



NYIC 2016 New York City Policy & Budget Priorities

Adult Literacy

Recommendation

Invest \$16 million in adult literacy programming through community-based organizations, CUNY, and the public libraries to address the crisis of 1.7 million New York City residents who lack English proficiency, a high school diploma, or both. **This new investment of \$16 million will support 13,300 students** in adult literacy programs including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Basic Education in Native Language (BENL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation. With over \$6 million in City adult literacy funding eliminated following the end of the Young Immigrant Literacy Program in FY 2016, programs throughout New York City lost over 6,300 classroom seats at a time when the State has reduced capacity and City programs already have wait lists for at least 14,000 individuals.

History

- **2013:** Mayor Bloomberg baselines \$3.5 million in adult literacy funding before leaving office: the ESOL portion of the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) at \$1 million, the Council PEG restoration at \$1 million, and the Adult Literacy Initiative at \$1.5 million. New York City Council creates the Young Immigrant Literacy Program investing \$18 million over two years to support outreach, legal, and literacy services for those who may be eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). From these funds, \$11.5 million is invested into community-based adult literacy programming through DYCD and CUNY with a strategic outreach and program design to serve any out-of-school, undocumented immigrant in the DACA age range. In Year 1, \$5.2 million is invested in literacy programming.
- **2014:** The second year of the Young Immigrant Literacy Program includes \$6.24 million in literacy funding.. New York City announces its Career Pathways plan with the intention to invest \$60 million in bridge programming by 2020. New York City Council invests an additional \$750,000 in the baselined Adult Literacy Initiative.
- **2015:** New York City Council invests \$630,000 in the baselined Adult Literacy Initiative bringing its total non-baselined funding to \$1.38 million. The Young Immigrant Literacy Program ends and is replaced by a new \$7.9 million program, ActionNYC, to expand immigration legal services and help New Yorkers prepare for Executive Action. Providers lose over 6,300 adult literacy classrooms seats with no concrete plan from New York City to replace this lost capacity.

Community Need and Background

With over 1.7 million New Yorkers lacking English language proficiency, a high school diploma, or both, a quarter of New York City's adult population lacks the basic skills required to better their work, family, and civic lives. Despite this need, less than 4% of this 1.7 million are currently able to access a classroom seat in community-based programs. If we are to better this deficit and truly support these New Yorkers, we need to finally achieve a thriving, equitable, and community-based ESOL and adult education system. A robust system is all the more necessary as New York City continues to implement its Career Pathways plan and prepares for the impact of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which will drastically impact the ability of providers to serve undocumented New Yorkers and those with the lowest skills. Without such a system, tens of thousands of New Yorkers each year will continue to be unable to access workforce training programs, to qualify for DACA if they need to meet the education requirement, to gain the skills to better support their children in school, or to communicate with doctors and law enforcement should they have an emergency. These are just a few of the many benefits of empowering New Yorkers with education.

Opportunity

Investments made to better adult education programming carry significant returns for the individual, their community, and the state at grand by leading to increased employment, stronger family engagement, and more integrated communities:

- 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 with less than 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.
- Individuals with low health literacy incur medical expenses that are up to four times greater than those with English language proficiency, which costs the healthcare system tens of billions of unnecessary dollars every year.
- The pass rate on the state's adult education exam is twenty-two percentage points higher (66% v 44%) for those that have access to an adult literacy preparation program.

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