

PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

ABOUT THIS SERIES

The stated purpose of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is “to strengthen the United States workforce development system through innovation in, and alignment and improvement of, employment, training, and education programs in the United States, and to promote individual and national economic growth.” Through this series of briefs on key equity levers in WIOA, World Education, Inc. (WEI) provides analysis of WIOA quantitative data 2016-2019 and recommendations for WIOA reauthorization on five key topics:

- CO-ENROLLMENT
- CO-INVESTMENT
- CAREER PATHWAYS
- PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY
- SYSTEM INTEGRATION

The goal of the series is to inform policy makers and other key stakeholders on WIOA outcomes to date and present options for increasing the efficacy of the WIOA legislation to promote equity.

WIOA QUANTITATIVE REPORTING

To act as an equity investment, WIOA requires disaggregated reporting in order to ascertain who is receiving services and to what impact.

Who Is Being Served?

Target populations are defined in ‘individuals with barriers to employment’¹ and mapped to race/ethnicity and age demographics. Education services for ‘basic skills deficient’ participants cover a range of Education Function Levels.² World Education’s analysis of Program Year (PY) 2016-2018 WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy state data shows increasing levels of service to target populations (see **Figure 1**).

Reporting indicates a gradual increase of the proportion of adult education participants designated as English language learners (see **Figure 2**) and remarkably consistent race/ethnicity participation (see **Figure 3**).

What Outcomes Are They Achieving?

WIOA title II Adult Education services are reaching their intended target, but to what result? WIOA introduced reporting on employment and credential measures and Title II has begun to report those outcomes in PY2017 and PY2018 (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 1: WIOA Title II Participants in Selected Target Groups, PY 2016 - PY 2018

