



COABE

The Voice Of Adult Education



2025 LEGISLATIVE TALKING POINTS



2025 LEGISLATIVE TALKING POINTS OVERVIEW

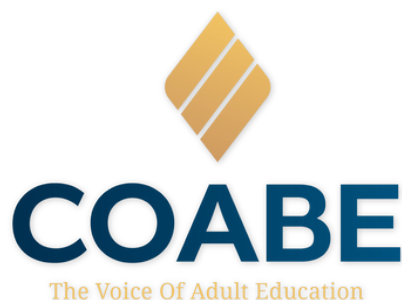
I. ADULT EDUCATION SERVES A LARGE POPULATION OF AMERICANS IN A VARIETY OF LOCATIONS.

II. ADULT EDUCATION HELPS HARD WORKING AMERICANS SECURE EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

III. ADULT EDUCATION HELPS EMPLOYERS BY DEVELOPING A SKILLED WORKFORCE PROFICIENT IN READING COMPREHENSION, BASIC MATH SKILLS AND DIGITAL AND INFORMATION LITERACY.

IV. ADULT EDUCATION HELPS THE ECONOMY BY ADDRESSING A GROWING SKILLS GAP AND LESSENING THE NEED FOR ASSISTANCE FROM FEDERAL BENEFITS PROGRAMS.

V. FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY ASKS

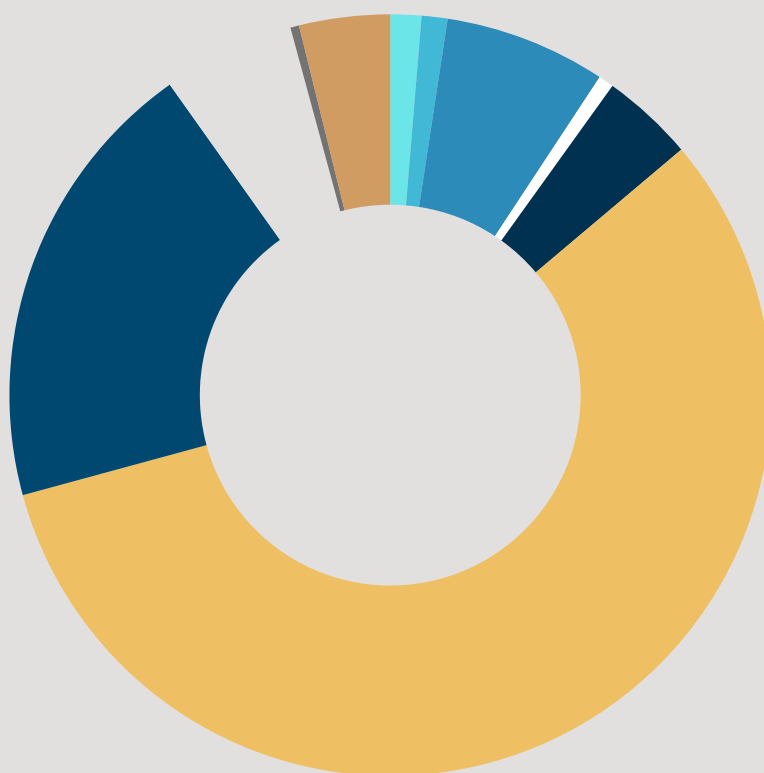
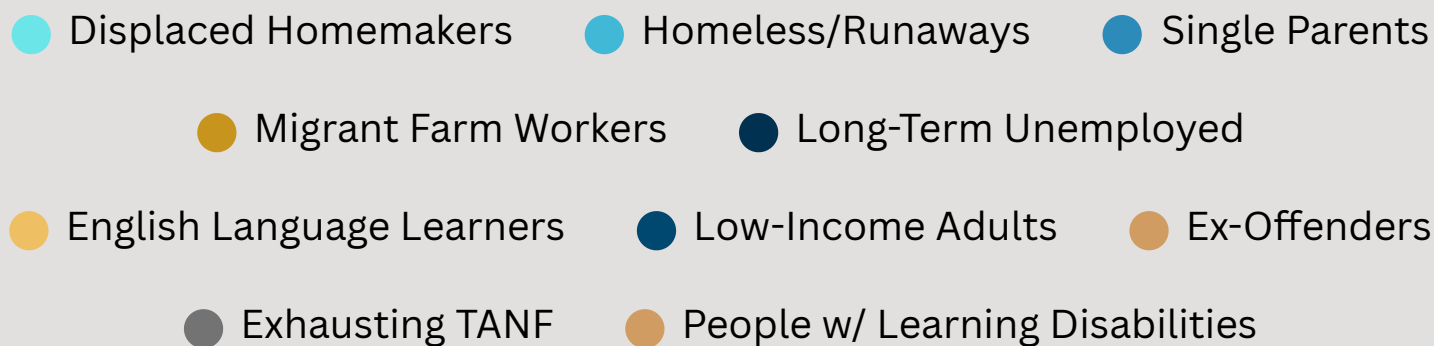


