



Compendium of Innovative Practices: Secondary Credentialing Programs for Adults

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Introduction

Development of adults' skills and educational attainment are central to addressing the economic and equity issues present in the U.S. Without opportunities for quality education and training, adults with low literacy are limited in their prospects for economic mobility and their opportunities to build strong, stable families.

Estimates from the three national adult literacy assessments conducted since 1992 indicate that the number of adults in the U.S. with low English literacy and numeracy skills has remained constant. The most recent assessment of the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, revealed that 22% (51.4 million) of U.S. adults ages 16-74 lack the English literacy skills needed to perform literacy tasks such as comparing and contrasting information or making low-level inferences. Included in this group are adults who were unable to understand sentences, read relatively short texts, or complete simple forms.ⁱ

The most recent assessment of the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, revealed that 22% (51.4 million) of U.S. adults ages 16-74 lack the English literacy skills needed to perform literacy tasks such as comparing and contrasting information or making low-level inferences.

The implications of low literacy are considerable.

Adults with lower literacy skills have significantly poorer health outcomes. They often have less access to healthcare and can have difficulty in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.ⁱⁱ Adults with low literacy also are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed and in low-wage jobs with limited opportunity for advancement.ⁱⁱⁱ This points to a critical need for services that can help adults strengthen their literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills so they can build a pathway to a better life.^{iv}

In the U.S., the main federal legislation that supports adults in developing their literacy and foundational skills is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Title II, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).^v Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, AEFLA funds states to provide literacy and basic skills services through grantees known as adult education (AE) programs that are part of local education agencies, community colleges, community-based organizations, and other entities. A key challenge facing AE programs is how to deliver high quality, engaging services that can meet the needs of a wide range of adults with foundational skills below the postsecondary level. With time demands from family, work, and community, adults who are motivated to increase their skills and economic opportunities need to be able to do so efficiently and with flexibility. As AE state offices and AE local programs carry out activities stipulated in WIOA, there is a need for information about new products and processes for delivering services that can result in meaningful outcomes for learners. These outcomes include learners' development of knowledge and skills, attainment of a secondary credential or its equivalent, and transition to further education and employment.

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) funded Manhattan Strategy Group (MSG) and Abt Associates (Abt) to lead the Advancing Innovation in Adult Education project (Advancing Innovation) to identify and disseminate innovative practices supported under the Adult Education and Family Literacy, Title II of WIOA.^{vi} The overarching goal of the project is to solicit applications from AE programs about their new or substantially enhanced practices that can lead to Title II learner outcomes, and highlight those that meet the project's criteria for being innovative and have some evidence of outcomes. The project team also provides technical assistance to AE programs to identify or enhance potentially innovative practices, determine learners' outcomes from the use of those practices, and to prepare innovative practices for use in other AE programs. The goal is to inspire and promote the development and use of innovation in AE that can result in high quality services and positive outcomes for adult learners.

The Advancing Innovation in Adult Education project is a five-year effort led by Manhattan Strategy Group and Abt Associates, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, to identify and highlight innovative practices in adult education that lead to improved learner outcomes.

The Advancing Innovation team is conducting five rounds of application solicitations over a five-year period to identify and highlight innovative practices. Through these activities the project team hopes to increase AE professionals' knowledge about innovation and their interest in developing new products and processes, as well as build their capacity in developing initial evidence about learners' outcomes from their participation in innovative practices.

This compendium describes the four innovative practices selected from the Round 1 applications which AE programs submitted in September 2019 (see *Criteria for Selecting Innovative Practices* below). The four practices and the programs in which they are being implemented are the following:

- *Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (IBEST)*, Pima Community College, Tucson, AZ
- *Integrated High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) Program*, Western Technical College, La Crosse, WI
- *Multi-Craft Core Curriculum High School Equivalency Diploma (MC3/HSED) Program*, Literacy Services of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI
- *National External Diploma Program® (NEDP)*, Mercy Learning Center, Bridgeport, CT

This compendium provides information about practices with new and enhanced approaches for adults to earn a secondary credential that include occupational training or earning of

postsecondary credits as part of the credentialing option, and that involve web-based delivery of a credentialing program. A variety of stakeholders will find this information useful, including AE state staff; AE program administrators, instructors, and staff; workforce development staff; federal agency staff; and AE researchers.

Discussed below are the project's selection of innovative practices, the context for the practices that were selected, and profiles of each of the innovative practices.

Selection of Innovative Practices

The Advancing Innovation team's selection of innovative practices for Round 1 involved:

- Specification of the project's key concepts,
- Development of criteria for selecting innovative practices,
- Design of an application form to gather information about potential innovative practices,
- Solicitation of applications, and
- Rating of applications and final selection of innovative practices.

Key Concepts

The definitions for the key concepts, “innovative” and “practices,” vary considerably in the literature. The Advancing Innovation team chose definitions that are supported by key stakeholders across education systems and countries and that are appropriate for use in an adult education project.

Innovative. Among the most widely accepted definition of innovation comes from the Oslo Manual developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development^{vii} and concerns four types of innovation: product, process, marketing, and organizational.^{viii} Because this project is focused on innovative practices that are directly related to AE learners' outcomes, the Oslo definition was adapted to include only the types of innovative practices that meet this criterion. The definition used in the project is:

Innovative practices are: (1) new products (e.g., a curriculum), services (e.g., inclusion of career and college advising), or significantly improved AE products or services; (2) new processes or significantly improved processes for delivering AE services (e.g., use of online learning), or (3) new or significantly improved ways of organizing AE services (e.g., integrated education and training) that result in improved outcomes for AE learners.

Practice. The word “practice” is defined in various dictionaries as the actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method, as opposed to theories relating to it. For this project, a “practice” is defined in relationship to the learner outcomes it is intended to facilitate. The definition used in this project is:

A practice is an instructional or supportive activity carried out to facilitate AE learners' improved knowledge development, skill development, secondary credential attainment, postsecondary credential attainment, and/or employment.

Criteria for Selecting Innovative Practices

The Advancing Innovation team developed a set of criteria to assess the merits of the applications submitted. The criteria are organized according to the administrative requirements for a practice, the characteristics of the practice, and learners' outcomes as a result of the practice.

The administrative requirements are that the state adult education office provides a letter of support for the AE program in which the practice is being implemented and verifies that the program is receiving AEFLA funds. Parameters for the timeline, during which the practice was developed or was enhanced, were set at 10 years, which covers the time period when the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was still operational. WIA's guidance concerning the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act prompted adult education state and local entities to begin to envision adult education services as a step for preparing adult learners for further education and employment rather than an endpoint. This vision has been reinforced and extended in WIOA. The 10-year timeline for practices to have been developed or enhanced provides opportunities for AE programs to submit applications for practices that were created under WIA funding as well as under WIOA.

The criteria for the characteristics of a practice address several aspects. Because the practice must facilitate learners' outcomes, the Advancing Innovation project is recognizing new or significantly enhanced practices that are directly related to learners' development of basic skills, attainment of a postsecondary credential, or attainment of a postsecondary credential or employment. These practices are products (e.g., a curriculum) or services (e.g., inclusion of career and college advising), processes for delivering AE services (e.g., use of online learning), or ways of organizing AE services (e.g., integrated education and training).

The Advancing Innovation team assesses the extent of the innovativeness of a practice as determined by existing literature or expert opinion. Although the research literature in adult education is limited, one area with a substantial number of studies is adult reading instruction. These studies help determine whether an AE program's approach to reading instruction is new or innovative in design or delivery. The stipulations in WIOA concerning adult education practices are the main sources guiding the project's determination of whether an AE practice is innovative. The practices referenced in those sources reflect either new directions in AE or practices with an evidence base. The relevant sections of WIOA are Section 231, Grants and Contracts for Local Providers, Section 242, National Leadership Activities, and Section 243, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education and other key sections with relevant practices. For example, Section 231 cites practices such as learning in context, use of technology to increase the amount and quality of instruction, and instruction using the essential components of reading instruction. Section 242 references integrated education and training programs and postsecondary education and training transition programs, among other practices, and Section 243 lists integrated English literacy and civics education in combination with integrated education and training activities.^{ix}

The Advancing Innovation team also assesses (1) whether the target population of learners who can benefit from the practice is specified in the application, and (2) the portability of the practice. In examining the portability of the practice, the Advancing Innovation team considers the extent to which the practice's materials have been documented, professional development is available to train other staff to use the practice, and the costs and other resources needed to implement the practice are specified.

The final criteria for the project's selection of innovative practices concern learner outcomes. The project team examines whether data on learners' outcomes are included in a program's application and whether the data (1) indicate reasonable outcomes based on the type of practice, (2) are from at least one program year of participation, (3) are from U.S. Department of Education's National Reporting System (NRS) tables or other similar data, and (4) show positive results for learners.

Criteria for Selection of Innovative Practices

Administrative Requirements

- ☐ **Letter of Support:** Letter of support from state's adult education office.
- ☐ **Funding for Practice:** Practice is implemented in an AE program that receives WIOA, Title II, AEFLA funding.
- ☐ **Age of Practice:** Practice (1) was developed or significantly refined or enhanced during the past 10 years; and (2) has operated in an AE program for at least one year.

