



Skinny Budget Q & A

On May 9th, COABE hosted a national webinar on “[*Mobilizing for Adult Education – Responding to the FY26 Budget Threat*](#),” which drew nearly 1,700 registrants and over 1,300 live attendees. The response was incredible, and we received more questions than we could answer during the session.

To help keep the field informed, we’ve created this **Q&A Document**, which provides answers to frequently asked questions about adult education advocacy. It will be updated regularly as the legislative environment changes.

If you have a question, we encourage you to email us at advocacy@coabe.org. You’ll receive a direct response, and your question may be added anonymously to this document to support others in the field.

Whether you joined us live or are just now exploring this resource, we’re glad you’re here. Let’s continue advocating for adult education—together.

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Federal Budget & Funding Timeline

1. Since our AEL year is July - June, how does that work with the federal budget from Oct - Sept? Is our 25-26 year funded from Fed FY25 or FY26?

Funding through the FY25 continuing resolution (CR) would/could cover programming from 7/1/25-6/30/26 or the upcoming program year. Note: While the intent expressed by Congress is that funding through the CR should be the same amount as in FY24, ED has not yet publicly shared its plans for adult education funding for FY25.

2. What are critical upcoming dates in the budget passing process?

The letter deadlines for members to make their case to the Appropriations Committee is May 23rd. From there the Committees will work to determine

funding levels for each program for the House and Senate to vote on. Because of the slim majority, we are likely to be in a CR situation for FY26. The deadline for passing an appropriations bill or CR is September 30 to avoid the federal government shutting down.

3. How can I get more people to sign the Dear Colleague/appropriations letter? Where can we find out who has already signed the Letter? How do I ask them? Should I thank them for signing?

To help grow support for the Dear Colleague/appropriations letter, you can contact your Representative and Senators and ask them to sign—especially if they haven't already. COABE will share a list of current signers as soon as it's available, or you can email advocacy@coabe.org for the latest update. When you reach out, keep your message short and personal—explain why adult education matters in your community and ask them to support funding by signing the letter. If they've already signed, a quick thank-you goes a long way and helps strengthen the relationship for future advocacy efforts.

House of Representatives Members Signees:

- Dan Goldman (NY-D)
- Jan Schakowsky (IL-D)
- Chellie Pingree (MN-D)
- Sharice Davids (KS-D)
- Josh Gottheimer (NJ-D)
- Jahana Hayes (CT-D)
- Lucy McBath (SC-D)
- Stephen Lynch (MA-D)
- Sean Casten (IL-D)
- George Whitesides (CA-D)
- Seth Magaziner (RI-D)
- Ayanna Pressley (MA-D)
- William Keating (MA-D)
- Jimmy Panetta (CA-D)
- Danny Davis (IL-D)
- Morgan McGarvey (KY-D)
- Ilhan Omar (MN-D)

Senate Member Signees:

This letter only started circulating.

- Jack Reed (D-RI)

4. When will Congress vote on the Skinny Budget proposal?

Congress will not vote on the budget as submitted by the President - skinny or otherwise. Congress through the House of Representative and Senate Appropriations Committees will develop their own funding bill, which would need to be passed by Sept. 30th - either a new full year funding bill or a continuing resolution that continues prior year funding.

5. Can you share the names of the Senators again who are championing the letter?

Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) and Senator Todd Young (R-IN) have led the Senate funding request letter in the past. Hopeful that this tradition will continue, Senator Reed began circulating this letter. The Quill url/link can be found [here](#).

6. Does OCTAE know why the appropriations committee hasn't released funding to be distributed. I know Workforce Partners have received their allocation estimates already.

Congress passed the FY25 CR with the intention that funding be maintained at the FY24 level. OCTAE has not yet sent estimated allocations to states as it would have typically by this time. COABE continues to advocate with the Department of Education to release this information.

7. Do you know what date the annual appropriations process is finalized?

The federal annual appropriations process needs to be finalized or extended by September 30 each year to avoid a government shutdown. If no action is taken by this date, there would be a shutdown, which can disrupt services, including adult education programs.

8. Is the ratio of type of funding at the state level accessible information to the public? Like, are we able to see how much (percentage rates or exact dollar amounts) each state is receiving from the state government and federal government to fund adult education?