I. ADULT EDUCATION SERVES A LARGE POPULATION OF AMERICANS IN A VARIETY OF LOCATIONS.

TALKING POINT #1

Adult education focuses on a population that is extremely challenging to reach.

More than 2,000 federally funded adult education programs provide services to 1.5 million learners nationwide and experience a 72% success rate with this population.[i]



TALKING POINT #2

Educating adults creates stronger communities.

Low skilled adults are:

**2X MORE LIKELY TO BE
UNEMPLOYED**



**3X MORE LIKELY TO
BE IN POVERTY**

**4X MORE LIKELY TO BE
IN POOR HEALTH**



8X MORE LIKELY TO BE INCARCERATED

Higher education levels are correlated with lower rates of chronic diseases like diabetes and asthma. A mother's education level is the highest determinant of a child's academic success.[i] Better-educated parents raise better-educated, more successful children who are less likely to end up in poverty or prison. Inmate participation in adult education reduces recidivism by 30%.[ii]

[i] National Institutes for Health. (2010). Improving mothers' literacy skills may be the best way to boost children's achievement. <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/news/releases/pages/102510-reading-family-income.aspx>

[ii] National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies. (2018, September 17). U.S. National Supplement: Prison Study 2014, PIAAC 2012. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/blogs/nces/2017/01/11/default>

II. ADULT EDUCATION HELPS HARD WORKING AMERICANS SECURE EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

TALKING POINT #3

Research shows that when our nation invests in adult education, outcomes improve

More than 80% of learners that enter a program with the stated goal of getting their high school equivalency (HSE) credential reached that goal. A longitudinal study of adult education participants found that participation in at least 100 hours of adult education was correlated with an almost \$10,000 increase in annual earnings. With increased investments and attention placed on the adult education pipeline, even more adults can become educated and quickly make progress in earning the skills needed to obtain better jobs.



