LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE

THE STATE ROLE IN ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY

prepared for the

Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

by **Forrest P. Chisman**

August 2002

CAAL

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FOREWORD

One of the Council's founding purposes is to help develop the state role in adult education and literacy. As vital as the national and local roles are, it has long been evident that steady progress in this field depends on a much stronger state role in providing services that are high in quality and extensive in outreach.

CAAL has been working for several months to lay the foundation for a solid program of state and national projects. We are in the process now of implementing several major initiatives on the state front that we think will be groundbreaking and strategically important to the future of adult education and literacy. Many of these projects will be built around specially-convened working groups, task forces, and blue ribbon panels. We also intend to offer a varied publications program on the state role — papers designed to stimulate thinking, promote understanding, and encourage constructive, informed action. This paper, *Leading from the Middle*, is our first such publication.

Leading from the Middle is a primer on the state role in adult education and literacy. Beyond that, it looks at how well the states are performing their leadership functions, the extent of their current commitment, and what it will take to improve their leadership capacity and commitment in the future. It is, in a sense, a call to arms. The publication is designed for a diverse audience — government officials who might welcome a fresh perspective and who may wish to consider the state role more fully, business leaders and others in positions of influence, students in adult education and literacy courses at colleges and universities, and, throughout the literacy field, a vast community of literacy providers, planners, adult learners, and advocates.

Gail Spangenberg
President, CAAL

LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE:
THE STATE ROLE IN ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY

I.
INTRODUCTION

MOST DISCUSSIONS of adult literacy policy and practice in the United States focus on the federal role in supporting this service system or on local programs and the staff immediately responsible for them. Discussion of the state role has been neglected, and that neglect is unfortunate.[1] The state role is at least as important as the federal and local role in defining the nature of the nation's adult education and literacy system (AELS) — and it is potentially more critical.

It is no exaggeration to say that adult education and literacy service is, and will be, what the states want it to be. State governments, potentially at least, are the only agencies capable of building the adult education and literacy system America needs. They cannot do so unaided. But the state role is absolutely indispensable to achieving any national literacy goals. Mobilizing the states to action is, therefore, of the highest priority**.**

To understand the importance of the state role, it is necessary to consider more broadly the way state governments function, to sketch the nature of their role in the adult education and literacy field, and to consider the major issues states face in this field and how they are being addressed in different parts of the country. To this end, the main body of this paper is organized as follows: **Section II** explains how the AELS functions as part of the intergovernmental system. **Section III** describes the state role in adult education and literacy service in its various dimensions. **Section IV** discusses the three major functions states play in the AELS and the problems and challenges they face in performing each of them. **Section V** contains brief concluding remarks.

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[1] There is a distressing lack of published material on the state role in adult education and literacy, including a lack of comparable data about the adult education and literacy systems of different states. This paper is based largely on primary sources, including state reports to the U.S. Department of Education, analyses prepared as working documents by the Department, individual state publications of various sorts, and interviews with national, state, and local administrators and other experts concerned with the state role. Because few of these materials are readily available, and some interviews were confidential, sources for most of the facts given in this report are not cited, occasionally introducing an element of obscurity. In preparing this report, one need above all others became acutely evident: the need for reliable, published data on the state role in this field. Unless and until such a resource base is developed, efforts to understand the state role and improve it will be severely hampered. Finally, I want to express my profound gratitude to the late Jack Brezius and to Sue Foster for tutoring me on this and related subjects over many years. Their 1987 book Enhancing Adult Literacy: A Policy Guide (Council of State Policy and Planning Associations) is still the best single source on the state role and many other aspects of adult education and literacy.

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II.
Adult Education & Literacy
As An Intergovernmental Program

PUBLIC FUNDING provides the bulk of adult education and literacy service in the United States. An important characteristic of almost all publicly-funded programs is that they are intergovernmental in nature. Responsibility for funding, policy, and administration is shared in varying degrees and different ways by federal, state, and local levels of government. This may seem too obvious to state, but it is key to understanding the state role in adult education and literacy.

With the exception of federal social insurance and some regulatory programs, most domestic programs at any level of government are intergovernmental in nature. This includes large service systems, such as Medicare, education, transportation, and hundreds of smaller systems. Virtually all of these programs share certain common characteristics. Most importantly, the division of labor among levels of government that results from them is usually the same, at least in its essentials.

The primary federal role in these programs is to provide funding and administrative guidance via regulations. The primary local role is usually administration and implementation, although local agencies may also play funding and policy roles. The states combine all three functions; they invariably play important funding, policy, *and* administrative roles.

Diversity is a hallmark of intergovernmental systems.

In a sense, the intergovernmental system places states "in the middle." This may seem problematic but, in fact, *the middle can be an ideal location.* Potentially, states have enormous discretion in shaping intergovernmental programs to meet their requirements. They need not let federal funding or regulations determine the form of service systems in their jurisdictions.

They can craft unique solutions to public problems in three ways: (1) By combining multiple sources of federal, state, and local funding; (2) by supplementing federal policy with their own policies; and (3) by exercising policy and administrative dominance over local jurisdictions.

The service systems of most intergovernmental programs differ greatly among the states. Diversity is a hallmark of such systems.

States enjoy wide freedom of action. That is because neither federal nor local governments can operate without them. If the federal government wants to improve the lives of Americans in any way, it almost always must work through the states. Creating and managing

an effective service system in the hundreds of thousands of localities of this large nation would be an unmanageable task for national government. The few federal programs that do this — Social Security and Medicare are well-known examples — are remarkable achievements of public administration confined to fairly simple income transfer functions. Federal regulatory programs also often attempt to circumvent the states, with varying degrees of success.

States already have administrative systems in place that reach all localities and are attuned to their needs. Likewise, if there is a perceived need for public services at the local level, localities almost invariably turn to the states for help. This is partly because local tax bases are severely limited, and partly because, constitutionally, local governments are creatures of the states and cannot proceed very far without state approval.

The dependence of other levels of government on the states for funding, policy, and administration means that they are indispensable to achieving any domestic public policy goal on a nationwide basis. The price that other levels of government pay for this state role is that the states have the discretion to decide how they will exercise their authority in any given field.

States have three basic choices:

(1) They may be relatively passive *administrators* of federal and local tax dollars earmarked for certain purposes – that is, they may perform a primarily managerial role.

(2) They may perform a creative *governance* role – that is, they may combine divergent streams of federal, state, and local funds in creative ways for greater efficiency of administration, and to maximize revenues from each of them.

(3) They may be *policy leaders* – that is, they may set goals for service systems and seek to use different revenue streams and administrative systems (or create new ones) to achieve those goals.

In some measure, most states play all three of these roles in intergovernmental programs, even though different states emphasize different roles in different programs. In the Medicaid program, for example, most states primarily administer federal and state matching funds. Some states attempt to integrate Medicaid with other health and low-income programs to create seamless service systems. A few states have taken a policy leadership position by using Medicaid funds as one component of a healthcare safety net for all citizens. (Other components often include group purchasing of medical services, state appropriations, and creative adaptations of other federal and state programs.)

In short, although states are the backbone for achieving any national purpose, they can do a lot, or a little, with the fiscal, policy, and administrative leverage they enjoy. At one extreme, they are largely administrative agents of other levels of government. At the other extreme, they

are capable of building service systems that meet national needs that other levels of government cannot, or will not, adequately address.

Interpreting Their Roles. In many important respects, the state role in adult education and literacy is typical of the state role in other intergovernmental programs. Its dynamics and problems are textbook examples of how such programs operate.

Some states, perhaps even the majority of them, serve primarily as administrators of federal and local funds to support adult education and literacy. They provide the minimal matches required to draw down federal funds, organize their distribution, and leverage local contributions. The result is the "fragmentation" of service that critics of this field often complain about. Each revenue stream has a separate administrative structure. Those structures have minimal interactions with each other.

However, most states attempt to assert their governance role to some extent. They combine what they regard as kindred revenue streams and authorities under common management systems to achieve greater efficiency and to maximize funding. This usually results in less "fragmentation." But the effectiveness of the programmatic combinations they create is often difficult to discern without a close scrutiny of individual states.

Finally, some states at some periods of time have sought to be policy leaders in adult education and literacy, to set goals and performance measures, and to marshal resources from both new and existing sources to meet them. This was the usual aspiration of state-led "literacy initiatives" in the late 1980's and early 1990's, and it is still the aspiration of policy initiatives, both large and small, in some states today.

The state role consists of some combination of administration, governance, and policy leadership. All three are essential to the nation's adult education and literacy system.

In short, the state role in adult education and literacy is not singular. In most cases, it consists of some combination of administration, governance, and policy leadership. And all three state roles are essential to the nation's adult education and literacy system.

