Indicators of Effective Community Planning

for

Community Adult Learning Centers

Adult and Community Learning Services

September 2013
Indicators of Effective Community Planning for Community Adult Learning Centers

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For
Adult and Community Learning Services
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Dear Directors:

In *Facing the Future: Massachusetts Strategic Framework for Adult Basic Education*, the adult basic education system identified three major goals: ensure that adults needing basic education have access to services; increase system effectiveness and quality; and prepare students for success in their next steps in college and further training, at work and in the community.

Effective community planning has the potential to play a critical role in achieving these goals. To that end, research based *Indicators of Effective Community Planning for CALCs* were developed to help strengthen and build the capacity of Massachusetts programs to conduct community planning. The *Indicators* include a self-assessment and planning tool to identify community planning strengths and areas that require focus; inform action steps for continuous improvement; and help track progress along a continuum of proficiency. The expectation is that the results of the self-assessment will be a catalyst for discussion to determine direction for ABE community planning as well as to shape goals and intended outcomes. Where multiple areas that require focus are identified, it is expected they will be prioritized, addressed over time, and integrated in a CALC’s continuous improvement process.

Use of the *Indicators* supports the ABE strategic framework and the Department’s priority goals in achieving various “models” of community planning in FY 14 – FY 17:

- **Family and Community Engagement:** To promote the effective involvement of parents and the community in supporting the success of children and schools, these partnerships include a local school or district and other stakeholders, such as early education and care providers, in the development of specific goals and outcomes related to children’s academic achievement.
- **College and Career Readiness:** Strong partnerships can play a significant role in the successful transition of ABE students to college, further training, and career. Community planning allows programs to work in partnership with college, training, and workforce partners for the purpose of helping students achieve their college and career related goals.
- **Single Focus Community Planning:** These partnerships, supported since the initiation of ABE community planning, involve convening a variety of stakeholders with a single focus on ABE. They may be convened by one or more ABE programs in a community or region.
- **Multi-Focus Community Planning:** These partnerships, developed as partnerships between programs and community stakeholders, involve the participation of ABE programs in a community-wide partnership not exclusively focused on ABE.

Given that communities have different needs and circumstances, there is flexibility in adopting and implementing these models. I invite you to keep in mind the goals of the strategic framework, the characteristics of your community, the needs of your learners, and key elements of the *Indicators* as you work to increase access, quality, and next steps for adult learners.

With Literacy in Mind,
Anne Serino
ABE State Director
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History of Adult Basic Education Community Planning in Massachusetts

An evolution of community planning in Adult Basic Education (ABE) in Massachusetts has occurred since 1997 when the ABE community planning initiative began. During 1997-98 community planning evolved when ABE programs across the state began to engage community members in a dialogue about the education, literacy and language needs of under-educated and/or limited English proficient populations within defined communities. From 1998 to 2004, ABE partnerships were formed, community needs and assets inventories were conducted and five-year strategic plans were developed for each ABE community. From 2005-2010, ABE Community Planning Partnerships continued to implement action plans based on updated assets and needs assessments and strategic plans.

A comprehensive community planning evaluation conducted in 2010 by Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) with an independent evaluator concluded that the community planning initiative is an effective strategy in meeting ACLS’s stated mission: To provide each and every adult with opportunities to develop literacy skills needed to qualify for further education, job training, and better employment, and to reach his/her full potential as a family member, productive worker, and citizen. As one ABE Director said, “ABE community planning partnerships help us to reduce the obstacles students face so they can persist in their educational pursuits.”

Future of Adult Basic Education Community Planning in Massachusetts

Community coalitions have been used for many years under different names such as collaborative partnerships, community forums, task forces, and interagency coordinating councils. Research refers to the term “community coalition” to mean a mutually beneficial relationship between individuals, governmental agencies, private and public sector organizations and/or community-based organizations that seek to achieve common goals.