TALKING POINT #4

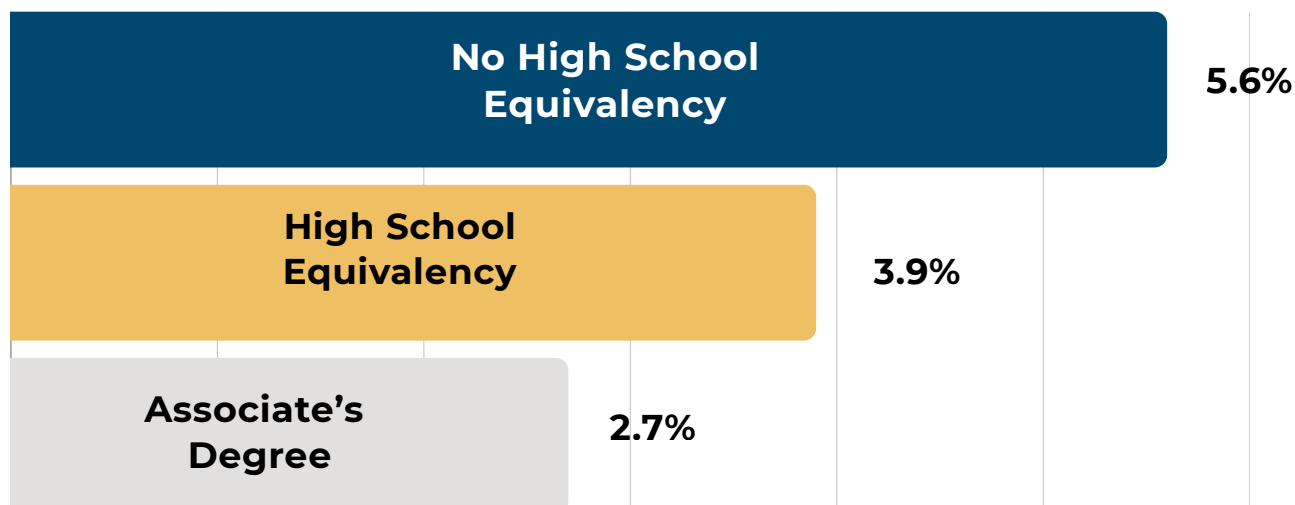
Research shows that earnings increase and unemployment rates decrease with educational attainment.

On average, the earnings of an individual with a high school diploma or its equivalent are **27% higher** than those without. [i]



Additionally, the unemployment rate of those without a high school diploma is 5.6%, while the unemployment rate of those with a high school diploma drops to 3.9%. For those with an Associate's degree, the unemployment rate drops to 2.7%.

Unemployment Rate by Academic Achievement



TALKING POINT #5

47% of GED recipients go on to higher education and have a 90% persistence rate.

While adult education provides so much more than just the high school equivalency, it is certainly a milestone. Many students complete their program and begin working while others pursue higher education. Studies show that 47% of GED recipients go on to higher education and have a 90% persistence rate. Adult education learners have grit and determination. They are fighting for a better future for themselves and their families!



**Over 4 in 10 GED
grads go on to
higher ed**



**9 in 10 GED grads who
enter higher ed finish
their degree**

III. ADULT EDUCATION HELPS EMPLOYERS BY DEVELOPING A SKILLED WORKFORCE PROFICIENT IN READING COMPREHENSION, BASIC MATH SKILLS AND DIGITAL AND INFORMATION LITERACY.

TALKING POINT #6

28 million adults in the US lack the basic digital skills that they need to use a computer.

Despite this, most adults in the workforce are using computers every day on the job.[i] We must invest in digital literacy to ensure a competitive workforce. Federally funded adult education programs provide digital literacy services while providing literacy, numeracy, citizenship, and workforce readiness skills. In addition to digital literacy skills, information literacy skills are crucial for adult learners so they are prepared for accelerating advances in technology in the workplace.



