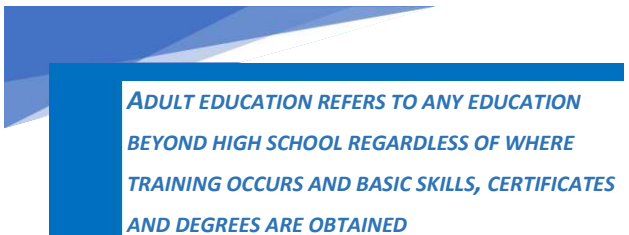


Making Sense of Northeast Ohio's Adult Education Assets

Moving from Programs to System



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BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL REGARDLESS OF WHERE
TRAINING OCCURS AND BASIC SKILLS, CERTIFICATES
AND DEGREES ARE OBTAINED*

Executive Summary

- 1. What is Adult Education?** Adult Education refers to any education beyond high school regardless of where training occurs and basic skills, certificates and degrees are obtained.
- 2. Why is Adult Education so important?** The requirements for a more educated citizenry and skilled workforce are well-known and fully documented identifying the need for a larger and better-trained workforce to fuel the technology economy and bridge the “skills gap.” The overwhelming majority of new jobs require both some postsecondary education or training and basic skills. This highlights the obvious need for high-school students to enroll and complete postsecondary programs, and for the returning workforce to enhance knowledge and skill levels —from basic skills through advanced certificates and degrees.

Nationally, 80% of all job openings in 2024 will require more than a high school diploma. In Ohio currently, approximately 874,499 working age adults (18-64) lack a high school diploma or equivalent (source: ODE). Additionally, 194,545 adults in Ohio are unable to speak English well or at all. (COABE Fact Sheet Ohio). Northeast Ohio has the highest number of adults (18+) in the state without a high school diploma—344,937. Cuyahoga County, including the city of Cleveland and surrounding suburbs, has 97,335 individuals lacking a high school diploma. This is in a state and region with high demand for workers in healthcare, manufacturing, IT, and services sectors.

The educational attainment of students and adults within the region is not keeping pace with the educational requirements for entry-level or higher-skills jobs within business and industry. The resulting imbalance between employment demand and a workforce lacking appropriate levels of education, training and certification results in a broken workforce pipeline.



(Source: Pathways to Prosperity Network, Jobs for the Future: Bridging the Education and Workforce)

Of all the issues facing adult skill obtainment, however, none is more important than **making sure the adult education-system continuum is clear, obtainable, and easy to use!**

Northeast Ohio Adult Education System Pilot: In response, the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio (ESCNEO) conducted a year-long series of information sessions, surveys, interviews, and focus groups to identify the breadth, number, and focus of adult education provider organizations regionally. The goal was to understand more about different organizations' efforts to provide education opportunities for adults across age and skill levels. An asset inventory of providers discovered a complex network of quality provider organizations offering multiple and varied services, coordinated by numerous private and governmental agencies, and funded through awards, grants, and other resources. Organizations contributing to the adult education and workforce continuum include non-profit providers, libraries, K-12 districts, career centers and compacts, colleges and universities, state agencies, and others.

Moving from Programs to a System Approach: Despite the relative wealth of offerings for adults, and best efforts of providers, we recognized the opportunity to better link the diverse programs of a multitude of organizations into a seamless continuum of adult education advancement. The ESC of Northeast Ohio, while not an adult diploma provider itself, partners with local, regional, state, and national agencies that provide such services and has undertaken a leadership role to serve the needs of our regional adult education providers and their constituents. It is agreed that an adult education-to-workforce continuum must be clear, concise and **easily navigable** for the adults being served, with easily defined entrance and exit points, particularly for underserved populations, to prepare themselves for career-related education and training. Coordinating with the various program providers and designing a clear continuous road map (system) that guides adults to move smoothly through the multitudes of opportunities from Aspire/ GED and industry credentialing to college technical degrees is the goal of the Northeast Ohio Adult Education System Pilot.

Growing the System: A regional network of adult education providers that is committed to moving from independent programs to a regional system to support the adult education-to-workforce continuum has been organized and has identified priorities and strategies for action. The pilot continues to expand the asset inventory of adult education providers; has established an Advisory Council to guide the work; initiated a



regional **Adult Education Provider Network**; coordinated and collaborated with state education agencies and the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, among other entities, to support the work. The regional Adult Education Provider Network now is focusing on priorities of information sharing and communication across the network in support of a regional system to support the needs of our citizens engaged in basic education earning GED or high school diplomas, credentials, and degrees that will provide economic advantage and growth for individuals and for our communities.

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