



NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION  
Every worker. Every industry. A strong economy.

# Comprehensive Immigration Reform

**A Proposal for a Skills Strategy that  
Supports Economic Growth and  
Opportunity**

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## Executive Summary

Comprehensive immigration reform has tremendous economic potential for individuals and the nation as a whole and will result in far-reaching changes to the labor market. In order to create economic growth and opportunity, though, the legislation must include an equally ambitious, integrated investment in skills—far greater than what is currently proposed. **A skills strategy within the context of comprehensive immigration should be based on these principles:**

1. Address the dual stakeholders involved in immigration policy: employers and workers.
2. Support alignment, collaboration, and shared accountability in the provision of adult English language acquisition and basic skills instruction.
3. Support the vital role of community based networks and service providers as a bridge into the public workforce system.
4. Address the plurality of skill levels/employment goals of individuals impacted by changes to immigration policy.

Funding under the current Senate bill is insufficient to address the likely increased demand for adult education by currently undocumented immigrants, let alone address the existing unmet need for English language, adult literacy, and basic and occupational skills training of U.S. citizens. **We propose three new grant programs that could be implemented in the current legislation and would dramatically increase the resources available for skills training for all without increasing the cost of the bill:**

1. *\$500 million for a Career Pathways Employment Fund*, supported by the increase in H-1B visa fees, to support integrated or contextualized adult basic education services to help low-skilled U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents acquire the skills they need to succeed in the labor market and/or meet the requirements to become citizens.
2. *\$1 billion for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Grants* through an expansion of the pilot grant program proposed in the Senate bill that would be used to promote immigrant integration at the state and local level. This expansion could be funded with a portion of the existing Earnings Suspense File (ESF) at the Social Security Administration (SSA), much of which was contributed by unauthorized immigrants.
3. *\$50 million annually for an Employer Skills Investment Fund*, by turning the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Trust Fund's optional, \$50 million grant program for integration purposes into a mandatory grant program that incentivizes employer and/or philanthropic matches for workplace ESOL.



**We propose three ways to ensure these investments are integrated with the existing workforce development system and support a comprehensive skills strategy.**

1. *Use common performance measures that are consistent with workforce development programs.* To encourage alignment, the grant programs above should be assessed via the same performance measures as other federally funded workforce development programs all of which should reflect both employment outcomes and basic skills gains/progress toward a degree or industry recognized credential.
2. *Employ high quality providers within existing workforce development infrastructure.* Priority should be given to states that have implemented standards of quality for adult education programs, and programs that can establish that they have met—or can meet—those standards.
3. *Move the Office of Citizenship and New Americans (OCNA) to the White House.* The proposed Office of Citizenship and New Americans (OCNA) proposed is meant to provide the centralized leadership and oversight needed to coordinate policies and programs across federal agencies and with state and local governments. The nature of the challenges to achieving cross-agency cooperation both horizontally at the federal level and vertically with state and local systems argue for placement of such an office within the Executive Office of the President (EOP).

Millions of citizens and permanent residents are already unable to obtain the skills they need for high-demand jobs because they lack the basic reading or math skills to succeed in vocational training or postsecondary education. While the Senate bill does provide some resources for English language skills and employment-related training, these provisions fall far short of the strong, coordinated skills strategy needed to ensure that all workers keep pace with the dramatic changes in the labor market that will occur once comprehensive immigration reform is implemented.



## Introduction

The 113<sup>th</sup> Congress is working to enact the most sweeping changes to federal immigration law in a generation. In May, the Senate Judiciary Committee passed a bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) bill,<sup>1</sup> while the House is developing its own reform proposal.

Much of the immigration debate has focused on providing the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants living and working in the U.S. the opportunity to obtain legal status and eventually become U.S. citizens. Much less attention has been paid to the dramatic impact the legislation will have on the U.S. labor market, not just by providing millions of immigrants an opportunity to work legally in the U.S., but also by making important changes to the future flow of immigrants and foreign temporary workers into the country.<sup>2</sup>

Immigration reform has tremendous economic potential for individuals and the nation as a whole. A recent report by the Center for American Progress found that without the immigrant population, the U.S. workforce will not be sufficient to replace the workers expected to retire from the labor force between 2010 and 2030. The absence of immigrants in the workforce could impede the nation's ability to maintain current productivity, let alone to foster economic growth and opportunity.<sup>3</sup>

Because the Senate bill so strongly shifts immigration policy toward an employment-based rather than a family-based system (the annual share of family-based admission of lawful permanent residents would shift from 75 to 50 percent<sup>4</sup>) and because of its potential to impact the nation's economic future, it represents one of the most important pieces of labor and employment legislation to come before Congress in some time.

