In Community, Strength

Changing Our Minds
about U.S. Adult Foundational Education

Book 5
What We Can Do to Generate Supports and
Supporters for Community-Oriented AFE

A Resource Book Series
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October 28, 2023

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Contents

Summary of Book 5

Transitioning current U.S. AFE efforts to a community-oriented model will require a significantly stronger infrastructure of supports than is currently provided for adult foundational education (AFE).[1]

Part 5.a. summarizes the financial, in-kind, and volunteer supports and policies that effective community-oriented AFE services require; potential sources of those supports; and what those supports would be used for (i.e., for staffing; professional development; facilities; technologies for learning, management, and other functions; partnerships; public outreach; and research and development).

Putting such an infrastructure in place and sustaining it will require new, collaborative ways of thinking, acting, and investing by a variety of familiar and other stakeholders at local, state, and national levels. Though challenging, this work can and should learn from and build on informative models of AFE policy, funding, professional development, partnerships, research, and advocacy already developed and currently underway in the field.

Part 5.b. suggests that those who want to create community-oriented AFE programs might do so through a series of demonstration projects focused on customizing AFE services to the needs and interests of particular learners and communities. Part 5.b. also suggests that those doing this work might learn from past and more recent initiatives that generated support for various aspects of AFE.

Part 5.c. describes nine examples of such capacity-building initiatives. Many relative newcomers to our field – as well as some veterans – might not be familiar with these examples. They are presented here as food for thought for those who now are interested in generating interest in and support for community-oriented AFE models overall and for special types of community-oriented AFE for particular learner populations and communities. While many of the initiatives described did help build individual programs, they also generated wider-scale support for longer-term use of such models at national, state, and local levels.

Those now interested in working with various stakeholder groups to build supports for community-oriented AFE should learn about these and similar examples and consider how these earlier capacity-building models might be updated and applied to AFE efforts today.

[1] See the Glossary in the Appendix for definitions of *adult foundational education (AFE)* and *community-oriented. AFE* is also explained in Part 2.a.

PART 5.a.

Supports and Supporters Needed for Community-Oriented AFE

Those doing this work (i.e., AFE providers, learners, and other partners) of creating and sustaining community-oriented AFE programs will require:

Supports and Supporters Needed

Financial, In-Kind, and Volunteer Supports

Supports needed

- Basic funding is needed for AFE staff, facilities, equipment, transportation, professional development, public outreach, partnership development, research and evaluation, and other essential program functions. Funding needs to be adequate, timely, sustained, and easy to access and manage.
- Special funding should be provided to support demonstration projects (to develop new program models for particular learners, stakeholders, needs, etc.) and rapid-response projects (e.g., to respond to the closing of a large employer, to a public health problem like COVID-19, or to a sudden influx of refugees).
- In-kind supports can also be very useful as stand-alone contributions or in combination with funding. Examples of in-kind supports include equipment (e.g., refurbished computers for use in computer classrooms or in learners' homes); Internet accounts for learners and AFE programs; office, classroom, and meeting space; transportation (e.g., bus passes for learners); childcare for learners' children; clerical supplies; refreshments (for meetings); clothing for job seekers; books for learners and their children; and publicity (e.g., through local news coverage).
- Volunteer (pro-bono) supports can take the form of individuals (including adult learners) who volunteer to help with instructional tasks (as tutors, teachers' aides, curriculum developers); administrative tasks (e.g., legal advice, publicity, fundraising); setting up and hosting a

program website; hosting of special events; and advocacy (e.g., outreach to public officials).

Potential providers of those supports

- <u>Federal, state, county, and municipal government agencies</u>, including traditional AFE funders and other agencies (e.g., correctional, public health, immigration, workforce development, public schools) that serve individuals with foundational skills limitations.
- <u>Private-sector stakeholders</u> who for various reasons are or might be concerned about the adult foundational skills issue. These stakeholders might include individuals, foundations, corporate giving offices, employers, labor unions, workforce and economic development agencies, and stakeholders concerned about public health, criminal justice reform and public safety, immigrants and refugees, individuals with disabilities, environmental sustainability, and other societal issues (Business Council for Effective Literacy, January 1989a; Chisman & Spangenberg, March 2006; Waite, March 2019).

Policies

Supports needed

- <u>Governmental policies</u> that set goals; provide guidelines, frameworks, performance measures, and funding to AFE efforts. (Funding to provide incentives for innovations will be especially important.)
- <u>Private-sector policies</u> that can provide AFE supports for particular populations and areas of need. (Examples include businesses that create "clear-language" policies to ensure that company communications are user-friendly for employees and customers who have limited English skills.)

Providers of those supports

- <u>Governmental agencies</u> that historically have created laws and set and administered AFE policies, as well as other governmental agencies (e.g., public health, economic development, corrections) that do or might serve individuals who have foundational skills limitations.
- <u>Private sector institutions</u> such as employers and employer associations, individual labor unions and labor associations, healthcare institutions

and associations, etc. (See list of "private sector stakeholders" under "Financial, In-Kind, and Volunteer Supports" above.)

What Financial, In-Kind, & Volunteer Supports Can Be Used for

Staffing

Staffing supports needed and providers of those supports

Professional staff: As is true in K-12 schools, higher education, healthcare, and other human services, AFE needs professional staff who have the special expertise and supports required to provide high-quality services. (Most parents wouldn't be satisfied with the idea of sending their children to schools that don't have qualified staff. Users of AFE rightly should expect to have qualified, adequately supported instructors and other staff to serve them.) As a field, AFE programs have historically lacked such staffing, due to lack of investment which in turn is likely due to the lack of recognition of AFE and adult learners as entities worthy of support. The creation and sustaining of the kinds of community-oriented AFE described in this document will require special expertise in planning and implementing of collaborative projects customized to diverse learners, stakeholders, and contexts.

There has also long been a need in the field for staff who come from the communities that AFE tries to serve. Though this issue periodically raises its head in the field, it remains a challenge, likely due a number of factors. These include the lack of professional salaries and career paths for adult educators in general and an AFE culture that has tended to be dominated by white people who might be insensitive to the need to recruit individuals of color as AFE professionals (Business Council for Effective Literacy, January 1993b; Harrison, 2021; Quigley, Fall 2021).

Para-professional staff: While individuals without formal AFE credentials can play roles in AFE programs, they need to nonetheless be equipped with the appropriate expertise that their roles will require. These individuals can include volunteers from the surrounding community or from a stakeholder group (e.g., employers such as a local restaurant owner, nursing home administrator, or building contractor who might mentor adult learners on jobs in those industries). Former or current adult learners might also participate as helpers in the classroom or in

administrative roles. (In some cases, learners have gone on to become professional AFE teachers and administrators.)

These "para-professionals" might do this work on a pro-bono, unpaid basis, with a stipend or salary, or in an "AFE apprenticeship" program. College students might serve as helpers in AFE programs through service-learning courses or work-study programs offered by their universities (Business Council for Effective Literacy, April 1987b; Jurmo, March 2003; New York Times, July 21, 1987). Para-professionals, though not fully qualified professionals, should nonetheless be expected to act in a professional way, taking the work seriously, understanding and adhering to organizational policies, and being committed to providing high-quality services.

There is a strong tendency in AFE in the U.S. to see "volunteers" as the "solution to adult literacy" and a way to avoid having to invest in creating a professional-caliber field. Although new digital technologies have great potential to better serve more learners, the field will nonetheless continue to need well-equipped human beings – both professional and para-professional – to manage AFE services and provide personal supports to learners. (In addition to learning from the decades of experience by volunteer organizations like ProLiteracy, the field might explore Peace Corps as a model of how to use and support para-professional volunteers to carry out demanding, professional-quality work with limited resources.)

Professional Development

Professional development supports needed: The above-described professional and para-professional staff need various kinds of professional development supports. Professional development should be understood to be more than "training;" a real profession should include paid positions with professional-level salaries and benefits (for the professional staff), appropriate compensation (possibly to include stipends, small grants, fellowships, or apprenticeships) for para-professionals, as well as professional-quality training (ranging from professional certification to degree programs), mentoring, peer networks, and easy access to high-quality resource materials. As stated above under "staffing," those doing this work should thus be recognized,

supported, and be accountable as professionals (Smith et al, November 2003).

Providers of those professional development supports: The good news here is that at this writing there are already many good examples of the kinds of professional development described above. Examples include the in-person conferences and workshops, on-line courses, discussion groups, and resource collections offered by national institutions (e.g., LINCS.ed.gov, ProLiteracy, COABE) and state and local adult education professional development offices and networks. However, those wishing to create community-oriented AFE services will need more specialized, intensive professional development opportunities that focus more directly on how to create community-oriented services like those described in Part 4.b. While many of the existing professional development supports are relevant and adaptable to a "community-oriented" model, additional training and resource materials should also be made available specifically for that purpose. Those additional resources might provide more details about the AFE models shown in Part 4.b. and the arguments presented in Part 3.b. (See Adult Foundational Education Digital Library Group, February 6, 2023 for more about the need for an expanded system of on-line AFE resources.)

Facilities

Facility supports needed: AFE programs need facilities to house instructional and administrative activities. These facilities need to be properly equipped with furniture, digital technologies, and other amenities; accessible in terms of time and location to learners and staff; and safe and welcoming to both staff and the learners to be served. (Two examples: If the program is serving Arabic-speaking refugees and immigrants from a predominantly-Muslim country, it might be helpful to have signage written in those learners' language and culturally-relevant foods and/or a prayer room available. A workplace AFE program might be housed in the same training rooms used for management personnel, both to provide an environment that is both physically well equipped (with quiet, well-ventilated rooms with good lighting, comfortable seating, and required digital equipment) and also conveys the company's respect for the program and worker participants (Boutwell, 1989; Soifer, Irwin, & Young, 1989). Though the AFE field is rapidly moving to a greater reliance on distance learning, many programs will

still need to have physical spaces to operate in. These could include spaces in the AFE program center and in one or more satellite locations (e.g., classrooms in a public housing residence, a labor union facility, a public library, or a correctional facility).

Providers of those facility supports: As with the case of "Policies" above, such facilities might be provided by a combination of "traditional" AFE funders and other stakeholders. Those other stakeholders might include prisoner re-entry centers, employers (who provide classroom spaces on company premises), labor unions (which set up learning centers at their union halls), public libraries (which create computer-equipped classrooms where instructors from nearby AFE programs teach classes) (Spangenberg, August 1996), or corporations (which open their cafeterias up as after-hours tutoring sites for volunteer literacy programs). Stakeholders (which might include the above institutions and others like universities and community colleges, places of worship, hotels, or restaurants) might also provide space for AFE-related meetings of community members, business leaders, or AFE service providers. Spaces might also be provided for an AFE conference or other special event (e.g., an awards ceremony for outstanding adult learners or readings by adult learners of their writings).

Technologies for Teaching/Learning, Program Management, and Professional Development

Technology supports needed: Starting in the 1980s, the U.S. AFE field has talked about "computers" as a potentially powerful tool for teaching and learning (Business Council for Effective Literacy, July 1985; Focus on Basics, Fall 1987). Computers were also seen as something that could make assessment, data-management, reporting, internal and external communications, and other program functions much more efficient. Fast-forward to now: computers are now established as a vital tool for adult learners to use in their education and other aspects of their lives. This became especially apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic when many AFE program facilities were closed and AFE practitioners scrambled to stay in touch with learners via remote, on-line learning (Belzer et al., July 2020; Belzer et al., 2022).

