

Equipping Non-native Speakers of English with Workforce Readiness Skills



English language learners are important to the U.S. job market. By 2030, it is estimated that nearly one in five U.S. workers will be an immigrant. However, nearly 20 million adults have limited English proficiency. (COABE, 2023). Adult Education programs are helping to fill this gap by training and educating non-native speakers of English, so that they are prepared to join and contribute to the future workforce of the United States.

In Wyoming, one such example of this is a student from Laramie County Community College, Yuriko Monelo. In her native country of Japan, she did not always enjoy school as life experiences had affected her self-confidence and overall well-being. She did not know what she wanted to do with her life. This changed after she enrolled in the ACES program at Laramie County Community College. "My teachers taught me that learning can be fun." Yuriko's career path may have begun with ESL classes, but the trajectory of 'fun learning' has taken her much further. Since beginning her educational journey, she has been inducted into National Adult Education Honor Society, was presented with the [MPAEA](#) Student of the Year Award and has since earned her high school equivalency certificate. Today, she is a full time STEM student and is a role model to other ESL students.

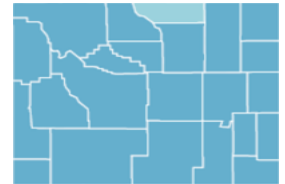
Adult Education Addresses National & State Economic Needs

U.S. Facts



Wyoming Facts

- 65% of Adult Education graduates are employed within one year of exiting
- Student enrollments in Integrated Education and Training programs have increased by 40%
- 1,161 Adult Education students have entered postsecondary/training programs since fall 2021
- 70% of all qualified Adult Education participants have earned a credential since fall 2021



Adult Education's Impact Upon Economic Development

\$2.5 Billion

For every 400,000 adults who earn a high school diploma, the U.S. gains \$2.5 billion back in tax revenue and reduced expenses.

\$200 Billion Added Value

The estimated value to the U.S. economy in reduced costs for public support programs for low-skilled, low literate adults is \$200 billion annually.

Increased Earnings

The average wage for individuals who earn a high school credential increases by approximately \$10,000.



Adult Education: A Business Strategy for Employers

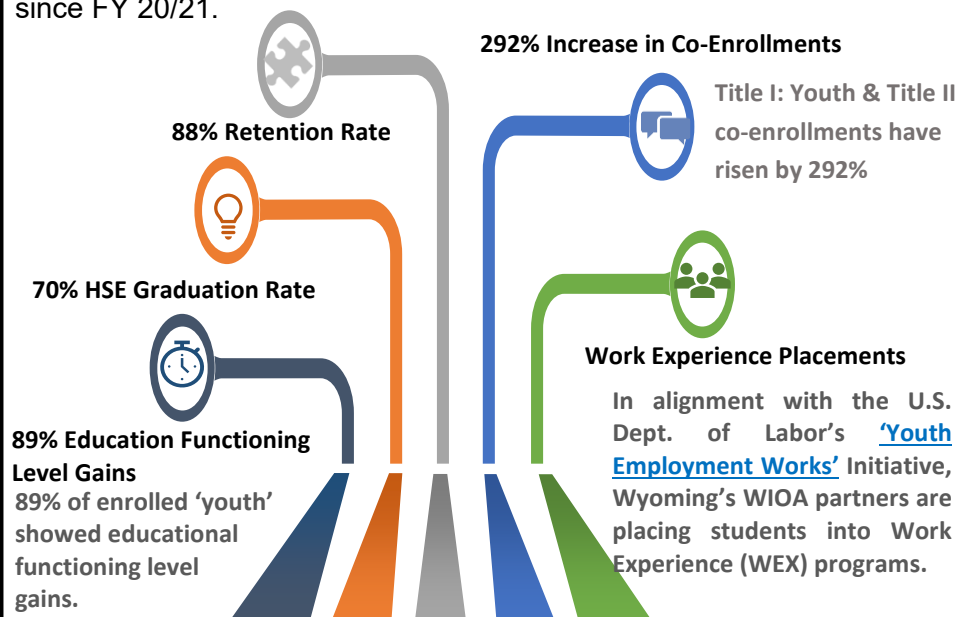


The WIOA Adult Education system and its partners prepares America's adults for family-sustaining levels of employment:

- Fortifies critical academic skills
- Integrates instruction with workplace essential skills and in-demand job training
- Provides English language instruction & citizenship classes
- Prepares adults in High School Equivalency
- Provides wrap-around services for success

Investing in Wyoming's Out of School Youth

Collaborative efforts between Adult Education and the Wyoming Dept. of Workforce Services (Title I: Youth) to equip Wyoming's out of school youth with workforce opportunities has seen exponential growth and success since FY 20/21.