To ensure this legislation realizes its potential to foster economic growth and opportunity, it must be accompanied by an equally ambitious investment in skills, far greater than what is currently proposed. These investments must be based on a skills strategy that takes into account the rapidly changing and diverse skill needs of U.S. industries. This skills strategy must also address not just foreign workers and new immigrants, but also the millions of citizens and permanent residents who are anxious to work, but lack the basic reading or math skills to succeed in vocational training or postsecondary education. Without those skills, hard-working immigrant and native-born individuals will struggle to advance on career paths and obtain family sustaining jobs. Meanwhile, industries and our economy will suffer for lack of a workforce with in-demand skills.

While the current Senate bill provides some resources for English language skills and employment-related training, these investments fall far short of the strong, coordinated effort that will be required to support a skills strategy for *all* workers that would allow immigration reform to foster economic growth and opportunity.



## Skill-Related Requirements on the Path to Citizenship

Under the bill passed by the Senate Judiciary Committee, undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S. would be eligible to apply for Registered Provisional Immigrant status if they meet certain requirements. The bill then establishes a minimum thirteen-year pathway to earned citizenship, which includes a number of benchmarks related to employment and earnings that individuals must meet.<sup>5</sup> These include:

### Year 6: To Renew Registered Provisional Immigrant (RPI) Status

- Continuous employment (unemployed no more than 60 consecutive days at a time)
- *Or* can prove income or resources at or above 100 percent of the federal poverty level
- *Or* enrolled in “full-time” education and training

### Year 10: To Adjust to Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) Status

- Continuous employment (unemployed no more than 60 consecutive days at a time)
- *Or* can prove income or resources at or above 125 percent of the federal poverty level
- *Or* enrolled in “full-time” education and training
- *And* demonstrate the level of English proficiency and knowledge of U.S. history/civics that is required for citizenship *or* be pursuing a course of study that is designed to lead to such proficiency/knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

The Senate bill establishes a broad definition of education and training that acknowledges the range of programs that are essential to building a skilled workforce. These include institutions of higher education and secondary education as well as nonprofit and community-based education, literacy, or career training programs (including vocational training) that are designed to lead to placement in postsecondary education, job training, or employment, as well as programs assisting students in obtaining a high school diploma, its recognized equivalent, or in passing a GED/equivalent.

Data on the current employment, income, and English proficiency of the 11 million undocumented individuals who will be affected by immigration reform (as well as those currently awaiting green cards or other adjustments of status) suggests that significant resources will be necessary to help people not only meet the mandates under the legislation, but also to meet the skill needs of employers and to start on a career pathway to family sustaining employment. According to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), about ninety percent of the 7.2 million undocumented working age adults in the U.S. labor force are employed. However, many immigrants in the workforce—just like many citizens in the workforce—lack the skills they need to obtain high-demand jobs that pay a family-supporting wage. More than three million undocumented adults (32 percent) have a family income below the poverty line, and 70 percent speak English “not well” or not at all. Substantial resources will be necessary to address the adult education, English language, occupational training, and employment needs of immigrant workers and the employers who need skilled workers.



## Principles for a Skills Strategy within CIR

Successful implementation of comprehensive, employment-based immigration reform on the scale envisioned by the Senate legislation will require an equally bold, coordinated skills strategy to increase the skills of *all* workers. This strategy must efficiently leverage our current infrastructure for English language acquisition, adult education, and skills training in such a way that prepares individuals with the skills needed by today's employers. An effective skills strategy within comprehensive immigration reform should be based on the following principles.

### **1. Address the dual stakeholders in immigration reform: employers and workers.**

Immigration reform offers the opportunity to increase the number of immigrants and citizens served by the nation's adult education system. Importantly, it should do so in ways that are carefully tailored to address the specific needs of a diverse workforce, while simultaneously supporting programs that are informed by and meet the skill needs of local and regional industries.

