



State Advisory Committee on the Transfer
of Adult Career-Technical Programs

Creating Opportunities

Connecting Adult Learners With Economic Success



Ohio

Board of Regents

Ted Strickland, Governor
Eric D. Fingerhut, Chancellor

University System of Ohio

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CONNECTING ADULT LEARNERS WITH ECONOMIC SUCCESS

Final Report of the
State Advisory Committee on the Transfer
of Adult Career-Technical Programs

June 2008

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FOREWORD

By Eric D. Fingerhut, Chancellor, Ohio Board of Regents

In order for the state of Ohio to grow and prosper, it must raise the education level of its population. It must create and nurture a vibrant system of higher education that allows Ohioans to earn the postsecondary credentials that lead to better jobs and higher incomes, that attract new businesses to the state while creating opportunities for those already here to flourish, and that are the source of innovative technologies that spawn new industries and make Ohio more competitive in the 21st century global economy.

For this reason, the goal of Ohio's 10-year Strategic Plan for Higher Education is to raise the educational attainment of our state year by year, and to close the gap between Ohio and competitor states and nations. To meet this objective, we must graduate more students, keep more of our graduates in Ohio and attract more degree holders from out of state.

Achieving this goal will require that we mobilize Ohio's extensive network of colleges and universities, adult career-technical education and Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) programs. It will demand that all of our institutions of higher education – including those that specialize in meeting the needs of adult learners – fundamentally change the ways they operate, become more responsive to the multiple ways students learn, help students address their academic and non-academic needs and provide learning supports that enable all students to reach their potential.

Ohio's 10-year strategic plan – with its goal of boosting enrollment in the state's colleges and universities by 230,000 students by 2017 – cannot succeed by simply encouraging more high school students to go on to college. Rather, success depends on our ability to encourage and support adults to go back to school to improve their skills and marketability. While many adults are more highly motivated and focused than younger students who do not have the same economic pressures to succeed, motivation can only go so far without the support of the system to help them along the way.

Our ability to effectively address this challenge was made possible by the far-sighted leadership of Governor Strickland and the Ohio General Assembly, who together mandated the transferring of adult literacy and career education from the Ohio Department of Education to the University System of Ohio. This action created what is most likely the nation's most integrated system of adult education, from the GED to the Ph.D.

The State Advisory Committee on the Transfer of Adult Career-Technical Programs has now built impressively on the work of the Governor and the General Assembly. The committee's thoughtful report needs to be read carefully and used effectively as a blueprint for ensuring that the structures, programs and funding of Ohio's adult learning system are aligned with employers' workforce needs and students' expectations.



Eric D. Fingerhut
Chancellor

NEW BEGINNINGS

Helping all adult Ohioans reach their full potential

In the 21st century, knowledge and innovation are reshaping Ohio's economic landscape and changing the way all of us do business. It is redefining the factors that contribute to economic success for individuals, families, communities and the state. As a result, advanced learning can no longer be seen as an option. It is a necessity. It is critical that the upgrading of adult workers' knowledge and skills be a core element of the state's learning equation.

In Ohio and across the nation, more than 50 million adult workers lack a college degree; nearly two-thirds have no college experience at all. In today's economy, the risks for individual social mobility and collective economic prosperity are severe.

But this should be less a matter for concern than a call to action. Ignoring the problem will limit individuals' future opportunities for economic success, just as it will erode the vitality of Ohio's economic and social institutions. By removing the barriers to adult learning – and transforming a postsecondary education system that was built largely for younger, full-time, traditional students – Ohio can help millions of adult workers acquire the skills and credentials that will allow them to succeed economically and to make a more positive contribution to society.

Ohio's determination to address this challenge was confirmed recently when Governor Ted Strickland and Chancellor Eric D. Fingerhut released the state's 10-year strategic plan to raise Ohioans' educational attainment and to close the gap between Ohio and competitor states and nations. The plan aims to boost enrollment in Ohio's public colleges and universities by 230,000 students by 2017. And much of its focus is on adults.

In promising to remove barriers and expand adults' learning opportunities, the state's new strategic plan recognizes that Ohio's public colleges, universities and adult career-technical programs must work together. They must offer a well integrated network of programs and services that allow those entering the workforce for the first time, as well as incumbent workers who look to education as the way to obtain better jobs, to succeed in an innovation- and technology-driven economy.

The Committee's Charge

Responding to the provisions of Amended Substitute House Bill 119 (2007), the State Advisory Committee on the Transfer of Adult Career-Technical Programs was convened in November 2007 and directed to craft a strategy for the successful transition of certain adult workforce development programs from the Ohio Department of Education to the Ohio Board of Regents.

From the outset, committee members understood that their charge involved more than simply shifting a few programs and the people who carry them out from one administrative agency to another. Rejecting this narrow task, they worked to identify ways to strengthen the governance of Ohio's adult learning system; ensure that its structures, programs and funding are aligned with employers' workforce needs and learners' expectations; and improve the performance and productivity of Ohio's talent development system with instructional programs that capitalize on best practices, state-of-the-art technology and high-quality teaching.

This transfer of responsibilities – and the creation of improved learning opportunities for Ohio's adult population – will be completed by January 1, 2009.

Yet, to strengthen Ohio's economic competitiveness in the nation and world – and to improve the quality of its citizens' lives at home – those responsible for providing postsecondary education services must do more than collaborate. They must address the needs and aspirations of adult learners, recognizing that many nontraditional students need to ready themselves for jobs quickly and cannot afford long-term enrollment. Some may not be able to pursue – at least initially – an associate's or bachelor's degree. And still others may be looking for limited training with an "open door" that allows them to return again and again as their needs change or they are presented with new opportunities.

Providers also must acknowledge that today's adults need higher levels of academic and technical knowledge to remain employable in an information and service economy characterized by frequent job and career changes.

That is why Ohio's 10-year strategic plan urges policymakers and postsecondary institutions to ensure that college-ready courses are available to all adults and to devise mechanisms that allow learners to acquire college credit for apprenticeship and other adult workforce programs that meet standards established by the University System of Ohio. It also calls for the development of new pathways to career-oriented postsecondary training that reward adult learners based on demonstrated competencies, not just "seat time" spent in the classroom.

A number of the initiatives highlighted in the Chancellor's 10-year strategic plan are rooted in the work of the State Advisory Committee on the Transfer of Adult Career-Technical Programs. Throughout the Committee's deliberations, draft recommendations were shared with the Chancellor. Committee members are pleased that a number of their ideas are reflected in the University System of Ohio plan and believe that this report provides tactical insights that will contribute to the effective implementation of the changes mandated by Am. Sub. HB 119.

No Small Task

Closing the adult learning gap

FACT:

Ohio's fastest growing occupations over the next decade will require learning beyond high school.

FACT:

Compared to Ohio, only nine states have a smaller portion of their adult populations having earned a baccalaureate degree, which is why Ohio is losing ground in creating the high-skill, high-wage jobs that will be used to measure our prosperity in the 21st century.

FACT:

Almost 75 percent of Ohio's current workforce will still be working in 2020.

Together, these facts demonstrate why the work of this advisory committee is so critical. They explain why Ohio needs a postsecondary education system that understands adult learners and has both the capacity and determination to meet their needs. They help us measure the value of a postsecondary education system that offers adult learners the knowledge and skills needed to get and advance in good jobs, and that links education with workforce development and the needs of employers.

At the beginning of a new century, "work" is being redefined by a technology- and information-driven global economy. With this transformation, advanced knowledge and skills, and a postsecondary degree or credential – will be increasingly valued in the marketplace for both new entrants in the labor force and those already employed. And in this new world of lifelong learning, all adult workforce education providers will need to rethink their traditions, policies and practices – and new strategies for meeting the needs of adult learners will need to be adopted. Very simply, a new adult workforce education system will need to be created.

This is no small task, to be sure. But by fulfilling this purpose, the state and its public institutions of higher education will have a huge impact on Ohio's future economic growth and prosperity.

What is it going to take to achieve this goal? In its simplest form, the answer to this question is that Ohio's adult learning system must be

demand driven, adult friendly, accessible, aggressively promoted and affordable for those it serves. It also must be built around high academic standards and challenging workforce training expectations, just as it must be effectively governed, performance-based and funded in ways that promote learner success.

