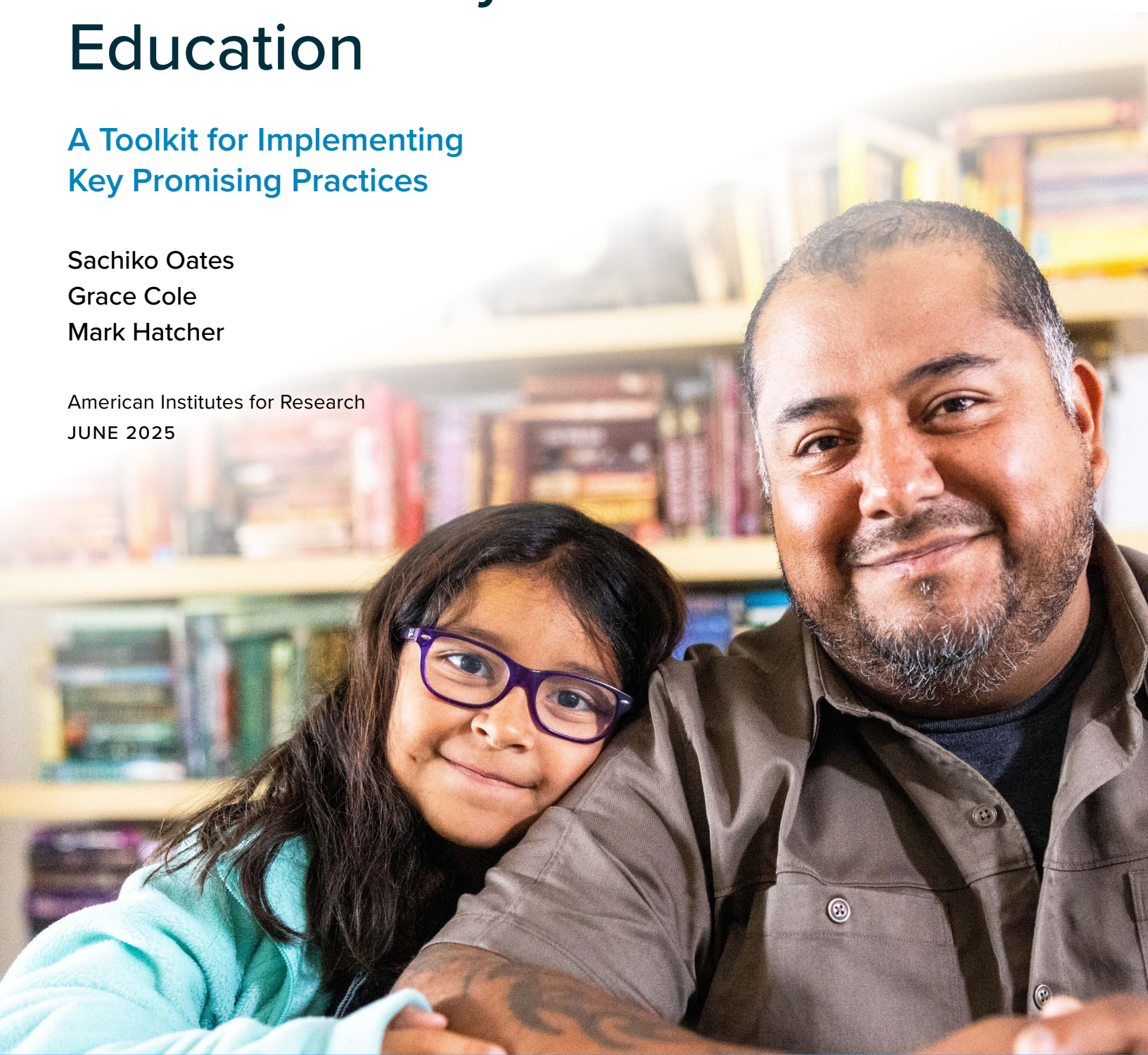


Supporting Adult Learners in Postsecondary Education

A Toolkit for Implementing
Key Promising Practices

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Introduction

Why Support Adult Learners of Color?

Higher education has the potential to transform lives, providing individuals with greater economic mobility, career advancement, and personal growth opportunities. Higher levels of education are typically associated with increased wages and lower unemployment rates. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). However, despite these benefits, current and prospective adult learners—defined here as those who are between the ages of 25 and 64 and do not have a postsecondary credential—often face significant challenges in accessing and completing postsecondary education. Many juggle work, family responsibilities, and financial constraints while navigating institutions that were historically designed for traditional-age students.

Nearly 32.9 million adults between the ages of 25 and 64 have some college credits but no credential (SCNC). **Adult learners of color, or Black, Hispanic, and Native American adult learners**, are disproportionately represented in the SCNC population (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2024). Understanding and effectively engaging, admitting, and retaining adult learners of color is crucial for postsecondary institutions to enhance economic opportunities and vitality in communities and support local workforce development. Better serving adult learners of color can also help boost enrollment, especially since the number of high school graduates is projected to decrease after 2025 (Lane et al., 2024).



This toolkit draws on the American Institutes for Research's (AIR) recent studies on supporting postsecondary enrollment and re-enrollment among adult learners of color. In an effort to make these studies relevant to practitioners, this toolkit translates those research findings into potential actions that staff at postsecondary institutions can take as part of their journeys to increase enrollment and improve access. AIR's research includes the following:

