

A Process Evaluation of the Integration of Title I (Workforce Development) and Title II (Adult Literacy) Services Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in New Jersey

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Executive Summary

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the primary legislation that addresses workforce, educational, and training programs, requires that an independent evaluation of Title I programs and activities be carried out annually. These evaluations may jointly examine activities under Titles II to IV (Legal Information Institute, n.d.; U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 2014). This evaluation report fulfills New Jersey's WIOA evaluation requirement for Program Year 2019 and examines the services in two programs: WIOA Title I, which covers workforce development activities (job training and services to unemployed or underemployed individuals) and WIOA Title II, which addresses adult educational and literacy services (covering basic skills, secondary education, and literacy) (Bradley, 2015).

The goal of this study was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the degree to which services under WIOA Title I and Title II are integrated in New Jersey. The process evaluation also sought to identify the challenges local areas face when implementing various forms of Title I and Title II services integration. WIOA broadly defines integration between Title I and Title II as a service approach in which adult educational and literacy activities are provided concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement (WIOA, 2014a).

The evaluation included preliminary work to unpack the significance of the WIOA requirement that adult literacy education and job training be "concurrent and contextual," even though the two Title areas are rooted in divergent agendas, have separate funding streams, and differ in eligibility criteria. Preliminary steps also included developing a working definition of what it means for Title I and Title II services to be integrated in practice. That definition categorized ways in which curriculum can be integrated and ways in which service delivery to consumers can be integrated. Based on defining the problem in this manner, evaluators investigated what local areas in New Jersey are doing to integrate WIOA Title I and Title II services.

Research Questions

To identify the extent of Title I and Title II integration in New Jersey, and to guide the research for this process evaluation, the study team developed the following research questions:

1. What are the most promising strategies to WIOA Title I and Title II services integration in local New Jersey workforce development areas and literacy consortia and what are the key components needed for those integration strategies to be implemented statewide?
2. What are the most common challenges to integrating WIOA Title I and Title II programs in New Jersey?
3. How has the COVID-19 public health crisis affected local WIOA Title I and Title II service integration strategies and what do local areas need in order to implement them during the current COVID-19 public health circumstances?
4. What programmatic or policy changes are needed, at the local and state levels, to facilitate better integration of WIOA Title I and Title II services in New Jersey to make a more seamless service delivery system for the consumer and achieve improved educational and employment outcomes?

Methodology

The research team used a mixed-methodology approach to collect the data for this study, which occurred between September 2019 and September 2020. Researchers conducted a literature review to shed light on the ways other states have integrated the service areas, and gathered input from multiple interviews with national experts in adult literacy and with frontline practitioners serving customers in New Jersey. Thematic analysis of these data informed the working definition for integrated services under WIOA, which guided investigation of practices in New Jersey's 17 local areas. Researchers also conducted an historic analysis of legislative actions regarding the promotion and funding of adult literacy and workforce development to gain understanding and context of the current state of the integration of

Title I and Title II services. Researchers then collected data by fielding an in-depth survey to adult literacy and workforce development professionals in local areas around the state. Survey data yielded topline findings and open-ended response data. After the survey, follow-up interviews were conducted with sampling of local staff to gather more details about specific programs and promising practices that illustrate integrated services across adult literacy education and workforce development. Interview and open-ended survey data were analyzed thematically using tenets of grounded theory to address each of the research questions.

Key Findings

Researchers found evidence of promising strategies being used in New Jersey's 17 local areas to integrate WIOA Title I and Title II services, both for integrating curriculum and for integrating aspects of service delivery. Survey data indicated that local staff widely use three strategies for integrating curriculum: incorporating career content into literacy education (93%), aligning adult education with post-secondary program prerequisites (91%), and linking non-credit workforce training content with literacy education (80%). Survey data also yielded seven commonly used strategies to integrate aspects of service delivery, which are listed with respective percentages of their use:

- ▶ Co-enrollment in Title I and Title II services (71%)
- ▶ Orientation/introduction of Title I services to all adult learners in Title II programs (68%)
- ▶ Shared intake assessment/testing across WIOA programs (68%)
- ▶ Input from business, industry, and nonprofit organizations (68%)
- ▶ Established data sharing policies between Title I and Title II (65%)
- ▶ Common case management for individuals who are enrolled in Title I and Title II (48%)
- ▶ Single point of entry for all WIOA services (48%)

The challenges identified by personnel seeking to integrate WIOA Title I and Title II services in New Jersey mirror the concerns discussed in the literature review of this report

and echo the findings of the investigation conducted a few years ago by New Jersey's State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES) subcommittee. Survey data captured the views of local area staff on six categories of challenges, asking them to indicate by category whether it was a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem at all. The six categories were "funding or resource issues," "policy issues, such as lack of policy, outdated policy, or bureaucratic inertia," "lack of leadership," "collaboration issues, such as coordination and communication," "logistical issues, such as technology," and "other service priorities taking precedent."

Survey responses from local area Title I staff and Title II staff point to two, nearly ubiquitous challenges; both funding/resource issues and logistical/technological issues were identified by 97% of respondents as being either a major or a minor challenge. Of the two, funding/resource issues were deemed a bigger problem with 71% reporting it as a major challenge, whereas only 52% indicated that logistical/technological issues were a major problem. In addition, three quarters of local area personnel identified policy-related issues as problematic, with 29% of them viewing it as a major problem and 45% seeing it as more of a minor concern. Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondents reported that "other service priorities" presented a challenge. This category was the most commonly reported minor challenge (55%) among all the options; it refers to service issues other than the mandate to integrate Title II adult education with Title I workforce development, in acknowledgment of the other work that local staff perform.

Evaluators sought to determine whether the source of challenges could be pinpointed by asking local staff to select their single biggest challenge to integrating Title I and Title II services from among the six categories. Among the three "biggest" challenges that local area staff confront to integrating adult literacy education and workforce development services are (1) resources/funding (32%), (2) policy-related issues (19%), and (3) logistical/technological issues (13%). But instead of thinking about them as separate matters, it is useful to consider them to be an interrelated set of challenges: Policy, and how individuals interpret policy, governs their decision making about funding and other resources, which are necessary to address the logistical and technology-related problems being encountered.

Declaration of a public health crisis at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 shut down everything in New Jersey (and the nation) and plunged everyone into a virtual world – ready or not. All aspects of WIOA Title I and Title II operations were adversely affected. Major issues were technology for engaging in remote learning, including the capacity of instructors to teach in online settings, and the functional capacity of local sites to operate under conditions that preclude face-to-face interactions; constrain access to services, tools, and data systems; and otherwise limit actions. Local staff expressed discomfort with or inadequacy of virtual services for providing the personal touch with their customers. Staff described the transition to virtual as “the most difficult barrier to overcome” because, as one staff member reported, “We are at a standstill. We are a community where email and voicemail messages do not effectively work with our clients. We need face-to-face time.” Moreover, the requirement to have fully remote operations limited the forms of instruction that could be implemented. One local area responded that the hands-on, work-related training pieces to its integrated education and training (IET) programs became impossible. The most pervasive impact was the inability of local areas to conduct their intake processes with new clientele without physical access to their office locations.

Based on a thorough analysis of the data collected through this process evaluation, researchers distilled the many suggestions from various stakeholders and compiled a set of recommendations for programmatic and policy changes at the state and local levels to facilitate better integration of WIOA Title I and Title II

services. The recommendations are aimed at making a more seamless service delivery system for consumers of WIOA services and engaging appropriate stakeholders to focus on achieving improved educational and employment outcomes.

Recommendation #1. The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) should examine the quantitative data to search for evidence of workforce-related outcomes that resulted in local areas utilizing integrated services and for tracking participants through the WIOA system.

Recommendation #2. NJDOL should invest in the professional development of staff for vital skill sets, including service delivery in virtual settings and strategic planning.

Recommendation #3. Statewide, more emphasis and effort should be directed toward increasing engagement of business/industry to obtain their input into programming for both adult literacy education and workforce development to ensure that relevant skills are being developed and training programs are being funneled into workplace opportunities.

Recommendation #4. There is a role for the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) and its subcommittee, SCALES, to play in facilitating the sharing among local areas of useful tactics for integrating WIOA service delivery, engaging the business community, finding ways to braid funding, and other promising strategies that emerge in local area operations.

Introduction

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this report is to fulfill a required independent evaluation of Title I programs and services under WIOA, the primary legislation that addresses workforce, educational, and training programs. Such evaluations, which must be carried out at least once every four years, may jointly examine activities under Titles II to IV (Legal Information Institute, n.d.; U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training

Administration, 2014). This evaluation report meets New Jersey’s WIOA evaluation requirement for Program Year 2019 and examines the services in two programs: WIOA Title I, which covers workforce development activities (job training and services to unemployed or underemployed individuals) and WIOA Title II, which addresses adult educational and literacy services (covering basic skills, secondary education, and

literacy) (Bradley, 2015). The WIOA legislation broadly defines integration between Title I and Title II as a service approach in which adult educational and literacy activities are provided concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement (WIOA, 2014a).

The goal for this study is to generate a better understanding of the degree to which services under WIOA Title I and Title II are integrated in New Jersey. This investigation builds on prior work done by SETC's SCALES subcommittee, which examined the relationship between Title II adult literacy programs and Title I job training and workforce development programs. That work from 2017 identified several key issues warranting further investigation, offered suggestions for enhancing integration between the two Title areas, and found job placement to be a rare outcome measured under Title II. Among the concerns was a fragmented process of referring applicants across Title II and Title I programs that caused individuals to be entered into the system multiple times as they progressed through programs, rather than flowing through one cohesive system (State Employment and Training Commission, 2017). The SCALES subcommittee's work thus informed the design for this evaluation and, in particular, fueled desire for a deeper investigation of the connections, or lack thereof, between adult literacy educational providers and One-Stop Career Centers.

This evaluation seeks to identify the promising strategies being deployed by local areas as well as the challenges that they face when implementing various forms of Title I and Title II services integration. Under WIOA, a local area is designated by the governor of the state based on the following considerations: (1) the extent to which the area is consistent with labor market areas in the state, (2) the area is consistent with regional economic development areas in the state, and (3) the areas have available federal and non-federal resources necessary to effectively administer services under the law (State of New Jersey, 2016, p. 53). County area and population size are also taken into consideration, but local areas may span county borders. New Jersey has designated 18 local areas and 17 local Workforce Development Boards for the administration of services under WIOA.

Problems Being Addressed

There are two problems that must be addressed when thoughtfully evaluating the integration of Title I and Title II services. One involves unraveling the impact that layers of related legislation passed over many years' time have had on the current WIOA requirement that adult literacy education and job training be "concurrent and contextual," even though the two Title areas are rooted in divergent agendas, have separate funding streams, and differ in eligibility criteria. The other entails developing a working definition of what it means for Title I and Title II services to be integrated in practice. Both are national issues that merit discussion in the literature review to provide crucial context for this evaluation that focuses on WIOA implementation in New Jersey.

Literature Review

While the WIOA mandate to have integration between the adult educational and literacy activities of Title II and the workforce development activities of Title I is clearly stipulated by the law, implementation of this integration is understudied. Literature on this topic focuses primarily on descriptions of programs that have achieved such integration, and from such results it is possible to discern the benefits of programs that yield successful employment outcomes for participants.

Descriptions of exemplar programs from across the nation, to be shared later in this literature review, offer an existence proof that adult education can be melded with workforce development training and some additional supports in integrated programs that help people obtain credentials and jobs. Yet, from a process perspective, little documentation exists that describes the specific actions that various state and local entities have taken to deliberately integrate the activities under these two Titles.

In other words, there is not much in the way of guidelines for **how** to integrate Title I and Title II services that states can adhere to as they make their state plans that strive to overcome challenges and attain improved outcomes. Heldrich Center researchers sought to address this gap by confronting the thorny issues that underlie the legal mandate for service integration, namely the legislative backstory that complicates matters and the need for a working definition to evaluate integration in practice. Addressing these issues begins with clarifying the focus of each Title area under the law, and then each issue is discussed to provide crucial context for this evaluation before introducing research questions and methods.

The Current Legislation and its Inherent Challenges

The intent of WIOA is to strengthen and improve the nation's workforce system and to help Americans, including those who face significant barriers to employment, secure high-quality jobs and careers while also helping employers hire and retain skilled workers (U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, n.d.). The law is divided into five main sections, referred to as Titles, and establishes six core programs across the first four titles, each focused on providing workforce and related services to different sub-populations in the nation. The fifth title, General Provisions, focuses on governance of the law. This report focuses on the programmatic activities of Title I, which has three core programs, and Title II, which has one core program.