Characteristics of Practice

- ☐ **Type of Practice:** Practice is a (1) new product (e.g., a curriculum), service (e.g., inclusion of career and college advising) or significantly improved AE product or service; (2) new process or significantly improved process for delivering AE services (e.g., use of online learning); or (3) new or significantly improved way of organizing AE services (e.g., integrated education and training).
- ☐ **Extent of Innovativeness:** Practice is different from what is generally implemented in AE programs, as determined by existing literature or expert opinion.
- ☐ **Target Population:** Target population of learners who can benefit from the practice is specified.
- ☐ **Portability of Practice:** Practice can be used in whole or in part by other AE programs as indicated by the reasonableness of the requirements for staff and materials, cost of implementing practice, and/or availability of professional development for transferring activities associated with the practice.

Learner Outcomes from Practice

- ☐ **Outcome Data:** Data (1) indicate reasonable outcomes based on the type of practice, (2) are from at least one program year of participation, (3) are from NRS tables or other similar data, and (4) show positive results for learners.

Application Form and Solicitation of Applications

An application form was designed to gather information about the AE program and all aspects of the practice's operation, outcomes, and innovative characteristics. The Advancing Innovation Application Form for Round 1 is found in Appendix A.

The Advancing Innovation project team disseminated information about the Round 1 application process through postings on the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS), Coalition for Adult Basic Education (COABE), OCTAE's newsletter Shop Talk, teleconferences, and other venues. The application also was made available on the Advancing Innovation in Adult Education webpage, as part of the federal initiatives section of the LINCS website. The staff conducted presentation sessions at the COABE Annual Conference, the Adult Education State Director's Annual Meeting, and the Virginia Adult Education Conference. The staff also conducted two webinars about the application process and held virtual office hours to address questions about the application process. Ten applications were submitted for Round 1.

Ratings of Applications and Selection of Practices

Three Advancing Innovation project staff, Abt's Principal Investigator (PI), MSG's Project Director (PD), and a member of Abt's project team, reviewed the applications using a two-stage process. During the first stage, Abt's PI oriented the reviewers to the criteria for assessing the applications using the project's application review form that has three sections for rating the applications, which are: (1) Program Information and Certification, (2) Description of Applicant Innovative Practice, and (3) Learner Outcome Data. Those sections are aligned with the review criteria listed in the *Application Review Criteria* section above. Each reviewer rated the applications independently using the review form and their ratings were compared as part of the process of establishing interrater reliability. After completing their independent reviews, the reviewers discussed their differences in ratings and their understanding of the criteria. The reviewers then conducted a second round of independent ratings. The level of agreement between pairs of reviewers (PI and PD, PI and Abt staff, PD and Abt staff) was established after each pair reached at least 85% agreement.

After the reviewers completed their ratings of the applications, the project's PI and PD conducted follow-up telephone calls with the program director and key staff knowledgeable about the practice from the most highly rated programs to discuss the operation of the practices and the outcome data presented in the applications. The programs were then asked to submit additional data. The PI and PD reviewed those data to make a final determination of the innovative practices that the staff would recommend to OCTAE for review and final approval.

Context for Secondary Credentialing Practices

This round of applicants focused on secondary credentialing. The importance of a secondary credential as the minimum educational attainment enabling adults to obtain family sustaining jobs has been well documented.^x Secondary credentials are also seen as the gateway to postsecondary education or training, critical for economic advancement and stability.^{xi} Recent U.S.



Census data on educational attainment in the U.S. in 2019 show that approximately 27 million people age 18 years and older do not have a high school diploma. Of those, 83% are 25 years and older,^{xiii} indicating the need for secondary credentialing processes that can assist adults across a wide range of ages.

Until recently, the primary path for adults to attain a secondary credential has been the General Educational Development (GED®) test. During the past six years, additional test options (i.e., HiSET® and the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC™) have become available. While many adults have been able to earn a high school equivalency credential by completing one of these standardized tests, which remain the dominant way for adults to earn a secondary credential, other adults have not been as successful. The need for an alternative to the GED® was recognized many years ago when the New York State External Diploma Program, a competency-based applied performance high school credentialing system was developed and modeled after the New York State Regents External Degree.^{xiii} Subsequently, other states have developed alternatives to standardized tests as secondary credentialing options for adult learners, as the need for a secondary credential has become a critical gateway to further education and employment.

The four AE practices highlighted in this compendium illustrate innovative approaches for adults to attain a secondary credential while developing skills for career readiness, earning college credits, or obtaining an occupational certificate in a career pathway.

Recent U.S. Census data on educational attainment in the U.S. in 2019 show that approximately 27 million people age 18 years and older do not have a high school diploma. Of those, 83% are 25 years and older, indicating the need for secondary credentialing processes that can assist adults across a wide range of ages.

Pima Community College's (PCC) Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (IBEST) is an enhancement of Washington State's I-BEST program. PCC has integrated learners' preparation for and receipt of a GED® credential into its IBEST program. IBEST learners co-enroll in the ARIZONA@WORK-Pima One-Stop Career Center and receive wraparound support services to help them succeed. An important feature of PCC's IBEST program is that learners who have not yet earned their HSE Diploma can use the Ability to Benefit provision in the Higher Education Act to access federal financial aid. The IBEST programs are currently the only designated Career Pathways Programs eligible for Ability to Benefit at PCC.

Wisconsin's PI 5.09 (HSED^{xiv}) is an example of an innovative approach taken by a state to enable local entities to develop unique high school equivalency programs. Organizations proposing a new 5.09 high school equivalency program must develop a plan and receive approval from the state superintendent of education, and all programs must document that program participants have passed the state's civics test. Western Technical College in La Crosse, WI is using the HSED option to implement the Integrated HSED Program. Through this

curricular design, learners apply past learning in new situations which reinforces the generalizability of the skills they are learning. Within two semesters, learners can earn an HSED and college credits from two courses. Participation in the two college courses eases learners' transition to college through the support they receive in applying for financial aid and the college and career planning that is provided to them. Another program, Literacy Services of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, has partnered with the Wisconsin Regional Training Program to use the 5.09 HSED mechanism to offer the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) in combination with a contextualized 5.09 HSED. Through this program adult learners earn an HSED and the industry-recognized MC3 pre-apprenticeship certificate, which prepares them for employment or enrollment in a registered apprenticeship in the building trades.

The Mercy Learning Center in Connecticut has been part of the state's implementation of the National External Diploma Program® (NEDP), formerly called the New York State External Diploma Program. The NEDP is an example of a significantly enhanced existing innovative practice, as defined by this project. During the past six years, the Mercy Learning Center has been part of the NEDP's enhancement process in which the content of the NEDP competencies has been aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. NEDP candidates can receive credit for their career readiness skills, and the NEDP assessment system can be implemented entirely through web-based delivery.

Profiles of Highlighted Practices

Profiles of the four practices selected as innovative from Round 1 are presented next. The profiles provide information about the components of services delivered in each practice, the target population for the practice, its innovative features, and the types of outcomes the AE program reported from the practice. The profiles are not intended to be a guide for the replication of a practice, but rather to stimulate interest about the ways in which new approaches have been developed or implemented in AE programs.

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (IBEST), Pima Community College

Pima Community College (PCC) is a large multi-campus community college in Tucson, AZ. The college's mission is to be an open-admissions institution providing affordable, comprehensive educational opportunities that support learner success and meet the diverse needs of its learners and community. The Adult Basic Education for College & Career (ABECC) division at PCC offers instruction in adult basic education (ABE), English as a second language (ESL), Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (IBEST), Math Bridge, refugee education, citizenship, high school equivalency (HSE) programs, and General Educational Development (GED®) preparation at the college and at the Pima County Jail.

Helping adult learners attain a GED® while they simultaneously earn CTE credits.

ABECC served 5,363 learners across all programs during the 2018–2019 program year (PY) and employed 60 full-time staff and 44 part-time staff.

Description of IBEST

PCC's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (IBEST)^{xv} is an instructional model providing pathways for adult learners in which they develop their basic skills in reading, writing, and math while they pursue a certificate in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program at PCC. IBEST enables learners to enroll in credit CTE classes and work simultaneously toward attaining a CTE certificate and a GED® credential. Integrated teams composed of ABECC staff, ARIZONA@WORK-Pima County One-Stop Career Center staff, and PCC faculty and staff, work together toward multiple shared goals for learners, including academic progress and success, earning a postsecondary certificate, an HSE diploma, industry-recognized credentials, and gaining employment in the sector.

PCC's IBEST programs and associated certificates during 2020 are:

- [Medical Assistant \(MA\) IBEST](#): Medical Assistant Certificate
- [Automated Industrial Technology \(AIT\) IBEST](#): Automated Industrial Technology Level I Certificate
- [Logistics & Supply Chain Management \(LOG\) IBEST](#): Logistics and Supply Chain Management Certificate

The IBEST programs that PCC offers vary from year to year depending on the demands of the local labor market. Past IBEST programs at PCC include Hotel & Restaurant Management IBEST, Behavioral Health Services IBEST, and Machine Tool Technology IBEST.

