A Reimagined Vision for Adult Education Services for the City of Philadelphia: Final Report and Recommendations

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Executive Summary

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This report synthesizes key findings and recommendations for the study, "A Reimagined Vision for Adult Education Services through the City of Philadelphia," commissioned by Philadelphia's Office for Children and Families (OCF). The city commissioned this study to identify service needs and gaps and to inform decisions about how it can support adult education in the future.

Recommendations outlined below were informed by three previous reports written for this study.

1. The first report analyzes the need for adult education in Philadelphia, identifies existing services, and pinpoints gaps between the need and supply. It draws on several data sources, including the PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Skills) small area estimates and the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2014-2018 five-year estimates.
2. The second report describes the landscape of adult education services in Philadelphia. Using survey, interview, and focus group data, it examines adult education and non-adult education stakeholders' perspectives on the status of adult education, their working relationships with the Office of Adult Education (OAE) before it was defunded, and their thoughts on how to re-envision city services.
3. The third report discusses promising models for city-wide adult education systems, as well as national best practices in adult education and city-wide system coordination. It draws on interviews with administrators of organizations that provide and/or play a coordinating role in city-wide adult education services and with national experts on adult education service provision and system coordination in other sectors.

Research Highlights

Philadelphia needs adult education programs to help address social, economic, and racial inequities and to increase access to multiple forms of social capital. Compared to other large cities, Philadelphia has a high poverty rate which is likely to increase as the COVID-19 pandemic causes unemployment rates to surge. Although there are multiple services to address the needs of adult learners throughout the city, data indicate gaps in services in some geographic areas. It is imperative to address the needs of Philadelphia residents with low educational attainment and limited English proficiency in order to ameliorate inequities in income and other indicators of socio-economic well-being.

Key stakeholders from a range of sectors indicate strong support for the city to play a meaningful role in adult education in Philadelphia and are appreciative of the former Office of Adult Education's (OAE) projects. They believe that a re-envisioned city-office could build on and strengthen what was already in place such as cross-system coordination, the referral system, and professional development. To help address service gaps, eliminate redundancies, and distinguish roles across systems, respondents suggested that the city work to more fully integrate and align adult education with other service domains (e.g., workforce development, the prison system, out-of-school youth) related to poverty reduction, improved employment, and increased social justice.

Interviews with leaders of other adult education city-wide offices, as well as national experts, had similar suggestions for the roles that city government could play to support adult education in Philadelphia. Ideas included developing a shared vision for the adult education system to guide planning, implementation, evaluation, and collaboration; advocating for and improving communication about adult education; providing services to build capacity and support providers; and coordinating and convening within adult education and across sectors.

Recommendations

The recommendations outlined in this report are intended to help the City of Philadelphia support a coherent, equitable, high-quality adult education system that can be sustained over time. A successful system would help adults meet their personal goals related to work, family, and community participation, and also address city priorities of reducing poverty and increasing social justice. The findings point to five key system elements that will contribute to these outcomes, and the recommendations are built upon them. These five elements are interdependent and overlapping:

- Understanding and valuing the role of adult education in meeting both individual resident and city-wide goals.
- Coordinating and collaborating within the adult education system.
- Collaborating and integrating across city service sector systems.

- Building capacity for excellence, equity, and accountability.
- Taking explicit steps to ensure a sustained adult education system.

In addition, both a city office for adult education[1] and the broader city structures (e.g., City Council, Mayor's Office, other city offices) have distinct and intersecting roles to play to support and sustain a robust adult education system.

