

Collaboration for Adult Learner Success: Advancing Adult Education Through Workforce, Postsecondary, and Employer Partnerships

NRS Trainers' Guide

About This Resource

The National Reporting System (NRS) trainers' guides are intended to support state adult education leadership and professional development specialists. This guide, which describes the overall training approach, highlights key themes and provides supporting resources to inform the planning and delivery of NRS training for state and local adult education professionals.

This document was created under U.S. Department of Education Contract No. 91990023D0006/91990025F0083 by the American Institutes for Research. The content of the publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. The U.S. Department of Education does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of any outside information included in these materials.

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Training Overview

Training Purpose

From July through September 2026, the NRS Support Project, managed by the American Institutes for Research®, held the annual regional training for state directors of adult education and their teams in three locations: Denver, Colorado; Kansas City, Missouri; and Crystal City, Virginia. The NRS Support Project developed this training to help states explore approaches to developing workforce system partnerships with employers and industry, postsecondary institutions, and community-based organizations. The training culminated with states developing a partnership action plan.

Training Objectives

- Identify models and strategies for partnerships between adult education, workforce entities, postsecondary institutions, and community-based organizations.
- Explore how data can align and mutually benefit participant outcomes for all Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners.
- Draft a partnership action plan tailored to the state landscape and adaptable by local education providers.

Training Focus

NRS facilitators presented considerations for exploring different approaches and strategies to developing workforce, postsecondary, and community-based partnerships. The training featured group discussions on partnership models, outreach strategies, and opportunities for states to learn and share their challenges and solutions for developing strong partnerships. States developed a 90-day partnership action plan to explore shared goals and outcomes with their potential partners. The major products of the training were the following:

- Partnership Snapshot—States used the Partnership Snapshot worksheet to identify potential partners, explore how data can be relevant and shared across partners, and how data can convey the value of adult education.
- NRS Data Points to Highlight—States used this worksheet to identify initial state-level data points that may be of relevance to potential partners.
- Partnership Mapping—Using the Partnership Mapping worksheet, state teams identified at least three external partners, including a minimum of one potential partner. Teams analyzed how existing partnerships were established and explored the potential contributions, needs, and goals of both current and future partners.
- Partnership Action Plan 90-Day template—Using the Partnership Action Plan template, states outlined key action steps for initiating partnerships, data-sharing, needed resources, potential barriers and mitigations strategies, and success benchmarks.

Format

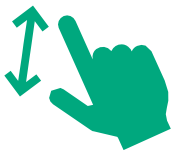
NRS Support Project facilitators delivered three in-person training events over 6 weeks. The in-person training events included two parts: (a) an online presession and (b) a 3-day in-person training session (totaling 16 hours). As part of the presession, participants completed assignments with their state teams. During the in-person sessions, participants continued to work with their state teams and other state teams to explore workforce and postsecondary engagement approaches and exchange feedback.

Refer to the training agenda for an overview of the key training activities and their sequencing.

How to Customize This Training

 **Audience**	The NRS facilitators designed this training for state adult education leadership. Trainers at the state and local levels can customize all or parts of this training by tailoring it to the following stakeholders to consider the value of workforce, postsecondary and community-based partnerships: • local adult education providers • partner organizations • state/local leaders Trainers can also bring together various stakeholders to discuss workforce, postsecondary, and community partnerships, review approaches and strategies, and consider action steps.

 **Format**	Trainers can deliver this training and its components entirely online, in person, or in a blended approach. The training delivery formats should be supportive of data gathering, analysis, and teamwork. Many of the activities can be enhanced by participant collaboration and thought partnership.



Guiding Framework and Approach

The NRS facilitators organized the training around discussions and activities that helped states better understand approaches to workforce system partnerships. The discussions and activities can be repeated by following the steps described in this section and by using the training resources. As necessary, the training can be customized and adapted.