Target Population and Requirements

IBEST typically serves adults whose TABE® 11/12 scores are at NRS Adult Secondary Level. Learners must also meet ACCUPLACER® entry requirements for each CTE program.

Key Components

The IBEST program at PCC involves a series of activities and supports. Learners participate in the program as a cohort. The key components are the following:

- IBEST Activities.** In an IBEST classroom, an ABECC instructor co-plans and co-teaches with a CTE faculty member. Learners gain the critical skills and knowledge provided with the support systems needed to help them persist and succeed in the CTE program and earn a GED® credential. Additional instructional time is incorporated into all IBEST models, where the adult education instructor provides contextualized instruction to develop the students' skills in reading, writing, math, digital literacy, and employment readiness.
- Work Readiness/Employability.** Each IBEST curriculum includes an employability unit where learners develop employability portfolios that contain a tailored resume, cover letter, inventory of certificates or training learners have received, information on potential employers, and frequently asked interview questions. Learners also practice interviewing skills that prepare them for a job fair that is held at the end of each IBEST program. CTE faculty and One-Stop Center staff work with the IBEST team to identify internships, when applicable to the IBEST program. The IBEST team also collaborates with the CTE faculty and leadership to organize site visits to potential employers and to invite industry representatives to speak to learners about careers in their sectors.
- GED® Credential Attainment.** Learners without a high school diploma or equivalent who enroll in one of PCC's IBEST programs receive additional support throughout the program to obtain the GED® credential.
- Financial Aid.** PCC's IBEST learners who have not yet earned their HSE Diploma can use the Ability to Benefit^{xvi} provision in the Higher Education Act to access federal financial aid. IBEST programs are currently the only designated *Career Pathway Programs* eligible for Ability to Benefit at PCC. During PY 2018–2019, approximately half of the learners studying in an IBEST program were concurrently seeking their HSE diploma.
- Co-enrollment in ARIZONA@WORK-Pima County One-Stop Career Center.** PCC's IBEST learners are co-enrolled in the ARIZONA@WORK-Pima County One-Stop Career Center to prepare students for employment or to pursue further training and/or education.
- Other Supportive Services.** Outside of the classroom, the PCC's IBEST program provides critical wraparound support and coordinated systems of communication and referrals to seamlessly help learners succeed in the program and be prepared for employment or further training/education. The ABECC division's program advisor and



student services specialists work with learners on their educational plans, assist them with challenges navigating college systems, and help with registration or financial aid questions and issues. This team also provides emergency support and guidance for learners in crisis situations, including identifying and connecting learners with community resources and assistance to address challenges such as: housing insecurity, food insecurity, resource acquisition to ease financial stress, referral to counseling support services, coordination with probation officers, case workers, and family members, or facilitating efforts to obtain financial assistance or services from federal, state, or local sources.

To facilitate coordination among partners, all IBEST programs hold monthly operations team meetings with instructors/faculty, student services staff, One-Stop Center partners, and other partners such as Health Pathways Opportunities Grant (HPOG HOPES) or JobPath's workforce development program. Planning for job fairs, internships, and graduation ceremonies is coordinated through those meetings. CTE faculty, AE instructors, and student services staff also meet weekly to stay informed about learners' progress.

Duration

The length of the IBEST program cohorts is between 12 to 15 months depending on the IBEST program curriculum.

Resources Needed to Implement Program

To implement IBEST, an adult education program must have partnerships with career and technical training providers. The program also needs partnerships with community organizations to be able to refer learners to wraparound and support services.

Learners' occupational training typically is funded using federal financial aid, WIOA funds available through the Pima County One-Stop Center, and other funding sources such as grant-funded programs. Other expenses for learners include course-related items such as textbooks or lab-related items such as a stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, and scrubs for health-related programs. Learners participating in health-related programs are required to complete Basic Life Support (BLS) Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid classes and complete a drug screen and background check as they prepare for an internship. These types of costs are typically paid for by the One-Stop Center, the HPOG grant or other partner programs.

Innovative Features

PCC's IBEST program is innovative because it enables adult education learners to earn a GED® while they are earning college credits, thereby accelerating learners' completion of a college credential and placement in employment. Key features of IBEST are the following:

- The IBEST program integrates instruction that supports IBEST learners' attainment of a GED®, which is an enhancement of Washington State's I-BEST model.

- ABECC provides extensive wraparound and support services to IBEST participants, which enables them to stay engaged in the program.
- IBEST learners co-enroll with ARIZONA@WORK-Pima One-Stop Career Center, which facilitates their access to labor market information and job placement opportunities as they complete their IBEST program.
- IBEST staff have developed strong partnerships with the ARIZONA@WORK-Pima One-Stop Career Center, supportive services in the community, PCC's career and technical education faculty, and with other divisions in the college to ensure that IBEST learners have comprehensive supports and access to the services they need to earn a CTE credential and a GED® credential.
- IBEST learners who have not earned a high school diploma can access federal financial aid through the Ability to Benefit provision in the Higher Education Act, which is not yet a widespread practice in adult education programs in Arizona and in other states.

Learners' Outcomes

The data in the table reflect whole cohorts of learners in the IBEST programs. The cohorts run 12 to 15 months and across program years. IBEST programs' completion rates have increased over time. More than half of the learners in IBEST who work to earn a GED® credential do so.

	Machine Tool Technology (1/2017–12/2018)	Medical Assistant 1 (12/2017–3/2019)	Automated Industrial Technology 1 (1/2019–12/2019)	Logistics & Supply Chain Management 1 (1/2019–12/2019)
Number of learners enrolled in the IBEST program	12	34	14	18
Percentage and number who completed¹ an IBEST program	50% (6)	65% (22)	79% (11)	78% (14)
Percentage and number who earned CTE certificate	50% (6)	68% (23)	71% (10)	72% (13)
Percentage and number who earned CTE certificate and were employed within one year of completion	67% (4)	70% (16)	80% (8)	100% (13)
Number of learners who started IBEST without a high school diploma	11	13	7	10
Percentage and number without a high school diploma who earned a GED®	73% (8)	77% (10)	57% (4)	60% (6)

PCC provided the data in the table based on their NRS reports submitted to the Arizona Department of Education.

¹Completed means learners completed the last semester of coursework in the IBEST program. Some learners who complete the program may have to retake one or more classes to earn a CTE certificate.

Contact Information

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Integrated High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) Program, Western Technical College

Western Technical College (WTC) offers Wisconsin's 5.09 Integrated High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) in the college's Learner Support and Transition Division. The college's mission is to provide relevant, high quality education in a collaborative and sustainable environment that changes the lives of students and strengthens the college's communities. Located in La Crosse, WI, the college has six regional satellite sites. Its Learner Support and Transition division offers instruction in adult basic education (ABE), English language learning (ELL), GED® preparation, HSED instruction, and support for college credit courses.

Helping adult learners earn a high school diploma and college credits in two semesters.

The college's Learner Support and Transition Division serves approximately 1,500 learners annually and employs 15 full-time and 48 part-time faculty.

Description of the HSED Program

WTC redesigned its 5.09 HSED program in 2016 to align with Wisconsin's shifts in ABE curriculum to address the U.S. Department of Education's College and Career Readiness Standards in Adult Education. The shift in math was known as *Focus, Coherence, and Rigor*. The English Language Arts/Literacy shift, *Complexity, Evidence, and Knowledge*, combined reading, writing, and communications instead of maintaining curriculum standards for each category. The shifts highlighted spiraling and integrating curriculum around themes, which reflected WIOA's priorities.

As a result of the redesign, the HSED program involves a 5.09 course that has five thematic integrated units with 27 lessons or learning activities that address Wisconsin's HSED competencies (see Appendix B) and promote pathways to work or college. The integrated units are delivered to cohorts of students and shorten the time it takes for them to attain an HSED. The HSED program also involves a 5.09 Transition course that addresses career exploration, employability skills, and critical reflection on prior learning, employment, or volunteer experiences and for which learners may earn college credit for prior experience. The third course in the program is a college course that aligns with learners' desired college program and for which learners can earn college credits. Learners also must pass the state's civics exam to attain an HSED, which is a state diploma issued by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Target Population and Requirements

To enroll in the HSED program, the state of Wisconsin requires that learners are at least 18.5 years of age, hold proof of Wisconsin residency, have no prior secondary credential, and participate in an assessment and counseling session. To enter the HSED program at WTC, learners must attain a reading score at the NRS Level 3 or higher on Level M, D, or A of the TABE® 11 & 12. Learners may begin in Project Proven,^{xvii} the Alternative High School Program,

GED® preparation, ELL classes, or at the Literacy Council before they attain the required TABE® Reading test score to transition to the HSED program.