Recommendations include:

1. The city should create, fund, and support a city office for adult education.
2. A city office for adult education should work to ensure the participation of diverse voices and stakeholders from within and beyond the adult education sector in order to build knowledge, collaboration, partnerships, and better services.
3. A city office for adult education should lead a process to create a shared mission, vision, and goals for Philadelphia's adult education system.
4. A city office for adult education and the city need to work together to clarify and communicate the purposes and benefits of adult education.
5. A city office for adult education and other city agencies and leaders should work together to promote collaboration and integration across city sectors.
6. A city office for adult education should build on and strengthen existing successful aspects of system coordination and address challenges and gaps.
7. A city office for adult education should continue to build capacity across the adult education system by equitably providing high-quality technical assistance and professional development.
8. The city and a city office for adult education should both play a role in identifying and generating resources to meet the needs of learners and in addressing barriers to participation so that equitable services are provided and sustained across the adult education system.
9. An accountability framework that is based on a theory of change and outlines goals and outcome measurements for the adult education system is needed to guide the work of a city office for adult education specifically and the adult education system broadly.

Conclusion

Through this re-envisioning process, the city has an extraordinary opportunity to intentionally and strategically enhance and expand on the high-quality work that leaders in various versions of a city office of adult education have initiated and sustained over many years. This work needs to continue and expand with the goal of helping all individuals meet their educational goals and the city to address its priorities. However, in order to do so, the city must make a

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[1] The City of Philadelphia uses "Office" to designate a particular level within city government. The use of the term office in this report does not refer to that specific organizational structure. Instead, it suggests the need for a unit within city government that has sufficient visibility and a distinct identity focused on adult education in order to carry out its support and coordination roles effectively.

concrete commitment to adult education that is affirmed throughout city government and operationalized by a well-resourced office for adult education.

A Reimagined Vision for Adult Education Services for the City of Philadelphia: Final Report and Recommendations

This report synthesizes key findings from deliverables for the project, "A Reimagined Vision for Adult Education Services through the City of Philadelphia," which was commissioned by Philadelphia's Office for Children and Families (OCF). It builds on those findings and provides recommendations for roles the city can play and actions it can take to strengthen Philadelphia's adult education system.

Philadelphia has a long history of coordinating adult education services in the city. In the 1980s, the city created the Mayor's Commission on Literacy (MCOL). Since that time, educators from other cities have looked to Philadelphia's city office of adult education and its programs as a model; although other cities have offices that support adult education services, very few are part of city government. The adult education coordinating body has had multiple locations within city government, including the Mayor's Office, the Free Library of Philadelphia, and the Workforce Division of the Commerce Department. These changes, along with changes in mayoral administration, sometimes shifted the office's agenda, roles, and visibility. As the office has evolved, the staff has continued to innovate and create new approaches to support adult education. Philadelphia's most recent incarnation of a city office for adult education[2], the Office of Adult Education (OAE), was defunded in June 2020 in response to a budget shortfall related to the coronavirus pandemic. Since then, the city has reaffirmed the importance of adult education for Philadelphia residents by restoring some funding to support programming and reinstating some of OAE's functions within OCF. The city also commissioned this study in order to identify service needs and gaps and to inform decisions about future structures and the roles that the city can play to support adult education in the future.

The discussion below provides highlights from the three previous reports written for this study.
- The first report analyzes the need for adult education in Philadelphia, identifies existing services, and pinpoints gaps between the need and supply. It draws on several data sources, including the PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Skills) small area estimates and the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2014-2018 five-year estimates.
- The second report describes the landscape of adult education services in Philadelphia. Using survey and interview data, it examines stakeholders' perspectives on the status of adult education, their working relationships with OAE before it was defunded, and their

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[2] The City of Philadelphia uses "Office" to designate a particular level within city government. The use of the term office in this report does not refer to that specific organizational structure. Instead, it suggests the need for a unit within city government that has sufficient visibility and a distinct identity focused on adult education in order to carry out its support and coordination roles effectively.

thoughts on how to re-envision city services. The research team conducted surveys of Philadelphia adult education program administrators and practitioners and interviews with myPLACE campus staff and focus groups with myPLACE referral partners and key stakeholders from other related service sectors.

