



August 4, 2014

Dear Colleague:

Two weeks ago marked a historic milestone for the adult education system in our country.

On Tuesday, July 22nd, President Obama [signed](#) the new [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) (WIOA) into law. At the same event, Vice President Biden's [Ready to Work: Job-Driven Training and American Opportunity](#) report was released. This report features 50 executive actions the Administration and key federal agencies have committed to in order to create more opportunities for job seekers and workers.

On Wednesday, the Secretaries of Labor and Education, the Assistant Secretary of the Employment and Training Administration, the Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner, and myself held joint conference calls to highlight critical elements and milestones in the new law and announce stakeholder outreach and information [resources](#). Over 4,000 leaders in education and workforce development participated in these calls.

On Thursday, the President gave a speech from Los Angeles Trade and Technical College emphasizing the need to train more Americans for 21st century jobs.

On Saturday, the White House [blog](#) featured an article, co-authored by the Director of the National Economic Council, Jeffrey Zients, and Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, on how the Administration is working to "upskill" more Americans. The blog post focuses specifically on the 24 million low-skilled adults who are working and are at the center of OCTAE's mission and work.

It has been a very long time since these issues have received this high level of attention in both the legislative and executive branches.

We could not have achieved this level of attention and priority on adults with low skills in the national conversation without the support and leadership of many individuals on the Hill, the various White House policy councils, the Vice President's Office, and the lead federal agencies including the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Transportation, Agriculture, Energy, Commerce, and the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

Much of this support was also facilitated by the good work many of you in the adult education, career and technical education, and community college systems have done. Additionally, an important factor in the last decade was the increase of strong performance data in the adult education system and the high quality data and findings from the OECD *Survey of Adult Skills*.

Other key factors that contributed were:

- ✓ The leadership of OCTAE staff who worked collaboratively with federal and state partners;
- ✓ The strategic use of recent data to reinforce the urgency;

- ✓ The private and philanthropic partners who have joined us in messaging and supporting this work

I hope that you are proud of your contribution to this effort and are energized, as I am, to seize the opportunities to help more youth and adults achieve their potential and contribute to our country.

Please, share my thanks with your staff and your programs for their contributions and inform them of the informational resources available. Stay tuned to the [OCTAE newsletter](#) and [blog](#) for forthcoming information and stakeholder input sessions.

In closing, let me signal that the new law and the executive actions in the Vice President's report include significant changes. These efforts are not tinkering around the edges. They lay the foundation for the transformation of adult learning in our country so that every American can pursue a path to a middle class job, career, and life.

I am looking forward to working together to make this transformation a reality. This work will not always be easy and some of the changes will be challenging and might move us out of the comfort zone of the status quo. Our office is making the commitment to working with you through these changes and to creating opportunities for the millions of low-skilled adults our current system cannot accommodate. We are also committing to working with you to narrow and close the opportunity and achievement gaps in our current system so that adult learners irrespective of their zip code, background, or circumstances have equitable access and a fair and comparable chance of achieving positive outcomes as a result of participating.

Join me and the OCTAE team in restoring opportunity for our most vulnerable adults.

Sincerely,

Johan E. Uvin /s/
Acting Assistant Secretary
Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education