

Adult Education Block Grant

Data and Accountability Committee (DAC)
Meeting 1: AEBG Data Fundamentals; AEBG
Student Journeys

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White Paper

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Overview

This paper was prepared for the Adult Education Block Grant (AEBG) Data and Accountability Committee (DAC) to guide discussions leading to the development of a clear and concise framework for evaluating the performance and outcomes of the AEBG initiative in California. The purpose of the committee is to focus on outcomes and measurable skills gains for adult learners served by consortia receiving AEBG funds allocated by the State under AB104 (2015; Chapter 13, Sec's 38 and 39, ed 84830 and 84900) in the core program areas identified in the legislation. This paper includes the following:

- A description of the data and accountability provisions of AB86 (2013; Section 76, Article 3), and AEBG (as established under AB104 in 15/16 and amended in 16/17).
- A review of data collection efforts to date under AB104.
- A consideration of key descriptors and guidance on the scope of AEBG, including the intended target population(s) and educational segments, and a revised definition of the scope of AEBG programs for reporting purposes proposed jointly by the California Department of Education and California Community College Chancellor's office for review by the DAC.
- A review of the legislative language identifying and framing the 7 (or 5) AEBG program areas, and brief consideration of the key questions raised by these definitions.
- A review of "WIOA alignment" under AEBG including a description of major WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) outcomes and guidelines for measurable skills gains, both for the overall Act and specifically how these do or do not differ for agencies administering WIOA Title II Adult Literacy funds.
- The relevance of the above framing elements and issues to the broader intent of AEBG for the development of more integrated regional frameworks and pathway systems for adult learners.

Data and Accountability in AB86 and AB104

AB86

AB86 provided 25 million dollars to support the ability of community colleges and K12 adult education providers to come together to form regional consortia "for the purpose of developing regional plans to better serve the educational needs of adults." The legislation defined the initial 5 program areas and directed consortia to provide the following as components of their plans:

- An evaluation of current levels and types of adult education programs within its region; including credit, noncredit, and enhanced noncredit adult education,

correctional programs, and WIA (WIOA) Title II Adult Literacy (Public Law 105-220).

- An evaluation of current needs for adult education programs within its region.
- Plans to address the gaps identified in the above.

The legislation is clear in the intent that consortia use the evaluation of existing capacity and community need for programs to drive the development of programs and services, including specific language promoting program integration, “seamless transitions”, integrated contextualized basic skills and CTE, and other “joint programming between adult education and career technical education.” As a result, the template for regional plans required consortia to provide demographic data demonstrating need and a summary of the capacity of K12 adult schools and community colleges in the 5 program areas defined by AB86 for adult education.

AB104

AB104 both amended the original 5 program definitions in AB86 (Sec. 38) and created the Adult Education Block Grant Program (AEBG; Sec. 39), providing \$500 million dollars to support both the maintenance of effort by consortia to deliver adult education services and to support ongoing program expansion and integration. Section 39 also expanded the definition of entities that provide adult education and workforce services, requirements for how the plan identifies other entities that have a fundamental interest in AEBG services, and included detailed requirements for consortia governance, fund distribution, and provisions for alignment with uses of WIOA, Perkins, Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), Apportionment and other resources.

AB104 also established reporting timelines to the legislature and core measures for assessing the effectiveness of consortia. These include:

- 1) The number of adults served by the consortium.
- 2) The number of adults served by the consortium that have demonstrated the following:
 - a. Improved literacy skills.
 - b. Completion of high school diplomas or their recognized equivalents.
 - c. Completion of post-secondary certificates, degrees, or training programs.
 - d. Placement into jobs.
 - e. Improved Wages. [ed 84920(c)]

Additionally, AB104 established timelines for reporting progress in establishing measures, aligning assessments, and for yearly reporting to the legislature, including that:

- The Chancellor and Superintendent shall identify no later than January 1st, 2016 the measures for assessing the effectiveness of consortia [ed 84920(c)].

- No later than August 1st, 2017, the Chancellor and Superintendent shall report to DOF, the SBE, and Legislature options for integrating assessments including integration into the common assessment system and compliance with other state and federal funding requirements for adult education programs.
- Yearly, the Chancellor and Superintendent will provide preliminary reports to the Department of Finance (DOF), the State Board of Education (SBE), and the Legislature on outcomes for adults statewide by consortium region by October 30th and a final report on or before February 1st of the following year.