The advisory committee's longer answer is that Ohio's adult learning system must be:

- **Demand-driven** – responsive to both employer needs and the career advancement requirements of workers – and focused on regional economic development needs.

DEFINING TERMS

Postsecondary Education

Any education beyond the high school level, regardless of where courses are taken and credits are earned.

Adult Workforce Education System

The network of providers and institutions that serve adult populations – particularly ***non-traditional students*** who leave high school before earning a diploma and/or without the knowledge and skills required for postsecondary education, or working adults who pursue postsecondary credentials years after graduating from high school.

In this report, "adult workforce education system" will be used interchangeably with other terms such as "adult learning system" and "adult workforce education and training system."

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- **Adult-friendly** – offering services that are easy to understand and navigate, emphasizing adult-focused teaching methods with applied learning models, integrating job-related content and providing career-relevant instruction, and facilitating students’ movement between programs and institutions with advance knowledge of what course credits will follow them.
 - **Learner-centered** – equipped and committed to helping learners address academic and non-academic challenges and to providing learning supports that enable all learners to reach their potential, such as advising, tutoring, individualized learning plans, academic learning centers, computer-based remedial preparation, child care and transportation.
 - **Innovative** – offering all adult learners new and accessible career pathways and employment opportunities, sometimes at no- or low-cost, starting with Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) and developmental education and continuing seamlessly to college-level credentials and degrees, with financing and payment options that expand equity and flexibility.
 - **Business and industry endorsed** – ensuring support from employers who make investments in their workers’ talent development and take sustainability strategies seriously, and benefiting employees whose earnings and career opportunities are enhanced as they acquire new knowledge and skills.
 - **High-quality and “cutting edge”** – making a commitment to providing instruction that satisfies both Ohio employers and employees, in part through comprehensive and integrated data systems that guide personalized and individualized education.

OHIO’S VISION

for connecting learning with economic success

All adult Ohioans will have an opportunity to continue their education beyond high school and earn the degrees and industry-recognized credentials that give them the knowledge and skills needed to get and advance in good jobs that pay family-sustainable wages.

All Ohio employers will have access to customized, flexible and industry-driven skills training, giving them a competitive edge in the 21st-century global economy.

EMPLOYEES WHO LEARN

Understanding how they're different from students who work

For Ohio to compete successfully in today's knowledge-based economy, ways must be found to boost the skills of adults who are working for low wages. There are many of them and most have little or no postsecondary education.

The good news is that Ohio offers a wealth of two-year campuses and adult career-technical education providers that are passionate about helping students succeed. But, as the USO strategic plan points out, "disconnects between and within these well-meaning institutions are creating barriers to their success."

The state's 10-year strategic plan for postsecondary education goes further by stating:

"When working adults try to improve their lifestyles by returning to school for post-secondary education and training, they're often met with barriers."

"While many enroll in community colleges, many do not succeed in graduating. Research shows that 86% of students at community colleges hope to complete a degree or certificate program, but only 25% accomplish this goal within six years. Raising families, managing the cost of school, and working part-time often cause many students to abandon their dreams after only a year or two.

"Even with the best intentions, education institutions and state policy can unwittingly create more barriers. A lack of communication and cooperation between education institutions, an inability to transfer credit between institutions, and limited financial aid offerings can cut even the most well-planned dreams short."

Consider these facts:.

- One in four Ohio workers holds a low-wage job (\$9.71 an hour)
- One in four Ohio working families has a low-income (less than \$39,943 a year)
- One in three Ohio adults has only a high school diploma or GED – and approximately 18 percent of the state's adult population does not have a high school diploma.
- Only one in three Ohio adults holds an associate degree or higher.
- Ohio's prime working-age adults (25-54) are ranked 21st (among the 50 states) in the percent with a high school diploma or GED, and they are ranked 42nd in the percent without any postsecondary education
- Four in 10 Ohio employers report having a hard or very hard time finding qualified workers

SOURCES: Community Research Partners and the Ohio ABLE Program

The State Advisory Committee on the Transfer of Adult Career-Technical Programs crafted its change strategies with a clear understanding that the needs of "employees who learn" are very different than those of "students who work." And its action priorities reflect a desire to create learning environments – and opportunities – that best facilitate adult growth and development.

Finally, the Advisory Committee's policy and practice recommendations are designed to eliminate recognized barriers to adult learning success. They are consistent with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning's (CAEL) principles for effectiveness in serving adult populations, which focus on the following:

- **Outreach.** Creating lifelong access to educational opportunities by reaching out to adult learners in ways that overcome barriers in time, place and tradition.

- **Life and Career Planning.** Addressing adult learners' life and career goals before or at the onset of enrollment, so the system's capabilities are aligned with learners' needs and goals.
- **Financing.** Expanding equity and financial flexibility for adult learners by offering an array of financing and payment options.
- **Learning Outcomes.** Defining and assessing knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by adult learners both from the curriculum and from life/work experience in order to assign credit and confer degrees with rigor.
- **Teaching-Learning Process.** Using multiple methods of instruction (including experiential and problem-based methods) for adult learners in order to connect curricular concepts to useful knowledge and skills.
- **Student Support Systems.** Assisting adult learners through comprehensive academic and student support systems in order to enhance students' capacities to become self-directed, lifelong learners.
- **Technology.** Using information technology to provide relevant and timely information and to enhance the learning experience.
- **Strategic Partnerships.** Engaging in strategic relationships, partnerships and collaborations with employers and other organizations in order to develop and improve educational opportunities for adult learners.
- **Transitions.** Supporting guided pathways that lead into and from the institution's programs and services in order to ensure that students' learning will apply usefully to achieving their educational and career goals.

OHIO'S ADULT LEARNING RESOURCES

118 ABLE Providers

91 Career-Technical Planning Districts

23 Community/Technical Colleges

13 Universities (plus one free-standing medical school)

24 University Regional Campuses

WHY ADULT LEARNERS ARE CRITICAL TO OHIO'S FUTURE

Confronting Economic Reality

Research confirms that employers need workers with higher and higher levels of education and the jobs they fill demand more advanced skills that come with learning beyond high school. And experience tells us that successful 21st century economic growth initiatives depend on increasing the knowledge and in-demand competencies and skill of existing workers, just as they demand more of the education of traditional P-16 students.

In this context, consider the following facts:¹

- By 2010, the United States will face a shortage of 12 million qualified workers for the fast-growing sectors of the economy.
- Ohio ranks 38th in the percentage of adults (ages 25 to 64) with an associate degree, and 37th in the percentage with a bachelor's degree.
- With three out of four current Ohio workers expected to still be working in 2020, it is important to provide high-quality education and training opportunities for the state's adult population.
- Adult workers, particularly low-income workers, face many well-documented barriers to credential achievement.
- Many companies find incumbent workers with better knowledge and skills to be the key to success. Ohio cannot compete with just traditional postsecondary students. Going forward, its adult learners will be the key to success.
- If we do not take action soon, the more than one million Ohioans working for low wages will continue struggling financially, meaning as little as \$3,000 per month for a family of four, and \$1,500 per month for a single person.

ADULT LEARNING SOLUTIONS

The Advisory Committee's action priorities, which are presented in the next section of this report, reflect **two core strategies** for giving adult Ohioans better learning and workforce training opportunities.

Strategy #1:

REMOVING INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS

Improve adults' access to and success in job-relevant education and training, and make adult learning experiences more affordable.

Strategy #2:

BUILDING AN ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

Enhance the quality of Ohio's adult workforce education and training services and ensure that these experiences and the funding that supports them meet employers' needs and learners' expectations.

¹ **SOURCES:** Ohio Labor Market Information (LMI), Ohio Department of Job and Family Services; and the Ohio Board of Regents.

FROM STRATEGY TO PRACTICE

Expanding Learning Opportunities for Adult Ohioans

The Committee advances two core strategies for expanding learning opportunities for adult Ohioans. And understanding that inadequate execution, not bad strategy, is most frequently the reason why organizations fall short of their objectives, Committee members have developed eight action priorities for carrying these strategies out.