### **2. Support alignment, collaboration, and shared accountability in the provision of adult English language acquisition and basic skills instruction.**

Multiple mechanisms and funding streams may be required to address different skill needs, but employment, English language acquisition, and basic skills strategies within comprehensive immigration reform should be integrated and aligned with each other and with the existing federal systems for addressing ESOL and ABE. To achieve this outcome, immigration reform must leverage and be connected to the existing Adult Education and Family Literacy System authorized under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

### **3. Support the vital role of community based networks and service providers as a bridge into the public workforce system.**

It is estimated that between 15 and 20 percent of all ESOL services are provided by organizations outside of the public workforce system. In an effort to promote alignment, a comprehensive skills strategy under CIR must ensure that community based organizations — including those with the cultural competencies to work with new RPIs — that provide ESOL and integration services outside of the federal system can connect individuals on a pathway to citizenship to the workforce development system.



#### 4. Address the plurality of skill levels/employment goals of individuals impacted by changes to immigration policy.

*Unauthorized immigrants, long-term temporary visa holders, and other immigrants who are currently residing in the U.S. and are not sufficiently proficient in English to meet the English language requirements of citizenship.<sup>7</sup> This includes:*

- Individuals who are already trained for an occupation but lack the English proficiency to perform that occupation in the U.S.
- Individuals who will likely be exempt from the employment requirements (due to age, or because they are primary caretakers of children, on medical leave, or disabled), but who will nonetheless need English instructional services in order to meet the English language proficiency required for lawful permanent residency status.

*Unauthorized immigrants who are currently residing in the U.S. and will be required to be continuously employed or working toward employment in order to retain registered provision immigrant (RPI) status and eventually secure lawful permanent residency (LPR) status. This population includes:*

- Individuals with English skills sufficient to maintain stable employment—and who are in fact employed—but who may need to upgrade their skills in order to increase their income to meet the earnings requirement under the legislation;
- Individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) who not only need to meet the English proficiency requirement but who also lack stable employment due to their limited English skills; and
- Individuals who lack employment regardless of their level of English proficiency. These individuals may be working towards employment and/or higher-levels of education by enrolling in adult education or job training.

*U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents currently part of the workforce (but who lack basic skills in literacy and numeracy) who will have to adjust to the influx of new immigrants into the labor market. Currently 93 million adults in the U.S. have low basic skills, yet WIA Title II adult basic education dollars serve fewer than 2 million people per year.*

All of these populations will put additional pressure on the already overtaxed existing adult education system. Programs that have shown success in rapidly moving people into employment and/or higher-levels of education will face increased demand for services by individuals working to meet the employment requirements under CIR, and immigrants and





citizens who are seeking to increase their earnings. Additionally, immigrants not in the workforce will be very focused on acquiring sufficient English proficiency needed for citizenship, potentially through adult literacy programs that are less focused on occupational skills. Some of these individuals will undoubtedly access English instruction outside of the existing adult education system, but for those who do seek instruction within the existing system, programs may be reluctant or even unable (due to funding constraints, for example) to serve a new influx of students who do not have employment-related goals.

## **Existing Funding to Support a Skills Strategy under CIR**

The Senate legislation includes several provisions related to English language acquisition and skills—primarily in the context of immigrant integration—and some training resources are likely to increase under the bill.

### **H-1B Visa Fees**

A central focus of the Senate bill is to make the U.S. immigration system more responsive to labor market needs. For example, the number of H-1B visas (which allow U.S. businesses to employ highly skilled foreign workers in jobs requiring expertise in specialized fields) would be raised from 65,000 to 110,000 a year, with 25,000 more set aside for people with advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) from a U.S. school. The cap could go as high as 180,000 a year over time, depending on demand.

Under current law (and retained in the Senate bill), the H-1B program requires employers requesting H-1B visas for highly skilled temporary workers to pay a fee that is then used to fund a grant program for skills training and STEM education. The rationale is that employers should contribute something towards developing the skills of the existing U.S. workforce so that they may at some point fill the jobs held by the H-1B temporary workers. The program funds skills training through the Department of Labor and STEM education through the National Science Foundation, aimed at training workers in occupations for which employers are using H-1B visas. Increasing the cap on H-1B visas would significantly increase funding for these programs, potentially increasing funding from \$125 million to somewhere between \$200 million and \$1 billion annually.

