TRANSFORMING MICHIGAN'S ADULT LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE

A report to the Council for Labor and Economic Growth from the CLEG Low-Wage Worker Advancement Committee's Adult Learning Work Group

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FORWARD

Starting in March 2008, Michigan's Low-Wage Worker Advancement Committee of the Council for Labor & Economic Growth has worked through its Adult Learning Work Group to examine and provide recommendations for transformation of Michigan's approach to basic skills development, in order to better meet the needs of adult learners, employers, and the state in an ever-changing economy.

The Adult Learning Work Group includes practitioners from around the state, representing community colleges, literacy councils, adult education programs, Michigan Works! Agencies, community-based organizations and four state departments. Its aim is to recommend comprehensive policy reforms and strategies to cut in half the dangerously large number of working age adults in Michigan – 1.7 million – who lack basic skills needed for post-secondary education and good jobs. The Adult Learning Work Group members sought to substantially re-imagine and re-design Michigan's approach to adult learning to meet this audacious but crucial goal.

The work group has gathered data about the current strategies and resources devoted to basic skills development; researched the current and projected need; learned about promising practices for system redesign; and engaged diverse stakeholders in conversations about improving adult learning opportunities and results. The work group heard from more than 200 attendees at seven regional forums around the state. This report reflects the work group's learning and shared viewpoint resulting from exposure to this information and the membership's own expertise.

Two aspects of the process that led to this report are worth noting. First, the feedback received during the seven regional forums was incredibly energizing. The forums revealed widespread understanding by practitioners that Michigan learners live in a very different economy and context today than when adult education programs were originally created. We are excited by the innovation already in place around the state, and by the willingness of many dedicated educators to come together in creating diverse new solutions that better fit the needs we face today and tomorrow. The transformative work that is underway carries tremendous potential.

Second, the work group itself is an unprecedented collaborative of leaders from education and workforce systems that too often live and operate in relative isolation from each other. Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth Deputy Director Andy Levin, who chaired the work group, challenged members at the outset to leave turf battles at the door and to join forces in developing a shared strategy to meet the basic skills development needs of Michigan workers and employers. Work group members met that challenge. The recommendations in this report set the stage for an urgent campaign to create the solutions Michigan needs. The work group deliberately employed the term "adult learning" to describe its focus, as the scale of need for basic skills development and post-secondary attainment is tremendous and goes well beyond the scope and capacity of any individual program, funding silo, or institution. When Michigan implements the recommendations that follow, adult learners will be able to obtain the skills and credentials they need to achieve success.

FORWARD

One key outcome from the Adult Learning Work Group was the development of several ***GUIDING PRINCIPLES*** that together define the vision for a transformed approach to adult learning in Michigan. These principles are the basis for the recommendations in this report.

Collaboration

Michigan's policies and programs must unite core competencies and capacities of various stakeholders to achieve a common vision of success for adult learners and employers.

Accountability

Michigan's policies and programs must promote shared responsibility for common outcomes across the adult learning infrastructure, invest in the infrastructure to collect data on program performance, and use data to inform decisions about future policies and programs.

Responsiveness

Michigan's policies and programs must recognize that earning a high-school diploma is no longer sufficient for adult learners and employers, promote post-secondary education as the new standard for adult learners, and engage a range of partners in offering services for these learners that support and move them along clear and accessible pathways toward their goals.

Agility

Our policies and programs must rapidly respond to the diverse needs of learners, employers, and communities with innovative programs that equip Michigan to be successful in emerging markets.

Contextualization

Michigan's policies and programs must inventively develop learners' basic skills in the context of practical applications in the real world and occupational skills so they quickly grasp the relevance of learning and remain engaged in programs until they earn needed credentials.

Entrepreneurism

Michigan's policies and programs must employ innovative thinking and approaches in program delivery that increase the range of customers served by programs and foster learners' entrepreneurial thinking.

Alignment

Michigan's policies and programs must develop articulation agreements and standardized pathways to ensure learning efforts will be recognized across a variety of institutions. Strategically aligned funding is also required to support a comprehensive adult learning strategy.

One thing is clear about transforming Michigan's adult learning infrastructure: we are in this together. If people in Michigan are not getting the education they need, for whatever reason, all of us are affected. We have some tough work ahead of us to reinvent adult learning. Together, we will move forward in building a better future for Michigan's people.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Life in Michigan, and indeed the world, is all about transitions: changes in the local, national, and global economies demand adaptation and innovation. Unfortunately, too many of our workers are unprepared for the adjustments they are expected to make.

Michigan's economy is transforming to one that demands new skills, knowledge, and credentials, especially post-secondary education. Michigan workers can no longer expect to hold a family-sustaining job with only a high school diploma. Michigan employers have also had to respond to rapidly changing market demands. During this transformation to a global economy, Michigan dramatically shifted focus away from basic adult education programs. This shift resulted in substantially fewer programs serving fewer adults, despite a growing need.

Michigan must ensure workers are prepared to thrive in this new world, and currently, far too many are not. The number of workers in need of assistance is startling.

- One out of three working-age Michigan adults — 1.7 million people — lacks the basic skills or credentials to attain a family-sustaining job and contribute to the state's economy.[1]
- Of these adults, 692,000 do not have a GED or high-school diploma.[2]
- 44% of Michigan's adults have very minimal literacy skills, no greater than those necessary to perform simple, everyday activities.[3]
- Nearly 1.15 million working-age adults in Michigan who have earned a GED or high-school diploma, but have not entered post-secondary education, are earning at or below the state's median wage of $15.45 per hour.[4]
- Michigan trails behind national and global averages in terms of the percentage of adults with an Associate's Degree or higher.
- According to community colleges around the state, at least 60% of students entering these institutions require remediation prior to engaging in post-secondary education.[5] Competency in basic skills is a major barrier for many who seek post-secondary credentials.
- Michigan is ranked 44th in terms of enrollment in state administered adult basic education programs[6].

1 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. *2006 Michigan Age by Educational Attainment for the Population 18 and Over* [Data File]. Retrieved from www.census.gov/acs.

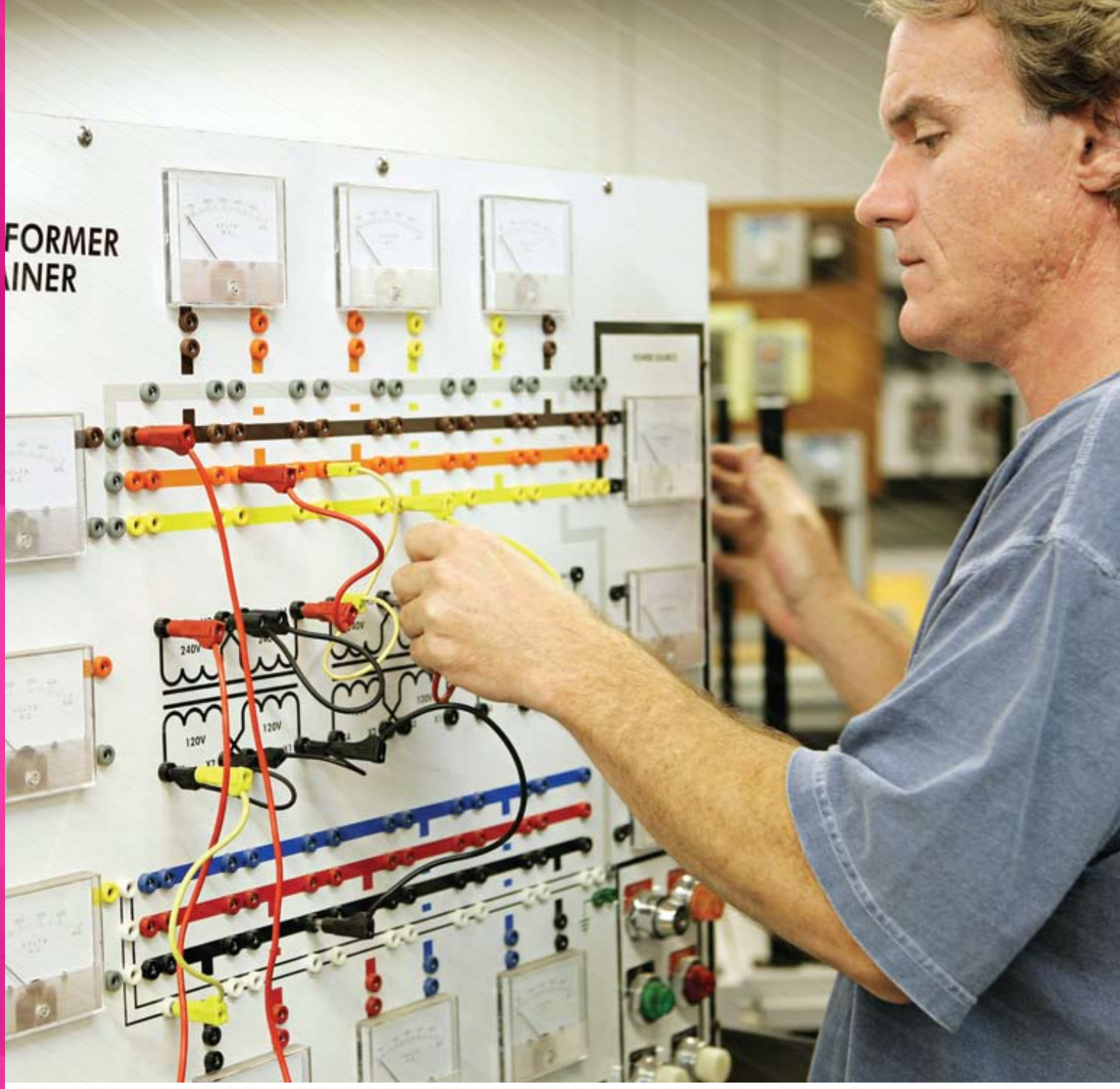
2 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ibid.

3 Michigan League for Human Services (MLHS). 2007. *Fixing the Leaky Pipeline: Why Adult Education and Skills Training Matters for Michigan's Future* with reference to U.S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics, *National Adult Literacy Survey*.

4 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, op. cit.

5 Michigan Community College Association. 2008.

6 The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) (2008) *Adult Learning in Focus: National and State-by-State Data*.



We are in the midst of a unique opportunity when multiple constituencies and stakeholders are supportive of systemic transformation. During well-attended regional forums conducted by this work group, we heard practitioners from across Michigan who understand the scale of change needed and are eager to be part of making it a reality. We must harness this current interest in adult learning policy and practice to position Michigan as a national leader in providing residents with access to lifelong learning and economic prosperity. The scale of the transformation we propose is unparalleled in the nation today.

Ignoring our pressing need to address these issues in adult learning is not an option for Michigan. The tremendous scale of need in our state demands a strong vision for substantial, sustainable impact. It is absolutely crucial to the state's prosperity that large-scale efforts be undertaken to ensure better outcomes for adult learners, employers, and communities.

Recommendations:

Transform Michigan's adult learning infrastructure to create a unified strategic approach to increasing basic skills and post-secondary credential attainment.

ACTION: *Create a unified state strategy and commitment to adult learning that cuts across agency boundaries and funding streams to deliver substantial and sustainable impact.*

Engage a range of partners in service delivery to meet the diverse needs of adult learners.

ACTION: *Require that adult learning services be delivered through regional collaborative partnerships.*

Build clear connections between learning and the promise of good jobs.

ACTION: *Require regional partnerships to connect adult learning to employment as a key dimension of program design.*

Use accelerated and connected pathways to help adult learners reach their goals.

ACTION: *Require regional partnerships to develop and implement individualized learning pathways leading to basic skills and post-secondary credential attainment.*

ACTION: *Create a network of high quality career and educational advisors/ navigators to support adult learners.*

Increase access to adult learning.

ACTION: *Require regional partnerships to include solutions to overcome major adult learning barriers in their program design.*

Make basic skills development a priority within every funding source that can legally support it.

ACTION: *Complete a thorough resource audit to determine what funding can be leveraged to support basic skills development for adults.*

ACTION: *Require regional partnerships to blend funding for comprehensive service delivery.*

Hold regional partnerships accountable for success and measure outcomes at the partnership level.

ACTION: *Develop a new framework for performance management.*

ACTION: *In the short-term, remove the restriction that currently precludes sharing data between the Michigan Adult Education Reporting System (MAERS) and the WIA Title I/One-Stop MIS system.*

ACTION: *Longer-term, operationalize the vision for a centralized K-20 Data Warehouse that all regional partners can access for data-entry and reporting purposes.*

Engage a broad coalition in communicating the urgent need to improve basic skills.