Creating a community partnership or coalition is a craft, not an exact science. It involves many variables, many people, and multiple issues which pull the effort in different directions. Though many publications on collaboration provide a step-by-step guide, this process of building a coalition is usually fluid, not linear. It is important that Community Adult Learning Center (CALC) community planning coalitions reflect their community context. What will work in one community may not work in another. Community coalitions also face a variety of challenges. Changes in funding priorities, retirement of a longtime leader and shifts in learner demographics can be challenging to coalitions no matter where they are located. All community coalitions face some of the same tensions---some members may want to focus on processes that take time, while others want to take quick action. Some will think big while others will want a narrower focus. Successful community coalitions are able to find a balance among these tensions and others, and are able to forge a path that everyone can support. To use a sports metaphor, a great shortstop does not make a

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1 Adopted in 1993
2 The terms coalition and partnership are used interchangeably in this document
3 Champions for Inclusive Communities, Utah State University
great baseball team. Eight additional players are needed, each with their own position and role, to make a successful team.4

In the spirit of further evolution of ABE community planning, ACLS has identified key indicators and characteristics of effective community planning, with the goal of providing guidance to CALCs to strengthen and build the capacity of their community planning coalitions. Realizing that CALC community planning coalitions are not cookie cutters, the indicators outlined herein are consistent with a body of research that provides a framework for effective community planning and coalitions (see Resources and Research, Appendix A). A self-assessment and planning tool has also been developed which aligns with the key indicators. The purpose of this tool is for CALC community planning coalitions to assess their level of functioning against a set of research-based criteria so they can identify their strengths and challenges, articulate and share their promising practices, and identify and address any gaps or weaknesses in the coalition’s characteristics.

The indicators take into consideration **three main phases of typical community coalition development**5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Development</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Coalition Formation** | • Form a core group of relevant organizations and recruit initial members  
  • Build a leadership team  
  • Create a viable structure (such as chairs/co-chairs, committees, work groups, rules, and operating procedures)  
  • Attain and share member resources  
  • Assess community needs and assets  
  • Articulate a clear mission/vision or guiding purpose  
  • Develop goals and a plan of action |
| **Coalition Maintenance** | • Retain member commitment and participation to achieve goals  
  • Recruit new members as needed  
  • Implement effective processes and concrete actions  
  • Continue to assess community assets and needs  
  • Identify and document positive results/outcomes |
| **Coalition Institutionalization (Sustainability)** | • Build community capacity to identify and solve new challenges  
  • Maintain diverse membership  
  • Diversify and strengthen coalition resource base  
  • Maintain infrastructure that supports ABE  
  • Plan for leadership succession  
  • Identify and document outcomes |

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4 *Building Effective Community Partnerships*, prepared by the Institute for Educational Leadership with funding from US Department of Justice.

5 Community Coalition Action Theory, Butterfoss and Kegler, 2002
INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING FOR CALCs

The indicators are based on the premise that “the stronger the partnership, the more comprehensive are services to adult learners and, therefore, the stronger the community impact.” Therefore, the indicators and characteristics in the self-assessment and planning tool represent an effective process that allows CALC community planning coalitions to achieve outcomes over time. Through a process of action planning (a key characteristic associated with several of the indicators), these outcomes will align with ACLS’s three strategic goals:

- Ensure that adults needing basic education have access to services
- Increase system effectiveness and quality
- Prepare students for success in their next steps

An assessment and examination of research exploring community coalitions yielded six indicators that can affect coalition functioning and effectiveness:

1. Leadership
2. Membership
3. Structure
4. Operations and Processes
5. Vision and Mission
6. Contextual Factors

Indicator 1: Leadership

In a 2010 survey of Massachusetts’ ABE Directors (43 out of 58 responded) conducted by ACLS as part of the independent evaluation of community planning partnerships, 95% of respondents said that strong leadership is critical to the success of community planning in Massachusetts. This was confirmed during interviews and site visits conducted by the independent evaluator. The evaluation report noted that “sites that were stronger experienced consistently strong leadership and had clear and stable ties to the community. In many instances, key agency leaders served on multiple community boards and/or other key committees to leverage visibility. In some instances, there were direct ties to the mayor’s office, or other political leaders within the community (ies) served. Those partnerships deemed most effective were well recognized within the community and had become a “voice” for serving adult learners with a range of needs.”