Data Collection Efforts to Date under AB104

To meet the legislative mandate that AEBG provide yearly data to ‘assess the effectiveness of consortia,’ there have been two rounds of data collection under AEBG:

August 1st 2016

2015/2016 baseline enrollment and outcomes data collected by members for the 7 AB104 program areas and the core outcomes including measurable gains in literacy, post-secondary transition, certificate/degree completion, employment, and wage gains. This data was collected as aggregated numbers from consortia members which could be rolled up by the State. In their best attempts to comply with the data available at the time, most K12 adult and community college consortium members provided comprehensive numbers of all adult education students regardless of funding source including reporting of for-credit basic skills and English as Second Language (ESL) students by the community colleges.

April 30th 2017

April 30th was the deadline for reporting of student enrollment and outcome data by consortium members using TopsPro Enterprise (TE). TE collects comprehensive demographic, intake, outcome and progress data for adult students. TE supports multiple data collection methods: import from 3rd party systems, scannable answer sheets, manual data entry by staff, and online student entry through eTests. Guidance for this round of reporting was provided through two memos, regional data and accountability training on the use of TE, webinars, and the state AEBG website. Under this guidance, consortia were required to:

- Use TE as the sole mechanism for quarterly and annual reporting of AEBG student participation and outcomes.
- Report only students participating in AEBG funded instructional or student support activities (the “touched by AEBG” criteria).
- Understand that all AEBG funded students enrolled in Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and ESL programs are subject to the pre- and post-testing of measurable skills gains after 12 contact hours using one of the NRS approved testing instruments.

Analysis

Because consortia operated under different assumptions for reporting for 15/16 and 16/17 program year data, they used different criteria to collect their end of year data in August 2016 and their first quarterly data report in April 2017 – using AEBG-aligned program participation in the 7 program areas (including for credit basic skills and ESL) for the August 2016 report and funding based criteria (students touched by AEBG) for their April 2017 report – meaning that the April data will differ substantially from the August data (only the August data is reported to the legislature), particularly for post-secondary enrollment and outcomes. Additionally, because systems for measuring post-secondary transitions, employment, and wages are still under development, any comprehensive data on these measures will be speculative.

Initial feedback from the April data submission indicates that the use of TE worked extremely well for the overwhelming majority of Title II funded providers and K12 adult schools, and was problematic for community colleges depending on what student information system they used and how they defined their AEBG student population. Community colleges struggled with the “touched by AEBG” criteria for reporting their students, many reporting extremely small numbers in the April report or in some cases opting to the default of reporting entire program areas. As a result, AEBG lacks comparison data that can be used to measure progress for reporting to the legislature. Additionally, because non WIOA II funded agencies are learning to use TE for the first time, there may still be significant discrepancies’ between the April 30th quarterly and the August 1st data reports for post-secondary programs.

AEBG Population and Scope

AEBG Population

Neither AB86 or AB104 provide clear definitions of the population to be served under AEBG; creating ambiguity as to what programs, populations, or systems should be subject to data reporting and included in annual reports to the legislature. The Legislative Analysis Office (LAO)’s 2012 report on adult education defined the purpose of adult education “to provide persons 18 years and older with precollegiate-level knowledge and skills they need to participate in society and the workforce” including:

- Immigrants who want to learn English, obtain citizenship, and receive job training.
- Native English speakers who are illiterate or only can read and write simple sentences.
- High school dropouts who want to earn a diploma or General Educational Development (GED) high school equivalency certificate to increase their employability or attend college.
- High school graduates who seek to earn a college degree but have not yet fully mastered reading, writing, or mathematics at precollegiate levels.

- Unemployed persons or unskilled workers earning low wages who seek short-term vocational training to improve their economic condition.¹

Additionally, while AB86 and AB104 do not provide clear population guidance, the funding formula for consortia under both AB86 and AEBG supports the basic intent relating to populatin including equal weighting of 1) Adults over 18; 2) Unemployed adults; 3) Adults without a high school diploma; 4) Household poverty; 5) Adults at a 7th grade literacy level; and 6) Adults identified as limited English speakers.

A problem identified by the 2012 LAO report is that there are overlapping responsibilities between the K12 adult and community college systems for serving these populations. In the community college system credit and non-credit programs are not always integrated, functioning in many cases like separate systems. Additionally, because of the inherent flexibility in Adult Schools to create curriculum and the autonomy of local colleges to create and define programs and levels, one also finds tremendous diversity in programs, target populations, and educational levels served across all three systems that may or may not fit into the basic categories of AEBG.