- The third report discusses promising models for city-wide adult education systems, as well as national best practices in adult education and city-wide system coordination. It draws on interviews with administrators of organizations that provide and/or play a coordinating role in city-wide adult education services and with national experts on adult education service provision and system coordination in other sectors.

This final report first synthesizes key findings from these reports in the Research Highlights section. This synthesis focuses on: (1) the need for and gaps in literacy services; (2) Philadelphia stakeholders' perspectives on adult education in their city; and (3) characteristics of city system coordination. The next section provides recommendations for the city's role in supporting and coordinating a strong, sustainable adult education system. Recommendations are organized in three sections: (1) strengthening the foundation of a city adult education system; (2) coordination, collaboration, and integration across city sectors; and (3) the functions of an office for adult education.

Research Highlights

The need for and gaps in literacy services

Philadelphia needs adult education programs to help mitigate social, economic, and racial inequities and to increase access to multiple forms of social capital. Approximately, 16% of Philadelphians age 25 or older lack a high school diploma or its equivalent. Moreover, 17% of residents age 25 or older were born outside of the U.S. and one-third speak English "not well" or "not at all." Of this group, more than one-half lack secondary education. Of Philadelphians age 16-74, 70% are estimated to be at Level 2[3] or below on the PIAAC literacy scale; and nearly 78% are estimated to be at Level 2 or below on PIAAC Numeracy. In addition, compared to other large cities, Philadelphia has a high poverty rate, which is likely to increase as the COVID-19 pandemic causes unemployment rates to surge and the economy to falter. By May 31, 2020, the unemployment rate had increased from 7% to 17% and nearly 68% of those who filed for unemployment lacked a high school education (Philadelphia Works, 2020). Overall, these data demonstrate a strong link between low skills, employment, and earnings.

Although there are multiple services to address the needs of adult learners throughout the city,

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[3] Ranging from 0 to 500, PIAAC literacy and numeracy scores correspond to five proficiency levels (Below Level 1 to Level 4/5). The average literacy and math scores for U.S. adults are 270 and 253, respectively (Level 2). At Level 2 or below, adults are believed to have difficulty understanding denser, more complicated types of print and performing more complex numeracy-related tasks. (For more information on PIAAC proficiency levels, see the National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/measure.asp).

data indicate gaps in services in some geographic areas. Some high-need areas lack myPLACE campuses and some regions lack convenient access to literacy programs at partner sites. Additionally, the number of myPLACE partner organizations and Community Schools is not necessarily well-matched with the needs of neighborhoods based on income, skill level, or immigrant population. The high number of unemployed residents without a high school degree or equivalent and the substantial number of adults with unmet literacy and numeracy needs point to the urgency of providing robust adult education services in Philadelphia. It is imperative to address the needs of Philadelphia residents with low educational attainment and limited English proficiency in order to ameliorate inequities in income and other indicators of socio-economic well-being.

Philadelphia stakeholders' perspectives on adult education in their city

Interviews with myPLACE campus staff, referral partners, and key stakeholders from a range of sectors indicate strong support for the city to play a meaningful role in adult education, appreciation of OAE's projects and initiatives, and ideas about how to further strengthen the city's role and that of a city office for adult education.

OAE successfully provided supportive technical assistance and fostered collaborative networks that enhanced the effectiveness of adult education services across the city. Survey and interview respondents agreed that the myPLACE network and referral processes helped to improve city adult education services. They also indicated that a new, re-envisioned city office should build on this success by enhancing and improving what was already in place. The relationships that OAE built across adult education programs were working well. Interviewees reported that OAE provided support and expertise for other sectors seeking to integrate adult education services into their work and also promoted improved cross-system coordination. Respondents believed these efforts should continue. One suggestion was to enhance understanding among providers about each other's services and programs. With this knowledge, they can make more effective referrals across the system. Interviewees advocated for improving services through short and long-term professional development offerings. They also expressed the need for an improved database that is more user-friendly, efficient, informative, and timely. In addition, respondents indicated that reliable internet access was a barrier for some learners and programs, both before and during the pandemic.