States can improve the AELS by enhancing their performance of any or all of their roles. **But from a *national* perspective, their policy leadership role is particularly important**. States may add to efficiency as administrators and by improving governance, but progress in improving literacy service by these means is inevitably slow and incremental. It ultimately runs up against the limits imposed by policy.

In adult education and literacy, as in other fields, states can overcome these limits. They can design and implement policies that will lead to rapid, major advances in government's response to an important public problem. If they cannot altogether solve the problem of providing adult literacy service, they can come closer than any other level of government. This is because they *alone* can leverage the fiscal and administrative capacities of all levels of government to achieve a specific end.

The federal government cannot do this as effectively. Its efforts are mediated through states and localities and, therefore, dependant upon them. Moreover, federal funding for adult education and literacy, as for most domestic purposes, is provided by multiple programs sponsored by multiple agencies. In any but the highest priority areas of national policy, even the best minds in public administration have yet to find a way to integrate intergovernmental programs within the federal government toward a common purpose. Most localities lack the policy authority and the fiscal capacity to take a leadership position.

Therefore, the greatest importance of the states' multiple role is their potential capacity to do what no other entity can do: build the adult education and literacy system that America needs and deserves through effective policy development.

III.
Components Of The Adult Education & Literacy System
The Whole Can Be Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts

WHETHER ACTING in their administrative, governance, or policy capacities, states construct their roles in adult education and literacy by combining the raw material provided by other levels of government with their own policies, institutions, and revenue streams. This is typical of their roles in intergovernmental programs generally. But a very important difference between adult education and literacy and many other intergovernmental programs is the exceptionally large number of federal, state, and local resources that states can, and often do, draw on in crafting their roles. These resources consist of the multiple streams of funding and delivery that support adult education and literacy service.

"Fragmentation" provides abundant raw material from which states can craft leadership roles — from which they can create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Viewed from a national perspective, these multiple resources suggest that literacy service is even more fragmented than most other intergovernmental undertakings. And insofar as states choose to be little more than administrators of multiple funding streams, it will stay this way. Viewed from the state level, however, "fragmentation" can be an opportunity for creativity. "Fragmentation" provides states with a multitude of options for aggregating or leveraging large sums. It creates diverse political bases of support. It combines disparate program priorities into a more robust and comprehensive service system than any one funding stream supports.

Simply put, "fragmentation" provides abundant raw material from which states can craft leadership roles — from which they can create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. To some extent, all intergovernmental programs provide this opportunity. Adult education and literacy provides it to an exceptional degree.

What major resources can states work with if they choose to take up the leadership challenge? The state role in adult education and literacy is far larger and more diverse than is commonly recognized. In financial and human resource terms, it consists of six large systems, and a number of smaller ones — each having substantial capacity for growth. These can be regarded as separate service systems because their core funding and policy directives come from

separate sources. They are also separately administered in most cases. They serve different target populations and core constituencies, and have remarkably little interaction with each other.

1. Adult Education Programs Traditionally Defined

The state role in adult education and literacy is traditionally discussed in terms of the programs presently funded by Title II of the federal Workforce Investment Act. They were formerly funded by the Adult Literacy Act of 1991 and various versions of the Adult Education Act. In every state, they provide support for Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (GED preparation), and English as a Second Language (ESL) service to out-of-school adults aged 16 or older. In FY 2001, Title II programs reportedly provided service to 2.8 million adults nationwide.

From a national perspective, the states appear to be the major stakeholders in these programs — at least in fiscal terms. The federal government presently distributes $575 million in funding to the states, with the requirement that states match their allotments with 25 percent of non-federal resources, which may include state appropriations, local spending, or in-kind contributions. This "state match" would require a commitment on the order of $140 million. In fact, collectively, states report that they provide more than eight times this amount to support Title II programs — approximately $1.2 billion, in resources of various kinds.

The appearance of state fiscal dominance in AELS is, however, misleading. In fact, seven states account for 80 percent of the $1.2 billion state investment.[2] In most states, the minimal federal matching requirement is met, but in some states it is just barely met. Many states count local government spending on adult education and literacy to qualify for their federal allotment. The size of the state often determines how large a commitment it has to Title II programs. Yet political *will* (the commitment of state government to this field) is at least as important. For example, large states such as California, Florida, and New York provide more state funds than federal matching formulas require. But Texas, another large state, does not.

Seven states account for 80 percent of the $1.2 billion state invesment in adult education and literacy.

In terms of the policy and administration of Title II programs, states clearly have the upper hand. In some respects, federal requirements of state adult education programs became more demanding when Title II replaced former legislation in this field. For example, Title II requires states to participate in a federally-designed National Reporting System to assess

[2] In order of state funding: California, Florida, New York, Michigan, Illinois, Massachusetts, and North Carolina. The competition for seventh place is close. Several states provide funding at about the same level as North Carolina – about $40 million per year.

outcomes. Yet compared to regulations in other intergovernmental programs, the requirements in Title II funding are minimal. And many regulations can cleverly be evaded, such as the federal "maintenance of effort" rule. There is rarely a penalty for non-compliance.

Therefore, at either the policy or administrative levels, states have great discretion as to what services to emphasize and what programs to support. This discretion also applies to their handling of staff training, curriculum, accountability, facilities, and innumerable other issues that bear on quality control. The result is that very different service systems exist in each state. Thus, policy and administrative decisions are as important to building sound programs as decisions about the level of state funding.

There is, by any measure, a disturbing lack of evidence about what level of state spending creates better adult education and literacy service. States that over-match their federal allotments have *bigger* programs. We do not know if they all have *better* programs. It stands to reason that the key to success is a combination of funding with effective policy and administration. Money is only one tool and it can be used more or less well. The most that can be said with certainty is that low-spending states forego the option to use this tool to their advantage. They tend to have less of everything, including fewer staff at the state and local level to carry out their policy decisions.

2. The Elementary and Secondary System

Elementary and secondary education in all states is wholly under the control of state governments, with local school boards exercising authority only at the discretion of the states. It is funded by a combination of state, local, and a small input of federal dollars. In all states, it is the single largest budget item. In a majority of states, Title II programs are administered by the elementary and secondary system. State budgetary, policy, and administrative dominance of that system enhances the ability of states to shape those programs.

In addition, other resources for adult education and literacy are available through the elementary and secondary system and, hence, subject to state control. In some large urban areas, such as New York and Los Angeles, and in an undetermined number of other localities, school systems or other agencies of local government fund adult education and literacy service above and beyond the support received from state and federal sources. The amount of this local funding nationwide is unknown, but available information indicates that it may be considerable in some areas. States can encourage such efforts, and they can adopt policies that require local education authorities to coordinate their AEL programs with other service systems. In addition, a number of federal elementary and secondary aid programs — The Reading Excellence Act and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program are examples — allow local school systems to use at least some funds for adult education under certain circumstances.

In short, from the perspective of adult education and literacy, the elementary and secondary system need not be regarded as solely an administrative mechanism for Title II

funding. It can be a revenue *generator*, a source of innovation, and a fountain of political support because of the close ties between most school systems and their communities.

3. The Postsecondary Education System

Largely neglected in discussions of the AELS is the second largest system used by states to provide service. Virtually all postsecondary education institutions in the United States provide remedial instruction in reading, writing, mathematics, and ESL to students whose skills are not up to the level of college work. This service system is usually referred to as "developmental education."[3]

Approximately one million adults attend developmental education classes nationwide each year. The content and method of instruction varies, and there has been no authoritative research comparing developmental courses with those supported by Title II funds. However, the existing evidence indicates that the goal of most developmental instruction is to upgrade the literacy, math, and English language skills of students who would be placed in the middle or upper levels of Title II ABE, GED, or ESL programs. In many cases, developmental classes are virtually indistinguishable from adult education classes supported by Title II. The same instructional techniques and staff are used.

Postsecondary institutions are the second largest provider of adult education and literacy services in the U.S., usually through their developmental education programs.

Development education and Title II programs differ primarily in their funding and governance mechanisms. Title II courses are largely supported by federal revenues and state matches committed to the Title II program, and they are usually offered free of charge. Developmental education courses are funded in the same way as other postsecondary courses: by a combination of tuition, tax dollars, postsecondary grant programs (such as the federal Perkins Act and Pell grant programs), and institutional endowments. Tuition for developmental education programs varies, depending on the policies of particular institutions and whether those courses are offered on a credit or non-credit basis. Tax support for public four-year institutions and universities comes primarily from state formula funding. At community and technical colleges, state dollars are supplemented by local government appropriations.