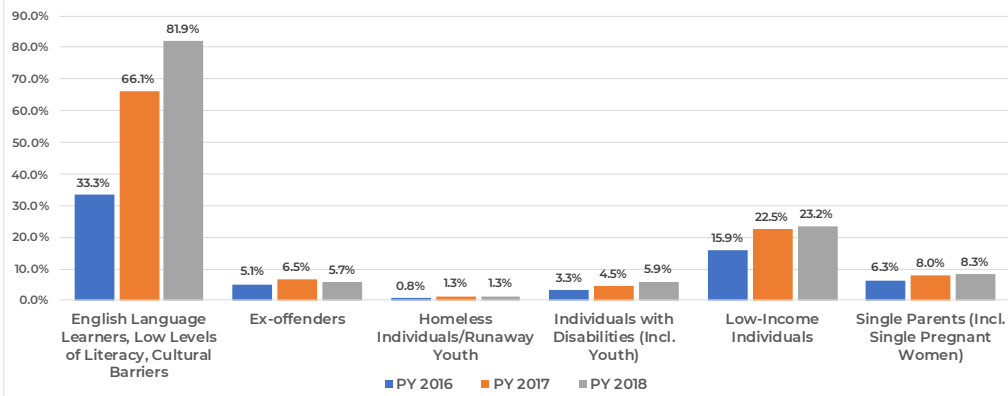


Figure 2: Educational Functioning Level Shares, PY 2015 - PY 2018

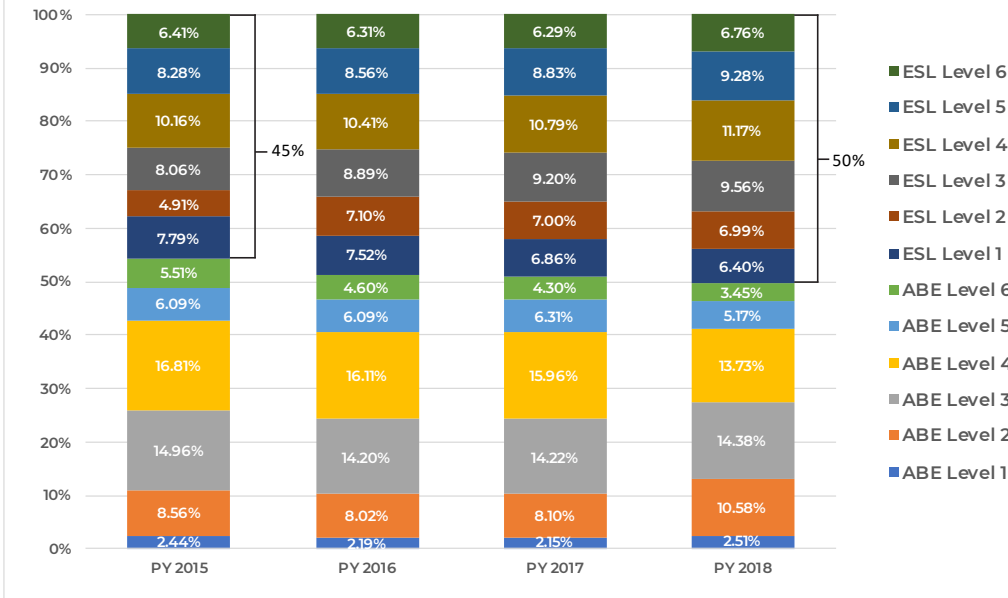


Figure 3: WIOA Title II Participants by Race/Ethnicity

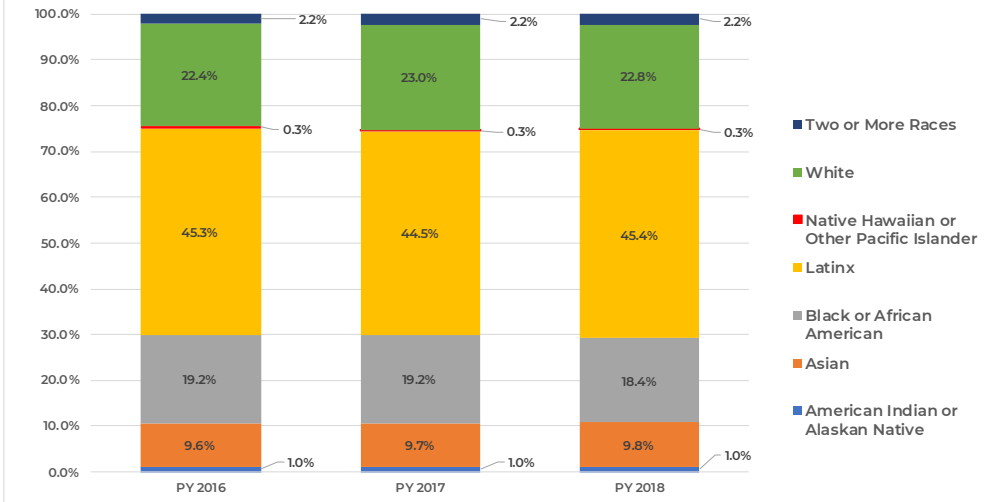
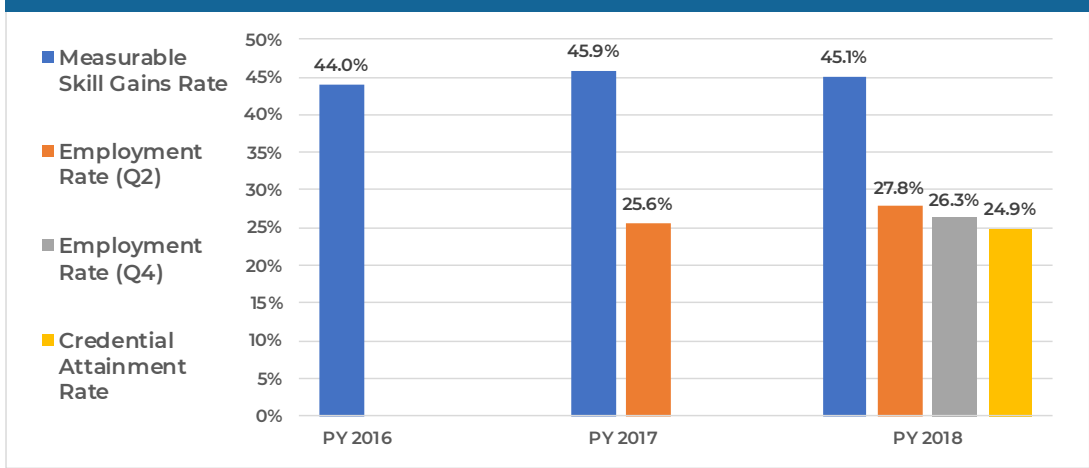
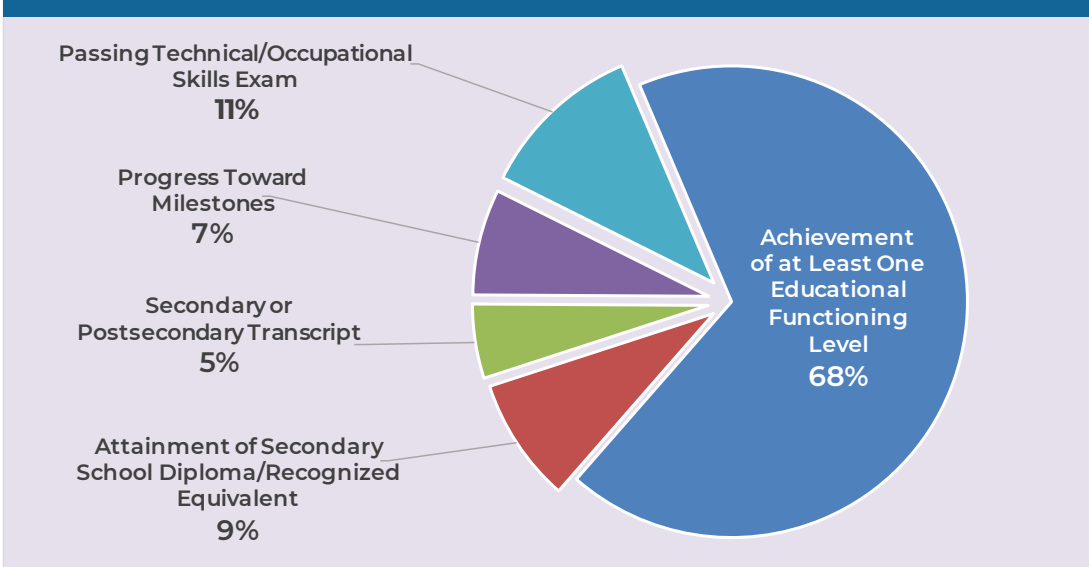


Figure 4: National Outcomes for WIOA Title II – Rate Measures



Adult Education continues to focus on reporting Measurable Skill Gains which are the type of performance measure used in WIOA Title II negotiated target setting. WIOA introduced five Measureable Skill Gain types. However, the U.S. Department of Education only recently allowed performance reporting on all five types beginning PY 21 and then only in limited program models.³ Hopefully, these other MSG types will continue to become a larger piece of the pie as Adult Education participants demonstrate more skill gains through occupational exams and training milestones (see **Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Components of MSG for Participants in IET, PY 2018



RECOMMENDATIONS

WIOA Title II will continue to use Measurable Skill Gain as its primary performance metric, but the system needs more and better ways to assess skill gains.

- OCTAE should implement demonstration pilots for AEFLA providers modeled after the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Innovative Assessment and Accountability (IADA) Demonstration Pilots. IADA allows participating states to pilot innovative new systems of assessments in a subset of school districts before scaling statewide. States may apply on their own or as part of a consortium of up to four states. Such demonstrations could be used to encourage experimentation in developing assessment models related to:
 - o Competency-based education; or
 - o Placement practices that do not engage standardized testing, including self-placement.