Key Components

At WTC's La Crosse campus, the HSED program is classroom-based, with a team of two teachers who provide instruction on campus. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the classes have been delivered online. At satellite locations, the program is computer-based, instructor-guided and delivered in an onsite computer lab. During the first of two semesters, learners complete the 5.09 HSED integrated, spiraled, thematic curriculum and take the ACCUPLACER® test. During the second semester, learners can complete two credit-bearing, graded courses.

- 5.09 HSED Integrated, Spiraled, Thematic Curriculum (classroom-based and computer-based).** The first semester curriculum units are spiraled, meaning that the units return to the same topics in different contexts and at increasing levels of complexity. The curriculum can be co-taught by two certified teachers face to face, or taught by one certified teacher, or through teacher-guided instruction delivered synchronously or asynchronously using Blackboard. The curriculum addresses seven content areas: (1) communication, (2) health, (3) math, (4) reading, (5) science (6) social studies, and (7) computer literacy across five thematic units. The units reflect learners' process of achieving a diploma or starting a career: preparation, building, balance, challenges and obstacles, and change. Each unit begins with a guiding question based in social studies or civics; and instruction focuses on learner exploration, problem-solving, participation, and growth. The curriculum is poverty informed, includes local history that is racially diverse, and opportunities for in-depth discussion of current issues. Although there are no formal tests in the first semester, there is ongoing assessment in reading, math, and problem-solving through discussion, project-based activities and individual assignments, lab work, and teamwork.



During the first semester, at the La Crosse campus, these units are taught to a cohort of learners in a classroom with two instructors team-teaching. At satellite locations, where there is only one instructor, the units are taught in a computer lab using Blackboard software. The content is available via Blackboard, with an instructor onsite to answer questions, guide learners, discuss content, and push learners forward. Learners must demonstrate mastery of competencies through a variety of in-class and homework assessments; there are no formal assessments.

Instructors have supplemented coursework with ABE content, assigned peer buddies, and added other supports to ensure learner success. If learners complete one or more units and then encounter barriers to their continued participation, they can either participate in the computer-based version of the units or take a break from the coursework and return within two years to continue. Learners must also pass the state-mandated civics exam, which can be taken at the WTC Testing Center at any point prior to completion.

- **College-level, Credit-bearing, Graded Courses.** In the second half of the first semester, all learners take the ACCUPLACER® test to determine which credit-bearing course a learner is eligible to enroll in for the second semester. Learners work with a career coach to determine which course would best fit with their college or career goals. This process motivates learners to apply to college, complete financial aid and scholarship forms, and participate in college or career counseling with the support of faculty whom they know.

During the second semester, learners enroll in the Transitions course, which comprises career exploration, employability skills (e.g., resume and cover letter writing), and critical reflection on prior learning, employment, or volunteer experiences. Learners compile their work in a portfolio, and at the close of the course, they can choose to interview with a business instructor to obtain credit for prior learning. This is allowable because the curriculum for this 5.09 course is parallel to that of the WTC business course called *Professionalism and Success*. The HSED staff have formed a partnership with the *Professionalism and Success* instructor to facilitate learners' credit attainment. Learners can also obtain an additional three credits for the documentation of their work history, and some learners have earned an industry-recognized Customer Service Representative Certificate through the documentation of their work history.

Pathways are not feasible at WTC because of the small number of learners and their diverse career and college goals. In order to promote pathways, WTC offers a graded course option for HSED learners. They select this college course based on their postsecondary program of interest. It may be a developmental education course, or any college course students qualify for based on their ACCUPLACER® test score. HSED learners can earn college credit for this course. The HSED instructor provides support to learners in the graded course by checking in with them periodically throughout the second semester to ensure that learners have the best chance for success. Learners obtain financial assistance through grants that are available for the graded course.

- **Financial Support.** The program works with learners to find sources of funding to cover costs.

Duration

The HSED is a two-semester program. Both semesters are 15 weeks. During the first semester, learners participate in five, three-week thematic units with nine hours of instruction per week. The Transition course is six hours per week for 15 weeks. The graded course is 15 weeks with varying hours of instruction. The flexibility of the program has enabled learners to increase or decrease the time it takes for them to complete the HSED.

Resources Needed to Implement Program

Access to computers is preferable. The curriculum is available through Blackboard software and can be copied. The curriculum could also be used on another platform. The curriculum is designed to be taught by a certified bachelor's or master's degree educator. Ideally the co-instructors teaching the 5.09 course are experts in opposite fields. For example, a math/science instructor and a communications/social studies instructor would co-teach.

Innovative Features

The Integrated HSED Program is innovative in the field of adult education because it enables adult learners to earn an HSED and college credits within two college semesters. Key features of the Integrated HSED Program are the following:

- The program structure has flexibility to serve learners at high-risk for interruptions in their education. The 5.09 HSED component of the program is organized into five units, enabling learners to stop after completion of a unit and to continue a new unit later. Alternatively, learners can continue with the units in an online setting. Learners have up to two years to complete the five units.
- The program features team teaching that provides an opportunity to have rigorous just-in-time learning by two master's degree expert instructors with experience working with at-risk adults. Instructors co-teach by rotating between teaching the class and modeling being a learner (e.g., taking notes, asking questions), with the goal that the class will follow their lead. The instructors are always available to learners, which provides the capacity for one instructor to coach, mentor, or counsel learners in crisis without an interruption in the course.
- Learners are eased into and supported through the transition to college because it is embedded into the program. During the program, staff support learners in applying to college, filling out financial aid and scholarship forms, making connections with career coaches, and providing coaching.
- Credit for prior learning is embedded in the HSED course taught in the second semester. Learners have the option to document their work history, reflect on their professionalism, and interview with a college instructor for a business course that has parallel content to their second semester course. Learners can earn up to six college credits while simultaneously obtaining their HSED.

Learners' Outcomes

The HSED attainment rates of learners participating in the Integrated HSED program have increased annually. More than half of learners who earn an HSED also earn college credits as part of the program. The number of credits range from three to 12 credits.

	PY 2016–2017	PY 2017–2018	PY 2018–2019
Number of learners enrolled in Integrated HSED	61	37	40
Percentage and number of learners who entered this year and earned an HSED	34% (21)	35% (13)	60% (24)
Percentage and number of HSED graduates who also earned college credits	71% (15)	54% (7)	50% (12)

WTC provided the data in the table based on their NRS reports submitted to the Wisconsin Technical College System.

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Multi-Craft Core Curriculum High School Equivalency Diploma (MC3/HSED) Program, Literacy Services of Wisconsin

Literacy Services of Wisconsin (LSW) is a non-profit adult literacy organization located in Milwaukee, WI that has served adult learners for more than 50 years. Its mission is to partner with motivated adults to provide access to quality basic education and skills training so they can improve their lives, enrich their families, and strengthen the community. LSW offers instruction in adult basic education (ABE), English language learning (ELL), adult secondary education (ASE) that includes GED® preparation and the state's High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) program, and workforce development training.

Earning a high school credential and an industry-recognized credential in a pre-apprenticeship program.

LSW provides instruction at eight locations in Milwaukee and Waukesha, with four in high-need communities in Milwaukee's central city area, and one location in Racine. During the 2018–2019 PY, LSW served 1,099 adults in their adult education program and employed 21 full-time staff and three-part time staff.

Description of the MC3/HSED Program

The MC3/HSED program enables adult education learners to concurrently earn Wisconsin's 5.09 HSED and the industry-recognized MC3 pre-apprenticeship certificate. MC3 is an apprenticeship readiness curriculum for the construction industry that was developed by the North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU). The MC3 pre-apprenticeship certificate is recognized by building trades, joint apprenticeship committees, unions, and employers. Learners with the MC3 certificate receive additional points on their apprenticeship applications, which can facilitate their placement in an apprenticeship. The number of additional points is determined by the local entity evaluating the application.

The MC3/HSED program involves a partnership between LSW's 5.09 HSED and the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP) program. The 5.09 HSED is a Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction-approved, competency-based alternative diploma program. LSW is delivering a contextualized version of the HSED program in partnership with WRTP's Building Industry Group Skilled Trades Employment Program (BIG STEP), an industry-led, worker-centered, and community-focused organization. Learners who participate in the MC3/HSED program not only earn an HSED and the industry-recognized MC3 pre-apprenticeship certificate, but they are prepared for employment or enrollment in a registered apprenticeship program in the building trades that leads to high-demand, high-wage employment in the region.

Target Population and Requirements for Participation

To enroll in the HSED program, the state of Wisconsin requires that learners are at least 18.5 years of age, hold proof of Wisconsin residency, have no prior secondary credential, and participate in an assessment and counseling session at LSW. To be eligible for the MC3/HSED,

learners (1) may have participated in either an ABE or ELL program; and (2) must have demonstrated good attendance and motivation in this program or in another program at LSW. It is strongly preferred that learners have a positive referral from WRTP, LSW, or another community-based organization.

A final requirement is that learners attain a score at the NRS Level 3 or higher on Level M, D, or A of the TABE® 11 & 12. Learners must also demonstrate basic computer skills.

