college, career, and life-management skills

with English acquisition in a “flipped” instruction model that blends classroom and digital learning. In program year 2016–17, I-DEA students demonstrated learning gains 12 percent higher than those of ELs in traditional programs.⁴⁰ While I-DEA is not a perfect fit for all learners—students who enter the program with limited computer skills and literacy have had difficulty keeping up with the pace of the course—its program elements and large-scale implementation can provide important lessons for others seeking to create programming that addresses multidimensional aspects of integration success.

New York State’s Literacy Zones provide inspiration and lessons of a different type. This network of more than 50 service areas offers educational programming and support from early childhood to adulthood in communities with high poverty rates and low levels of literacy and English language proficiency.⁴¹ In contrast to the haphazard organization of many local adult education “systems,” where programs operate as separate, unrelated islands, Literacy Zones are designed to ensure local coherence and coverage of service needs for diverse types of adult learners, including parents of young children, senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, and naturalization applicants. This blend of co-located, wrap-around educational services can serve as a useful example for states that choose to pursue a new, integration-focused model targeting a wide range of family needs.

States and programs that wish to adopt an EPI model will need to pursue these and other innovations in order to go beyond the limitations of the federal-state partnership system governed by WIOA. The subsections that follow briefly explore several of these key implementation issues, including the need—at least in the short term—to establish a funding source outside of the federal system and to leverage the strengths of local institutions and organizations in order to promote the most effective use of resources.

A. Financing, Piloting, and Scaling of an Integration Success Course

Because WIOA’s structure and performance measures primarily value employment-focused outcomes and can be expected to increasingly crowd out services for low-level learners and individuals with goals other than employment, the new EPI model will be best implemented via a state funding stream outside of the requirements of the federal system.

States are required to provide at least 25 percent of the adult education expenditure in the state (in cash or in kind), which is reported as a match of the federal adult education funding they receive under WIOA; however, most states provide significantly more than this required match. (See Appendix C for details on each state’s match levels.) When they formally report these excess match dollars to the federal government (as most do), they become subject to the law’s maintenance of effort (MOE) provisions, which require states in each new year to contribute funds equal to at least 90 percent of their prior year’s contribution. This means that states can reduce their excess match of federal funds by 10 percent each year without triggering any MOE penalties; funds freed up in this manner could be redirected to other adult education priorities, such as EPI programming, or other needs that are difficult to meet under existing federal rules.

New York State can serve as a model for other states that are interested in pursuing this course of action. Upon realizing that WIOA’s provisions would make it increasingly difficult to effectively serve lower-level learners and individuals without employment goals, New York began drawing down its match of federal funds in 2014 (see Table 1), but kept the money invested in its state adult education system. As a result, New York has gained greater flexibility to use its state funding to support programs and assessments⁴² that are better aligned to the needs and goals of lower-level learners and others who are poorly served by WIOA’s

Table 1. New York State’s Match of Federal Funding, Expenditure Periods 2013–16*

	Expenditure Period			
	2013	2014	2015	2016*
Federal funds authorized	\$40,601,018	\$40,782,205	\$41,950,407	\$43,343,655
Maintenance of effort	\$74,963,021	\$74,993,400	\$67,494,060	\$61,194,060
State expenditure	\$83,326,000	\$74,993,400	\$67,993,400	\$61,993,400
Change from previous year	\$33,754	-\$8,332,600	-\$7,000,000	-\$6,000,000
Percent change	0.04%	-10.00%	-9.33%	-8.82%

* Data for the 2016 period are based on the initial allocation report as a final report for the period is not yet available. *Notes:* Expenditure periods are structured such that, for example, “2013” runs from July 1, 2013 to September 30, 2015. Dollar figures have been rounded to the nearest dollar. Percent change figures were calculated using unrounded dollar amounts.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, “Financial Section—Table FFR2. Final Report – Total Allocation (New York; Program Years 2013, 2014, and 2015)” (dataset, National Reporting System, accessed August 29, 2018), <https://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/login.cfm>; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, “Financial Section—Table FFR1. Initial Report – Total Allocation (New York; Program Year 2016)” (dataset, National Reporting System, December 28, 2017), <https://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/login.cfm>.

requirements. Additionally, since funding can only be used to match one federal program at a time, releasing excess state funds from the WIOA match gives states more freedom to use these funds as a match for other federal programs.