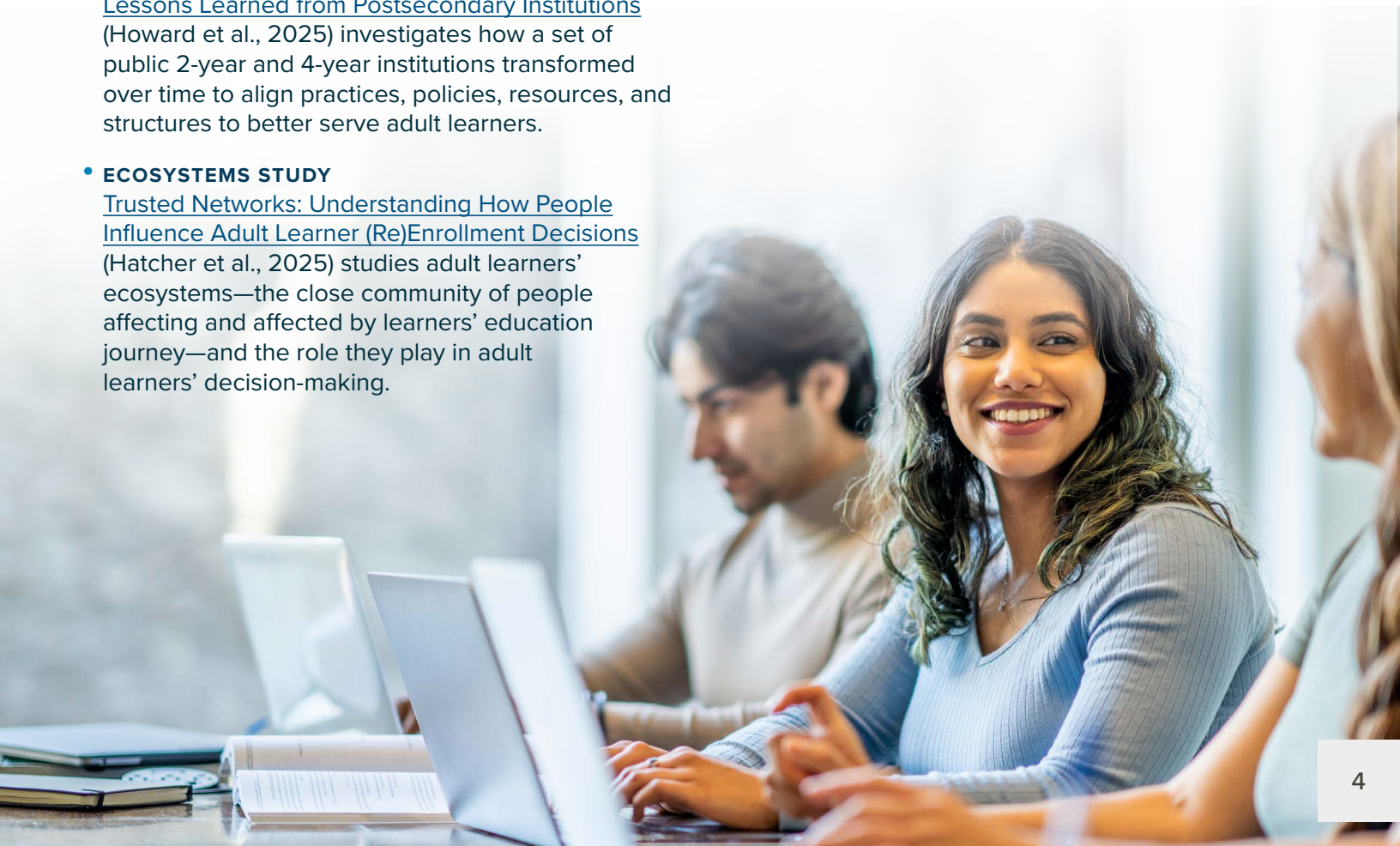
- [Can I Make This Work With My Life?" Exploring the College \(Re\)Enrollment Decisions of Adult Learners of Color](#) (Parsons et al., 2023) explores when and how adult learners of color make decisions about postsecondary (re)enrollment.
- **WEBSITE SCAN**
[Beyond the Homepage: How and Whether Websites Address the Questions and Needs of Adult Learners of Color](#) (Howard et al., 2024) reports on a landscape scan of 350 institutional websites to understand how these websites address the questions and needs of adult learners of color.
- **INSTITUTIONAL STUDY**
[Institutional Change for Adult Learner Success: Lessons Learned from Postsecondary Institutions](#) (Howard et al., 2025) investigates how a set of public 2-year and 4-year institutions transformed over time to align practices, policies, resources, and structures to better serve adult learners.
- **ECOSYSTEMS STUDY**
[Trusted Networks: Understanding How People Influence Adult Learner \(Re\)Enrollment Decisions](#) (Hatcher et al., 2025) studies adult learners' ecosystems—the close community of people affecting and affected by learners' education journey—and the role they play in adult learners' decision-making.



⋮

Me and my husband were struggling financially, and I already work at a school as a teacher aide, so . . . let me just go back to school so I can be a teacher and get paid more.

— Adult Learner



What are the findings and implications for practice?

AIR's research with postsecondary institutions has shown how these institutions have taken holistic, adult learner-centered approaches to effectively serve their communities. Here are the key insights and implications for institutional practice drawn from the studies, which informed the development of this toolkit. For more background and additional resources, please visit the study website (www.air.org/postsec-adultlearners).

FINDINGS

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE



WEBSITE SCAN



- Most institutional websites are easy to use and made a **good first impression in terms of their visual representations of adult learners**.
- Institutions can better support adult learners by providing **clear and specific information** about costs, admission processes, and support programs, including career services.

→ **Include essential details that are tailored for adult learners** on the institutional website (e.g., costs, admission processes, flexible programs, support services) to better support their (re)enrollment decision-making and educational access.



INSTITUTIONAL STUDY



- Institutional transformation at postsecondary institutions to better support adult learners was rooted in a **deep understanding of and desire to improve the experiences** of their specific students.
- Although institutions' transformation journeys were reflective of identified best practices for organizational change, their efforts are driven by this **knowledge of their student population**.

→ **Identify and fulfill the institution's role** within the regional community through meaningful engagement with employers and community partners.

→ **Establish a data-driven culture** to identify institutional barriers and the impacts of implemented strategies on adult learner outcomes.

→ **Prioritize adult learner needs** for student-centered programming and support services and adjust institutional policies and practices accordingly.



ECOSYSTEMS STUDY



- Adult learners' ecosystems were made up of **trusted individuals from similar backgrounds** who have relevant experiences to share.
- Adult learners found their **ecosystem members influential in their decisions** to (re)enroll.
- Ecosystems support for learners took two forms: **mindset-oriented support**, like motivation and encouragement; and **capacity-oriented support**, like sharing information or resources, to make (re)enrolling easier.

→ **Consider outreach and support**, specifically logistical support.

→ **Place staff in positions to support learners** through enrollment and beyond. Provide them with specific training to support adults.

→ **Intentionally develop your institution's reputation** and image in the local community.

How to Use the Toolkit

We developed this toolkit to support institutions in prioritizing promising practices that align with their strategic goals and local context. The toolkit offers examples of and a practical roadmap for transformational change. The toolkit is designed with separate sections that can be used independently; we invite you to skip and navigate to the sections that are of most relevance to you.

The sections are organized around three promising practices, which are informed by cross-cutting themes from AIR's studies::

1. Designing programs that align with the realities of adult learners' lives
2. Incorporating andragogy
3. Tailoring outreach and support with data-informed, mission-driven approaches

The toolkit also includes a Workbook. This is designed to help institutions explore how to adapt promising practices to their specific context and plan their implementation.

EACH PROMISING PRACTICE SECTION INCLUDES:

WHAT IS THE PROMISING PRACTICE?



The strategy and process identified as effective in improving access and success for adult learners. **Learn about the promising practice overall.**

WHY DOES IT MATTER?



Insights from the study and targeted literature review and description of specific challenges the practice addresses. **Understand why the promising practice is critical and effective.**

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?



Two composite stories drawn from multiple institutions (study participants) that illustrate practice variation representative of real examples. **Get inspired and explore example steps for implementation.**

WORKBOOK SECTION INCLUDES:

IDEAS FOR ACTION



Three tables with a list of example action steps and considerations that correspond to each promising practice. **Use this to implement a specific practice.**

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE



A blank template to document the transformation process and outline your steps and timeline for implementation. **Plan and track your progress.**

CHANGE MANAGEMENT GUIDE



Transformation planning steps and reflection questions for a tailored and structured approach to managing large change efforts. **Take a step back and explore what is right for your institution.**

Who is This Toolkit For?

This toolkit is designed for practitioners at postsecondary institutions—specifically administrators, faculty and staff leaders—who are seeking to increase adult learner enrollment and better serve adult learners of color. The toolkit is also relevant to partners of higher education institutions.

