

Adult Education (ABE) Primary Indicators of Performance

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This document describes Adult Education performance indicators and how they are implemented in Minnesota. The performance indicators are defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) and by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). Overall, there are 6 primary indicators of performance for WIOA programs, including Adult Education:

1. [Measurable Skill Gains \(MSGs\)](#)
2. [Employment second quarter after exit](#)
3. [Employment fourth quarter after exit](#)
4. [Median quarterly earnings second quarter after exit](#)
5. [Credential indicator](#)
6. [Effectiveness in serving employers](#)

Measurable Skill Gains

From the National Reporting Service (NRS) Technical Assistance Guide: "The measurable skill gains (MSG) indicator is used to demonstrate participants' progress toward achieving a credential or employment. For adult education programs, participants can demonstrate MSG in five ways: educational functioning level (EFL) gain; receipt of a secondary school diploma; exhibiting progress on a secondary or postsecondary transcript; showing progress toward milestones; or passing a technical/occupational knowledge-based exam" (NRS TA Guide, p. 12-13).

1. [Educational Functioning Level \(EFL\) gain](#)
 - a. [Comparing a participant's NRS-approved pretest with the participant's posttest](#)
 - b. [Awarding Carnegie Units or credits in an adult high school program](#)
 - c. [Enrollment in postsecondary education or training after exit](#)
 - d. [Passing a single subject High School Equivalency \(HSE\) assessment](#)
2. [Receipt of a secondary school diploma](#)
3. [Progress on postsecondary transcript or report card](#)
4. [Progress toward milestones](#)
5. [Passing technical or occupational knowledge-based exam](#)

MSG 1: Educational Functioning Level (EFL) gain

Programs and participants have 4 options for completing MSG 1 (Educational Functioning Level (EFL) gains (1a–1d).

MSG 1a: Comparing a participant's NRS-approved pretest with the participant's posttest

Check the Minnesota Adult Education Assessment Policy to see which NRS assessments are currently approved for Minnesota Adult Education programs for EFL gains.

How is it measured

SiD (Minnesota's Adult Education Database) data (NRS test scores entered by the program)

MSG 1b: Awarding Carnegie Units or credits in an adult high school program

MSG type 1b can be demonstrated by:

- Earning enough Carnegie units or credits to move from the equivalent of ABE Level 5 (9th – 10th grade) into the equivalent of ABE Level 6 (11th – 12th grade) in a local high school diploma program for adults; or
- Passing two of the four academic domains (ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies) within the Standard Adult High School Diploma, as long as at least one area from each of the Math, Science, and/or Social Studies domains is completed by ABE Instruction.
 - Note: Passing the Employability domain does not count for MSG 1b.
 - Note: Domains completed entirely by HSE assessments and/or High School Credits with no additional student-produced evidence do not count for MSG 1b. [Passing an HSE assessment does count as an MSG 1d.]

How is it measured

SiD data

- Students in a local high school diploma program (e.g. credit completion or credit recovery): program marks student goal of “progress to 11th grade level in a local diploma program” as met.
- Students in a Standard Adult High School Diploma program: automatically applied to the student record in SiD when two of the four academic domains are passed (per requirements listed above).

MSG 1c: Enrollment in postsecondary education or training after exit

How is it measured

Data match with Minnesota State (postsecondary)

MSG 1d: Passing a single subject High School Equivalency (HSE) assessment

In Minnesota, the two approved HSE assessments are GED and HiSET.

How is it measured

SiD data (programs enter the GED and/or HiSET single subject test and score information; passing scores will automatically count toward an MSG 1d on the SiD Level Gains, MSGs, and Post-test Rates report)

MSG 2: Receipt of a secondary school diploma

MSG type 2 can be demonstrated by:

- Achieving passing scores on State-approved high school equivalency assessments (GED or HiSET in Minnesota); or
- Obtaining a high school/secondary diploma (either through credit completion/recovery or the Standard Adult High School Diploma).