By pulling state adult education investments out from under the narrow requirements of the federal system, states gain more flexibility to set and pursue their own priorities within adult education and to implement instructional designs that best meet the diverse needs of their adult learners. While this could be the quickest route in some states to implementing an EPI model, numerous other options exist, including identifying new public or private funds to specifically support the model or braiding adult education funds with other related investments (e.g., with early childhood, pre-K, or Promise Neighborhood initiatives).

B. Leveraging the Power of Local Systems and Partnerships

Effectively implementing an EPI model will require smart leveraging of the expertise and ca-

capacity of other institutions and service systems that are implicated in integration trajectories, most of which currently overlap with or lie adjacent to adult education systems. This leverage strategy is partially a practical matter—drawing the expertise of other systems into adult education offerings is far more effective (and economical) than attempting to recreate it.⁴³ It is also a means to build partnerships and coordination among institutions and systems that play a role in supporting the longer-term integration success of program participants.

Important partners would include, among others: early childhood service providers, K-12 and community college districts, public health and safety departments, legal services providers, libraries,⁴⁴ and economic development agencies. Collaboration in both design and implementation of the model will leverage expertise and resources, improve coherence and transparency of local service systems, and, in doing so, likely widen service offerings and improve their outcomes. Notably, these prospective partners may have more flexibility in the types of programming they can support, as most do not receive WIOA funding and are therefore not bound by WIOA’s restrictive performance measures.

Recent initiatives have supported collective impact theory's proposal that cross-sector collaborations of this nature are best equipped to tackle complex social challenges⁴⁵ such as immigrant integration. Findings of the Networks for Integrating New Americans (NINA) Initiative, a landmark project of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, underscore the value of this approach, whereby local alignment of goals, resources, and action around immigrant integration achieves greater impact than organizations and systems acting individually.⁴⁶ For example, at a NINA project site in California's Central Valley, the Fresno County Public Library cooperated with the Fresno Adult School (FAS) to run Citizenship Corners connecting immigrants and refugees with resources to help them prepare for the citizenship exam. As a result of this partnership, FAS exceeded its citizenship services performance targets and secured additional USCIS funding to expand its efforts.⁴⁷

The New Americans Campaign—led by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center—is implementing this strategy on a larger scale through its national network of immigration, legal services, and faith-based organizations that work to connect lawful permanent residents with legal assistance and support to navigate the naturalization process.⁴⁸ Similarly, the Cities for Citizenship Initiative—supported by the Center for Popular Democracy, the National Partnership for New Americans, and Citi Community Development—works to increase naturalization rates through a network of cities and counties that are partnering with local community-based organizations.⁴⁹ An EPI model would aim both to create more strongly networked integration services, as modeled in these initiatives, and to improve the visibility of newer resources among the immigrant and refugee communities that need them.

Localities interested in promoting successful long-term integration could choose to play an active role in building local partnerships and developing EPI programs. Local appetites to support similar initiatives have already proven to be strong. For example, the NINA Initiative

offered only technical assistance to supplement and guide the use of local resources and yet generated strong interest from many communities around the United States. Furthermore, some localities—such as Montgomery County, MD⁵⁰—invest significant resources to connect and fund English literacy and immigrant-serving providers. To build upon this energy, states or private funders could, for instance, directly support local governments in establishing and scaling EPI programs or offer challenge grants to support implementation that require a local funding match.

Improved partnerships can also facilitate immigrant adults' access to additional supports that will enable them to pursue education and integration pathways. For example, a newly arrived refugee mother with a young child may need assistance making plans for child care before she is able to regularly attend English classes; if the resettlement caseworker and adult education provider maintain regular contact, it will be easier to ensure she has a realistic plan to access and budget for the services she needs.