- Step 1. Identify partnership strengths and opportunities by reflecting on current and potential partners. Consider the potential mutual benefits, partner contributions, and aligned partner goals and needs.
- Step 2. Use data strategically to strengthen collaboration and demonstrate impact.
- Step 3. Create a 90-day action plan with priorities, resources, measures of success, and next steps.
- Step 4. Reflect and refine partnerships by reviewing progress, assessing outcomes, and revising to strengthen future collaboration.

Step 1—Identify and Map Partnership Opportunities

Purpose

The purpose of this step is to identify current and potential partners and explore opportunities for collaboration that support adult education goals.

Actions: Map partnerships

- Use the Partnership Snapshot Worksheet Part 1 to identify:
  - Two current adult education partners/collaborators.
  - Two potential partners/collaborators. These are entities that you may not have established partnerships with but would like to explore or formally engage with as a partner.

  For each of the above, provide the partner's name, a one- to two-sentence description of the partner (e.g., mission, services), **and** the following information:
  - Current partners: What role do they have as your partner, what role does adult education have as their partner, how did you come to partner (e.g., what was the driver, issue, introduction, etc. that led to the partnership), what are the expected impacts to or outcomes for adult education based on this partnership?
  - Potential partners: Why would they be a beneficial partner for adult education and how might adult education be a beneficial partner to them?
- Afterward, review and narrow your partnership focus. From the above, identify a minimum of three external partners, including at least one potential partner.
- Next, use the Partnership Mapping Worksheet to examine each partner's role, contributions, needs, and goals. Specifically, the worksheet asks participants to consider:
  - partner and potential contributions
  - shared outcomes that strengthen collaboration
  - data available for cross-partner sharing
  - the opportunities and risks to partnering

Step 2—Use Data Strategically to Strengthen Collaboration and Demonstrate Impact

Purpose

The purpose of this step is to explore how data can strengthen partnerships by identifying what each partner contributes, what they need from the data, and how data can support shared goals.

Actions: Analyze partner data needs and alignment

- Complete the Data Points to Highlight template with the most recent program year state-level data. This will help provide an initial review of what data points are of interest to current/potential partners, and it may also highlight the value of adult education in your state or local area. Gather at least six points using the following as a guide:
  - Three data points, if available, should be training participation/co-enrollment, effectiveness of serving employers, and work-based literacy enrollment (Title II context).
  - Additional data points should include three or more of the following: participants served, measurable skill gains rate, credential attainment rate, employment Q2 after exit, employment Q4 after exit, median earnings Q2 after exit, and integrated education and training enrollment (Title II context).
- Next, complete the Partner Snapshot Worksheet Part 2 as a team. Select one or two partners identified in Step 1.
- To inform the discussion, review the available data from Step 2 and consider what information may be most meaningful to each partner.
- As you complete the worksheet, your team will document:
  - data-sharing methods with the partner
  - alignment of data to partnership opportunities, challenges, and risks
  - partner-relevant insights from the data
  - desired partner data and reporting frequency
- After completing the worksheet, discuss and consider:
  - high-value data across partners
  - aligned needs and gaps
  - common barriers to collaboration
  - priority action step

Step 3—Create a 90-day action plan with priorities, resources, measures of success, and next steps.

Purpose

The purpose of this step is to develop a focused 90-day partnership action plan that strengthens collaboration with key partners, aligns shared goals and outcomes, and establishes measurable actions to support adult education priorities.

Actions: Develop and implement a 90-day partnership plan

- Complete the Partnership Action Plan 90-Day template, which emphasizes:
  - priority partnerships
  - shared goals and desired outcomes
  - action steps to initiate engagement
  - data-sharing processes
  - resources, staff, tools, and supports needed
  - barriers and mitigation strategies
  - success benchmarks and measurable indicators
- After the action plan is complete, assign timeframes for when each action will occur (i.e., weeks 1–4, weeks 5–8, weeks 9–12).

