Breakout Group Activity #2

Explore Key Areas to Assess

15 minutes

Instructions:

Use this handout to guide discussions with your group for your assigned key area. See the following pages for notes on each area.

NOTE – IET Training Team:

This guide focuses on three of the five key areas reviewed in the IET Toolkit. You may also wish to develop breakout discussions on the other key areas.

Questions to Cover in All Breakout Groups/Rooms

1. Who do you need to talk to and why? What would this look like for you? (5 min.)

2. What questions do you need to ask? (5 min.)

3. What challenges do you think you will encounter in assessing needs in this area and how might you resolve those challenges? (5 min.)

Key Area #2: Regional Workforce Development Needs

IET programs train learners on skills employers need. When looking for potential IET opportunities, it is essential to understand which industries and businesses are hiring, paying a living wage, and experiencing challenges in recruiting the skilled workers needed to meet demand. You do not need to do this research yourself—reach out to partners with labor market analysis experience, such as your local workforce development board or community college, who can provide their insights.

You should also understand your potential pool of adult learners and their needs. You may have much of this information yourself, and you can supplement your in-house data with the expertise of others in your community who also serve adult learners.

Efforts to better identify workforce development needs may bring to light occupations and learner communities you had not previously considered. As part of your research, you may:

- Interview local workforce development board or community college staff with workforce development expertise who can provide insights on business needs, how those needs are being met, and where there might be gaps that could be filled by an IET program.
- Research your own case management data to better understand your learner population and how their education and workforce development needs are currently being met in the region.
- Interview partners who also serve adult learners to help identify areas of unmet learner needs that might be addressed through an IET program.

Key Questions to Answer:

- What are the important and growing industry sectors and businesses in our regional economy and who are the significant employers in these sectors?
- What are the occupations within these sectors that provide employment at good wages?
- Which businesses are having trouble hiring and retaining workers with the right skills, and what specific challenges are they facing?
- Are these businesses accessible to potential learner populations (on a bus route, etc.)?
- What skills and credentials do these businesses value?
- What requirements do these businesses have for employees (e.g., background checks, legal permanent residency, high school diploma or equivalent, industry certification requirements, etc.)?
- What programs/organizations currently provide education and training for adult learners as they prepare for and enter employment in in-demand occupations?
- What gaps exist in regional services to adult learners?
- Are there unmet needs for training, career services, etc., or are adult learners turned away due to demand?

Key Area #3: Community Resources to Support Your Program

Identify resources that can support your IET program and the learners who participate, including potential funding sources, training providers, and a network of community organizations to provide supportive services. Information on researching each type of community resources is provided below.

FUNDING

Initial and ongoing financial support is vital to long-term sustainability and scalability of quality IET programs. You will want to identify and research sources of federal, state, and local funding to develop and sustain an IET program. IETs can be funded in a variety of ways and states may have unique set of resources available, depending on state and local policies and priorities. Funding strategies that leverage non-Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) sources often require working in collaboration with partners to serve a common client.

As part of your research, you may identify and research sources of federal, state, and local funding to develop and sustain an IET program. Sources may include:

- AEFLA program funds authorized under Title II of the WIOA (check with your state office for guidance/direction)
- Section 243 Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education funds
- WIOA Title I adult, dislocated worker, and/or youth funds
- State authorized adult education funds
- Pell Grants through Ability to Benefit
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program employment and training funds
- State and local funding sources
- State and local foundations that support programs that complement current public sector program eligibility requirements and goals
- Supportive services provided by organizations, employers, foundations, agencies, and institutions of higher learning

Interview key stakeholders and other individuals involved with state and local programs and organizations to obtain funding related insights.

Potential Sources of Funding & Supportive Services	Reach Out To
Area Adult Education Providers Workforce Development Service Providers Area Training Providers	The agency designated in your state that maintains the state's eligible training providers' list.
Human Services and Supportive Services Providers	Agencies that provide childcare, food bank, transitional support, transportation services, etc.
State and Local Foundations	Foundations that support programming that complements current governmental eligibility requirements and goals.
Employers and Labor Organizations	Employers and organizations interested in or currently operating pre- or Registered Apprenticeships, on-the-job training or work-based learning programming, and labor management partnerships.
Institutions of Higher Education	Institutions that operate career pathway programs, including CTE programs and customized training for business and industry.