Research suggests that effective coalition leader(s) have organizational capacity, commitment, and vision, to build and maintain effective coalitions. Coalitions and partnerships with action-oriented leader(s) are most effective. Coalition leaders from diverse cultural groups, especially those that reflect the community, are more successful in obtaining community buy-in for coalition activities. The coalition leader(s) can be any coalition member who demonstrates the qualities, commitment, and vision needed to lead the coalition. Once the coalition is well established, a leadership succession plan is also important to sustain

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6 Community Planning Evaluation, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Adult and Community Learning Services, Prepared by Denise A. Bell, Ph.D., 2010
7 Developing a Conceptual Framework to Assess the Sustainability of Community Coalitions, Post-Federal Funding, US Dept. of Health and Human Services, Presented by: National Opinion Research Center (NORC), at the University of Chicago, January 7, 2010
8 Facing the Future, Massachusetts Strategic Framework for Adult Basic Education, 2010-2015, MA DESE
the coalition. Research suggests that the strength and continuity of leadership within the coalition is an important facilitator of sustainability of the coalition.

In the 2010 evaluation of the Massachusetts ABE community planning initiative, those partnerships that were more effective had a designated facilitator such as a part-time community planner, an ABE Director, or a facilitator whose salaries were partially funded by ACLS for community planning. Other research also cites that coalitions with a dedicated member as facilitator achieve more results.

**Indicator 2: Membership**

To be effective, it is important that the membership of the CALC community planning coalition includes a variety of organizations and individuals in the community that provide time or other resources to the coalition. Coalitions have a diverse membership of both professional and grassroots organizations with a variety of perspectives from different sectors, backgrounds, and constituencies. Effective coalitions engage both formal and informal leaders who reflect the demographic diversity of the community. It is very important in a coalition to include adult learners in some aspects of the coalition. Input from adult learners is sought through a mechanism most appropriate for the community/program. Membership diversity—culturally and otherwise—can affect whether the partnership is sustained in the long-term. Indeed it is out of diversity of perspectives that creative ideas commonly arise. Other factors that are associated with coalition effectiveness are the number of partners in the membership and the amount of time that member organizations can contribute to the coalition’s activities. However, this varies based on the size and needs of the ABE programs and learners in the community. Numbers are not as important as skills, knowledge, community connections and influence.

The expertise of the membership can also affect the success of the coalition. Partnerships benefit from having members with experience in community planning or community development, as they understand what is required to engage the community and conduct activities that meet the community’s needs. If the coalition does not have that expertise, an outside facilitator may be considered who does have community planning or community development experience. CALC community planning coalitions also benefit from members that represent the various “next steps” for ABE learners as they move through their progression to higher performance levels within programs, to post-secondary education, job training and/or employment, as well as members from the community who represent the support services learners need to persist in their education journey. Membership in a CALC community planning coalition could include organizations and individuals such as community residents (including current, former or potential ABE students), ABE providers, schools, vocational technical institutions, community colleges, child care providers, health care providers, libraries, community development corporations, community action agencies and other human services providers such as food pantries, community centers, Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and/or Career Centers, DTA representatives, employers and training providers, and other groups that will help adult learners to achieve their education and career goals. Engaging members who have experience or influence with resource development or can organize events will likewise benefit the coalition’s sustainability.

Coalition effectiveness is also facilitated by the commitment of the membership. Research shows that member satisfaction is associated with coalition effectiveness, as satisfied members are more invested in the coalition and its activities. Coalition members stay active when they contribute to making an impact in the community, improve services, and address a critical need.
Indicator 3: Structure

Structural characteristics refer to the administrative processes in place that facilitate the management of the community coalition. Research indicates that coalitions with articulated structures are more likely to achieve collaborative synergy in the partnership. The development of structure, rules, and responsibilities (based on size, characteristics and needs in the community) early in a coalition’s development enables CALC community planning coalitions to operate effectively. Structures can take the form of written policies and processes (e.g., memoranda of understanding, bylaws, and policy and procedure manuals) and a clear vision and mission statement.

