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Dear Governor Kasich, President Faber and Speaker Batchelder:

Enclosed are my recommendations for the Adult Diploma Program. These recommendations fulfill the requirements set forth in House Bill 483, the 2014 Mid-Biennium Review and as established in section 3313.902 of the Ohio Revised Code. The purpose of the program is to open new pathways for adults to earn a high school diploma and be connected to a job by obtaining an industry credential or certificate. This report outlines the program components and recommends a state-funded model, as well as additional requirements necessary to implement an impactful Adult Diploma Pilot Program for the 2015-2016 academic year and beyond.

The recommendations in this report were developed in consultation with key stakeholders throughout the state, including the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, the Ohio Board of Regents, the Ohio Association of Community Colleges, Ohio Technical Centers, and Adult Basic and Literacy Education providers. The conversation focused on creating a program that offers adults an alternative to the traditional classroom model through a competency-based approach that still provides the rigorous academic requirements of a diploma, but adds the high-level training necessary to earn a valuable industry-recognized credential or certificate at the same time. Critical to this model is the development of a program of study that includes the student support services these adults need to earn a credential and be prepared to further their employment within their chosen pathway, as well as the connection to Ohio's in-demand occupations. It is our goal to get the right student in the right program for all the right reasons.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a revolution for career-technical education in Ohio. As additional pathways are developed with the support of the Governor and General Assembly, it has never been clearer that Ohio is a national leader in career-technical education – providing high-quality career-technical education that connects *all* citizens to the education and training they need to be competitive in today's economy, while aligning to Ohio employers' most in-demand needs.

I want to thank our stakeholders for their contribution of time and expertise. Throughout these discussions, it was clear that Ohio has a truly collaborative approach to assisting adults in completing their education and receiving valuable training to become productive citizens.

I thank you for your continued support and I look forward to working together to successfully implement the Adult Diploma Program.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Richard A. Ross  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

## Vision of the Adult Diploma Program

To create new pathways for adults to earn high school diplomas and industry credentials or certificates that drive the state's effort to increase the number of college- and career-ready adults.

## Ohio's Challenge

It is estimated that roughly 24,000 students drop out of school each year in Ohio.<sup>i</sup> Even more staggering, there currently are over one million adults in Ohio without a high school diploma.<sup>ii</sup>

State-level data shows that adults in Ohio without a diploma are twice as likely to live in poverty compared to those with a diploma. Earning that diploma would add more than \$7,500 to their income.<sup>iii</sup> Even more, while the high school diploma is clearly essential for an individual's economic success, it is just the start. Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce estimates that by 2020, nearly two-thirds of all jobs will require some sort of post-secondary education or training beyond a high school diploma. In addition, their findings conclude that having some post-secondary education, even without earning a degree, adds nearly one-quarter of a million dollars to a person's lifetime earnings.<sup>iv</sup>

As Ohio's labor market continues to grow, the key to Ohio's future success is connecting those undereducated adults to the academic and technical training they need to rise above the poverty level and thrive in the state's economy.