Respondents also suggested that the city could play a key role in expanding the networks that OAE had established by more fully integrating and aligning adult education with other service domains in the city, including those related to poverty reduction, improved employment, and increased social justice. Areas for collaboration include workforce development, the community college system, the prison system, and out-of-school youth. Such efforts would help address service gaps, eliminate redundancies, and clarify and distinguish roles across systems. The office, with help from the city, could also play a major role in convening stakeholders to identify and operationalize a shared vision of program quality.

City systems roles

Interviews with national representatives of adult education and non-adult education systems revealed considerable overlap in roles played by city government agencies and non-profit organizations seeking to develop strong city systems. These key system roles include:

- *Driving and coordinating a shared vision.* For example, interviewees led visioning and planning processes in areas such as adult education, regional planning, and youth development.
- *Communication and advocacy.* These efforts included both external communications about an issue or available services through social media and other avenues and public policy advocacy.
- *Service delivery.* Although some adult education systems incorporate direct services such as offering specific classes, most do not.
- *Capacity-building and supports for providers.* This was a key responsibility for most organizations and focused on multiple areas:
    - Professional development.
    - Data collection and use.
    - Technology and digital access.
- *Fiduciary services*. Some organizations take on a fiduciary role, often by serving as a fiscal agent for grants shared by multiple organizations.
- *Coordination and convening.* Adult education and other city system leaders coordinate and convene, both within their specific area of focus and more broadly, with other partners and city agencies.

Recommendations

The goal of these recommendations is to help the City of Philadelphia support a coherent, equitable, high-quality adult education system that is sustained over time. A successful system would help adults meet their personal goals related to work, family, and community participation, and also address city priorities of reducing poverty and increasing social justice. The findings point to five key system elements that will contribute to these outcomes, and the recommendations are built upon them. These five elements are interdependent and overlapping:

- Understanding and valuing the role of adult education in meeting both individual resident and city-wide goals.
- Coordinating and collaborating within the adult education system.
- Collaborating and integrating across city service sector systems.
- Building capacity for excellence, equity, and accountability.
- Taking explicit steps to ensure a sustained adult education system.

Sustainability is both an outcome of the first four elements above and a distinct element that implies additional specific recommendations. Many of the recommendations below incorporate two or more of the key elements. In other words, substantive and successful operationalization of one element can support or contribute to the effectiveness of others. The recommendations reflect the inter-related nature of these elements.

It is important to note that both a city office for adult education and the broader city structures (e.g., City Council, Mayor's Office, other city offices) have distinct and intersecting roles to play to support and sustain a robust adult education system. The recommendations are written to reflect this.

Recommendations are organized into three categories:
    (1) Strengthen the foundation of a city adult education system
    (2) Coordinate, collaborate, and integrate across city sectors
    (3) Enhance the functions of an office for adult education

Some recommendations are dependent on the effective implementation of others, and they can not necessarily be rolled out in a sequential way. We believe that each is important and interdependent with the others. Rather than prioritize one recommendation over another, we suggest setting priorities within each and then working across them in order to strengthen the city-wide adult education system.

Strengthen the foundation of a city adult education system

1. The city should create, fund, and support a city office for adult education.

Both local stakeholders and national experts affirmed the importance of a city-wide adult education office within city government, as well as the need for a broader city role to rally support for adult education and connect it to city priorities, agencies, and initiatives. Local stakeholders suggested that a renewed office could reinstitute the valuable programs once housed in OAE and also amplify, improve, and expand efforts to build a stronger system.