CALC community planning coalitions vary in the structures they use. Some have a steering committee or “core working group” that provides guidance to coalition activities. This group, comprised of representatives of the coalition, establishes goals and benchmarks for the coalition and convenes regularly to assess the goals, activities and outcomes of the coalition. Others use ad hoc committees or work groups that work on specific projects or activities identified by the core group or steering committee and are identified in a plan of action. Some communities with only one ABE program join with an existing, larger coalition, and may become a formal sub-committee of the larger entity with written agreements to focus on the challenges associated with ABE. This assumes that the larger coalition is comprised of the members identified as critical to supporting adult learners and ABE programs in their community and have agreed to adopt ABE as a focus of their coalition. Another community with only one funded ABE program might develop their own coalition comprised of non-funded ABE programs and other key community partners. The 2010 evaluation of the ABE community planning initiative noted that “stronger partnerships also tended to have larger partnership meetings and sub-committee meetings.” In all cases, a defined structure facilitates collaboration and helps members to more fully understand the purpose of the coalition and their individual roles and responsibilities.

Indicator 4: Operations and Processes

Effective internal functioning is essential to successful coalitions. Effective partnerships institute operations and processes that allow it to function, such as those for communication, decision making and conflict resolution. Communication has been identified as one of the most important characteristics for the success of any organization, including CALC community planning coalitions. For a coalition to operate effectively, messages must be accurately communicated within and outside of the coalition. Regular communication among coalition members fosters cooperation that can help the coalition meet its goals. Decision-making processes are also important to coalition functioning because they are related to member satisfaction and involvement. Coalitions develop a decision making process, either by specifying a group of decision makers, using majority rule, or requiring a quorum or consensus.

Conflict resolution processes are also important to coalition functioning as they foster strong partnerships among members. Conflict may result from “turf” issues, leadership problems, perception of competition, and internal disagreements that affect the direction of the coalition. It is important to identify an individual or individuals in the coalition with good conflict resolution skills to manage this process if conflicts arise.

Setting a day, time and place that is conducive to maximum participation of coalition members is important to keep members engaged and committed. Developing and communicating agendas and recording and distributing meeting minutes help to keep members engaged in the partnership. This could
be the function of the designated facilitator, other members of the coalition, or a staff member of a participating organization. Effective facilitation to keep the coalition on task is important for addressing agenda items and meeting the goals of the coalition. The 2010 ABE community planning initiative evaluation also noted that “Stronger partnerships met more regularly. They tended to have very focused agendas and speakers.”

Developing an action plan with goals, objectives, timelines, benchmarks, persons responsible and planned outcomes is a critical process of the CALC community planning coalition.

**Indicator 5: Vision and Mission**

The CALC community planning coalition’s vision is the overarching reference for the coalition’s goals and activities. Vision helps coalition members to envision the impact of the partnership on adult learners and the community over a certain period of time. A clear vision helps the coalition to raise awareness of its activities within the community, identify partners and resources, and form its mission.

The CALCs community planning coalition’s mission operationalizes the vision. The mission includes a statement of its purpose (what), it’s business (how) and its values (beliefs). The coalition develops a plan of action that is based on the shared mission. The action plan is a fluid and evolving document that is revised as goals and outcomes are achieved and as needs in the community change. The vision and mission of the CALC community planning coalition should align with ACLS’s strategic framework goals of access, quality and next steps. “Achieving these goals requires the ABE system and its stakeholders to commit to the hard work ahead of increasing public awareness through state and local promotional campaigns; developing, sustaining, and utilizing both formal and informal partnerships; and leveraging a wide range of human, financial, and organizational resources.” ⁹

**Indicator 6: Contextual Factors**

Massachusetts ABE Directors noted that key to successful community planning coalitions was the ability to continually scan the community for changes in demographics and other conditions that would enhance or inhibit the ability to best serve students. The “stronger partnerships had active participants in the community in which they served, had successfully built a strong collaborative effort among agencies and were dedicated to encouraging and supporting community development.” ¹⁰

Contextual factors are the overarching indicators that drive the work of the partnership. Contextual factors are internal and external conditions that either exist or are lacking in the environment and which can benefit or impede the effectiveness of the coalition and the programs it represents. Contextual factors such as political considerations, history of the coalition, changes in leadership, funding guidelines and requirements, geography, demographics, and community needs and assets are important factors in coalition effectiveness. Knowledge of the community’s and/or region’s internal and external environment which could affect the work of ABE programs and coalitions is important to coalition effectiveness. Effective coalitions monitor changes in student composition, status of community agencies, and funding climate and opportunities. An important contextual factor is resource availability from the community to supplement or enhance state or federal funding. An environmental scan helps to identify resources to support the CALCs and the community planning coalitions.