### **Integration Fund**

The Senate bill would greatly expand the mission of the existing Office of Citizenship, under the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and rename it the Office of Citizenship and New Americans (OCNA). This expanded and revamped office will be charged with promoting citizenship preparation and coordinating programs across different federal agencies that are relevant to immigrant integration, as well as providing assistance to state and local



governments—essentially serving as the focal point for federal efforts to address the linguistic, economic and civic integration challenges and opportunities that immigrants create, and facilitate coordinated efforts to address them.

As part of this coordinated effort, OCNA would be responsible for two new grant programs related to immigrant integration: (1) an “Initial Entry, Adjustment, and Citizenship Assistance” grant program for public or private, non-profit organizations that provide direct assistance to immigrants seeking to legalize their status or apply for citizenship; and (2) a pilot grant program to promote immigrant integration at the state and local level, targeted to states and local governments (or other entities, as long as they work in collaboration with state and local governments). Both programs would have a combined authorization level of at least \$500 million over five years (and such sums as “may be necessary” after that). Civics-based English as a second language and programs designed to improve and expand access to workforce training services are among the several allowable uses of these grant funds.

### **Comprehensive Immigration Reform Trust Fund**

The Senate bill pools together a host of new and existing immigration-related penalties and fees into a Comprehensive Immigration Reform Trust Fund, to be maintained by the Department of Homeland Security. While the majority of this fund is devoted to border security, up to \$50 million a year over five years *may* be used to support competitive grants to organizations that provide assistance to immigrants, including “civics-based English as a second language.”

### **A New Skills Strategy within Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

Within the context of comprehensive immigration reform, it’s essential to invest new funds in basic skills training to increase the number of adult citizens, registered provisional immigrants, and lawful permanent residents served each year by programs that provide the reading, math and English language skills needed to go on to acquire in-demand skills and credentials. The resources included in the Senate bill—likely the high-water mark in the debate—are not nearly enough to support a skills strategy that helps ensure immigration reform creates economic growth and opportunity. Funding under the bill is insufficient to address the increased demand for adult education by currently undocumented immigrants, let alone the existing unmet need for ESOL, adult literacy, and basic and occupational skills training of U.S. citizens and current lawful permanent residents.

**Yet there are opportunities presented by the current legislation to dramatically increase the resources available for skills training for all—without increasing the cost of the bill.**



## Redeploy Grant Programs within CIR to Support a Skills Strategy

### 1. Career Pathways Employment Fund through Expanded H-1B Visa Fees

Any final CIR legislation will almost certainly include a dramatic increase in the number of work visas issued to high-skilled immigrants through the H-1B visa program (there is already such a provision in the Senate bill). A dramatic increase in H-1B visas will potentially significantly increase the amount of funding available for job training (under current caps, \$125 million is available annually). But millions of Americans won't be able to take advantage of these programs because they lack the basic skills or English language proficiency that is typically required for occupational training. As part of a skills strategy to support immigration reform, at least \$500 million in H-1B visa fees should be set aside annually to support integrated or contextualized adult basic education services to help all low-skilled U.S. citizens and current lawful permanent residents get the skills they need to succeed in the labor market.

These funds should be deposited in a new Career Pathways Employment Fund, which would support a grant program, to be jointly administered by the Departments of Labor and Education, aimed at strengthening career pathway models through education and training programs that integrate basic literacy and numeracy skills with occupational education or training. These include: bridge programs (programs that prepare adults with limited academic or limited English skills to enter and succeed in credit-bearing postsecondary education and training); contextualized learning models (programs that combine adult literacy and occupational training); stackable credentials (a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to help an individual move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher-paying jobs); Vocational ESL (VESL) programs; and dual enrollment programs (in which students enroll in postsecondary instruction and receive both postsecondary and secondary credit). These funds should be awarded to education and training providers through competitive grants, and should prioritize organizations that can demonstrate strong relationships with local employers and the existing workforce system.

Because of the broad labor market impacts of immigration reform, H-1B visa fees must be used to support training for more broadly defined career pathways for individuals with low basic skills. As currently administered, the emphasis on preparing students to enter specific occupations for which employers are using H-1B visas means that funds are typically used to train individuals at much higher skill levels for very specific jobs. Expanding the use of H-1B visa fees for training in regions or broadly defined industries that are impacted by H-1B visas will ensure entry points into these industries for those with lower basic skills. For example, if a large number of H-1B visas are used to employ nurses, fees should be available to train individuals for a range of jobs within the healthcare industry, including those on the entry point of a healthcare career pathway (such as home health aides or certified nursing assistants).