This information is available through your adult education funding office. Sometimes you can find it easily on their website. If not, your state director will be able to provide that information. Find your state's adult education funding office website and your state director's email address [here](#). You can find past AEFLA funding allocations to states [here](#).

9. The current recommended budget for FY 26 is the recommendation for the funding that would start in September 2025, correct?

At the federal level, FY26 starts on October 1, 2025. When funding is enacted for FY26 (either through a full-year bill or a CR), it would be available to states on July 1, 2026.

10. Just to confirm - we have the CR and are ok for FY 25 to start 7/1/25-6/30/26. We are advocating for FY26 to start 7/1/26. Is that correct?

FY25 funding has been passed by Congress and we are currently waiting for OCTAE to announce estimated allocations to states for funding to be awarded on July 1, 2025. The advocacy push we are making now is for FY26 funding. The FY26 process was kicked off with the release of the President's FY26 "skinny budget." Now action turns to Congress, which through the House of Representative and Senate Appropriations Committees, will propose funding levels for programs like adult education. We need to convince Members of Congress that funding for adult education should be continued.

Legislative Updates & Policy Priorities

11. Are you hearing any concerns about reallocation of FY25 allocations for adult education?

No, we are not hearing that at all from legislative staff or Department of Ed staff. COABE has written letters and met with OCTAE and Department of Education staff to urge that funding estimates be swiftly shared with states.

12. Is there a specific date that the skinny budget must be approved?

The skinny budget will not be voted on or approved by Congress in its entirety. The President's [FY26 budget](#) is a statement of how the President would like the budget to look. Congress will now decide whether to include the ideas presented in the President's budget request as they work to draft the annual appropriations bills. That is why it is critical that we focus our advocacy attention on Congress, to urge continued and increased funding for adult education.

13. What happened to the bicameral and bipartisan bill called WORKS that was just introduced a few weeks ago? Is Trump going against what both sides and both parties deem as an important program?

The Adult Education WORKS Act remains a strong COABE priority. As you know many of its provisions were included in A Stronger Workforce for America Act, the WIOA reauthorization bill that almost passed last December. COABE is continuing to push Congress to take up and pass this legislation. It is helpful to urge your member of Congress to cosponsor -- but over the next two weeks -- the most critical thing is to fight for adult education funding by asking your Representative and Senators in Congress to sign the Dear Colleague/appropriations letter.

14. Am I correct that the Quill system is only visible to Members of Congress? When we send that out for advocates to share with legislators, we have been trying to explain that.

Yes, that is correct. The [link/url](#) that we have been including in the templates for your advocacy can only be accessed by members of Congress and their staff. We have provided the [link/url](#) to make it very easy for members of Congress to click and sign on.

15. What data were the President's team using and/or looking at? Just out of curiosity.

Some of it is data from the National Reporting System (NRS). It is always a couple fiscal years behind the FY we are in. This is why it is so important to connect with [your adult education state director](#) to get the most current data for your state and to share that data with your Representative and Senators so that they know the true impact of the work you are doing to support adult learners.

16. I noticed that the three click software sends emails to state lawmakers and asks them to oppose President Trump's skinny budget. They have no real power when discussing federal funding negotiations. Should there be a separate email template specifically for state legislators? I'm sure they will just respond saying it's a federal issue and to contact federal representatives.

You're right that state legislators don't play a direct role in federal funding negotiations, but they can be powerful allies in the broader effort to protect and expand adult education. Our sense is that the more lawmakers who are aware of the value and impact of adult education—at any level of government—the better. When state legislators hear from their constituents, it helps build awareness and momentum. They can advocate within their own spheres of influence, pass state-level resolutions, support funding or alignment efforts at the state level, and even help amplify the message to their federal counterparts.

17. Are there active proposals to change the eligibility for WIOA title II services? Can that happen as part of the budget process or separate?

Typically changes to eligibility for federal programs would happen outside of the appropriations process. Last year, Congress almost passed a bill reauthorizing WIOA, which sought to make several changes to the law, and included many provisions of the COABE-supported Adult Education WORKS Act. The House Education and Workforce Committee held a [hearing](#) on WIOA earlier this year, highlighting the need to pass this reauthorization bill (titled A Stronger Workforce for America Act). Time will tell if this can happen during this Congress.