How is it measured

SiD data

- For local high school diplomas earned via high school credits (e.g. credit completion or credit recovery): program marks student goal of diploma met
- For Standard Adult High School Diplomas: automatically counts in SiD when a participant's diploma portfolio is marked as passed in SiD
- For High School Equivalency (HSE) diplomas: data match of GED or HiSET passing between MDE files from test vendors and SiD

MSG 3: Progress on postsecondary transcript or report card

Note: In Minnesota Adult Education, MSG 3 is only for Integrated Education and Training (IET) Programs

For ABE participants in an IET who complete a minimum of 12 postsecondary credit hours per semester, or for part-time students with a total of at least 12 credit hours over the course of two completed consecutive semesters during the program year, report an MSG for a postsecondary education transcript or report card that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards.

Federal Guidance

The transcript type of MSG is applicable only to **postsecondary** transcripts for participants enrolled in an IET program provided in partnership, most often with a postsecondary institution. The postsecondary institution would be providing the training component of the IET, and a transcript may be provided as documentation that the participant is meeting the state's academic standards for progress in the training course. A full-time participant must also complete a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester; part-time participants must complete a total of at least 12 credit hours over the course of two consecutive semesters during the program year.

Example That Counts

Carlos participated in an IET program at a local community college for certified, licensed automotive technicians. The IET program uses a co-teaching model that integrates basic skills and workplace preparation into the college's technical course for automotive technicians. The program is a 30-hour semester program and includes

basic reading and math skills related to the occupation; it is taught by instructors from the adult education program. Upon completion of the course, the adult education program obtained Carlos's transcript, which shows satisfactory completion of the postsecondary course.

Why it Counts

The college maintains a postsecondary transcript for the automotive technician course. The transcript shows that Carlos attended a sufficient number of hours and demonstrated satisfactory progress.

How is it measured

SiD data

- **SiD (Documenting the MSG):** Add a new history item to the Student > History screen. Choose the history group, "Goal – NRS Primary." Then click the history item, "12+ postsecondary credit hours earned in an IET (MSG)."
- **SiD (IET):** Classes must be marked as IET classes in SiD.

Additional Guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

- IETs must be approved: In order to count "postsecondary transcripts or report cards" as an MSG, the IET must be approved by the Minnesota Department of Education. The IET approval form can be found on the [MNABE IET page \(www.mnabe.org/career-pathways/iet\)](http://www.mnabe.org/career-pathways/iet).
- Credit Hours: Minnesota State has a policy on defining credit hours on their [website \(www.minnesota.edu/about/policies-and-procedures/definition-credit-hour-policy#\)](http://www.minnesota.edu/about/policies-and-procedures/definition-credit-hour-policy#).
- Program Required Documentation: The ABE program must keep a copy of the student transcript or report card showing proof of passing the postsecondary courses and earning the credits for the IET in the student paper file or electronically for up to 5 years.

MSG 4: Progress toward milestones

Note: In Minnesota Adult Education, MSG 4 is only for IET Programs and/or Workplace Adult Education Programs

Participants in an IET or a workplace literacy program who had a satisfactory or better progress report towards established milestones from an employer or training provider who is providing training (e.g., completion of on-the-job training (OJT), completion of one year of a registered apprenticeship program, etc.).

Federal Guidance

A progress report documenting sufficient or better progress toward an established milestone is typically well suited for workplace education programs. Workplace education and literacy services are provided in collaboration with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or an off-site location designed to improve the productivity of the workforce. Services tend to be customized to the needs of the employer. Progress milestones for employees should be set in collaboration with an employer when establishing the workplace literacy program. The completion of established milestones can be documented through progress reports from the employer. Progress reports must document development of substantive skills that the participant has gained. [PM 17-2](#) also allows documentation of a participant's increase in pay resulting from newly acquired skills or increased performance.

Example That Counts

The director of the adult education program at a local community college gave a presentation highlighting the programs and services available to the community during a lunch-and-learn meeting sponsored by the local chamber of commerce. Shortly afterward, the adult education program director was contacted by the manager of the local chicken processing plant, who had attended the lunch-and-learn presentation. The plant manager informed the director that her plant is suffering from high employee turnover and that she would like to improve retention by offering employees opportunities to continue their education, thus leading to career advancement opportunities with higher wages. The plant manager specifically wants to improve the English proficiency of the plant's production line employees.

