

Expanding Boundaries: Taking a Regional Approach to IELCE/IET

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The **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act** (WIOA) requires that Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) activities funded under Section 243 be offered “in combination with” Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs. While there are many ways to implement IELCE in combination with IET, this document illustrates how some adult education providers are using a regional approach to deliver IET programs that leverage resources across providers and expand access for IELCE participants.

The **Enhancing Access for Refugees and New Americans** project aims to support adult educators in developing and delivering high-quality IELCE/IET programming in alignment with an immigrant integration approach.

Enhancing Access Spotlights describe and provide examples of specific aspects of IELCE/IET implementation.

An IET is designed to assist learners in gaining foundational skills, relevant occupational skills, industry-recognized credentials, and essential workplace skills concurrently and contextually. While there is strong evidence of success supporting IET as an instructional model, some adult education programs have struggled to offer IETs in a broad range of career pathways and to form student cohorts that are large enough to make such programming feasible. To address these challenges, regional IET programs can be designed to address organizational and programmatic constraints, student interests, and occupational training requirements, and to help fulfill employers' needs.

A regional IET approach refers to the practice of shared programming among providers that allows adult learners to enroll in an IET that may not be offered in their home program. Regional IET programs may be offered statewide, across counties or a region, or within a city. No matter the geography, regional IETs expand access to a wider array of IET programs for IELCE participants and assist English learners (ELs) in advancing toward their educational and career goals. Regional IETs require intentional focus on communication and collaboration to leverage partnerships, share accountability, and provide staffing and resources that serve a region rather than a single program.

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A Regional IET

IET programming that is shared among providers, offering learners an opportunity to enroll in an IET that may not be available in their home program.

Regional IET programs may share accountability, staff, or resources.

Benefits

A regional IET approach delivers a number of benefits for adult learners and programs.

	LEARNER	PROGRAM
Equity and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increases equitable access to high-quality IET programs for learners across a state or region by increasing programmatic options and reducing barriers to participation, such as transportation and/or childcare• Serves learners with specific needs or educational and career interests, such as learners in rural areas who may be interested in a job or industry that cannot be accommodated through local programming• May increase opportunities for internationally trained professionals (ITPs) whom it may otherwise be difficult to serve in a cohort-based IET• Supports immigrants' economic integration by providing access to a wider array of tailored supportive services, education, and training options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increases programs' ability to offer IET in a range of career pathways that better align with learner goals• May enable providers to enroll students in established IET programs. This may be particularly beneficial for IELCE providers who are interested in standing up an IELCE program using section 243 funds to develop the program and meet the "in combination with" IET requirement• Expands services available for learners who may have specific educational and/or career interests (e.g., ITPs)• Enhances programs' capacity to educate learners while also offering training that may meet local workforce needs

Funding and Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reduce learner attendance costs such as transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braids funding and other resources to share costs of developing and delivering a financially viable and sustainable IET program • Creates specialized sector training programs that can be leveraged by other programs • Reduces costs associated with expanded offerings by sharing development and delivery costs across providers
Training and Workforce Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expands career opportunities for learners by offering access to a broader range of education and training programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds knowledge in specific industry sectors (e.g., licensing requirements, technical vocabulary, and skills), allowing specialization among adult education providers • Meets local, regional, and statewide workforce needs by creating a pipeline of highly qualified job candidates

Approaches to Regional IET Programs

As noted, regional IETs leverage partners, staffing, and delivery models to serve a region rather than a single program. Strategies may include collaborating within or across local workforce regions, leveraging partnerships with WIOA Title I programs and models to support and inform career pathways systems, providing local or regional career navigators, creating hybrid training and adult education and literacy instruction, and developing referral systems to identify adult learners who could benefit from specific sector training offered in another local workforce region.

The EARN project team conducted a landscape scan of research and existing practices related to IELCE and IET programs and identified several regional approaches in practice. The following approaches hold promise for adult education programs that are considering how they might develop regional approaches connecting English language instruction—including IELCE activities—to IET programming accessible beyond an individual providers' service area in order to meet the needs and goals of their adult learners.