18. How will this affect education in corrections?

While the specific impact on education in corrections is not yet clear, we are committed to making sure the needs of incarcerated learners are not left out of the conversation. We will continue advocating for access to adult education in all settings and will share updates as more information becomes available.

19. What is the status of OCTAE?

COABE CEO Sharon Bonney just met with OCTAE in person. They are still in the Department of Education building, still working, but definitely a skeleton crew.

Advocacy Strategy & Engagement

20. Is there any plan being made to take a coalition of students/advocates/ staff to DC to attempt to meet in person with budget subcommittee members? Is there any intention for any national advertising to educate the national population on the impact of adult education?

Yes to both! Understandably, this requires planning to ensure that we make it as stress-free for participants as possible. We will keep the field updated through our advocacy eblasts and [Public Policy Pulse](#) newsletter.

21. Can we partner with the new SAAEF rep for our state to help efforts?

Yes! Absolutely. You can partner with the new SAAEF representative for your state to support your advocacy efforts. We can connect you with an advocate in your state to help amplify your message and work together on your initiatives. Just email advocacy@coabe.org, and we'll facilitate that introduction. Collaborating with your SAAEF rep is a great way to strengthen your advocacy efforts and ensure a united voice for adult education in your state.

22. For those whose advocacy efforts have been restricted by their leadership, what do you recommend? How can those who cannot reach out directly still help?

As private citizens, you can use your personal phone, personal email, personal device to reach out to legislators. We recommend not using your work phone, work email, or work computer.

23. To what degree can we/should we get institutional letters of support? I'm wondering here about running afoul of lobbying restrictions either personally or institutionally.

To ensure you're aligned with your institution's policies and any applicable lobbying restrictions, we recommend reaching out to your program or institution's government relations or public affairs office. They can provide guidance on what's allowed and help you determine whether and how to pursue institutional letters of support appropriately.

Every organization has different rules and levels of comfort when it comes to advocacy, so it's always best to check internally first.

24. Our state association members aren't adult educators. That's why they do nothing. Could COABE set expectations that state association members should be current adult educators?

While COABE does not set membership requirements for state associations, we deeply value the contributions of anyone who supports adult education—whether they are current educators or involved in other ways.

In many cases, state association members are passionate advocates, former practitioners, or partners who play a meaningful role in advancing the field. That said, we do encourage all members—regardless of their background—to stay informed and engaged in advocacy efforts, especially during critical times for adult education funding.

If there are specific ways COABE can support your state in encouraging greater engagement or clarity around roles, we're happy to help! Email advocacy@coabe.org to begin that conversation.

25. Representative Lauren Boebert got her GED. Is she being recruited as an advocate?

Yes, our COABE State Advocate for Adult Education fellow from Colorado has been working with Representative Lauren Boebert's staff to raise awareness about

adult education issues. We have also been connecting with other GED graduates and individuals with adult education backgrounds who are currently serving in Congress. These advocates bring unique perspectives and personal experiences that can be powerful in helping shape policies that support adult education.

26. Do we have the American Association of Community Colleges or other community college advocates joining in on these efforts?

Many community college advocates are advocating for adult education; however AACC has not officially joined our efforts (yet). We are always looking for partners in this advocacy work. Please send suggestions or contacts to advocacy@coabe.org, and we will follow up with them.

27. AEL program directors from Missouri will be going to D.C. in the next few days. Can COABE get them a meeting with a Senator or Representative?

That's amazing! Please email advocacy@coabe.org. We are happy to help!

Communications, Messaging, & Storytelling

28. I feel as if we have been sending notices for months and the result is the silly commentary in the skinny budget as well as no consideration for reduction but total elimination. Is there a plan to do something more visual with a stronger impact?

Absolutely! At COABE, we are constantly looking for additional and new ways to raise visibility for adult education! We welcome any ideas that you have at advocacy@coabe.org. Just like at the federal level, we really encourage you at the local and state levels to share success stories, fact sheets, op eds etc.

29. Are phone calls better than emails when reaching out to our legislators?

Some members have been receiving tons of calls and so it is hard to get through. You can try calling, but also send an email to the staffer directly. Here is a [list](#) of staffers with their contact information. Note: Staff turns over quickly so you may get a bounce back - but hopefully with the name of the right staffer handling adult education that you can forward your message to.

