



**NASDAE**

National Association of State  
Directors of Adult Education

# Imperative of Digital Skill Building in Adult Education

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February, 2026

# Digital Skills are Imperative

The National Association of State Directors of Adult Education (NASDAE) recognizes the imperative to **build digital skills among the American workforce for full participation and advancement at work and in civic and family life**. Now more than ever as the economy shifts, adults need accessible and affordable opportunities to prepare for further education, training, and employment.

Adult education has been delivering on its promise for over 60 years and no other provider is as wide-reaching, scalable, effective, and accountable as WIOA Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy, to address digital skill building among adults in the workforce development system. With the vastly higher number of youths and adults served in adult education than the other WIOA core partners, adult education is a talent pipeline for employers. Furthermore, adult education is one of the few public workforce partners providing for the linguistic, civic, and economic integration of English language learners.

## In program year (PY) 2023-2024, WIOA Title II, adult education reported **1.26+ million learners served**

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**91,000**

Learners earned their secondary credential through adult education

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**320,000**

Youths aged 16-24 reconnected with education to overcome learning losses and prepare for careers

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**100,000+**

Incarcerated adults preparing to reenter society and contribute to the nation's workforce were served through adult education

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**60,000+**

Were served through integrated education and training models, preparing for high demand, industry-recognized credentials

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**12,000+**

Adults participated in workplace adult literacy programs in partnership with their employer or labor association

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The WIOA Title II adult education program was supported by \$689,949,325 in federal funds in PY2022- 23<sup>1</sup> and leveraged at least \$1.3 billion in non-federal contributions, demonstrating the value state and local policymakers see in adult education's role in upskilling and retooling the workforce. Learn more in the NASDAE brief, [Adult Education Works: An Investment in Workforce Development](#).

From using web-based human resource systems to taking online courses and training simulations to credentialing for high-tech careers in the AI revolution, working learners deserve opportunities to prepare themselves for what's next in their careers. A survey of NASDAE members in 2021 cautions that the well-documented barriers faced by low-income Americans remain common and persistent, including the of lack of access to affordable and reliable internet and devices, inequitable coverage of rural areas, cost of training opportunities, reliance on shared devices or smart phones, language barriers, and lack of time to devote to learning. The survey also revealed the great need for additional learning opportunities and professional support for instructors who are themselves often facing the same affordability and reliability issues as their students.

WIOA Title II programs uniquely and effectively build essential digital skills—alongside language and foundational competencies—that adults need to access jobs, training, and career advancement. Adult education has the potential to continue closing the digital divide, strengthen employer talent pipelines, and ensure inclusive economic growth in an increasingly digital economy.

The National Association of State Directors of Adult Education (NASDAE) (<http://nasdae.org>) is a member organization that supports state leadership of the adult education program, authorized under Title II of WIOA, by providing professional development, informational resources, and networking opportunities for state and U.S. territory leaders and partners.

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<sup>1</sup> Fiscal Year 2022 (for allowable expenditures July 1, 2022 - September 30, 2024) is the latest complete fiscal data in the National Reporting System