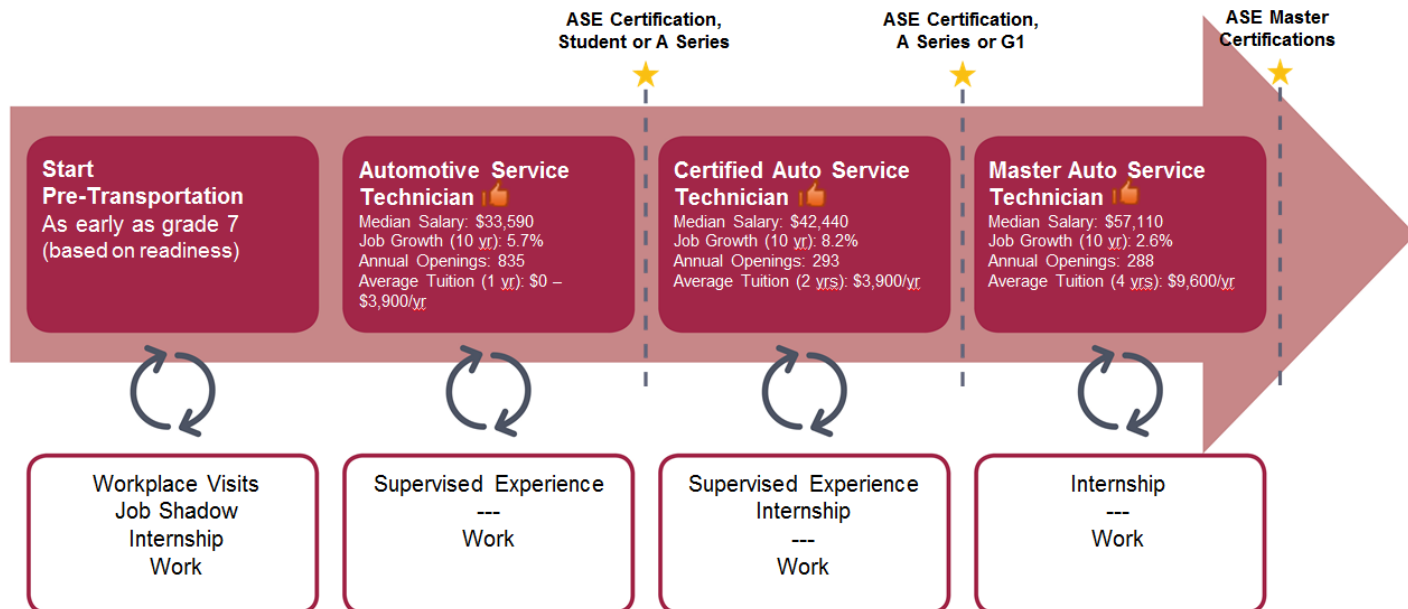
## Answering the Challenge

Career-technical education has historically played a vital role in preparing high school students with the knowledge and skills they need to be competitive in today's global labor market. In Ohio especially, data shows that career-technical education programs are effective in preparing qualified students for success in college and careers.<sup>v</sup> Students learn academics through authentic, hands-on training using the latest technology and equipment. This real work-world training enables them to make informed career and college decisions.

The establishment of the Adult Diploma Program connects adults to the already successful Ohio career-technical education infrastructure. Scheduled to launch in the 2015-2016 academic year, the program targets adults who are 22 years or older and were not successful in a traditional high school setting. The goal is to provide a new pathway for adults to earn a high school diploma and connect to a better job through training in one of Ohio's in-demand careers.

The Adult Diploma enhances the state's career pathway approach<sup>vi</sup> that provides a framework for a collective look at education, training, wage and outlook information. Through multiple entry points, the pathway allows an individual to begin a career path at his or her readiness level. The following is an example of a career pathway.

# Transportation Systems Career Pathway



Provided by middle schools, high schools, employers, Ohio Tech Centers, and colleges.

**Preparing students for multiple options after high school:**  
gainful employment and/or postsecondary study.



Ohio In-demand Occupations

Data reflects 2014 Ohio labor statistics and public institutions of higher education for 2013-2014. For specific tuition costs, visit [ohiohighered.org](http://ohiohighered.org).

To complement the career pathway framework, the Adult Diploma Program is progressive with its focus on an innovative, competency-based approach. This approach allows the flexible program delivery necessary to address the many learning styles of adult students. It also ensures preparedness for the next academic level and success in a career.

## INNOVATIVE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

### ***Flexibility in the Delivery of Instruction***

A distinct aspect of this program is the delivery of instruction to adult students that is different from a traditional high school setting. Instead of measuring academic achievement through clock hours, seat time or credits earned, the focus is on a competency-based approach that provides a self-paced option. Once competencies have been learned, adults then demonstrate mastery of skill.