- ▶ Title I: Workforce Development Activities core programs (3):
 - ▶ Adult Program
 - ▶ Youth Program
 - ▶ Dislocated Worker Program
- ▶ Title II: Adult Education and Literacy core program (1):
 - ▶ Adult Education and Family Literacy Program

Workforce development activities under Title I include a suite of services that begins with intake, initial assessment, and development of an individualized plan followed by engagement in job training programs, ongoing assessment, and support services for finding employment. Under WIOA Final Rules, the full array of Title I services is provided through a more integrated and coordinated one-stop service delivery system in each

state, branded as the American Job Center system. In New Jersey, the local sites within this system are known as One-Stop Career Centers.

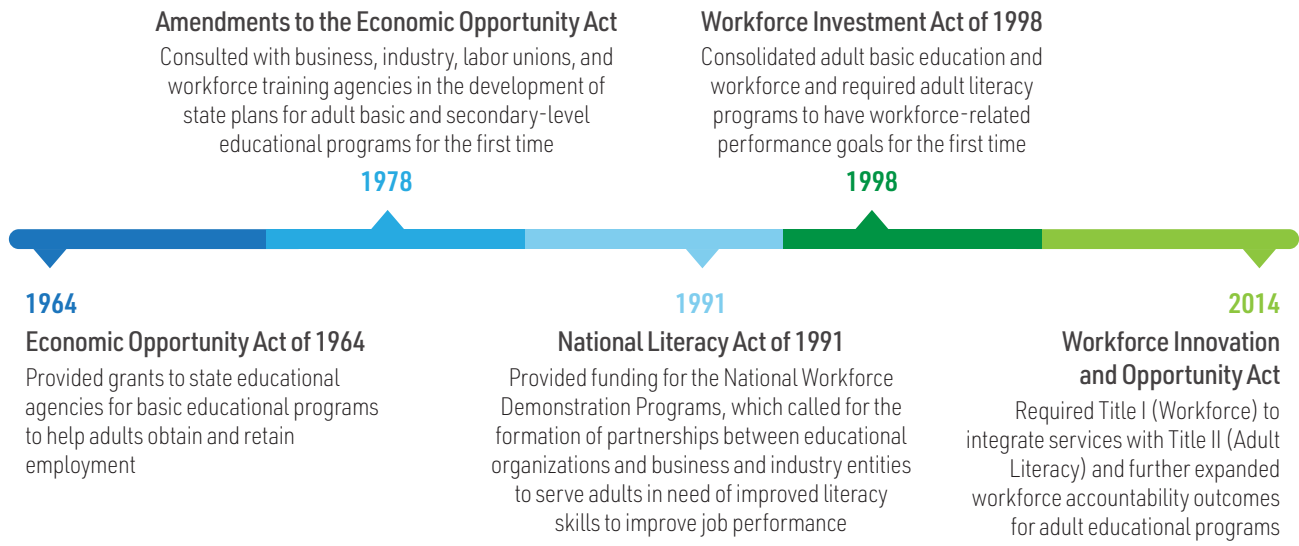
Adult literacy educational activities under Title II of WIOA are strengthened, according to WIOA Final Rules, by positioning those services "as a key component of the workforce development system in local communities and improving alignment among adult education programs, postsecondary education providers, and employers." However, historically, adult educational services emphasized basic education to learn the English language and tended to focus on high school completion as the outcome goal. With the expansion of services under WIOA, Title II adds mathematics learning, as well as civics education and workforce training to the scope of English language learning services. Other programmatic activities under this Title include educational services for incarcerated individuals and supports to involve parents and family members in the educational development of their children. Looking at this broad scope of services, it becomes clear that individuals could be applying to get services under Title II with personal goals that do not result in employment outcomes.

A further, and very important, complicating factor for integration of Title I and Title II services is that each Title area has different criteria for who is eligible to receive services. WIOA Section 188 (a) (5) states:

Participation in programs and activities or receiving funds under [Title I] shall be available to citizens and nationals of the United States, lawfully admitted permanent resident aliens, refugees, asylees, and parolees, and other immigrants authorized by the Attorney General to work in the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration & Management, n.d.).

In practice, this means that anyone seeking Title I services must provide documentation verifying citizenship or legal alien status and authorization to work in the United States. Undocumented immigrants, along with student visa holders and most tourist or visitor visa holders, are not eligible for Title I services; they are only eligible to seek services through Title II. While there is a historical basis for this distinction, as will be explained later, differences among needy individuals' eligibility to participate in programs or activities presents a barrier to the full integration of Title I and Title II service delivery.

Understanding the Impact of Layers of Legislation



A key factor complicating the issue of integrating Title I and Title II services under WIOA is a history of legislative policy with divergent goals for job training services and adult literacy educational services. Prior to the passage of WIOA in 2014, three notable policies focused on adult literacy education: the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the National Literacy Act of 1991, and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. Although all three policies were premised on the notion that acquiring a certain level of education is needed to obtain and retain employment, the 1964 and 1991 acts set goals to increase the adult literacy rate and build basic skills to enable entry to the workforce **without explicitly holding programs accountable for workforce outcomes**. The implication is that while policy shifted over time toward encouraging greater involvement of business and industry in adult literacy educational programs, program outcomes still were being viewed primarily through the lens of **educational attainment** at the end of the 20th century.

However, that view shifted with the 1998 passage of WIA, which tied the economic needs of the nation to the success of the educational and employment-oriented programs to be supported through the legislation. The law consolidated, coordinated, and improved employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs; it also sought to foster greater cooperation and collaboration among agencies that shared common clients and program funding issues. Notably, Title II of WIA called for a performance

accountability system requiring states to report on five core measures: educational gains, attainment of high school diploma, entry into postsecondary education or training, entry into employment, and job retention. The 1998 legislation governing adult education and literacy thus signaled, for the first time, a shift in outcome goals from what had been purely educational to include workforce-related outcomes. However, with three of five outcome measures being educational, some Title II programs might have retained that emphasis. The 2014 passage of WIOA aimed to further integrate provision of Title I and Title II services. As ideally envisioned, individuals needing to improve their skills and literacy would be referred to the Title II services for which they are eligible before becoming able to participate in Title I training programs or be guided into employment. WIOA's performance-based accountability kept the five core measures from WIA and added credential attainment rate, substituted median earnings for the average earnings common measure, and required the use of statistical modeling for setting performance targets (Negoita, 2015). These adjustments increased use of workforce outcomes as accountability standards for adult educational programs. However, the stipulation in WIOA Section 188 that an individual must present documentation of authorization to work in the United States to become eligible for programs and activities funded through Title I means that **this law has the effect of constraining options for providing undocumented immigrants with job training**. Furthermore, individuals

may have valid reasons other than job seeking when they pursue Title II services, such as becoming capable of supporting their children's education. An implication is that legislation with increased emphasis on workforce outcomes as a justification for funding programs that integrate adult literacy education with job training generates an enduring source of tension between the intended policy goals and the goals of adult literacy education practitioners and their students. While it is important to acknowledge that this tension endures because of its potential to affect WIOA programmatic outcomes, the legislative mandate to integrate provisioning of Title I workforce services and Title II adult literacy services prompts action to evaluate the extent to which those two service areas are being integrated.

Developing a Working Definition of Service Integration

While WIOA provides a legal definition for Title I and Title II service integration indicating that adult literacy education and workforce development training be concurrent and contextual, the law does not convey the manner in which that is to be accomplished, nor could researchers locate publicly available reports documenting measures of service integration for WIOA programs. Thus, researchers found it necessary to develop a **working definition** that could be applied to the local area practices for evaluating the extent to which adult literacy education and workforce development are integrated services. While the methods used are described later, the result is that it became clear that the integration of Title I and Title II services can occur at two levels: **(1) curricular**, which refers to the specific content to be learned and the learning environment, and **(2) service delivery**, which refers to the various actions taken by people in their efforts to deliver a range of services to the constituents eligible to participate. At each level, there are various ways in which adult literacy education and workforce development services can be provided that conform in some manner to the more generic legal description of concurrent and contextual.

Ways of Achieving Curricular Integration

A common approach taken to link Title I workforce development programming with Title II adult literacy education is to utilize some kind of integrated or

contextualized learning program. Looking across various program models and descriptions of programs, researchers identified three strategic ways in which curricula unite workforce development with adult literacy education as integrated programming.

- ▶ Align content of adult education with post-secondary program prerequisites.
- ▶ Link non-credit workforce training with literacy education and high school equivalency requirements.
- ▶ Incorporate career content (e.g., work-related vocabulary, résumé writing, work concepts and scenarios) into literacy education.

It should be noted that these forms of curricular integration are not mutually exclusive. A single program could utilize more than one of the above ways to unify its workforce development and adult literacy educational learning goals. As specific programs are discussed in this report, the way(s) in which each achieved curricular integration will be identified to help give meaning to abstract terms by using concrete examples.

Ways of Integrating Service Delivery

In light of the aspects of WIOA legislation that pose inherent challenges to integrating Title I and Title II services, creative approaches taken to better integrate the delivery of services across Title areas have shown to be an important component of statewide efforts to incorporate workforce development training within adult literacy educational services. There are multiple tactics for integrating service delivery across Title areas, most of which fall under the categories of **aligning administrative processes, creating common infrastructure, and establishing guidelines to engage appropriate stakeholders in development of work-based learning activities**. Reviewing the literature shows that integrated service delivery manifests in two forms: (1) top-down organizing wherein a state Workforce Development Board (WDB) or governor's office creates industry partnerships for their region, or (2) local-level organizing of processes for joint implementation of referral systems, intake procedures, case management systems, and/or learning opportunities in their region as staff across the Title areas find ways to work together.

Much like curricular integration, integrated service delivery is most clearly understood through examination of specific examples of what has been implemented. Before doing that, however, it is worth reviewing some terminology that describes ways that people work together toward a common end. The terms **communication, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration** are commonly heard, and those words often get used interchangeably, as if they were synonymous. Yet as Denise (1999) explains, each term is distinct and has its own strengths and limitations for describing communal efforts. When these distinctions are applied to the process of integrating Title I and Title II services under WIOA, the terms reflect differences in what is being shared and what one might reasonably expect to be accomplished through the interaction.

Exemplar Program Models for Title I and Title II Service Integration

Researchers conducted an exhaustive review of adult literacy models that previously have been implemented, in particular looking closely at those models that had a workforce development or job-related focus. Researchers analyzed the structure of program models by attending to aspects of curricular integration, which indicate how the content focus is related to skill development and designed for outcome goals. Researchers also attended to ways in which components of service delivery were integrated across Title areas as intentional features of the program model. Below are brief descriptions of the most notable models that integrated adult literacy education with workforce development

The Four C's

Communication opens the door to work together; it is the processes by which people understand each other and transfer information in their organization (Denise, 1999). Good communication can bring synergy, but is not likely to do so when it is mainly understood as sharing or giving out information and not necessarily taking it in and comprehending it. As Denise (1999) cautions, "We also act as if ideal communications will forge agreement. In reality, when people accurately communicate, they can learn just how far apart they really are." Moreover, even where there is excellent communication occurring, there still would be no direct link to getting results.

Cooperation is a centralizing behavior that signals all disparate units to "get with the group" and work together toward a shared goal (Denise, 1999). Yet cooperation's strength of groupthink also can be its weakness because it discourages divergent thinking, and thus suppresses creative solutions that might otherwise emerge to resolve disagreement and conflict. Put into the context of integrating Title I and Title II service delivery, common intake protocols might be used in a cooperative effort, but local staff might be disinclined to tell their supervisor what is problematic about following those procedures or to recommend any changes because they do not want to be seen as uncooperative employees. Also, like both communication and coordination, cooperation describes integration as a process not as its results (Denise, 1999).

Coordination begins with an assumption of differences to be bridged, such as different personnel in distinct offices who have overlapping missions and need to work together. Coordination occurs when all the disparate units are informed about what they need to do, when they need to do it, and how their respective parts contribute to what the whole effort accomplishes (Denise, 1999). However, coordination only describes a process, not what results from it. As Denise (1999) stated, "Indeed, there can be a weak correlation between coordination and results based on context." When applying the term to the provision of Title I and Title II services, personnel from both areas could be coordinating their actions to provide services across the two systems but those efforts may or may not generate the desired results measured by employment-related outcomes.

Collaboration is notably different in that it "anchors not in the process of relationship but in the pursuit of a specific result" (Denise, 1999). More than just the exchanging of ideas, collaboration actively uses information by intentionally gathering diverse viewpoints and igniting sparks of dissent to fuel the creation of something new. Denise (1999) also points out two consequences of collaboration being focused on an outcome. Collaborations are bound by time (they end with completion of the creation), and they are most effective when limited to a small number of people (two to four, ideally) who bring something uniquely valuable to what is being created. However, collaboration can be unpredictable because it relies on the motivation of specific individuals from diverse backgrounds seeking to change how things are done through purposeful innovation. To mitigate unpredictability, collaboration requires clear organizational supports, including defined challenges, defined teams, shared space, sufficient time, and leveraging of results (Denise, 1999). Collaboration has been shown to yield some well-integrated programs.

as found in the literature. These models were selected because they tangibly demonstrate integration of adult education and workforce development programming, and not necessarily because of their proven successful outcomes, although some of these programs are often highlighted as best practices among policymakers and workforce development leaders. All of these model programs were developed with financial support from various sources that include state funding through community colleges and funding obtained through private foundations.