Wyoming's efforts to co-enroll qualified 'youth' is a sustainable model that is supported at the federal level, by both the Departments of Labor and Education. In fact, the Department of Labor, in its July 2023 Newsletter highlights the ['YouthBuild'](#) program which gives at-risk youth, ages 16-24, the opportunity to "transform their lives by earning a high school diploma or equivalency degree, learning to be community leaders, and preparing for college and other post-secondary training opportunities."

Digital Literacy for the Workplace

Twenty-eight million adults in the U.S. lack the digital literacy skills necessary to effectively use a computer, yet most are required to use computers every day on the job. Wyoming's Adult Educators have risen to this challenge by implementing digital literacy in all aspects of Adult Education programming.

To expand digital literacy efforts in the State, the Wyoming Community College Commission is working in unison with the Wyoming Business Council to develop a [Digital Access Plan](#) that is part of the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program. This plan prioritizes digital literacy skills and infrastructure; which complements Wyoming's Adult Education digital literacy strategies for workforce development.



Wyoming's Adult Education Program Performance in Top Three Nationally

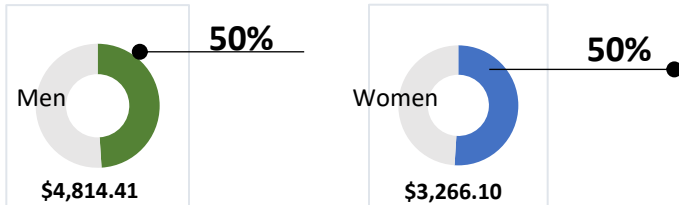
Wyoming's Adult Education programs are truly making a difference! National rankings for Wyoming places us in the top three positions for performance and outcome measures! Additionally, Wyoming held a 6th place national ranking for credential attainment.



The 'Who' and 'What' of Adult Education in Wyoming

Total Participants = 1,627 Served in FY 22/23

Median Earnings by Gender



The Adult Education programs saw equal male/female enrollments throughout the year; which follows national trends.

The wage gap between genders for this population is 32%, which is notable higher than the 25% found in a 2022 study published by the [Wyoming Women's Foundation](#).

Employment by Ethnicity (One Year After Exit)

American Indian/Alaska Native

Participants with these ethnicities represented 7% of total enrollments. One year after exiting Adult Education, 57.14% had successfully found employment.

Asian

Asians represented one of the smallest ethnic groups (1%) for FY 22/23. This group also had the smallest number of participants employed after one year; however, those who were gainfully employed had substantially higher wages.

Hispanic/Latino

Hispanics represented the second highest enrollments for the year and 62.16% had found employment after one year of exit.

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

This is the smallest ethnic population enrolled each year as it represents less than 1%. However, 100% of these individuals had found a job one year after exit.

Black/African American

Black/African Americans represented 3% of all enrollments and 62.96% were gainfully employed within one year of exit.

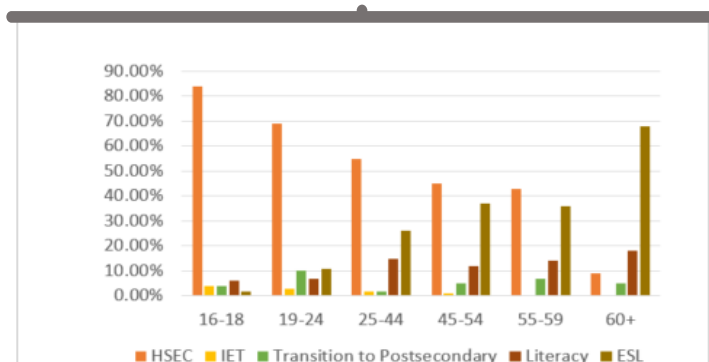
White

Wyoming's largest population consists of 'whites' who held a 68.11% employment rate one year after exiting.