STRATEGY #1

Improve adults' access to and success in job-relevant education and training, and make adult learning experiences more affordable.

ACTION PRIORITY #1: Raise adult Ohioans' aspirations for continued learning and improve their awareness and understanding of the state's adult workforce education and training opportunities – and make those opportunities more transparent and easier to navigate.

Broad access to higher education has long been a hallmark of the American postsecondary system. Yet, for too long, many colleges and universities have defined their missions around the needs and interests of traditional, full-time students. Without closing their doors to adult students, they have accepted them with the expectation that these older learners would adapt and survive in a system built largely for and around traditional, younger students.

The dynamics of supply and demand are changing this. Adult learners over age 24 currently comprise about 44 percent of U.S. postsecondary students, but many millions more need postsecondary credentials to succeed economically.² Today's adults need higher levels of academic and technical knowledge to remain employable in an economy in which frequent job and career change is increasingly typical, and in a job market that values skills and educational qualifications.

Adults with postsecondary credentials earn significantly more than those with just a high school education – and the gap is widening. This is why Ohio is committed to creating a postsecondary system that is geared to adult learners, changing the policies and practices that continue to favor traditional, financially dependent, recent high school graduates who enroll full time.

Improved accessibility and higher rates of success are two of the ways to achieve this purpose. In part, this demands a lowering of the barriers that adult learners face through innovative program design and delivery. It requires greater flexibility and accelerated program schedules and designs. It calls for the use of adult friendly instructional methods, an expansion of online course offerings, easier transitions and transfer across institutions, aligned standards and expectations at all levels of the P-16 system and alternative financial aid programs.

All of these change strategies are reflected in the advisory committee's final report and recommendations – most notably in action priorities 2, 3, 4 and 6.

² U.S. Department of Labor, "Adult Learners in Higher Education: Barriers to Success and Strategies to Improve Results," March 2007, page 2.

But improved accessibility and greater success also require changes in the way adults see themselves and in the value they place on continued learning. Therefore, access and success are defined, in part, by adults' understanding of the benefits of higher education, the level of their aspirations, their academic preparation for learning beyond high school and their awareness and familiarity with advanced learning opportunities.

It is not enough for adult learners to be familiar with the traditional paths to postsecondary education. As the Lumina Foundation for Education asserted in its March 2007 report, *“Returning to Learning: Adults’ Success in College is Key to America’s Future.”*

“The well-worn path will not work for most adult learners. Many adult students choose nontraditional paths to postsecondary education because they work, are responsible for dependents and can sometimes obtain tuition assistance from an employer if they enroll in a part-time program. These pathways often offer fewer resources per student than the traditional resident or commuter campus. Their range of curricular options is distinctively different. Adult learners generally seek convenient access and a high degree of certainty in choosing a program.... A variety of extenuating factors, including student characteristics, access to information and the nature of local, state and national subsidies shape the probability of success for adult learners.”

METRICS:

- Total enrollees ages 25 and older in postsecondary programs, including adult career-technical education programs
- Total degrees awarded to first-generation college students, including students 25 and older
- Number of Ohioans ages 16 to 25 who enroll in the state’s colleges and universities after completing courses and/or earning credits in Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) or adult career-technical programs
- Pre-baccalaureate programs that are linked to credit attainment and the number of non-credit courses (“hidden college”) that become a pathway to credit-bearing degrees, certificates and credentialing

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Work collaboratively with the Business Alliance for Higher Education and the Economy (BAHEE) and other partners, including labor organizations, to develop and execute a thoughtful, comprehensive and sustainable public education and marketing campaign targeted to adult learners.
 - It is essential that this marketing effort be fully aligned with the state’s economic development and workforce training efforts. In addition, it needs to focus on the value – both for individual learners and the state’s economy – of advanced learning (i.e., higher earning for higher learning), and on alternative pathways and supports that have special relevance for adults. While promoting the “democratization” of postsecondary education (i.e., learning opportunities for all), it needs to emphasize that Ohio has a higher education system that is geared to adult learners, with a variety of college-ready course offerings, easily understood ways to transfer credits, and flexible policies for learners who cannot afford long-term enrollment.
 - This marketing campaign should not simply be an advertising campaign. Instead, it should engage a broad range of stakeholders (e.g., employers, faith-based groups, foundations, and community and neighborhood organizations), using their communications channels to their own employees and members to create a new learning culture and promote learning opportunities for all Ohioans.

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2. Work collaboratively with employers and labor organizations, and through the Ohio Skills Bank at the regional level, to (a) familiarize workers with continued learning opportunities, including no or low-cost options; and to (b) increase businesses' and unions' understanding of and support for (including direct investments in) Ohio's adult learning and workforce development initiatives.
 3. To ensure that all adults – particularly from hard-to-serve populations – have access to high-quality learning opportunities, extend college access services to the state's adult learners by forging connections with ABLE Programs, as well as with regional providers such as the Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education (OACHE).
 4. Work with P-12 educators and state education policy leaders to improve academic preparation, align standards and expectations across Ohio's P-16 education system, and help students assess their knowledge and skills at regular points along the education pipeline so they can avoid later remediation.

ACTION PRIORITY #2: Create new, accessible pathways that make it easier for learners – particularly those from hard-to-serve populations – to prepare themselves for career-relevant postsecondary education and training, and to help them move smoothly from ABLE and adult career-technical programs to a credential or degree program at a two- or four-year campus.

Adults face many challenges as they pursue postsecondary credentials and they have different needs and motivations than traditional college students. It is not surprising, then, that relatively few adults – many of whom left high school before earning a diploma and/or without the knowledge and skills required for postsecondary education – succeed in upgrading their skills or earn needed credentials or become self-directed, lifelong learners.

The challenges these adults face are many. An overwhelming majority of adult learners are financially independent, work part or full time, have dependents and must juggle many responsibilities with school. Since most of them are “employees who learn” rather than “students who work,” their efforts to get an education are stymied by:

- inflexible course schedules and difficult-to-access locations, long course and program duration and degree programs that are not designed to stretch-out completion over a longer period of time;
- a lack of open-entry, open-exit policies that allow adults to drop out of a course and return in another term, picking up where they left off without having to repeat the entire course;
- a legacy of substandard secondary achievement and the need for extensive developmental or remedial education;
- a lack of adult-focused academic and non-academic supports; and
- “chalk and talk” teaching methods that ignore the real-life experiences and knowledge that adults bring to class.

Understanding these barriers to learning, Governor Ted Strickland and the Ohio General Assembly directed the Ohio Board of Regents, in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education, to develop a system of pre-college and college-level “Stackable Certificates” to help adult learners minimize the amount of time they spend in the classroom while maximizing the economic payoff of their efforts and providing a clear pathway to relevant educational experiences.

Consistent with this directive, the University System of Ohio has launched a “Stackable Certificates” initiative that provides a clear and accessible path for adults seeking to advance their education. With opportunities for concurrent enrollment in multiple institutions, it is being designed to help adult learners connect pre-college academic work to credit-bearing career-technical coursework. (NOTE: See page 30 for a graphic presentation of the “Stackable Certificates” Initiative.)

For this purpose, the “Stackable Certificates” initiative integrates and connects the services adult learners can access through ABLÉ, adult career-technical education programs and the state’s community colleges. To ensure the effectiveness of this innovative initiative, providers and policymakers will need to work collaboratively to ensure that appropriate funding streams are developed to support expanded and/or restructured services with ABLÉ providing academic skills development toward college readiness.

With certificates, including many that will be industry recognized, it will give adults an accessible pathway to college-level degrees and improved employment opportunities. It will:

- Be separate from, but connected to traditional education programs;
- Allow adults to see a transparent path to learning and skill development with an “open door” and drop-in and drop-out opportunities throughout their careers;
- Permit providers to market their programs and services in ways that are not possible now;
- Offer adults a series of small steps with defined rewards that build confidence for both students and employers;
- Avoid the shortcomings of “localized” programs that inhibit student transfer and flexibility;
- Offer “fluid” paths that recognize that adults can be at different levels in each of the skills – math, reading, writing and language; and
- Offer ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) at the first pre-college level, recognizing that it is a unique skill area and is increasingly in demand as the state’s population becomes more diversified.