- ▶ **Breaking Through**, developed in 2004, was administered by individual community colleges and piloted in six states: Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky, New Mexico, Ohio, and Oregon. This program model's subtitle, *Helping Low-skilled Adults Enter and Succeed in College and Careers*, reflects its goal. Provision of post-secondary occupational or technical training was accomplished by aligning the content of adult education with the prerequisites of postsecondary programs, linking the content of non-credit workforce training with college-level work, and infusing career content into developmental education (Jobs for the Future, 2010).
- ▶ **I-BEST**, developed in 2005, was administered in Washington State in conjunction with the state's 29 community colleges and five technical colleges. The goal for this model was increasing the rate at which Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students advance to college-level occupational programs and complete post-secondary credentials in fields offering good wages and career advancement (Wachen, Jenkins, & Van Noy, 2011). I-BEST programs use an intake assessment aligned to the program, are structured with a pathway to completion and employment for students to follow, provide support services as a means of ensuring student retention, incorporate co-teaching by adult literacy educational instructors and professional technical instructors, and feature a defined pathway to completion and employment.
- ▶ **Shifting Gears** ran from 2007 to 2014 across the Great Lakes region of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Its goal was to increase the education and skill levels of low-skilled adults to enable them to succeed in the 21st-century economy (Roberts & Price, 2012). Under this initiative, states formed their own programs to incorporate the four

core strategies aimed at improving adult education and skill level: policy change, data utilization, stakeholder engagement, and strategic communications (Bragg, Dresser, & Smith, 2012). *Shifting Gears* fostered integration at the level of service delivery while allowing each state to develop forms of curricular integration.

- ▶ **Accelerating Opportunity** was implemented from 2011 to 2014 and was designed to replicate and scale the best practices from prior initiatives like I-BEST and *Breaking Through* in order to meet local needs (Anderson et al., 2014). As such, it shares many core principles with I-BEST, including co-teaching, comprehensive student support services, and alignment between basic skills instruction and technical concepts.
- ▶ **Accelerating CTE** (career and technical education), based in part on *Accelerating Opportunity*, was implemented as a pilot among four colleges in Kansas and Kentucky from 2015 to 2018. The program sought to increase the number of low-skilled adult learners who were able to earn CTE credentials with strong labor market value by extending an integrated pathway approach to a broader population of low-skilled students and increase the focus on postsecondary pathways (Anderson et al., 2016). Core elements of this program included team teaching, student support services, supplemental instruction, and clearly defined pathways (Smith & Togliola, n.d.). Team teaching allows for both technical instruction and ABE to be covered at the same time by qualified individuals.

In summary, highly regarded program models for integrating Title I and Title II learning opportunities make explicit efforts to align the curricular goals of adult literacy education with workforce development training by involving stakeholders who represent the needs of industries in the region in designing programs and through co-teaching by qualified instructors for their respective content, as well as aligning service delivery components across Title areas so that data collection and utilization are more efficient. While this evaluation is attending to the processes of integration across Title areas, the fact that all of the program models described above have demonstrated that they produce employment-related outcomes is reassuring as the focus of this report shifts to examine what programs were being implemented in New Jersey during the study period.

Research Questions

To frame this process evaluation, which seeks to identify the extent to which Title I and Title II programs and related services under WIOA are being integrated within New Jersey's 18 local areas, the study team developed the following set of research questions:

1. What are the most promising strategies to WIOA Title I and Title II services integration in local New Jersey workforce development areas and literacy consortia and what are the key components needed for those integration strategies to be implemented statewide?
2. What are the most common challenges to integrating WIOA Title I and Title II programs in New Jersey?
3. How has the COVID-19 public health crisis affected local WIOA Title I and Title II service integration strategies and what do local areas need in order to implement them during the current COVID-19 public health circumstances?
4. What programmatic or policy changes are needed, at the local and state levels, to facilitate better integration of WIOA Title I and Title II services in New Jersey to make a more seamless service delivery system for the consumer and achieve improved educational and employment outcomes?

Methodology

The research for this evaluation occurred in two phases during the period of September 2019 through September 2020. Work began with extensive background research to define the nature of integrated programming across the Title I and Title II service areas. Those efforts were followed by exploratory research to measure the perceptions of local practitioners in New Jersey who provide services about the extent of integration across Title areas, their views about the challenges to providing integrated services, which promising strategies they use, and to obtain more details about some specific programs that showcase integrated programming.

Background Research

In approaching this process evaluation, the Heldrich Center research team sought but did not find established metrics for gauging the extent to which Title I and Title II services under WIOA have been integrated. While the prior work of the SCALES subcommittee identified issues and offered suggestions for improvement, their examination used the lens of outcomes to spot obstacles and consider remediation. In this study, evaluators engaged with the messy methodological question of "What does it mean for the two service areas to have

integrated program offerings?" by using the procedures and techniques of grounded theory to build a working definition of "integrated" that could be applied to examining integration of Title I and Title II services under WIOA. Doing so involved an iterative approach to identify various integrative practices through collecting data from multiple, diverse sources and then describing, conceptually organizing, and theorizing about those data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Evaluators used three research methods in conducting the background research. First was to perform an extensive literature review to reveal the history of how adult literacy education came to be integrated with workforce development and to identify program models that were designed to address the legislatively constructed goals for integrated services across Title I and Title II. In addition, researchers reviewed state WIOA plans and annual WIOA report narratives from 18 local areas to obtain an understanding of the ways in which other states have integrated the service areas.

In the next method, researchers conducted telephone and in-person interviews with seven adult literacy and workforce development experts from New Jersey and New York. The purpose was to seek guidance in the

design of this evaluation plus their recommendations and insights into the issues, challenges, and important factors to consider for obtaining a thorough understanding of the integration of the two WIOA systems. Two researchers conducted the interviews with experts between December 2019 and June 2020. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and yielded hand-written notes that recorded the conversation for applying open-coding techniques to the data set (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A list of the experts interviewed for this study appears in Appendix A.

The third method was to conduct preliminary interviews with 10 local Title I and Title II practitioners representing six localities across New Jersey in May 2020. The main purpose was to discuss current integration practices in their local areas, particularly to learn of any uncommon yet promising strategies they use and how those strategies affect outcomes. Researchers also solicited their views more broadly about what local stakeholders regard as promising practices, along with any recommendations they may have for noteworthy programs or policies in other New Jersey localities that could warrant further investigation for this evaluation. Interviews were conducted via telephone and lasted approximately 30 minutes. In most cases, researchers requested permission to conduct follow-up interviews, as necessary, to collect additional information.

Researchers analyzed data collected in this phase to formulate a tentative working definition for integrated services across Title areas, which they sought to refine through further data collection. Applying these methods as background research informed researchers' design of data collection instruments to be administered in the next phase of evaluation research activities.

Exploratory Research

Evaluators used two research methods – surveying and interviewing – in the exploratory phase. The research team designed and administered an online survey to gather data that addressed the evaluation research questions while enabling more robust theory development through comparative data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to refine the working definition of integrated services. Researchers then used open-ended

survey responses regarding promising practices in WIOA Title I and Title II integration to identify some key adult literacy or workforce development staff in selected areas across New Jersey for follow-up data collection through in-depth, structured interviews.

The online survey was fielded to the WDB director and the Adult Literacy Consortium lead in every local area in New Jersey. The final survey consisted of six major sections: study introduction, local area background questions, working relationship between Title I and Title II in the local areas, program implementation, impact of COVID-19 on local programming, and conclusion. The survey consisted of 25 multiple-choice questions and 20 open-ended questions. At the end of each survey, respondents could self-identify if they were willing to participate in further research. Recruitment to encourage participation in the survey was done through a presentation to WDB directors in February 2020 and through emails by the executive director of SETC and the director of NJDOL's adult education and literacy services. The full survey can be found in Appendix B.

The survey was fielded online, in English, from June 30 to July 31, 2020 and distributed to a total of 53 individuals. The research team emailed reminders to complete the survey to all 53 individuals on July 7, 2020 and targeted reminder emails were sent to potential respondents on July 21, 2020 and July 31, 2020. Recipients were instructed to forward the survey to the staff member in their local area that was most knowledgeable about Title I or Title II services. The survey yielded 31 responses with at least one response from each of the 18 local areas across New Jersey, for a combined response rate of 58%. In some cases, the local areas designated one person to respond to the survey on behalf of both Titles across the entire local area.

After collecting survey data, researchers used the process of discriminate sampling to identify interview subjects with strong potential to further illuminate concepts and conditions as an aid in defining thematic categories for integrated services across the two Title areas (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Researchers applied their coded data, collected and analyzed earlier in the process, to identify four promising practices from three local areas that warranted a structured interview for further study. Interview subjects were selected based on

four criteria: (1) the local area had a clearly identifiable and articulated promising strategy in effect, (2) the promising practice clearly illustrated a form of curricular integration across adult literacy education and workforce development, (3) there was variation in local areas (not all examples from the same local area), and (4) frontline staff expressed willingness to be interviewed about a promising practice to be highlighted in the study.

Researchers conducted structured interviews with five staff members from three counties between July 12 and July 18, 2020. The goal was to collect detailed information about promising examples of integrating Title I and Title II services from multiple areas, including information about the practices' key components, challenges to implementation, measures of success, and potential for replicability across other local areas across the state. Practices highlighted in this report's findings have been implemented in Atlantic County, Burlington County, and Ocean County, and were described directly by Title I and Title II staff who have a role in implementing them. The structured interviews were conducted via Zoom teleconferencing and recorded. Interview recordings were transcribed using NVivo software, and analyzed qualitatively throughout August and September 2020.

Researchers analyzed the data collected through the survey and interviews by applying thematic categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to responses for addressing

the research questions about promising strategies, challenges, issues that arose during the pandemic, and suggestions for making improvements that could enhance integration across the two Title service areas. As researchers proceeded with data analysis, they further coded for descriptions reflecting some form of curricular integration or addressing some aspect of the service delivery system, including features of the infrastructure that service providers use as well as ways that they work together.

Limitations

The two research methods – surveying and interviewing – that researchers used to collect data on the practices being implemented by local area Title I and Title II service providers both rely on self-reporting, which is a limitation of this evaluative study. Related constraints are limiting administration of the survey to two individuals per service area and the limited number of counties in which structured interviews were conducted with staff as a result of applying the selection criteria specified above. Despite the concerns that apply to self-reported data generally, hearing directly from the individuals most knowledgeable about the practices being implemented in their local area provided researchers with the best data that could be obtained to perform this evaluation.

Findings

Promising Strategies Being Used in New Jersey

Researchers found considerable evidence across the survey and interview data that the 18 local areas within New Jersey use promising strategies to integrate programs and services they provide through WIOA Title I and Title II. Local area practitioners indicated the extent to which they use the three forms of curricular integration in their program offerings, and they indicated which types of actions they take to work together across Title areas. Local staff also responded with their views

about which strategic components are most important for establishing successful integration, which integrative practices are used most, and whether those practices are deemed effective and replicable. Researchers report on this set of findings by first presenting evidence from survey data about curricular integration and integrated service delivery, and then portraying what effective integration looks like in practice through examples of specific programs featuring multiple characteristics of adult literacy education-workforce development integration in their respective programs.

Evidence of Curricular Integration Occurring in More than 80% of Local New Jersey Areas Surveyed

The survey outlined what researchers defined as three forms of curricular integration that local areas could use to integrate Title I and Title II services: **incorporate career content into adult literacy education, align adult education with post-secondary program prerequisites, and link non-credit workforce training content with literacy education and high school equivalency requirements.** Respondents were asked whether they implement any of these forms of curricular integration, and if they did, whether they perceive it to be beneficial to their customers, difficult to do, and replicable in other local areas. These findings are summarized in Table 1.

Survey results showed that the three ways of integrating curriculum for use in Title I and Title II services were consistently used across all local areas in New Jersey. The most common method for integrating curriculum that local areas use was incorporating career content into literacy education (93%). Aligning adult education with post-secondary program prerequisites was nearly as common (91%), while a large majority (80%) also responded that their local area integrates the two service areas by linking non-credit workforce training content with literacy education.

The vast majority of survey respondents reported perceiving that their customers benefitted from curricular integration across the Title I and Title II service areas. Eighty-four percent (84%) said they perceived incorporating career content into literacy education to

be beneficial to their customers, while 81% asserted viewpoints that both the strategies of aligning adult education with post-secondary prerequisites and linking non-credit workforce training content with literacy education are beneficial to their customers.

In addition, a majority of respondents reported that all three types of curricular integration for Title I and Title II services being used in their local area could be replicated. Seven in 10 (71%) respondents said that incorporating career content into literacy education is replicable while 61% said aligning adult education with post-secondary prerequisites could be replicated in other local areas. More than half (58%) said that linking non-credit workforce training content with literacy education could be replicated across local areas.