Key Questions to Answer:

- What funding sources are available to support IET in this community and state?
- What restrictions or requirements are in place to use each of these funding sources?
- Who is the point of contact for this funding in this community or state?
- How much funding is available? What costs/services can the funding cover?
- What timelines and deadlines do I need to be aware of?

TRAINING PROVIDERS

Although you may already have an established partnership with a training provider, we encourage you to give some thought to the range of potential training provider partners in your community. Not all training providers have high-quality programs that are connected to industry standards and industry recognized credentials or that can effectively integrate their training curriculum with the adult education curriculum. You will want to work with a training provider who develops their curriculum in close collaboration with local employers, considers industry and/or state standards, and updates their curriculum regularly to adapt to changing business needs. Most community colleges offer CTE programs funded through The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V). All Perkins programs offered are required to have advisory boards that provide input into the development of the training curriculum and align the industry and/or state standards. Such an approach results in IET programs that are better able to connect participants to work opportunities upon successful program completion.

As part of your research, you may:

- Interview workforce development board staff for insight into high-quality training providers in your region.
- Interview training providers to understand the role businesses play in curriculum design and delivery, including whether they use industry-recognized curricula aligned to specific credentials.

Key Questions to Answer:

- Who are the high-quality training providers in my region?
- Which ones are accessible to my learners (public transit accessible, etc.)?
- When was the last time they updated their curriculum?
- How much hands-on learning is provided as part of their curriculum?
- What role do regional employers play in curriculum development and delivery?
- What are the employment outcomes of recent program participants?

LEARNER SUPPORTS

Strong IET programs knit together a range of community resources to meet learner needs beyond the classroom to ensure learner success. These resources include case management, supportive services (e.g., transportation and childcare), career counseling, job placement and retention support, and more. If you have identified and connected with local career pathway systems, you may also be aware of and have access to community organizations or others that could provide supportive services for learners in your IET program.

The results of your research will help you to determine the community organizations available to partner with to meet IET program needs. As part of your research, you may:

- Identify the types of services and funding resources available to leverage for key learner needs, such as:
    - Personal needs (transportation, childcare, etc.).
    - Educational support (occupational training, technology, and other equipment needs)
    - Financial support (tuition assistance).
    - Career planning (counseling, job placement/transition to postsecondary education, job retention support).
- Identify a point of contact for each community organization, program, and funding agency and talk to them about supporting key learner needs.
- Conduct an asset mapping exercise to uncover additional sources of support for your learners if you identify gaps in supportive services potentially needed.

Key Questions to Answer:

- What services are available in your community to support learner success in IET programs?
- What are the requirements and procedures for accessing those services?
- Who provides these services, and what relationships might you need to build, or what partnerships might you need to establish, to help your learners access them?

Key Area #5: Learner and Business Needs

Learners and the businesses that hire them are key customers of IET programs. To select and design and IET program that responds to customer needs, you will need to have a strong understanding of learner goals, challenges, and experiences, and the workforce needs of the businesses that will hire them.

Use the information you gathered on learners and businesses in Key Area #2: Regional Workforce Development Needs to help you identify the types of learners you need to talk to and businesses in need of qualified workers. If your research—thus far—suggests a focus on a particular community of adult learners or a particular industry or occupation, be sure you include representatives of these groups in your research now.

LEARNER NEEDS

As an adult education professional, you may be thinking, "Of course I understand my learners' needs!" But taking time to listen to learners in a focused way can uncover fresh insights into needs a potential IET program could meet. As part of your research, you may:

- Conduct group interviews or individual interviews with learners to listen deeply to their experiences and uncover needs.
- Observe learners in classrooms or other settings to understand how they engage with learning.

Key Questions to Answer:

- What are the educational and career goals of potential learners?
- What past education and training experiences do these learners have and how do those experiences impact their learning today?
- What types of curriculum design and delivery strategies work best?
- What experiences outside the classroom—both positive and negative—impact learner success?
- What ideas do learners have about how IET programs should be designed?

BUSINESS NEEDS

Understanding the needs of local businesses who may hire learners who complete an IET program can help you design a more effective program. As part of your research, you may:

- Interview people from industry associations, workforce development boards, or other business-serving organizations to understand business needs.
- Interview businesses who currently hire your adult learners. Note that you may want to revisit this step after you have selected an IET program so that you can carefully target your time with businesses.

Key Questions to Answer:

- How do local employers recruit and hire for the occupations you might target with an IET program?
- What challenges do people in that occupation have that make it difficult for them to succeed on the job?

- What makes employees successful in these companies?
- How do employees advance in their career in these companies?