METRICS:

- Number of Ohioans ages 25 and older with a high school diploma and/or GED who continue their education by preparing for a postsecondary credential or degree program
- Number of Ohioans ages 16 to 25 who enroll in the state’s colleges and universities after completing courses and/or earning credits in ABLÉ or adult career-technical programs, including apprenticeships
- Number of adult career-technical students who continue their education by enrolling in and completing two-year and four-year colleges’ credentialing and degree programs
- Number of adult Ohioans who earn a credential from an adult career-technical program, or a degree or credential from a two-year or four-year college

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Proceed aggressively to design and implement a competency-based “Stackable Certificates” program that offers industry-recognized certificates at both the pre-college and college levels.
 - Disseminate “Stackable Certificates” through the Ohio Skills Bank (OSB) structure.
 - Give adult learners access to ABLÉ services for preparation to acquire the skills required to achieve a score on the GED equivalent to college readiness; and focus college remedial efforts on the transition between the GED and successful placement in the first college level-course.
 - Expand ABLÉ’s professional development system and other relevant services through the Ohio Resource Center and Ohio Learning Network.

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- Allow adult learners enrolled in an institution of higher education to turn certificates and apprenticeships into college credit, subject to standards established by the University System of Ohio; and increase the number of college-level “Stackable Certificates” through two-year colleges and adult career-technical providers.
 - Use the “Stackable Certificates” concept to expand education and training services in the state’s rehabilitation and corrections system.
2. Ensure that this transparent career pathway connects all of the state’s adult education assets, including ABLE programs, adult career-technical education services, and the developmental education programs of community and technical colleges.
 - Align ABLE standards and assessments with the state’s college readiness standards and assessments; and expand ABLE services with greater access to them through adult career-technical programs, two-year colleges and the workplace.
 - Create a college-ready and work-ready “tipping point” certificate that bridges the gap between the GED and the first college-level course in math and English composition.
 - Publicize the benchmarks (cut scores) for a common placement in the first college-level transfer course and align entry and exit assessments among various providers.
 3. Develop a funding strategy to support the expansion of ABLE services, and to reflect the differentiated college readiness and remediation missions of the state’s colleges and the ABLE program. (NOTE: See Action Priority #8 for more information.)

ACTION PRIORITY #3: Make Ohio’s adult learning programs and services more affordable by creating new support mechanisms and financial models that meet the needs of adult learners and other non-traditional students.

For more than 40 years, state and federal student aid and institutional financing policies have reflected the needs of traditional students (i.e., dependent adolescents who go to college full time after high school graduation).

This has to change if Ohio is going to improve adults’ access to job-relevant education and training. New financial aid strategies are going to be needed to help nontraditional students (including adult learners) who pursue nontraditional programs with nontraditional classroom models of instructional delivery. But as the U.S. Department of Labor has pointed out in “*Adult Learners in Higher Education*” (March 2007), the issue is not limited to financial aid.

“State institutional financing models offer little financial incentive to colleges to serve ... part-time, working adult students. Funding formulas that are based on full-time enrollment equivalency advantage those colleges that have mostly full-time students and discourage better attention to the needs of working adults. While working adults do not necessarily require more expensive support than traditional students, it often costs the college more to educate two half-time students than one full-time student. In addition, federal and state aid policies and state-based institutional financing systems have tended to discourage compressed and accelerated programming that would better meet the scheduling needs and learning styles of many working adults.”

In the state's 10-year strategic plan for higher education – and elsewhere – Ohio's leaders have made it clear that they are ready to meet this challenge. Very simply, they have pledged that, by 2017, the average out-of-pocket dollar amount that an in-state, undergraduate student pays to obtain a college education will be "among the lowest in the nation." And they have included adult learners in that commitment.

Therefore, bold action is needed – both in terms of student aid and institutional financing – to support the needs of adult learners and to enhance Ohio's competitiveness in the 21st century economy. While some new investments will be needed, action also will be required to make better use of existing dollars. And Ohio's voice, as an advocate for adult learners, will have to be heard in Washington as federal officials search for ways to help working adults afford the postsecondary credentials they must have for economic success.

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Lower operating costs and create high-quality, low-cost learning options for working adults, consistent with the recommendations of the University System of Ohio's 10-year strategic plan.
2. Based on an inventory of student aid and institutional financing "best practices" in Ohio and across the nation, develop (at the state level) more flexible financial aid policies and practices – loans, grants and scholarships – for adult learners studying part-time; increase the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG) availability for part-time adult students and find ways to use Pell Grants and other state and federal dollars to support low-income adults.
3. Secure employer and union contributions/support to make education and training more affordable for their employees and members.
4. Design and implement a performance-based funding system and provide adequate funding levels and sources for adult learning programs and services (see Strategy 8). Create financial incentives that make providers more responsive to the needs of adult learners.

METRICS:

- Number of Ohioans ages 25 and older in postsecondary programs, including adult career-technical education programs
- Number of Ohioans ages 16 to 24 in postsecondary programs, including adult career-technical education programs
- Number of low-income and first-generation college students ages 25 and older
- Number of adult learners receiving financial aid and the levels of support they are getting
- Cost savings generated by institutional realignment and collaboration among the providers of adult education and workforce training services

In addition to these actions, the state should seek policy changes at the federal level that expand need-based loan funding for working adults who are unable to complete college on a half-time or more basis, and modify the Lifetime Learning Tax Credit (LLTC) to offer working adults parity with the more generous credits available for traditional students.

ACTION PRIORITY #4: Expand opportunities for work-based learning (e.g., internships, co-ops, apprenticeships and teacher externships) by increasing employer participation and by making programs more flexible and adult-friendly.

Ohio's long-term economic prosperity requires more effective collaboration between the state's business and education communities, especially higher education. One of the biggest challenges in today's

economy is providing a sufficient number of skilled workers to fill business needs – at the certificate, associate, baccalaureate and even graduate levels.

For Ohio, this is an especially important challenge because we are not producing enough skilled workers and too many of those we do produce leave for jobs elsewhere. Also, far too many of our adult workers do not have the knowledge and skills needed to get good jobs that pay family-sustaining wages, or to learn continuously over time to meet the demands of an economy that values knowledge and skills.

Yet, research and experience tell us that the traditional structure and organization of many postsecondary institutions – and the way they provide instruction – pose significant barriers to non-traditional, adult learners. For this reason, the advisory committee believes that employers and educators must work collaboratively to better understand each others needs and capabilities, and to find better ways to meet the learning needs of the state’s adult population.

The committee acknowledges that Ohio’s colleges and universities already have made significant progress in developing non-traditional learning opportunities, including weekend and block-scheduled courses, modularized curricula and instructional programs designed collaboratively with the employer community. Yet, it calls for a more robust set of work-based learning opportunities – that is, internships co-ops, apprenticeships and teacher externships – and instructional programs that are more flexible and adult-friendly.

Such learning experiences allow businesses to harness the talent of Ohio students and teachers, just as they give students and teachers valuable relevant experience. They also give adult learners an incentive to stay in the region, enable participating businesses to realize a greater return on investment in higher education, and may attract new industries to the area as the stock of skilled workers increases.

METRICS:

- Number and percent of adult learners who participate annually in work- and career-based learning experiences
- Total number of credits earned toward a degree or credential through work-based and career-based learning
- Level of employers’ satisfaction with the program and the performance of students who learn through work- and career-based instruction, based on business surveys
- Level of students’ satisfaction with their learning experiences and the knowledge and skills they acquired

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Work collaboratively with the Business Alliance for Higher Education and the Economy (BAHEE) and other business and labor organizations to (1) Increase employers’ awareness of the benefits of work-based learning experiences for students and businesses that are involved in them, (2) increase employer participation; (3) develop uniform definitions of work-based learning and skills that will allow for measuring outcomes and progress on a local, regional and statewide basis; and (4) double the number of postsecondary students engaged in high-quality college-level internships, co-ops and apprenticeship initiatives that meet adult learners needs and interests.
2. Use the Ohio Skills Bank’s Sector Strategy to bring employers, educators and workforce human service providers together to solve regional workforce shortages.

STRATEGY #2

Enhance the quality of Ohio’s adult workforce education and training services and ensure that these experiences and the funding that supports them meet employers’ needs and learners’ expectations.