While most respondents agreed that all three forms of curricular integration were beneficial to customers and could be implemented by other local areas, local area staff had mixed views on the level of difficulty it would take to implement. More than half (51%) of respondents said that incorporating career content into literacy education was not difficult, which was not surprising since it is the most common form of integration used and is seen as the most beneficial, but 41% said that it was difficult. Respondents were split equally (45% respectively) on the level of difficulty of aligning adult literacy education with post-secondary requirements. They also were split on the difficulty of linking non-credit workforce training content with literacy education, with 45% saying it was difficult and 35% indicating it was not difficult.

Table 1: Summarized Local Area Perspectives on Curricular Integration Across Title I and Title II in New Jersey

Form of Curricular Integration	Reported as Occurring in Local Areas	Perceived as Beneficial to Customers	Perceived as Difficult to Do	Perceived as Being Replicable in Other Areas
Align content of adult literacy education with post-secondary program prerequisites	91%	81%	45%	61%
Link non-credit workforce training with adult literacy education and high school equivalency requirements	80%	81%	45%	58%
Incorporate career content into adult literacy education	93%	84%	41%	71%

Evidence of Integrated Service Delivery

Evaluators found evidence that the local areas in New Jersey engage in a range of practices that support integrated service delivery across the Title I and Title II service offerings. Moreover, the research revealed that nearly all such practices manifested as local-level efforts to organize personnel, processes, and resources, with leadership from the state being acknowledged as important yet playing a less visible role. While the research identified several, specific tactics for integrating service delivery across Title areas, evaluators

determined that the various tactics are in one of three categories: aligning administrative processes, creating common infrastructure, and establishing guidelines to engage appropriate stakeholders in development of work-based learning activities. Because these categories emerged through thematic analysis of the survey and interview data, examples of specific tactics within each of the categories are presented in Table 2. This listing of integrative practices is meant only to be illustrative and is not comprehensive.

Table 2: Strategic Ways of Integrating Service Delivery by Category (examples of tactics)

Aligning Administrative Processes	Creating Common Infrastructure	Establishing Guidelines to Engage Stakeholders
Engage in strategic planning to improve customer service	Single point of entry for all WIOA services	Involve business/industry in design or delivery of services
Co-enrollment in Title I and Title II services	Common case management system (co-enrolled people)	Co-teaching by workforce developers and adult educators
Shared intake testing across WIOA programs	Established data sharing policies between Title I and II	Leadership from the state that supports local efforts

Having an organizational framework to describe specific actions being taken to integrate adult education and workforce development service delivery facilitates presentation of more detailed findings from this process evaluation about integrative practices. Responses to multiple survey items reveal a range of things that local area personnel are doing to integrate service delivery.

Large majorities of Title I and Title II survey respondents reported that they liaise with each other through communication, most often through regularly scheduled

meetings. As shown in Table 3, nearly all staff members (97%) said that they participate in the local WDB's literacy subcommittee. Eight in 10 (81%) said they arrange meetings with staff and engage in strategic planning to improve services in their local areas. Some communication is occasional, with 71% saying that they keep in touch via email and phone. Six in 10 (58%) indicated that they sponsor events between Title I and Title II programs, showing some coordinated activity. Most of the ways of working together listed in Table 4 describe engagement of stakeholders.

Table 3: Ways that Title II Consortia Work with WDB Staff

Engage as a member of their local WDB	89%
Attend local WDB meetings on a regular basis	89%
Participate in the local WDB's literacy subcommittee	97%
Engage in formal communication – arrange meetings between local Title II staff and WDB staff	81%
Engage in strategic planning on ways to improve customer service in the local area	81%
Engage in informal communication – occasional email and phone conversations	71%
Participate in a WDB subcommittee (other than a literacy subcommittee) that addresses adult literacy and educational issues	68%
Sponsor events together	58%

When asked to choose among a list of strategic components, respondents overwhelmingly reported that cooperation in the local area and leadership within the local area are “very important” strategic components for establishing successful integration practices between

Title I and Title II services. Table 4 shows that 9 in 10 respondents labeled cooperation and leadership as “very important” (90% and 87%, respectively). This is followed by data collection (77%), input from the private and nonprofit sectors (71%), and leadership from the state (65%).

Table 4: Strategic Components to Establishing Successful Integration, Rated as “Very Important”

Cooperation between Title I and Title II service staff	90%
Leadership from within your local area	87%
Data collection	77%
Input from business, industry, and nonprofit organizations	71%
Leadership from the state WDB/state	65%
Funding blending	48%
Co-teaching	29%

Evidence from interview data also points to the importance of communication and leadership as critical to the integration of service delivery. One interviewee said it is the “leadership who supports the effort and then it comes down to communication between all parties.” Another interviewee explained that open lines of communication (between Title I and Title II staff) enable greater collaboration, which helps partners work together to better meet the needs of the community. In another interview, local staff told researchers that “relationships are critical” and that reliability and trust between the two sides were essential, so that when a student is referred to Title II for the education they may need to succeed in a Title I job training program, staff know they can count on each side to deliver because “there is mutual agreement that (we) can benefit each other.” The data are conclusive: effective communication is essential for achieving integration between Title I and Title II services. However, good lines of communication should be considered as the

starting point for cooperating and forming collaborations. The strategic components listed in Table 4 are all cooperative activities, and they span across all three categories of integrated service delivery.

Survey data also captured information about which integrative practices were being used by local area staff, building directly off the earlier work by the SCALES subcommittee. As shown in Table 5, the survey inquired about seven service options. For the option of “input from business, industry, and nonprofit organizations,” the survey listed the following as examples of such input: having an employer serve on an advisory committee, reviewing or co-developing a curriculum, assisting with mock interviews, and serving as a guest teacher in an ABE class. Because there were several survey respondents who indicated being unsure of whether a particular integrative practice was being used in their local area, the full range of survey responses are provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Local Area Acknowledgements of Using Common Practices to Integrate Title I and Title II Services

Most Commonly Used Integrative Practices	Yes, Use this Practice	No, Don't Use this Practice	Unsure
Co-enrollment in Title I and Title II services	71%	10%	19%
Orientation/introduction of Title I services to all adult learners in Title II programs	68%	16%	16%
Shared intake assessment/testing across WIOA programs	68%	19%	19%
Input from business, industry, and nonprofit organizations	68%	16%	16%
Established data sharing policies between Title I and Title II	65%	19%	16%
Common case management for individuals who are enrolled in Title I and Title II	48%	16%	35%
Single point of entry for all WIOA services	48%	39%	13%

As can be seen, co-enrollment in both Title I and Title II programs (71%), orientation of Title I services to Title II customers (68%), shared intake and assessment across programs and service areas (68%), and soliciting input from business into the content of the programs (68%) were among the most commonly indicated practices being implemented across the state, with 7 of 10 local area respondents specifying that they use those practices. For each practice that respondents said they

use, they were asked to indicate whether they believe that those practices contribute to effective service delivery, whether they were difficult to implement, and if they thought that the practice could be replicated in other local areas. The results from those survey items are reported in Table 6. Note that for all of the replicability questions, there were zero respondents who said “no” (i.e., all of the non-affirmative responses were “unsure”).

Table 6: Local Area Perceptions about the Effectiveness, Difficulty, and Replicability of the Integrative Practices that they Indicated Using

Integrative Practice Being Used	Percentage Using the Practice	Said it Contributes “a Lot” or “Some” to Effective Service Delivery	Said it is “Not too Difficult” or “Not at All Difficult” to Implement	Said it is Replicable in Other Local Areas
Co-enrollment	71%	77%	64%	73%
Orientation of Title I services to adult learners	68%	81%	76%	76%
Shared intake testing across WIOA programs	68%	86%	62%	81%
Input from business	68%	95%	81%	95%
Established data sharing	65%	85%	85%	60%
Common case management systems	48%	73%	66%	67%
Single point of entry	48%	100%	86%	80%

The two integrative practices used by local areas that are reported to contribute most to effective service delivery across the two Title areas are having a single point of entry for adult literacy education and workforce development (100%) and obtaining input from business, industry, and nonprofit organizations on the development and implementation of programs and services (95%). Moreover, both of those practices were deemed to be not difficult to implement and replicable by 8 or 9 of 10 respondents.

Two other practices used by two thirds of respondents (68%) – provides an orientation to Title I services to their Title II customers and implements a shared intake and testing system across the two service areas – were reported as contributing a lot or some to effective service delivery (81% and 86%, respectively). While three quarters (76%) of respondents said that implementing orientation of Title I services to adult learners was not difficult to do, local staff reported that conducting shared intake across WIOA programs would not be as easy to do, with only 6 in 10 (62%) responding with little or no

difficulty in implementing it. More than three quarters (76% and 81%, respectively) of respondents reported that these practices could be replicated statewide.

The practices that involve creating common infrastructure, through established data sharing and use of a common case management system, also are viewed as contributing to effective service delivery across the Title areas at 85% and 73%, respectively. However, the latter was perceived as more difficult to implement than the former. Both practices are viewed as being replicable, though, with the establishment of data sharing seen as somewhat less replicable (60%) than implementing a common case management system (67%).

During the structured interviews conducted with local area adult literacy education and WDB staff, several interviewees discussed integrative practices in greater detail. In one county, for example, Title II staff want “to increase awareness and make (WIOA services) more accessible” by holding orientation and informational sessions for users of Title I services regularly. In these orientation sessions, a One-Stop Career Center staff

member attends a Title II program class and explains the resources and services that are available, including not only Title I services but also other services, such as Food Stamps and Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services offerings, for students who might qualify.

In another county, local staff described Title II as “very integrated” and “working closely” with staff at the One-Stop Career Center. In that area, Title II manages the Workforce Learning Link and a centralized intake assessment process where Title II administers the testing for all WIOA services in that local area. After completing an assessment, individuals are referred to training, the Workforce Learning Link (funded through Title I), or Title II depending on their skill level. Their system for using a universal intake form was designed with input from all partners. Universal intake enables Title I and Title II staff to be able to quickly refer clientele to the proper system for services, based on their education, employment and training needs, and eligibility for services, thereby contributing to more integrated service delivery.

Examples of Programs and Models that have Implemented Promising Strategies

As well as investigating the use of specific practices to integrate service delivery and ways that programs can integrate adult education with workforce development training, evaluators took a deep dive into four programs and models for programming that have been implemented in three different local areas. Each specific program or model for developing programs illustrates one or more forms of curricular integration as well as components of integrated service delivery. In the following descriptions of programs and models that implement promising strategies, evaluators highlight salient features of integrative practices that each program or model exemplifies.

Casino Career Institute as an Integrated Education and Training Program¹

The Casino Career Institute (CCI) exemplifies multiple promising strategies for integrating across Title areas, as the history of its development illustrates. CCI was initiated as a pilot program in a cooperative effort with

leadership from NJDOL and leverage from a community college in southern New Jersey with existing robust relationships with Bally’s and Caesars casinos that included a track record of those casinos hiring students through the college’s programs. In 2018, the college further developed the successful CCI pilot to launch an IET program for CCI that teaches ABE and ESL while providing career training for casino games, such as blackjack and roulette, as well as a guest services (hotel front desk) component. The literacy committee based at the college formed a collaboration with the WDB and the One-Stop Career Center to create the CCI-IET program, which satisfies the funding requirements of the Integrated English Language and Civics Education component of Title II in New Jersey. In addition to getting their gaming license to obtain employment as a blackjack and roulette dealer in a casino, participants who complete the program also receive a guest service certificate from the nationally and industry-recognized American Hotel and Lodging Association. The CCI-IET program illustrates the curricular integration strategy of **aligning content of adult education with post-secondary program prerequisites**, which typically is driven by Title II and draws on adult educational curricula to provide the foundational learning students need in order to enter job training programs or post-secondary educational courses; yet the program also reflects the strategy of **incorporating career content into literacy education** by integrating guest services and gaming curricula with existing ABE curricula into a unified instructional program.

The design of the CCI-IET program has features lauded by educators, such as small class size, and aims to reach the employment-related outcomes demanded by the WIOA legislation. Due to limitations imposed by the Casino Control Commission, the class size is limited to 10 students. The program had 24 participants in 2019 and 21 participants in 2020. All students start in the bilingual blackjack curriculum and, upon completion, are offered the opportunity to participate in the bilingual roulette and carnival games curriculum. The blackjack program runs for 12 weeks and consists of three 8-hour days weekly, for 24 hours of instruction per week. The roulette and carnival games program is shorter at eight weeks and consists of three 4-hour days, requiring only 12 hours per week. A majority of participants in the blackjack

¹ At the time this report was published, CCI was running two bilingual gaming classes and a certified guest service course.

curriculum are unemployed, while almost all of the roulette and carnival games curriculum participants are employed and have returned to obtain additional gaming licenses and training.