ACTION: *Implement a public awareness campaign intended to create a culture in Michigan committed to lifelong learning and the conviction that learning helps adults achieve their goals.*

Impact:

The impact of a transformed adult learning infrastructure on workers and employers across out state will be profound and widespread. This impact can include:

- **Higher personal incomes**
  Over a lifetime, increased education for Michigan's workers offers astounding financial benefits for our state. If those adults in Michigan with either a high-school diploma, some college, or an Associate's Degree were to earn a Bachelor's Degree, their cumulative lifetime earnings would increase by $2.43 trillion.

- **Higher rates of citizenship and civic engagement**
  There is a strong correlation between levels of citizenship and civic engagement and levels of educational attainment. For example, 39.5% of registered voters with less than a high-school diploma voted in the 2004 Presidential elections, as compared to 68.9% of registered voters with at least some college or an Associate's Degree.[1]

- **Higher levels of educational achievement for future generations**
  Family income is a major predictor for whether a student will be lost in the educational pipeline. The Education Commission of the States estimates that while the rate of ninth graders entering college right after high school is around 39.5%, it is only 23.3% for Michigan's low-income students.[2]

- **Higher levels of fiscal contribution**
  If the approximately 692,000 working-age adults we have identified as not having a high-school diploma were to earn a diploma or GED, their annual net fiscal contribution would increase by $4.97 billion. If they went on to college, their annual net fiscal contribution would increase by another $3.13 billion. Clearly, increased investment in educational achievement yields financial benefits for the state and the nation. [3]

- **Higher rates of job creation and economic growth**
  A skilled workforce attracts higher-end employers and provides the vital human capital necessary for existing employers to expand more rapidly. When we meet the expansion of opportunities in the new economy with an equal or greater increase in the number of trained workers, we can expect job creation and economic growth. Michigan will be able to attract employers who strongly value a workforce that has the skills, knowledge, and credentials required to meet their needs.

Working together we can help Michigan become a leader in lifelong learning and economic prosperity. We can harness the potential of the transitions taking place around us to improve our state's global competitiveness, employers' prosperity, and workers' abilities to succeed.

1 U.S. Census Bureau. *Voting and Registration in the Election of 2004.* 2006. Retrieved on Aug. 20, 2008 from http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/p20-556.pdf

2 MLHS, op.cit.

3 National Commission on Adult Literacy. *Reach Higher America: Overcoming Crisis in the US Workforce.* 2008.

STATEMENT OF NEED

The Time for Change is Now

Life in Michigan, and indeed the world, is all about transitions: changes in the local, national, and global economies that demand adaptation and innovation. Unfortunately, too many of our workers are unprepared for the adjustments they are required to make.

Michigan's economy is transforming to one that demands new skills, knowledge, and credentials, especially post-secondary education. Workers can no longer expect to hold a family-sustaining job with only a high school diploma. Michigan employers have also had to respond to rapidly changing market demands. During this transformation to a global economy, Michigan dramatically shifted focus away from basic adult education programs. This shift resulted in substantially fewer programs serving fewer adults, despite the growing need.

EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT KNOWLEDGE-BASED INDUSTRIES ARE NOW THE MAJOR SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT GROWTH FOR GOOD-PAYING JOBS. AND THEY ARE THE MOST POWERFUL ENGINE FUELING OVERALL ECONOMIC GROWTH.[1]

While these emerging industries offer new opportunities—and Michigan suffers the highest unemployment rate in the nation—employers still have job vacancies because too many workers lack the needed skills. Jobs in knowledge-based industries require significant post-secondary training or a Bachelor's degree. ***IN FACT, THE NUMBER OF JOBS IN MICHIGAN REQUIRING A POST-SECONDARY DEGREE IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO RISE. AND YET, OF MICHIGAN'S FIVE MILLION WORKING-AGE ADULTS (18-64), NEARLY TWO-THIRDS HAVE NOT YET COMPLETED AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE OR HIGHER.[2]*** One recent study projected that by 2012, the state will have a shortage of 334,000 skilled workers.[3]

The growth of middle-skill jobs, those jobs requiring more than a high-school diploma but less than a four-year degree, is a key element of the knowledge-based economy. ***MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS MAKE UP 51% OF MICHIGAN JOBS, WITH THIS PERCENTAGE EXPECTED TO INCREASE.[4] HOWEVER, THE GROWTH OF THESE JOBS IS OUTPACING INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF WORKERS WHO HAVE THE APPROPRIATE TRAINING FOR THESE CAREERS.*** When key industries in Michigan are unable to find skilled workers to fill these jobs, job creation and economic growth are compromised.

For Michigan to be successful in this changing economic climate, we must work to improve the skills and abilities of our workers and help them prepare to access these emerging markets. *No Worker Left Behind* is equipping Michigan workers with the right sets of skills and credentials to seize new opportunities. This program offers transitioning workers up to two years of free tuition to help them obtain a degree or other credential in a demand occupation. However, more than one year after *No Worker Left Behind* was launched, it has become clear that there are thousands of workers who, because of a lack of sufficient basic skills, are not prepared to take advantage of the program's education and training opportunities. Michigan must prepare these workers and countless others like them for new opportunities. The numbers in need of assistance are startling.

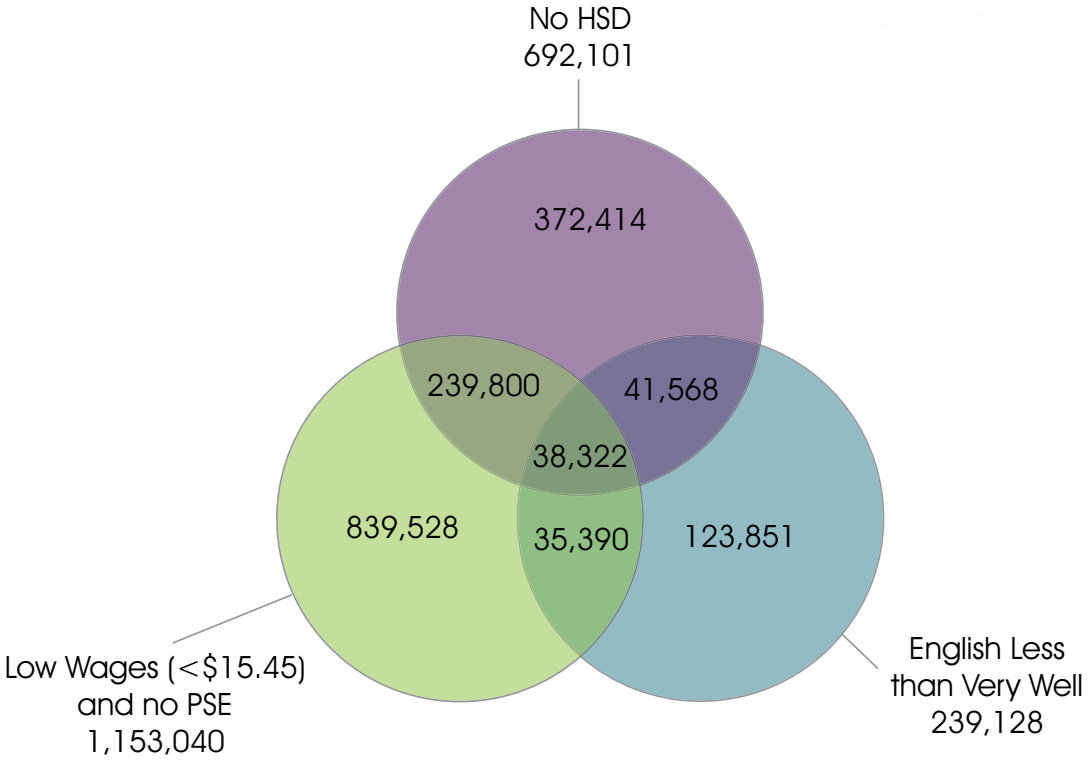
1 Skills2Compete (n.d.) *Michigan's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs.* Retrieved August 11, 2008 from *www.skills2compete.org*

2 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. 2006 Michigan Age by Educational Attainment [Data File]. Retrieved from www.census.gov/acs

3 Michigan League for Human Services. Michigan's Weak Link: Unemployment, the Skills Gap, and the Declining Support for Adult Education. April 2005.

4 Skills2Compete, op. cit.

1,690,870 Michigan Working-Age Adults (18-64) Need Improved Basic Skills, 2006



Percent of the total working-age adults (5,041,710): 34%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey (Public Use Microdata Samples)

- ***ONE OUT OF THREE WORKING-AGE MICHIGAN ADULTS — 1.7 MILLION PEOPLE — LACKS THE BASIC SKILLS OR CREDENTIALS TO ATTAIN A FAMILY-SUSTAINING JOB AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE STATE'S ECONOMY.***
- ***OF THESE ADULTS, 692,000 DO NOT HAVE A GED OR HIGH-SCHOOL DIPLOMA.***[5] Once considered the end goal of education, a high-school diploma or GED is now the bare minimum a worker needs to participate in the new economy. Only 55% of adults without a high-school diploma or GED currently participate in the workforce.[6] This leaves a very large pool of workers who are not engaged in Michigan's economy.

5 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ibid.

6 Skills2Compete, op. cit.

- Even for the 87% of adults who have a GED or high-school diploma, this credential is not a guarantee of basic skills. ***FORTY-FOUR PERCENT OF MICHIGAN'S ADULTS HAVE VERY MINIMAL LITERACY SKILLS, NO GREATER THAN THOSE NECESSARY TO PERFORM SIMPLE, EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES.***[7] In many cases, these individuals cannot read traffic signs, use a mobile phone efficiently, fill out an employment application, read and understand a lengthy memo or article, or calculate the total cost of purchase from an order form. In some adult learning classrooms around the state, classes comprised entirely of high-school graduates work on these types of basic skills as a precursor to pursuing additional education and training.

- ***NEARLY 1.15 MILLION WORKING-AGE ADULTS IN MICHIGAN WHO HAVE EARNED A GED OR HIGH-SCHOOL DIPLOMA, BUT HAVE NOT ENTERED POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, ARE EARNING AT OR BELOW THE STATE'S MEDIAN WAGE OF $15.45 PER HOUR.[8] THESE WORKERS NEED STRONGER BASIC SKILLS IN ORDER TO MOVE INTO HIGHER PAYING EMPLOYMENT.***

- ***MICHIGAN TRAILS BEHIND NATIONAL AVERAGES IN TERMS OF THE PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS WITH AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE OR HIGHER***—35.3% in Michigan have such a credential, which is 1.9% behind the national average, 14% behind the leading state of Massachusetts, and 17.5% behind the most educated countries.[9] Clearly, other states are ahead of Michigan in terms of their readiness to participate in the knowledge economy with a well-skilled workforce.

- ***ACCORDING TO COMMUNITY COLLEGES AROUND THE STATE, AT LEAST 60% OF STUDENTS ENTERING THESE INSTITUTIONS REQUIRE REMEDIATION PRIOR TO ENGAGING IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION.[10] BASIC SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IS A MAJOR BARRIER FOR MANY WHO ARE SEEKING POST-SECONDARY CREDENTIALS.*** At community colleges, students who require remediation are not prepared to take the college-level classes in English, reading and/or mathematics that are required to earn a post-secondary credential.

- The potential demand for lifelong learning is increasing at a staggering rate, and yet the total number of adults entering Adult Basic Education, GED, and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs has fallen from a high of 88,000 in the late 1990s to 32,000 at its lowest point earlier this decade. These decreases reflect the significant cut in state funding for adult education during this period (from $80 million annually from 1997 to 2001, to $20 million annually from 2004 to 2006).[11] ***MICHIGAN IS RANKED 44TH IN TERMS OF ENROLLMENT IN STATE ADMINISTERED ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS.***[12]

- Of the 32,856 individuals that participated in adult basic education programs during the 2006-2007 program year, only 37.4% completed or improved their educational functioning level. The completion rate of any program rarely exceeds 50%.[13]

7 Michigan League for Human Services (MLHS). 2007. *Fixing the Leaky Pipeline: Why Adult Education and Skills Training Matters for Michigan's Future* with reference to U.S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics, *National Adult Literacy Survey.*

8 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, op. cit.