This experience highlighted the potential of using on-line learning as a way to reach many more learners and provide more opportunities and

hours for them to engage in learning at times and locations convenient to them (Office of Educational Technology, Summer 2022). New funding like the Digital Equity Act (Berson-Shilcock, Treschitta, & Mortiere, August 18, 2022) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (National Skills Coalition, Spring 2022) has become available which might greatly expand the immediate infrastructure for, interest in, and longer-term development of on-line AFE. To ensure that these new technologies in fact help learners effectively learn what they actually need will require careful thinking, research, and development (Vanek, Harris & Belzer, June 2020). We need to avoid the tendency of our field to look for quick fixes that aren't supported by evidence of what works. This is especially the case if we want to develop community-oriented AFE which is customized to what particular learners need for specific contexts. One-size-fits-all electronic workbooks won't be very helpful and might discourage learner participation and future funding for technology-assisted learning.

Also, as stated under "Professional Development" above, staff can use on-line tools to develop expertise, support each other, and otherwise develop themselves as AFE professionals. This is evident in the recent shift to use of on-line conferences for adult educators and in the longer-time use of the U.S. Department of Education's Literacy Information and Communications System (www.LINCS.ed.gov . In 2023, a group of AFE researchers also issued a concept paper that calls for the creation of an on-line Adult Foundational Education Digital Library that would expand on LINCS and other on-line resource collections to make a wider range of resources (e.g., curricula, reports, research articles, videos, and others) available to AFE practitioners, learners, and other stakeholders (Adult Foundational Education Digital Library Group, February 6, 2023).

Providers of those technology supports: As with the case of "Policies" and "Facilities" above, the above-described technologies might be provided by a combination of "traditional" AFE funders and other stakeholders. Those other stakeholders might include technology companies, university-based educational and technology research centers, and the other governmental and non-governmental stakeholders who have an interest in AFE. (For example, various industries might fund research and development for models of on-line AFE learning that are relevant to their employees.) Federal and state funding might support national demonstration projects that show how

on-line and other technologies can serve particular learner populations, industries, or initiatives focusing on societal problems (e.g., providing on-line resource centers where adult learners can view videos or otherwise access information related to health needs.) Public or private (e.g., foundations) funders might also support the creation of the above-described Adult Foundational Education Digital Library to make it easier for AFE professionals to access a wider range of resources related to instructional and administrative tasks.

Partnerships

Partnership supports needed: This series has emphasized that effective "partnerships" will be key for many community-oriented AFE efforts. By partnerships we mean intentional, meaningful, and adequately-supported collaborations between AFE providers, adult learners, and other stakeholders. These collaborations would be designed to benefit all parties involved. As stated under Stage 2 in Part 4.a. and in Open Door Collective (and September 30, 2019a and September 30, 2019b), collaborations can take these forms:

- Contextualized education: Partners collaborate to provide contextualized education (through various types of co-teaching) to help learners develop foundational skills and other skills and knowledge related to the non-AFE stakeholder's area of expertise. (For example, an expert in customer service for the retail industry might co-teach an ESOL course that focuses on the English skills needed for customer service jobs.)
- Career pathway preparation and placement: Partners collaborate to provide learners with job preparation related to the non-AFE stakeholder's area of expertise. For example, a local nursing facility might provide a training to immigrant learners interested in moving into jobs in nursing homes or home healthcare.
- Non-educational supports for learners: Partners provide direct services to learners that are related to the non-AFE stakeholder's area of expertise. For example, an optometrist might do visual screening for adult learners.
- Helping non-AFE partner to better serve adult learners. The AFE partner builds the capacities non-AFE partners to better serve adults with foundational skills challenges.

- Making AFE facilities more user-friendly. Partners collaborate to create adult education facilities that are in keeping with the non-AFE partner's areas of expertise. For example, a healthcare provider or public safety agency might help the AFE center be more supportive of the health and safety of learners.
- Service-learning opportunities: Partners collaborate to provide service-learning opportunities for learners that are in keeping with the non-AFE stakeholder's areas of expertise. For example, an environmental organization might provide opportunities for adult learners to create and use a community garden or carry out a neighborhood clean-up activity.
- Joint advocacy, planning, and fundraising: Partners conduct joint advocacy, planning, fundraising on behalf of services for AFE learners that are in keeping with the non-AFE stakeholder's areas of expertise. (For example, AFE programs and local healthcare providers might advocate for public funding of health literacy activities carried out by local AFE centers and public health partners.)
- Join research: Partners collaborate to conduct joint research that helps learners and their communities in areas that are in keeping with the non-AFE partner's areas of expertise. (For example, a university school of public health might research the health needs of people with basic skills limitations or evaluate health activities carried out at a local AFE center.)
- Join professional development: Partners provide joint professional development for staff of both AFE and the non-AFE partner organization, to help them both better understand what the other partner does and needs and how they can collaborate to better serve adult *learners.*

Effective partnerships need to be well-planned, carefully implemented, continuously monitored, and adequately supported. Such collaborations in turn require professionals with the expertise, time, authority, and material resources to do the work. Without such resources, collaborations are likely not to be effective or go beyond the "token" (superficial) level. Special funding will likely be required to pay for staff time and other related expenses (Folinsbee & Jurmo, 1994a).

Providers of those partnership supports: Again, there is good news here. There are many existing models of partnership efforts that can be

learned from and built on. For example, the National Workplace Literacy Program of the later 1980s and early 1990s funded a series of three-year demonstration projects in which partnerships of employers, labor unions, and AFE providers worked together to plan, implement, and evaluate collaborative basic skills programs for those employers' workers. The funder (U.S. Department of Education) provided guidelines for how those partners could contribute to the joint effort. Program evaluations and other reports showed how each funded project interpreted "collaboration" (Evaluation Research, November 1992). Guidebooks were also produced that laid out steps for forming and implementing such partnerships (Folinsbee & Jurmo, 1994a). Similarly, the projects described by Auerbach (1992), Belzer et al (July 2020), Boutwell (1989), Fingeret, (1993), Merrifield, White, and Bingman (1994), Proctor and Hannah (2023), Soifer, Irwin, and Young (1989), Sperazi and Jurmo (July 1994), among others, describe processes for planning and implementing collaborative projects. The lessons from these and other collaborative AFE projects (Open Door Collective, September 30, 2019a and September 30, 2019b) can be learned from and adapted by governmental and non-governmental funders who might want to support the kinds of community-oriented AFE projects proposed in this series.

Public Outreach

Outreach supports needed: AFE programs often need to engage in public outreach activities to recruit learners, build partnerships with local stakeholders, raise funds, and increase public awareness of the potential of AFE services and of the learners served. AFE programs can post information on their websites, issue press releases, invite the news media to cover program activities, hold special events (e.g., a "march for literacy," a "reading event" in which learners read from their written work), distribute flyers, and set up face-to-face meetings with public policy makers, funders, and other audiences. Planning, organizing, implementing, and following up on such outreach activities require staff who have the time, expertise, authority, and other resources to do it well. These activities also can require particular material resources (e.g., a website, meeting spaces, printing, postage). Messages need to be well informed, positive, realistic (not promising more than is possible), clear, and well delivered.

Providers of those outreach supports: As with the "Policy," "Facilities," and "Technologies" examples above, resources for public outreach might come from governmental or non-governmental sources. Some of the supports (e.g., costs of a program website and clerical staff) might be covered under the program's usual budget. Costs of special events might be paid for by individual donors or local businesses. Local media might be looking for good human interest and other stories (related to education, immigration, correctional education) to cover and, by profiling an AFE program, effectively provide in-kind publicity support to the program.   A local university or community college might have journalism or communications students (or other students studying education, immigration, or other issues relevant to the AFE program) who might be interested in doing an internship in the program. In such internships, collect students might provide technical support (e.g., to design a website, write press releases, write profiles of learners, make videos of program activities). Their work might then be woven into a package of public outreach resources for the AFE program to use.

Research and Development

Research and development supports needed: AFE programs can benefit from good research and evaluation (Alamprese, December 1988; Lytle, Belzer, & Reumann, October 1992). These might take the form of action (or participatory) research in which staff and/or learners investigate questions of interest to themselves and the program (Hohn, 1997; McGrail, Purdom, Schwartz, & Simmons, 1998; Merrifield, White, & Bingman, 1994). Research might also be done by outsiders who are invited in to collect information that the program, learners, other partners, or funders need.[1] If a program wants to develop its abilities to conduct community-oriented AFE projects, research and evaluation might be built into the project design to collect useful information about learner needs and interests, available resources to incorporate into the project, the effectiveness of project activities, and factors that support or hinder the project's success. This is another situation in which

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[1] At this writing in September, 2023, the Adult Skills Network is investigating how to involve adult learners in research.

individuals doing this work need to have the necessary time, expertise, authority, and other resources

Providers of those research and development supports: As with other supports discussed above, supports for research and development might come from governmental or non-governmental sources. AFE funders tend to recognize the importance of needs assessment and evaluation in their projects and provide at least some funding for those functions. Beyond funding that standard type of research, funders might establish special demonstration projects to develop community-oriented models and put a special emphasis on research and evaluation. For example, federal and state funders (and/or private funders from healthcare organizations) might support health-related demonstration projects that provide health education and other services to various populations of adult learners or prepare them for healthcare jobs (Bennett, Pinder, Szesniak, & Culhane, September 2008; Hohn, 1997; Jurmo, December 6, 2009) Research organizations based in universities and other institutions can conduct research or provide research-related technical assistance to AFE program staff (Open Door Collective, January 10, 2019). Good documentation, analysis, use (for formative evaluation and for planning of future projects) and dissemination of lessons learned in demonstration projects are vital to ensure that the investments in projects produce longer-term improvements for the field. As stated earlier, it will be important to create one or more on-line resource centers where documents from research projects are easily accessible to others interested in doing similar work (Adult Foundational Education Digital Library Group, February 6, 2023).

Part 5.a. Wrap-Up

Putting an infrastructure for community-oriented AFE in place and sustaining it will require new, collaborative ways of thinking, acting, and investing by a variety of familiar and other stakeholders at local, state, and national levels. Though challenging, this work can and should learn from and build on informative models of AFE policy, funding, professional development, partnerships, research, and advocacy already developed and currently underway in the field.

Coming up next: Part 5.b. summarizes actions that advocates for community-oriented AFE can take to generate the supports needed to strengthen existing

community-oriented services or create new ones. Part 5.c. will provide examples of collaborative initiatives that have already generated supports for innovations in AFE.

Part 5.b.

What We Can Do to Generate Supports
for Community-Oriented AFE Innovations

Parts 3.a. through 5.a. make the case for a community-oriented approach to AFE in the U.S. and describe the supports that community-oriented AFE would need and various stakeholders who could provide such supports.

But the field currently lacks a strong, sustained advocacy effort to generate the kinds of supports that community-oriented AFE systems would need. The former advocates for this view (including those described in Part 3.b. and 4.b.) have largely – though not entirely – disappeared from the field due to closing of institutions, retiring of former advocates, and the policy shifts and other factors described in Book 2.

The good news is that there are arguments, research, models, and experienced AFE professionals within a number of institutions at national, state, and local levels that can be incorporated into new advocacy efforts for community-oriented AFE. (Part 5.c. provides examples of past capacity building and advocacy efforts within AFE that might now be learned from and adapted.)

Outlined below are actions that proponents of community-oriented AFE might take to build and launch effective advocacy within key institutions at national, state, and local levels. It will be important to keep in mind that this version of advocacy must be different from the more common one which tends to focus on maintaining funding to support the current way of doing AFE. (Yes, there are at this writing some efforts underway to get new funding for digital literacy and a few other areas of innovation, but they generally don't explicitly advocate for the community-oriented model described in this resource book – though they could do so with some extra work.)

The advocacy strategy proposed in Part 5.b. focuses directly on generating financial and in-kind supports for the reforming of U.S. AFE in ways that are consistent with the community-oriented vision proposed in this resource book. The strategy is organized in four actions:

Action 1: Create an initial national leadership team of advocates for community-oriented AFE to lay the groundwork for generating resources for community-oriented AFE.

