

## **ODHE Adult Learner Working Group**

**Purpose:** Ohio has established an attainment goal that 65 percent of Ohioans, ages 25-64, will have a degree, certificate, or other postsecondary workforce credential of value in the workplace by 2025; at present, Ohio is at 44.1%. Of the nearly 470,000 students enrolled in Ohio's public postsecondary institutions in 2017, close to 27% are adults over age 25. Since the Great Recession, the proportion of adult students enrolling in postsecondary education and training has been in decline; in the five-year period between AY 2011 and 2016, adult enrollment has declined by nearly one-third. The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) is concerned by this enrollment trend among adult learners and is committed to a goal where adults age 25 and older will comprise at least 40% of public higher education enrollments and completions by 2025. Additionally, Ohio will strive to close the equity gaps between underrepresented minorities and adults in enrollment and completion. With support from Lumina Foundation and ODHE, *Finish for Your Future* provides an opportunity to build upon established initiatives and create a strategic framework to advance improvement of adult learner outcomes.

**Working Group Charge:** The Adult Learner Working Group has the responsibility of recommending strategic frameworks to advance improvement of adult learner enrollment and completion. By June 2020, the Adult Learner Working Group will submit to ODHE an Ohio-focused report that identifies promising practices for adult learner success and how to build upon them; identifies equity gaps for adult learners and recommendations to close those gaps; identifies suggestions for policy improvement; and analyzes the return on investment colleges and universities can expect to experience based upon increased adult learner enrollment and success. Each section of the report will include data as well as data-based recommendations.

The report should be developed with the following guiding principles in mind:

- Solutions must be adult learner focused and address adult student needs.
- All completions, including technical certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees, are valued and need to be increased.
- Access and success must be increased.
- The report should build upon existing and previous adult learner success initiatives and campus experience.
- Recommendations must be based on data.
- Strategies must be systemic approaches.
- The academic quality of programs must not be compromised.

Subgroups that will inform the Adult Learner Working Group throughout the *Finish for Your Future* initiative include the High Impact Practices Subgroup, the Closing Equity Gaps Subgroup, the Policy Improvement Subgroup, and the Return on Investment Subgroup.

### **Activities, Duties, and Responsibilities:**

- Review the ODHE *Finish for Your Future* Lumina proposal to ensure familiarity with all of the expectations associated with this work.
- Review current research and literature.
- Identify promising practices for adult learner success in Ohio and nationally.
- Convene once a month at ODHE in Columbus.
- Determine standard agenda items.
- Create a time and action plan incorporating everything that must be accomplished by June 2020.
- Create a strategic framework to advance improvement of adult learner enrollment and completion.
- Guide, oversee, and monitor the Adult Learner subgroups, and ensure adequate communication between and among the subgroups and the working group.
- Reach consensus on conflicting issues.
- To the extent possible, prevent duplication of effort.
- Provide data-informed direction focused on achieving the goal of increasing the adult learner population to at least 40% of public higher education enrollments and completions by 2025.
- By June 2020, submit to ODHE an Ohio-focused report on how to build upon promising practices for adult learner success, how to close equity gaps, suggestions for policy improvement, and return on investment.
- Attend a *Finish for Your Future* Convening where the report will be released.