

THE WIOA MANUAL

Implementing WIOA in Adult Education



Essential Education
Revolutionizing Adult Learning

MICHAEL ORMSBY
DAN GRIFFITH

THE WIOA MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) is to better align the workforce system with education and economic development in an effort to create a collective response to economic and labor market challenges on the national, state, and local levels. WIOA is designed to increase the attainment of recognized credentials, employment, retention, and earnings of participants.

What does WIOA mean to adult ed? Essentially, WIOA is saying it is not enough to just educate adults to earn a HSE credential or to read, write, and speak English. The WIOA mandate is to give individuals the core academic, workforce, and digital literacy skills they need to not only get a job, but keep it. It is about educating the whole student. The challenge for adult ed programs is to find ways to integrate core academic skills with critical employability and life skills. The goal is to find ways to educate the whole learner so that adult learners leave the educational system not only with the credentials they need to enter the workforce or a career pathway, but the foundational skills that will enable them to create change in their lives.

workforce innovation & opportunity act: *strengthening and improving our **nation's public workforce** system.*

WHAT IS WIOA AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT ADULT EDUCATION?

Adults enter adult ed to make a change in their lives. The goal of an adult learner might be to learn English, to acquire the basic skills to get a Workforce Readiness Credential, to earn an HSE diploma, to enter into a career program, or a combination of any of these goals. The Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act was created to both accelerate and improve the way adults move toward these goals, including obtaining employment and post-secondary education. New tracking protocols designed to identify what is and is not helping learners achieve these goals are a core part of WIOA.

A NEW OUTLOOK FOR ADULT EDUCATION

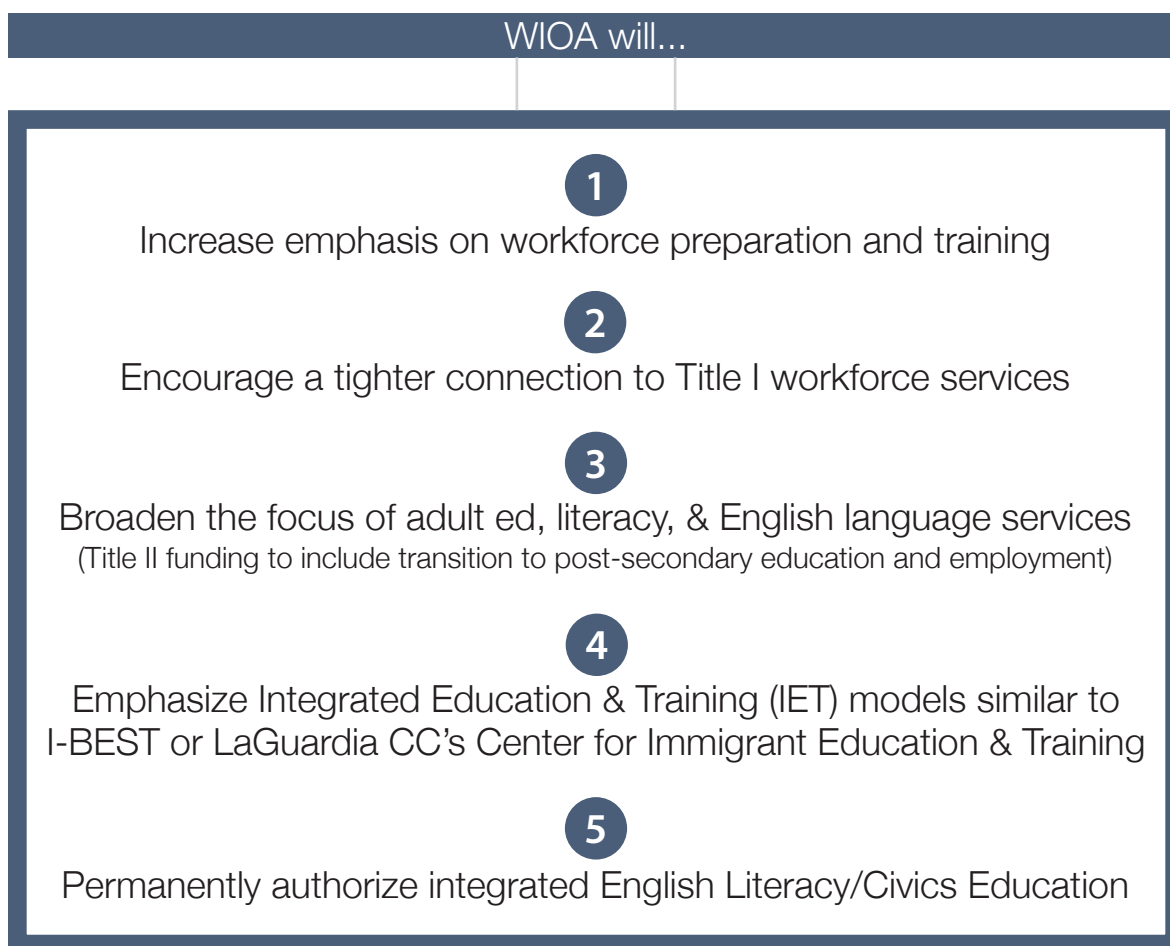
In a nutshell, WIOA is about getting people jobs. WIOA is putting more emphasis on including education services and content that prepares people to be workforce ready. Career pathway programs are encouraged to include partnerships with academic programs and to integrate academic skills directly into the career training. Academic programs are encouraged to include more workforce readiness education, critical thinking, and digital literacy education as part of their basic skills programs.