Step 4—Reflect and Refine Partnerships

Purpose

The purpose of this step is to assess the effectiveness of partnerships, identify opportunities for improvement, and determine actions that will strengthen collaboration and outcomes over time.

Actions: Reflect, review, and recalibrate

- Pause and Reflect: Assess partnership relevance and stakeholder experience.
- Review: Evaluate outcomes, expectations, resource use, and challenges.
- Recalibrate: Identify priorities, needed changes, and supports for success.



Primary Resources

State adult education leadership and professional development specialists can access the primary resources developed for this training on NRSWeb. The training resources include the following:

- presession team activities (products: Partnership Snapshot Part 1; Data Points to Highlight)
- training workbook (products: Partnership Mapping, Partnership Snapshot Worksheet Part 2-Data Perspectives, Partnership Action Plan 90-Day template)
- PowerPoint slide decks
- training agenda (see next section)

When using or referring to the materials on the NRSweb.org website, please use the following citation:

Neloms, G., Causey, C., Rasmussen, J., & Cronen, S. (2026). *Advancing adult education through workforce, postsecondary, and employer partnerships*. National Reporting System for Adult Education Regional Training. Produced for the Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education. Contract No. 91990023D0006/91990025F0083.

Training Agenda

The following is the training agenda for virtual presession activities and the 3-day, in-person training. The training may be replicated in whole or in part using this agenda as a guide to sequence presentation content and activities and to determine delivery methods.

Presession Activity Objectives
2 weeks online; self-paced; Moodle
• Review the NRS presession overview on Collaboration for Adult Learner Success: Advancing Adult Education Through Workforce, Postsecondary, and Employer Partnerships (2026). • Use the Data Point to Highlight handout to identify at least six of the listed data points. • Provide your responses to the Partnership Snapshot Part 1, sections 1–3, which include: – identifying four to five partnerships (two to three current and two potential partnerships) – describing the role current partners play and why chosen potential partners would be beneficial – top two to three barriers in developing or maintaining partnerships

Day 1
6 hours live; in-person
• Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda • Icebreaker • Partnership Models for Adult Education – Presentation on examples of adult ed partnership models • Activity: Partnership Mapping: State Teams – Reconvene for share out • Break • Activity: Partnership Mapping: State-to-State – Reconvene for share out • Break • Data Sharing Part 1: Mutual Benefits and Return on Investment (Continued) – Rapid Round Data Exchange Simulation and Debrief – Mutual Benefits and ROI – Common Data Sharing Challenges • Break • Peer-to-Peer Activity: Partnership Data Snapshot • Debrief and Summary • Break • Data Sharing Part 2: Partnership Through a Data Lens – Using NRS and WIOA Data to Demonstrate Value – Wrap Up Day 1 and Preview Day 2

Day 2
6 hours live; in-person

• Welcome Back, Recap of Day 1, Overview of Day 2
• Barriers to Partnerships and Strategies for Success and Sustainability
  – Common Partnership Barriers for Adult Education
  – Activity: Barrier Carousel
• Break
• State Teams: Develop Your Decision-Making Model (Continued)
  – Part 2: States take an element from their primary model and use it for the second model
  – Wrap-up activity with reflections
• Break
• Barrier to Partnerships and Strategies for Success and Sustainability (Continued)
  – Strategies for Success and Sustainable Partnerships
• Strategy Roundtables
  – Round 1
  – Round 2
  – Summary and report out
• Break
• Partnership Action Planning Part 1: Teams
• Break
• Partnership Action Planning Part 2: Peer Consultancy
• Report Out
• Day 2 Wrap-up

Day 3
4 hours live; in-person

• Welcome, Recap of Day 2, and Overview of Day 3
• Finalize Partnership Action Plan
• Break
• Gallery Walk and Presentations
• Themes and Reflections
• Impact and Review
  – Post Plan Implementation-Reflect, Review, and Recalibrate
  – Table and Group Discussion
• Wrap-Up of Day 3