INTENDED AUDIENCE:

- **Administrators** who can champion transformational change to better support adult learners of color
- **Faculty and staff leaders** who can serve as change agents in various divisions and departments—such as academic affairs (all discipline areas), student affairs, admissions, student support, academic advising, institutional research, and financial aid offices—by embedding promising practices into their spheres of influence
- **Partners** of higher education institutions, such as employers, industry partners, workforce development staff, wraparound service providers, and community organizations





Promising Practice 1: Designing Programs That Align With the Realities of Adult Learners' Lives

Identifying and implementing programs and practices that align with adult learner experiences is critical for their success in postsecondary education.

Many of the institutions in our study collected local demographic and consumer data to understand adult learners' habits, needs, and strengths in order to better serve them. Learning about the prospective learners in their community allowed these institutions to implement innovative and impactful programs and initiatives. Some changes were substantial and large-scale, such as making degree programs affordable through employer partnerships or implementing credit for prior learning (CPL). Other efforts were targeted and smaller scale but still meaningful. For example, some institutions extended service hours, while others made their course catalog and website mobile-friendly (recognizing adult learners' reliance on smart phones for internet access, information gathering, and communication). **Valuing adult learners' experiences and removing institutional barriers can help increase (re)enrollment, retention, degree completion, and economic mobility.**





WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Adult learners frequently assess whether they can make college “work” with their lives, considering financial, logistical, and social aspects. Many of the adult learners balanced education with work and family responsibilities, making it more challenging to participate in the “traditional” postsecondary education model. As a result, certain institutional characteristics played a pivotal role in their decisions to (re)enroll (Parsons et al., 2023).

- **Education costs**—including tuition, fees, materials, and time away from work—were some of the most common factors adult learners of color discussed. In addition, many had prior period(s) of college enrollment or work experience, and they often sought programs with robust credit transfer options including CPL. These transfer options allowed cost-effective and timely degree completion. In contrast, high tuition costs, limited financial aid options, and lengthy programs deterred participants from choosing the institution.
- **Program flexibility** also emerged as a key factor, with many adult learners prioritizing institutions that provided online and evening classes or job-embedded learning options. These program features helped adult learners see how they could fit college into their lives.
- **Career development** and better employment prospects were major motivators for most adult learners in the study. Many made (re)enrollment decisions based on their professional and financial goals and sought to obtain a credential or degree that would lead to career advancement.

Industry Partnerships

Some institutions in our study are **partnering with local employers and industry to design and implement cost-effective degree programming.**

They reported positive impacts:

- Initial enrollment exceeding expectations by 400%
- Above-average graduation rates for public institutions
- Graduates earning 33% more money and receiving twice as many promotions, compared with peers who did not participate
- Improved employee retention, with graduates staying 5 years longer with their sponsoring company

Credit for Prior Learning

Credit for prior learning (CPL) can promote adult learners’ degree completion while saving time and money.

- CPL recipients earned between 13 and 24 credits through CPL, saved between \$1,500 and \$10,200 in tuition, and shortened bachelor’s degree completion by 6.6 months (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 2023).
- The semester-to-semester retention rate was almost 47% higher for CPL recipients.
- CPL recipients were 17% more likely to complete credential programs, with even higher completion rates for Hispanic students (24%) and Black students (15%) (Today’s Students Coalition, 2023).



Story 1: Cost-Effective Career Pathways Through Industry Partnerships

THE SITUATION

For years, traditional semester-based schedules and costly tuition structures posed significant barriers to working adults seeking education through Chestnut Ridge College (CRC; a pseudonym). CRC undertook an initial data collection and research (including surveys and focus groups) which revealed some concerns. Many adults with no college degrees in entry-level jobs sought career advancement. However, financial burdens extended beyond tuition—for example, time away from work meant lost wages, making it difficult to participate in traditional degree pathways. At the same time, local employers were experiencing skilled labor shortages.



It's really designing [the academic program around] our student schedule and partnering with employers . . . how do we make sure that [adult learners] are . . . able to continue to upskill or reskill into the field that they want, and that there are jobs in existence out there for them, but then also keeping them employed as they're moving along.

— Administrator



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

THE STRATEGY

With input from local employers, industry partners, and adult learners, CRC reimagined its approach and implemented the *Earn & Learn Career Pathway Program*.

- **Employer partnerships for recruitment & tuition support:** CRC recruits students in entry-level positions who can benefit from earning a degree. Employers sponsor students in exchange for a commitment to work in the industry for a designated period, reducing financial strain on learners.
- **Skills-based coursework & paid internships/residency:** Every student enrolled in the program is placed in a paid internship with a local employer (often with their current employer). This model is designed to allow students to apply skills they learn in real time while earning an income. Employers, in turn, can benefit from a pipeline of skilled workers trained in the latest industry practices.
- **Year-round, flexible scheduling:** CRC offers robust summer course options, evening classes, and hybrid learning formats to allow for continuous progress without sacrificing work or family responsibilities.
- **Cohort model with peer accountability partners:** The cohort model supports a sense of community in this hybrid learning model. Students in the cohort meet monthly in person with their faculty mentor and support each other as accountability partners for persistence and retention.
- **Evening support hours with specialized success coaches:** Success coaches are familiar with the academic pathways. They work closely with individual students to help navigate both academic and non-academic challenges and communicate proactively about available support services. Their office hours match adult learners' schedules.

- **Support for certification exam:** Students receive explicit study skills training and academic support to pass the industry certification exam.
- **Open educational resources (OER) & digital textbooks:** Understanding that textbook costs can be a significant financial burden, the program adopted quality OER materials and digital textbooks, ensuring all students have free or low-cost access to required learning materials.

THE NEXT STEP

Since its launch, the *Earn & Learn Career Pathway Program* has seen remarkable success, including increased retention and completion rates. CRC constantly surveys students and collects outcome data to improve and enhance the program. CRC is also planning to expand the program to include more industry partners. The program was initially funded partly by grants; however, with the increase in enrollment and elevated completion rates, it is now possible to generate enough general funds to institutionalize these practices.



Story 2: Timely Completion Through Credit for Prior Learning

THE SITUATION

Cedar Creek University (CCU; a pseudonym) recognizes that timely completion is critical for their local adults and that many adult learners bring valuable work and life experiences that could translate into college credit. CCU needed to reduce redundant coursework and provide options to accelerate degree completion for adult learners.



To actually get a college credit for your work experience, for something that you love, and that you have passion for was definitely an amazing experience for me.

— Adult Learner



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

THE STRATEGY

CCU started with a small group of faculty members to pilot Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) in one department and awarded CPL primarily as electives. Since then, CCU has progressively expanded its CPL options. Now, CPL can be earned in various ways, such as industry credentials; exams; portfolio assessments based on work experience; and military, employer-provided, or other external training. Here is how CCU launched and enhanced its practice.

- **Champions for change and policy establishment:** CCU initially encountered multiple administrative roadblocks and resistance from traditionalists who questioned granting degrees based on prior experience. In response, CPL champions on campus worked closely with college leadership and governance bodies to refine CPL policies, ensuring clarity and consistency in implementation.
- **Pilot and success stories:** Starting small and sharing student success stories helped gain support across campus. Joe Moreno (a pseudonym) is one success story that exemplifies the initiative's impact. Joe left college over 10 years ago to support his family and had a successful career in the tech industry. When Joe came back to (re)enroll, he was able to leverage his work experience to earn nine credits through CPL for courses such as Introduction to Information Systems and Project Management, allowing him to complete his degree in a timely manner.
- **Scaling and expanding:** Encouraged by early success, CCU expanded CPL across multiple disciplines. The policy allows students to earn up to 50% of their degree through CPL. Department chairs and faculty were instrumental in this process assessing and approving the alignment of external certifications, training, and portfolio content with course objectives.