These multiple revenue streams for developmental education allow post-secondary institutions to spend far more per student on developmental education classes than Title II

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[3] By far the best contemporary discussion of "developmental education" is found in: Robert H. McCabe, No One to Waste: A Report to Public Decision Makers and Community College Leaders (Washington, D.C.: Community College Press, 2001).

programs spend. Although precise figures are unavailable, it is commonly asserted that Title II spending averages about $200 per student each year nationwide, whereas developmental education expenditures are on the order of $1,000 per student.[4] An examination of selected community colleges suggests that while this ratio is not precise, adult education and literacy programs provided through developmental education commonly receive two or three times as much funding as services under Title II. This is ironic, given the similarity of these types of programs. The irony is compounded by the fact that some community colleges and other postsecondary institutions administer Title II programs at the same time they provide developmental education.

Just as the funding differs for Title II and developmental education, so does the administration of these two systems. Within public postsecondary institutions, a division separate from the main academic departments sometimes administers developmental education. At institutions that offer Title II or other adult education services, the continuing education division usually administers those services, although other arrangements can be found. Whatever the managerial arrangements, developmental education and Title II programs usually have separate budgets, staffs, and lines of authority.

The intricacies of developmental education are as complex as those of postsecondary education itself. Suffice it to say that all states support developmental education programs that provide adult education and literacy service along with Title II programs. And they serve a large number of students — about one million per year. Most state support for developmental education goes to public postsecondary institutions. As a result, the state policy and administrative role for this component of adult education and literacy is very great. Public postsecondary institutions are state agencies, and states can control any and all aspects of their operations — although they frequently cede much of this responsibility to quasi-independent agencies such as higher education commissions, boards of regents, community college boards, or to the institutions themselves.

4. The Human Resource System

Federal welfare and job training programs provide states with mechanisms to target low-income individuals in need of adult education and literacy services. They also provide established management systems that can be used to facilitate the delivery of those services. Under present legislation, the aim of federal funding for welfare (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, TANF) and for job training (Title I of the Workforce Investment Act) is to encourage rapid placement in employment. The specific rules and regulations of these programs

[4] Dividing the total federal and state expenditures reported for Title II ($575 million plus $1.2 billion) by the number of students reportedly served (2.8 million) results in an average per-student expenditure on the order of $600. Because a few states spend a far larger amount on a per-student basis than do others, the figure of $200 per student has been used for some years to approximate the median per student expenditure – arguably a more relevant number, though perhaps out of date.

may seem to minimize their potential as foundations for adult education and literacy service, but both programs allow states a measure of discretion to incorporate adult education and literacy into the human resource system.

Some portion of TANF funds, for example, may be used to support basic skills instruction for program participants in conjunction with their job search, job training, and work experience activities. By defining these categories creatively, or through federal waivers, states can draw down TANF funding to support AEL services for this population. In addition, most states have unspent TANF funding and can use it for a variety of purposes, including continuation of adult education services to welfare recipients after they have left the program. Alternatively, if states believe that education is important to improving the long-term prospects of welfare recipients, there is no reason why they should not appropriate funds of their own for these purposes.

States have considerably less control over job training programs than they do over most other intergovernmental human service programs in their jurisdictions. Title I of the Workforce Investment Act assumes that Title II funds will be used to support job training services, importantly One-Stop Delivery Systems, by testing the basic skills levels of program participants and providing services to them under certain circumstances. In fact, all states use non-trivial amounts of Title II funds for these purposes, although only small numbers of job training participants are served by instruction.

Despite mechanisms to promote closer collaboration between adult educators and job training authorities, this relationship has not been particularly fruitful in most states. It is an open question whether aggressive state policymakers could make it more productive. In principle, this should be possible. After all, one of the traditional aims of adult education has always been to promote employment opportunities. Programs that integrate basic skills instruction with job training have been operating in some areas for many years. It may be that by encouraging adult educators to develop products that more closely meet the needs of the job training field, or by adopting more assertive job-training policies of their own, states could increase the effectiveness of Title I programs.

5. The Family Literacy System

In FY01, the Even Start Program brought about $260 million federal dollars to states annually, and other federal programs provided additional funding. Many states supplement this funding with additional appropriations of their own. Again, states have enormous discretion in how these programs are administered and structured. In some cases, they are adjuncts of Title II programs, with a strong emphasis on serving adults as well as children. In other states, they are managed as supplements to early childhood programs, with comparatively less emphasis on adults. In short, family literacy is a flexible tool for states that wish to improve their adult education and literacy systems. Because of its emphasis on both children and adults, it is a politically popular program. And it apparently serves as a recruitment magnet for adults who would not otherwise participate in basic skills instruction.

6. The Volunteer System

Even though volunteer tutors are not public employees, they comprise a large part of the workforce in most public adult education and literacy programs. It is estimated that more than 200,000 volunteer tutors provide services to more than 300,000 adult learners each year. Many states give at least some support for the management of volunteer programs, either with Title II resources or by other means. But states differ in their willingness to fund volunteers and in the ways they integrate them into public programs. In addition to a low-cost source of labor, the volunteer system potentially offers states a valuable base of political support for adult education and literacy. Both individual volunteers and members of the boards that supervise volunteer programs are often influential members of their communities. Their commitment to adult education and literacy is demonstrated by the services they provide. The volunteer system has the potential to be an even greater source of service delivery and political support, if states choose to invest in it.

7. Other Systems

In addition to the major systems discussed above, states can also draw on other systems to achieve adult education and literacy goals. Most of these other systems are quite large in their own right, and have the potential to deliver service that is needed. They are secondary to the major delivery systems only because most states make far less use of them. Three notable examples are cited here:

• **LIBRARIES** have historically played a key role in advancing adult education and literacy. The majority of library professionals have always favored making these institutions focal points for literacy instruction. Indeed, in many locations they are. It has been estimated that more than half of public libraries offer some type of adult education and literacy service. There appears to be strong support among libraries to enhance their role.[5] Although libraries receive some federal support, their primary funding is from state and local governments as well as private contributions. The states (and their state departments of education) can leverage the facilities, expertise, technology, and community support for libraries to enlarge their adult education and literacy systems, although few do. And they can make sure that library personnel are at the table in planning adult education and literacy service.

• **CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION** is another area of great potential.[6] Most states support literacy programs in state prisons and county jails in some fashion, often by combining Title II

[5] A good source of data and discussion is Gail Spangenberg's Even Anchors Need Lifelines: Public Libraries in Adult Literacy (Library of Congress, 1996, available from www.caalusa.org).

[6] A recommended summary of information on correctional education is Michelle Tolbert's State Correctional Education Programs (Washington, D.C., National Institute for Literacy, 2002).

and other federal funds with state appropriations. Twenty-six states have instituted mandatory correctional education programs for inmates with very low literacy levels. Although reliable figures on the total number served nationwide seem to be unavailable, it seems clear from state and federal reports than the states do not come close to meeting the need in correctional education. Yet, available research indicates that the 2 million inmates in prisons and county jails have significantly lower literacy rates than the population as a whole – and about half of them have not graduated from high school.

Correctional education programs have the dual advantage of improving education levels and potentially reducing recidivism. Moreover, the disproportionately large concentration of people in prisons and jails who need AEL service are logistically easier to reach than the general population by virtue of their incarceration. State governments are entirely under state government control, and any state can easily expand correctional education programs, although few have chosen to do so. In fact, both state and federal financial commitments to this aspect of adult education and literacy have declined in recent years.

• **PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**, especially proprietary schools, have enjoyed an enormous growth in most states in recent decades. Many provide some elements of AEL instruction in conjunction with vocational training. Many others either could or should. In addition, some proprietary schools compete with the public sector in providing remedial reading, ESL, and GED preparation services. In some areas, they are gaining market share.

States license and regulate proprietary schools. Many state officials regard them as some combination of a regulatory headache and unwelcome competition for public services. Certainly these schools are very difficult to regulate. When challenged to make changes in their operations, they often just close. Moreover, at least some investigations have revealed widespread fraud. But to the extent that these difficulties can be overcome, proprietary schools could provide an opportunity. States could use their regulatory authority to ensure that these institutions provide high quality adult education and literacy services, either on a freestanding basis or in conjunction with job training. By doing so, they would be expanding the statewide service system with the aid of private capital. At least some of what they hope to accomplish through public job training programs might be achieved in this way. Insofar as proprietary schools can demonstrate that they are cost-effective, contracting with them to provide other aspects of adult education and literacy service may be advantageous. The potential of this aspect of the adult education system has been largely unexplored in most states.

There are many other vehicles by which states might support adult education and literacy — and they have sometimes attempted to do so — including tax credits to encourage business to undertake basic skills training, basic skills assessments of state employees and the staff of state contractors, and the use of the unemployment insurance system to generate resources for basic skills instruction.