Through this approach, local programs have the flexibility to deliver instruction tailored not only to the needs of their communities, but also based on the individuals in the program. Each adult student is provided a program of study and has a student success plan. The student works at a variable pace based on the individual plan. Adult students may receive instruction through virtual learning, academic coaching, and lab instruction or in a blended approach. The ultimate benefit is the flexibility to bring in a variety of experts to guide students, on an individual basis, to prepare them for the next level of education or training.

### ***Aligned Curriculum***

Another unique component of the Adult Diploma Program is that academic standards are embedded into the industry credential or certificate program of study. Instruction is designed to recognize the academic learning that occurs in training programs. Essentially, the learning of academics occurs through authentic, real-work problems and projects completed within the industry credential training. To show mastery of content and competencies, rubrics can be developed or adopted, as well as use of existing assessments for pre- and post-testing, such as TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) or ACT WorkKeys®.

### ***Work Readiness Skill Assessment***

In the Adult Diploma Program, it is essential that the adult student graduate with an industry-valued credential or certificate. It is equally important for the student also to gain the academic skill set that allows him or her to advance within the chosen career pathway or if moving on to college, to be remediation free.

Similar to the new graduation requirements, the Adult Diploma Pilot program will utilize Work Readiness Benchmarks through WorkKeys® to determine if a student has achieved the academic competencies needed to graduate from the program with a diploma and credential. These benchmarks have been developed by ACT specifically to assess the academic knowledge and skills that an individual needs to be successful within his or her specific occupation or career pathway. The benchmarks were derived from ACT's job profile database<sup>vii</sup> that includes over 20,000 job analyses for occupations across a diverse array of industries and occupations.

Currently, work readiness skill levels are available for three WorkKeys® cognitive skills—Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics and Locating Information for career clusters. Skill level thresholds have been established to represent the skill level required for entry into 85 percent of the occupations within the career cluster.

**Table 1: Sample Work Readiness Benchmarks**

<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>Applied Mathematics (Range: 3-7)</b>	<b>Reading for Information (Range: 3-7)</b>	<b>Locating Information (Range: 3-6)</b>
Automotive Technician	4	4	4
Tractor-Trailer Drivers	3	3	4
Home Health Aide	3	4	4
Medical Assistants	4	5	4
Welder	3	3	3

Today, employers already use Work Readiness Benchmarks to screen applicants during their hiring processes, as well as to determine training needs for their current employees. The data also is useful in providing individuals with a clear picture of the skill levels they need to qualify for and be successful in the jobs they want.

### **PLANNING AND BUILDING CAPACITY: 2014-2015**

In Fiscal Year 2015, up to five entities will utilize \$2.5 million in start-up money to begin researching, planning and building capacity for the Adult Diploma Program. Enrollment will begin in the 2015-2016 academic year. The Ohio Department of Education and Board of Regents are currently

working together to select and support those pilot sites that will be awarded within the JobsOhio regional structure<sup>viii</sup> and funded initially through June 30, 2015.

Legislation for the pilot program requires the funding for the planning phase to be used to develop and offer a program for students, ages 22 and older, that:

1. Allows students to obtain a high school diploma while completing the requirements for an approved industry credential or certificate;
2. Provides career advising and outreach; and
3. Affords opportunities for students to receive a competency-based education.

The Adult Diploma Program marks the first time Ohio has focused resources on creating a competency-based model that provides adults who have not completed high school or earned a GED® with an alternative to the traditional classroom model. Therefore, it is anticipated that each regional pilot site will conduct a significant amount of research to determine what that model might look like based on the needs of the local population, as well as employer demand in the area.

During the planning phase, each pilot site will dedicate resources to support regional and local planning teams. These teams will develop the model and infrastructure needed to launch the program by addressing critical questions in five key areas:

#### 1. Target Population Research

- What is the make-up of the target population within the region?
- What incentive is necessary for the target population to take advantage of the program?
- What supports does the target population need to succeed?