A city office could play a range of important roles, including:

- helping programs build capacity to improve the quality of both individual programs and the overall system
- building collaborative networks among adult education providers to support peer learning, program improvement, and cross-program coordination
- connecting learners with programs as they enter or need to make transitions within the adult education system or to other kinds of service providers when they are ready for next steps
- building bridges between the adult education system and other city agencies as well as the state Division of Adult Education

- working to ensure a system that keeps equity at the forefront, including seeking to serve the hardest-to-serve (e.g., low-skilled readers, English language learners who lack basic education in their country of origin), and bolstering the capacity of struggling programs

City government's resources (human, financial, political, administrative) uniquely position it to support effective adult education services and catalyze the office's ability to build a strong system. The city can mobilize and engage a range of stakeholders and sectors, both in and outside of government; raise the visibility of learner needs and provider initiatives; summon leaders to address pressing needs such as digital access; and integrate adult education with other city systems.

2. A city office for adult education should work to ensure the participation of diverse voices and stakeholders from within and beyond the adult education sector in order to build knowledge, collaboration, partnerships, and better services.

According to interview and survey respondents, OAE created effective collaborative networks within adult education (e.g., myPLACE campuses and referral partners, Keyspots) and also worked with other sectors and organizations to improve cross-system coordination. However, both local and national stakeholders emphasized the need to engage diverse voices in collaboration, decision making, and policy discussion.

Whom to engage may be shaped by the overall purpose of specific initiatives, as well as by the goals of the office or the city. An adult education office could continue to review and refine engagement strategies over time and in response to evolving initiatives and priorities. Key stakeholders to consider engaging include those most affected by and engaged with adult education, including:

- current and prospective adult learners, instructional staff, and program administrators
- community members, especially from those communities with high unmet literacy needs
- other city agencies that may also serve adult learners before, during and/or after their participation in adult education, including departments focused on workforce, human services, refugees and immigrants, the prison system
- non-profits and other organizations that work with adult learners and their families
- the School District of Philadelphia
- institutions of higher education and other organizations engaged in post-secondary education and training
- the business community
- the philanthropic and foundation community

Intentional efforts to build relationships and trust within diverse groups can help create a foundation both for effective collaboration and for working through the inevitable tensions and conflicts.

The process of engaging a wide range of stakeholders must be driven by the goal of better meeting the diverse needs of adults across the city. Such engagement will also enable an office to collaborate with a range of partner organizations to both build a stronger adult education system and meet a range of needs of potential, current, and past adult learners.

3. A city office for adult education should lead a process to create a shared mission, vision, and goals for Philadelphia's adult education system.

Local and national stakeholders agreed on the importance of using a collaborative process to develop a shared mission, vision, and goals for adult education in Philadelphia. They noted that a shared understanding of the mission and goals can help others see the importance of adult education and how it fits into and supports other city priorities as well as provide a roadmap for planning and subsequently evaluating the efforts to meet system goals. This visioning process is an example of the kind of "planning table" where an office for adult education should gather diverse stakeholders. It would be especially important to include learners, community members, and program instructors and administrators.

A broad vision for the entire adult education system can galvanize city-wide support and engagement and can help varied stakeholders and players more clearly see their roles in meeting adult education goals. The mission and goals can also inform other planning and documents that help translate the vision into action. The city office can do further work, again involving various stakeholders at key junctures, to plan backwards from the system goals to create an implementation plan to meet the goals. Tools like a theory of change and a strategic plan that indicate how to enact the theory of change could help delineate the office's activities, outputs and outcomes, as well as the resources needed to achieve the outcomes. These can also help the office develop appropriate accountability measures to assess both the office's progress towards its goals and the larger system's progress toward citywide goals.

4. A city office for adult education and the city need to work together to clarify and communicate the purposes and benefits of adult education.

Interviewees repeatedly stated that many potential and actual stakeholders, including city council members and leaders of city agencies, institutions of higher education, and the business sector, do not understand what adult education is and how it can help them meet their goals. They often have a narrow understanding of it as "the GED® program" or perhaps "the English program for immigrants" rather than a key service that can help address pressing city needs and goals and play a key role in alleviating poverty; addressing the needs of citizens returning from incarceration; and improving employment, housing security, and public health outcomes.