Employers and business leaders can also play an important role in these partnerships. Recent decades have seen growing interest in and experimentation with employer-sponsored English acquisition programs, such as the McDonald's Corporation's English under the Arches program⁵¹ and the Walmart Foundation's support in piloting and scaling a multipartner initiative to provide contextualized English instruction for retail workers.⁵² These and other programs have helped to demonstrate the value of, for example, scatter-site program designs that allow workers at different sites to participate simultaneously in a course led by a live instructor,⁵³ and blended learning models that effectively use technology to provide English learning and practice opportunities outside the classroom. While drawing insights and lessons from initiatives such as these, employers might also seek to incorporate EPI curriculum elements—in areas such as personal finance, housing, education, and health-care access—into their programs to address practical challenges facing workers, and in doing so

better address employer goals such as reduced worker absences and improved performance and retention.

C. Implications under Potential Immigration Reform Legislation

The need to expand the use of innovative adult learning models will become even more pressing if a legalization program that allows some portion of the current unauthorized immigrant population to gain legal status is adopted in the future.

As in the past, any such reform would almost certainly include requirements pertaining to English language proficiency or “seat time” (completion of a certain number of hours of English and/or civics instruction). For example, the legalization program established under the *Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986* (IRCA) specified that applicants must either display an understanding of the English language and the fundamentals of U.S. history and government, or they must be pursuing a recognized course of study to build such knowledge.⁵⁴ Similarly, the *Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013*—the most recent comprehensive immigration reform bill that was passed in the Senate but not considered by the House—would have mandated that all applicants for conditional legal status demonstrate a level of English proficiency and knowledge of history and civics consistent with the requirements to naturalize. Previous legislative attempts at immigration reform bills, such as the *Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006*, also proposed English requirements.⁵⁵

If a legalization program with requirements such as these is adopted as part of future immigration reform, increased demand would create an influx of new adult learners seeking adult education services. Already, the existing adult education system meets only a small fraction of annual need, serving fewer than 1.5 million individuals in program year 2016 across all activities.⁵⁶ In comparison, of the 10.5 million

unauthorized immigrants ages 16 and older living in the United States as of 2016, approximately 6.9 million were LEP and 4.3 million had less than a high school diploma or equivalent and were not enrolled in school. Within this latter group, 3.7 million individuals were also LEP.⁵⁷ While it is unlikely all would qualify to apply under the rules of a future legalization program, it is nevertheless clear that the passage of such a law would touch off a spike in the need for services that would greatly outpace the existing system’s capacity.

At the same time, if conventional instructional models serve as the basis for a future legalization program’s requirements, a historic opportunity to realize the program’s promise—for the nation and for participating immigrant families—will be squandered. Central policy goals in adopting such a legalization program would include ending irregular or “off-the-books” labor and bringing unauthorized immigrant workers and families who meet program requirements out of the shadows and onto a path toward full integration. Unlike adult education programs operating under WIOA’s constraints, the EPI model would be uniquely well positioned to provide the multifaceted knowledge and skills needed by immigrants participating in a legalization process, and thereby support achievement of the broader purposes and promise of a legalization program.

IV. Conclusion

Developing a robust set of integration skills and knowledge enables immigrants and refugees to succeed as workers, family leaders, and community members—promoting their families’ economic mobility and social inclusion alongside their ability to contribute to the strength and economic prosperity of the states and localities where they have settled. Despite the obvious need for these types of skills and knowledge, the existing adult education system is unable to effectively impart them, largely due to the restrictive system design and performance measures imposed by federal law.

A new adult education program model—English Plus Integration—offers a higher-value approach to promoting successful long-term integration alongside English language proficiency. This model aims to make better and more effective use of the time immigrant and refugee learners spend in adult education classes, including by equipping them with the technological skills and other knowledge that will support and accelerate their integration and education trajectories well after course completion.

States wishing to harness their adult education investments for greater integration gains can begin to implement this new approach, either by committing new funds or a portion of existing state adult education funding that exceeds the match required by federal rules. Other stakeholders, localities, employers, private

foundations, and community organizations can also begin to develop and scale EPI models, either independently or in partnership with other actors.

English Plus Integration’s strong focus on civic and economic integration and family economic success, along with its embrace of digital literacy and other self-study skills, allows it to respond to many of the shortcomings of current adult education programming. With immigrants and their children such a significant part of the nation’s fabric, updating instructional designs and investing more effectively in this critically important arena will reap returns for local communities, employers, immigrants, and the United States as a whole for decades to come.

