

COABE JOURNAL

THE RESOURCE FOR ADULT EDUCATION

WORKFORCE EDITION

PART 1: CELEBRATING INNOVATIONS | Spring 2020, Article No. 4 | Published by the Coalition on Adult Basic Education

Local, State and National Perspectives About Integrated Education and Training (IET)

Insights from OCTAE's
IET Symposium, January 2020

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ABSTRACT

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education convened the Integrated Education and Training (IET) Symposium on January 15, 2020, to obtain information about the progress with and challenges in implementing IET models in adult education programs. Forty-five representatives from adult education state offices, adult education local providers, national adult education technical assistance organizations, research organizations, advocacy groups, and federal program offices participated in the symposium. This article synthesizes information provided during the day's activities. Discussed are key elements of well-implemented IET models, factors that should be considered in preparing adult learners to succeed in IET services, and the types of partnerships that are critical to designing and carrying out IET services. The article also provides examples of the ways in which adult education state offices support adult education providers in their IET activities, and suggests state and federal actions that could help expand IET services.

Keywords: integrated education and training, IET, adult education, occupational training, workforce development, U.S. Department of Education, symposium



INTRODUCTION

Integrated education and training (IET) services are opportunities for adult education learners to develop their foundational skills while participating in workforce training that leads to educational credentials and jobs in a career pathway. This approach can shorten the amount of time learners spend in education and training and facilitate their development of a career pathway. Authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), IET has specified components and requires that “adult education and literacy activities be delivered concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 2014; please see Section 203(11) of WIOA and 34 C.F.R. § 463.35)” IET is further described in the regulations at 34 C.F.R. §§ 463.36-463.38 (OCTAE, 2019). IET services also are to support the local and state workforce development boards as required under WIOA.

Adult education providers' implementation of IET is expanding as adult learners seek services that can efficiently move them into high-demand jobs in a career pathway. Since program year 2016, the number of adult education learners enrolled in Title II-supported IET services has more than doubled, with 51,925 learners participating in an IET during program year 2018 (OCTAE, 2020). Positive results on adult education learn-



ers' educational outcomes from evaluations of models such as the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program and variants of I-BEST in the Accelerating Opportunity initiative contribute to interest in IET as a promising approach (Anderson et al., 2017; Glosser et al., 2018).

As part of its activities to support adult education state and local implementation of IET, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) convened the Integrated Education and Training (IET) Symposium on January 15, 2020, at OCTAE's offices in Washington, DC. Forty-five representatives of adult education state offices, adult education local providers, national adult education technical assistance organizations, research organizations, ad-

vocacy groups, and federal program offices participated in the symposium (see Appendix for list of participants). The symposium was designed to: (1) provide information about the progress with and challenges in implementing IET models; (2) create awareness of the current and future conditions affecting the U.S. workforce and its development; (3) explore emerging approaches and potential promising practices in adult education and literacy; and (4) provide opportunity for collaboration and networking among participants.

OCTAE's leadership opened the symposium and provided context for the day's discussions. The Director of OCTAE's Division of Adult Education and Literacy noted how adult education state offices and local programs are eager to learn about strategies for carrying out the multiple components of IET services, particularly concerning partnerships to support occupational training and job attainment. OCTAE's Assistant Secretary confirmed the administration's support for IET and its desire to expand the number of IET programs as an efficient approach to meet the education and training needs of adults that can help them advance along pathways with progressively higher-paying jobs as well as to address employers' needs for skilled workers.

During the symposium, participants made observations about processes for designing, developing, and implementing IET services based on their experiences as adult education providers, technical assistance providers, and researchers. They posed questions about what is needed for IET models to be successful from state and local perspectives and offered examples of processes and approaches for implementing IET. Participants also considered the implications of technological change and evolving forms of work for existing IET models. During the morning following the symposium, I summarized the key points discussed during the symposium using the "Framework for Implementing IET in Adult Education" that I developed based on participants' comments and related research. After this presentation, symposium participants met and provided feedback on an IET technical assistance initiative that OCTAE is supporting.