Action 2: Form a coordinating team and task forces at national and other levels to plan (a) a series of activities to build the capacities for community-oriented AFE and (b) actions to generate supports for those capacity-building activities.

Action 3: Disseminate to the field drafts of the plans developed in Action 2 and invite input and involvement from AFE practitioners and others to further refine those plans.

Action 4: Reach out to potential supporters of the proposed capacity building efforts, monitor their responses, and adjust the plans for capacity building activities in light of potential supporters' responses.

Such planning and advocacy will require different ways of thinking about the purposes, practices, partners, and principles of AFE. (See the "Part 5.b. Wrap-Up" below for more about these "different ways of thinking.")

Action 1
Create an initial national leadership team of advocates for community-oriented AFE to lay the groundwork for a capacity-building initiative.

The team should be composed of individuals who have demonstrated an interest and expertise in creating the kinds of community-oriented AFE programs described in this resource book series. Members also need to have the time and – if necessary – permission to participate in the actions described below.

The team will need both "conveners" (or "organizers") who pull the group together and keep it organized and moving and "facilitators" who plan and lead the discussions in a participatory, collaborative way that allows members to freely, thoughtfully, and confidently share ideas and information. Team members will work with those conveners/organizers and facilitators to carry out the following actions:

Action 1.a. Review this document, to provide a common framework (e.g., vision, information sources, strategies, vocabulary) for the work that they will do below.

Action 1.b: Seek a planning grant (seed funding) to support the work described below under Actions 1.c. through 4.b. (Relying solely on busy people who have other job responsibilities and/or on unpaid volunteers is not likely to generate the amount of professional "person-power" to do this work in an efficient, sustained way.)

Action 1.c: Create an initial version of an on-line resource center (website) that:

- Houses one or more special collections of resource materials relevant to community-oriented AFE. This can include the kinds of resources cited in this document and others like them. This collection(s) will enhance the effectiveness of the efforts described below by providing advocates with easy-to-access resources to use to efficiently carry out tasks, rather than spinning their wheels, getting frustrated, and running out of gas. As new resources, information, and ideas emerge, they can be posted to this library, so that it is a living repository.
- Presents basic information about this new effort to advocate for and create community-oriented AFE alternatives in the U.S. Information will include: Why this effort is important. Who the initial leaders are. Who else can be involved (and roles they can play. Actions that will be carried out in the coming 1-2 years to plan, secure support for, and implement a series of systems-reform activities.

Action 1.d. Put out the word within the AFE field and other stakeholder groups who might support this systems reform effort. These audiences can be referred to the above on-line resource center for more information and invited to join a mailing list to communicate about this new effort to create community-oriented AFE models.

Action 2
Form a coordinating team and task forces at national and other levels to plan a national capacity building initiative.

At the national level, create (and fund) a central (coordinating) team and possibly additional task forces (to focus on particular tasks) which would:

Action 2.a.: Study this document and other sources cited within it to have a common framework (e.g., a vision, information sources, strategies, vocabulary) for the work they will do together.

Action 2.b. Plan a series of capacity-building activities designed to create, document, and learn from models of community-oriented AFE. These activities in turn could inform ongoing AFE systems reform. Capacity-building activities might include:

- Demonstration projects designed to develop models of community-oriented AFE for various learner populations, learning needs, and societal needs. (See Part 4.b. for examples.)
- Professional development activities to build the AFE workforce needed to create and manage such projects.
- Evaluation and research activities to support and learn from the above demonstration projects and professional development activities.
- Advocacy and fundraising efforts to generate necessary financial and in-kind supports for such programs from diverse public and private sources, including other stakeholders like employers, labor unions, public health agencies, correctional and re-entry services, etc.
- Documentation and dissemination of lessons learned in the above activities via an Adult Foundational Education Digital Library and other information sources.

Action 2.c.: Create an advocacy plan that clearly and constructively summarizes:

- Why AFE is important to the U.S.
- Key strengths and limitations of the current collections of AFE services in the U.S.

- Why developing community-oriented AFE could strengthen and expand current versions of AFE and create new ones that better serve more individuals and community stakeholders.
- How the above-described capacity-building activities might support the creation of community-oriented AFE models and AFE systems reform more broadly.
- Actions that funders, policy makers, and other stakeholders might take to support the above community-oriented AFE capacity-building activities. Actions might include:
  - providing shorter-term funding for the above-described capacity building activities.
  - creating longer-term . . .
    - policies and funding for partnerships between AFE providers and other stakeholders that provide integrated supports that help learners deal with a broader range of challenges and opportunities in their lives;
    - new accountability measures and project frameworks that more directly guide programs to help learners deal with (problem solve) personally-relevant challenges and opportunities;
    - financial and other supports that selected types of community-oriented AFE programs could use for (a) program planning, implementation, and continuous improvement; (b) various types of professional development [staff training, creation of professional positions, pilot projects, peer-mentoring, an on-line resource center]; (c) facilities and equipment; and
    - creation of a national institute for AFE and lifelong learning (Chisman & Spangenberg, October 8, 2009) and an Adult Foundational Education Digital Library (Adult Foundational Education Digital Library, February 6, 2023) which could coordinate, document, and inform this systems reform work.

Action 3
Disseminate drafts of the above capacity building and advocacy plans to the field and invite input and involvement from AFE practitioners and others.

The national coordinating team and task forces described in Action 2 might now share their capacity building and advocacy plans with others who might like to join in the proposed capacity building and advocacy efforts. By joining

in, the newcomers might help strengthen and expand those efforts by suggesting ideas, asking questions, and contributing in-kind and financial supports.

In particular, the "newcomers" might help the national coordinating team and task forces to:

- identify sources who might support new forms of AFE targeted to particular learner populations and societal issues. Options include:
  - governmental sources such as policy makers and funders within various government agencies related to labor, public health, human services, criminal justice, environment, immigrant and refugee services, Native American affairs, disabilities, civil rights, small business, transportation, housing, elections, and census;
  - non-governmental sources including foundations, corporate giving offices, individual anthropologists, businesses, labor unions, and other stakeholders from various sectors.
- agree on how advocates might communicate with potential supporters to secure financial and/or in-kind resources for the above-described capacity building activities.)

Action 4
Implement the advocacy plans by reaching out to potential supporters, monitoring their responses, and adjusting the plans in light of the responses of potential supporters.

Action 4.a.: Reach out to potential supporters in coordinated ways. The above national coordinating team, task forces, and other advocates might now reach out to the potential supporters identified in Action 3. Wherever feasible and appropriate, these outreach efforts should be done in a coordinated way, to avoid overwhelming potential supporters with too many messages from different sources asking for much the same kind of support.

Action 4.b.: Share information across the coordinating team and various tasks forces as responses come in from potential supporters. What sources were contacted? What were they asked to support? What was their response? Might they be re-contacted again later, possibly with a different "ask"?

Part 5.b. Wrap-Up
Comments on the Importance of Community-Oriented Advocacy and Leadership

Community-Oriented AFE Requires Community-Oriented Advocacy

The above-described advocacy is necessary to generate interest in and support for what is essentially an AFE systems-reform initiative similar to the Equipped for the Future (EFF) initiative of the 1990s and early 2000s. (See descriptions of EFF under "Example 1: Development of Participatory Models of AFE" in Part 5.c. below and in King & Bingman, 2004 and Stein, 2000). Much can be learned from EFF, both its successes and challenges. It supported many types of effective practices and innovations but did so in a systematic way, seeing those practices as part of a new way of doing AFE. Prior to and after EFF, there have been many types of projects that focused on particular types of innovations (e.g., models of family literacy, career pathways, uses of technology, urban AFE coalitions, services customized to the needs immigrants and refugees incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, and other learner populations). However, those individual projects and innovations have largely never been seen as part of a coordinated AFE system. In other words, many wonderful innovations have been kept in silos while the larger, overall AFE system remains disjointed and without a consistent vision, guidelines, and models that can be adapted for various purposes, learner populations, and social contexts.

It might seem like (and would in fact be) a gargantuan task to try to do what EFF did again. For that reason, it will be important for those who want to incorporate community-oriented AFE into more effective AFE systems at national, state, and local levels to go about this strategically and with adequate supports. The advocacy processes described above can create a vision of what more effective AFE systems might look like and then propose a series of demonstration projects, professional development, and other capacity-building activities. These would expand partnerships between AFE and particular stakeholder groups to help adult learners better respond to

various kinds of challenges and opportunities that they and their communities face.[2]

Advocates might propose a coordinated series of initiatives that create community-oriented AFE services for a number of learner populations and corresponding stakeholder groups. Each demonstration project might adapt a common community-oriented AFE template to support a number of projects at local or state levels. These projects would report their results and findings back to a central information center which would in turn develop further guidelines and supports for an additional round of such projects. (The National Workplace Literacy Program provided such a model for workplace literacy programs in the late 1980s and 1990s [Evaluation Research, November 1992]). These new projects would be seen as a new version of a coordinated, collaborative systems reform initiative similar to EFF. The new initiative could also borrow elements of other initiatives that have attempted to build support for various kinds of AFE innovations in the past.

Part 5.c. describes nine such past initiatives that current advocates for community-oriented AFE might learn from and adapt. (One other initiative to consider is the Leadership Excellence Academies, a project of the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium and ProLiteracy, begun in 2006 and in collaboration with the Center for Literacy, Education, and Employment at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and other partners. Administrative staff of AFE programs developed expertise and networks they could then use to work with stakeholders improve their programs, using a collaborative process of identifying priority needs, identifying promising practices, and developing a program improvement plan.)[3]

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[2] Focal points might be how to deal with health, environmental sustainability, digital equity, helping their children succeed in school, immigrant and refugee needs, needs of former and current inmates, services for adults with disabilities, and equitable workforce and economic development.)

[3] To learn more about the Leadership Excellence Academies, visit
https://www.slideserve.com/titus/leadership-excellence-academies ,
https://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=7746 ,
https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/sites/default/files/numbered-memos/cc08-200.pdf ,
and

Once resources are assembled to support some initial demonstration projects, much more work will be required to form and support project teams to plan and carry out those projects. That work might be the topic of other resource books similar to the ones in this series. Again, those doing this work need not start totally from scratch. There are good examples of past and more recent community-oriented AFE that have been documented. Those doing this work should take the time to learn from those existing models so they can jump start a new wave of AFE systems reform for our nation's learners and communities.

Community-Oriented AFE Requires a New Approach to Leadership

Expanding and strengthening AFE to support community-oriented services has many potential benefits for many learners and other stakeholders. But creating such models will require new thinking, significant commitment, and good organization which in turn will require professionals who are equipped and paid to do the organizing, documenting, and other programming and administrative tasks that collaborations require.

Community-oriented AFE will thus require strong leadership. Leaders will need to be guided by the kind of vision described in Part 3 and have expertise in the how's of both community-oriented AFE and advocacy. Leaders for community-oriented AFE will thus need to think and act differently, to focus their messages directly on generating support for not-just-any-old AFE but for a different version of AFE.

Where will these leaders come from? Some of them are already working in our field and have been around for a long time. Some new ones have also been emerging in recent years. They are scattered among the many institutions and levels of our field. Additional leaders can be recruited and developed from within AFE and other stakeholder groups. (Possible sources include successful AFE learners; individuals from adult learners' families and social communities; individuals with particular expertise related to employment, health, legal issues, financial management, and other topics of interest to adult learners; college students; military veterans; older adults looking for new ways to contribute to society; and former Peace Corps Volunteers and current or past AmeriCorps Volunteers.

But all of these leaders need to be supported, so they can develop their leadership abilities, put them to work, and learn from and build on the experience. Creating innovative, community-oriented programs requires time

and the authority to make changes. Leaders can't do this alone but should be part of networks of individuals with similar interests who can share expertise and other resources, collaborate and build expertise together.

