

Section Three: Professional Development and Training

3.1 Hiring Process and Criteria for Staff

The consortium follows established hiring procedures designed to ensure that staff possess the qualifications, experience, and commitment necessary to effectively serve adult learners. Hiring decisions are based on a combination of education, licensure where required, professional credentials, and relevant experience working with adult learners, youth, or underserved populations. Additionally, candidates who are fluent in languages other than English—particularly Southeast Asian languages—are highly valued to better support the diverse communities served by HAP Academy OIC.

Leadership positions, including the Director of Education and Chief Academic Officer, require individuals with strong experience in educational leadership, program administration, and workforce or adult education systems. Candidates are typically expected to hold an advanced degree in education, educational leadership, public administration, workforce development, or a related field, along with several years of experience managing educational programs, staff, and grant-funded initiatives. Leadership staff must demonstrate the ability to oversee curriculum development, instructional quality, program compliance, and student outcomes while ensuring alignment with state and federal regulations. They are responsible for supervising instructional and support staff, guiding program improvement efforts, and using data to monitor performance and inform decision-making. In addition, leaders must possess strong communication and organizational skills, the ability to collaborate with community and workforce partners, and a demonstrated commitment to expanding educational and career opportunities for adult learners. Current staff holding these positions have a combined 40 years of experience in Education Leadership, hold three Master's degrees, and one doctorate degree.

Adult Basic Education Instructional staff are expected to hold and maintain current K12 teaching licenses and demonstrate strong educational backgrounds in adult education, literacy instruction, English language learning, or related fields. Preference is given to candidates with experience in adult basic education, workforce development, or community-based education settings, and candidates who hold a Master's degree.

Faculty who teach career-specific training programs are selected based on their combination of industry expertise, instructional ability, and relevant credentials for the field they teach. Candidates are expected to possess appropriate professional certifications, licenses, or credentials related to the occupation being taught (for example, healthcare certifications, commercial driving credentials, or other industry-recognized qualifications). In addition, instructors should have several years of relevant work experience in their industry to ensure that instruction reflects

current workplace practices and expectations. Currently, all faculty in these areas hold at least a Bachelor's degree, with 3 holding a Master's in their field and 1 holding a DBA.

While prior teaching experience is preferred, candidates with strong industry backgrounds may be considered if they demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate technical concepts and support adult learners. Faculty are expected to design and deliver instruction that prepares students for industry certification exams and employment in their field. They must also demonstrate strong organizational skills, professionalism, and the ability to work with students from diverse backgrounds, including individuals who may face barriers to education or employment.

Faculty are also expected to participate in professional development related to instructional strategies, adult learning practices, and program compliance requirements. When required by the program or credentialing body (Minnesota Office of Higher Education), instructors must maintain active professional licenses or certifications to ensure training remains aligned with current industry standards.

Administrative staff is selected based on experience in program management, adult education, workforce development, or nonprofit administration. Qualifications typically include relevant postsecondary education and demonstrated experience in leadership, program coordination, or grant management.

Support staff positions, including intake, data, and testing coordinators, require strong organizational skills, attention to detail, and experience working with data systems, student services, or program operations. Familiarity with adult education programs and data reporting systems is preferred.

Student Advisors are hired based on their ability to support adult learners in achieving educational, career, and personal goals. Candidates are typically expected to hold a bachelor's degree in education, counseling, social work, human services, workforce development, or a related field, or have equivalent professional experience. Preference is given to individuals with experience working in adult education, workforce development programs, or community-based organizations serving individuals facing barriers to employment and education. Strong communication, case management, and problem-solving skills are essential, as Student Advisors provide comprehensive advising that includes goal setting, academic planning, career pathway navigation, and referrals to supportive services. Candidates are also expected to demonstrate cultural competency and the ability to work effectively with diverse populations, including individuals receiving public assistance, English language learners, and students balancing work and family responsibilities.

Across all positions, the consortium prioritizes candidates who demonstrate cultural competency, commitment to serving diverse populations, and the ability to support adult learners facing barriers to education and employment.

3.2 New Staff Orientation

New staff participate in a structured orientation process designed to ensure they understand program expectations, policies, and adult education requirements.

Orientation typically includes:

- Overview of the Adult Basic Education System in Minnesota
- Review of HAP Academy OIC's goals, programming, and student populations served
- Introduction to program policies, procedures, and reporting requirements
- Training on student intake, assessment procedures, and data entry processes
- Overview of required assessments and test administration procedures
- Introduction to instructional models and curriculum used within the program
- Training on distance learning tools and digital platforms used by the program
- Review of learner support services and referral processes
- Introduction to professional development expectations and available resources

New instructional staff also receive guidance on lesson planning, curriculum alignment, and instructional strategies appropriate for adult learners. New staff are provided ongoing support during their first year, including mentoring and additional training opportunities as needed.