All WIOA Titles need better ways to measure engagement with employer partners.

- Reauthorization should include a shift from the current emphasis on measuring employer engagement (e.g., market penetration, repeat business) to employer investment, in which the focus is on counting employer involvement in education and training that includes substantive investments by the employer in its workforce. This could include activities such as on-the-job training, internships, incumbent worker training, and other forms of workplace education, as long as they involve improvements to the educational skills of workers.

For WIOA to reach its vision of equitable outcomes for individuals confronting barriers and person-centered service models, reauthorization must reconceive the Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) to incentivize service to more individuals confronting barriers. WIOA Section 116 requires the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor to use a Statistical Adjustment Model as part of their negotiation with states for setting goals for the WIOA measures. Under law, the SAM must account for differences among states in the characteristics of the participants being served, as well as the labor market conditions in which those participants are being served.

- Reconsider SAM approaches with a view toward development of models that permit more robust adjustments for changes in participant characteristics, so that the models are doing more to adjust for these differences among local program operators.
- Require submission of individual participant record data by WIOA Title II and IV state administering agencies, including individual characteristics and outcomes. Use these data to support SAM development. Development of a single national model for each common measure should include data for each of the core programs, at a minimum.
- Amend WIOA to reinstate performance incentive funding for states and local workforce development boards. An accountability policy that only includes sanctions for failure is not likely to motivate local program operators to excel. WIA performance outcomes received significant local attention due in large part to the fact that local boards stood to garner additional funds for exceeding their local goals.
- Include provisions in WIOA incentive funding to reward states and local operators for reducing racial and other equity gaps in outcomes.

Confronting Barriers

Barriers To Success

WIOA seeks to direct services to those most in need in local communities through disaggregated reporting to a category of people deemed “individuals with barriers to employment.” This prioritizing of public resources is a laudable goal and the list of barriers is comprehensive and derived from data demonstrating the relationship between a barrier and unemployment rates. However, the characterization of the individual as containing the barrier is counterproductive in designing the very workforce development interventions needed to address those barriers, only some of which are temporary and situational, like homelessness. Further, this deficit-based framing disrespects those we serve and further taints the WIOA system and WIOA system participants as being individuals in need of fixing, with the “fix” frequently being placement in a low-quality job and an ‘exit’ from services.

Recognize Assets

WIOA reauthorization needs to address this deficit-based language while maintaining critical reporting on who receives what services and to what impact. One way to do this would be to reframe ‘individuals with barriers’ to ‘individuals CONFRONTING barriers’ and to clearly articulate the public workforce system’s role to support that confrontation with resources needed to overcome barriers. Reauthorization should also involve a stakeholder consultative process, much like that included in Strengthening Career & Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) in which people confronting the barriers detailed in WIOA priority populations should be involved in designing the services for their communities. Adults in our communities have skills and experiences that can be a powerful starting point for building toward their career aspirations. WIOA needs to leverage job seekers’ assets in order to design more effective solutions.

¹ WIOA uses ‘individuals with barriers to employment’ to designate priority populations. See discussion on Confronting Barriers (above) for a recommendation on asset-based language in reauthorized legislation.

² WIOA Title II’s National Reporting System requires sorting all participants into one of 12 Education Function Level categories: Adult Basic Education 1-6; English as a Second Language 1-6.

³ Resources for Reporting Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) Types 3, 4, and 5. Retrieved from <https://nrsweb.org/policy-data/Resources-for-Reporting>.

⁴ Retrieved from <https://aurora-institute.org/blog/the-u-s-department-of-education-is-inviting-new-applications-for-round-3-of-the-innovative-assessment-demonstration-authority-iada>

Questions or Comments? Please contact Judy Mortrude, Senior Technical Advisor at World Education's National College Transition Network: judy_mortrude@worlded.org.