Key stakeholders and other city leaders need a deeper knowledge of adult education, adult education services, and the functions of an office for adult education. Along with that, the office functions and citywide adult education services must be communicated clearly and made more visible to all stakeholders. This could broaden and further commitment to adult education and help to ensure more sustained funding, engagement, collaboration, and integration across

sectors. In support of this effort, clear, concise tools are needed to communicate the purposes of and processes for delivering adult education. Additionally, an office for adult education, possibly working with the Philadelphia Adult Literacy Alliance, should cultivate "champions" who can advocate for and explain adult education and ensure that office leaders, adult education practitioners, and learners are called to the planning, funding, and implementation "tables" whenever possible.

Coordinate, collaborate, and integrate

5. A city office for adult education and other city agencies and leaders should work together to promote collaboration and integration across city service systems.

Respondents agreed that along with increased knowledge and diverse stakeholder engagement, another key to fostering sustained commitment to adult education in Philadelphia is to integrate it with other city services. For example, meaningful collaborations between adult education and the workforce system; immigrant and refugee services; and efforts to end homelessness, promote public health, meet the needs of out-of-school youth, and support re-entry of formerly incarcerated people should all be strengthened. Adults who seek services from these systems often have multiple challenges that more education and increased skills could help address. Rather than function separately, adult education should complement the services in these other sectors. Similarly, other sectors can help support adult education services. Ideally, adult education services could be located within other service sectors so that their priorities could be integrated. For example, adult literacy educators could support health literacy at public health centers, adult literacy programs could integrate health education and literacy into their instruction, and health centers could make referrals and share information about adult education services.

As integration of adult education and other service systems develops, there is the potential for:

- combined funding opportunities
- reduced service redundancies
- greater awareness of and ability to fill unmet needs and address service gaps
- clarifying roles and responsibilities across agencies and sectors
- shared resources (e.g., training, curriculum, digital tools)
- co-location of services

The potential to increase system integration depends on the previous recommendation--increasing understanding of what adult education is and how it can address diverse priorities across sectors. However, this is not a linear process. Integration will increase understanding just as increased understanding will support integration. An office for adult education can both promote the benefits of adult education across service sectors and provide expertise and support for other sectors seeking to integrate adult education services into their work. City leaders can play a role in facilitating collaborations across sectors by including adult education in these efforts.

In addition, given the tendency to work in silos, it may be important to consider what incentivizes stakeholders to collaborate. Some possibilities for encouraging collaboration are:

- creating opportunities to identify a shared approach for meeting the needs of adults seeking services across sectors
- identifying shared goals and creating structures for working together to meet those needs
- facilitating strategies to help each other meet goals and address priorities.
- instituting seed grants that reward collaboration across sectors
- providing meaningful opportunities for shared professional development and knowledge generation
- pooling resources

Enhance the functions of a city office for adult education

6. A city office for adult education should build on and strengthen existing successful aspects of system coordination and address challenges and gaps.

Research with Philadelphia stakeholders consistently revealed that the collaborative networks and technical assistance that OAE provided enhanced the effectiveness of adult education services across the city and that respondents want them to continue. (See Appendix 2 for more detail about this interview and survey research.) These efforts include the myPLACE campus system, which provides a referral system of intake campuses and partner programs, coordinates campus and partner meetings, facilitates collaborations, and provides professional development. Respondents also indicated that a new office for adult education should build on these successes by augmenting and improving what is already in place. One way that campus and partner meetings could be strengthened is to consistently rotate the meeting locations to more sites so partners can learn more about one another's services in order to provide more knowledgeable and effective hand-offs when referring learners.

