



Additional briefs include:

Strategies for Improving Academic Achievement and Teacher Effectiveness

Goals

Steps to Increase Accessibility

Promotion of Curricula and Teaching Strategies That Integrate Technology

Professional Development

Technology Type and Costs

Coordination with Other Resources

Integration of Technology with Curricula and Instruction

Innovative Delivery Strategies

Parental Involvement

Accountability Measures

Supporting Resources

Collection of Key Questions to Consider

Collaboration with Adult Literacy Service Providers

Local technology applications and plans should include a description of how the program will be developed, where applicable, in collaboration with adult literacy service providers.

Overview

It is important not to underestimate the need for adult literacy services in your community. On most measures of literacy, U.S. adults—even those with one to three years of college—are at or near the bottom in comparison with 19 other high-income countries (Sum, 2002, p. 19).

Each community that is served by a school district also has services to promote adult literacy. The extent of need for adult literacy services, the type of services most needed, and the providers of those services and their relationship to the schools in the community vary greatly from one community to the next. The degree to which technology is being used to support adults in learning content, skills, and opportunities for work force development also varies greatly. An important consideration for applicants serving high need populations is to understand the extent of need in their communities for increasing adult and family literacy as well as for greater access to technological resources.

Key Questions to Consider

- What are the adult literacy needs in your community and how are they currently being met?
- In what ways might collaboration between your schools, district, and organizations that promote adult literacy around technology use produce increased benefits for each of their constituents?
- What other funds and resources, such as the 21st Century Learning Communities or the Community Technology Centers, can you access to increase your impact?

For more information, contact Keith Nuthall, Project Director, at knuthall@edc.org

Strategies for Addressing Local Technology Applications and Plans

Determining an Approach: Who, What, and How?

This criterion provides the applicant the opportunity to connect serving needs of adult and student learners in the community with the use of technology as a resource to meet those needs. It prompts consideration of ways to get more out of what you are doing now, building upon strengths in each area—adult education, K-12 learning, and technology resources—instead of considering them in isolation. Given the costly investment involved in acquiring technology equipment and skills, issues of access to these resources, and the potential of sharing the lessons learned from effective use of technology as a tool to support learning in both K-12 and adult education, it is useful for the applicant to consider how to capitalize on these connections in their own context. Additional funding for programs that use technology to support adult education, family literacy, acquiring the GED, and language instruction, is available through the Community Technology Centers (see NCLB, Title V, subpart 11, Sec. 5511). Another program, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, also reauthorized in NCLB, might also provide a way to support programming that meets the needs of all learners using technology as a resource (see NCLB, Title IV, Part B).

“The National Literacy Survey estimates that about 90 million adults in the United States may lack the literacy skills needed to succeed in the economy of the future. Adult education and literacy programs provide the literacy skills people need to obtain good jobs, play active roles in the education of their children, and carry out the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.”
(Adult Education and Literacy Home page of the U.S. Department of Education)

Who?

In some cases, the local education agency provides or houses adult education services, while in others, services may be provided by county agencies or nonprofit or community based organizations that have little to no relationship with the school district. Since literacy is a cross cutting issue that affects virtually all aspects of life, and in turn is affected by policies across all domains from education to health to criminal justice, support can come from a number of different agencies and organizations. It is important to learn who provides adult literacy services in your community.

Under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Federal employment, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation programs were required to create an integrated “one-stop” system of workforce investment activities for adults and youths. Entities that carry out activities under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (re-authorized in 1998 as part of the Workforce Investment Act) are mandatory partners in this one-stop delivery system.

(<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/legis.html>) States differ in how they administer the federally funded State Administered Basic Grants Program under the Adult Education Act, but they also oversee distribution of funds for the Even Start Family Literacy Program, both key sources of funding to local entities that provide services.

Where the applicant is in knowing the adult literacy service providers and understanding the full range of current services, the extent of unmet need, and the degree to which technology is used as a tool will determine the next steps to be taken. A key strategy is to involve the adult literacy providers in the district and school technology planning efforts.

What?