» Approach: Virtual Statewide Offering

An approach to providing regionalized IET opportunities for learners is via virtual statewide courses.

Aspire Ohio Adult Readiness Education, the adult education division of the Ohio Department of Higher Education, has offered two statewide IET programs to serve ELs who are or have

been enrolled in IELCE classes. The two IETs, **Hospitality and Tourism** and **Customer Service**, are delivered by adult education programs, which offer synchronous virtual courses and asynchronous approved distance education curriculum (e.g., Burlington English, Engen) which deliver career-aligned English instruction and support workforce preparation. The distance education components also help students build digital literacy skills.

To support student recruitment, Aspire creates flyers for local workforce development board partners, and local programs create flyers, videos, and social media posts to recruit within their service areas. Once enrolled, Aspire coordinators mail students instructor-curated boxes with supplies and tools needed for their IET course.

To accurately track enrollment across adult education programs participating in the IET, Aspire developed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to encourage partnership and communication among programs. The state also provides guidance for determining which program receives credit for student gains, informing the development of MOUs between programs. Notably, if a pre-tested student earns a measurable skills gain (MSG) (i.e., a demonstrated gain on the NRS-approved post-test) after entering the regional IET, both programs—the home program and the virtual program—may claim credit. If a student had earned an MSG prior to entering the regional IET and earns another MSG during the IET, both the home program and the virtual program may count that MSG. This regional approach provides the following benefits:


- Learners can access sector-specific educational opportunities that are not locally available to them.
- Each partnering adult education program can document gains achieved by dually enrolled learners.
- Adult education programs can offer sector-specific education and training programming without taking on the full cost of designing and implementing a full high-quality IET program.

How Sharing Outcomes Works in Ohio: An Example

A student participates in traditional ELA classes at Program A where they took a pre-assessment. The student also participates in IECLE/IET at Program B. Program A shares the pre-assessment with Program B so that Program B does not need to reassess the student.

The student earns two MSGs: (1) MSG Type 1 EFL gain assessed via a post-test administered by Program A and (2) MSG Type 5 passage of an exam assessed through a technical skills exam administered by Program B as part of the IET.

Although the state only claims one MSG, both local programs get credit for serving the student on their desk review. This approach also reduces redundancies in student assessment.



Similar to Ohio, Minnesota also offers a statewide IET program. Minnesota has developed an asynchronous IET course, Health Care Core, administered by the Central Minnesota ABE Consortium using AEFLA funds. The course was created by the Minnesota State HealthForce Center of Excellence and adapted for ABE learners by a registered nurse and an ABE instructor. Students can be dually enrolled in ABE programming or enrolled only in the IET program, depending on their needs. The Health Care Core IET is asynchronous, so students can enter the program at any time. Once students complete their IET coursework, they can apply for credit for prior learning to receive credit at many of the Minnesota State community colleges across the state.

» Approach: Correctional Education Offerings

The Montana Department of Corrections and four campuses in the Montana University System have partnered, using braided funding and other resources, to offer incarcerated adult learners the opportunity to gain academic, workforce preparation, and occupational skills as they near their release date. Second Chance Pell Experiment¹ funding, a component of the braided funding, was utilized to offer this regional IET program. The funding covered the costs of the automotive instructor and was used to purchase a set of mechanical tools. Upon completion of the program and after release, the tools were mailed to the learners to assist them in their job search and to use in their employment.

In the automotive technology program, instructors from Helena College offer virtual lectures, and facility-based correctional education staff provide both adult education instruction and hands-on automotive instruction. The Department of Corrections works with the Montana Department of Labor and campus partners to help students find employment post-release. This regional approach provides the following benefits:

- It increases opportunities for learners to earn industry-recognized credentials.
- Local partnerships provide supportive career navigation services to learners.
- Learners receive academic support services and learn about postsecondary transition opportunities available to them at their local community college or university where they can continue their education in the community they re-enter.
- It improves learner persistence and completion for learners being released to an area of the state without access to the education and training programs.