9 The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) (2008) *Adult Learning in Focus: National and State-by-State Data.*

10 Michigan Community College Association. 2008.

11 MLHS, op. cit.

12 CAEL and NCHEMS, op. cit.

13 Michigan Adult Education Reporting System (MAERS).

STATEMENT OF NEED

It is important to recognize that the financial reality for low-skilled workers, their children, and our communities is grim: 13.3% of adults who have a high school diploma or less are living in families with incomes below a living wage.[14] In fact, raising the skill levels of parents appears to have important impacts on the family legacy of success. For example, 28% of working poor families (24,229 families) had a parent without a high-school diploma and 11% of working poor families (9,518 families) had a parent who speaks English less than "very well."[15]

Over time, the gap has widened between hourly wages earned by those with less than a high-school diploma and those who have completed college. In 1973, the disparity was $8.18 per hour ($12.56 to $21.00). In 2005, the disparity was $14.14 ($10.53 to $24.67). It is also clear that while hourly wages for college graduates have increased over this period, hourly wages for those with less than a high-school diploma have fallen.[16]

Continuing educational achievement prepares workers for the middle-skill jobs that provide good wages and career paths. Please see Table 3.1 below for some examples of these types of jobs.

Table 3.1 - Median Annual Earnings for Middle-Skill Jobs

Examples of High-Demand Middle-Skill Jobs in Michigan	**Industry**	**2006 Median Annual Earnings***
General Maintenance and Repair Workers	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	$36,600
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	Trucking	$37,200
Automotive Mechanics	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	$38,200
Carpenters	Construction	$39,600
Registered Nurses	Healthcare	$57,800

* 2006 median annual earnings for all occupations in Michigan = $32,989
Source: Skills2Compete (n.d.) Michigan's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs. Retrieved August 11, 2008 from www.skills2compete.org

Having a workforce that has in-demand skills not only increases state revenues and personal spending, but can attract new business and ensure the state thrives in the new economy.[17]

New businesses are drawn to Michigan when they are able to benefit from a highly-skilled talent pool. ***FOR INSTANCE, ACCESS TO SKILLED WORKERS IS CITED AS ONE OF THE DEFINING FACTORS IN MEDICAL RESEARCH FIRM ASTERAND'S DECISION TO RELOCATE FROM ENGLAND TO DETROIT'S TECHTOWN.*** Stories like this are becoming more common throughout Michigan.[18]

14 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2006. Microdata complied by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

15 Michigan League for Human Services. *Labor Day Report.* 2008. Referencing Population Reference Bureau analysis of American Community Survey data, as requested by the Working Poor Families Project.

16 Economic Policy Institute. *The State of Working America 2006/2007*. 2007.

17 MLHS, op. cit.

18 Michigan Economic Development Corporation. 2008. *Success Story: Asterand.* Retrieved on August 11, 2008 from www.michiganadvantage.org

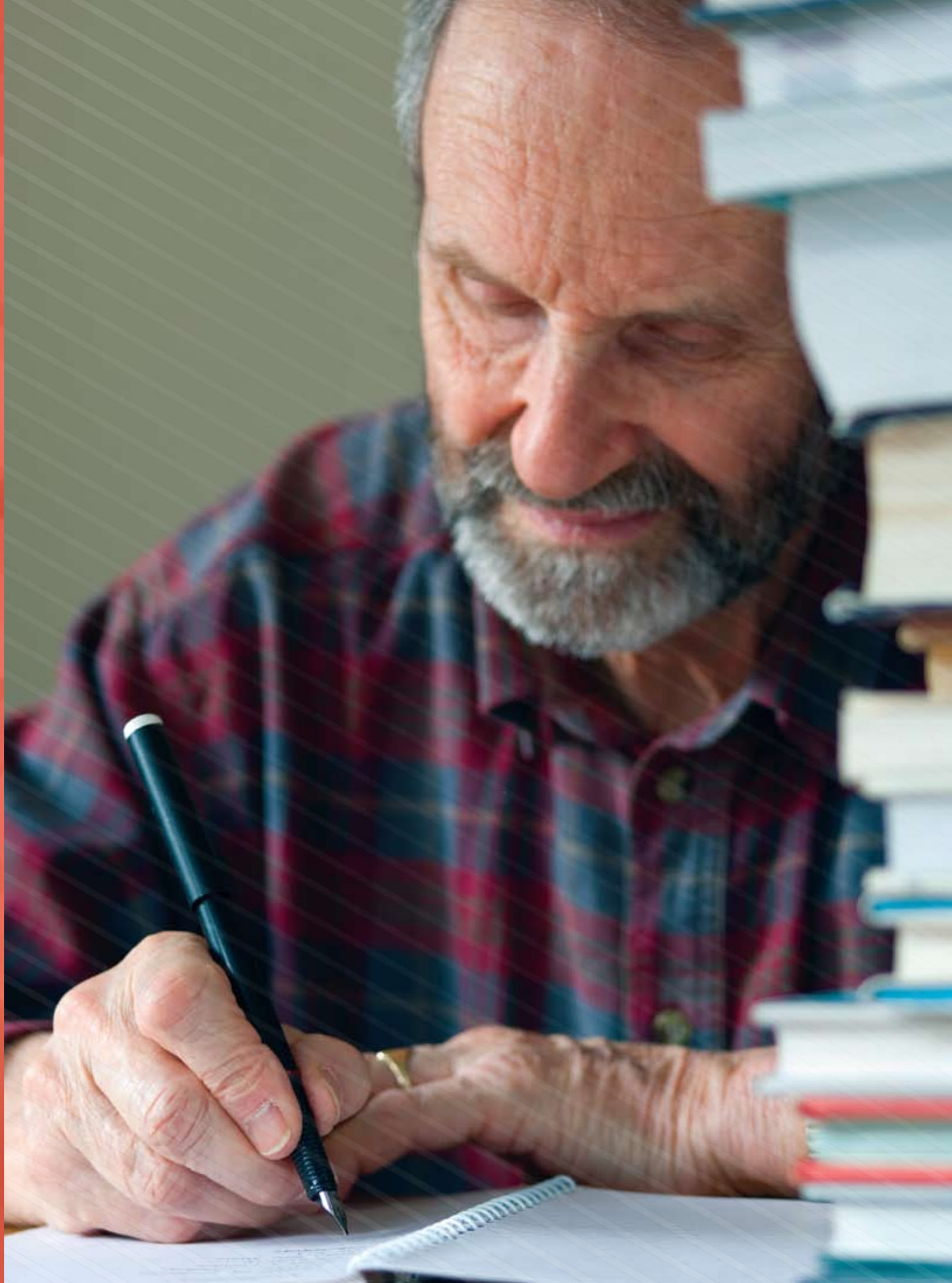
In another example, Michigan's strong manufacturing and agricultural industries, as well as vast natural resources, are providing unprecedented opportunities for green job creation. The Governor's recently-announced Green Jobs Initiative—a $6 million investment in training for jobs in alternative energy industries including wind, solar, biofuels, and geothermal—will include partnerships among community colleges, universities, Michigan Works! Agencies, adult learning programs, entrepreneurs and employers to create the training programs needed to make sure the emerging industries and green economy have trained workers.[19] These jobs represent unprecedented opportunities for workers in transition.

Today, Michigan's adult learning infrastructure is not equipped to take advantage of these opportunities. Michigan's approach to adult learning is largely based on antiquated standards, outdated credentials, and poor connections to the needs of the broader economy. Earning a high-school diploma or GED, once considered the terminal goal of adult learning efforts, is only one milestone for preparing adults to engage in lifelong learning and participate in our state's changing economy. The scarcity of financial resources for adult learning is forcing the development of new approaches.

Transformation of adult learning is necessary to make good on the state's promise that *no worker is left behind.* The philosophy of the *No Worker Left Behind* program sends a powerful message to residents of the state and businesses seeking a well-qualified workforce. To realize this promise, adults with low basic skills must have access to clear and effective pathways that move them toward obtaining needed skills and credentials.

Transformation of Michigan's adult learning system is critical to improving the state's global competitiveness, employers' prosperity, and workers' abilities to succeed. We must use this moment of crisis to gather momentum and imagination around a transformation agenda. The proposed strategic approach transcends political boundaries, term limits, economic conditions, and defensive action. Its guiding principles are logical and universal; its goals are non-controversial; and its core elements are grounded in best practices.

19 Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth. 2008. *The Green Jobs Initiative.* Retrieved on August 11, 2008 from www.michigan.gov/greenjobs



TRANSFORMATIONAL GOAL

GOAL: Cut by 50% the number of Michigan workers lacking the basic skills or credentials needed to attain a family-sustaining job.

The tremendous scale of need in our state demands a strong vision for substantial, sustainable impact. It is absolutely crucial to the state's prosperity that large-scale efforts be undertaken to ensure better outcomes for adult learners, employers, and communities.

This goal involves some key assumptions, including:

- ***MOST MICHIGAN WORKERS WILL NEED A POST-SECONDARY CREDENTIAL TO SUCCEED.*** That means that we must begin to treat a GED or high school diploma as an interim outcome and define success as a much larger proportion of adult learners achieving a post-secondary certificate or degree. The system must support and encourage smooth transitions and integration between basic skills development and academic/occupational learning.
- Adult learners have widely varying life contexts and skill levels. This means ***OUR ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM MUST BE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO REACH LEARNERS WHERE THEY ARE*** and help them to advance from a broad range of beginning points.
- ***ACHIEVING THIS GOAL WILL REQUIRE AN INTEGRATED RESPONSE.*** State agencies and policies need to align in support of this goal, which requires increased investment in basic skills development spanning multiple funding sources, and regional partnerships that can cohesively design and deliver services.

Cutting in half the number of workers lacking basic skills is an ambitious goal. Achieving it will require engaging tens of thousands of people each year in basic skills improvement who are not now being reached. It will require difficult changes in nearly every aspect of adult learning. It will require administrators, instructors, advisors, employers and learners all to take some risks.

The recommendations that follow are in service of achieving our goal.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present…. As our case is new, we must think anew and act anew." To accomplish the above goal, vast transformation of Michigan's adult learning infrastructure is imperative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Transform Michigan's adult learning infrastructure to create a unified strategic approach to increasing basic skills and post-secondary credential attainment.
- Engage a range of partners in service delivery to meet the diverse needs of adult learners.
- Build clear connections between learning and the promise of good jobs.
- Use accelerated and connected pathways to help adult learners reach their goals.
- Increase access to adult learning.
- Make basic skills development a priority with every funding source that can legally support it.
- Hold regional partnerships accountable for success and measure outcomes at the partnership level.
- Engage a broad coalition in communicating the urgent need to improve basic skills.

Recommendation 1

Transform Michigan's adult learning infrastructure to create a unified strategic approach to increasing basic skills and post-secondary credential attainment.

ACTION: *Create a unified state strategy and commitment to adult learning that cuts across agency boundaries and funding streams to deliver substantial and sustainable impact.*

Within the next 90 days, we ask Governor Granholm to:

- Adopt the goal of cutting in half the number of working age adults who lack basic skills.
- Direct the Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth (DELEG) to lead an interdepartmental team charged with creating, within 12 months, a unified adult learning system in Michigan encompassing multiple programs and funding streams.
- Declare basic skills development and post-secondary credential attainment to be an investment priority. Through the Budget Office and relevant departments, increase funding for basic skills development and post-secondary attainment within existing federal and state programs in 2009.

This is the most fundamental recommendation in this report. Cutting in half the number of working age adults with low basic skills cannot be done by tinkering; it requires wholly redefining the state's approach to adult learning.

Governor Granholm can provide crucial leadership to launch and catalyze the required transformation. First, she can make it a priority within state policy. Second, she can unambiguously set expectations and accountability measures such that every department engaged in adult learning will make it a priority within their own sphere of influence. Third, she can require integrated adult learning policies across all affected agencies and programs. Finally, she can direct the relevant departments to make basic skills development and post-secondary attainment a priority within any program stream that can contribute to this cause.

The Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth is powerfully positioned to lead this transformation. This goal is core to DELEG's purpose, and many crucial components of the intended adult learning system reside within DELEG.

Key elements of this strategic approach are defined below. This approach fundamentally relies on embracing common program design elements and goals for learners with every state dollar spent to support basic skills development. This new approach should include programs grounded in best practices which ensure adult learners experience greater access to and success in the new economy through improved skills. It should be understood that significant professional development will also be required to build capacity within the existing system to deliver on this new vision for adult learning throughout the state.

Recommendation 2

Engage a range of partners in service delivery to meet the diverse needs of adult learners.

ACTION: *Require that adult learning services be delivered through regional collaborative partnerships.*

Adult learners in Michigan are helped with basic skills development by multiple service providers. This reflects both Michigan's inherent decentralization of education and the reality that basic skills development is often part of a package of services offered by K-12 districts, intermediate school districts, community colleges, universities, Michigan Works! Agencies, literacy councils, and community-based organizations, among others.