Under this grant initiative, the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education would disburse grant funds (as a percentage of overall funding) to providers in every state on a competitive basis (similar to current disbursement of Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training, or TAACCCT, grants). Providers could then compete for additional funds, with a priority for programs operating in one of the 10 states with the highest rate of foreign-born residents, and/or those states that have experienced a large increase in the population of immigrants in recent years. These resources, when blended or braided with the current \$550 million appropriated for WIA Title II—which should also be reoriented to focus on occupationally contextualized or integrated adult education programs—will begin to address some of the current unmet need for occupationally integrated adult education among citizens and current legal permanent residents.

## **2. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Grants through an Expanded Immigrant Integration Grant Program**

The pilot grant program overseen by the Office of Citizenship and New Americans (OCNA) to promote immigrant integration at the state and local level proposed under the Senate bill should do more than simply allow ESOL/civics education as an activity; it should include a mandatory \$1 billion annual set-aside for ESOL and VESL provision.

The set-aside should be available to meet the increased demand for English language instruction by all immigrants with limited proficiency, regardless of status (including those seeking only literacy and civics education services because they are exempt from employment and earnings requirements under CIR). However, since it is likely that adult education providers will see a significant spike in demand for services as a result of CIR employment and earnings requirements, priority should be given, at least initially, to programs that integrate or contextualize adult basic education and occupational training services and training-related employment outcomes. The goal in these cases should be to move individuals into employment as quickly as possible, or higher-levels of education that will lead to employment or advancement in local and regional industries. Funds could be administered through the OCNA, as proposed in the Senate bill, but should be jointly managed with the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), and distributed by formula to state agencies that manage adult education services. The funds would then be disbursed via a competitive process to eligible providers (if adult education does not sit within the agency that oversees workforce development, this should be done in partnership with the state workforce development entity).

Funding for this program should be sufficient to meaningfully address the new demand for English language instruction created by CIR. One source of such funding is the Earnings Suspense File (ESF) at the Social Security Administration (SSA). According to the Migration Policy Institute, as of 2011, the ESF had \$993 billion of wages for which Social Security taxes had been withheld but had not been credited to valid Social Security accounts; conservative



estimates would put the amount contributed by unauthorized workers in excess of \$50 billion.<sup>8</sup> Assuming that it will prove unfeasible for immigrants to claim benefits for periods of unauthorized work, the federal government could use the Social Security payments it has amassed in the ESF to underwrite the services state and local governments provide to support the integration of immigrants and their children. This should include at least \$1 billion annually under the Integration Fund for adult basic education and ESOL provision. As mentioned above, priority should be given, at least initially, to programs that integrate or contextualize adult basic education and occupational training services and training-related employment outcomes.

### **3. Employer Skills Investment Fund**

Federal incentive/matching dollars have proved effective in developing partnerships between employers and community based providers in building the English language proficiency of incumbent workers. The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Trust Fund includes an optional, annual \$50 million grant program to be used for integration purposes including ESOL. This should be made mandatory, and should be used to incentivize employer and/or philanthropic matches for workplace ESOL. It should be administered jointly by OVAE and OCNA.

## **Ensure CIR Skills Strategy Aligns with Existing Workforce Development System**

### **1. Use Common Performance Measures that are Consistent with Workforce Development Programs**

Adult education, English language, and occupational training programs often face the challenge of having to report different performance and outcome measures across multiple funding streams, even when they are being used to serve a single population (for example, when adult education and occupation training funds are blended to provide contextualized adult basic education leading to employment). To encourage alignment, adult education, English language, and occupational training programs that lead to employment (and/or higher-levels of education) funded under CIR should be assessed using the same performance measures as other federally funded workforce development programs. The SKILLS Act (H.R. 803), legislation reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) recently passed by the House, includes common performance measures (including for adult education and family literacy programs) that reflect both employment outcomes and basic skills gains/progress toward a degree or credential. Outcomes measures under the bill include employment, earnings, retention, credential attainment, measurable basic skills gains while enrolled in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential, and employment within an occupation for which an individual received training.<sup>9</sup> Adult education, English language, entrepreneurial and skills training programs created or funded through CIR should adopt these performance measures to promote better integration of these programs within the existing workforce development system.