- **Streamlining the process:** One of the barriers CCU faced when scaling up was limited funding for faculty stipends for added responsibilities in assessing CPL applications. To address this, faculty created crosswalks—pre-approved agreements that map specific certifications to corresponding course credits—to streamline the credit awarding process, following the recommendations of the American Council on Education. For example, a student in a real estate degree program with a real estate license can receive credit for a core course, having demonstrated the necessary learning outcomes. CCU also established the portfolio review process, where a faculty panel reviews students' portfolios (similar to the process used in independent study courses).
- **Specialized admissions support:** Recognizing the importance of early engagement with prospective adult learners, CCU established a *Transfer & Returning Student Resource Center* to provide dedicated support for adult and returning students. Advising teams work with students to communicate potential CPL opportunities and restrictions, ensuring a smooth transition into degree programs.

THE NEXT STEP

CCU remains committed to refining and expanding CPL offerings based on student feedback and evolving workforce demands. CCU is also collecting outcome data and student stories to measure the CPL initiative's impacts. CCU is paving the way for more accessible postsecondary education by honoring adult learners' experiences while promoting timely degree completion.



Promising Practice 2: Incorporating Andragogy

Effective instruction for adult learners requires intentional design and strategies that recognize their experiences, their learning preferences, and the barriers they face.

Andragogy, the approach to adult learning developed by Knowles (1980), emphasizes that adults are self-directed and need practical and relevant instruction that can immediately be applied to their personal and professional lives.

Most institutions offer online courses and degree options to accommodate adult learners' busy schedules. Some institutions have invested in instructional design, technology access and support to make the learning modality effective and engaging for adult learners. Many institutions have also embraced hands-on experiential learning and provide real-world practice opportunities. In both approaches, faculty leadership and professional development are key. **Incorporating andragogical principles into online learning and implementing experiential learning can create learning environments where adult learners feel supported and valued.**





WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Both online learning and experiential learning in postsecondary education align with adult learners' unique learning preferences and expectations.

Many of the adult learners in the study expressed how the flexibility of online courses helped make college fit into their busy lives, and how skills-based applications through experiential learning made the courses efficient and relevant. However, the study also revealed that the effectiveness of these approaches depended on careful instructional design, support, and faculty leadership and training to ensure accessibility and engagement.

Effective Online Learning for Adults

Online learning helps dismantle some of the major barriers to adult learners' access to education.

- Typically more cost-effective than brick-and-mortar programs.
- Accommodates adult learners' need to juggle multiple responsibilities, eliminates transportation barriers, and alleviates childcare challenges (Carlsen et al., 2016; Sadeghi, 2019).

Ensuring access and providing adequate support is critical.

- The digital literacy gap disproportionately affects low-income adults, students of color, and those in industries undergoing rapid technological shifts, including health professionals and logistics workers (Bergson-Shilcock, 2020).
- Some non-digital native adult learners expressed concern about their technology skills and appreciated the support they received.

Faculty training on best practices in online andragogy—including effective communication, timely feedback, and the use of active learning tools—is also important.

- Faculty spoke about the need to go above and beyond the federally required regular and substantive interaction to create optimal learning experiences for adult learners.
- The quality of online teaching significantly impacts student satisfaction and learning outcomes (Sadeghi, 2019).
- Adult learners tend to appreciate having control over their educational experiences and adapting their learning to their professional and social lives (Fenwick & Tennant, 2020).



Technology is a lot to learn . . .
I really need to be trained in
technology because that's the
basis for your learning.

— Adult Learner



Experiential Learning as a Key Strategy for Adult Learning

Experiential learning aligns closely with andragogical principles by emphasizing real-world application and problem solving.

- Adult learners are likely to learn better when they understand the relevance of their education and can apply knowledge to practical situations (Fenwick & Tennant, 2020; Knowles et al., 2015; Knowles, 1980).
- Experiential learning—such as hands-on, project-based coursework, service-learning, and work-based learning—helps adult learners bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and professional practice (Radović et al., 2021; Sisselman-Borgia & Torinio, 2017).
- Faculty emphasized the importance of preparing students with employer-sought experiences, enhancing their earning potential and career mobility.
- Experiential learning can improve employability and foster civic virtue and lifelong learning habits (Caulfield & Woods, 2013; Nenzhelele, 2014).
- Experiential learning can present implementation challenges (Radović et al., 2021). Some institutions created a faculty community of practice (CoP) and mentoring program to mitigate some of those challenges.



Story 1: Online Learning With Andragogy and Just-in-Time Support (Bottom-Up Approach)

THE SITUATION

Several years ago, after reviewing their students' retention and outcome data, a dedicated group of faculty members in the Business Administration Department at Silver Lake College (SLC; a pseudonym) realized that their online courses were not meeting the needs of their growing adult learner population. Many students were working professionals who needed flexibility, relevant learning experience, and personalized support.



What we really want to look at is how the adult learners become partners in learning in the courses, which can be very challenging when you have an asynchronous online course.

— Administrator



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

THE STRATEGY

To address the issue, a few faculty members underwent training in andragogy and online teaching. They developed a standardized course design process for the department. The new course design emphasized relevance and applicability to real-life situations.

- **Authentic and contextualized learning materials and assessments:** All course materials and assessments are aligned with students' career fields, allowing them to apply what they are learning immediately. For example, students complete a capstone project where they analyze consumer data to answer real-world questions for a retail store and present a written report with recommendations.
- **Explicit and relevant objectives:** All assignments are directly related to the course objectives and student learning outcomes. The connection is explicitly explained so students understand why an assignment is relevant and how their time is being spent efficiently.
- **Adaptability and learner autonomy:** Some assignments offer students options to demonstrate their learning (e.g., written reports, job-embedded projects, or collaborative presentations).
- **Access to course materials and flexible deadlines:** All course materials are available at the start of the semester, allowing students to plan ahead—a crucial feature for those balancing work and family commitments. Faculty provide flexibility in assignment deadlines, acknowledging that real-life responsibilities do not always align with traditional academic calendars.

- **Master course shell with active learning tools and strategies:** Faculty created course templates with embedded andragogical and online learning best practices in their learning management system (LMS). Since many of SLC's instructors are industry experts, who teach part-time, these templates help ensure consistency across course sections. The templates embed evidence-based strategies and tools for online courses (e.g., liquid syllabus,¹ multimedia resources, low-stakes formative assessments, choice boards,² and collaborative projects).
- **Embedded digital literacy support:** Many of the students had limited experience navigating online courses. In response, the department developed and launched a digital literacy tutoring program and embedded technology support directly into courses (e.g., one-on-one guidance, video tutorials, and live chat assistance).
- **Data-informed customized nudges:** Faculty track student activity within the LMS and send customized timely reminders, encouragements, and available resources tailored to each student's progress. As many adult learners use their phones for communication, SLC shifted from email to text messaging.
- **Interdisciplinary Faculty Resource Center (IFRC):** To streamline faculty support and training, SLC created the IFRC, where dedicated instructional designers help faculty build their courses in the LMS, incorporating best practices. The IFRC provides relevant professional development and issues digital badges to those who complete training.