Our recommendation is that the Governor embrace the diversity of organizations engaged in basic skills development, rather than attempt to put any one system "in charge." We believe that the most effective way to provide adult learners with customized packages of learning services will be through collaborative partnerships involving multiple organizations in a region.

DELEG and its state agency partners should only fund adult learning strategies managed and delivered by a multi-lateral partnership that includes, at a minimum, an adult basic skills organization, a post-secondary institution, and the local Michigan Works! Agency or other organization with demonstrated workforce development capacity. Many other partners could be part of the equation in a region. Importantly, we recommend that the state not pre-designate roles for partners, but rather allow those balances to be tailored by each region.

In this approach, individual partners would focus on providing those services for which they have a competitive advantage, have demonstrated success in service provision, are open to innovating and implementing programs based on the vision for Michigan's adult learning infrastructure, and demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively with other partners.

Each collaborative would deliver services in a way that is seamless for learners and offers opportunities for entry to learners at all skill levels in a region. Each partnership would demonstrate a system of referral among a range of partners, in which it is clear what services would be offered by which entities and how learners could transition from one provider to another. This includes community-based providers offering resources that would eliminate or reduce barriers to education. Each partnership would be responsible for engaging employers in planning to ensure that programs align with the needs of regional economies.

Recommendation 2 (continued from previous page)

Coming Together

Stakeholders would be asked to organize partnerships within each of the state's 25 workforce regions. These workforce regions provide for comprehensive state coverage, a manageable infrastructure for statewide planning and service delivery, and a solid connection of adult learning activities with workforce development strategies. The following stakeholders, among others, would be invited to participate in a discussion around regional adult learning needs and strategies:

- Adult Education Programs
- Local Educational Partners (School Districts/Intermediate School Districts)
- Michigan Works! Agencies
- Literacy Councils
- Libraries
- Employers
- Community-based Organizations
- Faith-based Organizations
- Job Training Programs (integrated with occupational training)
- Community Colleges, including Developmental Education
- Regional Economic Development Organizations
- Universities
- Proprietary Schools
- Local Business and Industry
- Local Offices of State Government (e.g., DHS, MRS, CMH, Corrections)
- Local Foundations/United Way
- Local Chambers of Commerce

These stakeholders would work together to identify the region's characteristics (including demographics, key industries, and available services) to determine how services should be offered (existing sources of data and analysis would be leveraged to conduct this analysis).

Stakeholders would then work with each other to develop one or more partnerships within the region that would focus on service delivery that addresses the needs they have identified.

Collaborating to Serve Adult Learners

Partnerships would need to include an adult basic skills organization, a post-secondary institution, and the local Michigan Works! Agency or another organization with demonstrated workforce development capacity.

These regional partnerships would have strong decision-making authority for operations within their collaboration, including flexibility and ownership for how adult learning services are delivered and how the partnership is operated.

Each partnership would identify its operational structure, including how resources will be directed toward the partnership's strategy and who will be the convener within the partnership. Decisions of this nature would be based on an analysis of which organizations have capacity in terms of the partnership's strategy, credibility with the range of partners, and a neutral and unbiased viewpoint. Partnerships would:

- Convene various partners;
- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment;
- Identify common challenges among partners and interventions;
- Implement collaborative programs;
- Leverage funding, expertise, and other initiatives;
- Evaluate progress toward long-term goals identified by the partners;
- Identify new opportunities for impact; and
- Conduct total quality management for the collaborative

Each partnership would demonstrate documented, regular interaction as a team to conduct planning, analysis, and quality management.

Partnerships would be expected to align services to create pathways. At a minimum, services that should be aligned would include:

- Recruitment
- Assessment
- Pre-GED and GED preparation
- GED testing
- English as a Second Language (ESL) services
- Adult basic skills education
- Adult secondary education
- Developmental education
- Post-Secondary Education (PSE)
- Family literacy
- Occupational training
- Employment placement services
- Career and education advising
- Follow-up services
- Financial literacy/asset building services
- Extensive social support (wrap-around) services (e.g., childcare, transportation, shelter, food, clothing, financial, mental and physical health, life management skills, emergency services)
- Employer engagement
- Retention and advancement supports and services

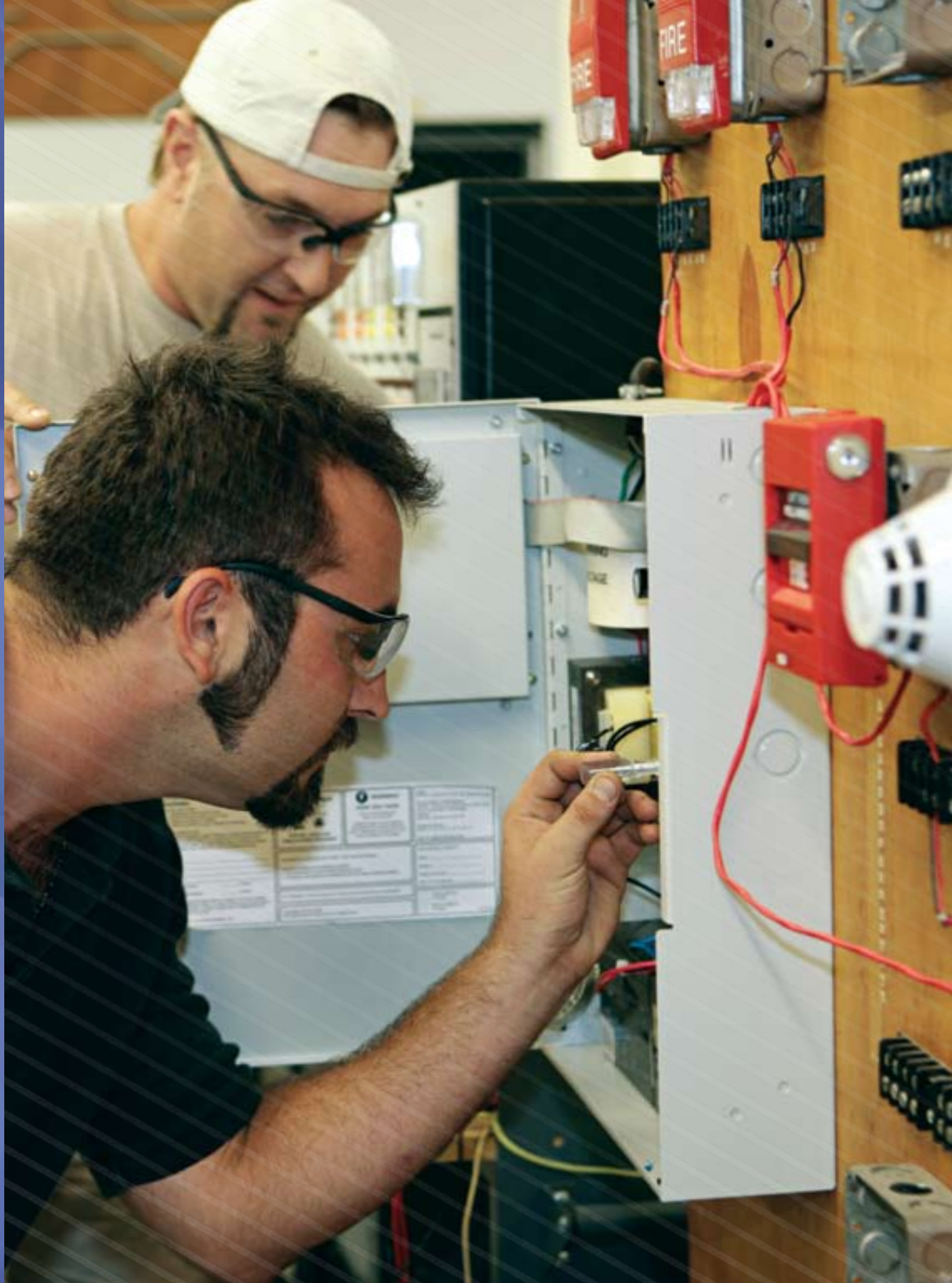
Recommendation 2 (continued from previous page)

Supporting Collaboration

To support and ensure the effectiveness of these regional collaboratives, the state should:

- Provide technical assistance and support as needed to existing and potential partnerships around the state during the transition to this model of delivery. This may include technical assistance and training to function in a multi-lateral collaborative venture.
- Promote a vision toward shared goals for the adult learning system.
- Align funding requirements and outcome measures to support the partnership structure and the goals of a comprehensive, statewide adult learning system.
- Promote the use of data in decision-making among partners within regions.
    - Provide timely, accurate, and relevant information regarding regional economies.
    - Facilitate the process of tracking students through multiple programs at multiple entities. This system would leverage existing data collection methods and track learner characteristics, participation and outcomes among a full range of providers.
- Manage accountability and rewards for achieving outcomes on a partnership basis, rather than by individual providers.
- Facilitate a dramatic shift in adult learning culture emphasizing a focus on lifelong learning, student transitions, and the power and necessity of collaboration and alignment among systems and efforts.

A range of partners around the state currently work collaboratively to deliver high-quality programs to meet the needs of a range of stakeholders (please see Appendix D for examples of state and national promising practices in adult learning). Michigan's adult learning system must leverage these efforts to ensure that promising practices impact the broadest audience possible.


FIRE

Recommendation 3

Build clear connections between learning and the promise of good jobs.

Michigan's strategic approach must help learners to see education as relevant to their larger lives, not taking place in a bubble. Adult learners must feel that their learning efforts are closely related to their goals and dreams if they are to remain engaged. Evidence demonstrates that developing skills in the context of one's life helps adults learn and advance more rapidly.

ACTION: *Require regional partnerships to connect adult learning to employment as a key dimension of program design.*

DELEG and its partner departments should make contextualized learning an essential building block of adult learning program design and delivery. The state can do this in at least three ways:

- Require contextualized learning as a integral concept of every grant awarded to support adult learning, regardless of funding source.
- Build this design principle into all relevant program plans and policies.
- Encourage innovation in connecting learning and employment through innovation grants, technical assistance strategies, training for program staff, and the use of peer learning networks, such as the Breaking Through network led by community colleges.

To build clear connections between learning and employment, Michigan's adult learning approach must:

- Be relevant and applicable to learners' lives, include the predicted needs for a competitive workforce, work as a major component of adult life, and include what is known about effective programs for adult learners.
- Recognize and encourage multiple forms of educational experiences and modes of delivery for adults, including workplace learning as key to helping them see connections between work and learning, and to helping them transition between these activities.
- Facilitate learners' participation in programs that demonstrate clear connections between learning and adults' broader lives, including content that is contextualized around the soft skills and specific abilities required for employment, life and family skills, financial literacy skills, and occupation/career specific skills.
- Educate learners and align program offerings around real opportunities for employment, education, and training.
- Engage employers in partnerships to:
    - Evaluate and contribute to curriculum and training design;
    - Provide job training for new and/or incumbent workers;
    - Integrate work experience and industry-based credentials; and
    - Recognize the integration of career pathways and credentials in employment and promotion practices.
- Offer rapid attachment to employment as a component of learning through such methods as apprenticeships, work study positions, and internships.

Recommendation 4

Use accelerated and connected pathways to help adult learners reach their goals.

As adults begin to recognize the connection between learning and earning, Michigan's approach to adult learning must fulfill its aim to help them compete in the local and global economies. Much of this approach centers on developing clear, accelerated, and connected pathways that move learners toward their goals.

ACTION: *Require regional partnerships to develop and implement individualized learning pathways leading to basic skills and post-secondary credential attainment.*

DELEG and its partner departments should make individualized learning pathways an essential building block of adult learning program design and delivery. The state can do this in at least three ways:

- Require the use of a pathways strategy as a dimension of every grant awarded, regardless of funding source, to support adult learning.
- Build this design principle into all relevant program plans and policies.
- Encourage innovation in pathways development and deployment through innovation grants, technical assistance strategies, training for program staff, and the use of peer learning networks, such as the Breaking Through network led by community colleges.

Career pathways are defined as a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to clearly visualize and follow the steps to reaching their career goals and advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment achievement.

Several elements must be present to ensure fully-functional pathways, and should be reflected in state policy across all relevant funding streams:

- **Alignment.** Program exit and entry requirements must be aligned so that expected learner outcomes in one program match the skills, knowledge, and abilities required to enter a subsequent program and be successful. Where possible, final assessments of progress in one program should be used to determine placement into the next program. Common definitions of services and outcomes—including basic skills—should be developed and used among partners.
- **Acceleration**. Accelerated timing for transitions between programs must be developed and implemented to maintain learner momentum (e.g., dual enrollment/dual credit programs, non-credit to credit transfers, embedded programs, concurrent programs). Frequent skills assessments should be used to more quickly advance those learners who are exit-proficient in a given program of study.