#### 2. Academic Standards Alignment

- What evaluation tools will be utilized to determine skill level upon program intake?
- How will the academic standards be aligned to credential competencies?
- What post-test assessments will determine that academic competencies have been achieved at the same level of rigor as the current high school graduation requirements?

#### 3. Industry Standards Alignment

- What are the most urgent job needs for the region according to Office of Workforce Transformation's in-demand list?
- What in-demand careers are best suited for the target population?
- How can employers be engaged?

#### 4. Career Advisement

- How are OhioMeansJobs.com resources and entities, incorporated into Ohio's Unified State Plan, utilized to deepen career advising and reinforce employability skills?
- How do previous academic achievement, career goals and likely completion timelines intersect to provide realistic pathway options to an individual?

#### 5. Outreach and Recruitment Connections

- How can business, community, labor, education and faith-based partners be engaged?
- How can this program connect to the goals of Ohio's Unified State Plan that is focused on increasing access to and the delivery of foundation skills, high school completion and connecting business to a highly skilled workforce?

Simultaneous to conducting the necessary research and development of an infrastructure to deliver the program, the pilot sites will focus on building initial and long-term capacity for program implementation in the 2015-2016 academic year. Planning funds will be used to support the development of a marketing strategy to determine the best way to reach the target population.



## PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION: 2015-2016

Once the target population is known and the competency-based model and program infrastructure have been developed, the program will open in the 2015-2016 academic year. Conceptually, the adult student's path within the Adult Diploma Program will begin with an assessment. Using an assessment such as TABE, ACT WorkKeys® and other prior learning assessments will determine the individual's current career readiness and academic skill level upon entry into the program. Assessment results, along with career advisement are then used to develop the individual's student success plan. The plan maps out the necessary training and support services they need along the pathway to be successful in the chosen career field.

Once the student's success plan is established, the student enrolls in the competency-based education program. The training program embeds the academic program of study with the high-level training necessary to earn the valuable industry-recognized credential or certificate at the same time. Learning, whether online, face-to-face or a blended approach, is designed to ensure the academic work is completed in combination with the industry credential training. At the conclusion of the program, an assessment is used for post-testing and demonstration of mastery of skill. In order to graduate successfully from the program, the student must achieve the academic and credential competencies and the minimum WorkKeys® score determined by the occupation program he or she is in.

From the start of the program, the student must receive the wrap-around services included in the student success plan. This ensures that the student is in the right pathway with realistic outcomes. Career advisement should include career inventories and job outlook data, as well as information on additional credential opportunities, such as associate or bachelor's degree program options. This allows students to make solid connections to potential employers, special training and higher education institutions along the way. Support services are essential in ensuring students are prepared to make a smooth transition to additional postsecondary options or career upon completion of the Adult Diploma Program.

## LEVERAGING RESOURCES

The development and implementation of the Adult Diploma Program is timely as the state continues to leverage education and workforce training resources to drive Ohio's economic prosperity. The program's focus on accessible and flexible academic and workforce training opportunities enhances the goals of the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation. Through Ohio's Unified State Plan<sup>ix</sup> approach, coordination among the state's workforce programs is essential to improving outcomes for students, adults and employers. The focus is on common case management, aligned assessment strategies, job readiness and soft skill training among other goals. The Adult Diploma Program aligns with these strategies and requires partnerships within the region and across education systems. The program encourages a consortium model as a seamless way to prepare students to be career and college ready.

In addition, the Adult Diploma Program is closely aligned to the newly formed One-Year Option program initiative.<sup>x</sup> Through the One-Year Option, students who complete 900+ hours in an accredited career-technical education program and earn a recognized industry credential also may receive 30 credits toward their associate degree at any Ohio public college.

# Funding the Adult Diploma Program

## THE CHARGE

House Bill 483, the 2014 Mid-Biennium Review, charged “the Superintendent, in consultation with the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents, the Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation, the Ohio Association of Community Colleges, Ohio Technical Centers, Adult Basic and Literacy Education programs, and other interested parties as deemed necessary, or their designees to develop recommendations for the method of funding and other associated requirements for the Adult Career Opportunity Pilot Program. The superintendent shall provide a report of the recommendations to the Governor, the president of the Senate, and the speaker of the House of Representatives by Dec. 31, 2014.”