Although respondents praised the OAE database and saw it as a key network resource, they also identified it as an area for improvement. The database is essential to operating a high-quality referral system and can also be used to inform decision making and monitor system quality. Reaching out to users to pinpoint the most important problems and challenges to address can help inform database revisions. Tasks could include:

- making the database more user-friendly, efficient, and informative
- conducting a "data review" to make sure that all data items the system requires are necessary and used
- creating a user manual to accompany the database
- providing more training on the database for providers, including developing an asynchronous webinar that is required for users (and new users)
- supporting a "help desk" to troubleshoot problems using the database

- having each program using the database identify a contact who is responsible for data entry quality and routine data checking (may need to provide incentives to support this),
- supporting programs in consistently updating their information
- ensuring that the renewed OAE office has dedicated staff to make and maintain database improvements

Many respondents noted a significant lack of digital literacy, digital tools, and broadband access among programs, practitioners, and learners. An office for adult education should take a lead in ascertaining the needs of programs, practitioners, and learners; provide relevant professional development; and work with the city to marshal resources and develop plans for expanding digital skills and broadband access. In addition, although there are multiple services to address learners' needs, data from the American Community Survey indicate gaps in service in some areas (see Appendix 1). In particular, populations that need adult education services are more likely to be concentrated in Central, East, Southwest, West, North, and Northeast-West Philadelphia[4]. Central, East, and West Philadelphia have myPLACE campuses, but there is no myPLACE campus in North, Southwest, Northeast-West, or Northeast-East Philadelphia. The east side of Northeast Philadelphia has no myPLACE partners. Northeast-West and West Philadelphia do not have community schools. The city should consider providing support and resources to increase services in these areas.

7. A city office for adult education should continue to build capacity across the adult education system by equitably providing high-quality technical assistance and professional development.

Respondents reported that the former OAE provided valued supports and technical assistance that helped myPLACE campuses and partners improve program quality. Such efforts should continue through an office for adult education, but with more systematic attention to improving program quality and building the capacity of all organizations in the system to serve learners with diverse needs. This is especially important because some respondents expressed concern about referring learners to some partners due to perceived low program quality or inadequate ability to effectively provide services to learners who have special needs or low assessment scores.

In particular, capacity building should help all programs meeting the needs of the hardest-to-serve learners through engaging, motivating, and effective instruction, and helping them persist. This is sometimes more difficult for smaller providers and neighborhood programs who may have fewer resources and professionally trained staff. Therefore, special efforts should be made to provide professional development that is aimed at large, medium, and small providers and that use a range of approaches, including collaborative learning groups, expanded professional development workshop offerings, and a leadership academy. Topics could include emergent literacy, motivation, persistence, differentiated instruction, and collecting and using data to inform instructional and program decision-making.

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[4] Note: These geographic designations come from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and may not align with how Philadelphia residents name neighborhoods.

A renewed office for adult education might consider creating a program quality template, implementing a non-threatening way to assess and build program quality (e.g., establish a community of practice for providers to work on program quality and diversifying services), and providing technical assistance and support to help programs improve where needed. The template could be adapted from the *Pennsylvania Department of Education Division of Adult Education Indicators of Program Quality* ([Indicators of Program Quality](#)). The template could also include a self-assessment and, along with guidance from office staff and a learning community, programs could self-assess strengths and gaps, develop a plan for improvement, and work on the plan with their colleagues. This process could also inform ongoing professional development opportunities available across the city's adult education system.

8. The city and a city office for adult education should both play a role in identifying and generating resources to meet the needs of learners and in addressing barriers to participation so that equitable services are provided and sustained across the adult education system.

Implementing the recommendations outlined throughout this report will require funding. Since city funding for adult education is limited, officials should creatively seek financial resources for adult education through new and innovative means to address learners' needs and barriers to participation. Most interviewees from other city adult education systems and national experts acknowledged that the city could play an important role in accessing external funding. For example, funding from public and non-governmental foundation entities could be used for adult education. Sources such as SNAP Employment and Training, Community Development Block Grant, Average Daily Attendance (ADA), TANF, and stimulus funding could possibly be used for some adult education services. Seeking these non-education funds is an example of cross-system collaboration and integration.