ACTION PRIORITY #5: Ensure that Ohio’s adult career-technical programs and two-year college campuses help drive state and regional economic development through both customized solutions and demand-driven degrees and certificates.

Ohio has a diverse array of adult workforce education assets, as fine as any in America. What it lacks is a coordinated strategy that effectively harnesses these resources to state and regional economic development goals. A meaningful, collaborative partnership with the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) is essential to achieve these goals.

The Ohio Skills Bank will be the University System of Ohio’s vehicle for aligning programs and services with the needs of high-growth, high-skill industries. Through demand-driven initiatives like the Career Pathways program, it will reposition our regional education networks to build data-justified, employer-driven talent pipelines that fix the skill shortages facing Ohio’s most critical industries.

Ohio’s adult workforce education networks also are heavily involved in regional economic development work on a “transactional” or project basis. The University System of Ohio partners should support ODOD’s economic development projects through consistent branding and messaging that maximizes the value of adult education and training services to the business customer.

In addition, coordination with ODOD on employer outreach should make it as simple as possible for businesses to access any of the state’s custom training services. Particularly encouraged are work-based learning experiences such as co-ops and internships or other training like apprenticeships that lead to industry recognized credentials. (NOTE: For more information about these two approaches, see the table on page 19.)

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Use the Ohio Skills Bank to foster alliances between employers and education to remedy the key occupation and skill gaps in high-wage, high-skilled occupations at the regional level. In addition, ensure that education, training and industry-recognized, portable credentialing systems are aligned to meet these challenges and, in doing so, contribute toward achieving Ohio’s workforce development goals.

METRICS:

- Total enrollees age 25 and older
- Number of Ohioans ages 16 to 25 who enroll in the state’s colleges and universities after completing courses and/or earning credits in Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) or adult career-technical programs
- Total degrees awarded to first-generation college students
- Level of employers’ satisfaction with the program and the performance of students who learn through work- and career-based instruction, based on business surveys
- Level of students’ satisfaction with their learning experiences and the knowledge and skills they acquired
- Number of adult learners engaged in work-based learning experiences such as co-ops, internships or apprenticeships

2. In alignment with the Ohio Skills Bank, implement an employer-recognized and supported “Stackable Certificates” initiative as described in Action Priority #2, which provides adults with a transparent path to learning and skill development – and an “open door” for drop-in and drop-out opportunities throughout their careers.

Two Approaches to Workforce Development	
<p>Systemic Workforce Development</p> <p>The Ohio Skills Bank will fundamentally reframe the relationship between regional adult education and training and their surrounding community, turning adult educational institutions into demand-driven engines of economic development. In so doing, it will directly link industry demand to workforce supply in each of Ohio’s 12 economic development regions and through statewide strategies aimed at the state’s “driver industries” as determined by the the Ohio Department of Development.</p>	<p>How It Works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each Regional Economic Development Director of the ODOD will convene an “employer panel” that will meet regularly with the education and training consortium to review its work. The panel also will advise and assist the consortium in developing an acceptable plan for the workforce needs of the region. ▪ In each region, the Ohio Board of Regents will convene a consortium of education and training providers along with workforce and human services professionals involved in workforce development, which will be led by a qualified institution based in the region. The consortium will be provided with data and assistance from agencies throughout state government organized by the Board of Regents. ▪ The consortium’s job will be to analyze the demand for employment in the region and the supply of students and programs, then determine what changes need to be made to guarantee that the education and training providers are recruiting and training the right number of people in the right types of programs to support a growing economy. ▪ The Ohio Board of Regents will collect the work of the 12 regions for presentation to the Governor’s Workforce Policy Advisory Board, which will serve as the statewide equivalent employer panel. The Regents will ensure that its funding formulas and incentive programs support those institutions who respond to the data and strategies developed by the Ohio Skills Bank by creating or modifying programs and expanding the number of graduates in key areas.
<p>Transactional Workforce Development</p> <p>Closer linkages between the adult workforce education system and the ODOD’s industry attraction projects will maximize postsecondary education’s value as a “game-changer” in the state’s economic development deals. The approach will ensure that workforce training is a driver, not an afterthought, as economic development officials craft and carry out business attraction and retention efforts. It will improve the alignment between economic development policies and the programs and practices of the state’s adult workforce education system.</p>	<p>How It Works</p> <p>Aligning the state’s economic development and workforce education and training programs, and providing a single point of contact for ODOD and the employers it serves, will be reflected in several areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The coordination of training grant programs will be strengthened, which will allow economic development officials to determine the appropriate pool of money to meet training needs, and to ensure that consistent standards and criteria are used to evaluate and approve funding requests. The agencies and programs affected will include the ODOD Ohio Investment in Training grants, ODOD Ohio Workforce Guarantee grants, Regents’ Targeted Industries Training Grants and WIA Incumbent Worker Training funds. ▪ The Workforce Training Quality Initiative will allow the state to define quality programs and to determine how to streamline services and reduce unwarranted duplication within regions. In addition, this initiative will allow providers to become Centers of Excellence and to focus on their core competencies. The customer experience for the employer community will improve through ready identification of expert providers in particular service delivery or functional areas. ▪ Regional Customer Service Teams will be formed to coordinate outreach efforts to the employer community and to build their capacity to generate effective marketplace solutions.

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3. Develop a transparent and consistent training grant process for business and industry, organize its regional customer service teams in ways that avoid duplication of effort and ensure coverage of all sector organizations, and identify two-year campuses and adult career-technical education in terms of their business and industry training capacity.

ACTION PRIORITY #6: Build the adult workforce education system’s capacity to facilitate the transferability of credits and students among all service providers – and actively promote such transfers to encourage adults to continue learning.

Of all the topics reviewed by the advisory committee, the transfer of equitable learning experiences for credit across the University System of Ohio is the most persistent. To address this issue, and to deal with the underlying inequity that it reflects, fundamental changes in the rules, roles and relationships that govern the structure of coursework – and the recognition of equitable curriculum and acquisition of similar skills and knowledge – are required.

Fortunately, Ohio has become a leader in providing a common course equivalency system that includes both academic and technical coursework. This work builds upon a credit-transfer infrastructure that can expand to meet the new system requirements while fostering innovation.

The Career-Technical to College Transfer initiative (CT2) focuses on the transferability of industry-recognized credentials from both adult and secondary career-technical programs to college. The challenge is to find innovative ways to translate credentials that are based on clock hours to a structure that is based on credit. The strategy uses an ***outcome approach*** that is based on demonstrated competencies for equivalencies, as opposed to “seat time” spent in the classroom.

Given that industry credentials dictate common outcomes and assessments, the process is guided by a common outcome metric. Programs and certificates that do not have such a recognized external credential pose a much more difficult obstacle for articulating learning experiences.

To date, the CT2 process has provided a number of achievements, including the following:

- Learning outcomes for five technical areas have been developed and disseminated, and subsequently supported by a statewide agreement. The five technical areas are (1) nursing, (2) electrical and mechanical engineering technology, (3) information technology-networking, (4) medical assisting, and (5) automotive technology.
- Engineering technology does not have an industry recognized credential, but has been included to ascertain the reasonableness of credit transfer in areas outside the credential designation. It proved that it can be successful but much more difficult and time consuming than a technical area with an industry recognized credential that dictates a common curriculum and assessment.

METRICS:

- Increased number of college credits received based on students’ coursework in adult career-technical programs
- Increased number of adult career-technical students who continue their education by enrolling in and completing two-year and four-year colleges’ credentialing and degree programs

- Electronic course submission and review process has been beta tested. Five validation centers have been formed and staffed to speed up the credit transfer process.
- Training for matching, submitting and reviewing courses for all institutions is underway.
- Regional faculty review panels have been formed and additional industry credentials have been selected for the next round of reviews.