This recitation of the multiple adult education and literacy venues that exist in virtually all states demonstrates several major points about the dimensions of the state role, either directly or by implication:

• ***First,*** *in almost all states, adult education and literacy service expands far beyond the Title II programs with which it is usually identified — in terms of students served, resources expended, and the reach of state policy. The state AEL role should not be identified solely with Title II programs, although these probably serve the majority of adult learners and are the only state programs solely devoted to this type of service.*

• ***Second,*** *because adult education and literacy is a secondary service of most systems except Title II programs, nobody keeps very careful track of even the most obvious measures of how the states perform their roles in terms of students served and resources expended. It is therefore impossible to determine precisely the scope, size, and effectiveness of the AELS nationally, because that must be based on a summation of the various state systems. However, the system is clearly larger than usually estimated. To the 2.8 million students estimated to be served by Title II programs, with a state contribution of $1.2 billion, another 1 million students served by developmental education must be added, at an additional cost of about $1 billion annually. Thus, by these two venues alone, states appear to be serving about 3.8 million students on total state spending of at least $2.2 billion.*

Programs funded by states or under their policy control deliver adult education and literacy services to at least 4 million students per year, and probably more.

Reliable estimates of spending and participation in most other components of the AELS do not exist. Contributions by local governments may well be substantial, but sound data on this is lacking. In some states, municipal funding is at least as large as the contribution of state government.

The financial contributions of the human service system and the numbers served are small. At most, the system serves a few thousand students in most states, and many of these students, as well as the funds that support instruction for them, are usually included in Title II statistics. Family literacy programs serve an estimated 65,000 families each year, but the total state financial contribution is unclear. By some estimates, state and private sources contribute as much as 40 percent of total national funding for this service. Estimates of total service and state spending on library literacy, prison literacy, and other systems are hard to come by. At most, the total number of learners served by

programs other than Title II and developmental education is a few hundred thousand, and the expenditures are in the tens of millions of dollars.

Thus, the total state financial role in adult education and literacy is probably on the order of $2.5 billion. But it may be far larger. That would certainly be the case if the time of volunteer staff in state programs were valued at the level of paid staff. These funds support at least 2.8 million students in Title II programs, 1 million students in developmental education, and an undetermined, although surely smaller number of students in other systems — probably several hundred thousand nationwide. Programs funded by states or under their policy control therefore deliver adult education and literacy service to at least 4 million students per year, and probably more.

• ***Third,*** *the absence of reliable figures on the dimension of the total state role reflects the fact that state literacy systems are rarely considered holistically.*

• ***Fourth,*** *students served and state government resources spent may not be the most relevant measures of the state role. For purposes of improving or expanding the state role, the large number of programs over which the states exert actual or potential policy control may be more important. From this perspective, Title II programs are just one of many foundations on which states may chose to build their efforts.*

• ***Fifth,*** *no state makes full use of all of the foundations available for expanding adult education and literacy service (the multiple service systems). In fact, most states make very little use of most of them.* ***The state role in potential is far greater than the state role in actuality.***

IV.
THREE STATE ROLES
& THE CHALLENGE OF PERFORMING THEM

ALL STATES are concerned about improving their adult education and literacy service. Evidence of this is that all of them take at least some measures to improve the scope and quality of their systems. But the measures they take, and the issues they face, depend on what type of role they elect to play in this field: whether to be primarily an administrator, to exert their governance functions, or to play a policy leadership role.

The three roles are, of course, summative. For example, all states serve at least as administrators and face the issues involved in that role. Some states also address governance issues and act as policy leaders. These states take on additional issues related to those roles. Depending on how far they choose to progress along this hierarchy, the issues associated with any role may take a different form. That is, states that choose to develop new governance arrangements may find that issues involved in administration take a different form, and different solutions may become available to them. All states play all three roles to some extent.

1. States As Administrators

THE ISSUES facing states as administrators of funds and policy for adult education and literacy are essentially the same as those facing them in all other intergovernmental programs. Decisions must be made about how to distribute funds, recruit both participants and local staff, ensure quality control and accountability, provide program improvement services, and bring about articulation with other programs.

All of these are essentially management or administrative issues, and they are of the greatest importance. They are the issues most commonly discussed among adult educators. Addressing them is absolutely essential to the operation of a high quality system of any kind. But because there is such a large literature on these issues, they will not be discussed at length here.

Perhaps the most important generalization about management issues in adult education and literacy is that all states solve them somewhat differently. Unfortunately, there is little solid evidence about what types of solutions are most effective.

Managerial diversity and a shortage of evidence about what administrative tools work best are typical of intergovernmental programs. States are allowed great latitude in administering these programs, and they exercise it. One reason intergovernmental programs are created in the first place is that policymakers believe state circumstances differ and that public services should be customized for different areas. Yet the resulting diversity of delivery systems and the underlying diversity of state circumstances make the management of these programs very hard

to evaluate. Moreover, there has been a longstanding neglect of this aspect of public administration by all levels of government, and by the research community. States should be able to learn from each other more easily than they do. In all intergovernmental programs there is too much reinventing the wheel.

The nature and importance of the managerial issues facing states in the adult education and literacy field is exemplified by some of the topics most often discussed among Title II administrators and the agencies responsible for helping them.

Nature of the Workforce. A major managerial issue facing Title II programs is the nature of their workforce. Nationwide, 80 percent of Title II staff at the program level are part-time employees or volunteers. Among instructors, the percentage is even higher. Compared to other intergovernmental programs, this reliance on part-timers and volunteers is extraordinary. The primary reason for it is financial. Volunteers require no salaries, although they require other forms of support and incur direct costs themselves. Part-time staff are paid at modest levels — $15 to $20 per contact hour in most states — and receive no benefits. Without these "cost-efficiencies," Title II programs would have inadequate funds to serve more than a small fraction of the adult learners they now serve.

Most states seem hungry for better ideas about how to perform their management function, and for additional resources with which to do it. Strengthening the state role in this regard should be a high national priority.

It is not clear whether this reliance on part-time staff and volunteers is the best way to provide service. States, as well as local programs within them, differ in the percentage of full-time staff they employ. But there is little evidence that full-time staffing leads to superior program performance. Perhaps this is because the relevant research has not been conducted. However, the reigning assumption in all other areas of education is that full-time professionals are essential to achieving the best results. In the adult education and literacy field, the proposition has not been adequately tested.

Whether or not the staffing patterns of Title II programs are inherently flawed, they do at least render staff training an urgent priority for managers. Many part-timers and volunteers have short tenures. Even if they do not, they cannot be expected to devote as much of their own time to continuing professional development as full-time teachers do. Consequently, staff training is a high priority for all Title II programs, and they address it in very different ways. Most states organize training seminars, instructional guides, web sites, and other training resources through their state Title II offices, as well as through individual programs. Often they do so with the support of "resource centers," located either at

academic institutions or somewhere in the administrative infrastructure that supports Title II programs. Some states contract all or part of this function out to private firms. However they handle the training problem, most states seem to believe that they do not do enough. Most seem hungry for both better ideas about how to perform this function, and for additional resources. Strengthening the state role in this regard should be a high national priority.

Quality Control and Accountability. An equally great difficulty facing Title II programs is ensuring that they meet adequate standards of quality. This is particularly difficult in the adult education and literacy field as there are so many strongly-held and often divergent ideas about how to measure quality. The problem is complicated by the diversity of services offered by programs: ABE, GED, and ESL programs obviously require different metrics. It is further compounded by the fact that adult education and literacy programs are largely "open entry-open exit" programs. Consequently, some learners move in and out of programs after short stays, so that keeping track of their instructional needs or achievements is difficult. Summary analysis of length and pattern of program participation is hard to come by at the national or state level, although research on the subject continues.

Many states set fairly demanding quality criteria for program inputs: staff, curricula, pedagogy, student management, and ancillary services. But in states with a large number of programs and an unstable workforce, these are often difficult to monitor or enforce. Many states also set output criteria: measures of how much students learn and how much good it does them.

These efforts have been bolstered by recent Title II requirements that states assess outputs. The U.S. Department of Education has developed standards that the states must meet. Unfortunately, implementing those standards has been a difficult task. At a minimum, they require that students be tested at the time of program entry and at some subsequent point, either at program exit or after a reasonable period of instructional time. Among their other provisions, they require that most ABE and ESL students be tested. Desirable as this is, it can be difficult to accomplish. Pre- and post-testing of a large percentage of students is extremely costly, consumes large staff resources, and often requires additional staff training. Moreover, different tests are used in different states, or even within states, so results are often not comparable for quality control purposes. Finally, many students are unavailable for post-testing.

States should have in place some effective measures of both inputs and outputs. Clearly, they need substantial additional resources to accomplish this.

