



NYIC 2016 State Policy & Budget Priorities Adult Education & Workforce Development

Recommendation

Expand Adult Literacy Education (ALE) to support more community-based adult education programming.

- **Invest \$17.2m in ALE funding in the enacted FY2017 budget.** The Governor and State Legislature should increase ALE funding by \$10.9 million for a total of \$17.2 million in the final budget to support high-quality, community-based adult literacy instruction.

History

- Included in enacted FY 2016 budget: \$6.3m
- Included in enacted FY 2015 budget: \$6.3m
- Included in enacted FY 2014 budget: \$6.3m

Services Funded

Adult Literacy Education funding supports English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation classes.

Community Need and Background

Immigrants are a vital segment of New York State's workforce, yet **3.5 million New Yorkers lack English proficiency, a high school diploma, or both.** These New Yorkers are denied their full potential to better their employment and economic benefit to the State as they are routinely held back from workforce training programs, despite being a priority of service. Such programs will ensure that these immigrants have the literacy skills they require to succeed in their work, family, and civic lives.

As the State prepares to implement the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), we must lay a **robust foundation of community-based ESOL and adult education programming.** Yet adult literacy programming continues to be the **most underfunded part** of the greater workforce development and educational pipelines. Adult Literacy Education (ALE) funding, one of the few state-funded streams for adult literacy, has been **flat for the last three years, and is at the same level as FY 2008.** By denying accessible, community-based adult education programming, we are leaving behind immigrants and their families who contribute so much to New York's economy.

Opportunity and Talking Points

Investments made to better adult education programming carry significant returns for the individual, their community, and the state by leading to increased employment, stronger family engagement, and more integrated communities. In New York, community based programs, libraries and the CUNY system regularly outperform school districts. However, much of the State's investment in adult education is limited to school districts. Opportunities should be given to these community-based programs that are trusted, culturally fluent, and offer wrap-around services.

- Increasing ALE funding to \$17.2m will allow for **approximately 16,000 classroom seats in New York State.**
- For those that have access to an adult literacy preparation program, the **pass rate on the state's adult education exam is twenty-two percentage points higher** (66% v 44%).
- For adults that complete high school or earn an HSE, **median wages are 25% higher.**
- During the 2010 recession, **unemployment rates were nearly 10 percentage points higher for those without a high school diploma** or its equivalent (14.7%) compared to those with a bachelor's degree (4.9%).
- A **mother's educational level is the single strongest predictor** of whether a child will be raised in poverty; by helping parents improve their English skills, they can better participate in and support their child's education.

For additional information, please contact Betsy Plum at bplum@nyic.org.