English Plus Integration’s strong focus on civic and economic integration and family economic success, along with its embrace of digital literacy and other self-study skills, allows it to respond to many of the shortcomings of current adult education programming.

Appendices

Appendix A. Adult Education Need vs. System Capacity

Despite an overwhelming need for adult education services, the existing system meets only about 3.4 percent of this need each year. In program year 2016, the adult education system served 1.5 million individuals, while nationwide, there were 43.7 million individuals ages 16 and older who were Limited English Proficient (LEP) and/or lacked a high school diploma or equivalent. Many immigrants and refugees could benefit from adult education services—approximately 22.5 million foreign-born individuals ages 16 and older are LEP and/or lack a high school diploma or equivalent, composing more than half of the 40.3 million foreign-born adults who reside in the United States.

Note that under the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA), individuals ages 16 and older who are “basic skills deficient” (defined by WIOA as being “unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual’s family, or in society”⁵⁸) are also eligible to be served under Title II. Some such individuals may fall outside the categories identified here and are not otherwise identifiable in population data, meaning that actual need for adult education services may exceed these estimates.

Table A-1. Most Recent Estimates of Adult Education Need and Individuals Served*

	Native Born	Foreign Born	Total
Total Adult Education Need	21,255,000	22,483,000	43,738,000
Adults (ages 16 and older) with less than a HSD or equivalent	19,144,000	11,366,000	30,511,000
LEP adults (ages 16 and older)	3,064,000	20,273,000	23,336,000
LEP adults with less than a HSD or equivalent	953,000	9,156,000	10,109,000
Total Served in Adult Education Programs	-	-	1,468,826
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	-	-	594,778
Adult Secondary Education (ASE)	-	-	156,069
English Language Acquisition (ELA)	-	-	601,296
Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE)	-	-	116,683

* Both sets of information in this table reflect the most up-to-date data available. Data on the level of adult education need are from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS), pooled for 2012–16 to increase accuracy. Data for the population served by different adult education programs are for program year 2016 (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017).

Notes: Data on individuals with less than a high school diploma (HSD) or equivalent excludes individuals enrolled in school. Limited English Proficient (LEP) refers to individuals who indicated on the ACS questionnaire that they speak English less than “very well.” ACS data are rounded. The U.S. Department of Education’s National Reporting System (NRS) only tracks the enrollment of students who attend a class for at least 12 hours.

Sources: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of pooled 2012–16 ACS data; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, “Statistical Section—Table 3. Participants by Program Type and Age (All States; Program Year 2016)” (dataset, NRS, accessed June 25, 2018), <https://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/login.cfm>.

Appendix B. ESOL Attendance and Level Progression

Even when immigrants and refugees attend English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, they often cannot participate for the length of time necessary to make substantial linguistic gains or to develop self-study techniques that will enable them to continue learning beyond the classroom. This may, for example, be due to irregular work schedules, sudden shift changes, transportation difficulties, or family obligations (including child care). Based on nationwide data from the U.S. Department of Education’s National Reporting System (NRS), adult ESOL students spent an average of 144 hours annually in a formal ESOL class during program years 2010–16.⁵⁹ (This figure is likely higher than the true average, as NRS data only captures students who attend classes for at least 12 hours.)

Between pre- and post-testing, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) recommends that adults learning English receive 80 to 100 hours of instruction,⁶⁰ and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) recommends 70 to 100 hours.⁶¹ In a 2007 study, CAL found that across all levels, students are more likely to make a level gain if they attend a greater number of hours.⁶²

Table B-1. Average Annual Attendance and Level Completion by ESOL Level, Program Years 2010–15

ESOL Level	Average Annual Attendance Hours per Student	Share Who Completed the Level (%)	Share Who Completed the Level and Advanced (%)	Share Who Left before Level Completion (%)
1 – Beginning Literacy	123	49.3	38.0	28.1
2 – Beginning Low	128	52.6	39.1	27.6
3 – Beginning High	141	53.0	39.0	26.5
4 – Intermediate Low	151	47.3	33.8	26.9
5 – Intermediate High	154	43.4	29.4	28.4
6 – Advanced	162	25.8	3.5	32.3
All ESOL Levels	144	45.5	30.9*	28.2

* The share of students in ESOL levels one through five to complete a level and advance is 35.5 percent. The share to advance from ESOL level six is an outlier; it is considerably lower because ESOL classes above this level are often not offered and pathways from ESOL to Adult Basic Education (ABE)/Adult Secondary Education (ASE) are frequently unclear or unnecessary for students with higher levels of underlying education.

