COLLECTING DATA FOR POST-EXIT INDICATORS IN PRACTICE

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), adult education programs must collect data on program participants for the primary indicators of performance. These indicators include:

- Employment rate in the second quarter after exit,
- Employment rate in the fourth quarter after exit,
- Median earnings in the second quarter after exit,
- Credential attainment, and
- Measurable skill gains.

This *NRS Tips* summarizes one local program's and one state's successful strategies for collecting data on the post-exit indicators of credential attainment and employment required under WIOA.[1]

THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE: COLLECTING SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS IN NEVADA

Obtaining students' social security numbers (SSN) is an essential part of collecting data for post-exit indicators, because these numbers are needed for data matching with employment and postsecondary databases. Local programs often find it difficult to obtain SSNs because of students' concerns about privacy. Staff from the Community Adult Learning in Libraries (CALL), part of the Las Vegas–Clark County Library District in Nevada, faced a similar challenge. CALL staff reported that they typically obtained SSNs for less than 50% of their students—far below their target.

To improve the collection of SSNs, staff implemented a multi-pronged approach, beginning with online registration, which is many students' first contact with the program. Students are asked to provide their SSNs during this registration. If they do not, staff again ask for the SSNs when students first show up to the program for an orientation session. As part of orientation, staff explain the importance of providing SSNs, particularly their role in tracking students' success after exiting the program.

If the SSN is still missing after a student has 12 contact hours, staff try again to collect it. Periodically, staff who work with data identify students who still have not provided an SSN and ask for it again, including at the time the student is posttested.

For students who do not provide an SSN, program staff call students to conduct a follow-up survey to collect data. The phone calls for the follow-up survey have yielded excellent results, and staff credit what they call "the human connection" (or helping students feel like the caller cares about them and

[1] These strategies were initially discussed as part of a webinar, which can be found here: https://nrsweb.org/training-ta/webinars/post-exit-indicators-tracking-students-over-time

has their best interests at heart) for this success. A protocol guides staff through these phone calls. For each call, a staff member:

1. Initiates the conversation by identifying himself or herself and reminding the student that he or she attended a class through the program.
2. Asks genuine questions about how the student is doing, and explains that one reason for the call is to see if the student needs any other support from the program.
3. Asks the student if he or she is working and gives genuine excitement if the answer is positive, and then continues to ask if the student is working part-time or full-time. If part-time, the staff member asks the student how many hours per week, or a range of hours, he or she is working.
4. Segues into asking the student if he or she is getting paid well, and depending on the response, clarifies minimum wage and continues to ask questions to identify the wage, or a wage range, that the student is earning.
5. Ends the call by asking again if the student needs any additional services or assistance from the program, and informs the student of math and writing workshops, as well as open labs, from the program that offer support to working students who may still want to improve their language or academic skills.

These phone calls have contributed to improvements in collection rates, and between those and the increased effort around obtaining SSNs, the program's report rate for post-exit indicators is 67%–71% during the past few years.

THE STATE PERSPECTIVE: USING TECHNOLOGY TO KEEP IN TOUCH IN KENTUCKY

Technology provides opportunities to simplify and improve many processes, including collection of data on post-exit indicators. [2] Through e-mail and texting, keeping in touch with current and former program participants is easier now more than ever. Kentucky Skills U, the office that administers the adult education program in Kentucky, participated in a pilot of a new case management system. The system is intended to help automate contact with students, to reduce the burden on local program staff to remember when to track students, and to help keep record of interactions with students through the use of case notes.

The case management system's interface works with the state management information system, the Kentucky Adult Education Reporting System or KAERS. From KAERS, the new system pulls in students' names, dates of birth, cell phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. Staff can enter students into "tracks" for different purposes. Each track has within it tasks, each of which contains scripted messages, which were developed by the individual agencies, that can be texted or emailed to students at predetermined intervals. These messages are interactive and solicit responses from students. Kentucky Skills U developed tracks related to attendance and post-exit follow-up to help address gaps in attendance and collect data for the post-exit indicators. The case management system also has options

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[2] This pilot is part of the work done by the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), a partnership between the Career Index, San Diego State University, George Washington University, University of Arkansas, Syracuse University, and the Council of State Vocational Rehabilitation Administrators, among others, with funding from the Rehabilitation Services Agency.

for ad hoc texting, which staff in Kentucky report using most often; emailing; and the automated creation of case notes for documenting interactions with students.

Kentucky has been using the new case management system for more than a year in one local workforce area that represents 10 counties. The agencies participating in the pilot are Kentucky Skills U, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Community-Based Services, and Office of Employment and Training. This partnership will soon include the community college system. Collaboration among the agencies makes the case management system a more robust system because it includes data and case notes from multiple sources, providing a more complete picture of the services a student is receiving or has received.

Some promising practices have resulted from Kentucky's experience with the case management system and the collaboration across the agencies that use the system:

1. **Collaboration among agencies is critical for ensuring that students' needs are met.** Often, a single program does not offer all the services that students may need, so another agency will need to provide supplemental services. Working together, agencies can track student history through case notes so that critical details (like the need for language support) are identified and such information is provided to other agencies that provide the needed services.
2. **A streamlined system for follow-up helps to reduce the burden on local program staff.** Although a fully automated system might not be possible, having an explicit, predetermined timeline for follow-up and fully scripted messages help to ensure that staff can collect all the necessary information.
3. **Flexibility to collect data beyond a single workforce region.** Although it is helpful for programs or agencies to organize themselves into workforce regions or school districts, students do not necessarily limit themselves to such artificial boundaries when they are looking for programs to meet their needs. More flexibility is needed to share data and meet the needs of students.

For more information about this pilot, please contact Kentucky Skills U at http://www.kyskillsu.ky.gov/contact.html.

CONCLUSION

Collecting data for the post-exit indicators helps states and local programs determine the extent to which they are meeting the needs of students in adult education programs, but data collection can be a challenging task. Statewide or regional collaboration across state agencies, which is required under WIOA, can help programs more effectively address the needs of adult learners. In certain instances where the collection of SSNs is challenging, personal phone calls may offer a constructive approach to improve local data collection. When states and local programs identify and share successful strategies, as is the case in Nevada and Kentucky, others can use and adapt them to better help their own students.