30. Our organization's national advocacy team has always advised that representatives value/count phone calls over emails. Do you agree with that perspective?

We have been told repeatedly by legislators that both are meaningful. A combination of both can also be very powerful.

It's also important to follow up on a phone call with an email to reiterate key points and provide additional resources or context. Legislators often appreciate the persistence and clarity that follow-up emails provide.

31. With workforce training being more "acceptable", would it be helpful to include things like a list of technical degrees/certifications/careers that require high school diplomas or GEDs in order to be accepted?

Absolutely—that kind of information can be very helpful. Showing how a high school diploma or GED is a gateway to technical training programs and career opportunities helps align adult education with workforce priorities, which often resonates with policymakers.

At the same time, it's important that we don't leave anyone out of the conversation. Many adult learners—especially those improving their English skills—may not be pursuing a career pathway right away, but their participation in adult education is just as important. English language learners strengthen our communities, contribute to the workforce in different ways, and deserve to be included when we speak to Congress.

By highlighting the full range of learners and goals supported by adult education, we can make a stronger, more accurate case for continued investment.

32. Is it better to use personal email or school email in the letters?

If possible, it's best to use your personal email when sending advocacy messages. This helps avoid any potential concerns related to your workplace's policies on advocacy or lobbying. While many schools and programs support advocacy efforts, using a personal email ensures there's no confusion about whether you're speaking on behalf of your institution. It also reinforces that you're reaching out as a constituent and engaged community member, which is exactly who lawmakers need to hear from.

33. Is there any way we can get a preview of what's in the line? I feel uncomfortable sending a prewritten message that I have no idea what it says exactly.

Yes—you can absolutely preview the message before it's sent. When you use the 3-click software, just click "Review Your Message" to see the full text of the email. We also encourage you to personalize it with your own experiences or local examples if you'd like. Adding your voice can make the message even more powerful.

34. Could we get media coverage from some of the top TV stations such as NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, and Fox News to support Adult Education? Possibly create some ad announcements about Adult Education and stating on the ads the importance for public and legislative support? These are just some bipartisan types of support that we can look at.

Thank you for your suggestion—raising national awareness through media coverage and public service announcements is definitely something we continue to explore. Securing coverage from major outlets like NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, or Fox News can be challenging without significant funding or a major news hook, but we're always looking for opportunities to elevate adult education at the national level.

In the meantime, COABE focuses on building public awareness through targeted campaigns, social media outreach, and by equipping advocates with the tools to share compelling local stories. These grassroots efforts often resonate strongly with both the public and policymakers. If opportunities arise for broader media engagement or ad placements, we'll be excited to share them with our network!

35. I don't want to use X for ethical reasons. What other social media platforms can we use?

Totally understandable. You don't need to use a specific platform to support the cause. If you're comfortable with other platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn,

Instagram, or even Threads, those are all great ways to help spread the word. Even sharing a post in a private group or resharing from COABE's official pages can make a difference. Every bit of visibility helps bring more attention to adult education.

36. Do you have a storm for Blue Sky yet?

No, the software that we use is not compatible with Blue Sky. We encourage you to engage in advocacy on all social media platforms that you use. You can use the same text from the Twitter storm and paste it into other platforms.

Learner & Local Involvement

37. How can ESL students make their voices heard?

We encourage all learners everywhere to lift up their voices! There are many ways to do this. You can send emails and engage in Twitter/X advocacy – visit [this webpage](#) to find links for these resources. Additionally, you can share your story on [COABE's Educate & Elevate web page](#). We create flyers out of these stories to share with legislators in your state. We also encourage you to connect with your adult education state association. For help connecting with their advocacy efforts, send an email to advocacy@coabe.org.

38. Does it actually help to share success stories for immigrants with this administration? I hate to be cynical, but we have hundreds! I just don't know if they're helpful.

It sure does help! There is a lot of support in Congress for all learners! Ideally, you can show the breadth of services that your program provides through learner success stories. You could further make the connection that your work to help participants gain fluency in English helps strengthen the economy, including by ensuring employers can find skilled workers.

39. If we have our students write letters to legislators requesting funding that would be considered lobbying correct? If we have them write a letter about what they enjoy and how they benefit without a request for funding that is advocacy and an allowable activity, correct?

