



# Cohorts for the Primary Indicators of Performance

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*Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education  
Division of Adult Education Policy*

Subject: **Cohorts for the Primary Indicators of Performance**  
Number: C.135  
Effective: July 1, 2019  
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## **POLICY STATEMENT**

All division-funded programs must follow established intake and data collection procedures, and provide quality instruction to ensure that the maximum number of outcomes for the primary indicators of performance can be achieved and documented for enrolled students. Program staff must understand how students are assigned to the performance indicator cohorts and how the state conducts the data matching process.

## **PURPOSE**

The National Reporting System (NRS) requires that adult education students be placed in performance indicator cohorts based on demographic data collected on entry into or outcomes achieved during or after participation in an adult education program. Achievement of performance targets entails program improvement and justifies continuation of adult education funding.

## **GUIDANCE**

### **COHORT SYSTEM**

Students will be assigned to performance indicator cohorts based on the criteria listed below. Programs are encouraged to set and track secondary outcomes in e-Data v2 for local reporting. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program grantees are required to set and track the outcome measures for civics education programs in e-Data v2.

All program staff members are required to annually review NRS cohort and data matching requirements to ensure accurate performance results. Administrators must document staff completion of this requirement.

### **Program Primary Indicators of Performance Cohorts**

For program performance reports, there are five cohorts (groups): Measurable Skill Gains [includes targets for each educational functioning level (EFL)], Employment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

after Exit, Median Earnings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit, Receipt of a Secondary School Diploma or Credential, and Entered Postsecondary Education or Training. To be included in a data match cohort, the student must meet all of the criteria for enrollment/participant and exit as defined in Policy C.100.

#### **Measurable Skill Gains Cohort Criteria**

1. The student does **not** have to exit the program.
2. The student must have a valid first administration of a division-approved standardized assessment before entering instruction.
3. All students except those who enter at the High Adult Secondary Education level are included in the cohort.

**Note:** Students assessed in multiple areas (e.g., reading and math) will be assigned to an EFL based on the lowest assessment score. Documented special needs students who cannot be assessed with one of the division-approved standardized assessments are assigned to the lowest EFL – Adult Basic Education Beginning Literacy.

#### **Unsubsidized Employment in 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit Cohort Criteria**

1. Have exited the program between July 1 and June 30 of the program year.

#### **Median Earnings in 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit Cohort Criteria**

1. Have exited the program between July 1 and June 30 of the program year.
2. Be employed in the second quarter after exit.

#### **Receipt of a Secondary School Diploma/Credential Cohort Criteria**

1. Have taken all parts of a state recognized high school equivalency test (GED<sup>®</sup> test or HiSET<sup>®</sup> exam) with at least one taken during the data match period.
2. Have exited the program between July 1 and June 30 of the program year.

#### **Entered Postsecondary Education or Training**

1. Have a U.S. secondary credential at entry into the adult education program; have a non-U.S. secondary credential and be at an adult basic or secondary educational level at program entry; have earned a secondary school diploma or credential while enrolled in adult education and remained in a program for 12 or more hours after attaining the credential; or be enrolled in a class specifically designed for transitioning to postsecondary education.
2. This cohort will not include students entering the program with a non-U.S. high school diploma who are receiving English-as-a-Second-Language instruction.
3. Have exited the program between July 1 and June 30 of the program year.

**Note:** Examples of a specifically designed transition-to-postsecondary class would be a bridge program or college readiness class. These classes must be marked in e-Data v2 as Special Program Type “Postsecondary Transition.”

#### **Data Matching for Program Performance**

The Division of Adult Education will run a data match from student records in e-Data v2 after the data has been validated at the end of the program year. Each student included in the denominator is evaluated to determine if the related outcome was achieved as indicated by the data match; the total number of positive matches becomes the numerator of the respective

fraction. Performance for any standard is the number of students for whom there is a positive match over the total number of students in the data match.

All enrolled students will be included in the Measurable Skill Gains, Receipt of a Secondary Credential, and Entered Postsecondary Education or Training data matching process - even students without valid Social Security Numbers (SSNs). For performance indicators relating to employment and wages, only those students in the cohort who have a valid SSN will be included in the data match, i.e., will be included in the denominator for determining performance.

### **Data Match Validity**

To be an accurate measure of program performance, the performance indicators for employment and wages must have greater than 50 percent of its cohort eligible (valid SSN) for data matching. If less than 50 percent of a program's cohort has a valid SSN, the data match results will be considered invalid.