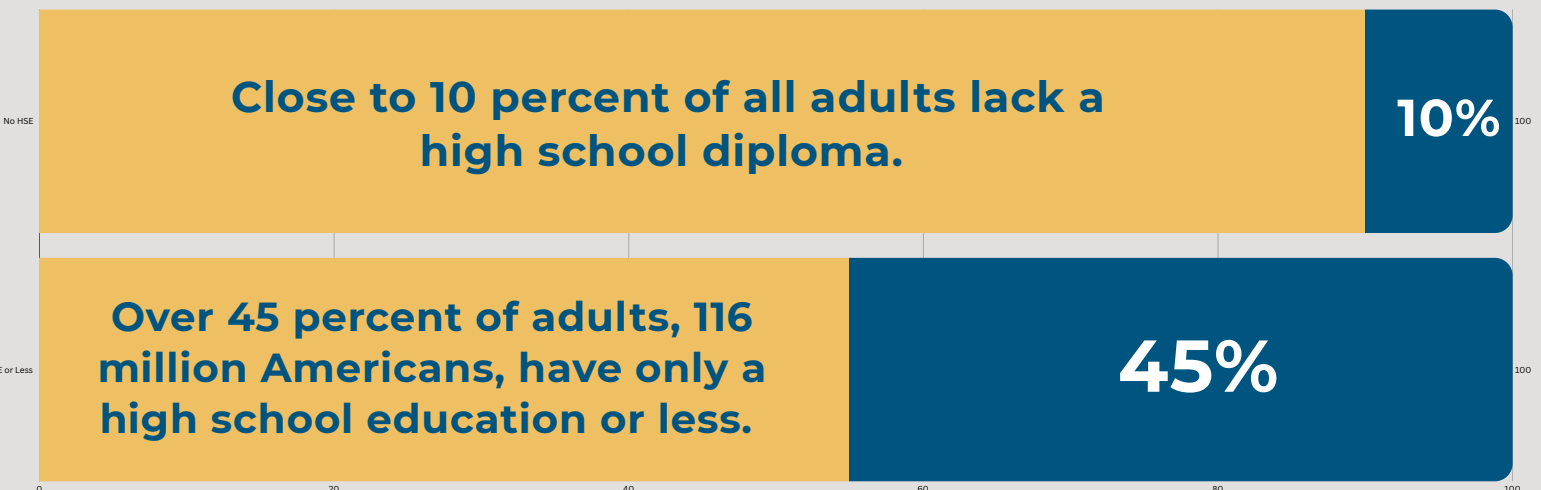
That's about 13% of the 211.55 million working age Americans who cannot use digital literacy skills.

[i] National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. (2019). Data Point: Adult Literacy in the United States. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/>

TALKING POINT #7

More than 24 million adults lack a high school diploma.[i]

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that over the next decade, there will be over seven million projected job openings each year in occupations typically requiring a high school diploma or its equivalent and nearly two million jobs requiring at least some postsecondary. Further, it is predicted that by 2031, 4.7 million job openings will be available for workers with a high school diploma compared to only 1.3 million job openings for those with less than a high school diploma.[ii]



Currently, over 50 million Americans have jobs that require no more than a high school education, but jobs with this comparatively low level of educational attainment are disappearing quickly. Americans need additional education and upskilling opportunities to fill those job openings and contribute to our economy. Educating motivated students with the skills that companies need provides qualified candidates for hard to fill positions.

[i] Census Data 2022. Published 2023. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2022/demo/educational-attainment/cps-detailed-tables.html>

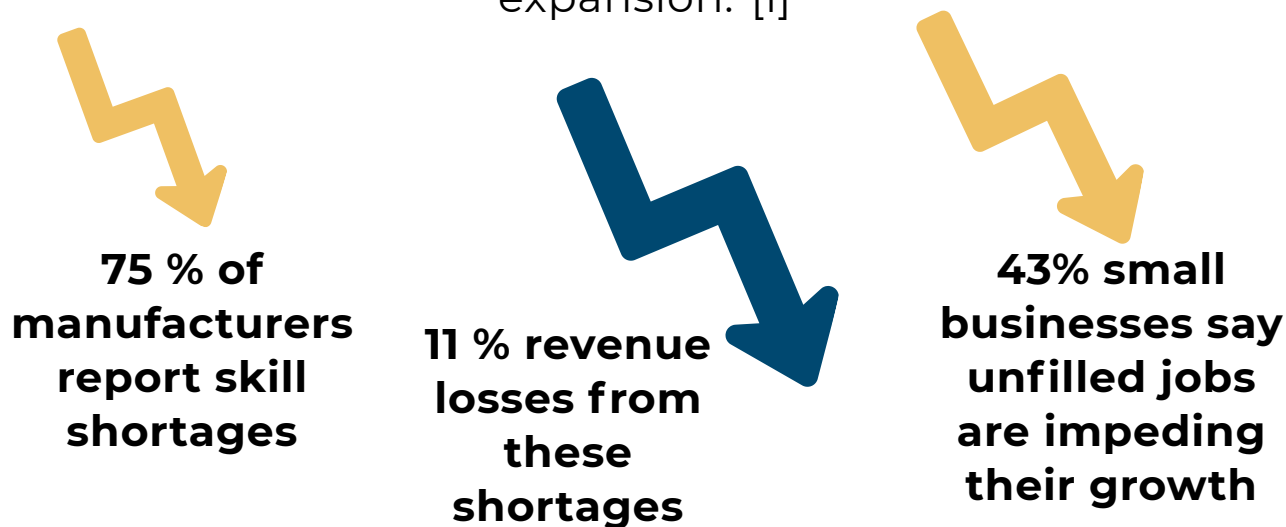
[ii] Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, Martin Van Der Werf, and Michael C. Quinn. After Everything: Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2023. cew.georgetown.edu/Projections2031.