K12 Adult	CC Non-Credit	CC Credit
Adult Basic Education	Adult Basic Education to 6 levels below transfer	General Education Leading to AA/AS Degrees/Transfer
Adult Secondary Education	Adult Secondary Education	Basic Skills to 4 Levels Below College
ESL/EL Civics	ESL/EL Civics to 8 levels below transfer	ESL
Short Term CTE	Short Term CTE	Short & Long Term CTE
Adults w Disabilities	Adults w Disabilities	Disabled Student Programs
	College Preparation	

The challenge is distinguishing collegiate from pre-collegiate education in a way that supports the broader AEBG goals of system alignment and design of seamless and intentional transitions into post-secondary courses and programs. Currently community colleges can define for credit Basic Skills courses up to 4 levels below transfer, for credit ESL up to 6 levels below transfer, non-credit ESL up to 8 levels below transfer, and non-credit basic skills up to 6 level transfer. While definitions of levels ‘below transfer’ often differ from college to college, and there is no uniform alignment between college levels below transfer and functional levels as defined in Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) and other National Reporting System (NRS) approved testing instruments, there is allowable and clear overlap between courses and functional

¹ California Legislative Analysis Office, “Restructuring California’s Adult Education System” (2012); <http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2012/edu/adult-education/restructuring-adult-education-120412.pdf>

levels in K12 AE, and credit and non-credit college curriculum that data and accountability planning and assessment will need to address.

AEBG Scope

To improve clarity about the scope of AEBG programs for data reporting purposes, the AEBG leadership from CDE and the Chancellor's Office met to consider the above concerns and issue a recommendation to the DAC committee considering the scope of AEBG programs and systems.

Recommendation: AEBG Students for the purposes of AEBG reporting includes, all students served in the 7 AB104 program areas for all K12 Adult and community college non-credit programs and short term for credit CTE certificates leading to employment.

The above definition was based on the following:

- The desire to incentivize colleges without existing non-credit programs to build their pre-collegiate course sequences in non-credit which provides more flexibility on course repetition, allows for open entry open exit, and does not penalize students with permanent transcribed grades should they eventually want to transfer.
- To focus alignment on the arrangement and integration of K12 AE and CC non-credit systems as the first step to transition into post-secondary for credit pathways.
- To include short term for credit CTE to incentivize creation of integrated and co-enrollment models which transition students from non-credit career preparation into for credit career pathways and increase transition.

AEBG Programs

AEBG Programs

AB86 describes 5 program areas to be addressed in the AE consortium plans. AB104 (Sect. 39; 2015) implements the Adult Education Block Grant program, which identifies the 7 AEBG program areas. However, AB104 (Section 38) also amends the original 5 AB86 program areas, replacing apprenticeship programs with 'programs offering pre-apprenticeship'. Thus, the 7 programs described in AEBG do not necessarily supersede the original (amended) 5 AB86 program areas.

The language used to frame the programs differs. Under AB86, consortia are required to address all 5 program areas in their plans. AB104, however, only stipulates which programs are allowable uses for AEBG funding, not which programs must be provided.

AB86/AB104 Section 38	AB104 Section 39: Adult Education Block Grant
(b) Grant funds provided pursuant to this section shall be used by each regional consortium to create and implement a plan to better provide adults in its region with all of the following:	(a) Funds apportioned for the program shall be used only for support of the following:
(1) Elementary and secondary basic skills, including classes required for a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate.	(1) Programs in elementary and secondary basic skills, including programs leading to a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate.
(2) Classes and courses for immigrants eligible for educational services in citizenship and English as a second language, and workforce preparation classes in basic skills.	(2) Programs for immigrants eligible for educational services in citizenship, English as a second language, and workforce preparation.
	(3) Programs for adults, including, but not limited to, older adults, that are primarily related to entry or reentry into the workforce.
	(4) Programs for adults, including, but not limited to, older adults, that are primarily designed to develop knowledge and skills to assist elementary and secondary school children to succeed academically in school.
(3) Education programs for adults with disabilities.	(5) Programs for adults with disabilities.
(4) Short-term career technical education programs with high employment potential.	(6) Programs in career technical education that are short term in nature and have high employment potential.
(5) Programs offering pre-apprenticeship training activities conducted in coordination with one or more apprenticeship programs approved by the Division of Apprenticeship Standards for the occupation and geographic area.	(7) Programs offering pre-apprenticeship training activities conducted in coordination with one or more apprenticeship programs approved by the Division of Apprenticeship Standards for the occupation and geographic area.