Preparing
"people
to be
workforce
ready."

A NEW OUTLOOK FOR ADULT EDUCATION (cont.)

There are five basic changes that affect adult ed programs.



Essentially what the WIOA legislation will do is integrate many of the diverse programs in adult ed. Every aspect of adult ed programs will be assessed and evaluated on how they contribute to moving a person closer to getting a job. Academic ESL, ABE, and HSE programs will be encouraged to integrate career training and instruction into their current curriculum and to infuse and contextualize instruction with real-life job situations. WIOA is saying... don't teach or invest in elements that don't move a person closer to obtaining a better job or career. While WIOA centers on low income and disadvantaged people, the principles hold true in all the ways that adult education interfaces with people who want to improve their work lives.

A GUIDED PATHWAY

In *Redesigning America's Community Colleges*,¹ Thomas Bailey suggests that adult ed programs should shift to a more cohesive model that follows and supports the individual throughout the entire education process. Bailey describes the current adult ed model as a cafeteria-style, self-service model. As a result, students are often confused by a plethora of isolated programs that do not lead to further education and employment outcomes. The 40% completion rate in adult ed programs attests to the difficulty adult learners have in navigating a successful path to their education and career goals. Bailey suggests that a guided pathway process is the way for the individual to move from where they are to where they want to be in a seamless and purposeful process.

Bailey argues that to improve outcomes, colleges need to move away from the prevailing cafeteria-style model. Instead, he argues, they need to engage faculty and student services professionals in creating more clearly structured, educationally coherent program pathways that lead to students' end goals. He advocates for rethinking instruction and student support services in ways that facilitate students' learning and success as they progress along these paths.



This approach
conceptualizes
each course
along a
coherent path..

Rather than conceptualizing each individual course as a stand-alone experience, as the cafeteria college does, the guided pathways approach conceptualizes each course as a step along a coherent path. Instruction should therefore focus on building the skills, concepts, and habits of mind necessary for success in subsequent courses. The adult ed process is essentially a continuum of educational services that move students to their goals as quickly and efficiently as possible. This approach is mirrored in WIOA with its more rigorous monitoring systems and emphasis on career pathways. Additionally, the focus in WIOA on moving individuals to jobs and careers creates an overlay on adult ed that guides the individual through multiple programs.

