



The Journey to Enrollment: Recruitment and Service Strategies for Adult Education

NRS Trainers' Guide

About This Resource

The National Reporting System (NRS) trainers' guides are intended to support state adult education 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.

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Training Overview

Training Purpose

In June 2022, the NRS Support Project held the annual regional training for state directors of adult education and their teams. The NRS Support Project planned this training in response to the changing landscape of adult education and the direct and indirect impacts of those changes on recruitment and enrollment data for adult education programs. The training guided states in exploring their ideal vision for their programs and the services provided for the individuals and communities they serve.

Training Objectives

- Discuss state enrollment patterns and issues affecting these patterns.
- Understand the participant experience in and adult education service alignment with the recruitment and enrollment process.
- Explore past and existing strategies for improving recruitment and enrollment—both from the adult education sector and other sectors.

Training Focus

Using a journey mapping process, the training highlighted recruitment and enrollment challenges from the perspective of potential learners, the state, and local providers. NRS facilitators presented considerations for understanding the recruitment and enrollment landscape through data and through alignment with the three Ps: people, programs, and policy. The training featured state discussions on issues affecting recruitment and enrollment within their state. State teams explored the adult learners' journey through the recruitment and enrollment process and identified service and process strengths and gaps. States also identified strategies to help programs move toward an actionable recruitment and enrollment vision. States had an opportunity to hear strategies that other states have implemented to address recruitment and enrollment challenges. The major products of the training were the following:



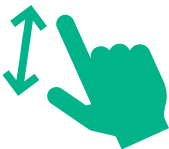
- User profiles – state teams developed two or more user profiles (also known as user personas) that represented a composite of the adult learner they would like to attract to their program with their recruitment strategies. States also developed at least one profile for another stakeholder with direct responsibility for and involvement in the recruitment process (e.g., a recruitment ambassador, enrollment manager, or adult learner onboarding advisor).
- Recruitment journey maps – these maps represented the journey of a user through the stages of recruitment leading up to enrollment in the program.
- Strategy workbook activity responses – training participants recorded their responses to guiding questions.

Format

NRS Support Project facilitators delivered the training virtually over several weeks. The hybrid training included two parts: (1) a 2-week asynchronous pre-session and (2) three 4-hour synchronous live virtual training sessions, held on 3 consecutive days. As part of the pre-session, participants completed assignments individually and with their state teams. During the live sessions, participants continued to work with their state teams and with other state teams to develop their recruitment vision, explore recruitment strategies, 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	<p>The NRS facilitators designed this training for state directors of adult education and their teams.</p> <p>NRS trainers at the state and local levels can customize all or parts of this training by tailoring it to the following stakeholders in the recruitment and enrollment process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• local adult education providers• partner organizations• adult learners• potential adult learners <p>NRS trainers can also bring together various stakeholders to complete a journey map as a team or to work on journey maps for their respective program or program type.</p>
 Format	<p>NRS trainers can deliver this training and its components entirely online, in person, or in a blended approach.</p> <p>The training delivery formats should be supportive of data gathering, analysis, and teamwork.</p> <p>Many of the activities can be enhanced by participant collaboration and thought partnership.</p>
 Key Topics and Areas of Focus	<p>The NRS trainers organized the training content and activities around the Three-Part Framework for Understanding and Visioning Recruitment and Enrollment, first introduced at the national adult education 2021 Annual State Director’s Meeting. Three steps make up the framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Step 1. Understand Enrollment Trends• Step 2. Review Instruction, Support Services, Student Perception, and Recruitment Process• Step 3. Articulate Your Recruitment and Enrollment Vision <p>The following are the key topics and areas of focus for each step in the framework.</p> <p>Step 1 – Understand Enrollment Trends</p> <p><i>Purpose</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The purpose of this step is to identify points of alignment with and gaps in services provided to potential students and their needs and interests.

Actions

- Survey the enrollment landscape to avoid assumptions about what is happening, what has happened, and what is needed.
- Review NRS data and other sources (e.g., demographic and industry data) to understand enrollment trends. Historic and forecasted enrollment data can aid in assessing and revising a program’s enrollment strategy.

Area of Focus: User Profiles

- A user profile is a composite of many individuals; the adult learner profile does not represent any single student.
- Utilize a user profile to represent adult learners currently enrolled in a program (to support retention) or students the program wants to attract.
- Validate user profiles with NRS data and other information sources about current students or potential students to ensure the profiles reflect the group as accurately as possible.
- Avoid stereotypes and assumptions when creating a user profile. Use a neutral and objective lens.

Step 2 – Review Instruction, Support Services, Student Perception, and Recruitment Process

Purpose

- The purpose of this step is to understand the landscape related to instruction and recruitment activities. What is the recruitment process and what is occurring programmatically?

Area of Focus: Journey Maps

- The purpose of journey maps is to help recruitment staff and process designers understand—from the user perspective—the range of experiences in their recruitment and outreach process.
- The journey map should be adapted to reflect the learner’s journey. It may be necessary to change the phases included in the template to fit a program’s process. Sometimes a provider (e.g., a K–12 or college system) may have phases that do not fall in the umbrella of those areas included in the template.
- For each phase of the journey map, participants should account for the roles of partners and other stakeholders. For instance, are there significant touch points with partners (e.g., referral agencies) or stakeholders (e.g., student referrers) who are not part of the core group of staff responsible for recruitment.