In other words, we need communities of leaders who can solve problems with others. Building forward-thinking leadership is what community-oriented AFE can do for adult learners and their communities, and we should adapt that idea to our own development as a profession. These leadership communities should be more than occasional, fleeting on-line discussions (though those can be helpful) but take the form of project teams, special interest groups, and peer-sharing and mentoring that are supported by on-line communications and resource collections (Lytle, Belzer, & Reumann, October 1992).

AFE professionals in general and leaders in particular also need career opportunities with professional-level salaries and benefits to enable them to stick with the work, generate results and resources, and build on and share that experience in ongoing collaborative projects.

Part 5.c.

Collaborative Initiatives
that Have Supported AFE Innovations

Individual forward-thinking AFE programs can – with help from various local stakeholder partners – do a lot (often with limited resources) to create and share models of innovative community-oriented AFE projects that others can learn from and expand upon. (We might refer to such innovative programs as "AFE Innovation Hubs.") However, for our field to go beyond small numbers of scattered "model projects" while leaving the overall field largely unchanged, we need to generate significant numbers of innovative projects that can inform, inspire, and generate support for wider-scale systems reform. We can do this by creating a web of capacity-building initiatives equipped with adequate seed funding and other resources (e.g., professional development and resource sharing mechanisms, public outreach) that . . .

- jump start significant numbers of projects to build diverse types of community-oriented models (like those described in Book 4) within various segments of the field, across cities, states, and the nation;
- monitor, document, evaluate, identify, and disseminate promising practices that others can use;
- attract and focus additional resources from various sources for longer-term development and use of community-oriented AFE innovations to reform AFE overall.

Outlined below are examples of past and more recent public- and private-sector initiatives that have generated supports for various AFE innovations. These examples represent a mix of funding sources, target learners and communities, program and community goals, and AFE service models and practices.

Those interested in working with various stakeholder groups to build supports for community-oriented AFE should learn from these and similar examples and consider how these earlier models might be updated and applied to support community-oriented AFE efforts today.

Example 1: Development of Participatory Models of AFE

During the 1980s and 1990s, AFE practitioners, adult learners, researchers, and supporters at local, state, and national levels collaborated to develop participatory (aka, learner-centered, student-centered, active-learning) approaches to AFE. Though this term can be interpreted in various ways, here are key elements as defined by Hanna Arlene Fingeret and Paul Jurmo in *Participatory Literacy Education* (1989).

In participatory programs . . .

- Learners take on high levels of responsibility, control, and reward for program activities (rather than being relatively passive recipients of services provided by others).
- They do so to achieve one or more of the following: greater efficiency of program activities, personal development of learners, and/or contributing to democratic social change.
- Learners can participate at higher levels in various types of instructional roles and of management (administrative) roles within adult education programs.

The development of participatory practices was a major focus of independent community-based education organizations and also seen in some of the volunteer programs sponsored by Literacy Volunteers of America and Laubach Literacy Action. Participatory practices were also promoted by other types of AFE programs, including workplace literacy services offered by labor unions (Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1987; Finn & Buxton, 1988) and some companies (Añorve, 1989) and in research conducted at and disseminated from a number of other organizations including Literacy South (Fingeret, April 1993; Literacy South, 1993) and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Continuing, and Vocational Education (Imel, 1989).

At the national level, the Association for Community Based Education (1983) was a voice for community-based programs that used a participatory approach. World Education (a nonprofit adult education support organization which initially focused on nonformal education in developing countries) widened its focus to include work in the United States. One of its first U.S. projects was the creation in 1987 of *Focus on Basics,* a magazine that specialized in promoting participatory adult literacy education in the U.S. (A few years later, World Education then launched *The Change Agent,* a

magazine that continues to now and supports a social justice, learner-centered approach to AFE.)

In the northeast, an informal Workplace Education Collaborative met in the early 1990s, sharing strategies for worker-centered education and advocated for a participatory approach to workplace literacy education (Jurmo et al, November 1994). Within some states, AFE professional development offices (e.g., the System for Adult Basic Education Support in Massachusetts) supported the development of learner-centered AFE practices (e.g., the *Adventures in Assessment* journal of SABES which is described under "Learner-Centered Assessment and Evaluation" in Part 4.b.) (McGrail, Purdom, Schwartz, & Simmons, 1998).   At local levels, the Adult Literacy Resource Institute in Boston and New York City's Literacy Assistance Center (Fall 2004) supported the use of participatory education through professional training, publications, and other supports given to AFE staff.

Several university adult education centers provided research and professional training in participatory literacy education. These universities included the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts (Gillespie, 1990; Jurmo 1987), the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (Colette, Woliver, Bingman, & Merrifield, 1996; Merrifield, White, & Bingman, 1994), Eastern Michigan University (Soifer, Irwin, & Young, 1989; Soifer, Irwin, Crumrine, Honzaki, Simmons, & Young, 1990), the University of Massachusetts at Boston (Auerbach, 1992), the University of New Mexico (Wallerstein, 1984); the University of Pennsylvania (Lytle, Belzer, Schultz, & Vannozzi, 1989), Syracuse University (Fingeret, Spring 1983), and Northern Illinois University (Heaney, November 1983).

Participatory AFE received a major boost in the mid-1990s when the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) launched the Equipped for the Future (EFF) adult education system reform initiative. NIFL staff and partners documented research that supported contextualized, participatory learning (Gillespie, 2002 and October 2002); trained resource persons who in turn provided training and other supports to instructors, assessment specialists, administrators, and others who wanted to adopt a participatory model; developed model participatory curricula designed to help learners prepare for work, family, and civic role); and provided guidelines and training to policy makers who wanted to support participatory AFE (King & Bingman, 2004; Stein, 2000).

Apart from EFF, NIFL also supported participatory AFE through its Literacy Leader Fellowship program (which funded several small one-year research projects related to the participatory approach) and created LINCS (the Literacy Information and Communication System) which hosted on-line discussions ("listservs") and special resource collections which facilitated sharing of information and ideas related to participatory adult education. When the National Center for the Advancement of Adult Learning and Literacy was created in the later 1990s, it joined both NIFL and World Education in supporting research and dissemination of resources aligned with participatory AFE principles and practices.[4]

Though NIFL and NCSALL closed in the first decade of the 2000s (following in the footsteps of ACBE and many of the earlier participatory-oriented CBOs), participatory AFE continued in a smaller number of NGOs and other programs that had been part of the earlier ACBE, NIFL, and NCSALL networks, some of which are described in Part 4.b. More recently, participatory models are seen in two U.S. Department of Education programs: the LINCS discussion resource collections and discussion groups and the Teaching the Skills that Matter in Adult Education project.[5]

Example 2: Employer Support for Workplace AFE

For nearly two decades (mid-1980s to the first few years of the 2000s) there was significant growth in interest, investment, and activity by employers and governmental agencies in "workplace literacy" education (i.e., AFE for incumbent workers). (Labor unions were also involved in these workplace literacy efforts, as described separately in Example 3 below.)

A number of interwoven adult literacy awareness-raising activities happened in the mid-1980s through early 1990s which contributed to these increased workplace literacy efforts:

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[4] Visit https://www.ncsall.net for more information about the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy.
[5] Visit https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/teaching-skills-matter-adult-education to learn about Teaching the Skills that Matter in Adult Education project.

The Advertising Council: Beginning in January 1985 and lasting about four years, the Advertising Council and Coalition for Literacy created a series of public service messages aimed at increasing public awareness of the adult literacy issue, recruiting learners and tutors for AFE programs, and increasing donations to AFE programs. The campaign received start-up funding from the newly-launched Business Council for Effective Literacy, which was followed by additional financial and in-kind (e.g., printing) supports from the U.S. Department of Education, General Electric Foundation, and Time-Warner. Prospective students, volunteers, and corporate supporters called a national hot-line to be linked to local adult literacy programs. (In its first 1.5 years, the hotline received about 52,500 calls.) Callers were responding to awareness-raising messages sent out via broadcast (television and radio) and print (newspaper and magazine) media. National Coalition for Literacy publications were distributed at no cost to AFE organizations, to help them respond to increased public demand. This campaign spurred additional developments in various parts of the AFE field, including in public libraries (through the American Library Association). This was the first in a series of national awareness raising efforts which are described below. Though the Ad Council campaign didn't focus on "workplace literacy" per se, it laid the groundwork for those other awareness-raising activities (Business Council for Effective Literacy, January 1985, April 1985, July 1986a, July 1986b).

The Business Council for Effective Literacy (BCEL): BCEL was launched as a national non-profit organization in 1984 with a personal donation of $1 million from retiring McGraw-Hill publisher, Harold W. McGraw, Jr. (Business Council for Effective Literacy, September 1984). Gail Spangenberg, a former program officer at the Ford Foundation who had facilitated the publication of *Adult Illiteracy in the United States: A Report to the Ford Foundation* (Hunter & Harman, 1979 and 1985), was brought on as BCEL's Vice President and led the day-to-day affairs of the organization throughout the organization's ten-year life. BCEL's mission was to strengthen corporate understanding of the adult literacy issue as it impacted businesses and communities and increase corporate support for U.S. adult literacy efforts. It did so through (a) a publications program (e.g., a quarterly newsletter circulated to 10,000 individuals representing businesses, AFE service providers, labor unions, news media, and government agencies at federal, state, and local

levels); policy and technical reports on topics such as employee basic skills, volunteer literacy programs, and corporate giving; (b) customized technical support to hundreds of national, state, and local organizations; (c) advocacy to public officials at federal, state, and local levels; and (d) information provided to the news media.

Its federal policy efforts contributed to the creation of the National Literacy Act, the National Workplace Literacy Program, and – later – the National Institute for Literacy. (BCEL was also a major supporter of community-based education and partnerships with public libraries and agencies specializing in housing, health, families, and other adult learner needs.) After its ten-year run with a small full-time and part-time staff in offices provided at no cost in the McGraw-Hill headquarters building in Manhattan, BCEL evolved into three other influential organizations: the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (Chisman, February 2000;Chisman & Spangenberg, March 2006;Chisman & Spangenberg, October 8, 2009; Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, April 2002), National Commission on Adult Literacy (June 2008), and National Council on Adult Learning. These organizations remained active and influential for about twenty years (from around 1994 to 2014) and produced dozens of policy and technical documents on a broad range of topics (e.g., federal policy, roles of community colleges, correctional agencies, and libraries). All of these organizations supported the kinds of community-oriented approach proposed in this resource book series. (See Part 3.b. for excerpts from these organizations' publications.)

BCEL encouraged companies to support adult literacy by (a) providing financial and in-kind supports to adult literacy service providers; (b) supporting collaborative planning and coordination of adult literacy efforts at local, state, and national levels; and (c) providing basic skills education to their own employees (aka, their incumbent workers). By its third year (1987), BCEL was experiencing a huge increase in requests for information about "workplace literacy." In response, the Council shifted much of its focus to the issue of employee basic skills education, with staff documenting and disseminating information about that topic to the media, employers, government agencies, AFE providers, and labor unions.

Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS) (1987): PLUS was a multi-year national adult literacy awareness-and-action campaign started in September

1986 and subsequently led by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and American Broadcasting Company (ABC). The two national television networks did this in partnership with AFE service providers, public officials, and many other organizations and individuals at national, state, and local levels. Its goals were similar to those of the Advertising Council's campaign (above): increase public awareness of the adult literacy issue, recruit learners and tutors for AFE programs, increase involvement of and investment by diverse stakeholders (e.g., employers) in AFE efforts, and strengthen coordination of AFE efforts at local, state, and national levels (Business Council for Effective Literacy, July 1986a).