More Than One Race

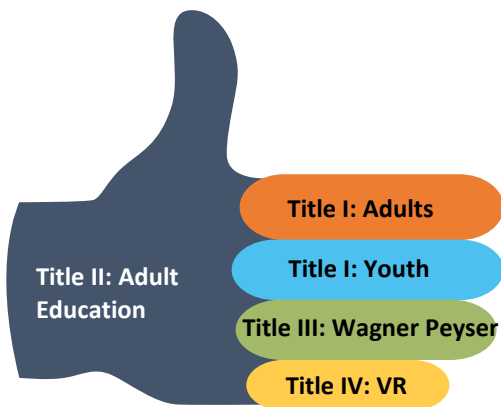
This population consists of individuals who have noted 'more than one ethnicity' and represented 3.5% of total enrollments. One year after exit, 62.96% of the participants had found employment.

Reason for Enrollment by Age



Learners come to Adult Education for a variety of reasons as shown in the chart. In the youngest age category, high school equivalency credentials are what learners are pursuing so that they can enter the career pathways system and obtain employment or enter postsecondary. However, this changes as the age of the learner increases. The most senior learners enrolling in Adult Education are non-native speakers of English who are seeking the means to effectively communicate and function in today's global society.

Co-Enrolling for Success



WIOA requires that the four Title programs co-enroll participants for data collection, performance reporting and as a best practice for:

- WIOA service integration
- Reduction in the duplication of services
- Data informed policy decisions

Collaborative efforts were outlined in Unified State Plan and were supported by quarterly 'Meet & Greet's' between Adult Education program directors and One-stop center managers.

In FY 22/23 Wyoming's Title programs saw some of the highest co-enrollment rates in the country. Because of this success, representatives from the Wyoming Dept. of Workforce Services and Adult Education were asked to present at a [National Workforce GPS webinar](#) to share best practices.

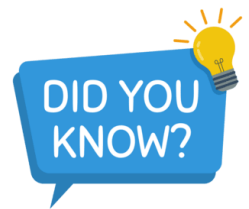
In March 2023, Wyoming's Co-enrollment Initiative was also nominated for the [NASWA Pinnacle Award](#) for Workforce Development, which recognizes State agencies for innovative projects/strategies that involve assisting participants with career services and/or the attainment of in-demand skills and credentials.

Adult Education and the One-Stop System

The One-stop delivery system brings together workforce development, education, and other human resource services in a seamless customer-focused service delivery network that enhances access to program services and improves long-term employment outcomes for individuals receiving assistance.

Wyoming's AE programs work collaboratively with WIOA partners to:

- Implement the mission, vision, and strategies of the Wyoming Workforce Development Council, the State Workforce Board for Adult Education
- Align programming to the Commission's Educational Attainment Initiative
- Cross train to avoid the duplication of services
- Implement a successful career pathways system
- Deliver career services to enrolled participants
- Make referrals for wrap around services
- Enroll students in post-secondary/training and Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs



ARPA Grants Extend Learning Opportunities

The education of over 100 students.

The launch of a new workplace literacy program at the hospital in Jackson, Wyoming.

The expansion of IET enrollments

ARPA funds are key!

In early 2023, the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services and the State Adult Education program received a 3 year grant in support of Integrated Education and Training (IET) Programs and an Adult High School Equivalency Program. Six months into the program, these funds are currently the keys to support multiple initiatives.

Notable Achievements and Recognitions in FY 22/23



- 1) [MPAEA](#) awarded Christina West, our DWS partner, with the Lay Leader of the Year award. Congratulations!
- 2) Local programs compiled a [video montage](#) of student success stories.
- 3) The AE program from WYDOC was selected as an experimental site for the Second Chance Pell and has graduated its first cohort.
- 4) Wyoming was selected as one of the nation's highest performing Adult Education States; eligible for an observation visit from the U.S. Secretary of Education.