"Research from several domains suggests that colleges can improve student learning by mapping out programs using learning outcomes that are aligned with student goals beyond just program completion." - Thomas R. Bailey

A PATHWAY OF MEASURED SKILL ACQUISITION AND ATTAINMENT

Inherent in the WIOA guided pathway approach to adult ed is a process to accurately measure, track, and create a cohesive learning path for each student. All education programs need an underpinning of core skills through which students move to attain their goals.

Adult educators often question how it is possible to identify the specific skills a student needs to meet their educational goal, and then to track the student's progress in acquiring those skills. A process view of adult ed requires a way to both teach and measure competency in the core skills each student needs to accomplish their goals in the most direct manner.

To accomplish this, educators need a core assessment and instructional process that creates a customized learning path for every student and then tracks the student's progression through the learning path to the very end. WIOA demands an educational process that takes the student from his or her individual and unique starting point to his or her ending point, the diplomas, credentials, and skills needed to obtain a desired job, career, or advancement.



WIOA demands
an educational
process with
customized
learning paths.

A PATHWAY OF MEASURED SKILL ACQUISITION AND ATTAINMENT (cont.)

To move to a guided pathway and holistic education model, adult educators are faced with challenges. Adult ed programs will need professional development, redesigned curricula, and better tracking systems to assess students and prescribe competency-based learning for each student's journey. In anticipation of the shifting needs of adult educators under WIOA, Essential Education has created a core adaptive learning platform that allows the educator to not only track the student's progress through multiple programs, but to integrate three critical academic and workforce readiness skills into a cohesive whole for the learner.

ESSENTIAL EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

Essential Education is the only competency-based learning program for adult ed. It is built on an exhaustive database of core skills needed for adult learners to achieve their goals, whether those goals are to move from an ESL program to HSE prep, to pass a HSE test, or to bridge from the HSE credential to a career and technical education program. This database is aligned to all primary adult ed assessments: TABE, CASAS, WorkKeys, HiSET, GED, and TASC. At a glance, the adult ed instructor can see exactly what skills the student has or has not mastered to complete his or her educational goal.

essential education: *an **adaptive learning platform** that allows educators to **track and integrate** academic and workforce readiness skills that adult learners need to **achieve their goals**.*

ESSENTIAL EDUCATION SOLUTIONS (cont.)

Most important, this all happens automatically. The student moves seamlessly through instruction in any program because Essential Education's courses are all connected to same skill-based database. In other words, Essential Education's adaptive skill-based system implements a WIOA-ready guided pathway approach that gives adult educators not only the core content they need to move their students to their goals quickly, but the data to know how they can best adjust their instruction to the needs of each student. The result is that students stay connected and engaged because their education is both purposeful and relevant to their goals. Instead of feeling lost and disconnected from their educational goals, they see how their day-to-day efforts are moving them closer and closer to achieving their goals.



• Complies with WIOA Guidelines!

WIOA INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

In addition to creating a pathways approach to the learning process, WIOA also mandates changes to the way instructional materials are designed. To help move the student smoothly through a guided and more purposeful educational process, teachers need instructional materials that do four things.

1. Individualize Learning

First, because every student is different, instructors need better ways to create differentiated learning paths for each student. Teachers need these paths to be self-generating and directed because they do not have the time or the tools to assess and map each student's academic needs.

Additionally, the adult ed teacher needs a way to track these personalized learning plans through multiple programs and levels. To teach effectively, the HSE prep teacher needs to know what the student mastered in ABE and ESL classes and what skills they need to work on to pass an HSE test. Correspondingly, the career pathway instructor needs to know what academic skills the student still needs to master to be successful in their CTE program. To accelerate student movement and reduce drop- and stop-out rates, the adult education teacher needs not only more actionable data about students, but intelligent learning tools that will automatically adapt instruction to what will accelerate students' progress.

Essential Education Solutions

Essential Ed's adaptive learning software assesses the student's mastery of over 2,000 skills and then plots a customized learning path for each student. While this is done behind the scenes, it also allows the teacher to make adjustments and special assignments on a student and class level. The result is that each student receives a flexible and predictive learning path that both accelerates learning and at the same time reduces student frustration by having to study material they have already mastered.