Promoting Articulation. Because they are the largest single providers of adult education and literacy services, Title II programs should collaborate with other service delivery systems (for example, Title I programs and family literacy programs), and they often aspire to collaborate with others (such as TANF programs). But this is an arduous process because the immediate goals, incentives, regulations, and management systems of other delivery systems differ from those of Title II programs. Most of the available evidence suggests that collaboration is not very effective.

To promote articulation, most states devise written agreements between Title II programs and their partners, both at the state and local levels. In addition, Title II programs are often represented on joint planning committees or boards, such as Workforce Investment Councils. Finally, in some localities, all or part of the Title II program is co-located with the local One-Stop Delivery Systems and/or family literacy program. In some cases, they are under a common management. All of these measures require a great deal of effort by all parties concerned. By all appearances they are undertaken in good faith. But the results, in terms of students served or resources shared, are disappointing to many managers.

Clearly, better articulation is desirable. But given the differences among systems, it is hard to achieve. All states face the challenge of finding new and better approaches to this problem.

Quantity and Quality. The natural inclination of managers of all human service programs is to spread resources wide and thin. This is to ensure that some level of service is available in every community, to serve as large a portion of the population in need as possible. At present levels of funding for Title II programs, however, this inclination is in conflict with the desire of adult educators to provide the highest possible *quality* of instruction. By almost any recognized measure, high quality instruction is more expensive than instruction that meets lesser standards. It requires greater intensity, and more highly trained staff, better instructional resources, closer quality control, more time, and more ancillary services to help learners deal with problems outside the classroom that may affect their ability to attend and learn — such as child care, transportation, and health issues. As a result, all states and programs are faced with a trade-off between quantity and quality of instruction.

All states and programs are faced with a trade-off between quantity and quality of service.

Some states, such as Massachusetts, have opted to emphasize quality in their Title II programs. In these states, the cost of instruction is several times the estimated $200 per student median of Title II programs nationwide. And there are long waiting lists for most programs. Other states invest in quality in differing degrees. Using cost-per-student as a measure of this, states range from expenditures of under $100 to more than $1,000. Clearly this is an issue that all states must acknowledge and address, although many appear reluctant to do so. All states want to raise the productivity of their programs to get more quality for the dollars they invest — but beyond a certain point they must consider whether doing a good job with fewer students is preferable to doing a mediocre job with many. *Unhappily, there is too little information on the effectiveness of incremental investments, and most states do not have an adequate policy foundation to guide them.*

Focus of Service. Given that program resources are inadequate to serve the entire population in need, all states face the question of who should be served. This issue has many dimensions. States with large language minority populations tend to devote a large percentage of their resources to ESL instruction. Likewise, some states have decided to place strong emphasis on family literacy, or on GED. All can be reasonable grounds for prioritization, but program managers must reflect hard on how much emphasis in one direction or the other is too much. The issue is rarely discussed.

Objective evidence that might guide decisions and well-developed philosophical rationales are hard to find. In addition, the issue has a political dimension. In states where ESL demand is strong, program managers who earmark some portion of funding for other forms of adult education often must face the protests of language minority advocates for turning ESL students away. With inadequate resources to serve all needs, states require publicly-considered policies for allocating resources among them. Absent such policies, neglect of some services may develop by default.

A related question is how much emphasis states should place on diagnosing and serving people with learning disabilities. This is an additional expense and burden, but it may be cost-effective in the long run, because it can increase the possibilities that students will receive the service they need.

Finally, it has long been part of adult education philosophy in America that programs should place highest priority on "those most in need" or "the hardest to serve." Usually this means giving priority to people with very low basic skills. However, it is far from clear whether or how Title II programs do this. Judging by enrollment figures, learners at intermediate and higher levels in ABE programs far outnumber lower level learners in most states – and the reverse is true in ESL programs.

Are there fewer native English speakers with very low levels of basic skills, than with higher levels of skills, who require ABE instruction? And are there more adults with very low levels of English proficiency, than with higher levels of proficiency, in the language minority population? Or do these enrollment figures reflect inadequate outreach to the lower-skilled adults? We do not know.

If serving those most in need is important, finding out how the population served compares to the need and demand for service should be a priority. If the priority is to serve those most willing to learn, then programs should sort students on that basis.

Shortage of Management Resources. All of the issues mentioned above are difficult to resolve. And many other equally difficult issues faced by Title II programs could also be cited. But, by far, the greatest issue the states face in administering Title II programs is a shortage of management resources. Most state adult education and literacy offices have tiny staffs and

budgets. A majority of state offices have fewer than half a dozen full-time employees. Some have only one or two people on staff. In a few states, nobody is responsible for the program on a full-time basis statewide.[7] In a majority of states, too, management resources consist largely of the 5 percent administrative set aside and the 12.5 percent program improvement set aside allowed by federal Title II funding.

All states, regardless of size, suffer acutely from inadequate management resources — although the problem is greatest in smaller states — and all must face and resolve the same kind of issues. Moreover, the management resource problem is even worse at the program level because most programs in most states have at best one full-time staff member, the program director. With such limited managerial resources, it is virtually impossible for Title II programs to meet their managerial challenges as well as they should — it is remarkable that they meet them at all. Nor is it clear that larger states with larger staffs have much of an advantage: their managerial problems are correspondingly more complex — and implementing solutions requires far more labor.

With their limited managerial resources, it is virtually impossible for state Title II programs to meet their managerial challenges as well as they should. It is remarkable that they meet them at all.

Resource Centers: States attempt to address these resource limitations in a variety of ways. As mentioned, most states have "resource centers" that focus primarily on staff development. They may be funded entirely by Title II funds, or by a combination of these funds with additional state allotments or other public or private resources aggregated by the institutions (often universities) where they are located. In some states, resource centers also provide technical assistance, or perform other managerial functions – for example, quality control, curriculum development, and management of some instructional systems, such as the use of technology. An adequate mapping of state literacy resource centers has never been conducted. As a result, the line between Title II administrative offices and the resource centers is vague when viewed from the outside. In some cases, resource centers bring additional funding and staff to managerial tasks, but it is unclear how often this occurs or the extent of their contribution.

However, in some states, resource centers clearly expand managerial capacity. These are states — Illinois and Pennsylvania are prime examples — where there are fairly large independent resource centers that conduct research and technical

[7] In states, such as Colorado, without a full-time state director of adult education, funds are usually distributed to regional entities which must tackle administrative issues.

assistance at both the state and national levels. A large part of the funding for these centers comes from special federal grants and/or from foundations, and they make major contributions to improving management in their states.

Regional Centers: Some states try to solve their managerial problems by devoting some of their resources to the support of regional centers. New England and the Pacific Northwest have regional centers. The states in these areas believe that they gain considerable benefits from the economies of scale that the arrangements allow. In addition, larger regional centers can be magnets for special state, federal, or private funding.

Some large states, such as Florida and Pennsylvania, have sought to improve management functions by consolidating a large part of their program improvement funding in regional resource centers within their states.

Outsourcing: Still another solution to managerial problems is to outsource some administrative functions. Many states contract with independent research firms, either local or national, for program improvement or on-going management services. A substantial portion of California's staff development effort, for example, is carried out under contract with the American Institute for Research, which is based in Washington, D.C. California and other states also contract with CASAS (the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System), a private non-profit organization, to manage their assessment services. In many cases, states believe that private organizations have developed a baseline of expertise that allows them to perform certain managerial functions more cost-effectively than could be performed by state staff.

Recently, the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC), which represents state directors of Title II programs, launched an initiative to help senior state adult education and literacy administrators improve their knowledge base and managerial skills. NAEPDC is supported by the states through contributions of a small portion of their 12.5 percent program improvement funds. The new initiative, conducted in collaboration with Abt Associates, is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. It clearly addresses an important priority, but it is still in an early stage. In a similar vein, the National Institute for Literacy and the ERIC Clearinghouse, both funded by the federal government, provide an abundance of managerial information.

Sharing Information: Finally, many states share managerial information and expertise on an informal basis or through professional associations. The southern regional states are renowned for their dense network of informal professional ties.

Because states augment their line administrative systems in so many ways, it is virtually impossible to estimate the total resources devoted to the state role as administrators of adult education and literacy systems, or, for that matter, to say that any one system is "typical." But most state managers appear to believe that total resources are woefully inadequate. Even with all of the creative adaptations and augmentations they have devised, they are still

facing managerial problems on a par with those faced by much larger intergovernmental programs. And even by the most generous estimate, they are facing those problems with a fraction of the managerial resources larger programs have. *Far from being the stereotypical "top heavy bureaucracies," Title II offices are so small that they are almost invisible in many states.*

Clearly, the state role as manager of adult education and literacy programs is of critical importance. Nothing else can succeed unless this management role is performed well. Thus, anyone concerned with improving adult education and literacy service in the United States must consider strengthening this role to be one of the highest priorities.