Key Components

Learners participate in the MC3/HSED as a cohort. The MC3 training and the 5.09 HSED classes are held at WRTP's facility in central Milwaukee. LSW staff teach the 5.09 HSED classes, which are conducted separately from MC3 training. The components of the MC3/HSED are the following:

- Recruitment, Intake, and Orientation.** LSW and WRTP jointly recruit ABE learners or ELLs who meet the MC3/HSED requirements from other programs at LSW and WRTP or other community-based organizations. Prior to co-enrolling in the HSED and MC3 program, learners meet individually with an LSW program staff member to discuss their goals and determine if the program is a good fit. An intake orientation provides information about course curricula, expectations, policies, and procedures. Learners must also attend an orientation and screening provided by WRTP/BIG STEP that includes interviews conducted by union members. The members' involvement helps to create buy-in from the union, and ultimately by employers and apprenticeship providers.
- 5.09 HSED Program.** LSW delivers the 5.09 competency-based HSED component of the MC3/HSED program. To earn an HSED, the Wisconsin Department of Education requires that learners complete the 5.09 course in which they compile and submit a portfolio with documentation of their work and obtain approval of the portfolio. Learners also must participate in employability and career awareness activities and pass the state's civics exam. Prior to the launch of the MC3/HSED program, LSW staff compared the HSED competencies (see Appendix B) to the MC3 curriculum to identify overlap in content and areas where learners could be provided additional support. LSW's curriculum includes contextualized literacy support for the MC3 training, which involves reviewing technical language. Its career readiness modules focus on different occupations within the building trades and soft skills instruction that includes mock interviews.
- Partnership with WRTP/BIG STEP.** WRTP delivers the occupational training course through which learners can earn an MC3 certificate, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)



certificate, and Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) certificate. The curriculum is a standardized, 120-hour course comprising the following units: (1) Construction Industry and Trades Orientation; (2) Tools and Materials; (3) Construction Health and Safety (including OSHA 10 and CPR); (4) Blueprint Reading; (5) Basic Math for Construction; (6) Heritage of the American Worker; (7) Diversity in the Construction Industry; (8) Green Construction; and (9) Financial Literacy. The curriculum includes hands-on and onsite training components. MC3 instructors also assess and document learners' mastery of competencies.

- **Supportive Services.** Learners can receive supportive services. LSW staff provide tutoring, career guidance, and employment services. WRTP case managers meet with learners to provide wraparound support such as transportation assistance and funds for childcare.
- **Job Placement Support.** Learners take the ACCUPLACER® to determine whether they are ready for the apprenticeship exam. Once learners complete the ACCUPLACER®, the WRTP case managers work with learners to access apprenticeships or a job within the industry upon completion of their HSED. Learners who score lower on the ACCUPLACER® may receive additional academic supports that LSW provides.

Duration

The program is 320 hours across 16 weeks. The 5.09 course is 200 hours and the MC3 component is a standardized, comprehensive 120-hour construction course. Typically, learners attend class four hours a day, four days a week. This schedule also includes an additional one-day event lasting six to eight hours during which work-site visits and other work-based or career awareness activities are conducted. The program is offered three times per year on a semester basis (spring, summer, and fall).

Resources Needed to Implement Program

This program requires a partnership between an adult education provider and an entity able to provide the MC3 programming. The costs for the HSED component are a \$10 fee for the civics exam, a \$15 fee for the Wisconsin state diploma, and a fee for the ACCUPLACER® test that varies by the entity administering the test. The costs for the training program are tuition (\$4,115), books (\$50), supplies (\$450), and other fees (\$385) for power tools, construction and building materials, exam and certificate fees, transportation, CPR and first aid kits, work boots, and other safety equipment. To access funds to pay for the cost of learners' participation in MC3/HSED, LSW works with their local workforce investment board; WIOA, Title I-B, Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs;^{xviii} FoodShare Employment and Training Funds (FSET);^{xix} and philanthropic partners.

Innovative Features

The MC3/HSED is innovative because it enables adult education learners to earn a high school credential while concurrently earning industry-recognized credentials in a pre-apprenticeship program, which can accelerate their attainment of high-demand, high-wage jobs. Key features of MC3/HSED are the following:

- Through the MC3 curricula students learn about a variety of trades and interact with professionals from the trades, which provides them with an authentic understanding of jobs in their area of interest and better prepares them to select a career pathway that is a good match to their skills and interests.
- Learners' completion of the MC3/HSED program qualifies them to apply for an apprenticeship and enables them to be in a competitive position with the additional points that are added to their application because of their completion of the program.
- The MC3/HSED program offers access to academic and career-focused training in an alternative setting, without learners having to commit financially to enroll in a college.
- The model is portable and can be replicated with another partner in another occupational area.

Learners' Outcomes

The number of participants increased from the first year of the program to subsequent years and the majority of learners who participated in the MC3/HSE during the first two years earned an HSED and industry-recognized certificate. During the third year, during which the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, close to half of participants earned their HSED and industry-recognized certificate.

	PY 2017–2018	PY 2018–2019	PY 2019–2020
Number of learners enrolled in MC3/HSED	10	28	27
Percentage and number of learners who earned an HSED	100% (10)	75% (21)	41% (11)
Percentage and number of learners who earned construction industry-recognized certificates (MC3, CPR, OSHA 10)	100% (10)	75% (21)	41% (11)

LSW provided the data in the table based on their NRS reports submitted to the Wisconsin Technical College System.

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National External Diploma Program® (NEDP), Mercy Learning Center

Mercy Learning Center (MLC) is a non-profit organization located in Bridgeport, Connecticut whose mission is to provide basic literacy and life skills training to low-income women using a holistic approach within a compassionate, supportive environment. MLC provides instruction in English, math, science, social studies/civics, and technology/computers in order to help learners prepare for the U.S. citizenship exam, earn a high school diploma, and prepare for college or a career. Mercy Learning Center served 1,153 learners in its adult education program during program year (PY) 2018–2019 and employs 21 full-time and 21 part-time staff.

Enabling adult learners to earn a high school diploma based on their academic skills, life skills, and college and career competencies.

The Mercy Learning Center was selected to represent Connecticut's National External Diploma Program® (NEDP) implementation in the Advancing Innovation project based on participants' high rates of high school diploma attainment, postsecondary enrollment, and job retention. MLC's NEDP participants exemplify the population for whom the NEDP was originally designed, who are adults 25 years of age or older who require a secondary credential to enter postsecondary education, establish or advance in a career, or fulfill their roles in their family and community. The NEDP is offered in 23 of Connecticut's 60 adult education programs. Originally conceptualized in 1973 by the Syracuse University Research Corporation as the Regents External High School Diploma Program,^{xx} the NEDP is now a program of the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), which is the NEDP's policy-making and administrative body.

Description of NEDP

The NEDP is a web-based alternative high school credentialing program for adults and out-of-school youth. It is a competency-based, applied performance assessment system that enables adults to demonstrate their skills in a series of simulations that parallel adults' work and life activities, and to earn a traditional high school diploma based on their mastery of those skills. As a credentialing program, the NEDP does not provide instruction but uses a diagnostic assessment process (see *Diagnostic Phase* below) to enable adults with high school level skills to participate in the performance assessments.

Since 2014 the NEDP has undergone significant enhancements to reflect WIOA's priorities and expand the administration of NEDP to include a web-based delivery system for part of the NEDP assessment. The enhancements included aligning the NEDP's Generalized Competencies and Performance Indicators to the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education published by the U.S. Department of Education. The NEDP's individualized assessment in college and career competency also takes into account the Integrated Education and Training requirements in WIOA so that learners can participate in the NEDP at the same time as they are participating in training or other WIOA activities. Since the beginning of the COVID-19



pandemic in spring 2020, all phases of the NEDP assessment process are administered using a web-based delivery system.

Learners participating in the NEDP develop a portfolio of their independent work from a series of online assignments which address 10 competency content areas: (1) Communication and Media Literacy, (2) Applied Math/Numeracy, (3) Information and Communication Technology, (4) Cultural

Literacy, (5) Health Literacy, (6) Civic Literacy and Community Participation, (7) Geography and History, (8) Consumer Awareness and Financial Literacy, (9) Science, and (10) Twenty-First Century Workplace. Each competency area has a series of competencies that are assessed through the online assignments. The NEDP competencies emphasize 21st Century skills required for the successful transition to postsecondary education and/or the workforce (See Appendix C, NEDP Competencies).

Learners participating in the NEDP must demonstrate 100% mastery of the programs' competencies to be awarded a high school diploma; in Connecticut, the high school diploma is issued by a local board of education. The issuance of a traditional high school diploma was designed to attract adults to participate in the NEDP and to recognize the worth of their demonstrated competencies.

Target Population and Requirements

The NEDP targets adults who can work autonomously and who are self-directed so they can complete the required performance assessments that include accessing community resources and conducting research independently. The NEDP is also recommended for mature adults with life experience who can document their work history, proof of a training program, or interest in postsecondary education.