  Modularized programs can also aid in accelerating learner progression. Programs should be modularized to break learning into smaller pieces that can be aggregated into a certificate enabling students to earn several certificates before entering and/or completing post-secondary education. Modules could focus on core competencies along career pathways, such as computer skills, soft skills, and customer service skills. Modules could also focus on varying levels of occupational skill attainment related to obtaining a post-secondary certificate or credential as part of a career pathway. Modules should always be aligned with labor market payoffs that allow learners to quickly benefit from their efforts.

Recommendation 4 (continued from previous page)

Finally, incentives should be offered to learners to support their motivation to continue their education and develop new skills. Incentives could include help with books, fees, and tuition support and/or earning supplements.

- **Assessment and Planning.** Common learner assessments should be used among providers. These assessments must include a range of tools to comprehensively assess student goals and current circumstances, including career exploration, literacy level analysis, barrier identification, learning style analysis, and learning difficulty analysis.

  Key to successful planning and transition activities is the recognition that not every learner has the same path to travel, and so should be able to customize and receive support to implement their own personal strategy.

  Information gained from such individualized assessments should be used to create an Individual Learning Plan with each learner, oriented toward a career and education pathway. The Individual Learning Plan should be made portable and shared among providers for meaningful transitions and progress toward the learner's goals.

- **Advising.** Career and educational advising must be a required component of programs to ensure that learners understand how learning relates to working and the role of education in progressing toward their career goals.

  Central to this concept is the designation of staff to conduct intensive, persistent advising to retain and advance learners along pathways. Using this approach, staff must identify learner barriers and maintain ongoing efforts with the learner to address those barriers. These staff would regularly conduct advising activities using a face-to-face format, though virtual advising can serve as an alternative where necessary.

  Advisors must also be required to guide learners in navigating various learning pathways. Advisors must have a working knowledge of learning pathways and the requirements of programs in other agencies, particularly those which precede or follow programs offered by their agencies.

  In addition to identifying barriers and assisting with navigation, advisors also serve as learner advocates and ensure that instruction staff are aware of any learning style or difficulties that require accommodations and/or career pathway interests and goals around which coursework can be contextualized. Advisors must be seen as a resource for instruction staff who may face challenges in working with individual learners.

  It is also important to recognize that advising activities should help learners self-advocate and gain the skills necessary to navigate pathways as identified in Individual Learning Plans, seek support, and make decisions as they pursue lifelong learning. Advisors should use case management tools and techniques to facilitate learners' use of intensive support resources in helping to address personal barriers, including services like proactive advising, peer support, and college success classes. Helping learners to seek family support for learning endeavors is also crucial to success.

ACTION: *Create a network of high quality career and educational advisors/navigators to support adult learners.*

The need for comprehensive advising and navigation assistance has been made clear in a number of state initiatives focused on aspects of lifelong learning. We consistently heard around the state that these crucial services are not accessible to nearly enough adult learners. We recommend that DELEG and its partner agencies use this strategic opportunity to begin building a cadre of high quality advisors/navigators.

The adult learning system should include a range of mechanisms by which the learner can access information about education and training options, support services, and career and employment opportunities related to learning. These mechanisms can include a web of networks and resources with which adults can engage to access services.

A range of staffing could be used to support such a system, including building the capacity of instructional staff to serve as navigators, creating a web-based system, and others. A deliberate navigation system is vital to helping adults understand their options and establish goals for lifelong learning.

Recommendation 5

Increase access to adult learning.

Even the best programs can offer no benefit to adults who cannot access them. Adult learners face a variety of barriers to engaging in learning, which must be systematically addressed if they are to reach their goals.

ACTION: *Require regional partnerships to include solutions to major adult learning barriers in their program design.*

DELEG and its partner departments should require and assist regional partnerships in identifying and mitigating major barriers that prevent adults who need basic skills from accessing the services to get them. The state can do this in at least three ways:

- Require program design for regional partnerships to include solutions to key barriers as a dimension of every grant awarded, regardless of funding source, to support adult learning.
- Build this design principle into all relevant program plans and policies.
- Encourage creative ways to remove barriers through innovation grants, technical assistance strategies, training for program staff, and the use of peer learning networks, such as the Breaking Through network led by community colleges.

Key strategies to enable access to Michigan's adult learning system should include:

- Creating options and supports for adults who must learn *while* continuing to meet their basic needs through work and other requirements for income. When asked to make decisions between meeting immediate needs for food and shelter and meeting long-term needs for career advancement, immediate needs prevail; many adults in Michigan face decisions like these every day.
- Using information from assessments to address learning differences and difficulties and equipping instructors with the tools and technology required to accommodate individual learner needs.
- Making programs physically accessible by offering diverse access points and/or using distance learning technology and blended/hybrid courses to facilitate learning.
- Increasing the frequency with which learners can begin programs, via such methods as instituting an open-entry, open-exit structure where students can begin and end a program on an individual schedule, rather than waiting for a new semester to begin or end; placing learners into cohorts with frequent class starts; and/or offering relevant and meaningful coursework that students can engage in while waiting for a class session to begin.
- Flexibly scheduling courses to accommodate adult learners' schedules, which includes offering courses on/at various days and times and offering courses year-round, with the understanding that adult learners must remain consistently engaged and do not have time for "summer breaks."
- Offering wrap-around services that focus on identifying and addressing the barriers impeding access to and progress through adult learning opportunities, including transportation, child care, healthcare, housing, and counseling.
- Co-locating a range of services to make it easier for adults to navigate systems and seek services from necessary partners. Space should be leveraged among partners to make co-location possible.
- Offering diverse and flexible instruction for learners with a range of learning styles and goals within one cohort, so that all learners have access to services that meet their needs.

Recommendation 6

Make basic skills development a priority within every funding source that can legally support it.

Given the magnitude of Michigan's adult learning needs, funding a unified strategic approach will require leveraging multiple funding sources to the greatest extent possible. In light of state budget constraints, additional funding to meet this need is highly unlikely in the near term. Therefore, every effort must be made to make adult learning a priority within every possible funding source.

ACTION: *Complete a thorough resource audit to determine what funding can be leveraged to support basic skills development for adults.*

The work group is in the midst of completing a comprehensive resource audit to identify all of the sources of funding that can support some or all aspects of the services described in this set of recommendations. We recommend that the Governor's Office, DELEG, and the other state partners use this audit as a working tool to ensure diverse funding sources support adult learning and that they do so in an integrated way.

The audit is a complex undertaking and will take some time to complete. We know some key things so far:

- The largest funding sources that can support basic skills development now primarily fund adult education providers, Michigan Works! Agencies and community colleges. ***WE RECOMMEND MICHIGAN FOCUS ON HOW TO ALIGN THOSE FUNDING SOURCES AS A FIRST PRIORITY, SINCE DOING SO WILL HAVE THE GREATEST SHORT-TERM IMPACT.***
- More than 20 program funding streams can support basic skills development and/or related services. In some cases, those funds can only be used with specific eligibility requirements; in other cases, they can support everyone needing services. ***THE WORK GROUP RECOMMENDS THAT MICHIGAN MAKE BASIC SKILLS DEVELOPMENT A PRIORITY IN AS MANY OF THESE FUNDING STREAMS AS POSSIBLE.***
- Nearly all of these programs operate on one of two funding cycles, with fiscal years beginning on either July 1 or October 1. ***WE RECOMMEND THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM BEGIN PHASING IN DURING 2009, WITH PROGRAMS BECOMING AN OFFICIAL PART OF THE SYSTEM WHEN THEIR FISCAL YEAR BEGINS.***

The completed audit will provide a road map on a range of issues, including legal requirements with each funding source, who administers the source, and what actions are required to set priorities and align the source with this strategy.

The result of the audit to-date is a funding matrix including information regarding the federal or state agency and legislation responsible for the creation and distribution of funds, target populations, activities allowed, fund restrictions, the amount allocated to Michigan, allocation procedures and current provider funding allocations.

Recommendation 6 (continued from previous page)

The following chart offers a very brief summary of funding sources currently being studied.

Funding Source	Services Provided
Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I - Adult	Provides occupational, workplace, entrepreneurial, job readiness and skills upgrading training for low income adults. Can fund Adult Basic Education (ABE), English as a Second Language (ESL), and literacy services for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) participants.
Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I - Dislocated Workers	Provides workers who have been or will be laid off and displaced homemakers with training programs. Training programs are designed to enable workers to enter new industries or occupations.
Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I - Youth	Enables low income youth (14 to 21 years old) employment and training opportunities to assist them in completing their education and securing successful employment. Youth are able to access mentoring, training, and supportive services.
Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II	Provides Adult Basic Education (ABE), English Language Civics, and literacy services for adults (over 16 years old) who have not obtained a high school diploma or an equivalent degree, lack sufficient mastery of basic skills and/or have limited English proficiency.
State School Aid Act, Section 107	Programs provide high school completion, General Education Development (GED) preparation, basic literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL) services to adults (under 20 years old and/or incarcerated) without a high school or equivalent degree or mastery of basic skills or English proficiency.
Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act	Program enables secondary and postsecondary students in career and technical education (CTE) to earn technical skills, credentials and degrees. Students receive academic support services and career guidance.
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Employment and Training (Formerly Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET))	Provides food assistance recipients with job search services and work experience and/or training through educational program or activities. Basic skills development can be provided within that service package.
No Worker Left Behind (NWLB)	Enables unemployed, underemployed or dislocated workers to pursue a higher education degree or certificate by providing two years' worth of funding. Basic skills development is permitted within No Worker Left Behind.
Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Training	Provides dislocated workers with Adult Basic Education (ABE), remedial, English as a Second Language (ESL), classroom and customized employer training. Participants are eligible for income support while completing training.
Community College Appropriations	State funding for community colleges is among the sources used to support developmental education for students needing it.

ACTION: *Require regional partnerships to blend funding for comprehensive service delivery.*

We believe that the best way to drive a much larger scale effort in basic skills development is to allow regional partnerships to blend multiple funding sources operationally to support service delivery. No learner should ever need to know what sources pay for education or supports; that resolution can be done by the partners in the background if the policies and requirements are consistently aligned by the state across the multiple funding sources. Leveraging multiple funding sources will allow partnerships to tailor service packages for each learner.

Funding Source	Services Provided
At-Risk Student Success Program, Community College Appropriations Act	Provides community college students enrolled in developmental or English as a Second Language (ESL) courses with academic counseling, pretesting and special programs.
Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Step-Up Program	Program connects public housing and/or low-income individuals with apprenticeships and classroom training. Participants receive support services throughout the program.
Jobs, Education and Training (JET) and JET Plus	Enables Family Independence Program (FIP) recipients in select counties to access education and training courses, case management services, community service and/or work experience, and academic support services.
Job Corps	Provides 16-24 year olds with targeted career training, General Education Developement (GED) prep, college prep and English as a Second Language (ESL) service. Some sites also provide supportive services.
Juvenile Justice - Adult Basic Education (ABE)	Provides Adult Basic Education (ABE) services to juveniles below 8th grade reading and math levels.
Juvenile Justice - Special Education	Enables students with disabilities to access employment and post-school experiences.
Alternative Education/School Aid	Educational services for youth whose needs are not met by the traditional school system.
Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative Vocational Programs	Enables correction inmates to access vocational programs, including Adult Basic Education (ABE) services.
Youthful Offender Grant	Provides Adult Basic Education (ABE) or literacy services to youth (under 26 years old) offenders with a high school diploma.
Registered Apprenticeship	Provides low-skilled individuals with on-the-job and classroom training or pre-apprenticeship basic skills training.
Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program	Enables homeless veterans to access vocational training and job development support. Provides participants with support services, including housing and transportation.

VOLTS

Recommendation 7

Hold regional partnerships accountable for success and measure outcomes at the partnership level.

As collaboratives work together to leverage resources to deliver a range of services for adult learners, it will be important to ensure that outcome measures reflect the real work of partnerships to move learners toward meaningful transitions. Additionally, data can help these partnerships to get smarter about leakage points, milestones, predictive factors, and effective practices.