- Participants should verify whether provider pain points (problems and issues that annoy or encumber individuals when using a service or product) contribute to learner pain points. For example, does the web-based learner interest form (pain point for provider) contribute to delays in students receiving information about orientation (learner pain point). Also note that provider pain points may not have anything to do with what the student experiences.

Area of Focus: Recruitment Strategies

- The purpose of considering, reviewing, and discussing recruitment strategies is to help participants understand what will help them close gaps in their recruitment process and determine if a strategy addresses a pain point.
- Participants should be open to the fact that they may not have tried everything, may have tried things that need to be done differently, or may need more time to determine whether a strategy is effective.
- Participants should be collaborative in terms of determining and implementing strategies. This is another suitable place to engage students. Look at other initiatives that you may have been a part of, even if they are not related to adult education, and determine if there are any transferable strategies. Think about any initiative that required you to recruit people and consider ways to adapt the strategies you used to do so.
- Do not ignore pain points. Each recruitment strategy should be aligned to at least one pain point.

Step 3. Articulate Your Recruitment and Enrollment Vision

Purpose

- The purpose of this step is to get a program as close to its ideal state as possible. Vision is about where the program wants to be if every strategy is successful.

Actions

- Consider what the program is able to implement immediately to move closer to achieving the program’s vision.
- Know what the program’s identity is or what the program administrators want it to be—at least in the here and the now—and know how to articulate that to both the program’s internal and external stakeholders.
- Consider what existing initiatives and policies the program can leverage and if there are any students who can serve as champions or influencers in the recruitment and enrollment process.



Primary Resources

State and local professional development specialists can access the primary resources developed for this training on [NRSWeb](#). The training resources include the following:

- pre-session team activities:
 - review of data to understand enrollment trends and areas for development
 - development of profiles for potential learners and staff involved in the recruitment journey
- OCTAE’s enrollment analysis tool
 - *Note: OCTAE developed this tool for analysis using aggregate data at the state level . NRS trainers may need to provide access to data or reports that show enrollment trends for local programs.*
- training workbook (includes key terms)
- 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:

Condelli, L., Neloms, G., Brown, D., Movit, M., & Rasmussen, J. (2022). *The journey to enrollment: Recruitment and service strategies for adult education*. 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. GS-00F-347CA.

Training Agenda

The following is the training agenda for the 3-day live synchronous training sessions. The training can be replicated in whole or in part using this agenda as a guide to sequence presentation content and activities and determine delivery methods.

Pre-session Activity: Review Data and Create Student Profiles

2-week online, self-paced; Moodle

- Review the Framework for Understanding and Visioning Your Recruitment Strategy.
- Answer guiding questions for data review.
- Describe your intended student audience and other key recruitment stakeholders.
- Share your team’s insights from this activity.

Day 1: Enrollment Landscape and the Student Journey

4-hour live, virtual; Zoom

- Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda
- Key Steps and Multiple Journeys to Enrollment
- Icebreaker
- The Enrollment Landscape: State and National Trends
 - Step 1: Understand Enrollment Trends
 - State Enrollment and Analysis Resource (OCTAE Enrollment Analysis Tool): Review and Application
 - National Enrollment Trends
- Break
- The Student Journey: Recruitment and Enrollment
 - Journey Map Walkthrough
 - Activity: Student/Adult Learner Map
- Break
- Instruction, Support Services, Perceptions, and Recruiting
- Step 2: Instruction, Support Services, Perceptions, and Recruiting
- Activity: Pain Points
- Recap of Day 1 and Overview of Day 2

Day 2: Strategies for Connecting Services to Pain Points Along the Recruitment to Enrollment Journey

4-hour live, virtual; Zoom

- Welcome, Recap of Day 1, and Overview of Day 2
- State Presentation of Recruitment Strategies
- Strategy Round Robin Roundtables (Breakouts): Round 1
- Break
- Strategy Round Robin Roundtables (Breakouts): Round 2
- Share Out
- The Provider and State Journey: Connecting Services to Pain Points
- Offline Assignment Directions (Teams): Complete a [Journey Map](#) for Your Adult Learner/Student Profile
- Recap of Day 2 and Overview of Day 3

Day 3: The Path Toward Your Recruitment and Enrollment Vision

4-hour live, virtual; Zoom

- Welcome, Recap of Day 2, and Overview of Day 3
- Gallery Walkthrough and Observations
- Articulate Your Recruitment and Enrollment Vision
 - Step 3: Articulate Your Vision
 - Activity: Articulate Your State Vision: Part 1
 - Key Takeaways
- Break
- Articulate Your Recruitment and Enrollment Vision
 - Activity: Articulate Your State Vision (State-to-State Exchange): Part 2
- Break
- Share Out
- Next Steps and Considerations
- Recap of Day 3 and Closing Remarks