Notes: NRS only tracks enrollment for students who attend a class for at least 12 hours. Averages would be lower if the attendance of those who completed fewer than 12 hours was included.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, “Statistical Section—Table 4. Educational Gains and Attendance by Educational Functioning Level (All States; Program Years 2010–15)” (dataset, NRS, accessed June 25, 2018), <https://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/login.cfm>.

Appendix C. States' Match of Federal WIOA Funding

States are required to contribute (in cash or in kind) at least 25 percent of the funds spent on adult education within their state systems; this state expenditure is reported as a match of federal WIOA funding. Of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, all except Oklahoma exceed this requirement, and 38 contribute more than twice as much as required in the most recent reporting period for which data are available. The median match rate is 124 percent—nearly four times the mandatory contribution—while the mean is 195 percent—almost six times higher than the requirement.

Table C-1. Adult Education Funding and Match Rate by State, Expenditure Period 2015*

State	State Expenditure (\$)	Federal Expenditure (\$)	State-to-Federal Match Rate (%)
Alabama	12,286,291	9,204,813	133
Alaska	1,764,509	1,043,654	169
Arizona	4,129,800	11,852,974	35
Arkansas	19,501,991	5,483,025	356
California	382,855,417	89,375,086	428
Colorado	3,992,775	6,753,970	59
Connecticut	40,701,644	5,258,164	774
District of Columbia*	1,742,817	1,260,214	138
Delaware	1,584,738	1,660,711	95
Florida	225,205,735	38,236,543	589
Georgia	13,617,524	18,327,457	74
Hawaii	2,491,634	2,156,142	116
Idaho	923,855	2,269,556	41
Illinois	16,227,265	20,461,804	79
Indiana	25,401,144	9,937,596	256
Iowa*	6,183,721	3,475,290	178
Kansas	1,457,031	3,651,531	40
Kentucky	16,554,471	8,448,766	196
Louisiana	7,654,067	9,222,194	83
Maine	4,665,483	1,662,106	281
Maryland	10,519,307	9,192,462	114
Massachusetts	27,302,754	10,051,516	272
Michigan	69,568,911	13,624,263	511
Minnesota	31,289,921	5,779,209	541
Mississippi	3,784,611	6,169,174	61
Missouri	5,162,297	8,702,853	59
Montana	1,425,042	1,233,171	116
Nebraska	859,546	2,404,211	36
Nevada	1,938,429	5,701,972	34

Table C-1. Adult Education Funding and Match Rate by State, Expenditure Period 2015* (cont.)

State	State Expenditure (\$)	Federal Expenditure (\$)	State-to-Federal Match Rate (%)
New Hampshire	6,094,969	1,619,035	376
New Jersey	19,001,008	15,314,306	124
New Mexico	6,100,112	4,197,889	145
New York	67,993,400	41,950,406	162
North Carolina	54,525,547	17,311,753	315
North Dakota	1,012,515	982,742	103
Ohio	10,802,416	15,596,597	69
Oklahoma	2,066,381	6,199,143	33
Oregon	31,487,754	5,419,390	581
Pennsylvania	14,953,125	17,967,167	83
Rhode Island	3,450,519	2,157,653	160
South Carolina	16,477,997	8,517,447	193
South Dakota	449,180	1,177,807	38
Tennessee	4,273,192	11,375,310	38
Texas	22,317,033	56,296,032	40
Utah	9,000,000	3,185,427	283
Vermont	4,138,386	901,000	459
Virginia	5,029,383	12,796,585	39
Washington	46,855,712	9,538,256	491
West Virginia	4,353,568	3,616,123	120
Wisconsin	5,689,800	6,519,784	87
Wyoming	1,088,712	804,896	135

* Expenditure periods are structured such that the 2015 period, for example, runs from July 1, 2015 to September 30, 2017. Data for all states except Iowa and the District of Columbia come from the Final Reports on Total Allocation for Expenditure Period 2015. These reports for Iowa and the District of Columbia are not available, so this table presents data from the analogous reports for Expenditure Period 2014 (July 1, 2014 to September 30, 2016).