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⁹ Facing the Future, Massachusetts Strategic Framework for Adult Basic Education, 2010-2015, MA DESE
¹⁰ Bell, 2010
It is important that CALC community planning coalitions contextualize their functions to align with the ACLS strategic framework goals of access, quality and next steps for ABE learners. This can be done during the goal setting and action planning processes of the coalition. Coalitions engage in a focused process to develop specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound goals that help ABE programs to expand access to services, improve quality of services and help learners to achieve next steps beyond the ABE program.

To make progress on its goals, it is important for the CALC community planning coalition to identify focused areas of action for the coalition. In the 2010 evaluation of the community planning initiative, interviews were conducted at 11 sites. Almost every site noted that the strength of the initiative was its flexibility and the department’s appreciation and recognition of local context. The evaluator noted that “...each partnership needs to be viewed as a unique entity with local context.”

A graphic representing a Framework for Effective CALC Community Planning Coalitions can be found in Appendix B.
THE SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING TOOL
THE SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING TOOL

PURPOSE OF THE TOOL
The self-assessment and planning tool provides a continuum for coalitions to indicate their current level of functioning and to aid in the development of goals for continuous improvement. Using the self-assessment and planning tool is a catalyst for the coalition to engage in discussion on its direction and to shape goals and outcomes the coalition intends to achieve.

The tool is comprised of the six Indicators and a list of characteristics associated with each Indicator. The characteristics identified in the self-assessment and planning tool are based on the premise that “the stronger the partnership, the more comprehensive are services to adult learners and, therefore, the stronger the community impact”11. Effective CALC community planning coalitions contribute to the ABE network’s ability to achieve its goals of: increased access to services, increased system effectiveness and quality, and to prepare adult learners to achieve their next steps.

The self-assessment and planning tool has three major purposes:

1. To scan current coalition practices.
2. To use as a planning tool for coalitions.
3. To track progress toward effective functioning within the indicators.

USING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING TOOL
For each of the indicators previously described, the self-assessment and planning tool asks coalitions to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement concerning certain characteristics associated with the Indicators:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

There are three steps to completing the self-assessment and planning tool:

1. Fill out the check boxes for each characteristic.
2. Identify steps to address areas requiring focus.
3. Identify outcomes to be achieved.

The self-assessment can be done in different ways or stages. The following are some items to consider before the coalition begins the self-assessment process:

- Coalition members may work individually or as a whole group to complete the self-assessment check box sections and discuss the results.
- At the same or another session, the coalition can use the information from the assessment to set goals and identify steps to reach those goals.

11 Bell, 2010
At the same or another session, the coalition can work to identify the outcomes they intend to reach, and document the outcomes that were achieved.

Coalitions can use an electronic version of the assessment that can be automatically aggregated, then discuss steps and goals at a face to face session.

NOTE:
A preliminary self-assessment is provided on page 23 that views the coalition from the three stages of development: **formation**, **maintenance** and **institutionalization**. This assessment can help new or re-forming coalitions to get a sense of where they are in the stages of their development. Once the coalition has completed most or all of the tasks associated with the formation stage, they can more effectively use the full self-assessment and planning tool.
Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each characteristic listed below. The results of this self-assessment will not be shared with ACLS, but rather are intended to be used as a catalyst for discussion amongst the partnership to identify strengths and areas that need to be addressed.

**INDICATOR 1: LEADERSHIP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The coalition(^{12}) has identified leader(s) such as chairperson/co-chairpersons, designated facilitator, sub-committee or work group leaders.</td>
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<td>b. Coalition leader(s) have connections to and visibility in the community (through participation with other coalitions, committees, etc.), and advocate for ABE and its priorities.</td>
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<td>c. Coalition leader(s) are well versed in ABE and the challenges that may face the coalition.</td>
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<td>d. The coalition leadership is committed to an action-oriented focus.</td>
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<td>e. The coalition leadership is able to foster relationships with key partners, either coalition members or community members, such as businesses/employers, post-secondary education institutions, job training providers, policy makers, and health and social services providers.</td>
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<td>f. The coalition is broadly recognized as the authority on ABE and the key objectives and challenges it faces.</td>
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<td>g. The coalition leadership makes a conscious effort to develop new leaders and foster depth of leadership, i.e., leading sub committees, work groups, etc.</td>
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<td>h. The coalition leadership represents the diversity of the community (culturally, economically, educationally, or through diverse experiences, perspectives, skills sets, etc.)</td>
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<td>i. Once the coalition is well established a plan is in place for leadership succession.(^{13})</td>
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\(^{12}\) The terms coalition and partnership may be used interchangeably in this self-assessment and planning tool.