THE NEXT STEP

SLC's andragogy integration efforts are resulting in higher retention and completion rates, contributing significantly to the college's strategic goal of graduating 50% of students within 5 years. There is a campus-wide push for more online and asynchronous courses to accommodate adult learners' schedules. Following the success of the Business Administration Department, SLC aims to scale its online andragogical best practices and high-touch support model across campus.

¹Liquid syllabus is a dynamic, web-based document designed to humanize online courses and foster a sense of connection between instructors and students. Unlike traditional syllabi, which are often static PDFs or documents locked within a learning management system, a liquid syllabus is accessible, mobile-friendly, and typically includes welcoming language and multimedia elements such as videos.

²Choice boards are graphic organizers that empower students to take an active role in their learning by allowing them to choose how they will learn a concept or demonstrate mastery.



Story 2: Experiential Learning: Embedding Hands-On, Work-Based, or Service Learning Into Coursework (Strategic Approach)

THE SITUATION

A few years ago, Elk River University (ERU; a pseudonym) analyzed student survey and learning outcome data and recognized that traditional lecture-based teaching was not fully serving its adult learner population. These learners needed an education that was practical, relevant, and designed to fit into their busy lives. With this in mind, ERU invested in *experiential learning models*, ensuring that students gain career-aligned skills through hands-on, applied learning.



My degree in cybersecurity . . . is 100% online. That appealed to me . . . because I didn't know what my schedule was going to look like.

— Adult Learner



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

THE STRATEGY

ERU understood that a meaningful shift to experiential learning required more than just tweaking course assignments; it demanded a cultural shift in teaching and learning. Recognizing the need for systemic change, ERU made experiential learning a key strategic priority and incorporated it into its academic enhancement plan (AEP). This institution-wide initiative aimed to embed hands-on, real-world experiences in the curriculum. The experiential learning models at ERU include (a) workplace learning, (b) research projects, (c) hands-on activities in classrooms or labs, (d) expeditions and field trips, and (e) service learning with community organizations or educational agencies.

To achieve this, ERU implemented a multi-pronged strategy:

- **Institutional commitment and budget allocation:** ERU designated a budget to support experiential learning initiatives for the duration of the AEP's 5-year period. These funds were used to support faculty professional development, purchase necessary materials, and offer internal grants for faculty to develop new course outlines with experiential learning activities.
- **Faculty community of practice:** ERU launched an extensive professional development program on experiential learning pedagogy and created a CoP where interdisciplinary faculty members collaborated to develop courses, shared best practices, and explored innovative experiential learning strategies. ERU also partnered with external organizations, such as the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) to ensure faculty had access to the latest experiential learning resources.
- **Hands-on, work-based, or service learning:** Faculty redesigned courses to embed experiential learning components across various fields. For example, in Computer Science & Information Technology, students work with external project sponsors to create web applications and games, or earn credit while assisting peers with digital literacy challenges through ERU's tech support center. In collaboration with the financial aid office, academic departments help adult learners secure paid work for service learning activities through the Federal Work-Study Program.

- **Integration across disciplines:** Using student feedback and industry trends, the faculty CoP has continuously refined and expanded the experiential learning models. As more CoP members gain experience, they serve as mentors to newer members to scale their experiential learning practices. More programs have adopted experiential learning principles. For example, nursing students work on community health projects, cybersecurity students run security audits for small businesses, and education majors provide tutoring to K–12 students. Across ERU, students are building skills that translate into career mobility.

THE NEXT STEP

ERU is transitioning experiential learning from a new initiative to an integrated part of its academic culture, reinforcing its commitment to adult learner-centered, career-relevant education. The goal is to ensure that 90% of undergraduate programs provide students with at least one experiential learning opportunity. To sustain and expand these efforts, ERU is exploring funding sources to continue offering faculty support and ensure long-term viability.

ERU is also positioning itself as a leader in experiential learning, influencing how other universities support adult learners. ERU shares its successes at statewide and regional conferences. These events serve as platforms for faculty to showcase best practices, exchange ideas with other institutions, and continue refining experiential learning strategies.



Promising Practice 3: Tailoring Outreach and Support With Data-Informed, Mission-Driven Approaches

Various institutions harnessed data and evidence to identify gaps in access and support, increase enrollment, and fulfill their institutional mission.

Understanding the community can help tailor approaches to outreach and support for adult learners, especially those whom institutions have not reached or served well before.





WHAT IS THE PROMISING PRACTICE?

Tailored Outreach

For many adult learners of color, the decision to enroll or return to college is shaped by more than personal goals and motivations; it is influenced by their ecosystem, communities, and lived experiences. Tailoring outreach methods can help reach adult learners previously disconnected from postsecondary education opportunities and foster a sense of belonging. Many institutions tailored their outreach strategies—including their institutional websites—to reach their intended prospective students based on their strategic goals and the communities they serve.

Tailored Support

Many institutions customized support services to close the opportunity gap and meet their strategic goals. Some institutions carefully examined their program participation and student outcome data and employed asset-based approaches that foster motivation and resilience among adult learners. One institution used appreciative advising³ strategies to help learners navigate academic challenges and other barriers.

MISSION-DRIVEN OUTREACH EXAMPLES

- » Some institutions have implemented adult learner-specific enrollment campaigns by utilizing a software application that identifies adults with educational intent through predictive analytics. Messaging is tailored to make college feel possible and accessible.
- » A historically Black university strategically recruits students at local sports events, acknowledging the social networks in these spaces.
- » A Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) hosts family movie nights on campus, turning the college into a welcoming space where students and their families can envision themselves belonging.
- » Another HSI utilizes Spanish-language enrollment campaigns to ensure language accessibility.
- » A tribal college values face-to-face and word-of-mouth recruitment. Admissions staff attend the chapters (similar to community town halls) to engage community elders, recognizing their influential role in decision making.
- » A 4-year university in a small town uses the Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development (RPED) grant to expand its outreach beyond community college transfer students to reach adults in rural areas with some college credits but no degree, visiting local community centers and libraries.
- » As part of a state-wide initiative to support people with records of incarceration, a flagship public university on the West Coast has implemented a peer ambassador recruitment program for students with records of incarceration in community colleges.

³ Appreciative advising uses principles from appreciative inquiry and positive psychology to create a framework that enhances both advisor and student success. This approach involves intentionally asking open-ended, positive questions to help students make the most of their educational experiences and achieve their goals. It is a highly student-centered method that has proven to be effective.



Outreach and recruitment strategies for engaging adult learners differ substantially from those typically used for high school graduates entering postsecondary education institutions (Person et al., 2020).

- Using tailored materials for both technology-based and traditional methods are effective in engaging prospective adult learners (Goble, 2021).
- Application assistance through “high-touch” (peer) ambassadors can help facilitate adult learner enrollment.
 - Available services and pathways may vary depending on adult learners’ status (veterans, socioeconomic status, etc.) and past experiences (prior learning, re-entry, etc.).
 - Employing peer (student) ambassadors offers students rewarding, well-paid part-time jobs that help them develop transferable employability skills (Folostina et al., 2024; Ylonen, 2013).
 - Some adult learners expressed how their peer ambassador/mentors played a critical role in their decision to enroll.