Adult ed teachers can see real-time actionable reports to guide them in designing their day-to-day instruction. They have the tools to do effective one-on-one tutoring with individuals and small groups, or whole class lessons designed to meet the academic needs of all their students. For the teacher without enough time to plot out differentiated learning paths for each student, Essential Education will guide each student on an optimal path automatically.

2. Choreograph Teaching

Just knowing what skills the student needs to learn is not enough. Adult ed instructors need tools that allow them to integrate all of their teaching materials into a holistic learning experience for the student. The challenge is how to choreograph many books and software programs to best educate the student.

Essential Education Solutions

Again, this is where Essential Education's massive skill database and diagnostic center takes charge. At a glance, the teacher can view a Skill Mastery report to determine what skills the student has mastered and still needs to work on. From there, the teacher can assign the best resource for the student. Essential Education's diagnostic center becomes the core of all instruction and allows teachers to integrate their materials into a holistic learning experience for every student.

3. Educate the Whole Learner

WIOA also necessitates instructional materials that combine academic and workforce skills seamlessly in a single learning pathway experience for the learner. The cafeteria model in adult education has been perpetuated by the available instructional materials. Each program uses different materials, and students experience huge overlaps and redundancies, as well a disconnect from their educational purpose.

A guided pathway WIOA approach requires instructional content that blends into a cohesive and responsive whole for the student. The student should not feel that they need to restart their education as they move through progressive programs and materials.

Essential Education Solutions

Essential Education solves this challenge by blending four critical skill areas into a cohesive learning experience for the adult learner. On a single educational platform, the learner can build academic skills, while also learning computer literacy, critical thinking, and workforce readiness skills. Just as important, the skills are taught in the context of situations that connect to the real-life of the adult learner. All this is possible because of the massive skill database that connects all Essential Education materials and the precision assessment diagnostic tools that create the adaptive learning paths for the student.



4. Motivate the Learner

WIOA-ready materials must motivate learners to stay engaged with their learning and their pathway. Educational materials should include core elements in the learning process that motivate and empower the student. While many people come to adult education with goals, some clearly defined, others somewhat vague, all learners are there to improve the quality of their lives through education. In shifting between multiple programs and levels, the understanding of how students' efforts are contributing to the achievement of their goals gets lost. How do students' daily efforts produce actual gains in their knowledge and skills that will pay off in achieving their goals?

Essential Education Solutions

Adult learners are often not self-directed and self-motivated. Learning can be a challenge for them because of past classroom experiences. Essential Education solves this problem by making the student a direct participant in the learning progress. Each student is given a personal HomeRoom that provides vital information on his or her progress and performance. Students always know where they are on their learning curve and what they need to do next. Success is the most powerful of all motivators. The Essential Education student sees exactly how daily effort is contributing to reaching an educational goal.



Adult learners
are often not
self-motivated.
They need
educational
materials that
include core
elements in the
learning process
that motivate
and empower.

THREE PILLARS FOR A STRONG WORKFORCE

Employers today are seeking a new breed of employee. They want workers who can think and make decisions quickly. They want workers who can evaluate a large quantity of information and make the right call. They want employees at every level who can notice opportunities for improvement and have the skills and confidence to articulate them to supervisors. From an entry-level employee in the proverbial “mail room” to someone hired with a specific credential for a specific piece of machinery, employers need and expect each employee to bring solid skills to the workplace. Additionally, employers need workers who can cooperate with others, behave professionally and responsibly, and help provide a safe and respectful work environment. While that may sound like high demands on individuals and the programs that educate them, WIOA-ready instructional materials give both the employee and the educator an integrated and contextualized solution that blends these skills into a comprehensive whole.

All adult ed instructional programs, whether they are for English Language Learners, Adult Basic Education skills, HSE prep, or Developmental Ed for entry into CTE or Career Pathway programs are encouraged by WIOA funding requirements to include ALL of the skills an individual needs to be successful in the workplace.



Employers
want people
who can
articulate with
confidence.