A five-step process was used for CT2 development and implementation. It can be further refined for future equivalency recognition across programs:

Defining. Faculty panels define learning outcomes based on recognized industry standards

Agreeing. Educational partners agree to the learning outcomes (or agree to modify)

Matching. Institutions match courses/programs to the learning outcomes

Submitting. Institutions submit course/program materials based on learning outcomes

Reviewing. Joint faculty panels review course/program materials for equivalency

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Build the capacity of all schools, colleges and universities – as well as ABLÉ Programs and adult career-technical programs – to send and receive electronically a common transcript that can be processed through the Articulation & Transfer Clearinghouse.
 - Much of the work required to implement this strategy can be accomplished through electronic web-based tools that have been developed to assist the process of sending and reviewing course equivalencies.
 - The Clearinghouse contains all the “business rules” that specify the course equivalencies that guarantees credit. It also processes, in real time, the course titles and credit from the sending institutions to the receiving institutions thus reducing the need to interpret or match course exchanges.
 - A common transcript, currently being facilitated by the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Board of Regents, is required along with the more complicated function of sending and receiving the document electronically. Currently, most high schools and adult career-technical programs are unable to comply with such a requirement.
 - Additional strategies are required to make possible not only the common transcript but, more importantly, the ability for the secondary and the adult career-technical system to send and receive it electronically using the Articulation & Transfer Clearinghouse.
2. Enhance program consistency and the transferability of technical credits by developing a common set of courses for each program that are equitable between adult career-technical programs and two-year colleges.
 - While the CT2 process will provide a system of course equivalencies that carry the statewide guarantee, additional innovations could increase the transfer of credit across the University System of Ohio, including to apprenticeship programs, and increase the likelihood of greater adult participation in higher education.
 - Selected consortia of adult programs, through the leadership of a Credit Validation Center, should begin developing and piloting a common set of courses between adult program providers for accelerated credit transfer.

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- Develop and begin piloting modular-based, lower-level technical courses with a common expectation of foundation learning in mathematics, science and composition. A modular approach to course structure will permit an easier matching of content, especially learning experiences that only contain a portion of outcomes and competencies found in traditional credit courses.
3. Develop more regionally based certificates according to industry need in collaboration with the Ohio Skills Bank. In collaboration with the Credit Validation Center, the certificates structure will be designed to be fully transferable across the University System of Ohio.
 4. Facilitate and pilot concurrent enrollment policies that allow adult learners to pursue degrees, certificates and other credentialing options simultaneously at the state's community colleges, adult career-technical programs and universities.
 5. Develop applied baccalaureate completion degree programs in collaboration with two-year colleges in areas where there are initial associate degrees.
 - Adults often desire the continuation of education beyond the associate degree, so the development of the applied baccalaureate completion degree should adhere to the credit transfer principles outlined here for seamless credit transfer between the associate to baccalaureate degree. Building on and accelerating the articulation and transfer foundation already provided for the guaranteed credit mobility of general education (transfer module), Transfer Assurance Guides in the major and the technical credit agreements of the CT2 will greatly enhance credit transfer across adult education providers. Implementing the additional recommendations will radically increase credit mobility across the University System of Ohio.³

ACTION PRIORITY #7: Develop an integrated data system – built around a focused set of results-oriented metrics – that fosters coordinated decision making by all adult education providers and assists in identifying and meeting employer needs.

In this report, the advisory committee sets out a clear vision for connecting learning with economic success – a future in which all adult Ohioans will have an opportunity to continue their education beyond high school and to earn the degrees and industry-recognized credentials that give them the knowledge and skills needed to get and advance in good jobs that pay family-sustainable wages. That vision also sees employers having access to customized, flexible and industry-driven skills training that gives them a competitive edge in today's global economy.

This report also outlines a number of strategies and action recommendations designed to move us toward that future, and it presents the advisory committee's suggestions for measuring our progress – for determining whether these recommendations are being implemented and to let us know if they are working.

In this sense, these metrics are accountability measures – a report card on Ohio's success in closing its adult learning gap. But they are more than that. They are a knowledge base designed to guide decision making by employers and policy makers at the state, regional and local levels.

³ Committee members have suggested that consideration be given to linking this initiative to the "Ohio Open Door Card" if it becomes available.

However, data do not usually occur naturally. They need to be generated and collected. They need to be integrated into sophisticated, yet easy-to-use data systems. And discrete data systems must be aligned so that information can be shared, tracked over time and across populations, and analyzed in ways that generate accurate and up-to-date information needed to make informed decisions and change educational practices.

Unfortunately, Ohio's data-collection and data-sharing systems have many holes and limitations that prevent policy makers and employers from accessing the comprehensive, reliable data they need to make effective decisions and take appropriate actions – and to track the performance of both learners and delivery systems over time.

This needs to change and there is considerable evidence that it is beginning to happen. But much more needs to be accomplished and that's the basis for the advisory committee's action recommendations.

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for bridging adult workforce education and training data systems.
 - Direct the Ohio Board of Regents to lead this initiative in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education.
 - Fund and conduct a “data audit” to identify the state’s adult workforce education training data needs, and identify the legal constraints and cost of developing and maintaining a fully integrated data system.
 - Resolve persistent issues about student identification numbers to ensure that learners’ educational attainment and skill development can be tracked throughout their P-12 and postsecondary education experiences.
 - Focus attention in the following areas: (1) learner-focused demographic data, employment status, career path and patterns of system use; (2) information about learner attitudes, aspirations and satisfaction with services received; (3) system and program performance data, including enrollment levels and trends, service/program redundancy, learner use of career pathways and success rates; (4) Labor Market Information (LMI), including economic conditions, employment data statewide and at the regional level, and business/industry workforce training demand by region and sectors; (5) employer awareness and support of workforce education and training programs, perceived workforce development needs, participation in training programs and satisfaction with services received; (6) learner college- and work-readiness data, including remediation rates; and (7) cost and financial data at both the individual learner and system levels.
 - Prepare a comprehensive plan for bridging adult workforce education data by March 2009. Through the implementation of this plan, ensure that the state’s adult workforce education data systems are appropriately and effectiveness connected. (NOTE: In some cases, this standardization may lead to the consolidation of data systems, while in other situations consideration may be given to converting (or merging) data systems over time. For example, advisory committee members recommend that ABLE’s data system be left alone, although changes may be needed to facilitate data sharing and longitudinal analysis.

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- Improve the utilization of IPEDS, the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (NOTE: This action will benefit several University System of Ohio initiatives, including the Ohio Skills Bank. Priority should be given to improving the accuracy of IPEDS reports for colleges and universities, and to achieving full reporting of adult career-technical education program outcomes.)
 - Ensure that the plan for bridging adult workforce education and training data systems is connected with the efforts of other agencies, including significant philanthropic partners, to align data systems in order to track and report on positive individual outcomes. (NOTE: The University System of Ohio is presently considering such a wide-ranging review as part of a multi-department data alignment initiative. The committee urges the University System of Ohio to include this recommendation in its ongoing discussions.)

ACTION PRIORITY #8: Develop a governance system for adult workforce programs and services, with appropriate funding mechanisms, that (1) provides comprehensive oversight, (2) creates incentives for quality practices and services; (3) distributes resources equitably based on results-oriented metrics, and (4) is consistent with the University System of Ohio strategic plan.

Governance and funding can be expected to be “hot” issues in virtually any discussion of education reform. This fact reflects the financial stringency that is embedded in most education policy debates. But it also is grounded in the reality that how decisions are made and scarce resources are allocated has tangible consequences for a broad range of stakeholders whose needs and interests may not be consistent.

Understanding this dynamic, the committee examined a number of governance issues and a subcommittee of its members considered possible changes in the funding formulas for institutions that serve adult learners. However, committee members ultimately decided not to make specific recommendations for changes in the adult learning system’s governance structures and processes, and to postpone any changes to the funding formulas until the next biennial budget.

In part, the advisory committee’s decision against recommending major changes at this time responds to research about the efficiency of sweeping changes in governance and funding systems. For example, in a 2003 study, “*The Politics of State Higher Education Governance Reform*,” Michael K. McLendon and Erik C. Ness concluded that “the literature is replete with accounts of governance change that produced no discernible improvements in the quality, effectiveness or efficiency of systems.”

There are other reasons for the advisory committee’s decision not to advance concrete recommendations – sweeping or otherwise – at this time.