TALKING POINT #8

Adult education can train students to fill the jobs industry needs today.

44 million adults are low-skilled, 30 million lack a high school diploma, and 66 million adults in the U.S. have limited English or reading skills, and more than 60 million can't perform simple math.

We cannot depend on a robust economy to solve this problem. A stronger economy will bring people back into the workforce but it won't provide the skills training they need. According to Alan Daley's *Overcoming the Skills Shortage*, "More than 75 percent of manufacturers report moderate to severe skill shortages and up to 11 percent revenue losses from increased production cost and sales losses due to those shortages. Service industries are hardest hit. Thirty-three percent of all small businesses say they cannot identify candidates qualified for job openings. And 43 percent of small business owners say unfilled jobs are impeding their growth or expansion." [i]



Adult education programs can train these students to fill the jobs industry needs today.

TALKING POINT #9

Adult education is good for business.

Companies miss out on growth opportunities, product development suffers, and profits stagnate without a skilled national workforce. America needs an “all hands on deck” approach to bring every available worker to the labor pool.



Adult education brings businesses options by preparing existing workers with competing life and family responsibilities with the skills that companies need through flexible classrooms and curriculum.

TALKING POINT #10

English language learners are important to the job market.

English language learners are important to the job market. Immigrants make up for the decline in the U.S.-born workforce as Baby Boomers retire. In 2024, immigrants made up 19 percent of the U.S. workforce.[i] However, nearly 25.7 million adults have limited English proficiency.[ii]

This means just over 12 percent of America's workforce needs English Language instruction!



We must train and educate these adults by increasing their English language proficiency, improving their basic skills, and helping them achieve a high school diploma or its equivalent, so that they are prepared to join and contribute to the future workforce.

[i] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Civilian Labor Force Level - Foreign Born [LNU01073395], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LNU01073395>, November 20, 2024.

[ii] U.S. Census Bureau. "Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B16001, 2022, [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2022.B16001?t=Language Spoken at Home](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2022.B16001?t=Language%20Spoken%20at%20Home). Accessed on November 20, 2024.

IV. ADULT EDUCATION HELPS THE ECONOMY BY ADDRESSING A GROWING SKILLS GAP AND LESSENING THE NEED FOR ASSISTANCE FROM FEDERAL BENEFITS PROGRAMS.

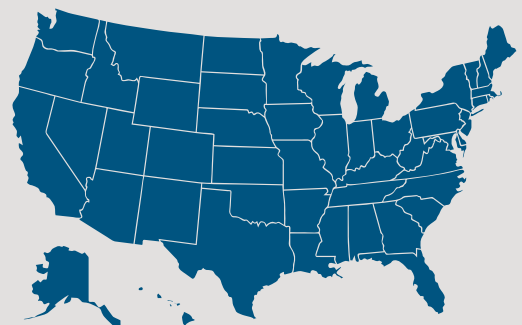
TALKING POINT #11

The return on investment from adult education is undeniable.