Learners who do not qualify for the NEDP program in the Diagnostic Phase are advised to participate in tutoring and then are re-tested. Learners who are re-tested and achieve the target test scores are accepted into the program. The section *Key Components* below describes the reading and math scores required to enter the NEDP.

Key Components

The NEDP has two phases of assessments: Diagnostic followed by Generalized Assessment. The Generalized Assessment phase includes an individualized assessment in College and Career

Competency (CCC). NEDP learners must complete the Generalized Assessments in order to be awarded a high school diploma.

- **Diagnostic Phase.** Learners are assessed for their reading, writing, and math levels. To qualify for the program, adult education and ELLs must achieve Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) scores of 230 in math and 236 in reading and score 3 out of 4 in a writing assessment. Learners also must complete an independent self-assessment in the areas of career exploration and technology and complete a determination of individual skills such as employment, training, and readiness for a postsecondary credential. Learners deemed eligible for the NEDP enter the Generalized Assessment phase.
- **Generalized Assessment.** In the Generalized Assessment phase, learners demonstrate their skills in 10 academic and life skill competency areas (see *Description of NEDP* above). They complete these demonstrations independently, submitting their evidence electronically. Learners have access to online support from an NEDP assessor/advisor as they work on their competency demonstrations, and then meet face-to-face with an assessor weekly or bi-weekly to defend their submissions. The face-to-face process was modified in 2020 to have the option of being conducted online.
- **Individualized Assessment in College and Career Competency (CCC).** The individualized assessment enables learners to demonstrate one of four types of skills related to college and career competencies. Learners' competencies are assessed through their development of a portfolio of evidence of their skills; presentation of documentation of their prior learning or experience; or their demonstration of current skills. The four types of skills for the CCC are:
 - *Employment or Workforce Training Competencies*, which are verified by an employer's assessment, training instructor's assessment, or through a performance interview;
 - *Specialized Skill Competencies*, which are verified through learners' development of a portfolio of evidence of their skills that provide a possible source of independent income such as tailoring, photography, or music;
 - *Transition to Postsecondary Competencies*, which are verified through learners' development of a portfolio of evidence of their academic skills in preparing for postsecondary education; or
 - *Personal Management Skills Competency*, which is validated through learners' development of a portfolio of evidence related to one of 14 possible competencies, such as financial planning related to homes and mortgages or consumer advocacy related to avoiding identify theft.

Duration

Learners have two weeks to complete and submit their demonstrations of a competency area before meeting for a face-to-face (or virtual) check-in with their assessor. On average a learner completes the program's requirements and graduates in six to nine months.

Resources Needed to Implement Program

To operate an NEDP, an adult education program must have the technological infrastructure needed to support its online activity and have staff who can complete the NEDP assessor/advisor training that CASAS sponsors. The NEDP can be implemented as part of a state's adoption of the NEDP in multiple programs or as a local program's adoption. Costs include a state license fee, implementation training, and web-based units per learner. The costs vary depending on the size of agency implementation and are available from CASAS (<http://www.casas.org/nedp>). The adult education program also must work with the state adult education office or a local school board concerning the awarding of a state or local high school diploma. CASAS staff are available to facilitate this process.

Innovative Features

The NEDP is innovative in the field of adult education because it enables learners to use prior learning and the skills they have gained through life and work experience as well as formal education to demonstrate secondary-level academic skills, life skills, and college and career readiness skills to earn a traditional high school diploma. Key features of the NEDP are the following:

- The NEDP uses a competency-based framework that includes learners' demonstration of academic and life-skill competencies, which are aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education, as the basis for their receipt of a high school diploma. As a competency-based performance assessment system, the NEDP also enables adults to develop their skills and knowledge while fulfilling the assessment requirements for the receipt of a high school diploma.
- Learners can receive credit for prior learning and for work experience as part of their demonstration of an individualized College and Career Competency, which is required to complete the NEDP.
- The NEDP's time-flexible structure facilitates the participation of learners who work or have other responsibilities that make it difficult for them to attend place-based programs which are offered on a specific schedule.
- The NEDP integrates college and career readiness skills and advising activities beginning in the Diagnostic phase and throughout the Generalized Assessment phase to prepare learners to transition to further education or employment when they complete the NEDP. This integration enables learners to have enough time and support to prepare for their next steps while they are still enrolled in the NEDP, and helps to ensure their successful placement in postsecondary education or employment.
- The NEDP's web-based system to deliver the program and certify adults' demonstration of competencies that result in their receipt of a high school diploma is a new approach to the delivery of a competency-based, performance assessment system. The use of a total distance delivery model expands access to the NEDP for a wide range of learners, including those who may have geographical constraints, scheduling limitations, and mobility issues.

Learners' Outcomes

NEDP learners from the MLC have high rates of attainment of a secondary credential, enrollment in postsecondary education, and job placement or retention.

	PY 2015–2016	PY 2016–2017	PY 2017–2018	PY 2018–2019
Number of learners enrolled	22	14	21	24
Percentage and number of learners who earned a high school diploma	95% (21)	77% (11)	95% (20)	92% (22)
Percentage and number of learners who enrolled in post-secondary training	86% (18)	64% (7)	45% (9)	64% (14)
Percentage and number of learners who obtained or retained a job	57% (12)	81% (9)	85% (17)	82% (18)

Mercy Learning Center provided the data in the table based on their NRS reports submitted to the Connecticut Department of Education.

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Conclusion

The practices selected for Round 1 of the Advancing Innovation in Adult Education project provide examples of secondary credentialing innovations that address key characteristics of promising practices. These practices consider the need for flexibility in schedule and amount of time for adult learners with busy lives to earn a credential. They embed support for transition to further education, training, and employment so that learners are well prepared for their next step when they leave adult education. Most importantly, the practices assess a range of academic, career, and soft skills that not only validate learners' formal academic learning but also recognize their informal and experiential learning at work, at home, and in the community. These characteristics are important for adult education staff to consider as they develop and implement secondary credentialing for adult learners.

The Advancing Innovation project will prepare four more compendia with information about the innovative practices that are identified during Application Rounds 2, 3, 4, and 5. The goal is to stimulate innovation in the design and delivery of adult education services that can enable adults to achieve their personal goals, advance their education, and improve their economic well-being.

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https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/pi/5/09
- ^{xv} PCC’s IBEST program is an enhancement of Washington State’s I-BEST model.
- ^{xvi} Ability to Benefit (ATB) is a provision of the Higher Education Act (HEA) concerning eligibility to receive federal financial aid for participation in postsecondary education. Under ATB, students who do not have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, but are enrolled in HEA Title IV eligible programs, may qualify for federal financial aid. In addition to participating in an eligible career pathways program, eligible students need to pass an approved test or successfully complete six hours of college credit.
- ^{xvii} Project Proven is WTC’s program to provide adult education, basic literacy, and GED® services to individuals held in area detention centers. The services are provided in collaboration with jail staff at the County of La Crosse.
- ^{xviii} <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/wioa/>
- ^{xix} The FSET is a free program in the state of Wisconsin that helps FoodShare members build their job skills and find jobs. FoodShare in Wisconsin’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and helps Wisconsin residents buy food. www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/fset/index.htm
- ^{xx} Bailey, S., Macy, F., & Vickers, D. (1973). *Alternative paths to the high school diploma*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Research Corporation.



Appendix A: Advancing Innovation Application Form, Round 1



Application for Innovative Practices

Overview: Advancing Innovation in Adult Education

Advancing Innovation in Adult Education is a national project supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) to identify, recognize, and disseminate innovative practices in adult education. Information on Advancing Innovation in Adult Education can be found at <https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/advancing-innovation>.

Instructions for Submitting Applications

Adult education programs that are nominating a practice must complete an application. A complete submission consists of three files:

1. The Application for Innovative Practices
2. A Letter of Support from the State Office
3. National Reporting System (NRS) Data

Completing the Application

The Application for Innovative Practices form should be completed in its entirety. Questions can be submitted to innovation@lincs.ed.gov at any point.

Note that this application requires a digital signature from your program. If you are unable to digitally sign the application, the application can be printed, signed, and scanned in order to email.

Please work with your state adult education office at the beginning of the application process to obtain a letter of support. A letter of support should indicate that:

- A program is in good standing with the adult education state office.
- The adult education state office supports the application of the program.

Programs should submit NRS tables 1–5 for the most relevant program year.

Submission

Please submit all three files electronically to innovation@lincs.ed.gov. Please name each file with the program name. Submissions must be received by **5:00 p.m. ET on September 30, 2019**.

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I. Program Information and Certifications

A. Applicant Adult Education Program: Complete the table below with the information about the adult education program, the adult education program director, and the person(s) completing the application.

Name of Applicant Adult Education Program:

Name of Administrative Agency (if different than name of program):

Program Street Address: **Suite No:**

City: **State:** **Zip Code:**

Name of Adult Education Program Director:

Telephone Number:

Email Address:

Program's Website Address:

Name(s) of Person(s) Completing Application:

Title(s) of Person(s) Completing Application:

B. Certifications: The director of the adult education program or authorized individual submitting the application must sign the following certifications as part of the application:

(1) The adult education program certifies that the information submitted in this application is accurate.