AB104, Sec 38 also provides explicit requirements that adult basic skills and ESL programs incorporate American Government and civics education, defined as the distribution of “basic information on American government and civics that includes, but is not limited to instruction on all of the following: (A) Federal, state, and local government; (B) The three

branches of government; (C) The importance of civic engagement; and (D) Registering to vote.”

Analysis

While AEBG expands the program areas originally defined in AB86 from 5 to 7, it by no means provides a directive that consortia must provide programming beyond the originally defined 5 programs. Additionally, the two additional program areas in AEBG – **(3) Programs for adults or older adults entering or reentering the workforce and (4) Programs for adults or older adults to help elementary and secondary students succeed in school** – are both difficult to interpret as to the kinds of programs intended and create challenges for measuring their effectiveness.

For example, adults gaining skills to help students succeed academically could include mentoring training, specific homework assistance strategies or pedagogical training, or just helping adults increase their literacy and educational skills so they have the basic knowledge to interpret and help students with their homework. Adults entering or reentering the workforce could be interpreted to mean assistance to dislocated workers, long-term unemployed adults out of the labor force seeking to reenter the labor force, reentry services for incarcerated adults, reentry services for veterans, or career development services to help adults enter the workforce outside of a CTE program. Both situations create challenges for data collection. How do you collect data on adults gaining skills to improve youth with school success?

It is worth noting that the outcomes reporting required by the legislature set the bar high, they are also very direct and straight forward – increased literacy, diplomas, certificates and degrees, employment, and wages. This reflects the broader framework of AB86 and AB104 which sets the focus of adult education much more squarely on jobs and careers, even within ESL and basic skills through an increase emphasis on integrated education and training, vocational ABE (VABE) and vocational ESL (VESL) in adult education. This parallels the implementation of WIOA, which now frames employment and wage gains as outcomes for Adult Literacy programs under WIOA Title II as well as the more traditionally employment-related parts of the act (Title I Workforce Services, Title III Vocational Rehabilitation, and Title IV Wagner Peyser).

AEBG and WIOA Alignment

AB104 references alignment with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in multiple ways. This includes:

- Alignment of adult education services with other regional plans pertaining to career pathways and workforce sector strategies as required under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act [ed 84906 (b)(9)].

- Coordination of AEBG with the disbursement of funds under the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) [ed 84915 (b)(1)(A)].
- Agreement that the State Chancellor and the State Superintendent will share data with other state agencies, including, but not necessarily limited to, the Employment Development Department and the California Workforce Investment Board [ed 84920(b)(2)].

WIOA includes four program areas administered by different systems in California: **Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services** (CA Workforce Development Board); **Title II Adult and Family Literacy Act** (CA Dept. of Education); **Title III Wagner Peyser** (CA Employment Development Dept.); and **Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation** (CA Dept. of Rehabilitation). While Adult Schools and Community Colleges may serve as training providers or career center operators under a local workforce board or county agency related to Title I, generally the only WIOA funds that most consortia members directly administer are WIOA Title II funding and programs authorized under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). However, all four program areas in WIOA are covered by the .

WIOA	AEBG
A. Employment Rate – 2 nd Quarter After Exit	(A) Improved literacy skills.
B. Employment Rate – 4 th Quarter After Exit	(B) Completion of high school diplomas or their recognized equivalents.
C. Median Earnings – 2 nd Quarter After Exit	(C) Completion of post-secondary certificates, degrees, or training programs.
D. Credential Attainment	(D) Placement into jobs.
E. Measurable Skills Gains	(E) Improved Wages.
F. Effectiveness in Serving Employers	

WIOA defines both ‘Primary Indicators of Performance’ which are closely aligned to the core indicators under AEBG and a secondary set of indicators specific for measurable skills gains. Defining measurable skills gains is critical to documenting progress completed by participants during enrollment and assuring that they are moving towards their goal(s).

Measurable Skills Gains

WIOA allows providers to count documented academic, technical, or occupational progress (measurable skills gains) as an outcome for participants who are in an education

or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment. There are five allowed strategies for measuring skills gains for all WIOA programs²:

- 1) Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level;
- 2) Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
- 3) Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards – 12 credit hours in a Semester if enrolled full time or 12 credit hours over a year if enrolled part time;
- 4) Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of On Job Training (OJT) or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; or
- 5) Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.

For the purposes of WIOA data collection, the reporting period is the program year from July 1st to June 30th. WIOA participants are considered to be enrolled until they are officially 'exited' from the program, meaning that they have not received any services for at least 90 days. Participants who return for services after 90 days must be re-enrolled and outcomes, including post-exit outcomes (employment 2 and 4 months after exit, median earnings) must be reported on both participation periods even if they occur in the same program year.