This article synthesizes information symposium participants provided during the day's activities based on analyses of the symposium's transcript and my research in this area, and includes the framework I presented at the symposium. Discussed in the article are the key elements of well-implemented IET models. Factors that should be considered in preparing adult education learners to succeed in IET services are addressed, as well as the types of partnerships that are critical to designing and carrying out IET services. The article also provides examples of the ways in which

adult education state offices support adult education providers in their IET activities, and it suggests additional state and federal actions that could help expand IET services.



Vision of Well-Functioning IET Services

IET models can be challenging to implement given that adult education activities are to be delivered concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training. Symposium participants identified challenges associated with the development of IET services and discussed the types of staff, program activities, and services needed for a well-functioning IET implementation. Below is the conceptual framework (Figure 1) that was presented at the end of the symposium. Such a framework can be useful in visualizing how IET services are implemented and relate to each other in adult education programs.

This framework specifies the components of an adult education program identified under previous work (Alamprese, 2003). The components were customized to IET based on symposium participants' observations about the design and implementation processes needed to support promising IET services.

As shown in the framework, partnerships between adult education programs and postsecondary education institutions, occupational training providers, workforce agencies, supportive service agencies, and employers can be instrumental to adult education programs' delivery of IET services. Workforce and other agencies serving low-skilled, underemployed, or unemployed adults can be sources of clients for IET services, and workforce agencies can provide financial support for technical training. Postsecondary education and occupational training providers can supply staff with the necessary technical skills and credentials for designing and delivering the career and technical education (CTE) training component of an IET program. Human service agencies can provide sup-

portive services such as childcare and transportation to help learners participate in IET programs, and the American Job Centers (AJCs) can assist IET learners in securing employment. Employers can play varied roles in IET services, such as assisting in the development of technical training, providing financial support for training, and hiring adult education learners who complete an IET program.

Because of the complexity of IET models, adult education programs should undertake a planning process before designing IET services. This process involves gathering information about high-demand local labor markets, employers, CTE training providers, and other partners needed to support IET services; identifying the skill levels and other characteristics of adult education learners who could benefit from these IET services; specifying the types of data that will need to be collected to guide services and report outcomes, and sources for these data; and identifying sources of financial support for the technical training. Having a well-articulated plan can facilitate adult education programs in moving forward in delivering the components of IET services.

IET services involve recruiting adult education learners who are a good match for the types of CTE training that the adult education program offers as part of its IET model; administering pre-assessments to determine learners' baseline skill levels and whether their skills meet the level required for the occupational training component; delivering basic skills instruction that is given concurrently with workforce preparation activities and is contextualized to the occupation that is the focus of the IET; including job readiness skills so that learners understand the pathway for the occupation they are training for and the types of further education that they will need to move forward in that pathway; and providing job search activities to enable learners to obtain employment upon completing the IET program. When learners' concurrent education and training activities are almost completed, the adult education program administers a basic skills post-assessment to measure their growth. Learners who are also preparing to earn a secondary credential would complete the testing requirements for that credential, and learners involved in occupational training that leads to a state or national certificate would prepare for those examinations.

Throughout the delivery of the education and workforce activities, adult education staff will need to monitor learners' engagement, academic performance, and other aspects of their progress toward completion. Of particular importance are learners' access to supportive services and financial aid

so that they have sufficient resources to complete their training. With the exception of the basic skills assessments, the implementation of most IET activities will likely require an adult education program to form partnerships with other providers and employers to have a well-functioning IET model that enables learners to achieve their outcome. As shown in the framework for implementing IET in adult education, the outcomes range from learners' development of their basic skills to their placement in a job, which ideally will lead to progressive jobs in a career pathway.

Considerations in Preparing Learners for IET Services

In implementing IET services, adult education providers should take some important steps in identifying learners for whom the services are a good “match.” Symposium participants reflected on three considerations that adult education staff should take into account in selecting and orienting learners who enroll in IET services.