The adult education graduate can typically earn close to \$10,000 more per year once they get their high school diploma.[i] And as we gain more skilled workers, the entire economy benefits as well. For every 400,000 adults who earn a high school diploma, we gain \$2.5 billion back in tax revenue and reduced expenses.[ii] That's \$6,250 per person! And on top of that, the estimated value to our economy in reduced costs for public support programs for low-skilled, low-literate adults is \$200 billion annually.



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\$2.5 billion in tax revenue
\$200 billion in saved costs

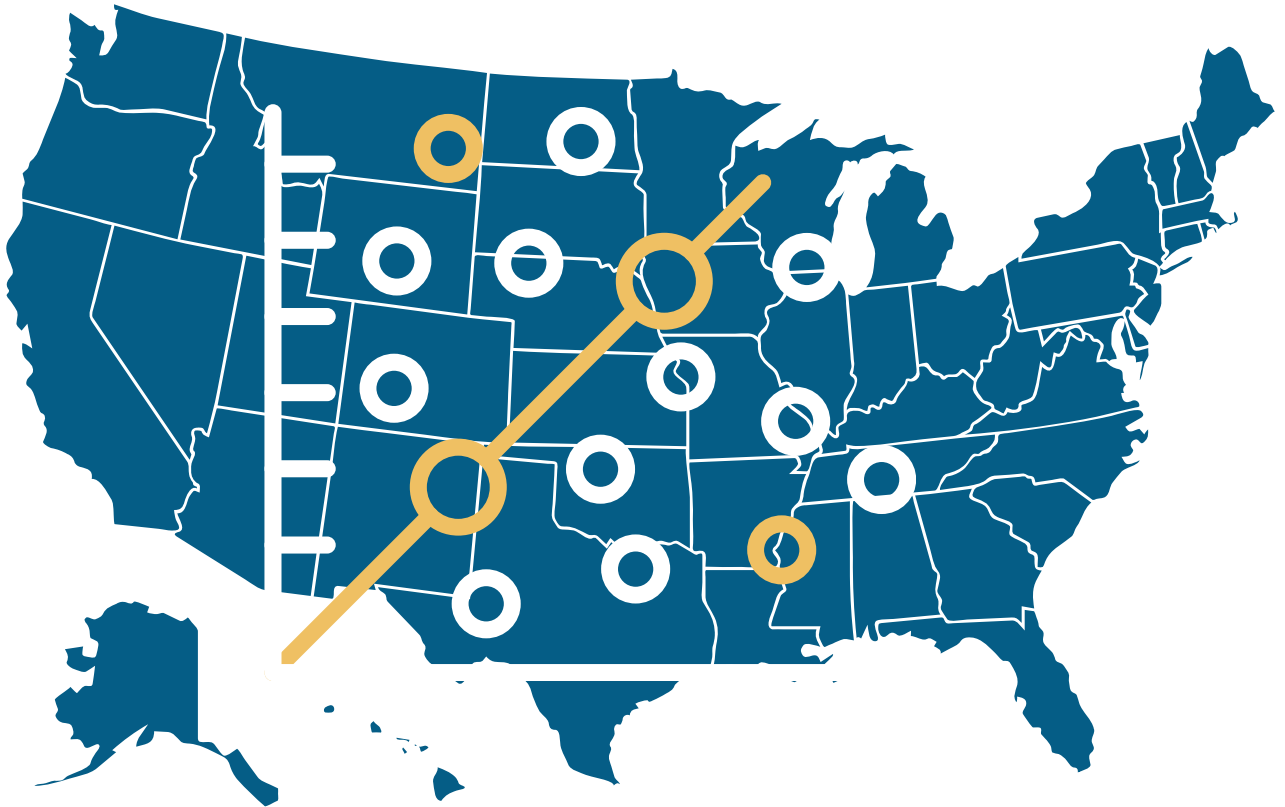
[i] Morgan, Kevin, et al. The Case for Investment in Adult Basic Education. ProLiteracy, 2017, <https://www.proliteracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Case-for-Investment-Reder.pdf>.