The CCI-IET program also shows how Title I and Title II service providers worked together to integrate service delivery operations in their local area. Participants can seek entrance to the program either through the community college or through the One-Stop Career Center. Most, approximately 70%, find their way to the program through word-of-mouth referrals. The rest generally get referred via Title I after intake through the One-Stop, which includes screening for their English language skill level; students must achieve a minimum score in English to participate. Participant progress is tracked and reported to One-Stop case managers or Title II staff biweekly. Upon program completion, participants continue to be tracked through the second and fourth quarters after their exit. In 2019, at the second quarter after exit, 83% of participants were employed, and at the fourth quarter after exit, 82% were employed. In addition to employment success, the program tracks other success indicators. In 2020, the program ran three cohorts of students. Eleven of the 21 students made measurable skill gains, 14 passed the occupational skill exam, and 70% passed the credentials exam. By obtaining these outcomes, the CCI-IET program demonstrates successful integration across the two Title areas for concurrent and contextual learning that results in work-based credentials and sustained employment.

Peer Recovery Specialist Certification Program²

Another program that showcases multiple promising strategies for integrating Title II educational services with Title I job training is the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) certificate program (<https://www.rcsj.edu/Workforce-site/Gloucester-site/Pages/PeerRecovery.aspx>). This program features curricular integration in the form of **linking non-credit workforce training content with literacy education and high school equivalency requirements**, which reflects more of a Title I-driven model in which the job training or apprenticeship programs incorporate both the occupational skills training needed for employment and ABE learning into the curriculum. The CPRS program

was developed in a southern county of New Jersey, where the community college that already had a three-year history of engaging Title II literacy students into its job training programs partnered with the Center for Family Services, a nonprofit organization headquartered in the area. The college's Dean of CTE led the team in establishing the initial program to combine career training, literacy programming, and corporate training, which began in 2019 and was jointly funded through an employer initiative supported by a consortium of local WDBs (i.e., it was funded in part by WIOA Title I funds). CPRS illustrates a promising strategy for **coordination** of integrated service delivery across Title I and Title II because it has a clear protocol for ensuring that eligible participants from the adult literacy component have timely enrollment in the job training program, as well as protocols for record-keeping across the Title areas. These **protocols help to align administrative processes**.

In addition to occupational training, CPRS includes 500 hours of field recovery work and/or volunteer experience, 35 hours of a supervised practicum, and the fees for the New Jersey Certification Board application and test. Participants include a mix of unemployed and employed individuals. For appropriate Title II students, the program runs parallel with or immediately following the typical literacy curriculum for the Title II adult educational program, thereby conforming to "concurrent and contextual." The program is designed to meet the CPRS requirements in New Jersey and to result in employment in a non-clinical position that provides assistance to peers in their recovery from drug and alcohol-related problems in a variety of settings, including treatment centers, hospitals, recovery settings, and other community organizations.

Over the course of their participation, the CPRS program instructor monitors students' progress weekly to identify any challenges or barriers that may arise that could inhibit completion and works with the student to eliminate them. Students who finish the program complete both their adult literacy program and a job training program that results in an occupational certificate. Program staff in the college's CTE department track the post-program workforce outcomes of participants. By 2020, the program had trained two students from Title II.

² At the time this report was published, the Peer Recovery Specialist certification program was still being offered to students.

Integrated-Content Curricular Model: Infusing Work Concepts in Adult Basic Education³

This example shifts from describing a specific program to describing a model that focuses on a particular form of curricular integration – **incorporating career content into literacy education** – which uses work-related vocabulary in curricula, employs résumé writing as a tool for literacy learning, and/or infuses work concepts and scenarios in adult literacy learning. This approach reflects initiative taken by Title II personnel, such as at a county college in southern New Jersey that offers a variety of programs incorporating work-related vocabulary and foundational skill building into its ABE instruction. For over 10 years, the college has been using this integrated-content model for curriculum in its ServSafe (food safety training), Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation-Healthcare Provider Certification, Certified Nursing Assistant, Certified Clinical Medical Assistant, Peer Recovery Certificate, and Advanced Manufacturing programs. As program staff described their practices to researchers, this strategic approach relies on having effective **communication** among various stakeholders to integrate WIOA Title I and Title II services. They mentioned extensive planning, communication, and **support from key stakeholders** such as local businesses, industry liaisons, the college administration, and representatives from the state, county, and local WDBs. Program staff said they believe that the incorporated-learning model provides a smoother transition into the workplace and increases the likelihood of job retention and advancement by integrating students' language and basic skills development in the context of the workplace for which they are preparing. In addition to obtaining their high school diploma, students also gain valuable on-the-job skills, soft or non-technical skills for navigating the workplace, and computer literacy and language skills that are tailored to their chosen career path.

The college tracks employment outcomes of the students who participate in its adult educational programs. Without specificity, program staff reported anecdotal success. Many students have obtained jobs directly from internships, externships, and promotions in instances where the individual was already working in the field of study. Some program staff said that these Title II

programs have affected students' lives dramatically by offering a program that allows them to obtain their diploma while also receiving relevant workforce-related exposure in a field that directly prepares them for a career in demand.

A Cooperative-Partnership Model: The Basic Skills Workforce Training Grant Program⁴

The Basic Skills Workforce Training Grant was spearheaded in 2007 as a partnership among NJDOL, the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, and the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development. This program is highlighted as a promising practice using **cooperation to form a partnership** to integrate provision of WIOA Title I and Title II services to individuals who are already employed but still have educational needs that can be met to make them more valuable to their employers as upskilled workers. **Key stakeholders engaging in the partnership include state-level leaders, representatives from business/industry across the state, and educators who focus on workforce development programming.**

The partnership that established this statewide grant program attended to two aspects of service provision that interconnect: content of the training and payment for the training. The latter is managed through eligibility requirements. To determine an employer's eligibility, they must provide their Federal Employer Identification Number to verify that they are in compliance with New Jersey tax law and not owe the State of New Jersey any taxes. Individuals must show proof of being employed at least part time for 20 hours per week, as well as the employer's Federal Employer Identification Number, in order to enroll in courses. There is no limit to the number of courses individuals can participate in as long as they are eligible.

The content of training and the mechanism for delivering the training vary by locality and needs. Business development teams at community colleges throughout New Jersey are given funding monthly, provided that the funds are available, to design and implement training programs. Each community college can use the money to provide open-enrollment courses or to provide specific

³ At the time this report was published, the Integrated-Content Curricular model was still being utilized for ABE programming at this particular county college in southern New Jersey.

⁴ At the time this report was published, the Basic Skills Workforce Training Grant program was still operational, with training sessions conducted virtually whenever feasible.

training for employers, giving flexibility to structure program offerings based on what is needed. Trainings may be held on campus, at the employer's site, and online, or in any combination of the three. In order to hold a dedicated course or training at the employer's site, there must be a minimum of 10 employees participating. Workshop and class topics include communications (written, verbal, and customer service), ESL, mathematics and measurement, computer skills (Microsoft Word, Outlook, Excel, and PowerPoint), and Spanish in the workplace.

This example offers a more comprehensive model for program development in that it **considers the flow of funding to support training** as well as the flexible nature of **aligning adult education with workforce development** in ways that support job advancement through continuing education opportunities for those already employed. It also shows how program implementation can span geographic areas through a **statewide partnership** that fosters cooperative learning arrangements.

Summary

As has been shown, there are numerous and varied tactics being taken in New Jersey in efforts to integrate provision of Title I and Title II services, both within and across the state's local areas. Evaluators will discuss implications of these findings as part of offering recommendations and in the concluding comments of this report. First, researchers present their findings on what the local area personnel reported about the challenges they confront integrating these two WIOA services.

Common Challenges to Integrating WIOA Title I and Title II in New Jersey

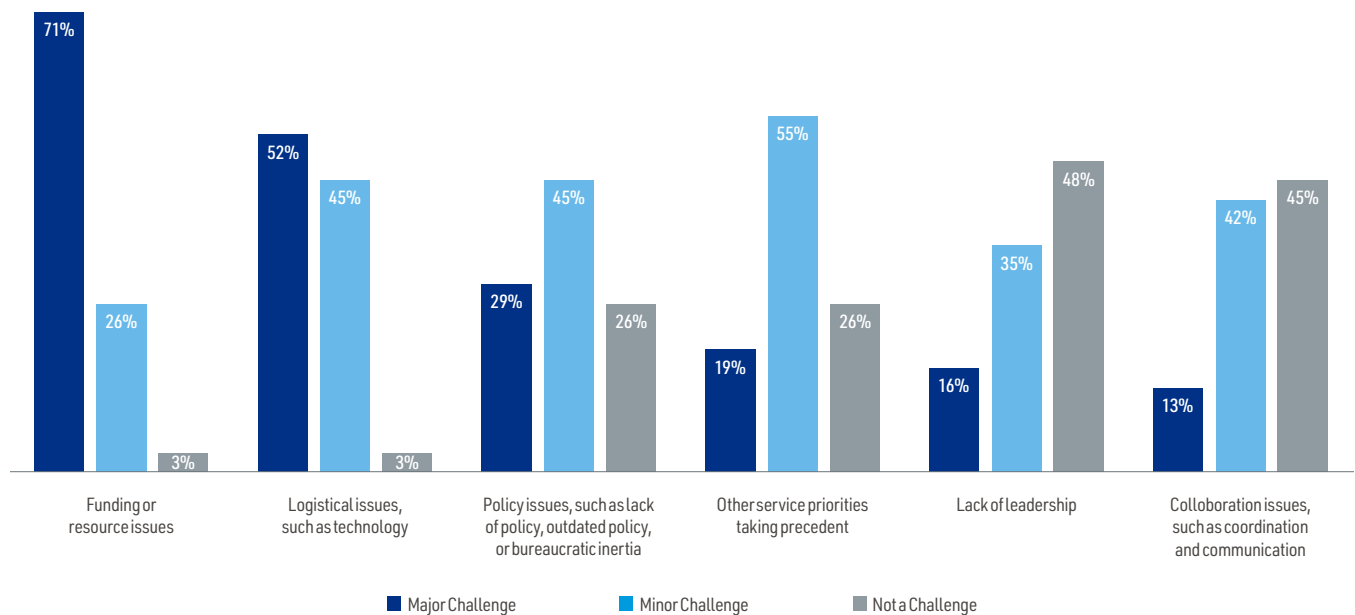
The challenges identified by personnel seeking to integrate WIOA Title I and Title II services in New Jersey mirror the concerns discussed in the literature review of this report and echo the findings of the investigation conducted a few years ago by the SCALES subcommittee. Survey data captured the views of local area staff on six categories of challenges, asking them to indicate by category whether it was a major problem, a minor

problem, or not a problem at all. The six categories were "funding or resource issues," "policy issues, such as lack of policy, outdated policy, or bureaucratic inertia," "lack of leadership," "collaboration issues, such as coordination and communication," "logistical issues, such as technology," and "other service priorities taking precedent." Figure 1 summarizes their responses to assessing those challenges.

Feedback provided from Title I and Title II staff across the 18 local areas in New Jersey point to two, nearly ubiquitous challenges; both funding/resource issues and logistical/technological issues were identified by 97% of respondents as being either a major or a minor challenge. Of the two, funding/resource issues were deemed a bigger problem with 71% reporting it as a major challenge, whereas only 52% indicated that logistical/technological issues were a major problem. In addition, three quarters of local area personnel identified policy-related issues as problematic, with 29% viewing it as a major problem and 45% seeing it as more of a minor concern.

Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondents reported that "other service priorities" presented a challenge, which was the most commonly reported minor challenge (55%) among all the options (see Figure 1). This category refers to service issues other than the mandate to integrate Title II adult education with Title I workforce development. Even though this study had a singular focus, researchers recognize that local area staff have a broader scope of work to perform. This survey item was intended to document that, in some local areas, other aspects of service provision might take priority over the need to integrate across Title I and Title II. For example, some local areas might have been asked to coordinate more with local youth organizations, they might be preoccupied with implementing a new service approach such as JobSource (an online job search assistance portal), or they might have been focused on how to implement a new data collection method, etc. The point was not to determine what is competing for their attention but rather to acknowledge that local area staff have multiple priorities for conducting their work and limited time and money to accomplish a range of performance objectives and service goals.