\(^{13}\) If the coalition is at the beginning stages of development, i.e., forming or re-forming, this characteristic may not be applicable at this time.
Steps the coalition will take to improve the leadership function are:

1.
2.
3.

These steps can be used as a basis for developing an action plan with goals, objectives, timelines, benchmarks, persons responsible and intended outcomes.

**Indicator 1 – Leadership**  
**Outcome Example:** Coalition leaders have built a relationship with the local Workforce Investment Board and are represented on WIB committees, which enable adult learners to access job training.

Based on the steps the coalition will take, what is the intended outcome(s)?

Prior to this self-assessment, what outcomes have already been achieved that reflect the coalition’s functioning in this area?
Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each characteristic listed below. The results of this self-assessment will not be shared with ACLS, but rather are intended to be used as a catalyst for discussion amongst the partnership to identify strengths and areas that need to be addressed.

**INDICATOR 2: MEMBERSHIP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The coalition engages representatives from educationally-focused institutions such as public schools, libraries, post-secondary institutions (including community colleges), vocational-education institutions, Transition to College or “bridge” programs, etc.</td>
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<td>b. The coalition engages representatives from workforce development programs, including job training vendors and One Stop Career Centers.</td>
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<td>c. The coalition engages representatives from local/regional employers and businesses.</td>
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<td>d. The coalition engages representatives from social service agencies that can provide support to learners with basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, child care, transportation, safety and health (including mental health).</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. The coalition engages adult learners in ways appropriate and relevant to the community (such as student leadership representatives, work on planning events, and participation in surveys as part of the assets and needs assessment).</td>
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<td>f. The coalition’s membership reflects the diversity of the community (culturally, economically, educationally, or through diverse experiences, perspectives, skills sets, demographics, etc.)</td>
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</table>

14 Depending upon the community planning model the partnership chooses, some of the characteristics may not be applicable with the exception of (d), (e) & (f).
Community Planning Self-Assessment and Planning Tool

Steps the coalition will take to improve the membership function are:

1. 
2. 
3. 

These steps can be used as a basis for developing an action plan with goals, objectives, timelines, benchmarks, persons responsible and intended outcomes.

**Indicator 2 – Membership**

**Outcome Example:** An inter-agency referral system was developed where students are referred to needed community services and/or next steps and tracking documentation was maintained.

**Based on the steps the coalition will take, what is the intended outcome(s)?**

**Prior to this self-assessment, what outcomes have already been achieved that reflect the coalition’s functioning in this area?**
### Community Planning Self-Assessment and Planning Tool

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each characteristic listed below. The results of this self-assessment will not be shared with ACLS, but rather are intended to be used as a catalyst for discussion amongst the partnership to identify strengths and areas that need to be addressed.

#### INDICATOR 3: STRUCTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The coalition has identified key positions such as chair/co-chairs and others which support the organizational structure (i.e., note taker, facilitator, etc.)</td>
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<td>b. The coalition has written expectations of its members, frequency of meetings (e.g. monthly, bi-monthly), subcommittees, time commitments, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. The coalition has a steering committee or core planning group that convenes regularly to develop activities and agendas and identifies resources to support the coalition and/or ABE activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. The coalition has a steering committee or core planning group that identifies resources to support the coalition and its activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. The coalition has relevant subcommittees, ad hoc committees, task forces, etc., based on the activities identified in an action plan, and the size, composition and characteristics of the ABE community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. The coalition has a steering committee or core planning group that assesses the progress and outcomes of the coalition.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Steps the coalition will take to improve its **structure** are:

1. 
2. 
3. 

These steps can be used as a basis for developing an action plan with goals, objectives, timelines, benchmarks, persons responsible and intended outcomes.

**Indicator 3 - Structure**

**Outcome Example:** An ad hoc committee plans and implements an education fair for adult learners with post-secondary institutions in the area.