### **Outcome-per-Student Data Matching**

The Division of Adult Education will use the match results from Measurable Skill Gains, Employment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit, Receipt of a Secondary School Diploma or Credential, and Entered Postsecondary Education or Training to determine each program's Outcome-per-Student performance. Reference Division Policy C.100

### **Measurable Skill Gains Data Match**

Students who have multiple first assessment administrations (e.g., reading and math) will be assigned to the lowest EFL cohort. Those students that show completion of an EFL in a subsequent administration of the lowest cohort assessment will count as a match. Students without a posttest cannot show completion of an EFL.

Students who cannot complete an EFL:

- Students entering at High Adult Secondary Education level on all assessments are not included in the EFL data match process.
- Documented special needs students are assigned to the lowest EFL cohort. They cannot be assessed with a division-approved test, and they will be counted as a non-match.

### **Unsubsidized Employment in 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit Data Match**

The Division of Adult Education will send a data file to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I). For each match, the output file indicates the existence of employer payment of unemployment insurance (UI) premiums to the state. Payment in the second quarter following the quarter of exit from the program goal indicates a match.

**Note:** Pennsylvania does not collect UI premiums for some forms of employment, for example, military or other federal employment.

### **Median Earnings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Data Match**

The Division of Adult Education will send a data file to L&I. For each match, the output file indicates the existence of employer payment of UI premiums to the state. Payment in the second quarter following the quarter of exit from the program goal indicates a match. L&I will identify quarterly wages for each match. The division will sort the wages from greatest to least and identify a mid-point. This will represent the median earnings for the program.

### Receipt of a Secondary School Credential Data Match

The division will use a data file from the Pennsylvania high school equivalency reporting system. Students that match those in the Pennsylvania high school equivalency database indicating a secondary school diploma or credential was awarded prior to October 31 are counted in the match.

### Entered Postsecondary Education or Training Data Match

Three methods of data matching will be used. The final result will be the unduplicated total of the outcomes from the three methods:

1. **NSC Record:** Records for learners in this cohort are submitted to the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for matching against its student enrollment database. For each match, the output file indicates verified enrollment at a postsecondary institution. The NSC data match lists adults who are enrolled full- or part-time in a degree or certificate program. As of March 2017, the NSC lists 191 schools in Pennsylvania and over 3,600 schools nationally ranging from Area Vocational Technical Schools (AVTS) to universities that participate in enrollment verification. The [NSC list of institutions](#) is available for download.
2. **Adult Student Postsecondary Enrollment Certification Form:** Division-funded agencies can submit student enrollment information directly to the Division of Adult Education for adults who have entered postsecondary education or training and exited the program prior to the end of the program year. The verification form can be used for postsecondary and training institutes that offer a state certification, license, or diploma. If the school or training institution is not listed with the NSC, two methods will be used to collect data: Individual Verification and Group Verification.
  - a. **Individual Verification:** Agencies will provide the Adult Student Postsecondary Enrollment Certification Form (available in e-Data v2) for adults who entered postsecondary education or training and exited the program. Prior to exit, the adult student will be advised to 1) complete this form and have it signed and dated by the authorized postsecondary official to verify enrollment, and 2) return this form to the primary provider program. The program will review the form for accuracy and completeness, sign and date the “Certifications” section, and mail the forms to the Division of Adult Education each month.
  - b. **Group Verification:** This option can be used when a program has a large number of students transition to the same postsecondary or training institute. Agencies that receive prior approval from the Division of Adult Education will be authorized to submit a certified list of students who exited the program and enrolled in the postsecondary education or training institution. This method will be contingent upon completion of a waiver by the students to approve the release of enrollment information. In addition, Division-funded agencies that receive enrollment data from an outside postsecondary institution should sign a formal partnership agreement with that institution as evidence of collaboration between the two entities.

Group verification should be submitted with a cover letter from the postsecondary institution and a list of the students who enrolled there.

The cover letter from the postsecondary or training institute must include the following information:

1. Institute name;
2. Institute address;
3. Phone number;
4. Type of school (college, university, licensed school – trade, business, industry, CTC, other);
5. Signature of school official; and
6. Position of signee.

The list of students must include the following information:

1. Name (First, Middle, Last);
2. PA Secure ID;
3. Date of Birth;
4. Exit Date in Adult Education Program;
5. Student Status (Full-Time or Part-Time); and
6. Entry Date into Postsecondary Education.