Disaggregating data and identifying gaps in service based on institutional mission, vision, and strategic goals can lead to student-centered, asset-based support programs.

- Cultivating a strong cultural identity correlates with higher self-esteem and positive academic attitudes (Cabrera et al., 2014; Phinney et al., 1997).
- Effective support programs require careful structuring and appropriate staff training to foster empowering relationships and learning environments where adult learners from varied backgrounds can maintain their cultural differences while participating fully in the education system (Paris 2012).



Story 1: Peer Ambassadors: Transforming Adult Learner Trajectory (Policy Advocacy and Alignment)

THE SITUATION

Understanding that there are many social and individual benefits to postsecondary education for individuals with records of incarceration, Redwood Regional University (RRU; a pseudonym) has advocated for policy support to develop a prison-to-education/employment pipeline (Bender, 2018; Wallace et al., 2020). Enhancing community re-entry for individuals with records of incarceration has now become a statewide initiative, and RRU—a 4-year flagship university—launched a *Peer Ambassador Program* in partnership with community colleges across the state. Even with shifts at the national level, such as the restoration and expansion of federal Pell Grant eligibility for people who are incarcerated, staff and faculty knew that enrolling in and navigating postsecondary institutions presented a significant hurdle for many adults with records of incarceration (Quach et al., 2022). The ambassador program aims to foster persistence and success by providing support from individuals with similar experiences.



[My peer ambassador said,] ‘Get a degree . . . We’re gonna get you into [the university].’ I spoke with him a lot during my time at [the local 2-year] college, and he’s the one who really made me believe that I could do this path.

— Adult Learner



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

THE STRATEGY

The Peer Ambassador Program hires and trains dozens of ambassadors—students who successfully transferred after facing similar challenges—to support potential transfer students.

- **Building trust:** The critical part of the ambassadors' job is to build trust, answer tough questions, and show prospective students that a 4-year degree is within reach.
- **Proving navigational support:** The ambassadors share information and provide logistical and navigational support throughout the enrollment process.
- **Building confidence through dual enrollment:** For a smoother transition, RRU also introduced a dual/cross-enrollment initiative, encouraging students with records of incarceration to take university-level courses for credit while still in their local 2-year college programs. Students can experience the rigor of university and gain confidence before officially transferring.

An adult learner in the study shared how the ambassadors and the dual/cross enrollment opportunity were instrumental in his decision to transfer to RRU, changing his life trajectory. He went from doubting his place in postsecondary education to mentoring others on the same journey:

“The cross-enrollment program made me believe that I could do it too. And it also really helped my application because I got an A. The resources they’ve given me . . . really helped improve my life. I mean, it’s the best decision I’ve ever made in my life.”

Once students are enrolled, RRU offers wraparound services to help overcome societal stigma and other structural and individual barriers through **on-campus resource hubs** specifically designed for students who are reentering their communities after incarceration. Services include college navigation, mentorship, study spaces, mental health support, and career advising.

THE NEXT STEP

RRU understands that postsecondary education is not just about opening doors; it is about walking students through them with the right support, connections, and opportunities to thrive. RRU engages students with records of incarceration to continue advocating for the development of a prison-to-education/employment pipeline through changes in policy and practice.



Story 2: Data-informed and Tailored Counseling (Starting Small to Inform Scaling)

THE SITUATION

When Laguna City College (LCC; a pseudonym) disaggregated student outcome data as part of the process to meet its institution-wide strategic goal of increasing the graduation rate, the data told a troubling story—Latino and Black males were not supported to complete degrees or transfer to 4-year universities at the same rate as other student groups. Once the academic advising staff discovered this service gap, they were determined to change the outcome.



My mentor was telling me about her process . . . she was helpful . . . to guide me and move past my fears and doubts as far as my age of going back to school and not being able to stay on track with everybody else.

— Adult learner



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

THE STRATEGY

The counseling team brainstormed what was within their circle of influence and launched the *Counseling for Men of Color* program, designed to foster a sense of belonging and provide tailored support that meets students where they are.

- **Building trust and familiarity:** Recognizing that some of the male students were not familiar with the “counseling” process, the academic advising team started barbershop counseling sessions to make counseling more approachable. They collaborated with LCC’s cosmetology department to have real barbers (instructors) and trainees (cosmetology students) provide free haircuts while academic counselors led discussions about academic goals, personal struggles, and pathways to graduation and transfer.
- **Mentoring through tailored courses:** The team also developed a credit-bearing personal development course that included mentoring, field trips, and guest speakers—opportunities for students to see themselves reflected in professionals and college graduates who had walked similar paths. This course is designed to help students envision their own success and strengthen their commitment to their educational journey.
- **Use of language that reflects culture of support:** The academic counselors worked closely with faculty to change institutional language related to academic advising. Instead of placing students on “academic probation,” they introduced “academic notice,” shifting the focus from punishment to intervention. Instead of an “academic dismissal,” students were placed on an “academic break”—a chance to regroup rather than a door being slammed shut. These small but meaningful changes aim to reinforce a culture of support rather than exclusion.

- **Scholarships:** Realizing that financial obligations were major barriers to participation in postsecondary education for men of color, LCC has expanded scholarship opportunities.

THE NEXT STEPS

In survey responses, program participants reported feeling more connected and empowered. Retention and transfer rates among men of color are improving, contributing to LCC’s institution-wide strategic goal. The academic advising team is collecting outcome data (both quantitative and qualitative) to gain institutional support, exploring ways to scale this type of high-touch tailored practice.



Moving Forward

Higher education institutions have an opportunity to transform the experiences of all adult learners, including adult learners of color, by embracing intentional, adult learner-centered strategies. We hope the three promising practices profiled in this toolkit inspire action and serve as catalysts for change at your institution. Start by using the Workbook in this toolkit and take the crucial next step in planning and implementing changes to support adult learners of color. The Workbook provides a structured approach with Ideas for Action (checklists and reflection questions that correspond with promising practices), a Change Management Guide, and an Action Plan Template for tailored strategies that support your unique goals and contexts.

The journey toward a future where all adult learners can thrive—regardless of background—is ongoing. With commitment, collaboration, innovation, and a willingness to listen to the experiences of adult learners, many institutions are re-imagining postsecondary education systems to better serve and empower adult learners. That work likely will generate new promising practices that continue to advance the field's capacity to serve adult learners well.

THE PROMISING PRACTICES ARE:

- 1. Designing programs that align with the realities of adult learners' lives**
- 2. Incorporating andragogy**
- 3. Tailoring outreach and support with data-informed, mission-driven approaches**

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Supporting Adult Learners in Postsecondary Education

A Workbook to Guide
Planning and Implementing
Institutional Change



Getting Started

This workbook offers a structured approach to planning and implementing changes within your organization.

1. Ideas for Action (Section A)

This section provides a promising practice checklist and reflection questions. If one of the featured promising practices aligns with your institutional or departmental goals, review the workbook section for the promising practice(s) that you're interested in exploring. Use the provided checklist and reflection questions to identify the next steps. This section provides actionable steps and strategies to implement the practice effectively. For general strategies for transformational change, refer to the Change Management Guide (Section C).

2. Action Plan Template (Section B)

Document your plan and track your progress using this **Action Plan Template**. The template allows you to tailor strategies to your institution's unique goals and contexts, regardless of whether you are implementing a specific promising practice or working to identify broader transformational change that would be beneficial for your institution.