¹The Second Chance Pell Experiment was first established in 2015 to provide Pell Grants to individuals who are incarcerated to allow them to participate in postsecondary education programs. Institutions of higher education, in partnership with correctional institutions, applied for the Second Chance Pell Experiment which enabled them to access Pell Grants. To learn more about the Second Chance Pell Experiment, visit: <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-expansion-second-chance-pell-program-and-actions-help-incarcerated-individuals-resume-educational-journeys-and-reduce-recidivism>

Separately, the FAFSA Simplification Act of 2020 restored the use of Pell Grants for incarcerated students, enabling eligible institutions of higher education to offer Pell Grants to qualified students beginning in July 2023.

» Approach: Regional Offerings

In another approach to regionalization, a State may strategically invest in regional offerings by providing funding to regional teams for planning and delivering IETs to be offered statewide or through state-identified regions.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MN DoE) has provided dedicated funding for regional teams to collaborate, plan, and establish a system to carry out shared education and training that supports postsecondary transitions. This targeted funding for planning offers program leadership the time to invest in building collaborative relationships among the adult basic education programs and their partners—a core component of building successful sustainable regional programming.²

MN DoE also supports virtual English language acquisition and workforce training programs in ten Transitions Regions. For example, the Southeast Transitions Region funds the Adult Education Southeast Regional Courses (SERC). The collaborative IET programming under SERC allows seven adult basic education programs in southeast Minnesota to share programming along two career pathways in Education and Health Care. The SERC programs are offered online and in a hybrid format; for example, a medical terminology class may include both virtual and in-person components, whereas the Nursing Assistant Prep class is offered fully online. The adult education programs also collaborate with their partners, such as local American Job Centers and colleges, to ensure that adult learners are receiving wraparound support services that prepare them for high-wage, in-demand career opportunities as well as postsecondary transition opportunities that may include college credit.

Similar to other approaches, this regional approach affords students greater access to core sector content and enables programs to serve more students in education and workforce training programs, including IETs.



²See the [Plan for Offering Distance Learning Courses Regionally in NW MN](#) as an example of how investment in collaboratives can support planning and MOUs that guide these partnerships.

» Approach: Workforce Regions

Regional IETs can also be organized through collaboration among WIOA partners. Nevadaworks, the workforce development board that serves northern Nevada, is working with employers and education and training providers to establish a regional workforce ecosystem that emphasizes educational career pathways and workforce training for adult learners that leads to high-quality careers in in-demand target sectors (i.e., health care, manufacturing, logistics and transportation, and digital technology).

To do this, Nevadaworks has started to convene local adult education providers to collaboratively offer IET/IELCE opportunities across the region. While this effort is nascent, programs are exploring how to provide learners across remote rural areas and on Tribal lands with opportunities that may not be available to them otherwise, such as access to testing for industry credentials through IET/IELCE and pre-apprenticeship programs. Programs are seeking to deliver classes in person, virtually, or as a hybrid offering, with a focus on enhancing adult education offerings in these areas. In some instances, programs may allow adult learners to enroll through one program and attend classes at another site.

The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration's Good Jobs Challenge grant currently provides funding through the Good Jobs Northern Nevada initiative for planning and instruction for historically underserved populations in remote rural regions while programs build participation and seek longer-term funding through other sources, including Title II funds. The state allows programs to co-enroll students across WIOA Title I and II and allows each program to document outcomes that are achieved during the shared programming. This strategy allows adult education programs to use multiple funding streams, thereby offering these programs the benefit of setting up and piloting regional IETs without expending dollars that are needed for existing programming and student services.



Overcoming Challenges

Taking a regional IET approach provides a real opportunity for States and local programs to foster equitable access to education and training opportunities for all adult learners. However, as noted above, there are some challenges to implementation. The table below identifies some common considerations for developing and delivering shared programming.