Figure 1: Challenges to Integrating Title I and Title II Services

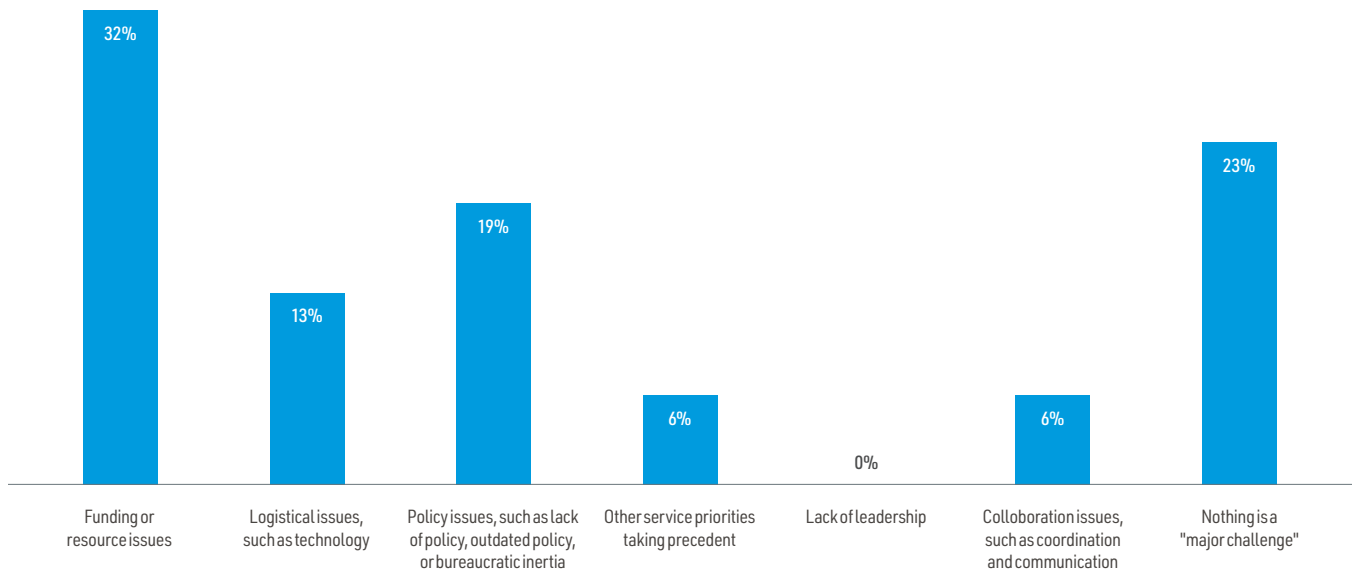


Neither a perceived lack of leadership nor collaboration issues were seen as a major challenge (16% and 13%, respectively). That perception seems justified in light of the findings that describe the numerous and varied ways that local area staff work together across the two Title areas to develop and provide services. Other survey data, however, show 84% of respondents think that they could do more to integrate services in their local area.

Through the survey’s design, evaluators sought to determine whether the source of challenges could be pinpointed by asking local staff to select their single biggest challenge to integrating Title I and Title II services from among the six categorical options after having identified more than one as a major problem. The topline results show that all survey respondents were prompted to select one type of issue as the biggest challenge (see Figure 2).

The outcome of applying that survey technique resulted in some interesting messaging, such as nearly a quarter (23%) reporting that nothing is a major challenge, which at a glance may seem to conflict with the responses they gave to individual question items about each of the six categories of issues, which were presented in Figure 2. However, staff responses to the single biggest challenge survey item actually validate measures of the degree of perceived challenges, with some staff generally feeling more optimistic about the potential for overcoming obstacles than others do, viewing them as minor rather than major problems. For the other categories of issues, how they ranked among the local staff’s concerns about integrating across the Title areas more clearly aligns with how they responded to issues when asked about them one at a time. For instance, their responses to what is the biggest challenge to integrating services showed that lack of leadership is not a concern (0%) when considering that one aspect within the bigger picture of service provision, which is congruent with their responses to the previous items.

Figure 2: Biggest Challenges to Integrating Title I and Title II Services



Aside from the optimistic respondents who claimed that nothing is a major challenge, the three “biggest” challenges that local area staff confront to integrating adult literacy education and workforce development services are: (1) resources/funding (32%), (2) policy-related issues (19%), and (3) logistical/technological issues (13%) (see Figure 2). Rather than think of these as separate matters, they can be considered as an interrelated set of challenges: policy, and how individuals interpret policy, governs their decision making about funding and other resources, which are necessary to address the logistical and technological problems being encountered. The experts who were interviewed for this study described the interrelatedness of issues, and commentary offered by local staff during their post-survey interviews also provides evidence that they, too, are savvy about how policy issues affect money and recognize that ensuring appropriate use of the varied funding streams greatly affects what they can and cannot do toward integrating Title I and Title II service delivery in their areas.

Within this interrelated set of challenges are policy-related issues, identified as a major challenge by 29% of survey respondents and by another 45% as a minor challenge (see Figure 1). The most frequently discussed policy problem was challenges to integration posed by the eligibility criteria by which an individual is able to receive Title I-funded, workforce development services. This policy concern directly affects how local areas can use fiscal resources to help individuals in their areas, so some

staff might see a money problem while others see a policy problem and yet others might see both as problematic. Unlike access to Title II services, eligibility for Title I services, as well as the allocation of Title I resources, is dependent on the documentation of a person’s legal status in the United States. As one survey respondent wrote, “... not every Title II participant is eligible for Title I services. Many Title II participants are employed or lack the documentation required [to receive] services.” Differing eligibility criteria complicate integration efforts in the local areas and inhibit Title II program staff from referring their adult literacy learners to advance to job training or other Title I services due to the fact that an individual may be eligible for Title II services but not Title I services. In general, differing eligibility criteria inhibit the use of referrals and co-enrollment across the two systems, and the problem was almost universally described as a challenge to effective integration between the two Titles.

Concerns about financial and other resources topped the list of challenges to integrating services across the Title areas, with 71% saying it presents a major challenge and another 26% saying that funding issues pose a minor challenge (see Figure 1). As one interviewee asserted, “It always comes down to money.” As analyzed in this study, this category encompasses twin challenges: the funding that is used to develop and implement programs, and the funding that supports data collection and entry into a database system. The latter, in particular, is a longstanding concern that previously was documented

by the SCALES subcommittee and is rooted in a legislative history of formerly disparate realms of service that each had its own data system: Literacy, Adult, and Community Education System for adult education and America's One-Stop Operating System for workforce development. Having separate funding and data systems poses significant challenges to integration because of the costs and resources needed for double data entry, the (in)ability to easily track customers through services, and confidentiality and privacy concerns surrounding data sharing between two data systems.

Survey respondents noted the difficulties with Title I and Title II having separate data reporting systems, which encourages the Titles to operate in silos and poses a hindrance to integration. One survey respondent wrote, "The two systems do not communicate to each other and therefore simple logistical challenges exist to ensure [the] data and service are best shared...Each agency may not know who shows up where and students needs may not be fully met." Other respondents stated a "better system of sharing client data" and "a single database used by both Titles" would be beneficial. One even suggested making the integration of the two data systems a requirement. However, stakeholders recognize that data sharing is not a simple matter. As one interviewee explained, "There's confidentiality issues that have to be worked through. You know, there's pieces that maybe an unemployment counselor would write in that I should not be able to see...that's a real obstacle."

Further evidence that the top challenges are interrelated is that resource issues and access to technology as a resource issue were discussed almost interchangeably during staff interviews. Interview subjects identified the lack of resources both to supply technology needed to provide online-based instruction and to provide proper professional development for their own staff as significant impediments to success for many Title II learners. One local area mentioned finding a creative way to finance an online learning platform but, overall, local areas reported struggling with the cost of implementing such systems, particularly without the foresight to plan for them (as occurred when the pandemic struck in early 2020). For instance, one interviewee said that an online platform they purchased was "pricey [and] it could essentially take most of my entire instructional [budget] for the year – and that's not even buying a pen or pencil or

book when we get back into the classroom." Critical gaps in resource planning included not only costs but also the capacity to properly train educators, who too often were unfamiliar and uncomfortable with online/remote instruction when they had to pivot quickly to teaching that way. One interviewee explained that they plan to spend time doing professional development with their Title II instructors so that "they can manage all of this technology without daily assistance." However, these and other comments about technological challenges are also reflected in survey responses that logistical issues, such as technology (52%), are a major challenge to integrating Title I and Title II services (see Figure 1). Among the critical needs of local staff is "more technology tools for those who lack access to continue to address the digital divide" in their area, exacerbated by the pandemic crisis.

Last, but certainly not least, among the challenges to integrating Title I and Title II services in New Jersey is a pervasive concern among the local areas is that not enough has been done to connect with employers, particularly for education/training pathways that lead more directly to opportunities for paid work. The situation is more dire in some local areas, where staff feel stymied that their efforts to connect with employers have not been fruitful. One local area reported that "employers do not engage with service providers at all." This poses a challenge to integration because local areas are trying to educate and increase the skill level of potential employees, but staff expressed being poorly informed about the hiring needs of employers, which is essential for successful job placement as an outcome of their efforts. Survey results indicate that about two thirds (68%) of respondents receive input from business, industry, and nonprofit organizations in their local area. However, they also described what they find challenging about seeking such input and trying to use information to develop and deliver programming to eligible participants. For instance, a local staff member said, "I think a lot of employers don't know that...we could be a help to them that we provide these resources. But I just don't think they know that we're here." Insufficient input from employers is a source of credibility problems for local areas, which is bad for everyone involved. One staff member articulated the situation in plain terms:

You have to get the buy in from the employer because you can go through all of this and you can train people but if there isn't a job for them at the end, then you're

not going to get the outcomes. And then you're putting all this money in and you're getting people excited about training them for what you're going to tell them is entry level career opportunities. But if that isn't there at the end, it's not going to be long before the word gets out that you're training them for a position that doesn't exist.

Descriptions of the disconnect between employers and Title I and II providers also materialized when survey respondents were asked what programmatic or policy changes are needed to better facilitate integration between the two Titles. One person answered by stating:

Enable businesses and employers to easily identify and hire skilled workers and access other human resource assistance, including education and training for their current workforce, which may include assistance with pre-screening applicants, writing job descriptions, offering rooms for interviewing and consultation services on topics like succession planning and career ladder development and other forms of assistance.

That suggestion reflects a local area perspective that employers lack awareness of the range and extent of services and resources that WIOA provides through the local sites, and points to missed opportunities for more engagement by employers as stakeholders in a system with capacity to provide services relevant to their business or industry.

Impact of COVID-19 on Service Integration Practices During Program Year 2019 in New Jersey

Before turning to recommendations, evaluators briefly address the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on service integration practices in the local areas of the state. Since the topic of challenges has been discussed already, this section focuses specifically on issues of technology for engaging in remote learning, including the capacity of instructors to teach in online settings, and the functional capacity of local sites to operate under conditions that preclude face-to-face interactions; constrain access to services, tools, and data systems; and otherwise limit actions.

Declaration of a public health crisis at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 shut down everything in New Jersey (and the nation) and plunged everyone into a virtual world – ready or not. All One-Stop Career Centers and providers of adult literacy education programming quickly had to adapt to remote forms of service delivery and virtual platforms for engaging in learning activities. For a small proportion of service providers, the transition did not pose any serious challenges. One local area shared, “There was no negative effect. The transition to virtual services was seamless. The pandemic allowed the provider to be creative and think outside of the box when it came to outreaching to students and keeping them engaged.” However, this sentiment was not the norm. More frequent were comments by local staff expressing discomfort with or inadequacy of virtual services for providing the personal touch with their customers. The transition to virtual was described as “the most difficult barrier to overcome” because, as one local area staff member reported, “We are at a standstill. We are a community where email and voicemail messages do not effectively work with our clients. We need face-to-face time.”

The pandemic’s impact on local service integration efforts became apparent at the intake stage. Staff reported through surveys and interviews that testing was a significant barrier to delivering integrated Title I and Title II services. One reason for that is, in several local areas, the Title II literacy consortia partners conduct all of the intake testing for both the adult literacy educational programs and the One-Stop Career Center. The results of those tests determine if an individual goes into an ABE class through Title II or to the One-Stop Career Centers’ Learning Link through Title I for higher-level learning in preparation for job training or high school equivalency testing. Without intake testing, regardless of which Title area is administering it, individuals cannot matriculate into either system. In terms of a broader impact on service operations, in many local areas, new customers were not even being brought into the WIOA system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Technological barriers were discussed from multiple perspectives, including that of the customer using services and that of the instructional staff providing services. While barriers were severe, they were not insurmountable for every local area. In an interview with

an adult literacy staff member in a southern New Jersey county, the interviewee described staff printing and mailing packets of literacy lessons to learners to hold them over until in-person learning resumes or they were able to arrange a technological solution. Another local area described making significant budget modifications quickly to allow its local literacy consortium to purchase online learning software and ensure that all the literacy instructors had access to a new, online learning platform, and that curriculum was deployed to enable virtual instruction. While this local literacy consortium director was confident in the quality of the software, she was less confident of the staff's ability to master the technology. For many literacy educators, the online delivery of instruction was completely new and it was taking time to get them to the point where they could do it. The need for raising the technological skills of the instructors, as well as the students, was discussed in several interviews with Title II consortia leaders. Technological barriers were also discussed as a challenge in terms of access to hardware and Internet service, and in the context of digital literacy. Local areas reported losing customers during COVID-19 "...because many customers don't have the technology capabilities" or whatever technology they do have is inadequate.