3.3 Training Required by the Adult Education Staff Training Policy

The consortium ensures that all staff complete required training in accordance with the Adult Education Staff Training Policy established by the Minnesota Department of Education.

Required training includes:

- **ABE Foundations training** for new instructional staff
- **Assessment test administration certification** for staff responsible for administering standardized assessments
- **Distance learning training** for staff providing instruction through approved distance education platforms

Program leadership tracks required training and ensures that new staff complete training within required timelines. Staff responsible for testing must complete certification training prior to administering standardized assessments.

The consortium also monitors updates to training requirements and communicates these expectations to staff. When new training requirements are introduced, staff are supported in completing them through scheduled professional development time and access to state training resources.

3.4 Professional Development for Staff

The consortium is committed to supporting ongoing professional development for all staff in order to improve instructional quality, strengthen program operations, and enhance student outcomes.

Determining Professional Development Needs

Professional development needs are identified through several processes, including:

- Annual program planning and consortium goal setting
- Staff performance reviews and supervisor feedback
- Analysis of student outcome data and program performance
- Input from instructional staff, support staff, and administrators
- State and federal policy updates related to adult education
- Emerging instructional practices and workforce alignment needs

Individual staff members also develop professional development plans that align with both their professional goals and the consortium's priorities.

Funding for Professional Development

The consortium dedicates a portion of its Adult Basic Education funding to support professional development activities. These funds may be used for training registration fees, conference participation, instructional workshops, and other professional learning opportunities. Staff are also supported in accessing professional development provided through statewide ABE training systems and partner organizations. Additionally, ABE staff and faculty are members of the Literacy Action Network and attend the summer conference annually.

Given the limited amount of funding, additional Professional Development funds are available through philanthropic support to HAP Academy OIC. Currently, the Greater Twin Cities United Way has been generous in its support of HAP and has agreed to supplement PD activities.

Required ABE Professional Development and Training Expectations

Instructional staff participates in professional development aligned with Adult Basic Education priorities, including College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), ACES/TIF employability skills, and Northstar Digital Literacy standards. Staff are encouraged to participate in Foundations trainings and additional state-sponsored learning opportunities as available. Training participation supports alignment of instruction with ABE content standards and workforce preparation expectations.

New instructional and support staff receive onboarding that includes orientation to Adult Basic Education requirements, student assessment procedures, data systems, instructional expectations, and program policies. New staff are also encouraged to participate in relevant statewide ABE training opportunities during their first year.

Professional development activities may include webinars, conferences, peer learning, instructional coaching, consortium meetings, and independent learning aligned with program priorities. Staff are encouraged to share key learnings from professional development with colleagues during staff meetings or collaborative planning sessions to promote continuous improvement across the consortium.

The consortium tracks professional development participation through supervisor documentation, performance evaluations, and professional development planning. Program leadership reviews professional development participation annually to ensure alignment with program goals and instructional quality improvement.

Professional development activities are designed to improve instructional effectiveness, support high-quality distance and hybrid learning, strengthen career pathway programming, improve employment outcomes, and ensure equitable access for diverse learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Additional Professional Development Expectations

In addition to required training under the Adult Education Staff Training Policy, staff are encouraged to participate in additional professional development activities related to:

- Effective adult learning and instructional strategies
- Digital literacy and distance education
- Cultural competency and equity in education
- Workforce preparation and career pathway instruction
- Data management and program accountability

Administrative and support staff are also encouraged to participate in training related to program management, student support services, and data systems.

Communication of Professional Development Opportunities

The consortium ensures that staff are aware of professional development opportunities through multiple channels, including:

- Regular staff meetings
- Email communications and internal announcements
- Updates from statewide ABE training providers
- Supervisor recommendations and professional development planning

Program leadership actively encourages staff participation in professional development and supports staff in identifying opportunities that align with program priorities and individual professional growth.

Formal Observation and Professional Development of Staff

HAP Academy OIC maintains a structured performance evaluation process to support continuous improvement and ensure high-quality instruction and services. Professional faculty receive two formal observations each year, conducted by program leadership. These observations focus on instructional quality, student engagement, classroom management, alignment with program standards, and support of student learning outcomes. Following each observation, leadership meets with faculty to review strengths, identify areas for growth, and establish mutually agreed-upon professional development activities. These professional development assignments are aligned to observed needs and may include targeted training, peer observation, curriculum development, or participation in consortium or state-sponsored learning opportunities.

Leadership staff establishes annual performance goals using the SMART goal framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound). These goals align with organizational priorities, including student outcomes, program quality, staff development, and employment placement success. Leadership performance is reviewed annually based on progress toward these goals and the program's overall effectiveness.

Support staff, including student advisors and intake personnel, are also evaluated annually using SMART goals aligned to their roles and responsibilities. These goals may include caseload management, student engagement, data quality, retention, and employment outcomes. Annual evaluations ensure accountability, promote continuous improvement, and support high-quality services across all areas of HAP Academy OIC programming.