But PLUS went considerably further than the Advertising Council's campaign. With the leadership of WQED, the PBS affiliate in Pittsburgh, PLUS adapted strategies used in a previous substance-abuse-prevention campaign (called "The Chemical People") to this new issue of adult literacy. PLUS activities included (a) (prior to the airing of public awareness messages) creation of "PLUS Task Forces" at local levels to help AFE service providers and other stakeholders prepare for the anticipated increase in learners and tutors that would result from the public awareness messages; and (b) airing of public service messages, news specials, and a made-for-TV movie, "Bluffing It," starring Dennis Weaver.[6] (During this period, CBS also aired a similar movie, "The Pride of Jesse Hallam," featuring Johnny Cash.)[7]

ABC and PBS were joined in this effort by other media companies and associations, including the American Newspaper Publishers Association and Magazine Publishers Association. Individual publishing-related companies like the Gannett Foundation, B. Dalton Bookseller, Time-Warner, and individual newspapers, played important roles in supporting planning, advocacy, and other activities of state- (Gannett Foundation

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[6] See "Bluffing It" on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNcQm_bCvbY . Read a review in The New York Times at https://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/11/arts/bluffing-it-on-illiteracy.html .

[7] View "The Pride of Jesse Hallam" on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UThg4m2SjLw . And learn more at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pride_of_Jesse_Hallam.

and B. Dalton Bookseller) and local-level (B. Dalton Bookseller) adult literacy coalitions. Other entities like the National Governors Association, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and the Urban League also urged their constituents to get involved in PLUS.

In its second year (in July 1987), PLUS began focusing its messages more directly on the issue of "workplace literacy" and the need to ensure that U.S. workers were equipped to perform jobs emerging in the U.S. economy (Business Council for Effective Literacy, July 1987). It aired a PBS documentary, "A Job to Be Done," which was followed by more than 250 business breakfasts for corporate leaders hosted by Barbara Bush to discuss the implications of this problem for their companies and their local economies (Business Council for Effective Literacy, July 1987). This topic became a major focus of newspaper and magazine articles for several years.

In 1987, COSMOS Corporation issued "Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS): The Campaign and Its Impact" which stated that the first year of PLUS had been highly successful in raising awareness, motivating volunteers, and bringing community stakeholders together to develop strategies (Business Council for Effective Literacy, October 1987c; COSMOS Corporation, 1987).

Workplace literacy research: During this same period, a number of workplace literacy research reports (Berlin & Sum, 1988; Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990; Johnston & Packer, 1987; Mikulecky,1988; U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment, 1990; Sticht & Mikulecky, 1984; Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills,1991) and guidebooks (Business Council for Effective Literacy, 1987; Mikulecky & Lloyd, 1985; Philippi, 1991) were published and widely circulated. These further raised the visibility of and interest in employee basic skills. Their authors were called on to make conference presentations, talk with news media, and advise employers and government agencies. Researchers at Georgia State University (Gowen, 1992) and the University of California at Berkeley (Hull, 1991; Schultz, December 1992) also raised questions about some of the underlying assumptions and practices proposed in the above works. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (based at Ohio State University) made workplace literacy a special focus during

this period, issuing a series of summaries of workplace literacy research and issues (Imel, 1988; Imel, 1995; Imel & Kerka, 1993).

Employer initiatives: Fueled and guided by the above awareness-raising and research, individual companies and employer associations began creating new workplace literacy projects for their employees. Some of these were paid for by the employers and associations themselves, while some were underwritten in part or fully by public dollars. Examples included:

> Trade Associations: The American Bankers Association (Business Council for Effective Literacy, October 1989a), National Association of Printers and Lithographers (Business Council for Effective Literacy, October 1989b), Home Builders Institute (Business Council for Effective Literacy, April 1991), and the hotel and food service industry (Business Council for Effective Literacy, June 1993) set up special workplace literacy initiatives to develop basic skills program models customized to their particular workforces and industry demands.

> Individual Companies: Many companies – large and small -- created workplace basic skills programs for their employees. Examples included Polaroid (Business Council for Effective Literacy, January 1986b), Eastman Kodak (Jurmo, 1994g), Levi Strauss (Jurmo, 1995), Motorola, as well as many small companies (Business Council for Effective Literacy, July 1990a; Chisman, 1992). Some such as General Motors (Jurmo, 1994g) and Ford Motor Company (Business Council for Effective Literacy, July 1988; Soifer, Irwin, & Young, 1989) were run jointly with their union partners, the United Auto Workers. (For more information about labor union leadership in this area, see "Example 3: Labor Union Support for Worker AFE" below.)

Government supports: Some of these employee basic skills programs were provided with funding from federal agencies. The National Workplace Literacy Program of the U.S. Department of Education funded demonstration projects, international conferences, and reports (Business Council for Effective Literacy, October 1988, 1990b, and January 1993; Evaluation Research, November 1992; Kuttner et al, May 1991; Office of Vocational and Adult Education, May 1992). In 1988, the U.S.

Department of Labor provided $3.2 million for projects that researched or demonstrated ways to provide workplace basic skills supports to low-income workers (Business Council for Effective Literacy, October 1988). In 1991, the U.S. Small Business Administration (Business Council for Effective Literacy, July 1992) issued a study of workplace literacy programs in American small business.

State governments also established their own versions of workplace basic education initiatives. Examples included the Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative (Sperazi, 1991; Sperazi, Jurmo, & Rosen, December 1991), the New York State Education Department (Jurmo, June 1993; Jurmo, December 1994a), the workplace education activities of the Illinois Literacy Resource Development and South Carolina (Business Council for Effective Literacy, July 1990c), among other states. States continued supporting workplace education programs through the 1990s and into the 2000s (Focus on Basics, November 2004; Jurmo, October 1996; Parker, September 4, 2007).

These interwoven efforts had a number of results: workers and employers received AFE services customized to their workplace demands and the AFE field and partner companies developed expertise, networks, and tools (e.g., planning strategies, curricula, assessments) that could be adapted for ongoing work in this area. Funders also created funds and funding mechanisms that could be adapted for future such projects. These efforts also produced evidence about what NOT to do when talking about, planning, implementing, and evaluating AFE services for incumbent workers. (See Book 2 for more about the strengths and limitations of work-related basic skills programs.)

As the above workplace literacy initiatives for incumbent workers of the later 1980s and early 1990s wound down, they influenced the U.S. Department of Education's shift to work-readiness education for job-seekers which began in the mid-1990s with the Workforce Investment Act and, later, the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act, described in Book 2 (Jurmo, October 1998).The above workplace literacy activities also laid the groundwork for additional federal worker education initiatives in the later 1990s and early 2000s, including:

- The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) funded research projects on workplace education (Askov, 1995; Jurmo, June 1994; Jurmo, October 1996; Sperazi & Jurmo, June 1994 and July 1994).

- NIFL's Equipped for the Future adult education system reform initiative worked with the National Retail Federation Foundation and the healthcare industry to create basic skills education models customized to workers in those industries.
- NIFL's Literacy Information and Communications System (LINCS) hosted a workplace literacy resource collection and listserv as well as similar collections and listservs on other topics like family literacy.
- The ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education continued generating research summaries on workplace literacy until it closed in the early 2000s (Imel, 2003).
- AFE providers played active roles in implementation of the U.S. Department of Labor's WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) initiative which funded integrated models of workforce and economic development to better respond to regional economic needs and opportunities (Hollenbeck & Hewat, November 2011). For example, because the transportation/logistics/distribution (TLD) industry was a key, growing employer in Northern New Jersey, workforce development partners there – including the adult basic education program of a community college -- received WIRED funding to provide basic education and other supports to TLD workers and job seekers. (See "Moving into TLD Careers" in Part 4.b. of this series for an example of WIRED-funded TLD-related education that integrated basic skills with TLD career exploration and common TLD job tasks.)[8]
- Career pathway models and Integrated Education and Training tied to in-demand jobs became a focus of Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) efforts beginning in the first years of the 2000s (American Institutes for Research & Safal Partners, August 2022; Cronen, Diffenderfffer, & Medway, March 2023).

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[8] For more about WIRED, visit
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workforce_Innovation_in_Regional_Economic_Development

Example 3: Labor Union Support for Worker AFE

Labor union support for "workplace literacy" initiatives grew out of many of the same public awareness and research initiatives described above under "Example 2: Employer Support for Workplace AFE" (Business Council for Effective Literacy, October 1987a). The national AFL-CIO's Human Resources Development Institute took a major leadership role in raising labor union awareness of and interest in the basic skills of U.S. workers. Its *Worker-Centered Learning: A Union Guide to Workplace Literacy* (Sarmiento & Kay, 1990) laid out arguments and guidelines for what it termed "worker-centered" education which not only supported workforce productivity but responded to other worker needs such as workplace safety and health, job security, job advancement, fair wages and benefits, civil rights, and other indicators of quality of work life.

National-level AFL-CIO representatives were called on to plan, organize, and participate in international, national, and state conferences and advocate for a worker-centered approach (Sarmiento & Shurman, April 1992). Labor representatives and other supporters of worker-centered education raised critiques of misleading and degrading messages issued by the news media and other sources. Educators working for and in support of unions created innovative worker education program models for various industries and worker populations (Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1987; Finn & Buxton, April 1988; Soifer, Irwin, & Young, 1989; Wallerstein & Auerbach, 2004).

Using some of the same funding sources described under Example 2 above, labor unions partnered with governmental agencies, employers, and adult education providers to plan worker education programs, develop relevant instructional and assessment tools, implement pilot projects, train workforce educators, evaluate programs, and develop a body of knowledge about how to do this work (Jurmo, Spring 2020).

To generate resources for these programs, individual labor unions were sometimes able to take advantage of education funding provided through their collective bargaining contracts with employers. Individual unions and labor associations like the national and state AFL-CIO offices and the multi-union Consortium for Worker Education (CWE) in New York City were able to use their large memberships to leverage governmental support from policy makers who wanted to serve their constituents (and perhaps get the votes and contributions of union members). For example, in the first few years of the

2000s in New York City, the Transport Workers Union negotiated a $10 million Training and Upgrade Fund through their contract with the Metropolitan Transit Authority. This fund supported the creation of a new Training and Upgrading Fund education program for union members which prepared workers for civil service tests and for admission to technical training programs at City University of New York (Jurmo, March 2021).

The two dozen unions who participated in the Consortium for Worker Education ran various training (e.g., culinary arts, nursing, childcare provider) and education (e.g., ESOL, computer skills) programs customized to the needs of their members. As described in Part 4.b., CWE quickly set up a special program soon after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center. The program was to provide education (e.g., ESOL and computer classes geared toward job readiness) and job placement services to workers who had lost their jobs when Lower Manhattan was shut down after the World Trade Center was destroyed. Funding for that program came from a special 9/11 Fund set up by United Way, using donations sent in by people from all over the world. (Jurmo, Fall 2002; Jurmo, November 2002; Jurmo and Love, March 2003). CWE was seen as a reliable recipient of this funding because of its ability to create and manage programs customized to particular adult populations and situations.

The New York State AFL-CIO and Civil Service Employees Association likewise were recognized leaders in helping labor unions (through, for example, staff development activities and fundraising) provide customized education to workers such as psychiatric aides in state mental health facilities. The United Auto Workers worked with the New York State Education Department and the General Motors Delphi plant in Rochester, NY in "Collaborative Learning for Continuous Improvement," a three-year federal National Workplace Literacy Program project described in Part 4.b. of this series (Jurmo, December 1994g).

The New York State Civil Service Employees Association was an active participant in the Workplace Education Collaborative (WEC), an informal network of participatory-oriented workplace educators from northeast states who periodically met in the early 1990s. They shared ideas about how to create and advocate for worker-centered workplace education and co-signed a document calling for changes to the National Workplace Literacy Program (Jurmo et al, November 1994).

In Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable[9] has provided a forum for labor educators to collaborate around worker education issues (Nelson, November 2004; Utech, 2005; Utech, June 2008). Individual union affiliates like UNITE HERE and the labor/management workplace education programs at the University of Massachusetts campuses in Amherst and Dartmouth, Massachusetts were among the Roundtable's members (Open Door Collective, October 1, 2019).

Example 4: **Urban AFE Collaborations**

By the mid- to later 1980s, a number of U.S. cities had established (a) an adult literacy resource center (e.g., New York City's Literacy Assistance Center, Boston's Adult Literacy Resource Institute) and/or (b) an urban AFE coalition or initiative (e.g., the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Literacy, Houston READS, the Boston Adult Literacy Initiative). These entities typically provided some mix of public awareness, recruitment, professional development, advocacy, and other supports for local AFE programs and adult learners. Many began as initiatives of their mayor's office.

> **Urban Literacy Network:** In 1985, a group of AFE activists from major U.S. cities – many representing the above resource centers and coalitions -- created the Urban Literacy Network which served as a national, independent advocacy coalition for urban-based adult literacy efforts. It "represented grassroots and other local literacy efforts at national forums," "provided a mechanism for learners, providers, and policy makers to . . . learn from each other and define problems which needed attention," "provided federal legislative and funding information to people in the field who lack the resources to monitor these activities," "provided information, training, technical assistance and support to urban and state collaborative efforts and local programs representing diverse voices," and "created a national network of programs and practitioners with shared values" (Literacy Network, November 6, 1991, p.1).

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[9] Visit https://www.umass.edu/roundtable/index.html to learn more about the Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable.

With financing from the federal ACTION agency, the Gannett Foundation, Dayton Hudson Corporation, and B. Dalton Bookseller (with the Minneapolis Foundation as fiscal agent), it created an Urban Literacy Fund to support networking, advocacy, and a grants program. Grants of up to $40,000 were provided to urban coalitions of literacy programs and community organizations to plan locally-relevant literacy initiatives. The Urban Literacy Network eventually broadened its focus to include state and national coalitions and was renamed "The Literacy Network," with a tag line of "Supporting Collaborative Efforts for Literacy" (Business Council for Effective Literacy, October 1987b & July 1989).[10]

Its three-day 1989 National Forum on Literacy Collaboration and Policy Issues was organized around three themes: "Seeking Common Ground," "Collaboration: Why, Who, What, Where and When," and "Getting Results: Collaboration, Policy, and Advocacy." One Issue Group presented recommendations related to the "Roles of Adult Learner Leaders." Participants included representatives of government agencies (including U.S. Senator Paul Simon and Representative Thomas Sawyer), state and community-based adult education providers, and private sector funders. Learners and staff from Bronx Educational Services presented an evening theater performance (Literacy Network, June 15-17, 1989).

As it neared its end in the early 1990s, the Literacy Network provided moral support, travel funds, and seed funding for learner leadership efforts which included creation of the national adult learner organization, VALUE, described below under "Example 5: Learner Leadership Development."

PLUS Task Forces: The PLUS Campaign of the ABC and PBS television networks (described above under "Example 2: Employer Support for Workplace AFE") also encouraged AFE organizations to form AFE coalitions at city and state levels. These "PLUS Task Forces" were to plan and coordinate how the city's or state's AFE providers would respond to the anticipated increase in learners, volunteers, supporters,

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[10] Correspondence with Jean Hammink, December 2020.

and resources that would be generated by the planned series of public service messages, news coverage, and other awareness-raising activities that ABC, PBS, and other PLUS partners (e.g., American Newspaper Publishers Association, American Society of Newspaper Editors, Magazine Publishers Association, etc.) would generate (Project Literacy U.S., 1987).

Many of the members of the Urban Literacy Network were also active participants in the PLUS Campaign at local and national levels. Among other things, they were among the stronger voices who raised concerns about (a) sometimes-misleading messages being sent out by the media and other channels about the source of and solutions for "adult illiteracy" and (b) being overwhelmed by the increased demand for AFE services that was resulting from the media coverage. (These AFE programs felt they were now expected to respond to significant requests for services without having substantially more capacity to do so.)

National Alliance of Urban Adult Literacy Coalitions: By the early 1990s, both the PLUS Campaign and the Urban Literacy Network (which had been renamed the Literacy Network) had closed down. By the mid-1990s, a new organization called the National Alliance of Urban Literacy Coalitions (NAULC) had emerged, composed of many of the urban initiatives that had participated in the Urban Literacy Network and/or PLUS Task Forces. NAULC continued for about twenty years with technical support from Literacy Powerline, a consulting organization based in Houston. NAULC provided training and technical assistance to support urban AFE coalitions around the country. It produced guidebooks, reports, mailing lists, and other resources that could be adapted for similar efforts today. Among other sources, support for NAULC came from the National Institute for Literacy, which provided funding for a "Community Literacy Initiative" led by NAULC (Doughty & Hart, June 2005). Other major support came from AmeriCorps, which provided volunteers who worked in programs operated by NAULC members. In the early 2000s, NAULC changed its name to Literacy USA because it had begun to serve not just "urban" coalitions but statewide and rural coalitions, as well, and wanted to remove "urban" from its name.

Urban AFE Networks, 2022-2023: In June 2022, a small group of AFE professionals with experience in urban AFE began working with

representatives of AFE networks in a dozen U.S. cities to create a new version of a national network of urban AFE coalitions. As of this writing in October 2023, they had created a fledgling (though unfunded) group whose name ("Urban Collaborations for Adult Foundational Education", aka "Urban CAFÉ") was being revised. It was to serve as a forum for communication and collaboration among representatives of AFE networks in U.S. cities and counties. A small all-volunteer steering committee discussed how this new national network might host a website (https://sites.google.com/view/urbanafecoalitions/home), occasional on-line meetings, and an asynchronous on-line discussion group to facilitate communication and collaboration among urban AFE representatives. The steering committee was also seeking technical support from a national AFE organization.

Lessons learned in these urban AFE coalitions: For four decades, representatives of urban-based AFE organizations have seen a value in communicating and collaborating across cities to build their capacities to better serve their communities. They have produced some significant results and left behind models, documents, and other resources that others might adapt for urban AFE efforts and other purposes. A common theme of these efforts has been "community." These efforts have also shown that, to be successful, a number of ingredients are necessary, including funding, staffing, a vision and corresponding strategies, expertise in both AFE service delivery and organizational development, and leadership able to lead a collaborative effort.

Example 5: Learner Leadership Development

In the early to mid-1980s, some community-based AFE programs (i.e., independent non-profits serving diverse communities with literacy and often other services) and volunteer adult literacy organizations were making "student leadership" a major focus of their activities. Learners were developing leadership skills within learning groups (e.g., by analyzing problems of interest and identifying solutions) and by serving as program staff, spokespersons, board members, recruiters, and mentors to fellow students.

By the early 1990s, such learner leaders were participating in the national and state conferences of adult literacy organizations, meeting with elected representatives, carrying out special mini-projects, and creating student

publications. In the later 1990s, a new national adult learner leadership organization, Voice for Adult Literacy United for Education (VALUE) was created by a small group of experienced adult learner leaders and adult educators from around the U.S., with Iowa adult learner Archie Willard as president. In its early, fledgling years it received important seed funding from Time Warner and, later, the National Institute for Literacy, as well as considerable volunteer and in-kind help from individual adult learners and adult educators and from organizations like state departments of education and national, state, and local adult literacy programs. Later renamed VALUEUSA in the late 1990s, it continued for 25 years with Marty Finsterbusch, a former literacy student from Pennsylvania, as president, with financial support from Dollar General and other sources. The organization stopped operations in early 2023 due to lack of funding and other needed supports, though its nonprofit status remained in effect for possible use by others.   It nonetheless left behind a model of what a learner-run leadership organization might look like and do, as well as resources (e.g., a model of training for adult learner leaders created with ProLiteracy) that others might adapt.

Beginning in about 2017, the Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) has run its own "Student Ambassadors" adult learner leadership program. It trains selected adult learners to serve as spokespersons and advocates on behalf of AFE. The Spring 2023 issue of the *COABE Journal* (Coalition on Adult Basic Education, Spring 2023) focused on the theme of "Programs Succeed When Learners Lead" and contained sixteen articles by AFE practitioners and learners describing examples of learner leadership activities. The Adult Literacy and Learning Impact Network (ALL IN), convened by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, has also identified "learner leadership" as one of its priority areas for action (Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, October 2021).

See Jurmo (March 2023) for an in-depth history of learner leadership efforts and actions that might be taken to redefine "learner leadership" and make it a central feature of community-oriented AFE.

Example 6: AFE for Families

Though "AFE for work" has been a major focus of much of AFE for decades, another very important AFE purpose has been "family literacy." Family (aka, intergenerational or "2Gen") AFE programs are typically defined as AFE

services that focus on helping both parents (adult caregivers) and their children to develop basic skills and other strengths they need to succeed in lifelong learning and other life roles. Since the 1980s, support for this concept came from diverse (though often collaborating) sources and took a number of forms as shown in the following examples:

> **The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy** was launched at a special White House luncheon on March 6, 1989 by Barbara Bush, wife of newly-elected U.S. President, George H.W. Bush. Its mission was to promote adult literacy in the United States, with a special focus on family literacy (Business Council for Effective Literacy, April 1989a). For several years prior to starting the Foundation, Mrs. Bush had – as wife of the then-Vice President Bush -- already been advocating for the issue to leaders in government, business, and in the nonprofit world (e.g., women's groups) (Business Council for Effective Literacy, July 1987 and April 1989b). Other First Ladies at the state level (e.g., Virginia) (Business Council for Effective Literacy, January 1990b) followed Mrs. Bush's lead and took on similar roles as adult literacy advocates.

> **The National Center for Family Literacy** was established in August, 1989 under the directorship of Sharon Darling, also the director of the Kenan Family Literacy Project and former Director of Adult and Community Education in Kentucky (Business Council for Effective Literacy, October 1989c). She had pioneered a family literacy model called the Parent and Child Education (PACE) program when head of adult education in Louisville.   The Center, based in Louisville, collaborated with Mrs. Bush's office and other stakeholders; secured funding from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, Toyota, and other sources; developed and field-tested models of family literacy programs around the U.S.; and hosted conferences around the U.S. NCFL guided the inclusion of family literacy and NCFL's four-component, two-generation model into the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act in 1998.

> Fast forward a decade: The Center was renamed the National Center for Families Learning in 2013, evolved from its original model to one that now "builds upon the organization's legacy work and charts a new course. Moving beyond isolated programmatic endeavors, NCFL's vision will drive work designed to support the establishment of coordinated and aligned family learning systems in communities." Its "NCFL 60x30

Vision" is "By 2030, coordinated and aligned family learning systems are established in 60 communities, built with and for families, to increase education and economic outcomes, thereby creating more equitable communities." In 2018, the U.S. Department of Education selected NCFL to lead the establishment of Statewide Family Engagement Centers.[11]

The Even Start Family Literacy Program was a federally-funded intergenerational literacy initiative that began in the early 1990s (Business Council for Effective Literacy, January 1988 and January 1989b), with funding steadily winding down in the first decade of the 2000s, was closed in 2012. Even Start's stated purpose was to "integrate early childhood education, adult literacy (adult basic and secondary-level education and instruction for English language learners), parenting education, and interactive parent and child literacy activities for low-income families."[12] The ending of Even Start funding led to a significant decrease in family literacy programs. "Despite this significant lack of federal and state financial support, a committed family literacy community remains. This community has been inventive in cobbling together scare resources to sustain vibrant family literacy initiatives and programs" (Clymer et al, January 2017, p. 1).