All forms for the program year need to be submitted to the Division by the deadline (reference Guidelines - Section 700). Agencies are required to maintain paper or electronic files to substantiate their records. If the data match indicates enrollment in a postsecondary education or training institution prior to November 1, these students are counted in this core outcome.

## DEFINITIONS

The following terminology and descriptions will help identify what is considered a successful match for this cohort:

1. **Postsecondary Enrollment:** The term *postsecondary enrollment* refers to students who are enrolled in a full- or part-time status, and receiving instruction in an approved degree or certificate program at a postsecondary institution. It does not include students who are enrolled in remedial courses, such as math or English, or are studying in programs under special circumstances, such as contracts through employers. Nor does the term include students who are studying in courses or programs outside the jurisdiction of the State Board of Private Licensed Schools and/or not included on the list of providers of Certified Trade Adjustment Assistance training programs or eligible training providers under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including those that provide professional development or that are recreational or vocational in nature. For registered (out-of-state) schools, *postsecondary enrollment* refers to permanent residents of Pennsylvania who studied at schools in approved programs.
2. **Private Licensed School:** The term *private licensed school* refers to a “school or classes operated for profit or tuition that provides resident instruction to prepare an individual to pursue an occupation in the skilled trades, industry, or business; or (that provides) systematic instruction by correspondence or by telecommunication in a field of study” (Act 174 of 1986, Private Licensed School Act). The Department of Education’s Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education is responsible for licensing and regulating private career and trade schools. Most of these schools offer certificate or diploma programs, with 62 institutions authorized to grant specialized associate degrees. The most popular areas of postsecondary study are business management and administrative services, health professions, mechanics and repair, family and consumer services, computer and information science, engineering technologies/technicians, personal and culinary services, legal professions; and construction trades.

## REFERENCE

### Federal Primary Indicators of Performance Cohorts for Participants

For federal reporting of state performance, there are six cohorts (groups): Measurable Skill Gains; Employment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit; Employment in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit; Median Earnings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit; Credential Attainment; and Effectiveness in Serving Employers. To be included in a federal data match cohort, the student must have been a “participant,” (i.e., have received 12 hours or more of service during the program year). Incarcerated individuals who remain incarcerated after exiting the adult education program are excluded from the employment outcome cohorts. Due to the timeframes required for data matching for federal reporting, outcomes for students may be reported up to two years after participation.

Period of Participation: For federal reporting purposes, a new period of participation is counted each time a student exits and reenters again after an absence of 90 days or more. Students are included in all of the cohorts for which they meet the criteria for each period of participation.

### Measurable Skill Gains

1. The student does **not** have to exit the program.

### Unsubsidized Employment in 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit Cohort Criteria

1. Have exited the program within the reporting period.

### Unsubsidized Employment in 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit Cohort Criteria

1. Have exited the program within the reporting period.

### Median Earnings in 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit Cohort Criteria

1. Have exited the program within the reporting period.
2. Be employed in the second quarter and have wages greater than \$0.

### Credential Attainment

1. Have exited the program within the reporting period.
2. Be co-enrolled in a postsecondary education or training program during program participation, *or*
3. Have entered the program at or above the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level (i.e., have an entry level of Low or High Adult Secondary Education) without a secondary diploma or equivalent, or have exited the program at or above the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level after being posttested.

### Data Matching for Federal Cohorts

All enrolled students that meet cohort requirements will be included in the data matching process, including those who did not provide SSNs.

### Measurable Skill Gains Data Match

Students can demonstrate Measurable Skill Gains either by EFL gain or by earning a secondary school diploma or equivalent during the program year. Students demonstrate EFL gain through use of standardized assessment (pre-/posttesting). Students who have multiple first assessment administrations (e.g., reading and math) will be assigned to the lowest EFL cohort. Those students that show completion of an EFL in a subsequent administration of the lowest cohort assessment will count as a match.



Students who do not complete an EFL gain via standardized assessment can demonstrate EFL gain by exiting the program and then enrolling in postsecondary education and training by June 30 of the program year.

Matches will be conducted using posttest results from the e-Data v2 system, submitted postsecondary enrollment certification forms, and data files from the Pennsylvania high school equivalency reporting system, NSC, and L&I ITAs.

#### **Unsubsidized Employment in 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit Data Match**

The Division of Adult Education will send a data file to L&I. For each match, the output file indicates the existence of employer payment of UI premiums to the state. Payment in the second quarter following the quarter of exit from the program goal indicates a match.