The states simply do not have the managerial resources to carry out their responsibilities at the level of quality required, and they admit it. The individual states and the federal government must together find ways to improve both the quantity and quality of public administration in this field.

2. State Governance Role

THE STATE ROLE in governance of adult education and literacy programs is different from, although related to, the administrative function of articulation. When administrators deal with issues of articulation, they are trying to forge cooperative arrangements among programs that operate under different policy authorities and different funding streams. States perform a governance role when they place programs with these differences under the same management.

To some extent, all states combine separate streams of adult education and literacy funding and policy authority. In some cases, these combinations are almost inadvertent administrative conveniences. In other cases, they are the result of bureaucratic turf battles. In still others, they are the result of considered policy. Whatever the motives for governance decisions, they address the same fundamental question: Who should be in charge of what aspects of the adult education and literacy system?

The answer to this question is important because decisions about governance strongly influence the nature of the management systems that guide programs, the goals they are expected to achieve, and the degree of support they receive from states. Because governance systems can combine separate programs under the same management, they also have the potential to create administrative efficiencies by sharing staff, facilities, curricula, and other overhead elements.

Because Title II programs are usually regarded as the primary component of any state's adult education and literacy system, most governance issues revolve around the question of what agency should control those programs. Title II programs are never administered by freestanding entities that are too small to achieve agency status. In all states, they are placed under the authority of some larger state agency with other responsibilities.

Three arrangements are most common for "packaging" adult education — school boards, community colleges, and workforce investment boards:

School Boards. In the majority of states, Title II programs have long been controlled by state boards of education — the same agencies that have primary responsibility for elementary and secondary schools. Implicitly or explicitly, this reflects the view that adult education and literacy is a remedial program: its goal is to bring adults with educational deficits up to the basic skills standards they should have obtained as children. Schools and teachers whose primary training is elementary and secondary education may seem to be the natural means of achieving this.

However, adult education leaders, in and out of government, have long taken exception to this view. They believe that the educational needs of adults with low basic skills are different from those of children at the same skill levels, and that teachers with a specialized background in, and basic dedication to, adult learning are required to instruct them. Thus, the packaging of adult education within school systems has always been an uncomfortable arrangement for all concerned. The comparatively small adult education and literacy system is rarely a high priority for state-level school officials who are already hard pressed to keep up with the problems of elementary and secondary education. Adult educators believe that *their* needs are neglected and that the basic philosophy of what they are trying to achieve is skewed in the wrong direction.

In most states, this tension is resolved by the creation of a system within a system. Separate divisions of adult education are created within state and local education departments, usually under the direct management of a middle-level state administrator bearing the title "state director" of adult education. Under this arrangement, state directors have a great deal of autonomy as long as they do not ask too much of senior administrators. They often are allowed to be highly entrepreneurial in arranging management systems, seeking additional funds, and forging alliances within and outside the education system. They are not necessarily restricted to working through local education agencies. Indeed, they are often encouraged to fund programs managed by volunteer groups, community colleges, and other organizations.

Although adult educators often complain about governance by the elementary and secondary system, the arrangement does have some advantages.

As noted above, insofar as adult education and literacy programs are managed by school districts or other local agencies, they may benefit from administrative support by these established bureaucracies. This support may take the form of facilities, access to teachers, accounting, and other forms of overhead that would be very costly to Title II programs if they had to operate on their own. Moreover, to the extent that local agencies care about adult education and literacy, they often supplement state funding. Because most local agencies have their own revenue streams, the potential for supplementation can be great.

At the state level, too, adult education can potentially benefit from governance by school boards by sharing various forms of overhead. More importantly, this form of governance makes Title II programs part of the public school budget. In most states, this is the largest and highest priority area of spending. Because adult education is only a small part of it, there is at least the potential to slip in large increases without greatly affecting the total. The heads of state education agencies are highly influential players in state politics. To the extent that they are sympathetic to adult education and literacy, a great deal can be achieved. Adult education becomes part of the larger game of educational politics, and can potentially score large gains. In most states where Title II programs are governed by elementary and secondary systems, at least some of these benefits are achieved. In some states, the benefits are substantial.

A prime example of what can be achieved is demonstrated by the "school aid" systems in New York and Florida — two of the states that spend the most on Title II programs. In most states, funding for adult education is an annual appropriation issue. It is often hard to detect the rationale for the amounts appropriated. In "school aid" states, funding is provided by a formula within the overall education budget. To oversimplify, Title II programs receive per capita reimbursement for the number of students they enroll, in the same way that public schools do, except at a reduced rate. This system can be an enormous generator of resources.

This type of arrangement probably would be impossible unless Title II were under the governance of elementary and secondary authorities. Clearly, however, it is not the only way to muster large resources for adult education and literacy. For example, California, the highest spending state, handles the matter by annual appropriations. But "school aid" is an example of one tool that is available to states that maintain the traditional system of governance through boards of education.

There has never been an objective analysis of how adequate this system is. On the whole, adult educators seem to believe that, in most states, the disadvantages of being "buried in the educational bureaucracy" outweigh the administrative and fiscal benefits. They believe that senior school officials can never be motivated to take the needs of adult education and literacy seriously enough. **Still, it may be that they are neglecting untapped potential in this arrangement.**

Community Colleges: In a growing number of states, policymakers have decided that school board governance is inadequate. In eight states and the District of Columbia, Title II is administered by community college systems or their equivalent.[8] The implicit philosophy behind these arrangements is that adult education and literacy is a form of postsecondary education.

[8] The eight states are currently: Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin. In addition, in several other states – such as Idaho and Pennsylvania – the director of the Title II program reports to the higher division of the overall state education agency. This allows a great deal of flexibility in the use of administrative systems. Finally, in at least some "school board" states, such as New Mexico and Arizona, service is delivered primarily by postsecondary institutions.

Like many of the other services offered by community colleges, the implicit goal of adult education and literacy is lifelong learning, not remediation.[9] Consequently, administrators who understand the needs of adults and are skilled at working with them should manage the programs.

States that adopt this form of governance appear to believe that Title II programs will receive higher priority within community colleges than in school systems. They also appear to believe that the administrative, instructional, and overhead resources available will be stronger. Moreover, management by community colleges potentially makes it possible to integrate Title II services with the other adult services colleges provide. It may, for example, create a seamless transition from GED instruction to regular college enrollment, from lower-level ESL programs to "developmental" programs aimed at academic study, or from ABE and ESL programs into specialized vocational programs for individuals with limited basic skills.

Borrowing from their experience with developmental education, community colleges that manage Title II programs may also place more emphasis on math instruction than is found in most adult education and literacy programs. They may also offer more *intensive* programs. Finally, community colleges may find creative ways to channel financial support for postsecondary education (state and local per-capita reimbursements, Pell Grants, and Perkins Act aid) to support at least some aspects of Title II programs.

The potential to achieve these things is very real. As in the case of governance by school boards, however, there is no definitive analysis of the extent to which they are realized. A cursory examination of states that have adopted governance by community colleges suggests that they are realized more fully in some states than others.

At one extreme, some community college states appear to be running a system within a system, just as school board states do. Both at the state governance level and at individual colleges, Title II services are managed by separate administrative entities that have only tenuous ties to other college services. Developmental education and Title II are separate and parallel systems. Many adult education and literacy services are contracted out to school boards and volunteer groups.

In other states, there is much closer integration of management, curriculum, staff, and support services. Adult education and literacy service is a priority for colleges, and it is mostly provided on campus and/or by college staff. Transitions between Title II programs and traditional academic offerings are a goal. Directly or indirectly, post-secondary funding streams augment Title II funding. Community college leaders are advocates of adult education and literacy.

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[9] Any assessment of governance by community colleges should be informed by a broader understanding of community colleges themselves. That is beyond the scope of this report. An excellent source is: W. Norton Grubb, Working in the Middle (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1996).

They attempt to mobilize support for it from business and other local leaders through programs such as workforce literacy instruction.

A standing concern about all states in which community colleges exercise governance functions is whether the colleges will place as much emphasis on low-level readers and ESL students as school boards traditionally have. Serving these groups has not been a traditional part of the community college mission. Nevertheless, there seems to be no inherent reason why colleges should not extend their missions in this way. Most states that have adopted community college governance claim that they have done so.

Placing Title II programs under the governance of community colleges is not a panacea. Nor is it the only way to involve community colleges in the adult education and literacy system. Even in states where that system is under the governance of school boards, a large percentage of Title II programs, and an even larger percentage of students served by them, are located in community colleges.[10] A growing number of states believe, nevertheless, that governance by community colleges has great potential.