Pillar One

Academic and Critical Thinking Skills

The core of all adult ed is a solid foundation of math, reading, and writing. These core skills allow employees to understand and evaluate key information and to adapt to new circumstances and learn new skills independently. A solid foundation of these skills lets learners move quickly through their prep programs and become successful in their career pathways instruction. Academics are the foundations on which everything else is built.

WIOA encourages adult ed programs to find ways to contextualize core academic instruction with situations from career clusters and pathways. The goal is to connect academics to real-life and meaningful situations that not only make the instruction more interesting to adult learners, but also help guide them in making intelligent decisions about career planning.

Research indicates that individuals learn best when skills or knowledge are directly relevant to real work. Contextualized instruction embeds traditional academic content (e.g. reading, writing, mathematics) within the content that is meaningful to learners' daily lives or interests. Information is usually related to general workplace skills or a specific field or trade. The most successful examples are adult literacy courses that teach reading, writing, or math within the context of industry sectors that open doors to employment for the learner.

Essential Education Solutions

Essential Education's print and online content

integrates concepts from occupational areas, industries, and sectors with basic skills education. For example, a math lesson will teach the skills in the context of how they are used in different careers and situations. A reading or social studies lesson will use situations that an adult learner goes through in making choices about a career path. The result is that students become deeply engaged in their learning. They learn faster and retain more.

Pillar Two

Digital Literacy Skills

Employers demand that applicants demonstrate technology skills to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information. The applicant or employee without these skills is at a huge disadvantage. Basic computer literacy is one of the core elements of a WIOA-ready curriculum.

Essential Education Solutions

Essential Education's Computer Essentials is designed to build computer literacy in three critical workforce areas that correspond to IC3 Global Certification. Through a series of 38 interactive online lessons, students develop not only digital literacy workforce skills, but critical thinking skills that enable them to evaluate information successfully. Graduates of the Computer Essentials course earn a workforce certificate which demonstrates skills they have mastered. Students can use these certificates to verify their computer skills to employers.

Pillar Three

Workplace & Self-Management Skills

The “soft skills” necessary in the workplace and in personal life form the third pillar of adult ed instruction. Effective programs teach students how to resolve conflicts respectfully, how to cooperate in the workplace, and how to maintain basic workplace etiquette. Employees with these skills are more likely to retain and advance in their employment.

Essential Education Solutions

Essential Education gives adult educators two core programs to build these critical skills. The online Work Essentials course starts with units on Finding a Job and Making a Good Impression. The next units, Working with Others and Communication, teach the student critical speaking and listening skills. The unit on Professionalism teaches integrity, leadership, and ethical behavior in the workplace, and the unit on Critical Thinking and Problem Solving gives the learner key skills in decision-making and taking initiative. The lessons are engaging and meaningful to the student because they are taught in real-life job situations. The student quickly learns how to survive and prosper in any work environment. The online software is enhanced by an accompanying print component.

Essential Education’s Money Essentials course develops critical thinking skills in the context of personal finance. Students learn how to budget and how set realistic financial goals. They master the fundamentals of loans and credit, and how to budget and how set realistic financial goals.

They master the fundamentals of loans and credit, and how to avoid predatory credit and loan practices. A print component is also available for the teacher and student.

Additionally, Essential Education’s *Smart Skills* workbook teaches the student critical goal setting, study, and test-taking skills.

Essential Education’s workforce courses are developed based on the Employability Skills Framework, which was developed as part of the Support for States Employability Standards in CTE and Adult Education project, an initiative of the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education. The course material builds the foundation for a successful career pathway approach.

MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES		OCCUPATION-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	
INDUSTRY-SECTOR TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES			
Patient Interaction	Health & Disease	Infection Control	Medication
Documentation	Diagnostic Procedures	Rehabilitation Therapy	
INDUSTRY-WIDE TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES			
Health Industry Fundamentals	Healthcare Delivery	Health Information	
Health Industry Ethics	Law & Regulations	Safety Systems	
WORKPLACE COMPETENCIES			
Teamwork	Customer Foods	Planning & Organization	Problem Solving & Decision Making
Working with Tools & Technology	Scheduling & Coordinating	Checking, Examining & Recording	Workplace Fundamentals
ACADEMIC COMPETENCIES			
Reading	Writing	Mathematics	Science & Technology
Critical & Analytical Thinking	Basic Computer Skills	Communication, Listening & Speaking	
		Information Literacy	
PERSON EFFECTIVENESS COMPETENCIES			
Interpersonal Skills	Integrity	Professionalism	Initiative
Dependability & Reliability	Adaptability & Flexibility	Lifelong Learning	

CAREER PATHWAYS

WIOA also promotes career pathways as a key workforce development strategy. Career pathways align and integrate education (including adult basic education and ESL), job training, counseling, and support services to create accelerated pathways to post-secondary education credentials and employment in in-demand occupations. For low-skilled adults, adult ed is a central component and frequently the entry-point to a career pathway. Adult ed has been shown to be an effective part of career pathways when it is integrated with skills training and provided within the context of a student's career goals. Under WIOA, career pathways must include integrated education and training.

Adults, youth, and non-traditional working learners often struggle to complete education and training programs that provide the necessary credentials for many growing careers. This is especially true for those who lack basic skills, including work readiness skills and English language comprehension. These populations often have other barriers to training and employment, such as lack of transportation and the need for childcare. In addition, working learners have the added challenge of balancing jobs with education or training, which makes flexible training programs, such as evening, weekend, and/or online classes, critical to their success.

career pathways: *integrated education, job training, counseling and support services that **provide adults with skills** to help place them in **high-demand** and **high-opportunity** jobs.*

Designing training programs that accommodate these challenges ensures higher completion rates. When training and education programs do not accommodate the needs of adults, youth, and non-traditional students, they drop out. Developing career pathways-oriented education programs that support the unique needs of targeted populations helps patch the “leaky pipeline” of learners prematurely exiting training programs.

Career pathways systems provide participants with multiple entry points to accommodate academic readiness and multiple exit points to permit exit and reentry with minimal interruption when necessary. The intent for career pathways is to lead to industry-recognized credentials and employment at family-supporting wages with occupational advancement opportunities. The question is, how does adult ed support career pathways as bridge programs, transition programs, and also partnerships with Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs such as I-BEST?

"The intent for career pathways is to lead to industry-recognized credentials and employment at family-supporting wages with occupational advancement opportunities."

Career pathways are the new way of doing business, and they operate at two levels—a systems level and an individual program level.

SYSTEMS LEVEL

1

At the systems level, career pathways development is a broad approach for serving populations that may experience significant barriers to employment. They can substantively alter the way the workforce system delivers its services and its relationship with partner organizations and stakeholders. Career pathway programs offer a clear sequence, or pathway, of education coursework and/or training credentials aligned with employer-validated work readiness standards and competencies.

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

2

On the individual level, career pathways overlay adult ed. In the past, career pathway programs were separate from adult ed. However, WIOA requires states and local areas to develop career pathways that align and integrate education (including Adult Basic Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages), job training, counseling and support services to create accelerated pathways that enable low-skilled adults and youth to obtain a secondary school diploma (or recognized equivalent) and a post-secondary education credential, leading to employment in high-demand occupations.

The individual career pathway is an approach that connects progressive levels of education, training, support services, and credentials for specific occupations in a way that optimizes the progress and success of individuals with varying levels of abilities and needs. This approach helps individuals earn marketable credentials, engage in further education and employment, and achieve economic success. Career pathways deeply engage employers and help meet their workforce needs; they also help states and communities strengthen their workforces and economies. This approach is not simply a new model; it is a systems-transformation strategy.

ESSENTIAL EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

Essential Education has three unique solutions for WIOA career pathway education. First, we prepare students more effectively for career pathways while they are in bridge and feeder adult education programs. Our Three Pillar approach meets this need by integrating critical digital literacy and workforce skills into the core academic thread. Our second solution is to provide the academic instructional piece for Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs. With Essential Ed's ABE and HSE instruction, CTE programs can provide all the basic skills instruction needed to prepare students for entry and success in industry specific training.