## 2. Employ High Quality Providers

In general, in order to ensure that the capacity of existing high-quality adult education providers are leveraged, priority should be given to states that have implemented standards of quality for adult education programs, and programs that can establish that they have met—or at least can meet—those standards. Typically these standards are mandatory for programs that serve adult learners under WIA Title II, and address issues such as program design; curriculum; instruction; program capacity and sustainability; student orientation, goal formulation, enrollment, and assessment; student support and retention; special learning needs; data collection and student record-keeping; transition to postsecondary education, technical/career training and training-related employment and retention outcomes; and teacher credentialing and professional development.

Some community-based organizations currently serving undocumented immigrants are unlikely to meet these requirements, typically because they have been providing ESOL and integration services outside of the existing adult education and workforce development system. Funding should be prioritized for states that commit to work with these organizations that have demonstrated the cultural competency to work with individuals on a pathway to citizenship to ensure they are able to meet standard of quality requirements.

In addition, the agency that manages adult education services (or employs the State Adult Education Director) in the state should serve as the supervising entity for these grant programs within their states (even as they will not be the administering entity in all cases). These offices provide the experience and expertise needed to support the purposes of these grants:

- They already manage the WIA Title II sub-grants to local public, private nonprofit, community based and other organizations that provide ESOL and English Literacy/Civics instruction that prepare adult learners for the workforce; collect statewide data on outcomes; and maintain accountability systems that meet federal standards.
- They have already established professional development systems and other types of support for ESOL and English Literacy/Civics instructors in their states.

## 3. Move the Office of Citizenship and New Americans (OCNA) to the White House

Immigrant integration involves a range of interrelated populations and policy objectives. Aligning English language, adult education, and occupational training services with related employment outcomes is a complicated undertaking, made more challenging when combined with the other integration policy concerns connected with immigration reform. A strong, centralized leadership and oversight role will be needed in order to effectively coordinate policies and programs across federal agencies and with state and local governments. The Office



of Citizenship and New Americans (OCNA) proposed in the current legislation is designed to serve such a purpose. However, the office is to be housed within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The wide-ranging set of issues under immigrant integration falls outside the mission and experience of DHS.

Of particular concern is the scope and urgency of the policy and program issues that must be addressed in the adult basic education, ESOL, postsecondary and workforce training fields as part of this effort. English language, adult education, and occupational training grants under CIR would need to be jointly administered by multiple agencies (typically the Departments of Labor and Education), and will need to be coordinated with USCIS to ensure that those on a pathway to citizenship are receiving the skill development that they and their employers need. The nature of the challenges to achieving cross-agency cooperation and coordination of responses in these fields—both horizontally at the federal level and vertically with state and local systems—argues persuasively for placement of such an office within the Executive Office of the President (EOP). Situating oversight within the EOP as opposed to DHS can help ensure that the agencies are at the table who can help ensure that investments in skills put more people on a path to industry recognized credentials which is necessary to spur the economic growth that immigration reform offers.

## Conclusion

Over the last several decades, the U.S. has seen new jobs emerge with changing skill demands. In his first joint address to Congress in 2009 the President called on every American to commit to at least one year of higher education or career training, be it “community college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship.” This is an education vision well-tuned to the changing demands of the labor market and the connection between skills and economic growth and opportunity. Unfortunately, there are 93 million Americans who can’t answer the President’s call because they don’t have the basic math, reading, or English language skills to enroll in postsecondary training. Federal funding for adult education has steadily declined for ten years (24 percent decrease adjusted for inflation) which means the number of people served has dropped by over 1 million since 2000. It’s no longer possible to ignore this need.

Comprehensive immigration reform, which will substantially increase legal immigration and provide a pathway to citizenship for millions of undocumented workers, will bring new, dramatic changes to the labor market and drive the demand for basic skills education well beyond where it stands today. For this reason, the ultimate success of comprehensive immigration reform will rest largely on whether we meet this challenge and finally make the investment in skills of immigrant and native-born workers to move our economy forward and increase economic opportunity.