Adult education providers point to the following three strategies that help ensure a successful match between adult education learners and their IET services. The strategies are: (1) providing career awareness activities to check that learners are aware of their skills, abilities, and interests and how these match the in-demand jobs that interest them; (2) exposing learners to the physical, cognitive, and psychosocial demands of the jobs that interest them so they understand the daily routines of these jobs and will know what to expect if they are hired; and (3) providing information about the outcomes from the IET services, such as a certificate, and the types of near-term jobs that this credential will enable learners to obtain. State adult education offices are supporting local providers' use of these strategies by requiring learners' completion of career pathway plans (e.g., Kentucky) or supporting the development of Career and College Awareness Courses that include activities related to the three strategies (e.g., Oregon).

Another type of “match” to consider is the extent to which learners' skill strengths align with the skills required for the industry sectors or jobs that interest them. Learners should be aware of the skill demands of jobs along their pathway and whether they will need to develop stronger skills to

advance in jobs along their pathway. A third consideration is providing learners with a clear vision of a long-term pathway so that they understand the types of jobs along the pathway, the educational requirements for those jobs, and the local wage rates. States' development of career pathway maps that specify this information can facilitate local providers' work in helping adult education learners select a pathway as part of planning their future.

Role of Partnerships in IET Services

Given the critical role of partnerships in IET services, symposium participants reinforced the need for adult education providers to develop approaches for planning and initiating partnerships with public and private entities in their communities and for monitoring the progress of the partnerships to ensure that they remain strong. Adult education programs' partners will vary depending on the type of organization that is the administrative base for a program; the history of the program's working relationship with potential partners; and the culture of collaboration among education, work-force development, and employers.

The administrative base for an adult education program is particularly important in planning an IET model. For example, adult education programs located in community colleges will likely have easier access to developing the training component of IET compared with adult education programs located in community-based organizations that may not have existing relationships with occupational training entities. Adult education programs without prior relationships with training entities will need to determine the benefit the potential partner will get by working with adult education, and they will need to develop a strategy for approaching that partner. The aim is to identify the circumstances when the partnership can be mutually beneficial, such as an adult education provider in a community-based organization providing training candidates for the local community college during times when college enrollment in CTE programs is low.



The prior working relationship between an adult education program, or its administrative organization, and a potential partner, such as the local workforce, can also affect the development of IET services. Adult education staff will need to gather background information about their organization's prior relationships with potential partners and the extent to which they were successful. The adult education provider should use this information to determine how to approach the potential partner. For example, adult education providers in organizations that have had successful relationships with employers may be able to leverage the organizational partnership by accessing an employer through staff who previously worked with the employer.

The culture of collaboration within a community can be difficult to assess but is an important factor that affects partnership development. Adult education providers can obtain a sense of the culture by examining the history of partnerships among key education, training, workforce, and private sector employers to assess which potential partners are more likely to be receptive to working with adult education in exploring the development of IET services.

State and Federal Activities to Support Implementation of IET Services

Adult education state offices can play a critical role in providing state guidance to facilitate implementation of IET services, offering funding incentives, collaborating with state agency partners to facilitate local interagency partnerships, and sponsoring professional development to prepare adult education providers to deliver IET services. For example, Indiana's adult education office has prepared guidance for adult education providers in implementing IET services and has delivered professional development to support adult education providers in their IET work. Washington State's adult education staff regularly meet with local agencies across the state to support adult education providers' efforts in developing IET services. The adult education management staff in the District of Columbia collaborated with the local workforce board to run a competition to fund local community-based organizations to develop IET services. Wisconsin's state adult education office is considering providing incentives for establishing IET services during the grants competition for adult basic education providers.

The U.S. Departments of Education and Labor can be instrumental in encouraging and supporting interagency partnerships at the state and local levels by providing technical assistance in implementing IET, and disseminating information about promising IET models and innovations in the design and delivery of IET. OCTAE's new technical assistance contract to support adult education providers' development of IET services is an example of one effort to expand IET models.