[ii] McLendon, L., Jones, D. and M. Rosin. (2011). The Return on Investment from Adult Education and Training. McGraw Hill Research Foundation.

TALKING POINT #12

Expanding your focus on adult education will fill more jobs.

Some jobs will be filled by those currently on a postsecondary track or by those who can easily be retrained and provided with a new skill set. However, in order to support local businesses and build the U.S. economy, we must focus on lower-skilled workers to meet future demand.

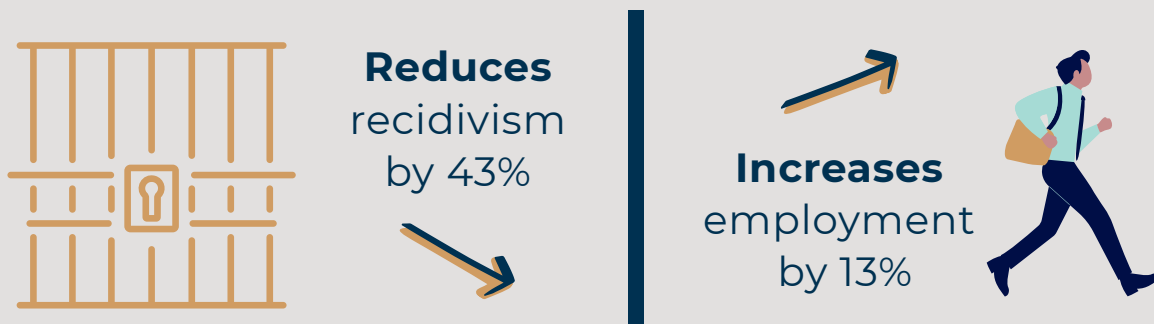


Without a major correction, tens of millions of Americans will be unprepared to fill the next wave of jobs, and we could face a dramatic increase in unemployment nationwide. We must ensure that the 43 million working-age Americans who possess low literacy skills get the education they need to access the skills training that will help fuel our future economy.

TALKING POINT #13

You can medicate, incarcerate, or educate.

A 2013 meta-analysis by the RAND Corporation found that participants in correctional education programs were 43% less likely to be rearrested [i] than those who did not participate. This is a key finding that supports adult education programs in correctional facilities as a deterrent to recidivism. The same study also found that these programs were associated with a 13% higher employment rate after release.



- **Broader benefits:** Effective education programs can help with social skills, academic and vocational development, and provide strategies to help inmates deal with emotions, all of which can contribute to successful reintegration into society.
- **Cost-Effective:** Research indicates that these programs are cost-effective, with studies finding that they save money by reducing the costs associated with reincarceration.

This is just one of many reasons why sustaining the federal investment in adult education is essential—adult education delivers vital learning opportunities both behind and beyond the walls.