Three types of services are provided under the federally supported adult education programs. Adult Basic Education, for learners with skills below the eighth-grade level, Adult Secondary Education, for adults earning a high school diploma or the General Educational Development (GED) certificate, and English as a Second Language (ESL) services. The ESL services are the fastest growing portion of adult education programs. Each of these programs can be offered in a variety of contexts including workplace literacy and family literacy, and technology may or may not be used as a delivery system and/or as a key set of skills to be learned as part of workforce development. Additionally, services that utilize technology can be a key factor in assisting with the learning needs of adults with disabilities. It is clear that the intent of including the criterion that the applicant consider collaborating with adult literacy service providers is to assist a community in devising methods of increasing access to technology resources and in leveraging those resources to serve the learning needs of both students in K-12 and adults.

How?

Collaborations must embody effective elements of involving all partners in increasing their ability to meet the needs of their constituents by working together and in using technology as a tool to support learning. Adult learners benefit from a real world problem based learning approach that has the purpose of generating skills that can be transferred to everyday life. The recent report *Benchmarking Adult Literacy in America* (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/publicat.html>) suggests ten “Tools for Action” to increase literacy in the U.S. that can be the foundation of an effective overall approach. These include promoting:

- Cultures of life-long and life-wide learning;
- Early childhood education and care programs;

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- Measures to improve the quality of education;
- Measures to reduce the inequality in the outcomes of schooling;
- Access to adult education for all citizens;
- Literacy-rich environments at work;
- Workplace literacy programs;
- Literacy-rich environments at home;
- Literacy rich environments in the community; and,
- Access to information and communication technologies.

One of the best sources of rich examples of adult learning programs that have integrated technology is *Captured Wisdom on Adult Literacy* produced by the NC-RTEC and its partner National Center for Adult Literacy (NCAL) at the University of Pennsylvania. Available on the Web (<http://www.ncrtec.org/pd/cw/adultlit.htm>) and on CD-ROM, this resource profiles seven examples that help educators learn of successful practices using video and narration by the instructors in an engaging format. “The Restaurant Problem,” for example, involves students as consultants hired to save a failing restaurant. They use technology to deal with irate customers, schedule work hours, and design new menus. “Creating Family Histories,” for ESL adult learners, is an example of using technology and teaching language skills simultaneously.

Another resource is the information provided about the Community Technology Centers on the USDOE web site (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/CTC/index.html>), which includes a fact sheet, as well as listing and examples of funded projects in 44 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. These examples can give you a flavor of the rich mix of programs, approaches and combinations of technologies including computers, Web-based and television-based approaches. This site links to information about other Community Technology Center projects, such as those funded by the National Science Foundation, CTCNet (<http://www2.ctcnet.org>), and the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development’s Neighborhood Network Centers. While each has a different mission, they all are vehicles to increase access to technology-based resources.

Extended Resources

The National Institute for Literacy

<http://www.nifl.gov>

This Web site has information on literacy-related issues and includes Fact Sheets, publications and many links to other adult literacy information including LINCS (the Literacy Information aNd Communication System), a cooperative electronic network of the National LINCS team at NIFL, four regional partners, representative organizations from all the states and territories, and several major national organizations. LINCS is a one-stop literacy site at <http://nifl.gov/lincs/>.

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

<http://gseweb.harvard.edu/ncsall>

The goal of NCSALL and its partner organizations is to help the field of adult basic education define a comprehensive research agenda, to pursue basic and applied research, to build partnerships between researchers and practitioners, and to disseminate research and best practices to practitioners, policymakers and practitioners. The site includes research, publications, teaching and training materials.

The National Center on Adult Literacy (NCAL)

<http://Literacy.org>

This partner that developed Captured Wisdom: Stories of Integrating Technology into Adult Literacy Instruction with the NC-RTEC has a number of other resources and projects that inform the use of technology for adult literacy.

Bringing Technology, Teachers, and Adult Learners Together

<http://www.tech21.org/about/index.html>

This Web site is a hands-on and virtual research-to-practice dissemination system that is developing state of the art technology environments for adult learning and teaching.

References

North Central Regional Education Laboratory, North Central Regional Technology in Education Consortium, and the National Center on Adult Literacy (2000). *Captured Wisdom: Integrating Technology Into Adult Literacy Instruction*. Retrieved June 12, 2002. Available online at <http://www.ncrtec.org/pd/cw/adultlit.htm>.

Technology Briefs for NCLB Planners can be obtained by visiting <http://www.neirtec.org>.

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