CONCLUSION

The IET symposium addressed a range of topics concerning adult education providers' development, implementation, and expansion of IET services. The discussion provided valuable information and suggestions about activities and assistance that can support successful IET services. The symposium participants made the following key points: Partnerships play a critical role in all phases of IET service development and delivery, and state and federal agencies support would help adult education providers' efforts in this area. Adult education providers can facilitate learners' success by helping them develop their college and career knowledge and assisting them in determining whether enrollment in IET services is a good match for their skills, interests, and abilities. Adult education providers' work with public and private sector employers can be facilitated through coordinated efforts with training and postsecondary education partners. Adult education providers are central to the expansion of IET services and will need a range of supports to be successful.



Judith A. Alamprese, a Principal Scientist at Abt Associates, has directed research, evaluation, and technical assistance projects in education and workforce development for more than four decades. Her work includes leading random assignment and quasi-experimental evaluations of innovative practices in education and workforce development to designing state-systemic change initiatives in career pathways. Ms. Alamprese has published and presented papers in a number of venues on topics including reading instruction for low-skilled adults, the role of interagency coordination in career pathways, and family literacy. She has served on two adult literacy committees for the National Academies' Board on Testing and Assessment.

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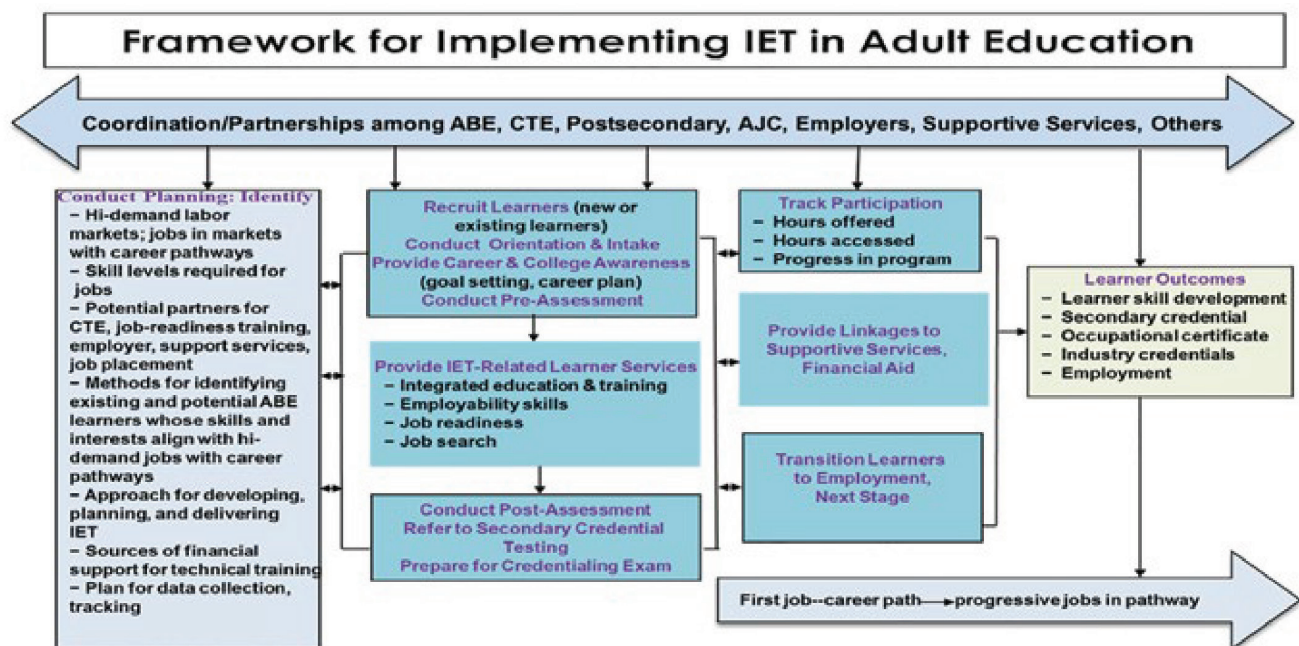
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FIGURE 1.



APPENDIX



Participant List

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