Notes: Dollar figures have been rounded to the nearest dollar. State-to-federal match rates were calculated using unrounded dollar amounts.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, “Financial Section—Table FFR2. Final Report – Total Allocation (All States; Expenditure Periods 2014–15)” (dataset, NRS, accessed June 25, 2018), <https://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/login.cfm>.

Appendix D. Advisory Panel Members

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy convened an advisory panel of national experts, listed below, to offer advice and feedback during the compilation of this policy brief. This policy brief builds on insights and feedback shared by these experts, but it was not intended to and does not necessarily reflect the consensus of advisory panel members or their institutions.

Cathy (Xi) Chen, Assistant Director of Programming and Operations, New Americans Program, Queens Library

Carol Clymer, Co-Director, Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy, Pennsylvania State University College of Education

Lee Culpepper, Vice President, Public Affairs, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

Patsy Egan, Director, ABE Teaching and Learning Advancement System (ATLAS), Hamline University School of Education

Art Ellison, Former Bureau Administrator, New Hampshire Bureau of Adult Education; former Policy Committee Chair, National Council of State Directors of Adult Education

Rosalind Gold, Senior Director of Policy, Research, and Advocacy, NALEO Educational Fund
Joined by Rosita Ramirez, Director of Constituency Services-Education, NALEO Educational Fund

Charles Kamasaki, Senior Cabinet Advisor, UnidosUS; Resident Fellow, MPI
Joined by Laura Vazquez, Senior Program Manager, Immigration Initiatives, UnidosUS

Jon Kerr, Director, Basic Education for Adults, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Allison Kokkoros, Chief Executive Officer, Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School, Washington, DC

Kristin Lahurd, Assistant Director, Literacy and Continuing Education, Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services, American Library Association

Christian Nelson, Director, Oakland Adult and Career Education, Oakland Unified School District; former Administrator, Adult Education Office, California Department of Education

Stephen Reder, Professor Emeritus of Applied Linguistics, Portland State University

Dan Torres, Director of Immigrant Integration, Office of California Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.

Jen Vanek, Director of Digital Learning and Research, EdTech Center at World Education; former Educational Coordinator, Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment Project

Alison Ascher Webber, Director of Strategic Initiatives, EdTech Center at World Education

Heide Spruck Wrigley, Senior Researcher and President, Literacywork International; Nonresident Fellow, MPI

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About the Authors



Margie McHugh is Director of the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. The Center is a national hub for leaders in government, community affairs, business and academia to obtain the insights and knowledge they need to respond to the challenges and opportunities that today's high rates of immigration pose for communities across the United States. It provides in-depth research, policy analysis, technical assistance, training and information resource services on a broad range of immigrant integration issues. Ms. McHugh's work focuses on education quality and access issues for immigrants and their children from early childhood through K-12 and adult, postsecondary, and workforce skills programs. She also leads the Center's work seeking a more coordinated federal response to immigrant integration needs and impacts, and more workable systems for recognition of the education and work experience immigrants bring with them to the United States.

Prior to joining MPI, Ms. McHugh served for 15 years as Executive Director of The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), an umbrella organization for more than 150 groups in New York that uses research, policy development, and community mobilization efforts to achieve landmark integration policy and program initiatives. Prior to joining NYIC, Ms. McHugh served as Deputy Director of New York City's 1990 Census Project and as Executive Assistant to New York Mayor Ed Koch's chief of staff.

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Previously, she served in Compass AmeriCorps for two years as a Refugee Case-worker and Volunteer Coordinator at Jewish Family and Children's Service of Pittsburgh, where she provided case management services to newly arrived refugee families. She has also worked as a Research Assistant at the Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies, interned in the U.S. Treasury Department's Middle East and North Africa Office, and worked on several youth education initiatives in Chicago.

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