## THE PROCESS

Per the legislative requirements, the superintendent convened key stakeholders to gather input on what it would cost to fully implement the Adult Diploma Program in the 2015-2016 academic year and beyond. Stakeholders included the Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation, the Ohio Board of Regents, the Ohio Association of Community Colleges, Ohio Technical Centers and Adult Basic and Literacy Education. The group was asked to also consider additional requirements necessary for the program to be successful.

There were several guiding principles that helped the group shape the program recommendations:

1. The criteria for awarding the high school diploma will center on a competency-based model that assesses a student’s readiness level upon entry and then again at the conclusion of the program.
2. Collaboration within the region and across education systems (community colleges and Ohio Technical Centers) is essential in preparing students for a seamless transition to continued education and career readiness.
3. The approved industry credential list will be developed by the Ohio Department of Education and will align with OhioMeansJobs in-demand occupations.
4. Academic standards can be embedded into the credential or certificate program of study so that adults could earn the diploma upon completion of the training program.

## FUNDING MODEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The stakeholder group unanimously agreed that a state-funded model was imperative to pilot the program beginning in the 2015-2016 academic year.

Proposals for the Adult Diploma Pilot Program were due at the end of November 2014. This deadline was after the advisory committee meetings due to the timing of this report. Therefore, the costs used for the funding model include projections gathered from stakeholder group input regarding what it would cost for a student to obtain a diploma while earning a credential or certificate. In addition, the official credential list will be published shortly after this report is submitted. To establish reasonable costs associated with earning a credential(s) or certificate(s), the stakeholder group developed the model based on what would most likely be on the list and aligned with the OhioMeansJobs in-demand occupation list.



## **Funding Formula**

$((\text{Career pathway training} + \text{Work readiness training}) \times 1.2 \text{ for Associated services})$

## **Career Pathway Technical Training**

Career pathway training program of 601-900+ hours  $((900/30^{\text{xi}}) \times 160) = \$4,800$

Career pathway training program between 301-600 hours  $((600/30) \times 160) = \$3,200$

Career pathway training program less than 300 hours  $((300/30) \times 160) = \$1,600$

## **Work Readiness Skills**

High School Level (>grade 9) or above \$750

Below High School Level (<grade 9) \$1,500

## **Associated Services (additional 20% of total program)**

\$470 - \$1,260

Pre- and post-assessments – (e.g., TABE, WorkKeys®, ACT)

Counseling and advising

## **Payment Schedule**

25 percent once student has successfully completed the first third of the program

25 percent once student has successfully completed the second third of the program

50 percent on attainment of diploma (technical and work readiness)

## **Range of payment**

\$2,820 - \$7,560

## **SAMPLE CAREER PATHWAY TRAINING PROGRAMS**

Tuition costs vary dramatically from institution to institution based on demand, location, training type and other factors. Drawing from several adult education programs offered at Ohio technical centers and community colleges, the following are examples of the investment of the Adult Diploma Program.

### **State-tested Nurse Aide/Patient Care Nursing Assistant 200 hours**

$\$1,600 + 750 \text{ (or } 1,500) = \$2,350 \times 1.2 = \$2,820 - \$3,720$

### **Carpentry 360 hours**

$\$3,200 + 750 \text{ (or } 1,500) = \$3,950 \times 1.2 = \$4,740 - \$5,640$

### **Medical Assistant 900 hours**

$\$4,800 + 750 \text{ (or } 1,500) = \$5,550 \times 1.2 = \$6,660 - \$7,560$

## **FUNDING MODEL REQUEST**

Given the number of variables in the funding formula, coupled with the inherent challenges of identifying and enrolling eligible individuals, it is difficult to forecast the total initial investment required. Simulations estimate that the Adult Diploma Program could potentially serve 900+ eligible candidates. Speculating that a majority of students will earn the first credential in their chosen career pathway, with fewer eligible candidates enrolling in advanced programs, the estimated total investment for FY 2016 is approximately \$4,806,000. Program impact and projected costs will be re-evaluated at the conclusion of the pilot year.