The Goodling Center for Research in Family Literacy was established in 2001 within the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, which had been founded in 1985 at Pennsylvania State University. The Center was named after Congressman William Goodling, a former school official and teacher who had been a major advocate in Congress for the Even Start program. The Center was funded by a $6 million endowment from his colleagues in Congress when Mr. Goodling retired. Since its

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[11] To learn more about the National Center for Families Learning, visit
https://www.familieslearning.org
[12] To learn more about Even Start, visit
https://www2.ed.gov/programs/evenstartformula/index.html

inception, the Center has supported family literacy programs through research, professional development, and advocacy.[13]

Other research in support of family literacy has been carried out on various aspects of family literacy since the 1980s. Examples include Auerbach (1992), Gadsden (2006), Nickse (1990), Peyton (2007), Sticht (Fall 2011), and Sticht and McDonald (January 1989), among others.

The National Institute for Literacy supported family-related AFE through its Equipped for the Future (EFF) adult education systems reform initiative which, among other things, identified "family member" as one of three life roles for which adults needed basic skills. EFF advocated for AFE programs to use participatory, contextualized curricula customized to the particular real-world roles that learners play. (The other two roles were "worker" and "community member." For more about how EFF defined the family member role, see Stein, 2000, p. 10.)

These initiatives to support family literacy have demonstrated both the importance of family literacy at the community level and the potential of collaborative capacity building supports for a particular segment of the AFE field. These supports for family literacy have continued when similar efforts to support workplace literacy, corporate involvement, urban AFE, and other segments of the field have faded and much of the previous good work they did has been lost and is no longer used. Much of family literacy's success is due to strong leadership, sustained support from committed funders, and a solid model that is relevant to a major segment of U.S. communities.

Example 7: AFE for Health

Like "work" and "family," "health" is another theme that can be an important focus for AFE programs. More specifically, AFE providers – in collaboration with stakeholders who in various ways support the health of individuals and communities – can help adult learners maintain their own health and that of

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[13] Visit https://ed.psu.edu/research-grants/centers-institutes/goodling-institute and https://eric.ed.gov/?q=source%3A%22Goodling+Institute+for+Research+in+Family+Literacy%22 for more about the Goodling Center for Research in Family Literacy.

family members and other social groups (e.g., neighbors, co-workers, customers) with whom they interact.

There are many good models of health-related AFE collaborations at the program level and at city, state, and national levels. An Open Door Collective guidebook (September 30, 2019b) identified the following nine ways that "health partners" can collaborate with AFE programs to provide:

- Health literacy education for adult learners;
- Healthcare career preparation for adult learners;
- Direct healthcare services to adult learners;
- Basic skills-related guidance and other supports (e.g., language and cultural training) for healthcare providers to help them better work with their clients and employees;
- Help to AFE providers to create health-friendly adult education facilities;
- Public health-related service-learning opportunities for adult learners (e.g., adult learners conduct and learn from projects that improve public health in their communities);
- Joint advocacy and planning around community health issues;
- Research about health-related issues of adult learners.
- Joint professional development for staff of health partners and AFE programs.

Such community-level AFE/health collaborations have been supported by research and professional development carried out at universities (Bennett et al, September 2008; Rudd, February 2002; Tassi & Ashraf, September 2008) and with organizations like the National Institute for Literacy, Institute for Healthcare Advancement, and the Delaware Health Literacy Forum, with funding from a variety of sources.

In one local-level example, in 2003-2004, New York City created a NYC Health Literacy Initiative, a collaboration of the Mayor's Office, the Literacy Assistance Center, the Adult Literacy Media Alliance, healthcare professionals, and community AFE programs. At the state level during that same period, California Literacy established a California Health Literacy Initiative with these components: a multi-stakeholder task force that provided leadership, funding from a variety of sources, a Health Literacy Resource Center, health awareness activities for basic-skills-challenged adults, a wallet card that showed adults how to maximize their visits to healthcare providers, and ongoing monitoring of activities. This led to a report that identified factors that

make it difficult for basic-skills-challenged adults to navigate health issues and systems (Literacy Assistance Center, Fall 2004).

This web of programs, models, researchers, and supporters have created an infrastructure similar to that which is supporting "AFE for Families" (described above). The above Open Door Collective (September 30, 2019b)guide provides examples of such capacity-building activities, including:

- Research: Health and AFE researchers conduct various kinds of research about topics like the health needs of adult learners and strategies and how to respond to those health needs. Many of these research projects are conducted with direct involvement of AFE programs and adult learners.
- Program models: Some AFE organizations have made health partnerships a major focus of the services they provide to their target communities. These include state-level organizations (e.g., Florida Literacy Coalition, Wisconsin Literacy), city-wide initiatives (e.g., in Chicago and New York City), and local programs across the U.S.
- Professional development supports: The Institute for Healthcare Advancement hosts conferences around health literacy. National and state AFE organizations include health literacy as a topic in their conferences. LINCS (the Literacy Information and Communication System of the U.S. Department of Education) has an online health literacy special collection and discussion group.
- Financial and in-kind supports: The ODC guidebook identifies many sources of financial and in-kind supports for AFE-health partnerships, including state health agencies, university-based medical schools and AFE research centers, private foundations, the National Institute for Literacy, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Educational Testing Service, and Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy.

"AFE for Health," like "AFE for Families" is a valuable model of "non-work-specific" AFE that is useful in itself (by helping basic-skills-challenged adults and their communities deal with health-related issues). It also can serve as model of how AFE can be integrated with other types of services within a more comprehensive community-oriented system. This health focus is especially important in that health is a need all of us have in every aspect of our lives, especially at this time of challenges related to COVID-19, mental health

(Hewitt,2017; Office of the Surgeon General, 2023), substance abuse,[14] poor diet and hunger, environmental health, gun violence, workplace health and safety, and rising healthcare costs.

Example 8: Private-Sector Support for AFE

Example 2 ("Employer Support for Workplace AFE") described the public-outreach efforts of the Advertising Council, the Business Council for Effective Literacy (BCEL), and the PLUS adult literacy awareness campaign. One of the outcomes of these three initiatives was an increase in corporate and foundation support for AFE programs and policy. In particular, the Business Council for Effective Literacy – which was founded by Harold McGraw, Jr., the recently-retired Chairman of McGraw-Hill, Inc.– had as its major purpose increasing corporate involvement in U.S. adult literacy efforts. BCEL's strategic planning, publications program, and day-to-day operations were led by Gail Spangenberg, who had worked at the Ford Foundation, Carnegie Corporation (also a foundation), and elsewhere in the foundation world. She thereby had significant contacts in foundations and corporate giving offices and among researchers and public policy makers. She had insights about how to communicate with them about the adult literacy issue and how they might play useful roles as funders and advocates for the adult literacy field.

This background led her to hire a small staff who could communicate with business and foundation leaders via widely-circulated and -respected newsletters[15] and other documents. BCEL also helped to connect corporate givers and foundations to local, state, and national adult literacy organizations through one-on-one communications and a national directory of key state adult literacy contacts. BCEL's *Make It Your Business* guidebook (Business Council for Effective Literacy, January 1989a) and examples in BCEL's quarterly newsletter of corporate support showed literacy programs how to reach out to corporate donors.

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[14] LINCS hosted an on-line discussion on the impact of the opioid epidemic on adult education in March 2019: https://community.lincs.ed.gov/search/node?keys=opioid
[15] See BCEL's newsletters at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED359392.pdf

For example, B. Dalton Bookseller was a major leader in organizing urban and state adult literacy coalitions and generating support for community-based AFE programs. The Gannett Foundation supported state-level adult literacy planning. The American Broadcasting Company and Public Broadcasting Service led the PLUS campaign, and many publishing industry companies and trade associations provided coverage of the adult literacy issue. (For many more examples of various types of corporate involvement, big and small, see the BCEL newsletters at this link:
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED359392.pdf)

BCEL thus provided resources and a framework for talking about corporate involvement that national, state, and local AFE professionals could use to (a) secure grants from corporate giving offices and foundations and (b) get business leaders to serve on boards of directors and tasks forces and as advocates for adult literacy within their business networks and with public policy makers. Though BCEL did support the involvement of the business community and other private sector funders, it consistently also insisted that governments at all levels had to significantly increase public funding for adult literacy services. As BCEL president Harold W. McGraw said in "A Message to Corporate CEOs" in the inaugural issue of the BCEL newsletter in September 1984 (p.1):

> Business must give an even higher priority to this problem among their many pressing corporate social responsibilities. And, in addition to increasing their funding for the needed expansion of the efforts of the various literacy agencies in the field, they must increasingly join with local, state, and federal government agencies in bringing added management, organizational, and planning skills to an integrated, overall effort. It will require that kind of joint endeavor to make any sizable inroad on a problem that has been markedly outgrowing the degree of current effort to meet it.

The result of these collaborations between BCEL, the PLUS campaign and associated print and broadcast media, and the adult literacy field produced a huge wave of corporate giving and advocacy for adult literacy. This lasted for about a half dozen years (from the mid-1980s to early 1990s). This was a point when BCEL closed (in 1993), the PLUS Campaign ended, and other major corporate supporters for adult literacy (e.g., B. Dalton Bookseller, Gannett Foundation, and others) steadily withdrew from the field. In "Adult Literacy and the American Dream" (Chisman, February 2002, pp. 9-10),

Forrest Chisman reflected on the decline in corporate and other supports for adult literacy that had transpired in the previous decade:

> Support for adult literacy) came to an abrupt halt. . . For no particularly good reason, most socially conscious elites lost interest. First Ladies, the media, and philanthropists no longer signed up for it. Literacy became old news for the media. Most foundations and other major charities quietly dropped it from their lists. The federal agencies balked at some of their new responsibilities under the National Literacy Act of 1991. . . . The result of these recent developments is that the national literacy effort in America today is not even remotely comparable to that of just a decade ago . . . It is a cruel irony that the deficiencies of a system left half-built are often used to argue against investing in it further.

In 2006, Forest Chisman – with Gail Spangenberg, with whom he had worked at BCEL -- returned to the issue of corporate funding in *The Role of Corporate Giving in Adult Literacy* (Chisman and Spangenberg, March 2006). It went in-depth into questions of "who gives and how much," why and how companies donate to AFE, and the impacts of that giving and how they are measured the need for national leadership around this issue and how to develop it. The authors also identified important needs in the field that corporate giving might help fill. These included strategic planning for AFE, creation of contextualized AFE models integrated with other social and economic initiatives, public awareness that more fully helps build understanding of the adult literacy issue and what can be done to resolve it, and strengthening of public policy to support important, under-funded segments of AFE work.

Fast-forward to 2019 and Peter Waite's observations about both the decline and continued need for private sector funding for community-based AFE (Waite, March 2019., p 1):

> Private-sector and United Way funding have provided significant support to community-based literacy programs for over 50 years. In fact, private-sector funding (along with volunteer tutors) launched some of the first adult literacy programs in the nation. As federal, state, and local government funding opportunities grew in the '70s and '80s, the size and scope of literacy programs increased dramatically.

> As other national and local social priorities arose in the late '90s, there was a general erosion of private sector and United Way funding for adult

literacy programs. Many programs that received some state and federal support had to shift to rely on local government or private-sector funding.

While private-sector funding is continuing to increase today, the proportion being allocated to adult literacy programs is getting smaller. Private-sector funders are requiring new and innovative approaches to solving community problems with a focus on collective impact, collaborations, partnerships, and consolidation of programs to ensure funding dollars are being efficiently utilized. In addition, many United Way and private funders are primarily looking to support workforce education. Private-sector and United Way funding will continue to be a vital part of adult literacy programming, but both funders and programs must develop a more effective dialogue on the key contribution that literacy programs make to improve local communities.

