



ADULT LEARNING, ARRA AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Ed Strong

Corporation for a Skilled Workforce

www.skilledwork.org

ARRA BASIC SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Formula money is driven by need to spend fast and transparently.
- For most part, no formula money is going to basic skills development.
- ARRA funds are essentially being used to expand existing activities – things that can move quickly.
- Little innovation is occurring at this stage.
- If sectors strategies, for example, are in place, they are being employed but very few, if any new ones are emerging from the formula funds.



THE CONUNDRUM

- Much of the discussion of WIA reauthorization is centered on the necessary acquisition of post-secondary or certificate attainment.
- The need is clear – for family sustaining wage jobs post-secondary training is a basic requirement.
- Substantial nuances to this based on type of training and location but premise is sound.
- Yet to access post-secondary training, basic skills development is needed for many e.g. 1/3 of Michiganders lack the basic skills to compete in the post-secondary environment.



THE OPPORTUNITY

- While there is no ARRA money dedicated to ABE or basic skills, it can be integrated into WIA activities.
- The “green” SGAs offer more thoughtful opportunities to incorporate basic skills into program designs.
- There are many examples of how this can and has happened already outside the ARRA context.
- These examples show great promise for combining work and learning and integrating basic skills and post-secondary training.



ARRA GREEN OPTIONS FOR BASIC SKILLS

- Pathways Out of Poverty
 - Specifically emphasize basic skills development; no specific role for states but public workforce system is mandated partner.
- State Energy Sector Partnership and Training Grants
 - Basic skills could be part of state strategy if integrated into overall approach if aligned with state strategy; states are leads.
- Energy Training Partnership Training Grants
 - Potential for basic skills given target groups; states can be partners not applicants.



MICHIGAN PLAN

- Transforming Economy with skills upgrade at its center.
- Automotive base – not gone but enormously reduced – Michigan must change to thrive
- Complex Process to change workforce skills
 - No Worker Left Behind
 - Adult Learning Gap
 - Need unified strategic approach to increasing basic skills and post-secondary credential attainment
 - Make basic skills development a priority within every funding source it can support
 - Engage broad coalition of in communicating urgency of need



MICHIGAN PLAN (CON'T)

- Increase access to adult learning – multiple nodes of entry
- Public awareness campaign
- Potential for regional partnerships
- Combining wrap-around services
- Resource audit of funding available (moving target in today's economy)
- Setting metrics – e.g. 60,000 more people in adult learning opportunities than year before
- Re-focusing WIA Title II
- Building adult learning into core of all policy decisions and directions.
- Learning from other states



WHAT ARE STATES ALREADY DOING THAT COULD ALIGN WITH ARRA SGAs?

- Align Adult Basic Education and Postsecondary Policies
- Connect Basic Skills Curriculums with Relevant Skills
- Partner for Comprehensive Service Delivery
- Link Learning with Opportunities for Employment
- Increase Adult Basic Education Program Flexibility and Access
- Collect Data Based on Transitions and Employment