3. Change Management Guide (Section C)

If you need to take a step back and determine the most appropriate transformational changes for your institution, start with this **Change Management Guide**. The guide offers a general overview of change management strategies and processes. Use the reflection questions to assess your current practices and make transformation plans. Next, use the **Action Plan Template** (Section B) to document your plan and progress.

Workbook Section A: Ideas for Action

The following steps are inspired by institutions in the study. Use the information in this section in conjunction with the Change Management Guide (Workbook Section C) and Action Plan Template (Workbook Section B). The following tables present topic-specific information related to each of the promising practices.

Promising Practice 1: Designing Programs That Align With the Realities of Adult Learners' Lives

ACTION ITEMS	REFLECTION QUESTIONS
LOCAL NEEDS: ADULT LEARNER POPULATION	
<p>» Conduct surveys, focus groups, or community assessments to identify adult learners' needs, strengths, and barriers.</p> <p>» Disaggregate data by key demographic variables relevant to your learner population.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What information do we have and still need to develop to meet our strategic goals related to adult learners? • What data elements or academic and support aspects have we not considered? • What do the data show? What are the gaps in services for adult learners of color we can address? • What factors are affecting adult learners in our region? • How can we ensure our programs reflect the lived experiences of adult learners and leverage their strengths? • How do we ensure we are addressing adult learners' goals? How do we engage learners in assessing their needs and goals?
AFFORDABLE AND EFFICIENT PROGRAMS	
<p>» Prioritize one or two areas of focus to address gaps or challenges found in the data. For example, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop employer partnerships to fund tuition assistance, stipends, or paid internships. <input type="checkbox"/> Implement or expand credit for prior learning (CPL) to acknowledge existing skills and reduce redundancy. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer open educational resources (OER) and digital textbooks to reduce material costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What financial obstacles do adult learners face at our institution? What are the areas for improvement? • Are there potential new partnerships we can explore with local employers or community organizations to provide financial and career support? • What is our credit for prior learning (CPL) policy? How do we ensure students, faculty, and admissions staff understand how to use it? • External resource: https://www.cael.org/lp/cpl-pla

FLEXIBLE AND CAREER-FOCUSED LEARNING OPTIONS

» Consider the roles of academic departments, faculty, and community partners to offer flexible programs. For example, think about the following:

- ☐ Offer hybrid, online, evening, and weekend courses.
- ☐ Collaborate with local workforce agencies, employers, and community organizations to understand labor market demands and design efficient industry-aligned programs.
- ☐ Design stackable credentials that allow students to earn meaningful qualifications on the path to a degree.

- What are the areas of improvement for flexible programming? What changes are needed/possible?
- What career pathways are emerging and evolving in our area? Who are our potential industry partners? What is the potential return on investment for them and our learners?
- What training is necessary for faculty and staff?
- What structures and systems can we leverage for efficient planning and effective implementation?

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR RETENTION AND SUCCESS

» Consider what services can be enhanced, revised, or newly implemented. For example, think about the following:

- ☐ Extend student services (advising, financial aid, tutoring) beyond standard business hours.
- ☐ Establish support programs tailored to adults' needs (e.g., transfer and returning student services, career advising, etc.).
- ☐ Make digital platforms and enrollment processes mobile-friendly.
- ☐ Provide support services in multiple modalities (e.g., video conferencing, in-person, texting, phone, etc.).

- What are the roles of advisors (admissions, academic, career) and wraparound support services for this change initiative?
- What is the current student-to-advisor/success coach ratio? Taking this into consideration, how can we enhance the support services?
- What community organizations can we partner with to support enhanced, existing, or newly identified service needs?
- What technology, systems, and structures can we leverage?
- How do we ensure that our website, enrollment platform, and support services are adult learner-friendly?

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

» Track student outcomes, including persistence, completion rates, and job placements/career advancement.

- ☐ Disaggregate data as appropriate.

» Collect feedback from adult learners on program effectiveness and areas for improvement.

» Regularly review and refine policies to ensure they remain aligned with adult learners' evolving needs.

- How are we tracking the success of adult learners in our programs?
- What mechanisms are in place to gather and act on feedback from adult learners?

Promising Practice 2: Incorporating Andragogy

ACTION ITEMS	REFLECTION QUESTIONS
INSTITUTIONAL READINESS AND LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT	
<p>» Develop a new strategic plan or connect to an existing shared vision for integrating andragogy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Enhance online learning. <input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate experiential learning. <p>» Allocate funding to support instructional practices that align with effective adult learning. These practices could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum development and instructional design <input type="checkbox"/> Stipends for faculty community of practice <input type="checkbox"/> Development of faculty resource center <p>» Provide professional development on andragogy, online and experiential learning, and faculty leadership opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What instructional policies and practices support or hinder adult learners' success? • What data elements or academic and support aspects have we not considered? • How does our institution ensure that courses are designed with adult learners' needs in mind? • What structures are in place or necessary to support faculty in incorporating andragogy?
ONLINE COURSE DESIGN AND ANDRAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES	
<p>» Incorporate andragogy into online learning. For example, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Collect feedback from online students to identify areas for improvement. <input type="checkbox"/> Audit course materials to ensure assignments and assessments are relevant to real-world applications. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide learner autonomy by offering multiple ways for students to demonstrate their learning. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide appropriate and timely feedback focused on mastery and learning strategies. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a standardized course design that promotes consistency while allowing flexibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the adult learner-specific characteristics, goals, and needs we must consider when designing courses and grading or participation policies? • How can adult learners be engaged as partners in shaping their learning experiences? • How do my course assignments reflect real-world applications? • How can I provide adult learners with options to demonstrate their learning in ways that fit their professional experiences? • How can we ensure that all faculty—especially part-time or industry-expert instructors—are equipped to implement adult learning best practices?

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

» Consider implementing experiential learning. For example:

- ☐ Embed hands-on and authentic activities and assessments in coursework.
- ☐ Explore new community and employer partnerships for work-based or service-learning experiences.
- ☐ Create interdisciplinary collaboration opportunities to expand experiential learning across programs.

- How can I integrate more hands-on, work-based, or service-learning opportunities in my courses?
- How can I ensure experiential learning is accessible to all students, including those with limited time?
- What partnerships (industry, community, or service-based) can we develop to enhance adult learners' real-world learning experiences?

ADULT LEARNER-CENTERED SUPPORT & ACCOMMODATION

» Consider implementing adult learner-centered support. For example:

- ☐ Provide clear, structured guidance on navigating online courses and assignments.
- ☐ Offer flexibility in assignment deadlines to accommodate students' work and life responsibilities.
- ☐ Ensure all course materials are available at the start of the semester for better planning.
- ☐ Make course materials mobile-friendly.
- ☐ Provide digital literacy and technology support.
- ☐ Track student engagement through LMS analytics and send timely, personalized nudges.
- ☐ Use mobile-friendly communication methods such as text messaging for reminders and updates.

- What barriers do my students face in accessing and completing coursework, and how can I mitigate them?
- How can I make my online course materials more navigable and user-friendly for students with limited digital literacy?
- How can I provide flexible deadlines or alternative participation methods to accommodate adult learners' responsibilities?
- What learner data can we leverage to personalize engagement?