But even in situations where technological limitations were addressed or accommodated through efforts made by local area staff, remote learning during the pandemic became a source of stress, particularly on adult literacy learners when it affected their entire family, and often the pressure was too great to keep them engaged. As one survey respondent explained, "Those who have the technology and skills are preoccupied with worries about food insecurity, paying rent, and meeting their family's basic needs instead of working on their literacy." A staff member lamented during an interview that she was losing touch with a notable percentage of her adult literacy learners due to the physical, intellectual, and emotional effort it took to learn on a shared computer with children in the house, or on a cell phone that made learning difficult, on top of all the other burdens and worries associated with COVID-19. Remote learning made implementing adult literacy in general, and any integrated approaches with Title I specifically, too difficult, in her opinion.

Moreover, the requirement to have fully remote operations limited the forms of instruction that could be implemented. One local area responded that the hands-on, work-related training pieces to its IET programs became impossible. A staff member explained, "The hands-on training has to be hands on. You can't teach somebody to be a casino dealer virtually. They have to hold the chips. You have to teach them how to cut the cards. You have to teach him how to deal." The staff member further explained that their local area had converted as many of its IET programs as possible to a virtual platform. However, in many such conversions, the hands-on component was lacking as a complement to the online component, rendering the entire certification program wholly inadequate. As one local Title II staff member explained:

You know, it's massage therapy. It's medical assistant. It's any of these trainings that Title I is funding. How do you teach somebody to be a beautician or to do nails or dog grooming [remotely]? How do you teach anybody to do a training if you can't have them doing something in person?

In summary, all aspects of WIOA Title I and Title II operations were adversely affected by the pandemic, and efforts of the local areas to implement their integration strategies were challenged in multiple ways. Staff adapted to provide services remotely to the individuals already enrolled in adult literacy education or workforce development programming, but encountered technological obstacles with both instructors' and learners' capacity for engaging in virtual settings. The most pervasive impact was the inability of local areas to conduct their intake processes with new clientele without physical access to their office locations. Ironically, the situation seemed worse for those local areas that had integrated more fully their intake procedures by positioning their One-Stop as the gateway into either Title I and Title II with orientation to services on both sides and assessment to determine individuals' paths forward accordingly. While the issue of physical access to One-Stops and other locations for obtaining services has greatly diminished since data were collected for this study, the various technological issues that arose in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic have been considered by researchers and incorporated into the recommendations being offered in this process evaluation.

Recommendations for Programmatic and/or Policy Changes in New Jersey

Based on a thorough analysis of the data collected through this process evaluation, researchers distilled the many suggestions from various stakeholders and compiled a set of recommendations for programmatic and policy changes at the state and local levels to facilitate better integration of WIOA Title I and Title II services. The recommendations are aimed at making a more seamless service delivery system for consumers of WIOA services and engaging appropriate stakeholders to focus on achieving improved educational and employment outcomes.

Recommendation #1. NJDOL should examine the quantitative data to search for evidence of workforce-related outcomes that resulted in local areas utilizing integrated services and for tracking participants through the WIOA system.

This evaluation revealed numerous integrated service practices being implemented in the local areas providing WIOA services in New Jersey. However, an impact of the COVID-19 public health crisis was that the research team was unable to conduct a quantitative analysis of data from the America's One-Stop Operating System and the Literacy, Adult, and Community Education System to examine what workforce outcomes had been occurring in local areas utilizing integrated services. A quantitative study will inform NJDOL about the extent to which forms of integrated Title I and Title II service delivery are correlated with positive workforce outcomes and which workforce outcomes seem to be most affected by particular aspects of integration. Examining the program data will also allow exploration of outstanding questions that still exist such as the outcomes associated with co-enrollment, the service path and drop-off rates of individuals who use both systems, and the proportion of people accessing Title II services who are already employed, even if such examination reveals limitations in the data to answer such questions. In particular, evaluators recommend that data analysis should aim to investigate the pathways that individual consumers of services actually take through the WIOA system as they

proceed with education/training and obtain credentials and/or employment outcomes. Such an investigation could be used to help determine where there are pain points in the system, such as drop-off issues, as well as where the take-up of services is aligned with outcomes.

Recommendation #2. NJDOL should invest in the professional development of staff for vital skill sets, including service delivery in virtual settings and strategic planning.

This study has shown that most WIOA service integration efforts being implemented across New Jersey are occurring as a result of what local staff have done, but it also revealed situations where staff did not have sufficient skills to adapt to changing conditions or to engage stakeholders enough in program development. Two areas of great need for staff development are in building the skill set to deliver a range of services to consumers in virtual settings and in building leadership skills to spearhead strategic planning processes. Both should be considered as strategic investments for increasing the capacity of the existing WIOA service delivery system statewide.

The pandemic-induced shift to virtual services in 2020 resulted in many local area Title I and II staff being forced to learn quickly, and typically on their own, how to use new online tools and learning platforms to aid in provision of services remotely. Professional development is needed for these staff members to improve their digital fluency and comfort level with virtual platforms because it will enable them to better connect with and provide quality services to their customers. The state learned a hard lesson that public health conditions can fluctuate rapidly and interfere with standard operating procedures, making it necessary for service providers to be agile so they can adapt to changing conditions. Moreover, having an option for virtual service delivery in addition to serving customers in face-to-face settings increases accessibility of WIOA services, particularly for those who may face transportation challenges in getting to appointments

on site. While NJDOL has a leadership role to play in championing the need for staff professional development and helping to identify funding streams to support it, local area personnel should be empowered to determine what specifically is needed for whom in their respective areas. Some areas may need to focus on developing their teaching staff who faced a lot of difficulty teaching virtually because they were not familiar with or did not know how to manage all of the technology that was needed to run classes, whereas in another area there may be a greater need to develop skills to have effective communication with customers when the majority of those interactions happen remotely. Staff development is not one-size-fits-all and should be tailored.

The second prong of professional development that NJDOL should champion and invest in is to support personnel, perhaps in state positions as well as in local areas, with developing their skills to facilitate strategic planning. While this report revealed that New Jersey has some instances of programs or models for programming that are well integrated across Title I and Title II, it also uncovered the fact that some local areas feel that their efforts to involve key stakeholders are floundering. It seems that the challenge of effectively engaging representatives from business, industry, and nonprofit organizations is much greater than that of getting people at the local WDBs and literacy consortia to coordinate and plan together. Yet the skills needed to engage diverse constituents in a joint endeavor are the same regardless of the topic or the participants, and all of the integrative service practices reported in this study came about as a result of people's strategic planning.

Recommendation #3. Statewide, more emphasis and effort should be directed toward increasing engagement of business/industry to obtain their input into programming for both adult literacy education and workforce development to ensure that relevant skills are being developed and training programs are being funneled into workplace opportunities.

While the imperative to obtain more effective involvement of business/industry in the design and implementation of WIOA programming is statewide, the particular approach taken to solicit such involvement will need to be developed strategically in each local area of New Jersey. Empowering local personnel through

developing their capacity to engage in strategic planning is key to this effort. Yet the state also can support local development strategies through joining partnerships where the clout of state-level representation in a venture lends credibility to what is being initiated at the local level. Note how three of the four programs highlighted in this report manifested with some degree of involvement by representatives of the state partnering with local area staff and members of the business community wanting some of their employment needs to be met through WIOA programs and services that educate and train people to participate in the workforce.

Encouraging the involvement of business in helping to develop and design integrated programs will help ensure that, upon program completion, participants will be equipped with the skills and knowledge that is needed by local employers. Active and improved business engagement that provides work-related exposure and experiences will allow programs to be more effective at meeting the needs of the regional community by aligning program content more closely with available job opportunities. One interviewee stated that it is necessary to "engage employers in a real way, to get them to see that collaboration is mutually beneficial." Designing programs with adequate, relevant input from employers is crucial for obtaining employment-related outcomes.

Recommendation #4. There is a role for SETC and its subcommittee, SCALES, to play in facilitating the sharing among local areas of useful tactics for integrating WIOA service delivery, engaging the business community, finding ways to braid funding, and other promising strategies that emerge in local area operations.

While local area personnel have demonstrated their capacity to integrate service delivery across WIOA Title I and Title II, there is much that they can learn from one another. To that end, SETC has a role to play in helping to disseminate strategies, tactics, and processes that local staff have shown to be effective in reaching particular aims and outcomes. Evaluators do not presume to tell the state how to enact a dissemination plan but instead encourage solicitation of ideas from local area personnel for what they think would be most helpful as ways to learn from each other. One idea that might get considered is to convene a regular forum, possibly in an online

setting, for local staff to share best practices and discuss various strategies for how to integrate services. Peer-to-peer learning in this context should be both effective and empowering as staff listen, learn, and determine how they can adapt something done in another area to make it work in their own local conditions. The research done for this evaluation shows there is demand for more guidance from the state. One survey respondent said that they would benefit from “clear guidance from the state on how to best integrate Title I and II services.” Another survey respondent stated that it would be “helpful to have a clear directive from the state that local boards can use to help transform current structures.” However, evaluators interpret such comments more as a cry for help than an insistence that the state be the sole source of guidance for helping local staff. The concern to be

addressed is providing more guidance to navigate the challenges of integrating WIOA services, and the state’s role in making that happen is to support the sharing of ideas and proven strategies that could lead to more effective and integrated service delivery. Additionally, SETC might consider a repository for accumulating and sharing documented resources (e.g., an effectively designed intake form or program curriculum) to reduce the amount of time that local areas spend reinventing wheels that spin well elsewhere. Yet the overarching recommendation is that SETC should find out directly from local staff what kinds of information sharing would be most helpful to them, and then seek to leverage local talents and accomplishments as a means of supporting the efforts of WIOA personnel statewide.

Conclusion

This process evaluation examined the integration of WIOA Title I (workforce development) and Title II (adult literacy education) services in New Jersey. The evaluation was based in extensive background research to illuminate the context surrounding the legal mandate to integrate these services, as well as to address the legislative vagary of “concurrent and contextual” to define what the implementation of integrated services looks like in practical settings. Resulting from those methods, New Jersey now can discuss three modes of curricular integration as well as a range of specific practices to integrate aspects of service delivery to consumers across the two Title areas. The various categories that define aspects of integrating workforce development and adult literacy education provide a framework that can be discussed, refined if deemed necessary, and applied in subsequent evaluations and analyses of administrative data.

Also resulting from this evaluation is considerable evidence, as reported by staff who perform the work, of specific integration practices being implemented in one or more of the 18 local areas within the state. Curricular integration has been achieved across 90% of

the local areas using an effective method to blend adult literacy education and workforce development content. Integrating other components of service delivery have proven to be more challenging, and some areas have achieved greater success than others in this regard. Yet there are success stories and effective models that can be built upon as the state continues its mission of supporting local staff with their endeavors to improve service provision and outcomes. Recommendations in this report outline steps that ideally should be taken to further promote the integration of WIOA services and urge greater involvement of local business, industry, and nonprofit organizations to ensure that programming utilizes relevant work-based learning that is aligned to employment opportunities, whether to fill newly hired positions or to promote workers with upgraded skills. Due to the distinctiveness of the different regions of New Jersey, no single approach or strategy will work equally well in all areas. Instead, there is much opportunity to leverage the unique strengths that each area has for establishing partnerships and other collaborative efforts to design and implement programs and services through engaging employers as stakeholders alongside adult educators and local WDBs.

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The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University is devoted to transforming the workforce development system at the local, state, and federal levels. The center, located within the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, provides an independent source of analysis for reform and innovation in policymaking and employs cutting-edge research and evaluation methods to identify best practices in workforce development, education, and employment policy. It is also engaged in significant partnerships with the private sector, workforce organizations, and educational institutions to design effective education and training programs. It is deeply committed to assisting job seekers and workers attain the information, education, and skills training they need to move up the economic ladder.

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- ▶ Data Collection and Analysis
- ▶ Disability Employment
- ▶ Job Seekers in Transition
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Appendix A: List of Preliminary Expert Interviewees

- ▶ Stacie Evans, Director for Language and Literacy Programs, City University of New York. Interviewed on August 21, 2020.
- ▶ Paul Jurmo, consultant on basic education for development. Interviewed on August 18, 2020.
- ▶ Martin Murphy, Director, Long Island Regional Adult Education Network. Interviewed on August 19, 2020.
- ▶ Ira Yankwitt, Literacy Assistance Center, New York, NY. Interviewed on August 5, 2020.

Appendix B: Survey Instrument

I. Introduction

DISPLAY TO ALL

The Heldrich Center at Rutgers University is conducting a study on behalf of the New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOL) to document the extent of integration between Title I workforce development services and Title II adult literacy services in local areas across New Jersey, highlight best practices of integration where they exist across the state, and to inform NJDOL and local areas on policy changes that could be made to improve integration of Title I and Title II services.