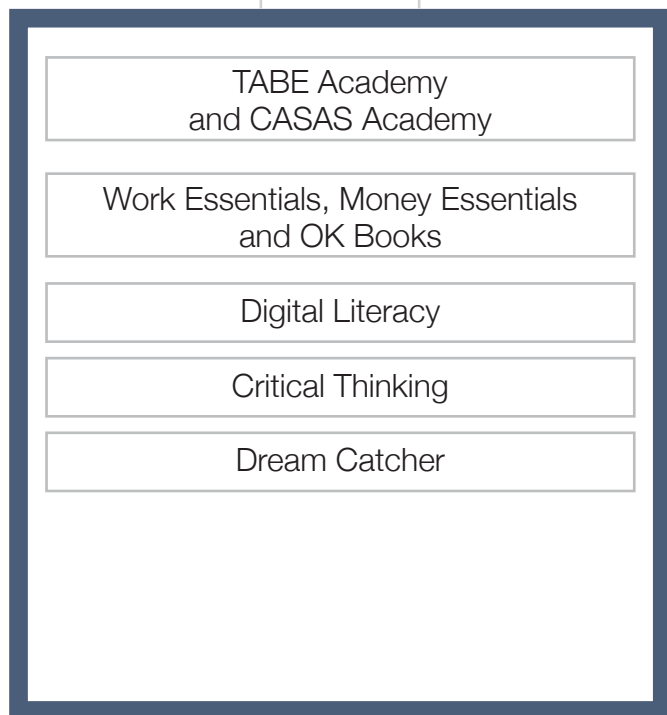
Our third solution focuses on career planning. Many students in adult education do not have a clearly defined end goal for their education. They know they need to create change in their lives but are unsure how to put together a realistic career plan. Essential Education's Dream Catcher program helps students clarify their interests and talents and do the research needed to transform these into a career pathway that is realistic and doable. Without a clearly defined objective and the means to make it happen, many adult learners lose interest in their education and quit.

THREE CHANGES IN TITLE II ADULT EDUCATION FUNDING

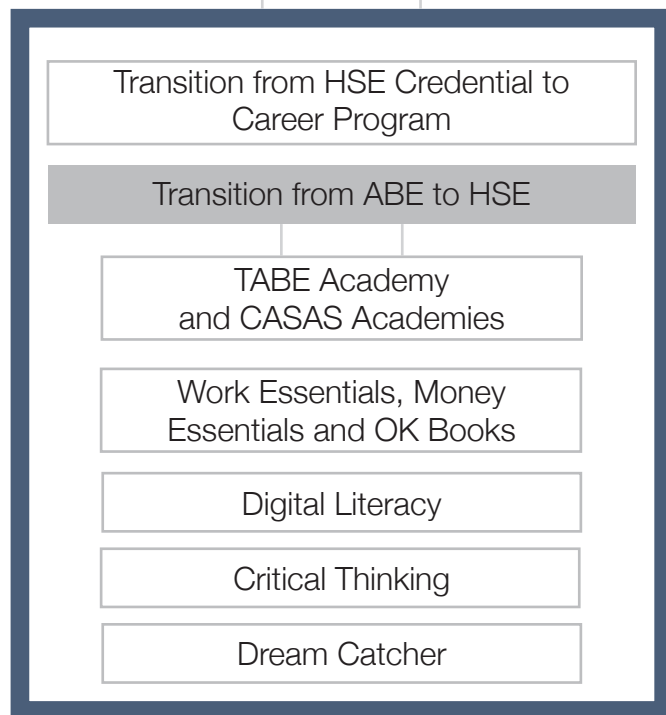
- 1 WIOA broadens the focus of adult ed, literacy, and English language services to include transition to post-secondary education and employment. While it is still designed to serve all adult learners, the law reflects the changing needs of the nation's workforce and goals of its workers. It amends the stated statutory purpose of adult ed and subtly modifies the definitions of key terms to reflect this new emphasis. The law also explicitly states that Title II funds may be used for adult ed activities that “help eligible individuals transition to post-secondary education and training or employment, or for concurrent enrollment activities.” In other words, Title II funding can be used to include core workforce instruction in the context of ABE and HSE programs. This opens the door to a richer and more relevant curricula for the adult learner seeking employment and entry into career pathways programs.
- 2 WIOA Title II funding also defines and encourages new models such as integrated education and training and workforce preparation activities. IET “provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation and workforce training for a specific occupation.” This means that individuals can start directly into career pathways and get the core academic skills and workforce readiness while training for a career.
- 3 WIOA codifies the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs and explicitly allows the use of EL/Civics funds for workforce training.