ACTION: *Develop a new framework for performance management.*

It is important to align data systems to support measurement and management of the adult learning system for several reasons. First, students migrate between regions, and aligned data systems are crucial to continuing services in a new region. Second, duplicate data-entry is an issue for all partners within the state's system; thus, aligning data for single-entry wherever possible helps to create efficiencies and accuracy. Finally, aligned data systems would allow for long-term tracking of adult learners' participation and success in learning activities, which will provide for a deeper understanding of expectations and what services are proven most effective in the long-term.

To this end, a new framework for performance management is necessary. Key elements of this framework should include:

- Regionally adjusted outcome measures for economic and employment factors forconsistency with WIA Title I.
- An ability to measure not only the learner's immediate or short-term goals, but also long-term success.
- Initially, a limited number of broad measures, so as to be conducive to innovation and creativity.
- Shared credit for outcome attainment among all individual members in a regional partnership, which would naturally follow the shared vision of responsibility and resources within collaboratives.
- Regional flexibility to determine the appropriate attendance and activity structure (i.e., attendance should not be a measured outcome at the state level).
- A stronger focus on holding partnerships accountable for smooth transitions for learners between individual partners.
- Measuring qualitative aspects of service delivery, including how partners are working together, how seamlessly pathways operate, and how barriers are addressed.
- Better tracking of learner goals and alignment of the learning plans used by various partners, such as Adult Learning Plans (ALP), as developed by adult basic skills providers, and Educational Development Plans (EDP), as developed by post-secondary partners.
- More accurate and detailed data on student achievement collected from various partners, including employment information from Michigan Works! Agencies and post-secondary enrollment data from the community colleges and universities, as compared to the less-reliable student surveys currently in use.

Recommendation 7 (continued from previous page)

The new framework should include measuring the success of regional partnerships in achieving the following outcomes:

- Educational Attainment
    - High School Diploma
    - GED Certificate
    - Post-secondary Credential
- Employment
    - Obtain a Job
    - Retain Employment
    - Improve Employment
- Participation Milestones
    - Passage of one or more HSD classes
    - Passage of one or more GED tests
    - Continued advancement by improving on one or more Educational Functioning Levels (EFL)
- Transitional Milestones
    - Entry into post-secondary education
    - Entry into a job training program
    - Passage of college credit classes
    - Passage of college preparation courses

It should be noted that the recommended categories for system-level outcomes, defined above, align with the current required performance measures for the various partners. The required categories measure:

- Educational gains
- Attainment of GED/HSD
- Entered post-secondary education or training
- Entered employment
- Retained employment
- Earnings change
- Student retention

ACTION: *In the short-term, remove the restrictions that currently preclude sharing data between the Michigan Adult Education Reporting System (MAERS) and the WIA Title I/One-Stop MIS system.*

This is an opportunity for immediate action that will make partnership level accountability much more meaningful and accessible. Actions like this, and those defined above, will help to capture evidence of successful interventions and will also help DELEG to recognize poor performance quickly and take action to improve results.

ACTION: *Longer-term, operationalize the vision for a K-20 Data Warehouse that all regional partners can access for data-entry and reporting purposes.*

Making long-term improvements to Michigan's adult learning system will depend on findings from data on outcomes, and the real benefits of these outcomes for workers, employers, and communities.

The state should look at examples of innovative and comprehensive ways to measure student success. One such method might include measuring partnerships on inputs (e.g., Full-Time Equivalents, enrollments), outputs (e.g., completers and graduates), and outcomes (e.g., employment, earnings, further education).

Another way to potentially measure the success of collaboratives in moving learners toward their goals is by tracking student achievement of momentum points, which are critical points that affect student success and have some relevance to the learner and a given institution. These could also be defined as the incremental goals identified in a learning plan. Examples of momentum points that build toward college-level skills and success include:

- Significant gains in test scores for adult literacy or English language proficiency
- Earning a GED or high school diploma
- Passing pre-college writing or math courses
- Earning the first 15 college-level credits
- Earning the first 30 college-level credits
- Earning college-level credits in math
    - Computation required for applied degrees
    - Quantitative reasoning required for transfer degrees
- Earning college-level credits in English
- Completions
    - Certificates
    - Associate's degrees (technical or transfer)
    - Apprenticeship training
- Re-engineered unit data to track shifts in student success (i.e., momentum at start versus momentum at end of year)
    - Less than college ready to college level
    - Little to no college level to some college level or more
    - Some college level to credential or beyond
    - No college math to preparing for and completing college math

To evaluate the impact of Michigan's transformed adult learning initiative, the state needs to use the collected data to assess the success of programs in increasing the number of Michigan workers who have the basic skills or credentials to attain a family-sustaining job.

Recommendation 8

Engage a broad coalition in communicating the urgent need to improve basic skills.

Transforming Michigan's adult learning infrastructure cannot single-handedly decrease the number of adults lacking the basic skills and credentials to obtain a family-sustaining job and participate in a changing economy. A significant amount of public awareness and engagement is necessary to engage more Michigan's adults in continued learning.

ACTION: *Implement a public awareness campaign intended to create a culture in Michigan committed to lifelong learning and the conviction that learning helps adults achieve their goals.*

Key to this message is emphasizing that learning is a lifelong process, that it is important to economic success, and that there are learning opportunities for adults at all levels.

THE IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATION

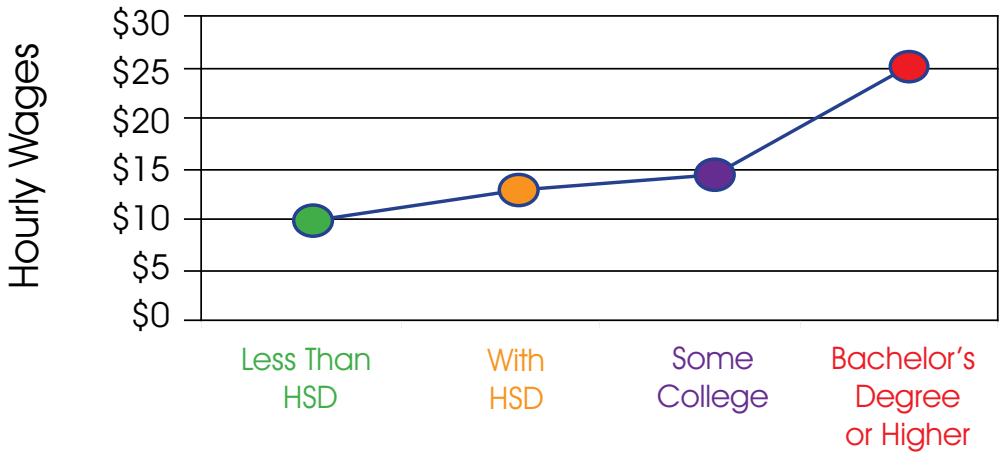
The impact of a transformed adult learning infrastructure on workers, employers, and our state will be profound and widespread.

Higher personal incomes

Increased educational achievement typically results in increased wages for workers. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over an adult's working life, high-school graduates earn an average of $1 million, while those with some college or an Associate's Degree earn about $1.3 million, and Bachelor's degree holders earn about $1.8 million.[1]

Graph 5.1 demonstrates the increase in wages that can result from earning a High School Diploma and continuing with lifelong learning.[2]

Graph 5.1
Hourly Wages for Various Levels of Educational Attainment

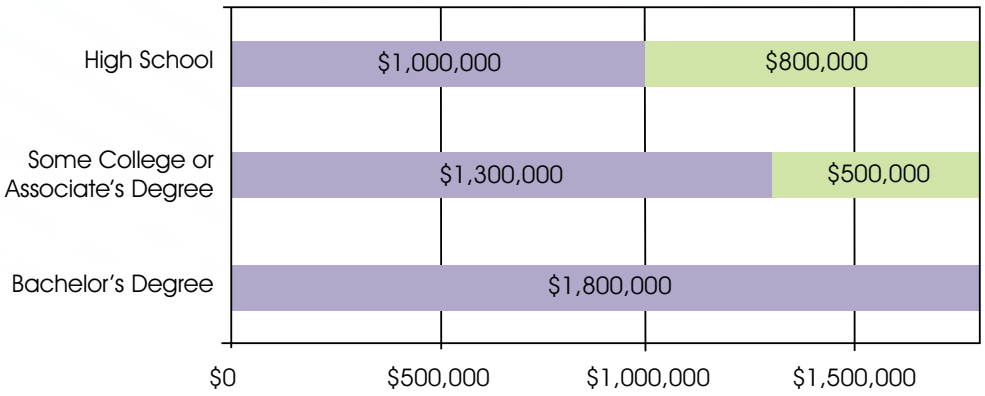


As shown in Graph 5.2 (on the next page), over a lifetime, increased education for Michigan's workers offers astounding financial benefits for our state. If those adults in Michigan with either a high-school diploma, some college, or an Associate's Degree were to earn a Bachelor's Degree, their cumulative lifetime earnings would increase by $2.43 trillion.

1 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. *2006 Public Use Microdata Samples* [Data File]. Retrieved from www.census.gov/acs.

2 U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Reports, 2007. Microdata compiled by the Economic Policy Institute.

Graph 5.2
Comparing Educational Attainment & Earnings



Calculations:
2,000,000 with high school diploma X $800,000 = $1.6 trillion; 1,665,118 with some college or an Associate's Degree X $500,000 = $832 billion

Furthermore, education is critical to ensuring workers can continue to work and earn wages during periods of high unemployment. The unemployment rate for workers without a high school diploma tends to increase disproportionately during uncertain economic times. The number of workers with a diploma, but no post-secondary training, also goes up significantly during such times. However, the unemployment rates of workers with some college and especially with four-year degrees are much more stable during an economic downturn.[3]

Higher Rates of Citizenship and Civic Engagement

There is a strong correlation between levels of citizenship and civic engagement and levels of educational attainment. For example, 39.5% of registered voters with less than a high-school diploma voted in the 2004 Presidential election, as compared to 68.9% of registered voters with at least some college or an Associate's Degree.[4] Additionally, workers who are better educated and better paid are more likely to engage in their communities as critical drivers of economic vitality at both the local and national levels.[5]

Higher Levels of Educational Achievement for Future Generations

Perceptions about learning and standards for achievement are transmitted from parents to children, playing a significant role in determining the levels of education children will pursue. Parents who have had affirming learning experiences and have benefited from continuing education will pass these positive messages to their children, thus increasing the likelihood that children will pursue continuing education.

Family income is a major predictor for whether a student will pursue post-secondary education. Research has shown a significant gap in readiness for Kindergarten based on low family income. The Education Commission of the States estimates that 39.5% of students enter college right after high school, while only 23.3% for Michigan's low-income students do the same.[6]

3 Michigan League for Human Services. *Labor Day Report.* 2008. Referencing Economic Policy Institute analysis of Current Population Survey data.

4 U.S. Census Bureau. *Voting and Registration in the Election of 2004.* 2006. Retrieved on Aug. 20, 2008 from http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/p20-556.pdf

5 National Commission on Adult Literacy, op cit.

6 MLHS, op cit.

Higher Levels of Fiscal Contribution

A policy paper written by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University for the National Commission on Adult Literacy discusses the substantial fiscal burden that residents lacking high-school diplomas impose on individual states. Fiscal contribution estimates for Michigan are cited in the report:

> *In Michigan, the average high-school graduate paid $4,122 more in taxes in 2004-2005 than he or she received in cash and in-kind transfers from the government (each graduate paid $1.89 in taxes for every $1.00 he or she received in government benefits). Individuals with some college education, including an Associate's degree, paid $8,917 more than they received (a ratio of $3.74 to every $1.00). In contrast, the average Michigan adult with less than a high-school diploma paid $3,488 dollars less in taxes than he or she received in benefits that year (these adults only paid $0.64 in taxes for every $1.00 they received.*[7]

According to these calculations, if the approximately 692,000 working-age adults we have identified as lacking a high-school diploma were to earn a diploma or GED, their annual net fiscal contribution would increase by $4.97 billion. If they went on to college, their annual net fiscal contribution would increase by another $3.13 billion. Clearly, increased investment in educational achievement yields substantial financial benefits for the state.

Higher Rates of Job Creation and Economic Growth

Employers are seeing opportunities in markets that are emerging within the new economy. Michigan will be able to attract employers who strongly value a workforce that has the skills, knowledge, and credentials required to meet their needs. A skilled workforce attracts higher-end employers and provides the vital human capital necessary for existing employers to expand more rapidly. When we can meet the expansion of opportunities in the new economy with an equal or greater increase in the number of workers who have the appropriate training for these occupations, we can expect job creation and economic growth.

7 National Commission on Adult Literacy, op.cit.

CONCLUSION

To ensure our state prospers in the changing economy, we must drastically reinvent Michigan's adult learning infrastructure. The implications of inaction are clear.

