



National Reporting System
for Adult Education

A Project of the U.S. Department of Education

ISSUE 1

Identifying Learner Cohorts for Employment-Related Outcomes

Issue Presented at Congress of State Directors

The National Reporting System (NRS) currently requires local program staff to identify who among their unemployed students has a goal of “entered employment” and to follow up only with these students after they exit the adult education program to determine whether they have entered employment.

Additionally, the NRS requires local program staff to identify learners who are not employed at the time of entry, have a goal of obtaining employment and become employed in the first quarter after exit, as well as learners who are employed at entry and have a goal of improving or retaining employment. Programs must follow up with students who are employed or have entered employment to determine whether they have retained employment in the third quarter after they exit the adult education program.

OVAE proposed the following change to this policy at the State Congress.

Automatically designate all students who are unemployed in the labor force as the cohort for which “entered employment” must be tracked. Automatically designate all students who enter the program employed as the cohort for which “retained employment” must be tracked.

In the break-out groups, state participants were asked to discuss whether to continue using program exit as a criterion for cohort identification and reporting.

Summary of State Response

A majority of states supported moving to automatic cohort identification and believed it would improve data collection, quality, and outcomes. States also noted that this change would make the intake process easier and standardize the process across local programs, reduce or eliminate the manipulation of goal setting and reflect a more accurate count of outcomes because it includes a more complete group of students seeking work rather than just those who set goals. Also, some states felt eliminating goal setting and automatically defining the cohort would make employment outcomes easier to explain to stakeholders.

However, states also expressed the need for adequate time to make this change in the state MIS and additional resources to conduct follow up on the increased number of students. States also noted the need for sufficient time to inform and train local staff, develop new performance standards, and revise local monitoring procedures. States using the survey follow-up methods noted substantial increases in burden and cost and some states currently using data matching noted that they will need to combine their follow-up with additional surveys to capture all learners, especially those with missing Social Security Numbers (SSNs).

Final Proposal

OVAE proposes to implement in Program Year (PY) 2011 the change presented at the State Congress of replacing goal setting for the entered employment measure with the automatic cohort designation of all learners who are unemployed and in the workforce at program entry. In addition, all students who enter the program employed or enter unemployed and then obtain a job will automatically be in the cohort for which “retained employment” will be measured.

However, OVAE has decided *not* to eliminate the use of exit dates to trigger follow-up activity, which for entered employment is one quarter after the exit quarter and for retained employment is three quarters after the exit quarter.

OVAE believes that removing program exit as the trigger for determining follow-up is a change that creates a measure that is significantly different from our WIA partners and the common measures. It is also possible that in the reauthorization process, Congress would require common measures and, if so, this measure may be subject to change again. Such an event could be disruptive and require new state financial commitments to change the MIS and to re-train local staff. Furthermore, the exit date provides a standardization of the data collection process which enables comparability of data across programs within states and across states.

Therefore, OVAE recommends changing *only the cohort designation* for the employment measures and proposes no changes to *the data collection procedures* of these measures. The revised definitions below for these measures show proposed changes in ***bold italics***.

Proposed Changes to the Definition of Entered Employment

Definition: Learner enters employment by the end of the first quarter after the program exit quarter. Employment is working in a paid, unsubsidized job or working 15 hours or more per week in an unpaid job on a farm or business operated by a family member or the learner. The exit quarter is the quarter when instruction ends, the learner terminates or has not received instruction 90 days, and is not scheduled to receive further instruction. A job attained while a learner is enrolled can be counted for entered employment and reported if the learner is still employed in the first quarter after exit from the program.

Applicable Population: Learners who are not employed at time of entry ***and in the labor force and who have a goal of obtaining employment*** who exit during the program year.

Federal Reporting: States report the total number of ***unemployed learners in the workforce*** who enter employment (and exit during the program year) and the total ***number of learners in the relevant population (i.e., number of learners in the workforce who are unemployed at entry and have a goal of obtaining employment)*** (and exit during the program year). Entered employment rate is computed by dividing these numbers.

Proposed Changes to the Definition of Job Retention

Definition: Learner remains employed in the third quarter after program exit.

Applicable Population: Learners who, at time of entry, were not employed *and in the workforce ~~and have a goal of obtaining employment~~* who enter employment by the first quarter after exit quarter, and learners employed at entry who exit the program. *~~who have a goal of improving or retaining employment.~~*

Federal Reporting: States report the total number of learners *~~who retain employment in the applicable population who are employed in the third quarter after program exit~~* and the total number of learners in the applicable population *~~had a goal of obtaining employment,~~* who exit during the program year *~~with a goal of improving or retaining employment).~~* *The retained employment rate is computed by dividing these numbers.*

Major Implications of Proposed Change

- The number of learners requiring follow-up will significantly increase. However, by keeping the exit criterion, the number of learners included in the cohort for follow up is lower.
- Due to the expected increase in the number of learners required for follow-up, it is recommended that all states match the UI wage records to determine employment status.
- If a state serves a significant number of students who do not have valid social security numbers it may need to augment UI data matching with follow-up surveys to capture employment outcomes.