Workforce Investment Boards. Seven states have chosen to place their Title II programs under the governance of their Workforce Investment Boards or similar bodies —the agencies established to administer the job search, training, placement, and related activities of Title I of the Workforce Investment Act.[11] This arrangement can be considered to be in the spirit of that Act, which encourages collaboration in providing Title I and Title II services. It also has the advantage of appearing to provide a primary focus for adult education and literacy service — preparation for employment — around which the system as a whole can be organized.

Finally, as mentioned above, links between Title I and Title II services have been among the most difficult to achieve within overall state adult education and literacy systems. This is the case despite the fact that Title I is a natural catchment area for people in need of Title II services, and despite the fact that both Titles place a great deal of emphasis on the goal of economic advancement for people with limited basic skills. Placing Title II programs under the governance of Workforce Investment Boards is one way to force collaboration and to link adult education students with a large family of support services provided by Title I.

Most states that combine Title I and Title II programs under the same governance system have developed detailed administrative structures to make the arrangement work. It is not clear, however, whether these states achieve the potential benefits of this method of governance. Viewed from the perspective of state reports on Title II, the benefits are not apparent. The

[10] One U.S. Department of Education official estimates that 15 percent of Title II programs are located at community colleges, and that these serve 30-40 percent of program participants.

[11] The states are Arkansas, Alaska, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Tennessee, and Wyoming.

numbers of Title I beneficiaries served in Workforce Investment Board states appear to be about average for the nation as a whole. Their learning gains appear average as well. Staffing appears to be similar. State funding is not exceptionally high. It may be that most of the benefits gained by this governance system are difficult to measure in terms of the traditional goals of adult education. These integrated programs may, for example, facilitate greater transference of learning to the world of work.

It is difficult to assess governance by Workforce Investment Boards because the administrative arrangements of job training systems are highly complex. In addition, many aspects of Title I — particularly One-Stop Delivery Systems — are fairly new in most states. Only now are they beginning to hit their stride. As a result, this form of governance is a topic that requires more careful investigation.

Governing Smaller Components of the System. Determining what agency should be responsible for Title II programs is, however, only one governance decision that states make. They also decide how the smaller components of the adult education and literacy system should be governed. States have adopted a number of different arrangements for these smaller programs.

A common governance arrangement is to place family literacy programs, including Even Start, under the management of Title II agencies. This is consistent with the idea that family literacy is, in part, an adult education program. Moreover, the provisions of Title II allow state grant funds to be spent for family literacy. Many states, however, seem to view family literacy as more of an early childhood program. In those cases, family literacy is under the governance of agencies that specialize in early childhood education. The relationship between that program and Title II programs is handled by articulation agreements of various kinds.

Another common pairing is between Title II and literacy programs provided by correctional education. All states invest some of their Title II funds in programs at state prisons and/or county jails. However, the management of these programs is often fragmented. It may or may not fall directly under the same authorities responsible for Title II services. Likewise, many Title II programs fund library literacy efforts, and support them in other ways. But, in most areas, it would be an exaggeration to say that these programs are under the governance of Title II administrators. The relationship is closer to that of grantor and grantee. In states such as Minnesota and New York, it is a close relationship. But libraries receive their funding from a variety of national, state, and local sources. And they set their own directions.

Programs for the learning disabled are only beginning to make their way into Title II programs. Many states are struggling to find ways to diagnose students in mainstream Title II programs and to serve them more effectively. Few states have forged strong links with agencies that specialize in learning disabilities (usually for children) or tapped the large resources potentially available for these purposes.

The Limits of Governance. Combining components of their adult education and literacy systems through governance arrangements is clearly an important state role. If performed well, this function can achieve administrative efficiencies, increase resources, enhance quality, and reduce fragmentation. To some extent, these goals are achieved in every state by governance arrangements that package Title II programs with other components of their education or human resource systems.

One of the most striking aspects of governance arrangements for adult education and literacy, however, is that they rarely achieve their full potential. Regardless of how they are governed, Title II programs are seldom well integrated with the mainstream programs of their host agencies. For example, with the exception of the few "school aid" states, Title II programs hardly ever have access to traditional streams of education funding in the states where they are under the governance of elementary and secondary authorities. And they rarely take full advantage of developmental education resources in the states where they are managed by community colleges. There is no inherent reason why these and other opportunities to strengthen adult education and literacy service should not be pursued. An example of almost every conceivable use of governance to improve adult education service can almost certainly be found in some state. The problem is that probably no state makes use of all or most of these tools.

Most states could improve both the quantity and the quality of their adult education and literacy systems if they demanded more of their governance arrangements.

Yet another striking aspect of arrangements for governing adult education and literacy is how few of their options many states use. In many, perhaps the majority of states, decisions on governance consist primarily of placing Title II programs in a kindred agency. States do not bring many other components of the adult education and literacy system under the same authority. State directors must negotiate as much coordination as possible from agencies over which they have little control, and for which adult education and literacy is a low priority. Likewise, few states have used their governance authority to build centers of strength in adult education and literacy apart from Title II. For example, the potential of libraries as a service system has been neglected in most states. There is often a grudging acceptance of volunteers. Also, few states have been as assertive as they might be about enhancing the role of adult education and literacy in welfare programs.

In short, in most states, the governance systems of adult education and literacy are as important in potential as they are in actuality. At the program level, states with different governance arrangements often resemble each other more than they differ. This need not be the case, and some states optimize their governance arrangements better than others.

However, most states could improve both the quantity and quality of their adult education and literacy systems if they demanded more of the governance arrangements now in place. And many states would benefit from considering whether those arrangements are adequate.

III. State Policy Leadership Role

IN THEIR ROLES as managers of adult education and literacy services, and in their governance roles, states fall short of what they might achieve. In all states, more students would be served better through more effective performances of these roles. In the case of the managerial role, the major problems are a shortage of administrative resources and uncertainties about the best way to use available resources. In the case of governance, the major problem is the limited effectiveness of governance systems, and their consequent limited ability to overcome managerial problems, reduce fragmentation, enhance resources, and achieve other goals.

If any state is to achieve its full potential in adult education and literacy, it must have the desire and ability to optimize its system through policy development.

However, ultimately, the reason for both problems is that state policymakers rarely think about their adult education and literacy systems strategically. They seldom view those systems in their full dimension. They rarely ask: How can we achieve the maximum benefit for adult learners from the various delivery mechanisms available to us? The reason is that adult education and literacy is seldom a high priority for the states.

This means that the problems of the state role in adult education and literacy are fundamentally leadership problems. If any state is to achieve its full potential in this field, it must have the desire and ability to optimize its adult education and literacy system through policy development. **This is no light undertaking. It requires thorough, thoughtful strategic planning.**

The first steps in strategic planning are to consider all components of the AELS, establish goals, and identify the resources needed to achieve those goals. Implementing strategic plans almost inevitably requires additional state spending, breaking down long-standing barriers between programs with new governance arrangements, and holding both administrative and governance systems to high standards of performance.

These challenges are involved in optimizing any intergovernmental program. It should be no surprise that they are faced in adult education and literacy. Moreover, there are no cookie-cutter solutions to them. State circumstances differ. A strategic plan that is desirable and possible to implement in one state may differ significantly from plans suitable for other states. More

importantly, because there are so many strands to the adult education and literacy system in any state, viable plans might take various forms.

Who is capable of taking on this difficult leadership challenge? As in any other aspect of public affairs, leadership can come from the top down or the bottom up. Ideally, it should come from both directions.

Top-Down Leadership. Experience indicates that state governors, or those who can exert their influence — first ladies, close advisors, or senior cabinet officers — are the most likely sources of top-down leadership in the adult education and literacy field. In most states, governors are the consummate policy leaders. They set budget and legislative priorities, appoint state administrators, establish management and governance systems, and enforce standards of performance. They have the ability to commit funds to missions they consider important, and to muscle aside bureaucratic or political opposition to their decisions. **Although they are often hemmed in by state legislatures and constitutional provisions, governors in most states can usually get what they want if they want it enough.**

Most major advances in improving the effectiveness of intergovernmental programs at the state level are the result of initiatives by governors. This has certainly been true in the adult education and literacy field. The only period during which this field was a policy priority in most states was during the late 1980's and early 1990's. During that period, literacy initiatives led by governors or first ladies were launched in more than 30 states, and at least a dozen of these were quite substantial. These initiatives at least *aspired* to perform the leadership functions required to make large advances by devising and implementing changes in management and governance — and by leveraging additional state, national, and private funds.