Considerations	Approaches to Overcoming Challenges
Funding (e.g., what funding will be utilized?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share costs among participating providers through the use of braided funding, where multiple funding streams are used for a shared purpose but are tracked and reported separately (e.g., on-site adult education paid by local program sites while the virtual workforce training is funded by a workforce training provider). • Use targeted state funding to support the development of regional programming, if available. • Collaborate with partners who can deliver identified components of the IET to create a unified offering (e.g., community college provides occupational or technical training, adult education providers provide contextualized adult education and literacy activities, local American Job Centers provide contextualized workforce preparation activities). • Identify targeted grants to support regional efforts.
Outcomes/attribution (e.g., who gets credit for MSGs and outcomes?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide state-level guidance on how outcomes will be attributed to programs when students are dually or co-enrolled (e.g., allow each program to receive credit for MSG earned and/or seat time while learners are enrolled in the program).
Delivery of services (e.g., how are services being delivered?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver fully online services that can be accessed throughout the state or region. • Deliver hybrid opportunities (e.g., online training and in-person adult education and literacy and workforce preparation activities, or vice versa, dependent on expertise and local facilities).
Coordination (e.g., who is coordinating multiple providers?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate a single agreed-upon entity or person to lead the partnership. • Work as a coalition of provider leads (e.g., representative from adult education providers, workforce development agencies, employers).

Program design (e.g., how are all three IET components presented and integrated?)

- Design the IET with partners and clearly identify how each required component is offered.
- Develop a single set of learning objectives or curriculum with integrated contextualized learning objectives to ensure that the three required IET components are included and integrated.
- Identify outcomes that ensure skills with all components are being met (e.g., articulate classes to additional training or educational offerings so that language, academic literacy, and training skill are sufficient for success along a career pathway).

Getting Started

To prepare to design and implement a regional IET approach, consider the following questions:

State Leadership

- Does state leadership support a regional strategy?
- What guidance is needed at the state level to encourage regional planning and implementation?
- What compliance issues may arise (e.g., attribution of outcomes and MSGs, seat time)?

The Region

- How will the region be defined?
- How will regionalization strengthen and create more equitable access to career pathways for adult learners, including ELs?
- Are there course offerings that will complement existing programming?
- What student supports are available in the region and what is missing?
- How can adult learners be supported to understand and navigate a regional approach?
- Are there regional sector-specific strengths?



Partnership

- Who are interested and appropriate adult education partners?
- Are there other organizations that can provide additional student supports and/or successful transitions to employment or further education and training?
- Is an MOU needed (e.g., to support data sharing)? If so, what is important to include?
- How will the three required components of IET be addressed?
- How will outcomes be attributed?

Funding

- What kind of funding is needed to support design, development, and eventual implementation of a regional IET approach?
- Are grants available to support development and implementation of a regional approach to IET?

Conclusion

These approaches illustrate various methods for offering IET programs throughout a region or state. While each approach is contextualized to its local setting, there are common themes across these examples. In each example, the state plays a role in creating an environment that is conducive to developing regional IETs; this includes providing guidance, support, and leadership for programs offering or participating in a regional IET. Some states have provided guidance on how programs might share attribution for outcomes so that a regional IET can benefit adult learners and programs can document shared outcomes, as appropriate. Another similarity across these approaches is the use of virtual instruction, which has enabled the delivery of these regional IET programs.

Lastly, these approaches to developing regional IET programs showcase methods of sharing costs and resources for program development and implementation. Through state support, the strategic use of technology and collaboration, and innovations in outcomes and cost-sharing among partners, regional IET approaches have the potential to expand adult learners' access to a wider range of IET programs that may better fit their interests, needs, and identified career pathway.

Learn More

Explore the following resources to learn more about braiding funding:

- Watch the webinar [“Yes, WIOA Can! Effectively Leveraging or Braiding Multiple Funding Sources with WIOA”](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor.
- OCTAE's Advance IET project's [IET Strategies in Action: Promising Practices for IET Pathways to Postsecondary Education](#) summary includes examples of braiding funding.
- Explore the Institute for Professional Development of Adult Educators resource, [IET and Braided Funding: A Practical Approach](#), for an example of how Florida is providing support for this approach.