The adult education program began to offer customized English language acquisition courses and training at the chicken processing plant after collaborating with plant management to develop flexible, adaptable milestones that are measurable and that reflect the job requirements for career advancement opportunities in the plant. Established milestones include the following: (a) improved English proficiency using job-related vocabulary and oral communication, (b) improved written and oral communication skills during in-service and/or required plant trainings, and (c) the ability to read all plant safety protocols and communicate their meaning to plant management in the event of an emergency.

Plant management and adult education instructors developed a progress reporting tool to exchange information about each employee's progress toward the established milestones. The plant manager and the adult education program director agreed to exchange progress reports. The adult education program uses the progress reports to determine whether each student is making sufficient progress toward the established milestones.

Why it Counts

The employer and adult education provider established three progress milestones that identified specific participant outcomes before the start of the program. They established a routine method for tracking progress toward the milestones through progress reports.

How is it measured

SiD data

- **SiD (Documenting the MSG):** Create a new history item to the Student > History screen. Choose the history group, "Goal – NRS Primary." Then click the history item, "Progress Toward Milestones (MSG)." Programs must add details of what the progress was and how it was demonstrated in the "comment" box.
- **SiD (IET):** Classes must be marked as IET classes in SiD.
- **SiD (Workplace Education/Literacy):** Classes need to be marked as a workplace literacy class in SiD.

Additional Guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

- **Developing the Milestones:** In developing the program, the adult education provider needs to create milestones with the employer (or the training provider), i.e. identify the goals of the instruction, which could include academic, employability, digital literacy and other mutually agreed upon employee milestones or accomplishments. These milestones should be developed before the programming is offered. The adult education provider and the employer (or the training provider) need to also agree on the measure of how the milestone or accomplishment will be achieved.

- Example: Digital Literacy. If the employer explicitly states they want employees to be digitally literate and contextualized digital literacy skills instruction is built into the IET or workplace literacy program, then demonstration of digital literacy skills could be countable as an MSG.
- **IETs must be approved:** In order to count “progress toward milestone” with an IET program, the IET must be approved by the Minnesota Department of Education. The IET approval form can be found on the [MNABE IET page \(www.mnabe.org/career-pathways/iet\)](http://www.mnabe.org/career-pathways/iet).
- **Program Required Documentation:** The ABE program must keep proof of the employer-developed student evaluation showing the student achieved the milestone in the student paper file or electronically for up to 5 years. In the case of a program audit, ABE programs will also be asked how the milestones were developed and defined with the employer.

MSG 5: Passing technical or occupational knowledge-based exam

Note: In Minnesota Adult Education, MSG 5 is only for IET Programs

Participants in an IET [Integrated Education and Training] program who successfully passed an exam that is required for a particular occupation, or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.

Federal Guidance

Because this type of MSG measures demonstrated occupational progress, it is appropriate only for participants in IET programs, given that IET is the only service under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act that allows occupational training. Participants may demonstrate an MSG under this type of gain in one of two ways: passing an exam or demonstrating progress in gaining technical or occupational skills, as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks. The critical requirements for this type of MSG are that the exam must be required for a specific occupation and that the skills must reflect industry benchmarks. The exam can be an employer-required, knowledge-based exam or other test necessary to obtain a credential. Satisfactory attainment of an element on an industry or occupational competency-based assessment can be used to demonstrate progress.

It is critical to emphasize that [PM 17-2](#) and [PM 19-1](#) require that exams and technical or occupational skills used for validation of MSG type 5 must be directly tied to *trade-related benchmarks* and *specific occupations*. Exams must measure skills for a *specific* industry or occupation that are necessary to obtain employment or to advance within the industry or occupation, and that have been developed or endorsed by employers or industry associations.

However, general skills related to an industry or occupation, even if such general skills are broadly required to qualify for entry-level employment or advancement in employment, are *not recognized* for determining MSG type 5. For example, work readiness exams or certificates are not acceptable for documenting this type of MSG gain because they are not recognized industrywide and do not document the measurable technical or industry or occupational skills necessary to gain employment or advance within a specific occupation.

Example That Counts

A heating and air conditioning service company wants to open a new facility and needs certified technicians. The state requires the certifications for licensure. The employer cannot find sufficiently qualified applicants and contacts a local adult education program to develop a training program. The employer and program staff develop an IET program that includes contextual literacy skills instruction, workplace preparation, and job training. The

training encompasses three phases, and after each phase, participants take an assessment that measures their skills mastery in each phase. Program participants are certified for the job when they successfully pass the final assessment.