Students	Program Costs	Totals
300	\$2,820	\$846,000
300	\$5,640	\$1,692,000
300	\$7,560	\$2,268,000
		<b>\$4,806,000</b>

## ADDITIONAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The stakeholder group identified additional considerations for the implementation of an impactful Adult Diploma Program.

### Awarding the Adult Diploma

As of July 1, 2012, students who want to attend college but do not have a high school diploma or GED® are not eligible for federal financial aid.<sup>xii</sup> For students to seamlessly transition to postsecondary education, the Adult Diploma Program must provide students with a federally recognized high school diploma. For this purpose, it is recommended that the State Board of Education issue the high school diploma to adult students who complete the program. This diploma should include an official transcript detailing the academic and technical competencies mastered.

### Data Collection

The Adult Diploma Program assists adults, 22 years of age or older, to complete their high school diploma and industry-recognized credential or certificate. Due to the ages of these individuals, they are no longer a part of the Ohio Department of Education data collection system. Therefore, it is recommended that the department work with the Ohio Board of Regents to establish data collection processes and guidelines for data reporting to not only track the success of the students, but for accountability and performance data for the program grantees. Funding from the FY15 Planning Grant may be used to access data needs and determine the best way to capture this data on the state level.

## Conclusion

The Adult Diploma Program is an innovative, competency-based approach to providing adults an alternative pathway to obtain a high school diploma at the same time as earning an industry credential or certificate. The potential impact of this program in reaching and educating over one million adults in Ohio without a high school diploma is vast. Further, aligned with Ohio's Unified State Plan and with the financial support of Ohio's Governor and General Assembly, the program is well positioned to expand the pool of skilled talent that Ohio's workforce demands.

The program is a pilot for the 2015-2016 academic year. As research and development continue to take place, the shape of the program will change to ensure the state is reaching and serving the appropriate population. With an already successful career-technical education infrastructure in place in Ohio, together with the recommendations of this report, the state can continue to build an efficient and impactful program for adult students.

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<sup>i</sup> Ohio Department of Education, *School Report Cards*, <http://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/Pages/Power-User-Reports.aspx>.

<sup>ii</sup> Ohio Department of Education, *School Report Cards*, <http://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/Pages/Power-User-Reports.aspx>.

<sup>iii</sup> National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, *Economic Impacts of Dropouts Quick Facts*, <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/statistics/quick-facts/economic-impacts-dropouts>.

<sup>iv</sup> Anthony P. Carnevale, Stephen J. Rose and Ban Cheah, *The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, August 2011.

<sup>v</sup> Ohio Department of Education, *Education Management Information System (EMIS)*, 2014.

<sup>vi</sup> Ohio Department of Education, *Career Pathways*, <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Career-Tech/Career-Connections/Career-Pathways>.

<sup>vii</sup> ACT, Inc., ACT WorkKeys® Occupational Profiles, <http://www.act.org/workkeys/analysis/occup.html>, 2014.

<sup>viii</sup> The JobsOhio regional map can be found at <http://jobs-ohio.com/network/>.

<sup>ix</sup> Ohio Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, *Ohio's Unified State Plan*, <http://workforce.ohio.gov/Initiatives/UnifiedStatePlan.aspx>.

<sup>x</sup> Ohio Board of Regents, One-Year Option, <https://www.ohiohighered.org/one-year-option>.

<sup>xi</sup> Denominator parallels the 30 college technical hours of credit in the Ohio Board of Regent's One-Year Option credit articulation system. <https://www.ohiohighered.org/one-year-option>

<sup>xii</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Laws & Guidance: Program Integrity Questions and Answers*, 2012.