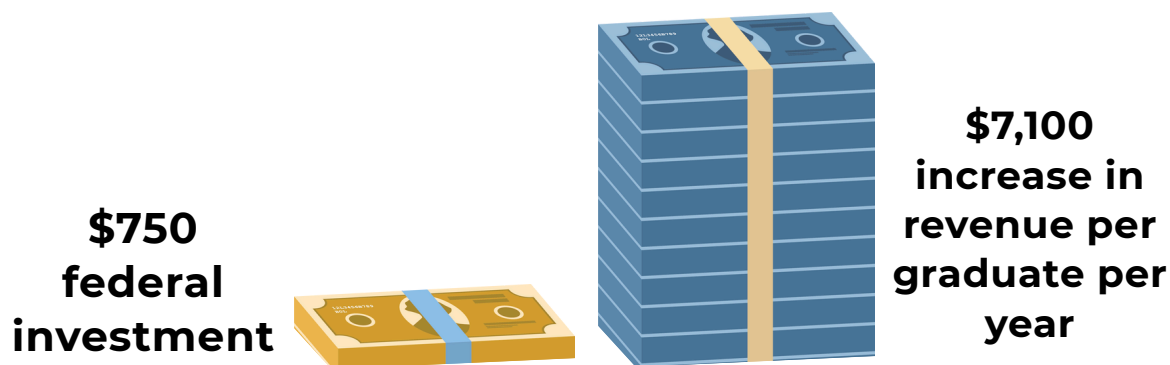
[i] Davis, L. M., Bozick, R., Steele, J. L., Saunders, J., Miles, J. N. (2013, August 22). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs that Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults. RAND. [Prison workforce and education programs reduce the likelihood of recidivism by 14.8%. Research findings also show positive employment benefits for former offenders, including a 6.9% increase in the likelihood of employment and an extra \\$131 in quarterly wages.](#) [iii]

V. FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY ASKS

TALKING POINT #14

Funding for adult literacy is inadequate.

According to a report published by The Literacy Assistance Center (LAC) of New York City, “...funding for adult literacy education is so inadequate that fewer than 4% of adult New Yorkers in need can get into classes in any given year.[i] For fiscal year 2020, WIOA Title II spending per participant is less than \$750 per adult learner.[ii]



However, unemployed residents with prior U.S. work experience who enrolled in an employment-focused English course boosted their earnings by an average of more than \$7,100 annually two years after starting the program, compared with unemployed non-English speakers who weren't in the program. Among all participants, including those who started out with jobs, the average annual increase during the second year was more than \$2,600.[iii]

[i] Literacy Assistance Center (2020) Literacy & Justice: A Call for Transformative Action.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fW4scuzRYn8bUPrxhZ4tTBjtscTAcvMM/view>

[ii] Comings, Reder, Rosen (2020). An Open Door Out of Poverty.
<https://www.literacymn.org/odc/open-door-out-of-poverty>

[iii] Johnston, Katie. (2020). First-of-its-kind study finds 'stunning' earnings gains for immigrants who learn English. The Boston Globe.
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/11/23/business/language-success/>

TALKING POINT #15

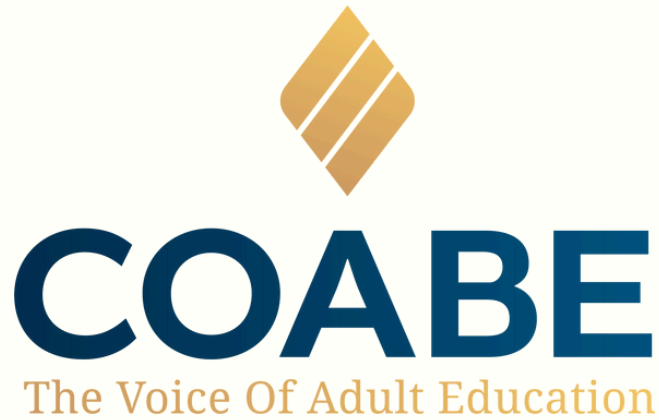
Adult education needs updated reporting requirements.

Adult education data reporting requirements are antiquated and do not fully capture the number of learners served by programs.

We recommend:

- Modernizing NRS reporting requirements to allow for programs to more accurately reflect the number of learners served, such as including review of the 12-hour rule;
- Expanding the metrics of success for graduates to include innovative indicators that show more than either postsecondary education or employment;
- Ensuring that all graduates be counted in programs' enrollment totals, rather than only those who pursue postsecondary education or obtain employment; and
- Streamlining and modernizing data collection requirements for career pathway programs, including incumbent worker programs, to encourage more employer and industry partnerships.





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