Transformation of Michigan's adult learning system is critical to improving the state's global competitiveness, employers' prosperity, and workers' abilities to succeed. We must use this moment of crisis to stimulate the state's imagination about adult learning. The proposed strategic approach transcends political boundaries, term limits, economic conditions, and defensive action in that its guiding principles are logical and universal. Its goals are non-controversial, and its core elements are grounded in best practices. This approach is not about a single existing system that has failed; rather, it is about a changing world that demands new responses from all of us.

We are in the midst of a unique moment when multiple constituencies and stakeholders are supportive of extensive transformation. We must harness this current interest in adult learning policy and practice to put Michigan on the road to being the national leader in providing residents with access to lifelong learning and economic prosperity.

Staff support for the Low-Wage Worker Advancement Committee and Adult Learning Work Group is being provided by the Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth (Marcia Black-Watson, Dianne Duthie, Andy Levin, Erica Nakfoor); Michigan League for Human Services (Jacqui Broughton, Sharon Parks, Peter Ruark); and Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (Carrie Floyd, Larry Good, Leise Grimmer, Holly Parker, Kathy Stocking), with grant support from the Joyce and Mott Foundations. Special thanks go to three associations that have contributed enormously to this effort: the Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education (MACAE), the Michigan Community College Association, and the Michigan Works! Association. With the generous support of the Joyce Foundation, the work group has been able to draw upon invaluable technical assistance from the Center for Law & Social Policy (CLASP).

APPENDIX A
ADULT LEARNING WORK GROUP MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

Andy Levin (Chair)
Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth

Barbara Anders
Michigan Department of Human Services

Curt Babcock
White Lake Area Community Education

Ed Bagale
University of Michigan – Dearborn

Lena Barkley
CVS

Joe Billig
Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth

Patty Cantu
Michigan Department of Education

Julie DeRose
Michigan Department of Corrections

Luann Dunsford
Michigan Works! Association

Dianne Duthie
Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth

Jim Folkening
Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth

Pam Gosla
South Central Michigan Works!

Anne Greashaber
Washtenaw Community College

Tracy S. Hall, Ph.D.
Focus: HOPE

Dennis Hart
MCTI - Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth

Anne Iseda
Jackson Community College

Jim Jacobs
Macomb Community College

Barry Kinsey
Monroe Community College

Rich Klemm
Niles Adult Education

Susan Ledy
Literacy Center of West Michigan

Christy Luckey-Nelson
Traverse Bay Area ISD/ Michigan Works!

Robert Matthews
Mott Community College

Lois McGinley
Macomb Community College

Ray Metz
University of Michigan-Dearborn

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Michigan Community College Association

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Michigan League for Human Services

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Debra Porchia-Usher
United Way for Southeastern Michigan

Nancy Rotarius
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Dean Smith
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Bob Steeh
Novi Public Schools

Kathleen Sullivan
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Ray Telman
Middle Cities Education Organization

Mitch Tomlinson
Peckham, Inc.

Gary Tweddle
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Chris Van Heel
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Linda West
Henry Ford Community College

William D. Wilson Jr.
Michigan Department of Corrections

Katie Wolf
Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education

Doug Wood
Orchard View Community Education

Elaine Wood
Northwest Michigan Council of Governments

David Zuhlke
Middle Cities Education Organization

APPENDIX B
LOW-WAGE WORKER ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

David Adams
Michigan Credit Union League

Barbara Anders
Michigan Department of Human Services

Lena Barkley
CVS

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Janet Joseph
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Frank Lopez
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Julie MacFarland
Saint Mary's Health Care

Sharon Parks
Michigan League for Human Services

Hubert Price, Jr.
Synergistics Consulting

Sharon Rivera
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Mitch Tomlinson
Peckham Inc.

APPENDIX C
ADULT LEARNING WORK GROUP 2008 REGIONAL FORUMS FINAL REPORT

Introduction

Local leaders in adult learning policy and practice across Michigan see an urgent need to reinvent the state's approach to increasing basic skills held by adult workers. Innovative partnerships are emerging that serve as examples of the dramatic scale of transformation that is needed, and leaders can readily be found who are committed to being part of a major, sustained commitment to basic skills improvement.

These themes were heard by state officials repeatedly during the course of holding seven regional forums in the summer of 2008. More than 200 leaders participated in those forums, including a range of employers, adult educators, literacy councils, community colleges, universities, Michigan Works! Agencies, community organizations, and elected officials.

The regional forums were part of the research being done by the Council for Labor and Economic Growth's Adult Learning Work Group, which was charged with developing a set of policy and program recommendations for Michigan's next-generation adult learning strategy as part of the work plan of its parent Low-Wage Worker Advancement Committee. The work group's policy framework was approved at the September 9, 2008 meeting of the Council for Labor and Economic Growth, and was followed by approval in December of more specific implementation actions.

The framework being considered was greatly influenced by the feedback received during the regional forums. Every major recommendation being made was proposed in one or more of the forums.

The Adult Learning Work Group is comprised of adult education practitioners and administrators, literacy councils, community college administrators, university leaders, representatives of statewide adult and community college associations, four state departments (Energy, Labor & Economic Growth, Human Services, Corrections, and Education), area foundations, and local and statewide community-based organizations. The regional forums were one important dimension of the work group's research and deliberations, and were held to gain a better understanding of the current state of play in the development of basic skills in Michigan and the opportunities and challenges ahead.

The members of the Adult Learning Work Group would like to thank everyone who participated in the regional forums for their enthusiasm and insights into the potential future of adult learning in Michigan. The response to the forums was overwhelmingly positive; the forums were energetic, informative, and eye-opening. This energy reflected the unique opportunity and readiness across the state for an adult learning strategy that is sufficiently creative, flexible, integrated and accountable to meet the needs of Michigan's changing economy.

At each forum, the work group heard from two panels: a local exemplary program panel and a panel discussion featuring local leaders in adult education. Based on those discussions, participants were asked to share their individual ideas, concerns and advice in reinventing Michigan's adult learning infrastructure. That advice is reflected in this report.

We heard about a variety of exemplary practices from programs throughout the state, along with creative ideas and perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing our current adult learning system. We are excited by the innovation we already see in pockets around the state, and by the

willingness of many dedicated educators to come together in creating new, diverse solutions that better fit a range of needs.

One key definitional point: the work group deliberately is using the term "adult learning" to describe its area of focus in order to ensure that the framework reflects both the full scale of the enormous need for basic skills improvement and embraces within it every type of organization that helps to fulfill that need. This problem and its solutions don't fit neatly into any one agency or program; what we heard in the forums reflects the work group's bias that our strategy requires a myriad of creative partnerships.

General Observations of Issues Impacting Practitioners

The need for basic skills improvement is growing. In each region, practitioners told us that the number of adults needing to improve their basic skills is increasing. The adult learner can be someone who dropped out of high school, someone who has recently lost a job or someone who generally needs to improve their skills. While programs are trying to keep up, the growth in need is outpacing their capacity to serve adult learners. Many program administrators noted that they often surpass the state's cap on funded participants. Unfortunately, this trend is not isolated to individual regions. Practitioners told us that often this is thought of as an urban issue, but many rural areas only have a 50% high school completion rate for adults.

Not only is the need growing, but the "typical" adult learner is no longer typical. Often programs are attracting younger adults who are realizing sooner than in the past that they need higher education. Furthermore, community colleges are seeing increasing numbers of students with high-school diplomas or GEDs needing developmental coursework before beginning college-level classes. Administrators indicated that at least 60% of students entering community colleges require at least one developmental course in reading, writing, or mathematics.

We heard many variations of a common theme throughout the forums. **The goal of adult education should be to improve adults' basic skills and to help them reach self-sufficiency.** Often adult learners enter programs with the goals of improving their income, and being better able to provide support for their families. Programs should be designed to meet students where they are and ensure that programs always benefit the learner. Adult education should help adult learners access training, meet their personal goals, and connect learners to good paying careers in the labor market.

Programming Improvements

Adult learners often need intensive services to support them as they face personal challenges. Adults returning to school often have multiple responsibilities, low wages, and are unaware of where to go for help and how to maneuver through the system. In order to succeed in basic skills programs, adult learners need programs that recognize their individual challenges and direct them to resources to mitigate those challenges. For example, child care and transportation were named as very common issues for adult learners. While most programs try to provide these supports, we heard that it is often difficult to provide the level of support adult learners need and many programs, especially in rural areas, have difficulty providing these services.

Adult learners often need help in navigating career and educational pathways. Practitioners told us that adult learners are often unaware of the career opportunities and the pathways to reach those opportunities. We heard that students need navigators to provide the mentoring and coaching required to effectively move through various systems. One individual stated we need support for students to complete the FAFSA and [college] applications at adult education programs. Many stated that adult learners would greatly benefit from having intensive career and post-secondary advising.

A number of people argued that support for learners in adult education programs is just the beginning. Once placed into employment, adults should be able to access support to help them advance in their careers and continue to improve their skills. In addition, adult learners should be equipped with the skills to advocate for themselves by build[ing] self-advocacy into programs.

Programs should accommodate adult learners' highly varied schedules. Adult learners have many responsibilities, including work schedules and families. We heard that programs that are most effective have flexible times and locations to accommodate the schedule of the non-traditional learner. Often we were told of programs that are operated during the evenings and weekends or that are taught online, enabling learners to schedule their own coursework. Practitioners also noted that many adult learners have immediate needs for education and cannot wait until the next semester to enroll in a program and that there should be more points of entry and year-round open enrollment programs.

We were told that programs needed to be responsive to the multiple skill levels of adults and create environments that build relationships between learners and practitioners. A number of practitioners stated that the field needs to know how to deal with learning disabilities and know how to teach to individual skill levels. We heard that many adult learners have been told they can not learn and need to have an environment that builds their confidence and empowers them to engage with the material. One practitioner stated that individuals should be recognized and rewarded for the small steps. Finally, many programs illustrated that creating a sense of community helped their adult learners work together to overcome their challenges.

Adult learners need the opportunity to learn relevant skills in nontraditional environments. In each region, we heard that adult learners have immediate and career related educational needs. They do not have the time to complete multiple degree programs before seeing economic rewards for their efforts. A number of practitioners suggested that adult learners could benefit from programs that offer contextualized learning, accelerating the educational pathway to careers, with basic skills integrated into occupational training. Furthermore, many suggested that soft-skill training should be embedded in coursework to not only prepare adults academically, but socially.

Often forum participants said that adult learners were discouraged in their first educational experiences and were unwilling to return to those environments. Many argued that non-traditional learning environments were more inviting and accepting of adult learners and facilitated better learning outcomes. One region specifically noted that they try to house programs in non-school atmospheres, often simulating a workplace environment. Others suggested that apprenticeships and internships offer opportunities to learn and experience non-traditional educational environments.

System Improvements

Programs should be aligned, collaborative and integrated. At each regional forum, collaboration was identified as a key component of successful adult learning programs. Forum participants often told us that adult learners are required to complete multiple assessments and visit multiple agencies, and often have difficulty accessing all the services they need because of eligibility and funding constraints. A common theme was that the adult learning system should foster partnerships between local and regional organizations through common assessments, aligned curricula and blended funding streams. We heard there should be alignment between adult education and college entrance requirements and there should be shared visions between organizations. In some areas, we were told that the system should foster regionalism and in others we were told that there should be local input and control.

Increased collaboration among stakeholder groups and agencies was mentioned at each forum. Often participants cited employers, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth, Michigan Works! Agencies, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Corrections, community colleges and adult education providers as examples of agencies that need to be active partners in the adult learning system. Suggestions for how to foster such collaboration included tying funding to partnerships, creating a database of providers, giving business a decision-making role, enabling learning disability funding to follow students from the K-12 system to the adult education system and creating dual-enrollment programs for adult learners.

Collaboration was mentioned as key for increasing the system's ability to rapidly respond to the needs of learners, employers, and communities. We heard about the need to leverage resources among various stakeholders, including adult education providers, Michigan Works! Agencies, employers, and community colleges to support new approaches to meet new and increasing customer needs.

Adult learners often fall through the gaps in transitions. We were told that adult learners often fall into the gaps between programs and agencies during transitions. For example, there were many accounts of adult learners graduating from GED programs but not successfully transitioning to post-secondary education or training. Forum participants frequently stated that the adult learning system needs to allow for seamless transitions and be responsive to the needs of adult learners. Many participants told us that requirements should be aligned and counselors should help adult learners make transitions. We heard that the adult learning system should be connecting employer and community needs to aid smooth transitions. One participant emphasized the need for employer perspective on the local level; by the time the state catches up to employer needs, the employers have moved on. In order to create a system that is agile and addresses learner needs, employers and other stakeholders need to help create a responsive and seamless system.