Why it Counts

The IET program trains participants for a specific occupation, which requires successfully passing all parts of a multipart exam to achieve certification. Passing each part of the exam demonstrates progress toward completion, and passing the final exam certifies participants for the job.

How is it measured

SiD data

- **SiD (Documenting the MSG):** A list of eligible credentials can be found in SiD in the Student History section. See this [SiD help article on Credentials](https://mnabe.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360022483911-Display-Hide-Goal-Credential-Earned) (<https://mnabe.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360022483911-Display-Hide-Goal-Credential-Earned>). If you document in SiD that a student enrolled in an IET class earned one of the credentials, it will automatically be counted as an MSG in SiD on the SiD Level Gains, MSGs, and Post-test Rates report.
- **SiD (IET):** Classes must be marked as IET classes in SiD.

Additional Guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

- **IETs must be approved:** In order to count “passage of occupational exam or demonstration of progress attaining technical/occupational skills,” the IET must be approved by the Minnesota Department of Education. The IET approval form can be found on the [MNABE IET page](http://www.mnabe.org/career-pathways/iet) (www.mnabe.org/career-pathways/iet).
- **Credential List:** If you would like to inquire about including an additional credential to this list, please contact Julie Dincau at julie.dincau@state.mn.us.
- **Program Required Documentation:** The ABE program must keep proof that the student earned the credential in the student paper file or electronically for up to 5 years.

Exit-Based Performance Indicators

The following indicators are measured for participants after they exit Adult Education. Some indicators may have outcomes at both the state and the consortium/grantee level: Employment and earnings outcomes. Credential attainment and effectiveness in serving employers have outcomes only at the state level.

Employment second quarter after exit

Definition

From the National Reporting Assistance (NRS) Technical Assistance Guide: “The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program” (NRS TA Guide, p. 14).

How is it measured

Data match with Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

Employment fourth quarter after exit

Definition

From the National Reporting Assistance (NRS) Technical Assistance Guide: “The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program” (NRS TA Guide, p. 14).

How is it measured

Data match with DEED

Median quarterly earnings second quarter after exit

Definition

From the National Reporting Assistance (NRS) Technical Assistance Guide: “The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program” (NRS TA Guide, p. 14).

How is it measured

Data match with DEED

Credential indicator

Definition

From the National Reporting Assistance (NRS) Technical Assistance Guide: “The credential indicator measures two types of credentials:

1. Receipt of a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent during participation or within 1 year after exit from the program. The receipt of a secondary diploma is only counted if the participant is enrolled in postsecondary education or training or employed within 1 year after exit.
2. Receipt of a recognized postsecondary credential during participation or within 1 year after exit from the program”

(NRS TA Guide, p. 14).

How is it measured

Compiling data from SiD, DEED, and Minnesota State (postsecondary)

Effectiveness in serving employers

From the National Reporting Assistance (NRS) Technical Assistance Guide: Starting in 2025, “The indicator calculates the percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program who were employed by the same employer in the second and fourth quarters after exit. For the six core WIOA programs, this indicator is a statewide indicator reported by one core program on behalf of all six core programs in the State, as described in joint guidance” (NRS TA Guide, p. 15).

How is it measured

Data match by DEED (all WIOA title programs will share this outcome)

Resources/For More Information/Contacts

SiD (Minnesota’s Adult Education Database)

- SiD (<https://sid.mnabe.org/>)
- SiD Help Desk (<https://mnabe.zendesk.com/>)
- SiD Email (SiDsupport@literacymn.org)

Minnesota Adult Education (MNABE)

- Policies (www.mnabe.org/abe-law-policy/mn-abe-policies)
- Accountability and Reporting (www.mnabe.org/accountability-reporting)

National Reporting System (NRS)

- *NRS Technical Assistance Guide* (<https://nrsweb.org/policy-data/nrs-ta-guide>)
- *NRS Tips: Reporting Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) Types 3, 4, and 5 by Adult Education Programs* (<https://nrsweb.org/policy-data/Resources-for-Reporting>)

U.S. Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE)

- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), which is Title II of WIOA (<https://aefta.ed.gov/>)