#### **Unsubsidized Employment in 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit Data Match**

The Division of Adult Education will send a data file to L&I. For each match, the output file indicates the existence of employer payment of UI premiums to the state. Payment in the fourth quarter following the quarter of exit from the program indicates a match.

#### **Median Earnings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit Data Match**

The Division of Adult Education will send a data file to L&I. For each match, the output file indicates the existence of employer payment of UI premiums to the state. Payment in the second quarter following the quarter of exit from the program goal indicates a match. L&I will identify quarterly wages for each match. The division will sort the wages from greatest to least and identify a mid-point. This will represent the median earnings for the program.

**Note:** For the three employment-related performance indicators, programs may submit supplemental wage information for students who are self-employed or do not provide a SSN. Programs must submit the supplemental wage information to the division within one year after student exit and must provide information for all three indicators.

#### **Credential Attainment Data Match**

There are two numerator matches for this cohort:

1. The division will identify those students who obtained a secondary school credential during participation in or within one year after exit from the program AND were employed or were enrolled in a postsecondary or training program within one year after exiting the program
2. The division will identify those students who obtained a recognized postsecondary credential during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. As defined in U.S. Department of Education Program Memorandum OCTAE 17-2, the following are recognized credentials: associate's degree; bachelor's degree; occupational licensure; occupational certificate, including registered apprenticeship certificate and career and technical education educational certificate; occupational certification; and other recognized certificates of industry and occupational skills completion that are sufficient to qualify for entry level or advanced employment. Questions about recognized credentials should be addressed to the division advisor.

Matches will be done using Pennsylvania high school equivalency data, L&I data matching for UI payments and ITA accounts, postsecondary enrollment/completion forms, and NSC records.

## Federal Primary Indicators of Performance “Effectiveness in Service Employers”

In addition to the five indicators of performance for program participants, WIOA includes an indicator of performance for the workforce development system partners’ effectiveness in serving employers. For state accountability purposes, this is a shared indicator across all six core programs under WIOA. In Pennsylvania, L&I will take the lead in collecting data for and reporting on this indicator, but all core programs will assist.

WIOA requires the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education to establish one or more indicators to demonstrate effectiveness in serving employers. For the initial implementation period, the Departments established three measures; states must select and report on two of the three. The Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board selected “Repeat Business Customers” and “Employer Penetration Rate.”

1. Repeat Business Customer: Percentage of employers in the commonwealth that receive services from core programs more than once during a three-year period.
2. Employer Penetration Rate: Percentage of employers that receive services from core programs out of all employers in the commonwealth.

## TOOLS

Two websites are provided that can be used by a program, when submitting an Adult Student Postsecondary Certification Form, to verify if the program that a student is attending issues a state-approved certificate or license.

**Institutional Program Search:** Pennsylvania Department of Education search engine that contains information on all approved higher education institutions in the state. [This list](#) does not contain career technical centers, unions, and other non-private licensed schools that may award legitimate certificates.

**Licensing Facility Search:** Pennsylvania Department of State search engine that contains information on businesses regulated by the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs. This site is considered a primary source for verification of license credentials provided by the [Pennsylvania Department of State](#).

**Adult Student Postsecondary Enrollment Certification Form:** Agencies should use the official form generated via e-Data v2 or the following form for group verification. Forms should be mailed to:

Pennsylvania Department of Education  
Division of Adult Education - Attn: Administrative Officer  
333 Market St., 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333



## Adult Student Postsecondary Enrollment Certification Form

Information collected on this form will be aggregated and used for state and federal reports on students **enrolled** in postsecondary education or training in a degree or certificate program. Information on individuals will be protected as confidential. Please complete all information requested and **sign below**.

### Student Information

**PA SecureID**

**Adult Student ID**

Name (First, Middle, Last)

Date of Birth

Exit Date from Adult Education Program

### Postsecondary/Training Program Information

Name of Program

Program Entry Date

Address of Program

Phone Number

Course of Study

Type of Program (College, University, Private Licensed School – Trade, Business, Industry, Union, CTC, Other – specify):

### Certifications:

I certify that this information is correct to the best of my knowledge. By signing this certification I am authorizing

\_\_\_\_\_ (name of Adult Education Program)

as a Grant Recipient to operate an adult education or family literacy program by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, to verify my enrollment with the institution named above.

Signature of Adult Student

Date

I certify that this information is correct to the best of my knowledge. By signing this certification, I certify that the student named above enrolled at the institution named above.

Signature of Postsecondary/Training Program Official

Date

Name of Adult Education Program

Signature of Adult Education Program Official

Date

Phone Number