- Before significant changes are made in the governance and funding of adult education and training programs, connections among key data sources are needed to provide the necessary knowledge base for informed decision making.
- Constructive changes in how dollars are allocated should be accompanied by funding stability to ensure a firm and understandable foundation to build upon.
- Changes in the governance of the state’s adult learning system should come after a robust culture of collaboration has taken root to ensure the system’s success statewide and at the regional level.

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- Changes in funding formulas should not be rushed and made in piecemeal fashion; rather, they should be addressed in the context of a broader review of higher education funding – and that is not within the charge or expertise of the advisory committee.
 - The governance and funding of Ohio's workforce education and training initiatives should be a major agenda item for the Ohio Board of Regents' current budget consultation.

However, one governance issue requires immediate action. The transfer of adult career-technical programs to the Ohio Board of Regents has the potential of disrupting or destabilizing historic relationships between these programs and similar services for secondary students at the local level, whether they are being served by career-technical programs or comprehensive school districts that offer such services. For this reason, these vital relationships need to be evaluated at both the state and local levels, and where appropriate, new “bridges” should be built to assure that programs and services – regardless of the settings in which they are offered – are not jeopardized and that secondary students do not become the victims of organizational change.

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. At the state and regional levels, develop a governance system for adult workforce programs and services, ensuring appropriate linkages between the two jurisdictional levels.
 - Ensure that the system has a clear vision and the guidance needed to achieve it – i.e., a well-defined strategic direction. Make sure that local and regional service providers have sufficient flexibility to make decisions and take actions that respond to the needs of their communities, while establishing a policy infrastructure that guarantees that all elements of the adult workforce system are fully aligned with ODO's economic development assets and the University System of Ohio's strategic agenda.
 - Ensure that the system has the capacity to continually implement articulation and transfer and other integrating functions, and put mechanisms and incentives in place to promote efficiency (in part, through the sharing of faculty and facilities) and preserve low-cost options and opportunities for adult learners.
 - Ensure that the system facilitates effective communication among all stakeholders; gives the employer community a role in program direction and implementation; and functions as part of a fully integrated, aligned P-16 partnership.
 - Ensure that the system is performance-based with accountability for results.
2. Ensure that the transfer of adult workforce education programs and services to the University of Ohio does not jeopardize existing connections and collaborations between adult career-technical education programs, the joint vocational system and comprehensive school districts' career-technical education initiatives.
 - Work to preserve and strengthen partnerships between schools, districts and ABLE Programs.
 - Ensure that the transfer of adult workforce education programs does not have adverse consequences for schools' and adult career-technical education programs' joint use of faculty members, facilities and other resources.

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3. Develop short- and long-term funding solutions for the expansion of ABLÉ services.
 - Seek additional ABLÉ funding in the initial implementation period to ensure that expanded services can be supported, and use the “stackable” pilots to evaluate future funding needs and opportunities for cost-savings through greater collaboration between ABLÉ, community colleges and adult career-technical education programs.
 - As a preliminary step, encourage colleges, adult career-technical education programs and other community-based learning settings (e.g., public libraries and community centers) to contract directly for ABLÉ to provide basic skills services.
 - Explore longer term options for the reallocation of funding to better reflect the roles of ABLÉ, adult career-technical education programs and community colleges in helping adults prepare themselves to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.
 4. Secure funding in the state’s FY 2010-2011 biennial budget for a Chancellor’s Workforce Initiative to support implementation of the committee’s recommendations in several areas, including concurrent enrollments, common course development, articulation and transfer, workforce outreach and incentives for collaboration among adult workforce providers.
 5. Secure adequate long-term funding for adult workforce programs and services, and ensure that future allocations and funding reflect the importance of workforce education and training to Ohio’s future economic growth and prosperity and are consistent with the University System of Ohio strategic plan.
 - Ensure that funding and program decisions are research and data driven, and that the adult workforce education system is performance based, rewarding programs and institutions that meet their objectives and contribute to regional solutions and success.
 - Ensure that funding and program decisions include incentives for collaboration among postsecondary providers (including articulation and transfer) and for behaviors/actions that promote efficiency and effectiveness.

TOWARD AN ADULT WORKFORCE SOLUTION

Identifying Next Steps

As the Advisory Committee launched its work in November 2007, one theme emerged consistently: If we are serious about connecting adult learners with economic success, we have to be willing to take a systemic approach to giving adult Ohioans opportunities to continue their education beyond high school and to ensuring that employers have access to customized, flexible and industry-driven skills training.

Recognizing this fact, committee members rejected a narrow mission statement that could have focused them on the task of shifting a few programs and the people who carry them out from one administrative structure to another. Instead, they settled on a broader purpose – to identify ways to strengthen the governance of Ohio’s adult learning system; ensure that its structures, programming and funding are aligned with employers’ workforce needs and learners’ expectations; and improve the performance and productivity of Ohio’s talent development system with instructional programs that capitalize on best practices, state-of-the-art technology and high-quality teaching.

The Committee believes that it has responded fully to the charge it received from Chancellor Fingerhut and State Superintendent Zelman. And for that reason, urges Ohio’s education policy leaders to view its action recommendations as an integrated response to the challenge of improving adult learning opportunities, not as a menu of options from which to pick and choose.

Yet, committee members know that everything cannot happen at once. The state’s ongoing fiscal pressures, along with the complexity of some of the recommended actions, will require phased-in commitments for the implementation of some of the committee’s recommendations. They will determine how much can be accomplished and how soon it can be achieved.

At the same time, committee members do not want to lose the momentum generated by their deliberations over the past eight months. They believe it would be a mistake to put things on hold – to simply wait for the actual transfer of programs that is scheduled to occur in January 2009.

Significant progress can be made right away by beginning to carry out the recommendations advanced in this report. “Proof of concept” pilots that provide a foundation for other elements of the action plan can be launched now – and the focus of these efforts can be on actions that hold the greatest and most sustainable benefits for Ohio’s adult learners.

Toward this end, the committee urges the Chancellor to establish an Implementation Advisory Committee to help carry out the recommendations presented in this report. As a reflection of their commitment and enthusiasm for this action plan, many current committee members have indicated their willingness to serve if an advisory committee is formed to assist in transferring the state’s adult career-technical programs and to create the adult workforce education system envisioned in this report.

So, where should the work begin?

Committee members believe that policymakers and adult learning providers should address seven high-priority actions, which are presented here in no particular order.

- 1** Create new, accessible pathways for adult learners through implementation of the “Stackable Certificates” initiative, as recommended in Action Priority #2.
 - Twelve pilots will be launched in the summer of 2008 – one in each of the Ohio Skills Bank’s 12 regions. Through these pilots, all adult education providers will be required to work together to design the “Stackables” project during the summer months, with implementation scheduled to begin in the fall. All pilots will be evaluated and program changes will be made, as appropriate.

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- 2** Develop concurrent enrollment policies and practices through pilot projects that engage adult career-technical and community college programs.
 - These pilots will provide incentives to expand the transferability of credits and students, explore the modification of existing courses and develop a common set of courses to facilitate credit transfers.
 - In addition, these pilots will “test” ways to transfer appropriate courses/credits from apprenticeship programs to college, beginning with the electrician apprenticeship.
 - At least one of these pilots will include a “proof of concept” program for incarcerated inmates that addresses basic education needs (through ABLE) and initial certificates in a pathway that leads to college credit. Incentives may be offered to support planning during the summer months with implementation anticipated in the fall.
 - 3** Conduct an inventory of student aid and institutional financing “best practices” in Ohio and across the nation.
 - This initiative will begin during the summer of 2008 with consulting assistance from the Ohio Board of Regents and the University System of Ohio campuses. It will be an important next step in the state’s effort to make adult learning programs and services more affordable.
 - 4** Seek funding in the FY 2010-2011 biennial budget for a Chancellor’s Workforce Initiative fund to support the Advisory Committee’s recommendations.
 - An expanding system and implementation activities will focus on concurrent enrollments, common course development, articulation and transfer initiatives, workforce outreach and incentives for collaboration among adult workforce providers.
 - 5** Assist in implementing the Ohio Skills Bank (OSB) initiative, as it relates to adult workforce education and training programs and services.
 - Ensure that the high-priority actions highlighted here are fully coordinated with the OSB.
 - 6** Initiate conversations with the Business Alliance for Higher Education and the Economy (BAHEE) and other representatives of the state’s business and labor communities about ways to (1) raise adult workers’ educational aspirations, as well as their knowledge and understanding of the options available to them; and (2) double the number of postsecondary students engaged in college-level internships, co-ops and apprenticeship programs.
 - Those engaged in this project will work to ensure that these work-based learning experiences are linked to the \$250 million that has been set aside for internships, co-ops and apprenticeships in the state’s economic stimulus package.
 - 7** Begin work on the development of a comprehensive plan for bridging adult workforce education and training data systems.
 - This initiative will begin with a “data audit” to identify the state’s adult workforce education training data needs, and identify the legal constraints and cost of developing and maintaining a fully integrated data system.
 - A comprehensive plan for bridging adult workforce education data needs will be completed by March 2009.