SCALABILITY & INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT

» **Collect feedback from adult learners as well as outcomes data to evaluate the andragogy initiative.**

» **Establish long-term funding sources to sustain and scale the initiative.**

» **Provide ongoing professional development on andragogy, experiential learning, and online teaching.**

- ☐ **Recognize and incentivize faculty engagement through grants, stipends, awards, or digital badges.**
- ☐ **Foster faculty communities of practice for peer collaboration and shared best practices.**

» **Leverage technology and automate personalized nudges, interventions, and other communications when appropriate.**

» **Share successes and challenges through presentations at statewide and regional conferences.**

- How do we measure the success of our online and experiential learning initiatives, and how do we continuously improve them?
- How can we ensure these efforts are sustained beyond initial funding cycles?
- How does my institution support faculty in integrating andragogy, and how could that support be improved?
- What steps can my institution take to expand the initiative across disciplines?
- How can we scale high-touch support? What technology applications can we leverage?
- In what ways can my institution share its best practices with the broader postsecondary education community?

Promising Practice 3: Tailoring Outreach and Support with Data-Informed, Mission-Driven Approaches

ACTION ITEMS	REFLECTION QUESTION
STRATEGIC PLANNING & INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT	
<p>» Analyze institutional data to identify trends in enrollment, persistence, and completion rates for adult learners.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Investigate common and unique barriers adult learners of color are facing.</p> <p>» Align outreach and support plans to institutional mission and strategic goals.</p> <p>» Establish buy-in and commitment to data-informed mission-driven outreach and support services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data do we have about adult learners on our campus, and what gaps exist in their enrollment, retention and completion rates? • How do we engage adult learners in identifying the challenges they face and the support they need? • Are there specific structural or institutional barriers that prevent adult learners of color from accessing our programs and services? • What data elements or academic and support aspects have we not considered?
TAILORED OUTREACH	
<p>» Consider tailored outreach plans based on gap analysis results. For example, think about the following:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partner with trusted community organizations and cultural institutions to reach adult learners where they are and offer appropriate recruitment events to foster belonging.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Leverage multilingual marketing materials, including targeted digital and social media campaigns.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use storytelling or other relevant forms of messaging to acknowledge challenges while highlighting institutional support and success stories.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Develop peer ambassador programs to connect prospective students with current adult learners who share similar backgrounds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we ensure that our outreach strategies are inclusive and resonate with adult learners from various backgrounds? • What community partnerships can we build to strengthen trust and extend our reach? • Do our recruitment materials reflect the lived experiences of adult learners of color?

TAILORED SUPPORT SERVICES

» Consider providing tailored support services. For example:

- ☐ Provide holistic and asset-based student support, including academic advising, mental health services, and career coaching tailored to the target population.
- ☐ Establish dual or cross-enrollment opportunities to ease transitions from community colleges to four-year universities.
- ☐ Use data and technology (customer relationship management systems, data visualization tools, etc.) to track student experiences and provide timely interventions.
- ☐ Expand scholarship opportunities.

- How do we create a welcoming and culturally affirming campus environment for adult learners of color?
- How do we incorporate feedback from adult learners of color to examine the campus climate and culture?
- Are our advising and counseling services tailored to the unique needs of adult learners from different racial and ethnic backgrounds?
- What additional wraparound services (e.g., financial aid advising, childcare, transportation) can we provide to reduce barriers to enrollment and completion?

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND EVALUATION

» Collect and analyze data on the effectiveness of outreach and support initiatives.

- ☐ Solicit feedback from students and community partners to refine programs.

» Regularly assess institutional policies and language to ensure inclusivity and cultural competence.

» Share promising practices and lessons learned with peer institutions to contribute to the broader field of postsecondary education and advocacy.

- How do we measure the success of our tailored outreach and support initiatives?
- What mechanisms do we have to gather continuous student feedback and make program adjustments?
- How do we institutionalize tailored practices, so they are sustained beyond individual champions or grant funding?
- How can we scale high-touch support? What technology applications can we leverage?
- In what ways can my institution share its best practices with the broader postsecondary education community?

Workbook Section B: Action Plan Template

The action plan template can be used to document your specific focus and plan. After reflecting on the questions and reviewing the steps in the change management guide, use this template to plan your transformation and record your action steps, benchmarks, planned activities, timelines, people responsible, and resources needed. Monitor progress and make adjustments. The first row provides an example.

BENCHMARK ACTION STEP	ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE & INVOLVED	FUNDING & RESOURCES
Example: Data Collection	Adult Learner Survey Environmental Scan of the Service Area Community Focus Groups Review of Enrollment, Retention and Outcomes Data (Past 5 years)	August-November 20xx	Institutional Research Student Affairs Community Liaisons	General Fund & Grants Survey Program Stipends for Focus Groups Institutional Data Systems

BENCHMARK ACTION STEP	ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE & INVOLVED	FUNDING & RESOURCES

Workbook Section C: Change Management Guide

This guide offers structured steps to implementing changes in general. Reflect on the questions and discuss them with your colleagues to determine what transformational changes are appropriate for your institution. Use this guide in conjunction with the ideas for action (Workbook Section A) and action plan template (Workbook Section B).

CHANGE MANAGEMENT STEPS	QUESTIONS	NOTES
Collecting and analyzing data for needs sensing Assessing institutional readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What changes that align with our mission and strategic goals do we want to make? • What data do we already have about adult learners and adult learners of color? • What local data do we need to collect? (e.g., students' characteristics and preferences, labor market information, etc.) How will we collect the data? • What challenges emerge as critical for our community through disaggregating, dissecting, and analyzing the data? • What laws, policies, and initiatives are relevant to the changes we want to make? • What resources, funds, and grants are available? • What are some ways we can secure the necessary resources and funds? • Given the local policy guidelines and available resources, what change initiatives should we focus on? 	
Establishing a problem statement Defining goals, objectives, and success metrics Forming a team and getting buy-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the challenges we are trying to address based on the local data and the readiness assessment? • What are our goals and objectives? • How will we measure success? • What data do we need to collect? How will we collect them? • Who are the champions and change agents for this transformation? • How will we gain buy-in from various constituency groups? • Who are the potential internal and external collaborators and partners? How will we [determine][present][highlight] the potential return of investment of collaborating and partnering? • Who should be part of the planning team? 	

CHANGE MANAGEMENT STEPS	QUESTIONS	NOTES
Planning Activities (See Workbook Section for Action Plan Template)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What program structures are necessary? • What are the steps to implementation? What are the benchmarks? • What activities are needed? • What areas (divisions/departments) should be involved? Who will lead the process? 	
Allocating Resources (Identify Funding, Hiring, and Training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the budget for the transformation? • Do we need to create new positions or hire staff? • What are the training needs for staff and faculty? 	
Promoting the program through outreach and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we promote the new program? • What outreach and communication avenues and methods are most effective for the target audience? • What is the budget for this activity? Who will lead the effort? 	
Piloting and implementing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What support, structures, and funding are necessary for piloting the program? • Who will lead the pilot and implementation? • How will the results be shared? • How do we scale up and institutionalize the practice? 	
Evaluating and improving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data do we need to collect for continuous improvement? • Do we have the capacity (staff data literacy, infrastructure, etc.) to collect and analyze the data we need? If not, what do we need to do to address the challenge? • What funding is needed for continuous improvement? 	



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