WIOA defines two broad categories of individuals served under the system – **1) Reportable Individuals** and **2) Participants**. A Reportable Individual is someone who provides identifying information and participates in the self-service system or receives information-only services or activities and does not require an assessment by a staff member of the individual's skills, education, or career objectives. An individual becomes a Participant when they access services beyond self-service or information only activities, or in the case of the Title II AEFLA programs, when individuals have completed 12 or more contact hours.

Title II AEFLA programs, by definition pre-collegiate, are considered under WIOA to be educational programs leading to postsecondary credentials or employment, and are therefore subject to the measurable skills gain indicator, however measurable skills gains for AEFLA focuses on one of two elements: **1) Achievement of at least one educational**

² US Department of Education: Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (2016); "Program Memorandum OCTAE 17-2: Performance Accountability Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV Core Programs. <http://www.nrsweb.org/foundations/Program%20Memorandum%2017-2%20OCTAE.pdf>

functioning level; or 2) Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent. Additionally, documentation of achievement of an educational functioning level can be accomplished in three ways:

- Comparison of skill gains through pre- and post-testing of participants using a National Reporting System approved testing instrument.
- For participants in adult high school programs, States may report educational gain through the awarding of credits or Carnegie units.
- A functional level gain may also be reported for students who exit a program below the post-secondary level and enroll in post-secondary education and training.

Reporting of all other WIOA indicators for employment, wages, and credential attainment apply equally to all four WIOA programs.

WIOA Reporting and AEBG

WIOA reporting requirements directly apply to WIOA funded programs and participants, however the language in AB104 as well as alignment of the California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program (SWP) with the 5 WIOA indicators and the coming alignment of Perkins Vocational and Technical Education (VTEA) reporting with WIOA make it clear that AEBG, should to the extent possible, align AEBG outcomes and reporting with WIOA. However, it does not mean the absolute adoption of every protocol and measure of WIOA for non WIOA funded programs. For example, functional skills gains can be measured by pre- and post-testing, but they can also be measured by completing levels below transfer assigned to credit or non-credit courses in community colleges, particularly for programs that are not funding students through WIOA Title II AEFLA funding.

The leadership of the Chancellor's Office and CDE have met and conferred on the broader issues of WIOA alignment and have agreed on alignment of the major indicators of WIOA with AEBG for the purposes of data collection and evaluation, including employment, wages, completion of credentials and degrees, and measurable skills gains. What that likely means is that where WIOA guidelines go beyond data reporting requirements in AB104, we would expand the AEBG data collection to also report on the WIOA requirements. For example, AEBG only requires reporting on employment of participants, AEBG would expand its data collection to include employment 2 and 4 quarters after exit. This would be for all AEBG participants in all program areas, including WIOA Title II AEFLA programs which covers ABE, ASE, and ESL/EL Civics.

What still lacks clarification is the alignment of measurable skills gains methodology between colleges, and K12 adult schools especially given the requirements of WIOA Title II, the specifics of measurable skills gains for CTE and workforce programs, clearer definitions for specific program areas, such as pre-apprenticeship, and a roadmap for

building out the data collection methodologies and processes for yearly reporting to the state and federal agencies.

Some Key Questions

1. If the primary focus of AEBG for reporting are all students in the AEBG program areas in K12 adult and college non-credit programs, what impact does that have on the role of for-credit basic skills and ESL courses in the community colleges related to the adult school population.
2. How should each of the five metrics for measuring the effectiveness of consortia be refined or expanded to better capture the major program areas of AEBG and improve alignment with WIOA performance indicators?
3. How should AEBG program areas be defined or grouped to simplify the disaggregation outcome data by program area?
4. How should outcomes be defined (or should they) for AB104 program area 3 (Programs for adults/older adults entering or re-entering the workforce) beyond the core employment outcomes (employment/wages)? Is there a measurable skills gain associated with this program?
5. How should outcomes be defined (or should they be) for AB104 program area 4 (Programs for adults/older adults gaining skills to assist youth with primary/secondary school success) beyond basic literacy and numeracy skills. Is there a measurable skills gain or other outcome associated with this program.
6. Should WIOA Title II AEFL measurable skills gains criteria be applied to all ESL and basic skills be applied to all regardless of whether they are funded through WIOA, or can we use other indicators of functional levels such as college basic skills or ESL course completion as indicators.
7. How should completion be defined in relationship to the different programs and course types offered by K12 adult schools and community colleges for AEBG students.



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