ESSENTIAL EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

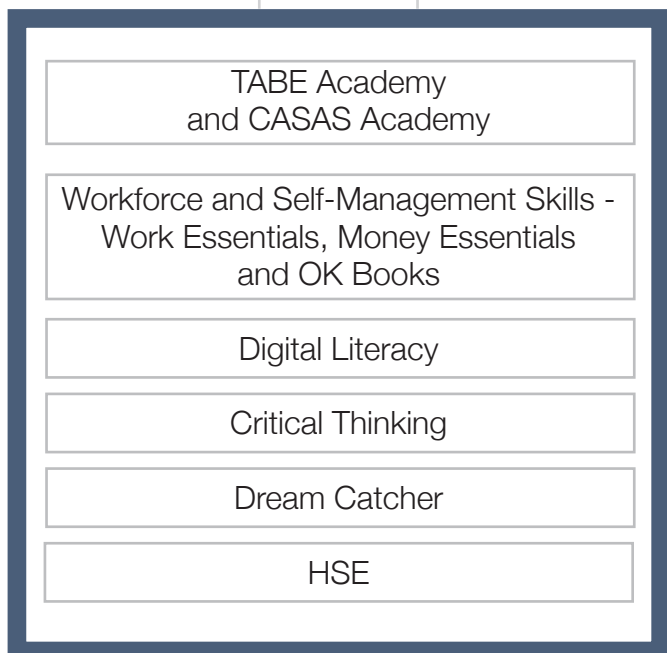
ADULT BASIC EDUCATION



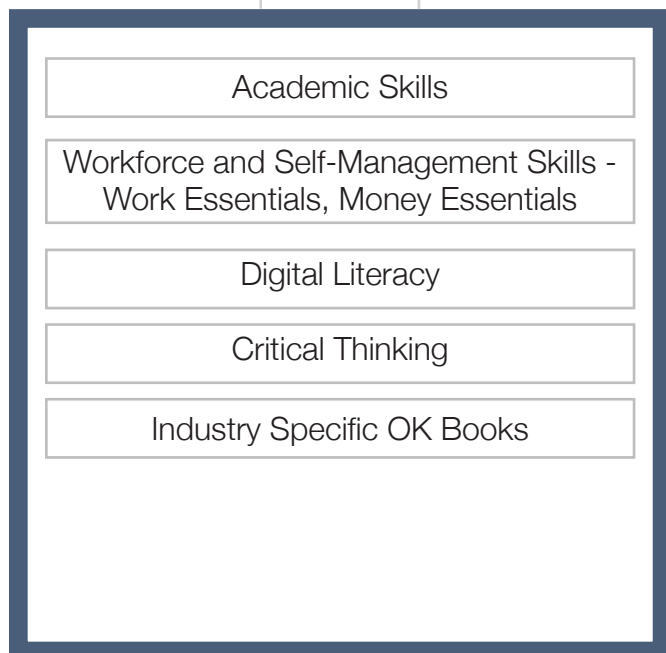
BRIDGE PROGRAMS



CORRECTIONS



CAREER PATHWAYS





FIND OUT MORE

www.essentialed.com

895 NW Grant Ave. Corvallis, OR 97330

support@essentialed.com

Essential Education

Revolutionizing Adult Learning