To identify and generate such resources, the city should consider dedicating a position (or part of one) to develop and implement plans and partnerships to creatively access and bundle public funds across sectors, as well as to raise awareness of and interest in adult education with foundations and corporate donors. This position could also involve working with corporations to make digital access more equitable citywide by helping to increase the availability of the internet and digital devices for programs, learners, and community members.

The city could play a role in addressing other barriers to participation such as lack of program space and transportation. First, the city may be able to make currently under-utilized space available at low or no cost for programs seeking to expand services or to meet needs in underserved areas. Opening up such spaces for adult education has multiple advantages. It can help programs reduce rental costs and find reliable and appropriate space. For learners it can reduce public transportation needs and costs and enable them to study in their own neighborhoods. If needed, the city office for adult education staff could also encourage public transportation officials to add bus routes at times that align with class scheduling.

9. An accountability framework that is based on a theory of change and outlines goals and outcome measurements for the adult education system is needed to guide the work of a city office for adult education specifically and the adult education system broadly.

Establishing an accountability framework for the adult education system in Philadelphia is critically important for the sustainability of the city office for several reasons. First, decision makers pay attention to program outcomes, and program outcomes can help the city track progress and achievements in the adult education system. Second, a city office will operate in an environment where multiple data systems with varying outcomes and measures are in place, and the city office will have little control over these or the organizations and programs that are responsible for achieving those outcomes. Therefore, it will be challenging for the city office to demonstrate results if it does not have its own accountability framework.

As the city office works towards a shared vision, mission, and goals for Philadelphia's adult education system, as described in Recommendation 3, it should also establish an accountability framework that includes both system-wide goals and city office goals. The office should work with stakeholders to identify the outcomes that will result from achieving those goals, the measures that will be used to determine how well the outcomes have been met, the data that will be collected, and how the data will be used to demonstrate accountability. Assuming a theory of change is developed, this framework should be aligned with it.

Conclusion

Through this re-envisioning process, the city has an extraordinary opportunity to intentionally and strategically enhance and expand on the high-quality work that leaders in previous versions of a city office of adult education have initiated and sustained over many years. This is a moment to build on strengths, understand gaps, and identify innovative responses to current realities.

The overall goal is the full realization of a city-wide adult education system that meets the needs of all individuals seeking to improve their literacy, numeracy, language, and workforce skills; prepares for transition to post-secondary education; and helps the city address its priorities. This goal can only be met if the city makes a concrete commitment to adult education that is affirmed throughout city government and operationalized by a well-resourced office for adult education. Commitment can be built through a purposeful goal-setting process and the development of an implementation plan. As part of this plan, metrics of effectiveness should be identified and ongoing cycles of evaluation and improvement should be implemented. It is important that diverse voices, experiences, and resources are brought together to participate. In addition, clear communication about goals and plans is needed, and this communication should reach every relevant service sector that could benefit from and help support a strong adult education system. Integrating adult education across city sectors should be encouraged by city leaders who have the clout to convene key players to identify opportunities for mutually strengthening efforts to serve the citizens of Philadelphia.

Placing city adult education staff in OCF is an important opportunity to begin this work. And, because OCF houses several complementary programs and departments, important synergies can be initiated within it that begin to integrate adult education with other service sectors in the city. However, within this large office there is also a risk that adult education could lose its distinct identity as a key contributing mechanism for reducing poverty, increasing social justice, and addressing many of the challenges the city and its residents face. City leaders, adult education champions, and OCF adult education staff should work together to enhance efforts to communicate the importance of adult education, build capacity among adult education programs, strengthen networks in the field, and seek meaningful ways to collaborate, coordinate, and integrate adult education with related sectors across the city.