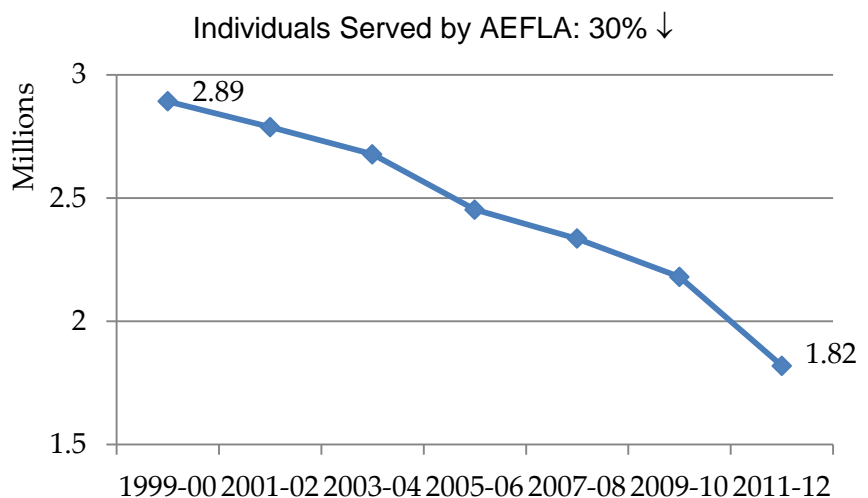
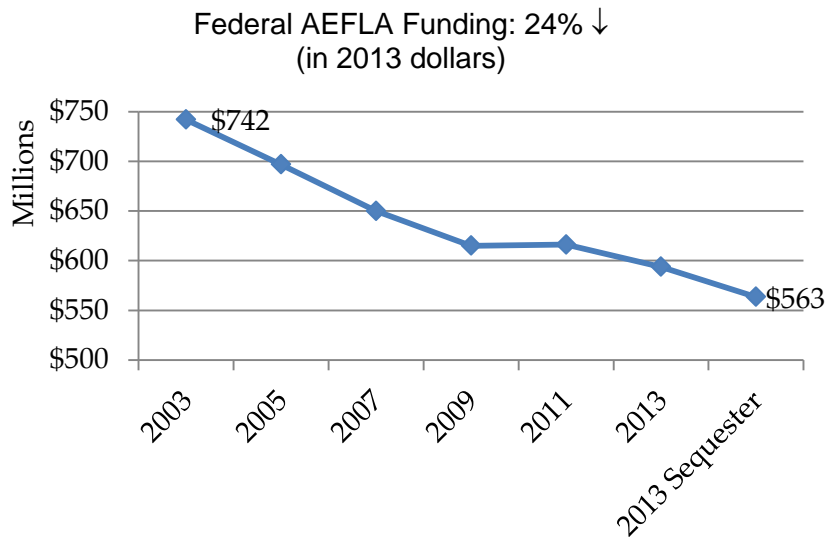


## Appendix A: Adult Education in the U.S.

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that 30 million American adults—14 percent of the country’s adult population—have below basic literacy skills. An additional 63 million adults have just a basic, bare-bones level of literacy proficiency.

Despite this demand, WIA Title II dollars serve less than two million adult learners annually, and the demand for services will rise once immigration reform goes into effect. More than 160,000 people were placed on waiting lists for WIA-funded adult education programs in 2009-2010. Adjusted for inflation, federal support for adult education under WIA has declined by nearly 24 percent since 2003 and the number of individuals served has declined by 1 million (30 percent) since 2000. WIA itself is long overdue for reauthorization, having expired on September 30, 2003. (Programs authorized under AEFLA continue to be funded through annual appropriations.)

The largest source of federal investment in adult education and literacy—by far—is the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), authorized by Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). AEFLA is administered by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) through the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE). AEFLA provides block grants to states to fund local adult education and family literacy programs. These programs, which provide services for free or at minimal cost, assist





adults to become literate and proficient in speaking English, secure citizenship, and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and/or higher levels of education. In addition, since FY2000, appropriation bills have reserved a portion of state grant funding for integrated English language and civics education programs.

The phrase “adult literacy programs” is sometimes used interchangeably with the term “adult education programs,” but adult education has a slightly broader meaning. That is, the adult education field includes not just adult literacy programs, but programs that help adults of varying levels of literacy proficiency improve their basic academic skills (including math); and/or help non-native English speakers learn English; and/or help those without a high school diploma obtain a high school level credential. Examples include: adult basic education (ABE) for adults who need help with basic reading, writing, or math skills; GED preparation; External Diploma Programs (EDP), an alternative high school diploma credential; English as a Second Language (ESOL); family literacy programs, and programs that integrate adult literacy instruction with employment training.