Name: **Title:** **Signature:**

(2) The adult education program agrees that OCTAE, Manhattan Strategy Group, and Abt Associates project staff can access and distribute the information and data provided in this application.

Name: **Title:** **Signature:**

II. Adult Education Program Context Information and Data

Summary of Adult Education Program: Describe the adult education program's community context, organizational base, and adult education services in the box below. Definitions of terms are provided.

- *Community context:* size of area served by the program; overview of demographic characteristics of community
- *Organizational base:* type of agency in which adult education is located (e.g., school district, community college, community-based organization); types of services this agency provides in addition to adult education (if applicable)
- *Adult education services:* types of adult education instructional and other services the program provides; number of adult learners served annually; number of full- and part-time staff that provide adult education services; key partners with whom the program has a relationship and the activities conducted with the partners

Summary

III. Description of Applicant Innovative Practice

Describe the innovative practice that the adult education program is submitting for review.

1. Is the practice a:
 - ☐ Product (e.g., written curriculum, instructional materials) or Service (e.g., college and career advising)
 - ☐ Process (e.g., online learning) or way of organizing services (e.g., concurrent enrollment)
2. Check the area(s) below that best represents your innovative practice.

Content of Practice

 - ☐ Career pathways-related content, included STEM careers and in-demand industry sectors or occupations
 - ☐ Civics education
 - ☐ Digital literacy
 - ☐ Family literacy
 - ☐ Financial literacy
 - ☐ Foundational skills (reading, writing, math and numeracy, English language acquisition)
 - ☐ Workforce preparation activities
 - ☐ Other:
3. If your practice relates to instruction, check the approach that represents your practice.
 - ☐ Alternative pathways to a high school diploma and/or a recognized secondary credential
 - ☐ Competency-based learning
 - ☐ Concurrent enrollment in adult education and postsecondary education
 - ☐ Integrated Education and Training (IET)
 - ☐ Integrated English Language & Civics Education in combination with IET (IELCE)
 - ☐ Learning in context
 - ☐ Pre-Apprenticeship
 - ☐ Strategies for assisting adults with disabilities
 - ☐ Use of technology to increase access to, quality of, and/or amount of instruction
 - ☐ Work-based learning
 - ☐ Other:

Category of information	Provide Description
Name of Practice (if practice has a name)	
Describe in what ways the practice is a new approach in adult education OR is an enhancement of an existing practice in adult education	Specify if practice is a new approach or an enhancement of existing practice.
Purpose(s) of Practice: what the practice is intended to achieve (e.g., prepare learners to obtain a secondary credential)	
Population(s) of adult education learners with whom practice can be used. Specify skill level, type of learner (ABE, ELL, or both), and other relevant learner characteristics.	
Description of how practice works or is implemented; describe each component if there are multiple components of activities for the practice	

Materials, equipment, and/or technology required to implement the practice, including costs for each type	
Length of time needed to implement practice (hours per week, numbers of weeks)	
Types of staff qualifications, experience, and/or training needed to implement practice	
Expected learner outcomes from use of the practice	

Why do you believe this practice is innovative?

IV. Learner Outcome Data

In this section of the application, provide the data and information on the outcomes for learners who have participated in the innovative practice that is being submitted for review. Complete the information requested in A and B below.

A. Learner Outcome Data

Type of Outcome	Program Year(s) of Data Examined; Year Practice Began	Instrument and Data	Outcomes/Results
EXAMPLE 1: Reading skills	Years Data Reviewed: 2015-2016 (Prior Year) 2016-2017 (First Year) 2017-2018 (Second Year) Year Practice Began: 2016-2017	Instrument: TABE 9/10 Percentage of learners participating in reading instruction who progressed at least one EFL level on NRS Table 4b: 2015-2016: 33% 2016-2017: 35% 2017-2018: 39%	Of the learners who participated in the reading instruction, the percentage who progressed at least one EFL level increased by 2 percentage points in the first year that the practice began and increased by 6 percentage points in the second year.
EXAMPLE 2: Attainment of secondary credential	Years Data Reviewed: 2015-2016 (Prior Year) 2016-2017 (First Year) 2017-2018 (Second Year) Year Practice Began: 2016-2017	Instrument: GED® test Percentage of learners participating in the practice who took the GED® test and earned a GED® 2015-2016: 70% 2016-2017: 79% 2017-2018: 82%	Of the learners who participated in the practice, the percentage who took the GED® test in a program year and attained a GED® credential increased by 12 percentage points from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018.

B. Other Information about Learner Outcomes: In the *Learner Outcome* box, describe any outcomes that learners participating in the practice have demonstrated but are not measured by NRS data. List the instrument that was used to measure learners' outcome and describe the results.

EXAMPLE: Our program conducted a survey at the end of each session of a Career and College Awareness (CCA) Course that we offered during 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. About 125 learners completed the survey, which asked them whether the CCA course had influenced their goals for participating in the program or any of their interests for further education or work. One third of the learners who completed a survey reported that their goals had changed from earning a GED® to thinking about enrolling in further education and training.

Learner Outcomes:

Appendix B: State of Wisconsin's Competency-Based High School Equivalency Diploma: List of Competencies

The following pages contain the list of the competencies that must be demonstrated by candidates for the state of Wisconsin's 5.09 High School Equivalency Diploma.

HSED 5.09 - Social Science

1. Analyze major themes in U.S. history
2. Analyze major themes in World history
3. Analyze basic economic concepts
4. Compare major geographic regions and features

HSED 5.09 – Civics

1. Describe the structure and function of state, county, and local governments
2. Explain the principles of U.S. constitutional government
3. Explain the role of the consumer and the government in the U.S. economy
4. Identify ways that individuals, political parties, and interest groups participate in the political process
5. Describe the basic rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship

HSED 5.09 - Communication Skills

1. Use correct grammar
2. Apply rules of mechanics
3. Compose complete sentences
4. Use resource materials
5. Create written documents
6. Apply active listening skills
7. Use interpersonal skills
8. Communicate ideas orally
9. Participate as a team/group member
10. Use a variety of learning strategies to process written material effectively
11. Use a variety of informational resources
12. Develop responsibility for self-directed learning
13. Employ a variety of vocabulary development strategies
14. Demonstrate comprehension of a range of written materials
15. Apply information from content
16. React critically to a range of written materials
17. Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively using current technology
18. Create word processing documents such as letters, memos and basic reports

HSED 5.09 - Employability Skills and Career Awareness

1. Justify the value of positive attitudes and good job habits
2. Identify interest and aptitude areas in relation to career clusters

3. Match personal characteristics with identified occupational options from interest and skill inventories
4. Recognize the changing work force according to labor market information
5. Summarize how state and federal labor laws protect you in the workplace
6. Explore methods for finding employment
7. Create a resume
8. Complete a job application
9. Compose a letter of application
10. Prepare for an interview
11. Construct an individual career plan

HSED 5.09 - Health

1. Assess the effects and dangers of commonly abused substances
2. Assess the factors that impact establishing and maintaining quality relationships
3. Assess the effectiveness and availability of contraceptive methods
4. Explain the process of human growth and development
5. Assess the risk factors, results, and prevention options of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
6. Compare methods of preventing communicable diseases
7. Apply valid criteria in selecting health-related products and services
8. Identify basic first aid procedures
9. Analyze the elements of a healthy lifestyle including nutrition, physical activity, mental health, and wellness

HSED 5.09 - Math

1. Calculate with whole numbers
2. Calculate with fractions
3. Calculate with decimals
4. Calculate with ratio and proportions
5. Calculate with percents
6. Calculate with integers
7. Calculate with exponents
8. Calculate with rational numbers
9. Calculate using the order of operations
10. Calculate with radical numbers (square roots)
11. Use calculators in problem solving
12. Use measurement tools
13. Demonstrate use of measurement systems
14. Use rectangular co-ordinate system
15. Interpret tables, charts and graphs
16. Analyze data using basic statistics
17. Predict outcomes using probability
18. Solve problems using geometric figures
19. Simplify algebraic equations

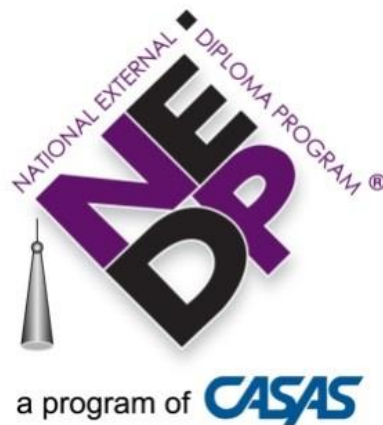
20. Solve algebraic equations
21. Calculate with scientific notation