Little is known about what happens to adult learners after completing a program. Many practitioners spoke of their frustrations with not knowing what happens to program participants after they leave programs. We heard there is no common data system, so providers cannot track students from when a GED was attained to where they are now. Without a common tracking system, many practitioners said they were unable to determine when adult learners dropped out of the system and how to reconnect with those individuals. Furthermore, they expressed frustration with not being able to know accurately how many of their students went on to post-secondary education and training or improved their job prospects.

Cultural Improvements

Lifelong learning should become the expectation, not the exception. Throughout the state, many told us that basic skills and lifelong learning are becoming necessities in a changing labor market. A GED is no longer enough to earn family sustaining wages. Forum participants had many ideas about how to create an expectation of lifelong learning, including adult learning branding and messaging campaigns. We heard that employer buy-in to the importance of lifelong learning is essential. Many regions noted that post-secondary education can take many forms including four-year degrees, two-year degrees and training certificates.

Adult learning is often accompanied by a cultural stigma. We heard many accounts of adult learners being reluctant to enter the adult learning system. Many stated that most students want high-school diplomas and higher education, but it is discouraging to return to a system where they previously had negative experiences. Overwhelmingly, forum participants told us that the stigmas associated with adult learning and adult basic education need to be removed.

Staff support for the Low-Wage Worker Advancement Committee and Adult Learning Work Group is being provided by the Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth (Marcia Black-Watson, Dianne Duthie, Andy Levin, Erica Nakfoor); Michigan League for Human Services (Jacqui Broughton, Sharon Parks, Peter Ruark); and Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (Carrie Floyd, Larry Good, Leise Grimmer, Holly Parker), with grant support from the Joyce and Mott Foundations.

Framing Questions for Adult Learning Forum Panel

- What is the scale of the need for basic skills development in this region? Is the need growing or shrinking over time?
- What do you see as the goal or goals for current investments in basic skills development? What should those goals be? (Examples: readiness for entering post-secondary education; readiness for entry into career path jobs.)
- What current adult learning practices should be expanded and replicated?
- Who are we reaching effectively with current approaches to basic skills development? Who are we missing?
- Should basic skills development be integrated with occupational training? Should we focus on developing skills within the context of an individual's job?
- What is the readiness of schools and colleges to offer non-traditional models, such as accelerated learning, contextual learning, modules smaller than a semester, etc.?
- Does Michigan need to embrace some or all of those models? Why or why not?
- We know funding for adult education has been cut dramatically in Michigan. Set that aside for a moment. If you could change three things in state policy and practice that would dramatically increase basic skills attainment, what would those changes be?

Framing Questions for Table Discussions

- Given the goal to dramatically increase basic skills attainment among adults, what are the elements and characteristics that should be contained in Michigan's adult learning policy and funding priorities? You have a blank slate: what would make a major difference?
- How should we link the issue of basic skills shortfalls with the broader agenda for increased post-secondary educational attainment in Michigan?
- What are concrete things that partners can collaborate on to improve lifelong learning opportunities for adults in your region?

Forum Presenters

Detroit

- Debra Porchia-Usher, United Way for Southeastern Michigan
- Jaffiria Leach-Orr, Detroit Public Schools
- Mary Jones, Wayne County Community College

Eastern Upper Peninsula

- Kris Derusha, Tahquamenon Area Schools
- George Snider, Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Mid-Michigan

- Lyn Knapp, Education Training Center
- Jeff McNeal, Education Training Center
- Mary Weise, Family Literacy Center

Northwest Michigan

- Christy Nelson, Traverse Bay Area ISD
- Elaine Wood, NW MI Council of Governments
- Jean Peters, Healthcare RSA
- Annie Shelter, Kalkaska County RSA

Southeast Michigan

- Bob Steeh, Novi Community School District
- Gregg Dionne, Hazel Park School District
- Michelle Irwin, L'Anse Creuse / Mount Clemens Adult Education
- Linda Casenhiser, Oakland Community College
- Niko Dawson, Oakland Community College

Southwest Michigan

- Sid Mohn, The Opportunity Center
- Kim Thinnes, Kalamazoo Adult Education
- Scott Goodwin, Goodwill Industries

West Michigan

- Vera Grishkina, Literacy Center of West Michigan
- Linda Krombeen, Literacy Center of West Michigan
- Carolyn Madden, Read Muskegon
- Courtney Schaub, Read Muskegon
- Curt Babcock, Whitehall Community Schools

Forum Panelists

Panels moderated by Andy Levin and Marcia Black-Watson, Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth

Detroit

- William Barber, Henry Ford Community College
- Susan Corey, SEMCA MIWorks!
- Erica Larkins, Focus: Hope
- Ray Metz, University of Michigan-Dearborn
- David Porter, retired, Detroit Public Schools

Eastern Upper Peninsula

- Samantha Cameron, Bay Mills Community College
- William Sutter, Consolidated Community Schools
- Gwen Worley, Eastern UP MI Works!

Mid-Michigan

- George Barker, Mott Adult High School
- Robert Matthews, Mott Community College
- Katie Wolf, Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education

Northwest Michigan

- Marguerite Cotto, NW MI College
- Mary Marois, Retired from Dept. of Human Services

- Jan Warren, NW MI Works!

Southeast Michigan

- John Almstadt, Oakland County Workforce Development Division
- Niko Dawson, Oakland Community College
- Tracy S. Hall, Ph.D., Focus: HOPE
- Pam Kellett, Oakland University

Southwest Michigan

- Jeannette Holton, MI Works! Berrien-Cass-Van Buren

Rich Klemm, Niles Adult Education

- Anna Murphy, United Way of Southwest Michigan
- Chuck Philip, Lake Michigan College
- Chris Siebenmark, Legislative Aide to Senator Jelinek

West Michigan

- Ashleigh Emmerson, West Michigan TEAM
- Chris Whittman, Orchard View Workforce Development
- Doug Wood, Orchard View Adult Education
- Eric Williams, Grand Rapids Community College

APPENDIX D
PROMISING PRACTICES IN ADULT LEARNING

The Michigan Career Readiness Certificate

is a portable credential, powered by WorkKeys, that verifies to employers anywhere in the United States that an individual has essential core employability skills in Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, and Locating Information. These three skills are very important to the majority of jobs in the workplace. The certificate offers individuals, employers, and educators an easily understood and universally valued credential that certifies the attainment of these workplace skills. The certificate is designed to complement other traditional credentials, such as a high school diploma, community college degree, or university degree. While these education credentials mark the fulfillment of an individual's classroom learning experiences, the certificate confirms the person's competence in a specific set of workplace skills.

Literacy Center of West Michigan

found that a number of employers in their area needed help in increasing the literacy and English language skills of their workforce. The Center began offering 10- to 12-week classes on-site at the companies for a fee to the company or through a combination of fees and grant funding. The program is customized to each employer based on a thorough needs assessment of the company. Customization options at three levels are offered to the company. In addition to specialized lessons, the reading and writing portions of the curriculum use real company documents or the work language that is specific to the company as study materials. Curriculum is in the context of employees' jobs, providing English or literacy skill instruction and work place training simultaneously. The Center has had demonstrated success with the employers served thus far and is continuing to build connections with employers on the need for investment in their human capital. The Center also uses creative funding to support the project, including a variety of public and private funds.

Breaking Through

a multi-year demonstration project, promotes and enhances the efforts of community colleges to help low-literacy adults prepare for and succeed in occupational and technical degree programs. The project is a partnership of Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education with support from the Charles Stewart Mott and Ford foundations. The goal of Breaking Through is to strengthen post-secondary outcomes for low-income adults by focusing on strategies that create more effective pathways into and through pre-college and degree-level programs. Seven colleges in Michigan are part of the cohort, including Mott Community College, Grand Rapids Community College, Henry Ford Community College, Lake Michigan College, St. Clair County Community College, Washtenaw Community College, and Macomb Community College.

Mott Community College's Workforce Education Center (MCC) has developed career pathways for students through its involvement with the national Breaking Through initiative. MCC ensures that programs have strong connections to the labor market by reviewing several dimensions of labor market information, reviewing postings sent to the College from area employers, and soliciting regular feedback from employers via the College's job developers and corporate services representatives. The resulting career pathway programs are seamless to students in that each phase builds upon the skills, credentials, and/or certificates earned in the previous phase, from basic skills attainment to technical certifications. There are multiple points of entry and exit for students. MCC also accelerates basic skills attainment in phase one, and has some accelerated vocational options

within the pathways. Currently, there are pathways available to students in Healthcare, Business Management, Engineering/ Manufacturing/ Industrial Technologies, Human Services, and Public Administration. MCC also provides supports to students by registering all pathways students in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services, to allow access to social supports like transportation and child care, and training funds like No Worker Left Behind. Supports like academic advising and tutoring are provided by the College.

Novi Community School District

has fostered a relationship with local hospitals (Providence, Beaumont, Botsford, and Henry Ford) to create a healthcare pathway for adult learners. Students are able to dual enroll in Oakland Community College and Novi Adult Basic Education to acquire basic skills in the context of studying healthcare related fields.

The Michigan Works! Service Centers in Northwest Michigan

have truly become one-stop shops for clients seeking lifelong learning opportunities, with basic skills learning labs at each center. Michigan Works! and other agencies in that region deliver adult education services to adult learners through a multitude of partnerships. An adult education coordinator manages the partnerships and ensures that there are seamless transitions for adult learners. Often the adult learners do not even know they are receiving services from separate agencies. The partners have cross-walked their assessments and funding strategies to eliminate program labels and program boundaries for adult learners. All program and funding eligibility is handled behind the scenes. Central to the region's success are communication, collaboration and cooperation.

L'Anse Creuse Public Schools

has a program partnering with their local Michigan Works! Agency, the Macomb Computer Center, Macomb Community College, and Baker College to enable students to transfer credit from their adult basic education program to the community colleges. Macomb Community College and Baker College have articulation agreements with L'Anse Creuse whereby students can earn up to 17 post-secondary credits. Students can participate in a workforce readiness skills course which transfers as two credits at Macomb Community College in the Career and Technical Education program.

Macomb Community College

committed resources and worked with area employers and the Macomb/St. Clair Workforce Development Board to create an entry-level program with unique features that would address the needs of healthcare employers, who needed to fill 1,500 new Certified Nursing Assistants positions, and the needs of unemployed, dislocated, and underemployed workers. The program's curriculum addresses the needs of adult learners by combining classroom learning with hands-on laboratory practice and supervised clinical training in a long-term care facility. The classes are scheduled during times when students are available and child care and other supports are being provided. Students also are able to use all of the College's resources such as free tutoring, time and personal management support, and counseling. Students also have access to a dedicated Macomb program manager who works with Michigan Works!, the Department of Human Services and other support services to address students' needs for child care, transportation, living expenses, etc. When students satisfactorily complete the nurse assistant training, they receive a certificate of completion and are eligible to take the Michigan Nurse Aide Competency Evaluation Test, which is required to receive the Certified Nurse Assistant designation. Certified students are qualified not only to get and keep an entry-level position in the growing healthcare field, but also to use that training to transition to other career programs for possible career advancement.

Florida's K-20 Education Data Warehouse

extracts data from multiple sources and provides a single repository of data concerning student services in the K-20 public education system. Operated and maintained by the Florida Department of Education, the data warehouse allows for longitudinal analysis and includes information on demographic characteristics, educational attainment history, and programming information, as well as employment information. Elements of the data are frequently used to evaluate the effectiveness of particular program models and make decisions on future strategies.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

is a multi-year national initiative to help more community college students succeed. The initiative is particularly concerned about student groups that traditionally have faced significant barriers to success, including students of color and low-income students. Achieving the Dream works on multiple fronts, including efforts at community colleges and in research, public engagement and public policy. It emphasizes the use of data to drive change. Achieving the Dream's presence in Michigan includes six colleges: Lake Michigan College in Benton Harbor, Jackson Community College in Jackson, Bay de Noc Community College in Escanaba, North Central Michigan College in Petoskey, Wayne County Community College in Detroit, and Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn. Achieving the Dream provides participating colleges with support to implement strategies designed to help more students earn degrees, complete certificates or transfer to other institutions to continue their studies. Achieving the Dream emphasizes building a culture of evidence, in which colleges use data to identify effective practices, improve student success rates, and close achievement gaps.

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