



TRANSFORMATION OF ADULT EDUCATION

2025-2028 Strategic Plan



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INTRODUCTION LETTER

Dear COABE Members,

With immense pride and anticipation, we are thrilled to present COABE's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan—a visionary roadmap to guide our organization through the next transformative chapter in adult education. This plan reflects our steadfast commitment to leadership and innovation in the field, charting a course for sustained progress in the years ahead.

Crafted collaboratively with input from a diverse range of members and stakeholders, this plan is a reflection of shared priorities and aspirations. It captures the perspectives of COABE's board, leadership, and staff, as well as you, our members, thus ensuring alignment with our collective vision. In addition to detailing our goals, objectives, and strategies for the next 3 years, this document unveils our newly refined mission and vision statements. These statements are thoughtfully designed to encapsulate COABE's current strengths and future aspirations, serving as a guiding compass for our efforts.

At the heart of this plan are three core principles: **lead, equip, and empower**. These pillars shape our strategic goals and represent our dedication to advancing the field. By leading with innovation, equipping educators and stakeholders with the tools they need, and empowering individuals and communities, we will build on our successes and forge new pathways for growth.

A cornerstone of this strategic plan is the elevation of student voices. Over the next

three years, COABE will focus on expanding student membership and empowering students as active, engaged participants in our mission. Through this effort, we aim to ensure that their voices are heard, their needs are met, and their contributions are celebrated.

In addition, we remain deeply committed to enhancing networking and professional development opportunities for the adult education community. While COABE has a long-standing legacy of excellence in this area, we are embracing cutting-edge technology and innovative engagement strategies to further enrich our offerings.

We are confident that COABE's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan aligns with your own vision for the future of adult education. This plan is a testament to the invaluable contributions of our members and stakeholders—partners who make this work possible.

As we embark on this journey together, we invite you to join us in leading, equipping, and empowering the adult education field. Together, we will continue to make a lasting impact.

Warm regards,

Sharon Bonney, COABE CEO & Shaketta Thomas, COABE Board President



Lead Equip Empower

OUR MISSION

To lead, equip, and empower the field of adult education, inspiring transformative growth in every adult to achieve their full potential.

OUR VISION

Adult education is recognized as the catalyst for empowering individuals, strengthening families, and enriching communities.



1999

- »»» COABE was founded in 1999 with the guiding principle that adult education deserved more attention and respect at the local, state, and national levels.
- »»» We started with 1,072 members.
- »»» Recruited local and state association leaders and educators from across the country.
- »»» Between 1999 and 2004, COABE disseminated 36 scholarly journals and 5 briefs.



2016

- »»» COABE grew from 1,072 members in 1999 to 15,279 members in 2016.
- »»» COABE's national conferences have been held in several major U.S. cities (virtually during Covid) and garnered over 23,239 attendees.
- »»» Started the Educate and Elevate public awareness campaign in 2017 that is raising awareness, changing the dialogue, and increasing funding for adult education. The campaign prompted over 250,000 contacts with legislators at the local, state, and federal levels.



2024

- »»» We have partnerships with 2,384 local programs, 47 state organizations, and 91 national partners.
- »»» Founded the Adult Education & Family Literacy Week in 2018 that has led to over 452,000 connections with state and federal legislators and resulted in massive increases in funding for adult education programs.
- »»» COABE has helped more than 200,000 adult learners find adult education programs.
- »»» COABE now serves over 3.2 million adult learners throughout 23,084 local programs in 47 states.



Lead Equip Empower

Goal 1

Lead a diverse, aligned network of stakeholders to drive impact at the local, state, and federal levels.

- » Engage in collaborative projects and partnerships to leverage shared resources and expertise that leads to at least 3% growth in community, state, and federal impact annually.
- » Build organizational visibility and recognition to inspire the field of adult education to actively advocate for themselves and the learners that they serve by 10% annually.
- » Professionalize adult education by increasing the talent pipeline by 3% annually.

Lead Equip Empower

Goal 2

Equip the field of adult education by increasing professional development, advocacy, and data-driven research.

- »»» Expand the sphere of influence of adult education research and data-informed policy by increasing the number of journal contributors and written briefs by 3% annually.
- »»» Drive the future of adult learning by providing cutting-edge content and learning strategies for professional development in adult education.
- »»» Engage with local, state, and federal policymakers to advance the field of adult education and increase funding and engagement by 5% annually at all levels.



Lead Equip Empower

Goal 3

Empower adult learners to engage through innovative programs and services that fill gaps in the field.

- »» Activate the voice of adult learners to establish a blueprint for member recruitment, engagement, and retention by 5% annually.
- »» Provide the necessary resources, skill-building, and incentive opportunities through COABE programs for adult learners to increase learner success by 5% annually.
- »» Build the adult learner champions' and general speakers' bureau by 5% annually.





Lead Equip Empower

Goal 4

Develop and implement a sustainability plan to fulfill the mission.

- »»» Increase organizational capacity through diversified funding that leads to strategic growth and elevation of the field of adult education by 10% annually.
- »»» Enable COABE board and staff to represent member interests and increase organizational and governance effectiveness through local, state, and national initiatives.
- »»» Invest in staff capacity to support organizational transformation and infuse institutional expertise into programs and services.



TRANSFORMATION OF ADULT EDUCATION