Adult education programs often partner with community colleges, technical institutes, community-based organizations, non-profits, and area vocational schools to provide integrated adult education with occupational skills training and career pathway programs, leading to the attainment of an industry recognized certification. AEFLA also serves as the primary source of federal funding for states and community efforts to provide limited English proficient adults with expanded access to high-quality English literacy programs linked to civics education.

Several other federal programs authorize expenditures for adult basic education services, such as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services’ (UCIS) Citizenship and Integration Grant Program, the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), as well as community service programs operated by the Corporation for National and Community Service. However, these sources provide much less support for adult education and adult English language instruction overall than WIA. Moreover, OVAE uses a small portion of WIA funds to provide foundational support to state adult education systems by, for example, developing standards and overseeing a uniform accountability measurement system.



## Appendix B: A Skills Strategy within Comprehensive Immigration Reform (Table)

Program	Employer Skills Investment Fund	Integration Fund ESOL Grant Program				Career Pathways Employment Fund
Populations	Employed RPIs and LPRs	RPIs, LPRs		RPIs, LPRs seeking to improve English for reasons unrelated to employment		Current citizens or LPRs in low-skilled, low-wage jobs or disconnected from labor market due to low basic skills/limited English
		Those seeking to meet employment/income requirement by improving basic skills	Those seeking to meet English language requirement	Those seeking to obtain citizenship	LPRs not in workforce (disabled etc.)	
Funding Type	Competitive/Incentive	Formula to States then Competitive to Providers				Formula/Competitive
Amount	\$50 million/year	\$1 billion/year				\$500 million/year
Revenue	Comprehensive Immigration Reform Trust Fund. Mandatory carve out.	Initial Appropriation, supplemented by funds from Social Security Earnings Suspense File (ESF). Mandatory carve out.				H-1B visa fees. Mandatory carve out.
Federal Administration	OVAE/DOLETA through ONA@EOP	OVAE/USCIS through ONA@EOP				OVAE/DOLETA through ONA@EOP
Funding Recipient	Individual providers who have secured employer or philanthropic match	State adult education administrators to disburse to providers				Individual providers
Performance Measures	Common measures	Common measures	Common measures related to educational gain only			Common measures
Activities	Workplace ESOL and ABE	VESL/Contextual	Citizenship/ESOL			Bridge programs and other models linked to occupational training/credentials



## References

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- <sup>1</sup> The Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act (S. 777).
- <sup>2</sup> S. 777 as passed by the Senate Judiciary Committee will significantly raise the cap on foreign worker visas and create a new W visa for low-skilled, non-agriculture, temporary workers; eliminate the cap on permanent legal immigration for certain high-skilled workers; provide greater flexibility for employers to access foreign workers when needed; and provide foreign workers more flexibility to move within the labor market.
- <sup>3</sup> Dowell Myers, Stephen Levy, and John Pitkin. *The Contributions of Immigrants and Their Children to the American Workforce and Jobs of the Future*. June 19, 2013.
- <sup>4</sup> J. Preston. "Beside a Path to Citizenship, a New Path on Immigration." *The New York Times*. April 16, 2013.
- <sup>5</sup> The Senate bill allows for waivers to these requirements for individuals who can show extreme hardship
- <sup>6</sup> The Senate bill includes a mandatory exception to the English/civics requirement for individuals with disabilities and discretionary exception for those who are age 70 and older.
- <sup>7</sup> In the Senate bill, unauthorized immigrants will have to demonstrate English skills and knowledge of US history/civics by meeting the English requirement needed for citizenship found in Sec. 312 of 8 U.S.C. 1423, or be pursuing a course of study to learn English and US history/civics, with a mandatory exception for individuals with disabilities and a discretionary exception for those age 70 and older.
- <sup>8</sup> D.G. Papademetriou. "The Fundamentals of Immigration Reform." *The American Prospect*. March 12, 2013.
- <sup>9</sup> It should be noted that while the SKILLS Act includes outcome measures that could support a strong skills strategy under CIR, the bill includes a number of provisions that will overall make it more challenging to meet the changing skill needs in the U.S. labor market. For more information visit: [www.nationalskillscoalition.org/WIA](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/WIA)