This was particularly true of initiatives aided by the Council of State Policy and Planning Agencies (a now-disbanded branch of the National Governors' Association). The Council's efforts focused on a National Literacy Academy. The Academy was a high-intensity strategic policy planning process in which six states participated. The process required states to take a holistic view of their literacy systems and to craft initiatives that leveraged as many components of those systems as possible into larger and more effective responses. Participating states were required to send their top policymakers to the Academy, including governors' chiefs of staff, state budget officers, and others exercising the governor's authority, *and* key state legislators. The results were carefully considered initiatives that established adult education and literacy as a state priority, as well as placing governors in leadership positions to bring about large-scale change.

Gubernatorial leadership in the adult education and literacy field did not die in the 1990's. In recent years, the governors or first ladies of Massachusetts, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and other states have become involved in strengthening the service system through reforms in administration and governance, as well as requesting additional state funds.

Of course, governors' initiatives are not the only way that states can, or have, exercised a leadership role in this field. In California and New York, for example, a combination of senior legislators and state education officials has been key to progress. But in most states, most of the time, governors have been the key players in ensuring that state government will play a leadership role.

Leadership from the Bottom. Top-down leadership can accomplish a great deal, but it will not necessarily occur on its own. In any state, there is a community of people deeply concerned with improving adult education and literacy service — literacy advocates. Top-down leadership is unlikely to emerge unless these advocates exert pressure from the bottom up.

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To enlist their governors or other policy leaders in the literacy cause, or to bring about large-scale policy change by other means, adult education and literacy advocates must be prepared to lead the way in strategic planning: to think across the various service systems in this field, establish goals, and identify the managerial and fiscal requirements to meet them.

Literacy advocates must also be prepared to think and act from a realistic understanding of how policy is developed in their states. Assuming that governors are the most likely policy leaders in this field, advocates must acknowledge that all chief executives have far more priorities than they can possibly handle. As a result, the advocates need to define their cause in a way that is attractive to their governor, key legislators, or other members of the state policy leadership. This usually involves linking adult education and literacy to some other issue of concern to the governor and other policy leaders. In some states, the issue may be economic development. In others, it may be child services, health, criminal justice, welfare, higher education, or the environment. The formula will be different for each state and vary according to the times.

For purposes of linking adult education and literacy to other public issues, fragmentation of the system can be an advantage. It provides a long shopping list of possible connections to other policy concerns. One small component, such as family literacy, service to welfare recipients, correctional education, or service by public libraries may capture the interest of top policymakers in the literacy system as a whole. What may seem to be problematic from an adult education and literacy perspective, such as the relationship between Title I and Title II programs, may be seen as an opportunity to a governor and policymakers who want to influence their state's job training system.

Focusing the Appeal. Defining adult education and literacy in attractive terms is not enough, however. Generalized appeals for support to a worthy cause are less likely to succeed

than targeted requests. To play a leadership role in the policy arena, literacy advocates need to *focus* their appeal. They should ask top state policymakers to do something specific to aid their cause, and it must be something readily doable in the near term. This may mean devoting more funds to a particular program or function, creating new governance arrangements, enforcing existing mandates more strongly, or devising wholly new policy emphases, such as initiatives in the welfare or job training fields.

Having done their homework, literacy advocates must then find a way to get their message to these policy leaders through their close associates. Otherwise their appeals will simply be received as special pleading by one of many interest groups. Who do these policy leaders listen to and trust? To act effectively in this area, literacy advocates must convince influential policymakers of the merits of their cause. Depending on particular state circumstances, these may be elected or appointed officials, business or party leaders in the governor's camp, members of the press, or any of the many other people who make up the influence chain in a state at any given time.

It takes insight and persistence to identify and recruit likely allies. But here again, diversity in state literacy systems can be an advantage. In one way or another, those systems involve a great many people. Determining which of these people can be helpful in reaching a key policy leader may, however, be a difficult task. It requires finding the community college trustee, the child advocate, or other prominent person who happens to have a special interest in literacy — and who also happens to be within the confidence of that leader.

Finally, literacy advocates must be prepared to show that they are not the only people who care about their cause. They must form alliances with other advocacy groups. For example, most states contain substantial organized lobbies for improving the welfare, job training, health, library, early childhood, and youth services systems. Many states also contain strong lobbies for the rights of language minorities and prisoners. Certainly, all states have strong business and labor organizations. These and other groups should have an interest in improving adult education and literacy. Advocates must attempt to recruit them as allies, to convince them to express support for improved basis skills instruction, exert influence on policymakers, and mobilize their members.

By the same token, literacy advocates must mobilize their *own* policy base. This requires activism in the most elementary sense of the term. The advocates must keep administrators, teachers, volunteers, students, and others who are responsible for providing service informed about policy issues and developments. And they must organize letter-writing campaigns, public events, and other forms of public expression at strategic points in the policy process. In addition, they must marshal and publicize data, anecdotes, and other forms of information to support their arguments. This may require commissioning specialized research. In many states, well-organized student letter-writing campaigns and visits by governors or other policymakers to literacy programs have proved effective.

The Need for Infrastructure. These are the rudiments of bottom-up leadership for any cause in any state at any time. The challenge for advocates of adult education and literacy is to become organized to act as leaders in the ways outlined.

In most states, this is a substantial challenge. No single organization has the resources, responsibility, or stature to develop strategic plans or exert policy leadership in adult education and literacy. Program administrators, who are generally the most knowledgeable people in the field, are often barred from direct involvement in advocacy work because they are public employees. State literacy councils are usually understaffed and underfunded. In some states, resource centers play an advocacy role, but this is rarely their primary function. Regional resource centers in New England and the Pacific Northwest have sometimes been effective in strategic planning. In Virginia, Massachusetts, and a number of other states, privately-funded organizations have been instrumental in organizing advocacy efforts based on strategic plans. Volunteer groups are often among the most publicly active members of the adult education community, and their capacity for leadership could be greatly enhanced.

One of the major challenges facing states in the adult literacy field is the lack of an effective advocacy infrastructure.

In short, one of the major challenges facing states in the adult literacy field is the lack of an effective advocacy infrastructure. This clearly is not the case with most other intergovernmental programs. Advocates for improved health care, elementary and secondary education, transportation, child care, the environment, and a myriad of other causes, have well-organized lobbies in most states. If states are to reap the benefits of providing strong leadership in adult education and literacy policy, advocates for this system must find better ways to take part in the competition for public funds. As just noted, this almost certainly involves bringing together existing advocacy groups in new combinations and forming alliances with other causes related to literacy. If family literacy is the key to opening the policymaker's door, for example, literacy advocates might well forge alliances with the childcare lobby. If economic development is the key, it would be productive to work with business organizations and organized labor.

The development of an advocacy infrastructure is all the more important because establishing state leadership cannot be achieved in a single campaign. Governors and state legislators leave office, and new state leaders must be enlisted in the adult education and literacy cause. Moreover, any particular state administration is likely to support only selected improvements in the adult education and literacy system. Comprehensive reform is rare in any aspect of public policy at any level of government. If literacy advocates tie their cause to one aspect of the policy agenda, the most they can hope to achieve is progress in those areas of the system most closely related to that priority. Comprehensive, lasting reform can only come about by long-term advocacy that maintains the momentum of past administrations and directs new administrations to another set of issues. Creating and maintaining state leadership is a never-ending process. Literacy advocates therefore need to organize their efforts for the long haul.

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V.
A Final Note

THE STATE ROLE in adult education and literacy is clearly indispensable, and its potential is great. But how strong is the state commitment to this field now? If federal funding for adult education and literacy programs vanished overnight, how many states would maintain their efforts? We do not know, but the limited commitment of financial and policy resources to this field in many states is a sobering reality.

In an era of devolution, the need to strengthen the state role in adult education and literacy is all the more urgent.

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To ensure that the states can perform their role in service delivery at a level the nation needs and deserves, the federal government, state policy leaders, and private sector organizations must do the following:

- *View the state role in adult education and literacy holistically, taking account of its full dimensions.*
- *Strengthen the administrative resources of the states in this field by providing additional funding and by building greater management expertise.*
- *Conduct rigorous evaluations of the governance arrangements for adult education and literacy in each state, adopt the systems of governance that are most effective, and make sure that they work well.*
- *Develop strategic plans that establish clear goals for service, and identify the fiscal, administrative, governance, and policy resources required to achieve them.*
- *Create and support an advocacy infrastructure in each state with the resources, commitment, and expertise to make strategic plans a reality.*

As noted at the outset, **the adult education and literacy system will become what the states want it to be.** It is crucial to our nation and to the states themselves that they do everything within their power to develop the stable, supportive environments needed for sound adult education and literacy programming — by exercising strong, clear leadership from the middle.