They can share their stories about why adult education is important and how it has helped them. I recommend not asking for funding or calling out a specific funding line item. Language like “without this program, I wouldn’t have been able to...” is a wonderful way of highlighting adult education’s necessity.

40. Any advice for recruiting student advocates in a climate when students - particularly those who are not citizens - might be afraid to be seen and heard? How would you suggest we protect our students in this process?

When engaging in advocacy, it's essential that we protect our students' privacy, safety, and dignity—especially for English language learners, who may face added risks due to language barriers or public misconceptions.

We should never share identifying details (names, photos, or locations) without clear, informed consent. If students do want to share their stories, we can support them by offering choices about how they participate—whether that’s anonymously, through a written statement, or by speaking directly with lawmakers in safe, supportive environments.

Advocacy should always empower students, not expose them. Our role is to lift their voices while ensuring they’re in control of their own stories—and to make sure lawmakers understand the real people and powerful journeys behind adult education, even when names are left out.

41. How can I use my COABE ambassador certificate for advocacy? Our voices as adult learners need to be heard!

Your voice *absolutely* matters, and your experience as an adult learner is one of the most powerful tools we have to protect and grow adult education.

Your COABE Ambassador certificate shows that you've taken a step toward leadership. Here's how you can use it to advocate:

- Tell your story: Share what adult education has meant for you—how it's helped you grow, what challenges you've faced, and what your goals are now. Your story can change hearts and influence decision-makers.
- Speak up in your community: You can attend local events, school board meetings, or even town halls and say, "I'm a COABE Ambassador and an adult learner. I want to share how this program has changed my life."
- Meet with elected officials: If you get the chance to meet a legislator or their staff, show your certificate! It helps show that you're informed, prepared, and part of a national network of learner leaders.
- Share online: Post your certificate or a short message on social media about why adult education matters. Tag your local representatives or COABE—we love to amplify your voice!
- Inspire others: You're setting an example. When other students see you using your voice, they might feel more confident stepping up too.

Your certificate is more than paper—it's a badge of leadership. And now is the perfect time to use it to help protect the programs that helped you.

42. What are the recommendations for contacting former students? Is it okay to use work email/phone or should that be personal as well?

Yes, it is definitely OK to contact former students, and we recommend not using work email/phones if possible. Educators and teachers have a key advantage in this area because of the relationships they build with their learners.

43. Can we legally do a student letter writing campaign during federally funded class time?

This is a question best directed to your program director or [state director of adult education](#), as they can provide guidance on the specific rules and regulations in your area. Generally, it's important to ensure that activities like letter-writing campaigns comply with any rules regarding the use of federally funded class time. Your program director or state director of adult education will be able to help determine whether it's permissible and how to proceed appropriately.

44. What can we do as ESL instructors? It feels like our component of adult ed is very specifically being targeted.

Please encourage your adult learners, all of them, to lift their voice for adult education. They can join the [COABE Ambassador Program](#), [share a success story](#), [make a phone call](#), [send an email](#), [share on social media](#), and [so much more!](#)

45. Can you recommend ways to track this data for organizations working with volunteers who struggle using computers?

Absolutely! Please have them [contact us](#). We are happy to help!

46. How can I share this with my colleagues who are not in Adult Education but would like to reach out to congress if easy?

You can easily share the advocacy tools with your colleagues—even if they aren't in adult education. Direct them to COABE's Faces of Adult Education campaign,

where they'll find message templates and a simple 3-click system to contact their members of Congress. Explore and share the resources [here](#).

47. Can we have more than one LOCAL Rep per program?

Yes, you can! [Click here](#) to learn more about LOCAL. Register to participate here: <https://www.tfaforms.com/5179443>

COABE's Role, Resources, & Tools

48. Where will we be able to access the recording of this presentation to share with colleagues?

Yes! You can find the link to the recording and additional resources on [COABE's Faces of Adult Education webpage](#). We purposely made this information open to the general public so that all people who care about the work we do can take action.

49. Where can we find resources and templates to use?

For resources and templates specific to adult education funding in this current time, please visit [COABE's Faces of Adult Education page](#).

50. Is COABE preparing to push legal action if current funding is targeted?

We plan to continue working with our champions in Congress and other members of the House of Representatives and Senate to press the case about funding for adult education.