The above history of corporate and other private-sector (e.g., foundations, United Ways, individual donors) support for AFE shows both the potential and challenges of working with such funders. In some cases, private-sector funders have provided timely, easy-to-use supports that jump-started innovations and quick responses to community needs that might have not been possible through government sources. For example:

- VALUEUSA secured a very timely and important small grant from Time Warner that allowed it to get up and running. (See "Example 5: Learner Leadership Development" above).
- The National Center for Families Learning receives vital support from the Kenan Charitable Trust and Toyota. (See Example 6: AFE for Families.")
- The Business Council for Effective Literacy (described in Examples 2 and 8) was initially launched with a personal contribution of $1 million from publishing executive, Harold W. McGraw, who then served as BCEL president for the next decade during his retirement years.

Some observers (Folinsbee & Jurmo, 1994a; Kazemek, November 1988) have cautioned that AFE programs need to be selective and strategic about whom they partner with. Doing so will help AFE proponents avoid getting themselves mixed up in ethically-compromising situations. Being selective and well-organized will also allow AFE advocates to ensure that securing funding is done in a cost-effective way. As Peter Waite recommends, it will be important for AFE proponents to rethink how they can educate possible supporters about

why and how funders might target resources to particular forms of AFE relevant to priority community needs.

Example 9: College Student Involvement in AFE

Through a variety of programs—community service, service-learning classes, and federal work-study programs—college students nationwide have gotten involved in AFE programs (Business Council for Effective Literacy, January 1993; New York Times, July 21, 1987). This is potentially good news for resource-strapped adult educators, since college students can not only help out in the classroom or tutor adult learners but can also perform other services such as designing publications and websites, writing proposals, doing research, or organizing advocacy events.

It's also good news for the adult literacy field as a whole. Adult education professionals need to be building AFE's future workforce; college students represent potential adult education teachers, administrators, and policymakers. Though AFE is in many ways not an easy calling, we know that this form of education offers great rewards for those who believe in improving people's lives and building a healthy society. We need to make these realities clear to college students and welcome them into our programs regardless of the professions they end up in. We need lawyers, healthcare providers, schoolteachers, public policymakers, employers, union leaders, and social service providers who understand the potential and needs of adult learners and are willing to advocate for adult learners and for our programs.

Research[16] on youth involvement suggests that a positive volunteer experience leads to greater community involvement and increased likelihood of philanthropic giving in adulthood. AmeriCorps, among other community service models, could provide opportunities for recent college graduates to spend a year or more working for an AFE organization. Literacy USA (previously called the National Alliance of Literacy Coalitions) reported that it had worked with Literacy*AmeriCorps to place 160 AmeriCorps members with literacy service providers to tutor and teach in six cities, where local adult

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[16] Learn what youth.gov says about "positive youth development" at https://youth.gov/youth-topics/effectiveness-positive-youth-development-programs .

literacy coalitions served as sub-grantees and project coordinators. Literacy USA also reported that, nationally, from 1994 through 2003, "more than 1,170 Literacy*AmeriCorps members gave more than 1,380,000 hours of service to their communities," providing tutoring services to 57,00 adult learners and 51,700 children (Literacy USA, n.d.). (An October 2023 Internet search for "adult literacy AmeriCorps" showed that AFE programs in California, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, DC, and Washington State used AmeriCorps Volunteers as tutors, teachers, or administrative staff.)

National and local experience shows the potential benefits of well-planned partnerships between adult education programs and local colleges and universities. Here are some examples:

> **SCALE: A National Network of College Students Involved in Adult Literacy:** In 1989, two undergraduates at the University of North Carolina (UNC) created a national organization called SCALE: Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education. SCALE's mission was – and still is -- to support the literacy work and leadership of college students and campus-based literacy programs (Business Council for Effective Literacy, October 1991).
>
> SCALE has intentionally promoted a participatory, social-change perspective on literacy education. (Its slogan is "Read. Write. Act.") Organizers have taken this view in the belief that adult illiteracy is a social justice issue requiring an educational approach that helps learners develop the skills they need to understand and change the world. SCALE has sponsored an annual conference and also provided many levels of training and technical support to its college-based program members via its website (www.readwriteact.org), on-site training, and publications.
>
> SCALE's network has grown to include dozens of college-based literacy programs. As an example, the New Writers' Voices Program in New Orleans, a partnership between Tulane University and YMCA Educational Services, enabled university writing students to teach adult learners using creative writing exercises; the university students simultaneously

gained knowledge, experience, and understanding of adult education issues.[17]

Students in other (non-SCALE-member) universities have likewise gotten involved in local adult literacy efforts in several ways. Here are some examples from New York City (Jurmo, March 2003):

- At NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study, undergraduates were involved through two courses. Literacy in Action was a semester-long course that introduced undergraduates to adult literacy. Students made a minimum of eight site visits during the semester to one of a half dozen local adult basic skills programs, where they worked as classroom helpers or tutors. They recorded their observations in a "site visit log" and produced a semester project consisting of a program profile and interviews with a learner and teacher. In addition to their site visits, students also participated in weekly class sessions at the university in which they discussed readings on adult literacy education and shared observations about their field experience. Some course participants went on to do further volunteer or paid work in local programs.

  In addition to participating in the Literacy in Action course, some Gallatin students also gained academic credit by doing semester-long tutorials in teaching writing to adult ESOL learners at University Settlement House, a multi-service agency for immigrants in Manhattan. Under the supervision of Professor June Foley (Gallatin's writing program director), the students read, discussed, and wrote about adult literacy issues and observed the director's weekly University Settlement writing class and eventually co-taught it.

  Since Spring 2003, Gallatin students and Professor Foley have also edited and published The Literacy Review, an annual journal of

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[17] To learn more about SCALE, visit https://bonner.unc.edu/student-coalition-action-literacy-education-scale-campus-based-non-profit/ .

writing by NYC adult learners.[18] The Literacy Review team also organizes an annual reading event in which learners whose works are published in the Review read excerpts from their works in a NYU conference center. Each year the team also organizes a day of workshops in which local adult educators learn about how to teach writing to adult learners.

- At Columbia University, the Jobs and Education Empowerment Project (J.E.E.P.) helped adult residents of the Harlem Empowerment Zone achieve independence through jobs and further education. Programs were run on campus and at the Graham Windham Beacon Center. Columbia students volunteered in GED, ESOL, citizenship, computer, college readiness, and job preparation classes. J.E.E.P. was part of Columbia's Community Impact program, an umbrella for 25 community service initiatives in which almost 1000 Columbia students volunteer each year.
- At Wagner College on Staten Island freshmen volunteered at the St. George Center for Reading and Writing for three or four hours per week for one full semester as part of the college's Experiential Learning community service program.
- Students from PACE University and Hunter College worked at Henry Street Settlement House one-on-one with basic skills learners to help them transition into jobs, providing pre-employment guidance, advice on the learners' workplace internships, and help in the computer lab.
- At the Center for Worker Education at City University of New York, students in a Peer Tutoring Workshop course did a 10-hour practicum as basic skills tutors and wrote a report about their experiences.
- Students in New School University's adult ESOL certificate program's methods course taught in local adult education programs two hours a week for at least ten weeks. This teaching served as a "laboratory" that allowed them to try out and reflect on the practices taught in the methods class.

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[18] For more information about T*he Literacy Review,* visit
https://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/undergraduate/writing/literacyproject.html .

Drawing on experience gained in the above programs, summarized below are some steps that AFE providers and partners might take to tap into the valuable resources represented in local college students:

- Poll local adult education programs and colleges to identify ways that college students are—or might be—helping adult education programs. Summarize the findings and circulate them to the adult education community and to the community service programs of local colleges.
- Organize a meeting that brings together adult education providers and college representatives to identify ways to get college students involved in adult education programs.
- Create an ongoing network of these kinds of partnerships, perhaps in the form of a local affiliate of SCALE, staffed by college students who have worked in a local literacy program. Publicize these collaborations via adult education websites and press coverage.
- Provide ongoing training and job opportunities—internships, volunteer work, and paid positions—to college students interested in getting and staying involved in the field.
- Explore the possibility of hiring undergraduate and graduate students who qualify for federal work-study to work in community-based programs. Colleges and universities have sometimes been required to spend 7 percent of their work-study funds on community service jobs—and this percentage is likely to increase.
- Generate resources for these programs by reaching out to funders who support volunteerism, community service, leadership development, and adult literacy.

Part 5.c. Wrap-Up

The above nine AFE capacity-building initiatives provide examples of resources (e.g., strategies, partners, funding) that advocates might adapt to generate supports for new efforts to build community-oriented models of AFE.

As resources allow, descriptions of other similar initiatives might be added to the above list. Examples might include capacity-building initiatives related to:

- state planning;
- services for special populations (e.g., individuals with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, currently- and formerly-incarcerated individuals),

- skill areas (e.g., digital literacy, numeracy, and various kinds of work-related skills), and
- potential partners (e.g., universities, particular industries, faith-based and community service organizations).

As stated elsewhere in this series, it will be important for advocates of community-oriented AFE to be strategic, organized, and informed in their efforts, building on both past good work and new ideas, to make AFE more relevant to emerging challenges and opportunities in our nation.

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A P P E N D I X

Glossary

Adult Foundational Education (AFE)

This term was introduced by the Open Door Collective (ODC) in 2022, to provide a name that more fully captured the diverse types of services provided in adult literacy/basic skills, English for Speakers of Other Languages, high school equivalency ("GED"), and other related programs (e.g., workplace/workforce basic skills, citizenship preparation, health and family literacy programs). For more about how the ODC defined this term, visit https://nationalcoalitionforliteracy.org/2022/05/adult-foundational-education/ and https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BTroPf5NCwcQIy_drWO5pzd44GE2fbmWNp71VyrqZCc/edit

Because I have long agreed that our multi-dimensional field needs a more comprehensive and accurate way of describing itself, I have adopted this term "adult foundational education" ("AFE ") and use it throughout this resource book series, adding my own interpretations of the term. (See a more detailed description of "AFE in the U.S." in Part 2.a.)

I also recognize that others in the field might not want to use this term and use other terms like "adult literacy education," "adult basic education," "English for Speakers of Other languages education," "high school equivalency education," or simply "adult education." I hope that this discussion of "What do we call ourselves?" is not a source of confusion, distraction, and division. I hope that this discussion instead helps us better understand the learners and communities we serve, what we can do to better serve them, and how talk about our field internally and externally.

In Part 2.a. of this series, I present my own interpretation of this term, based on my years of study and work in AFE and related fields. Though it does not use the exact wording used by ODC, I believe that how I describe AFE is in keeping with the general sense and spirit of ODC's definition. ODC itself has also encouraged the field to help to further develop this term.

In a nutshell, I'm saying that *adult foundational education (AFE)* refers to the diverse types of instructional and other services that help U.S. adults and out-of-school youth to (a) strengthen their "foundational skills" (e.g., oral and written language, numeracy, digital literacy, problem-solving, collaboration, and others); (b) build social-emotional strengths; (c) develop content knowledge; and (c) develop credentials, personal plans, support systems, and other tools they need to perform work, family, civic, and academic roles. AFE services are based in multiple institutions and communities, serve diverse populations of adults and out-of-school youth, and often involve other stakeholder partners.

Community-oriented adult foundational education

This is an approach that focuses AFE services on helping learners participate effectively in the various *communities* (social contexts) they operate in. *Communities* are not limited to geographic neighborhoods but can include settings like workplaces, families, healthcare facilities, prisons, clubs, religious institutions, social services, and other social contexts where learners use foundational skills to communicate and solve problems with others. The term *community-oriented* is borrowed from Hanna Arlene Fingeret (1992)[19] who used it in a 1992 ERIC monograph and from the *community-based* adult literacy movement of the 1980s and 1990s. As used in this document, *community-oriented* AFE programs often work with other stakeholders who provide supports that help learners manage particular life issues they are concerned about. Such an integrated, collaborative, community-oriented approach can, in turn, also help those other stakeholders be better able to work with basic-skills-challenged adults and the AFE programs that serve them. In these ways, *community* is both a venue and resource for, and a product of, adult foundational education.

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