Taken together, these seven high-priority actions are ambitious, yet they are clearly doable. Committee members are confident that the groundwork for carrying out all of the action recommendations advanced in this report can be established during the next year. But the hard work that needs to be undertaken should begin now.

The action recommendations advanced in this report hold great promise for Ohio's adult learners, the providers who serve them, the employer community and the state of Ohio.

For adult learners, these action recommendations will create a seamless, statewide workforce education and training system with a more uniform set of courses and credits that eliminate confusion while enhancing access and transferability. Ohio workers will see more learning opportunities that are connected to their regional economies and the jobs needed to power them. And they will discover new and promising career pathways that lead to certificates and degrees that can be earned at appropriate and convenient locations.

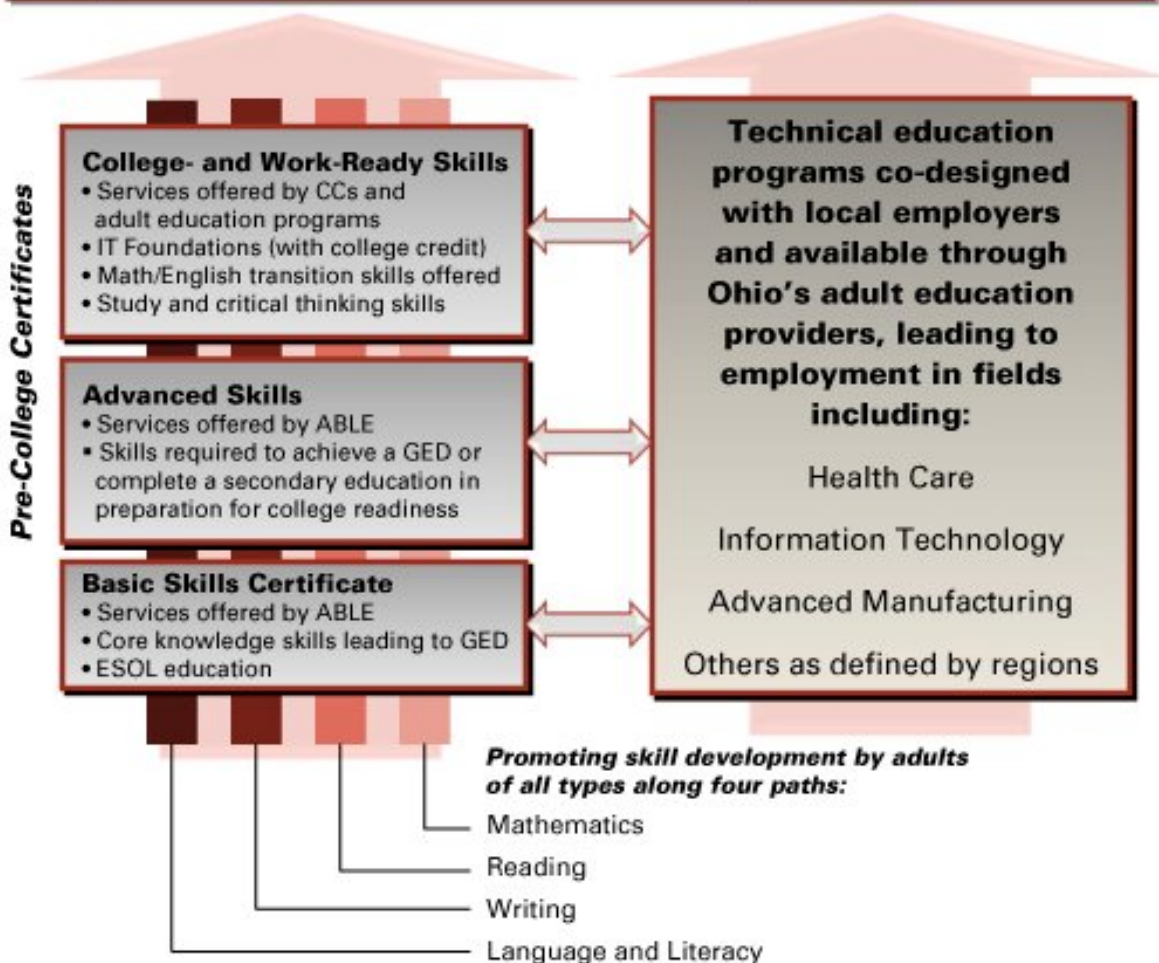
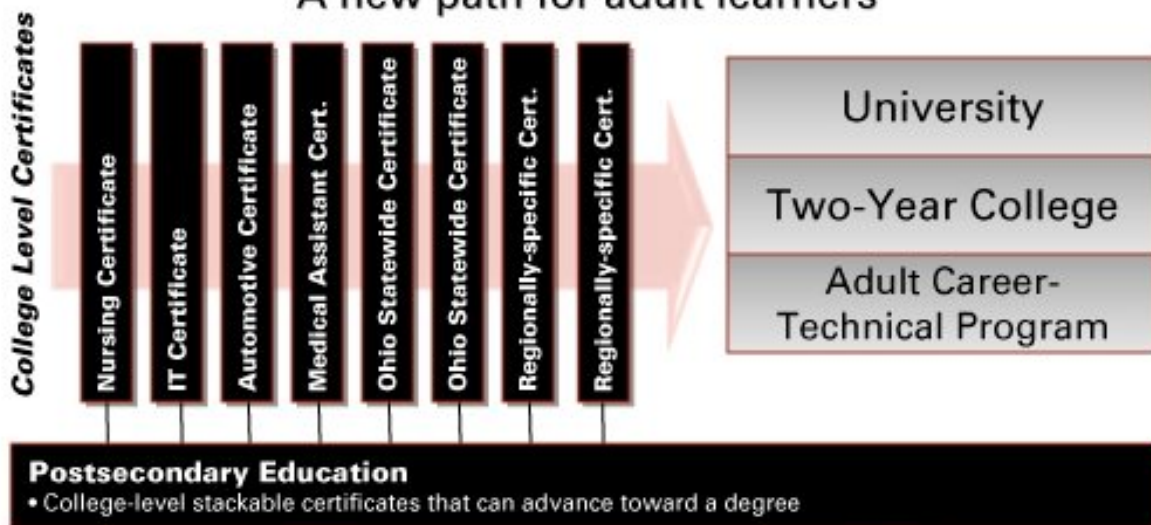
For educators and training professionals, these action recommendations will remove many of the inefficiencies inherent in fractured and disjointed education and training programs. They will create opportunities to build better, higher quality programs – and to target available funding to providers' strengths and employers' needs. And they will plug leaks in workforce education pipelines that have for too long deprived adults of the learning opportunities upon which their economic futures depend.

For employers, these action recommendations will define and strengthen their roles in building the state's adult education system, from determining how to best meet demand to deciding how programs will be funded and held accountable.

For the state and its citizens, these action recommendations will place Ohio at the forefront of adult learning. They will enable Ohio to give adult learners an opportunity to continue their education beyond high school and earn the degrees and industry-recognized credentials that reflect the knowledge and skills needed to get and advance in good jobs that pay family-sustainable wages. And they will allow the state to grow its economy – to make it more competitive in the 21st century global economy by giving employers access to customized, flexible and industry-driven skills training.

Stackable Certificates

A new path for adult learners



COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP LIST

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COMMITTEE CONSULTANT**Donald Van Meter**

President
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SELECTED RESOURCES

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