The following questions ask you to describe your experiences, opinions, and ideas about Title I and Title II integration in your area. The majority of this survey asks you to please think about your experience prior to the pandemic when responding to the survey questions. **This survey is voluntary and will take you approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your name will not be used. Your answers will be shared with NJDOL in our final report. Thank you for your participation.**

II. Background of Respondent

ASK ALL

Q1. What is the name of your program agency?

- ▶ Atlantic Cape Community College
- ▶ Bergen County Technical Schools
- ▶ Brookdale Community College
- ▶ Camden County College
- ▶ Essex County College
- ▶ Hunterdon County Education Services Commission
- ▶ Mercer County Community College
- ▶ Morris County Vocational School District
- ▶ New Brunswick Board of Education
- ▶ New Jersey Department of Corrections
- ▶ Paterson Public Schools
- ▶ Rowan College at Burlington County
- ▶ Rowan College at Gloucester County
- ▶ Salem County Vocational Technical School
- ▶ St. Francis Community Center
- ▶ Union City Adult Learning Center
- ▶ Union County College
- ▶ Other, specify: _____

ASK ALL

Q2. What is your job title/position/designation at the program where you work?

OPEN-ENDED TEXT BOX

III. Workforce Development Board (WDB) Working Relationship

DISPLAY TO ALL

First, we want to understand your relationship with the Workforce Development Board (WDB) in your local area. Please think about your experience prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ASK ALL

Q3. Do you, or does a representative of the Title II literacy consortium in your local area, serve as a member of your local WDB or not?

1. Yes, myself
2. Yes, someone else
3. No/Unsure

ASK IF SERVE ON WDB (Q3=1,2)

Q4. Do you, or does a representative of the Title II literacy consortium in your local area, attend WDB meetings in your local area on a regular basis?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure

ASK ALL

Q5. Other than attend WDB meetings, in what ways does your Title II consortium work with or liaison with the WDB staff in your local area or not? Check all that apply.

1. Engage in informal communication - occasional email and phone conversations
2. Engage in formal communication - arrange meetings with WDB staff
3. Sponsor events together
4. Engage in strategic planning on ways to improve customer services in our local area
5. Other, specify: _____

ASK ALL

Q6. How often do you or someone else on your staff communicate to workforce development staff about...

- a. Policy-related issues related to Title I and Title II services?
- b. Operations-related issues related to Title I and Title II services?

This includes emails, phone calls, and attending meetings other than full WDB meetings.

1. Regularly
2. Occasionally
3. Never
4. Unsure

ASK ALL

Q7. In your opinion, how important is it for you or someone else on your staff to communicate with the workforce development staff in your local area?

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Not too important
4. Not at all important

IV. Approaches to Integration

DISPLAY TO ALL

Integration of Title I workforce development services and Title II adult literacy services is a goal under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and is defined as a service approach in which adult education and literacy activities are connected to workforce preparation activities to improve labor market connections for adult learners.

Integration activities are implemented differently in local areas across New Jersey. We want to ask about integration practices that may be used in your local area for more specific information about Title I and Title II integration in New Jersey.

ASK ALL

Q8. To what extent are Title I (workforce development) services and Title II (adult literacy) services integrated in your local area?

1. A great deal
2. Somewhat
3. A little
4. Not at all

BASED ON SOME EXTENT OF INTEGRATION IN LOCAL AREA (Q8=1,2,3)

Q9. Can you please provide a brief description, and/or an example, of one way in which your local area's Title I and Title II services are integrated?

OPEN-ENDED text box

BASED ON SOME EXTENT OF INTEGRATION IN LOCAL AREA (Q8=1,2,3)

Q10. Do you track employment outcomes of learners your local area serves through Title II programs who also receive service through Title I programs?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

DISPLAY TO ALL

Thinking about the integration practices that your local area might or might not be engaged in...

The following questions, Q11a to Q11d, will be asked of the following items, see below for the example using Q11.

Q11. Aligning content of adult education with post-secondary program prerequisites.

Q12. Linking non-credit workforce training content with literacy education and high school equivalency requirements.

Q13. Incorporating career content into literacy education.

Q11a to Q11d to be repeated for Q12 and Q13 items.

ASK ALL

Q11a. To what extent does your local area align content of adult education with post-secondary program prerequisites?

1. A lot - GO TO Q11B
2. A little - GO TO Q11B
3. Not at all - GO TO Q12A
4. Don't know - GO TO Q12A

ASK IF EXTENT IS A LOT OR A LITTLE (Q11A=1,2)

Q11b. And thinking about service delivery...how much do your local area's customers benefit from this type of integration practice? (aligning content of adult education with post-secondary program prerequisites)

1. Benefit a lot
2. Benefit somewhat
3. Benefit a little
4. Do not benefit at all

ASK IF EXTENT IS A LOT OR A LITTLE (Q11A=1,2)

Q11c. How difficult was it for your consortium to implement this type of integration practice? (aligning content of adult education with post-secondary program prerequisites)

1. Very difficult
2. Somewhat difficult
3. Not too difficult
4. Not at all difficult

ASK IF EXTENT IS A LOT OR A LITTLE (Q11A=1,2)

Q11d. Based on your experience, could this integration practice be replicated in other areas throughout the state? (aligning content of adult education with post-secondary program prerequisites)

1. Yes, could be replicated
2. No, could not be replicated
3. Don't know

*** Q12A to D AND Q13A to D BATTERIES HERE. Q14 FOLLOWS THE COMPLETION OF Q11, Q12, Q13.**

ASK IF ANY Q11, Q12, or Q13 USED (Q11A OR Q12A OR Q13A=1,2,3)

Q14. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your local area's ability to continue to implement these integration practices of Title I and Title II services?

1. Specify: OPEN-ENDED text box
2. Not applicable/The pandemic has not affected my local area's ability to continue to implement this practice

DISPLAY TO ALL

Thinking about other integration practices that your local area might or might not be engaged in...

The following questions, Q15a to Q15d, will be asked of the following items, see below for the example using item Q15.

Q15. Engage in regional education/industry partnerships with the local WDB.

Q16. Engage in partnerships between the local community college, local career and technical education programs, and Title II providers.

Q17. Coordinate apprenticeships, with embedded literacy education, with local businesses and/or community-based organizations.

Q15a to Q15d to be repeated for Q16 and Q17 items

ASK ALL

Q15a. To what extent does your local area engage in regional education/industry partnerships with the local WDB?

1. A lot - GO TO Q15B
2. A little - GO TO Q15B
3. Not at all - GO TO Q16A
4. Don't know - GO TO Q16A

ASK IF EXTENT IS A LOT OR A LITTLE (Q15A=1,2)

Q15b. And thinking about service delivery...how much do your local area's customers benefit from this type of integration practice? (engaging in regional education/industry partnerships with the local WDB)

1. Benefit a lot
2. Benefit somewhat
3. Benefit a little
4. Do not benefit at all

ASK IF EXTENT IS A LOT OR A LITTLE (Q15A=1,2)

Q15c. How difficult was it for your consortium to implement this type of integration practice? (engaging in regional education/industry partnerships with the local WDB)

1. Very difficult
2. Somewhat difficult
3. Not too difficult
4. Not at all difficult

ASK IF EXTENT IS A LOT OR A LITTLE (Q15A=1,2)

Q15d. Based on your experience, could this integration practice be replicated in other areas throughout the state? (engaging in regional education/industry partnerships with the local WDB)

1. Yes, could be replicated
2. No, could not be replicated
3. Don't know

***Q16A to D AND Q17A to D BATTERIES HERE. Q18 FOLLOWS THE COMPLETION OF Q15, Q16, Q17.**

ASK IF ANY Q15, Q16, or Q17 USED (Q15A OR Q16A OR Q17A=1,2,3)

Q18. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your local area's ability to continue to implement these integration practices of Title I and Title II services?

1. Specify: OPEN-ENDED text box
2. Not applicable/The pandemic has not affected my local area's ability to continue to implement this practice

DISPLAY TO ALL

Next, thinking about programs, policies, or procedures that your local area might or might not engage in...

The following questions, Q19a to Q19d, will be asked of the following items, see below for the example using item Q19.

Q19. Co-enrollment in Title I and Title II services.

Q20. Established data sharing policies between Title I and Title II.

Q21. Common case management for individuals who are enrolled in Title I and Title II.

Q22. Single point of entry for all WIOA services.

Q23. Orientation/introduction of Title I services to all adult learners in Title II program.

Q24. Shared intake assessment/testing across WIOA programs.

Q25. Input from business, industry, and nonprofit organizations (such as having an employer serve on an advisory committee, review or co-develop a curriculum, assist with mock interviews, serve as a guest teacher in an adult basic education class, etc.).

Q19a to Q19d to be repeated for Q20 to Q25 items.

ASK ALL

Q19a. Co-enrollment in Title I and Title II services.

Is your local area engaged in this program, policy, or procedure?

1. Yes - GO TO Q19B
2. No - GO TO Q20A
3. Don't know - GO TO Q20A

ASK IF ENGAGED IN PROGRAM/POLICY/PROCEDURE (Q19A=1)

Q19b. How much does this integration practice contribute to effective service delivery in your local area's consortium? (co-enrollment in Title I and Title II services)

1. Contributes a lot
2. Contributes some
3. Contributes a little
4. Not at all contributes

ASK IF ENGAGED IN PROGRAM/POLICY/PROCEDURE (Q19A=1)

Q19c. How difficult was it for your consortium to implement this type of integration practice? (co-enrollment in Title I and Title II services)

1. Very difficult
2. Somewhat difficult
3. Not too difficult
4. Not at all difficult

ASK IF ENGAGED IN PROGRAM/POLICY/PROCEDURE (Q19A=1)

Q19d. Based on your experience, could this integration practice be replicated in other areas throughout the state? (co-enrollment in Title I and Title II services)

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

***Q20A to D - Q25A to D BATTERIES HERE. Q26 FOLLOWS THE COMPLETION OF Q19 to Q25.**

ASK IF ANY Q19 to Q25 USED (Q19A OR Q20A OR Q21A OR Q22A OR Q23A OR Q24A OR Q25A=1)

Q26. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your local area's ability to continue to implement these integration practices of Title I and Title II services?

1. Specify: OPEN-ENDED text box
2. Not applicable/The pandemic has not affected my local area's ability to continue to implement this practice

ASK ALL

Q27. Overall, to what extent do you think integrating Title I services and Title II services is a priority in your local area?

1. Integration is a big priority
2. Integration is a small priority
3. Integration is not a priority
4. Don't know if integration is a priority

V. Program Implementation

ASK ALL

Q28. Thinking about your overall experience working in adult literacy services, how important are the following strategic components when establishing successful integration practices between Title I and Title II services?

- a. Leadership from within your consortium/local area
- b. Leadership from the state WDB/state
- c. Cooperation between Title I and Title II services staff
- d. Funding blending
- e. Co-teaching
- f. Data collection
- g. Input from business, industry, and nonprofit organizations

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Not too important
4. Not at all important

ASK IF MORE THAN ONE RATED "VERY IMPORTANT" IN Q28 (Q28A-G=1)

Q29. And which strategic component do you think is MOST important when establishing a successful integration practice between Title I and Title II services?

1. Leadership from within your consortium/local area
2. Leadership from the state WDB/state
3. Cooperation between Title I and Title II services staff
4. Funding blending
5. Co-teaching
6. Data collection
7. Input from business, industry, and nonprofit organizations

ASK ALL

Q30. What do you think are the challenges to integrating Title I and Title II services? Please assess each of the following things. Is it a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem?

- a. Funding or resource issues
- b. Policy issues, such as lack of policy, outdated policy, or bureaucratic inertia
- c. Lack of leadership
- d. Collaboration issues, such as coordination and communication
- e. Logistical issues, such as technology
- f. Other service priorities taking precedent

1. A major problem
2. A minor problem
3. Not a problem

ASK ALL

Q31. What programmatic or policy changes are needed in your local area to facilitate better integration between Title I and Title II services?

OPEN-ENDED text box

VI. COVID-19 Impact

ASK ALL

Q32. Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, what are your biggest challenges to providing adult literacy services now?

OPEN-ENDED text box

ASKALL

Q33. Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in what ways is your local area consortium thinking about new ways to providing adult literacy services or serving its customers?

1. Specify: OPEN-ENDED text box
2. Not applicable/The pandemic has not affected my local area's ability to continue to implement this practice

ASKALL

Q34. What are your local area's most critical needs now in order to be able to provide adult literacy services at the quality provided prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

OPEN-ENDED text box

VII. Conclusion

ASKALL

Q35. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how your local area aligns Title I workforce preparation activities with Title II adult literacy services?

OPEN-ENDED text box

ASKALL

Q36. Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses have been recorded. We appreciate your contribution to this important research project.

Our researchers may have a follow-up question to ask you regarding your responses. If you are comfortable with having a researcher contact you by phone or email for a short (five minutes or less) follow-up, please indicate "yes" and provide your preferred contact information below.

1. Yes, specify email and/or phone number: _____
2. No