WTCS HSED 5.09 - Basic Scientific Process Skills

1. Process appropriate science information for informed decision making and problem solving in the physical and life sciences
2. Apply the scientific method to solve a given problem in the physical and life sciences
3. Perform scientific Observations - using the senses to gather information about an object or event in the physical and life sciences
4. Draw scientific Inferences - making an "educated guess" about an object or event based on previously gathered data or information in the physical and life sciences
5. Conduct Measurements - using both standard and nonstandard measures or estimates to describe the dimensions of an object or event in the physical and life sciences
6. Communicate scientific results - using words, diagrams, and/or graphs to describe an action, object or event in the physical and life sciences
7. Make scientific predictions - stating the outcome of a future event based on a pattern of evidence in the physical and life sciences
8. Apply the Physical, Environmental, and Life Sciences to the Basic Scientific Process Skills



Appendix C: National External Diploma Program® (NEDP) List of Competencies



NATIONAL EXTERNAL DIPLOMA PROGRAM

COMPETENCIES

With Life Skill Examples

July 2019

1 Communication, Cultural and Media Literacy

- 1.1 Read** informational texts (e.g., documents, manuals, websites, news articles, and texts in academic areas) and:
- a) identify and analyze central ideas and supporting details;
 - b) interpret and navigate the organizational structure;
 - c) examine assumptions, arguments, and conclusions;
 - d) make inferences to broaden comprehension;
 - e) discern orientation or point of view; and
 - f) assess the effectiveness of the presentation (e.g., comprehensiveness, clarity, format, language use), citing strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis.
- 1.2 Read** and analyze a set of ideas and sequence of events in literary texts (e.g., short story) and:
- a) identify and analyze themes and central ideas;
 - b) evaluate literary elements, such as theme, plot development, setting, conflict, and characterization;
 - c) make inferences; and
 - d) evaluate the author's choice of point of view, use of language, style and expressiveness, and use of literary devices, citing strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis.
- 1.3 Write** to:
- a) present, explain and examine information and ideas;
 - b) state a position, with clear and coherent supporting arguments;
 - c) describe experiences and events, real or created; and
 - d) express thoughts, feelings and emotions, using writing techniques, organizational structures, word choices, English language conventions, and styles of expression that are effective and appropriate to the purpose.
- 1.4 Listen** to oral communication (e.g., conversations, announcements, presentations, speeches, and lectures) and:
- a) interpret central ideas, supporting details, and organizational structure; and
 - b) analyze and evaluate the message, including the speaker's purpose or intent, point of view, reasoning, tone, delivery style, word choice, and use of language.
- 1.5 Speak** to:
- a) convey information and express thoughts and ideas in conversations, discussions, meetings and interviews, using appropriate language and communication style; and
 - b) make oral presentations, with content and language appropriate for the purpose and audience, and that are well planned and organized and make strategic use of support materials, using an effective delivery style.
- 1.6** Analyze how language functions in different kinds of media messages
- 1.7** Distinguish fact from opinion, and fact from point of view in media messages and presentations (e.g., news, political and consumer advertisements)
- 1.8** Analyze a selected film including elements of film analysis (e.g., themes, setting, plot, character development, cinematography)
- 1.9** Identify and practice responsible and informed research using credible reference sources, including proper citation of textual information (e.g., product and job search information, online media messages, identification of risks associated with the transfer of electronic data, and measures one can take to protect the security of electronic data)

2 Applied Math/Numeracy

2.1 Numbers Sense and Operations

- 2.1.1 Understand and use the operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division with positive and negative numbers including decimals, percentages, and fractions.
- 2.1.2 Solve problems in realistic situations, including multi-step problems.
- 2.1.3 Use estimation and mental arithmetic (e.g., estimate tax on a purchase).
- 2.1.4 Compare and convert between fractions and percentages including those from graphic representations (e.g., 21 % of total budget can be approximated by what fraction?).
- 2.1.5 Understand and use the number relationships represented by rates, ratios, and proportions (e.g., increase the number of servings in a recipe).

2.2 Algebra

- 2.2.1 Represent relationships in mathematical situations with tables, graphs, and equations (including variables, exponents and negative numbers).
- 2.2.2 Simplify expressions and solve equations and/or inequalities with one variable, and explain the process of reasoning.
- 2.2.3 Analyze and solve systems of equations using two or more variables and explain the process of reasoning (e.g., compute interest rates, profit-loss projections).
- 2.2.4 Interpret and use rates of change from graphical and numerical data (e.g., average temperature change over multiple years).

2.3 Geometry and Measurement

- 2.3.1 Apply and use both customary U.S. measurements and metric systems of measurement and convert units as required (e.g., 3.5 feet = 42 inches, 1,100 meters = 1.1 kilometer).
- 2.3.2 Solve problems involving two-dimensional objects (e.g., size of angles, perimeters and areas of polygons and circles).
- 2.3.3 Evaluate reports based on data that solve problems involving use of three-dimensional objects (e.g., volumes of cylinders, pyramids, prisms, spheres).
- 2.3.4 Use the concept of similar figures to create and interpret scale drawings (e.g., blueprints and maps).

2.4 Statistics, Data Analysis and Probability

- 2.4.1 Calculate and interpret the mean, median, mode and range of a set of data.
- 2.4.2 Interpret, illustrate and summarize data using a variety of graphic visual representations (e.g., pie chart of sales data) and solve problems related to them.
- 2.4.3 Make and evaluate inferences based on data as found in charts, graphs, and tables.
- 2.4.4 Apply the basic elements of probability to real-life events to make predictions.

3 Information and Communication Technology

- 3.1** Demonstrate computer skills including keyboarding, software applications, and the Internet (e.g., word processing, spreadsheets)
- 3.2** Demonstrate the use of technology to conduct research, organize data, communicate information, create original work, and solve problems
- 3.3** Identify and practice responsible and informed use of information and communication technology

4 Health Literacy

- 4.1** Develop a plan for personal and home safety including disaster preparedness
- 4.2** Research and interpret information about health threats
- 4.3** Research and summarize information on techniques for ensuring good health
- 4.4** Analyze multiple factors to consider when accessing and using health care resources
- 4.5** Interpret information about nutrition, healthy diets, food safety, and personal fitness

5 Civic Literacy and Community Participation

- 5.1** Collect and integrate information about community agencies from Internet sources
- 5.2** Compare and use community agencies and services
- 5.3** Explore opportunities for lifelong learning (e.g., scholarship programs, online learning)
- 5.4** Demonstrate the ability to locate and interact with educational institutions
- 5.5** Reference text and develop a logical argument for individual rights under the Constitution and for the American political system, citing supporting evidence (e.g., voting rights, equal opportunities in employment)
- 5.6** Identify and exercise political and civic participation in a democracy (e.g., voting, contacting elected officials, participating in local government)

6 Geography and History

- 6.1** Research diverse media and provide evidence of how local, national and global geography impacts economic factors
- 6.2** Describe and compare social, political and economic systems in countries outside of the United States
- 6.3** Integrate various media reports and interpret information on the impact of a global economy
- 6.4** Describe the contributions of a diverse workforce in the United States
- 6.5** Explain how major U.S. historical events have an impact on the lives of its citizens

7 Consumer Awareness and Financial Literacy

- 7.1** Evaluate multiple sources of information, including the Internet, to make decisions regarding price, quality, and product information
- 7.2** Describe procedures for resolving consumer issues
- 7.3** Interpret information on the use of credit, including interest rates, payment terms, and credit reports
- 7.4** Compare and contrast characteristics of savings and checking accounts and calculate simple and compound interest rates
- 7.5** Apply mathematical formulas and calculate expenses for household budgeting purposes

8 Science

- 8.1** Use the scientific method to collect, investigate, hypothesize, and analyze information (e.g., why do plants grow towards light?)
- 8.2** Make comparisons, differentiating among, sorting, and classifying items and information (e.g., rainforests and relationship to ecosystem)
- 8.3** Provide evidence that humans impact the environment
- 8.4** Interpret information related to natural science issues
- 8.5** Identify and analyze scientific issues underlying national and local discussion, citing supporting evidence
- 8.6** Demonstrate and illustrate the differences and interconnections among branches of science

9 Twenty-first Century Workplace

- 9.1** Use Internet-based career inventories to establish a career pathway (e.g., O*NET, College and Career Competency Inventory CCCI, including steps needed to achieve career goal)
- 9.2** Evaluate sources of information on employment opportunities and summarize the requirements for possible jobs
- 9.3** Compare and contrast the skills and education required for specific occupations
- 9.4** Use appropriate writing conventions to interpret and complete job applications, resumes, and letters of application
- 9.5** Present clear and convincing information in a job interview
- 9.6** Interpret wage and benefits statements to select appropriate benefits for given case situations and justify choices
- 9.7** Analyze the changing job market due to technological advances

10 College and Career Competency (individual competency)

- 10.1 Employment/Workforce Training Competency** allows the client to document work experience and employment training, including active participation in community volunteer activities or self-employed business success.
- 10.2 Specialized Skill Competency** permits the client to demonstrate distinct competencies that provide a source of independent income.
- 10.3 Transition to Postsecondary Competency** encourages the client to demonstrate readiness for postsecondary education and training and complete transition work to increase the likelihood of success.