Based on the steps the coalition will take, what is the intended outcome(s)?

Prior to this self-assessment, what outcomes have already been achieved that reflect the coalition’s functioning in this area?
**Indicators of Effective Community Planning for Community Adult Learning Centers**

**Page 17**

**September 2013**

**Community Planning Self-Assessment and Planning Tool**

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each characteristic listed below. The results of this self-assessment will not be shared with ACLS, but rather are intended to be used as a catalyst for discussion amongst the partnership to identify strengths and areas that need to be addressed.

**INDICATOR 4: OPERATIONS and PROCESS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The coalition has a method of communication, such as an email list-serve, newsletter, online calendar, that keeps members regularly updated and informed, included meeting agendas and minutes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. The coalition has a process in place to identify and replace members who become inactive.</td>
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<td>c. Coalition meetings are held in central locations and at convenient times for all members.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. The coalition has a process in place for decision making such as majority rule, consensus, one person, etc.</td>
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<td>e. The coalition has a process in place for conflict resolution.</td>
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<td>f. Coalition members feel free to speak at meetings without reservation.</td>
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<td>g. The coalition has developed an action plan with clear measures of success that demonstrate goal achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>h. The coalition reviews and updates the action plan on a regular basis as goals are achieved and needs change.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Community Planning Self-Assessment and Planning Tool

Steps the coalition will take to improve its **operations and processes** are:

1.

2.

3.

These steps can be used as a basis for developing an action plan with goals, objectives, timelines, benchmarks, persons responsible and intended outcomes.

**Indicator 4 – Operations and Processes**

**Outcome Example:** The CALC community planning coalition develops and coordinates an online sharing site for communicating ideas, relevant news and materials.

Based on the steps the coalition will take, what is the intended outcome(s)?

Prior to this self-assessment, what outcomes have already been achieved that reflect the coalition’s functioning in this area?
Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each characteristic listed below. The results of this self-assessment will not be shared with ACLS, but rather are intended to be used as a catalyst for discussion amongst the partnership to identify strengths and areas that need to be addressed.

**INDICATOR 5: VISION and MISSION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DON’T KNOW</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The coalition has a shared vision.</td>
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<td>b. The coalition uses its vision statement to raise awareness of adult basic education in the community.</td>
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<td>c. The coalition has a written mission statement that clearly describes its purpose (what), business (how) and values (beliefs).</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. The coalition identifies how their vision and mission furthers other community-wide goals (such as economic development, workforce development, education reform).</td>
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<td>e. The coalition refers to its vision and mission statement regularly when developing shared goals and action plans, and before embarking upon new activities.</td>
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<td>f. The coalition assesses its progress toward meeting its vision and mission.</td>
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<td>g. The coalition reviews its vision and mission annually and determines if additional recruitment is needed to address the activities of the action plan.</td>
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</table>
Community Planning Self-Assessment and Planning Tool

Steps the coalition will take to align itself with a clear **vision and mission** are:

1.

2.

3.

These steps can be used as a basis for developing an action plan with goals, objectives, timelines, benchmarks, persons responsible and intended outcomes.

**Indicator 5 – Vision and Mission**

**Outcome Example:** Coalition members participate in other coalitions that share similar visions, to help each other achieve a larger community-wide impact.

Based on the steps the coalition will take, what is the intended outcome(s)?

Prior to this self-assessment, what outcomes have already been achieved that reflect the coalition's functioning in this area?
Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each characteristic listed below. The results of this self-assessment will not be shared with ACLS, but rather are intended to be used as a catalyst for discussion amongst the partnership to identify strengths and areas that need to be addressed.

**INDICATOR 6: CONTEXTUAL FACTORS**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The coalition conducts regular environmental scans (needs, assets assessment, student demographics) including primary and secondary data, and prioritizes goals based on identified need.</td>
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<td>b. The coalition’s action plan aligns with the ACLS strategic framework goals of access, quality and next steps for ABE learners.</td>
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<td>c. The coalition keeps abreast of current information, data, and research that affect ABE policies or practices.</td>
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<td>d. The coalition has identified and developed (through an assets and needs assessment) a plan to increase available services through service intensity and/or additional student seats in their community to address student waiting lists.</td>
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<td>e. The coalition assists ABE providers to identify opportunities for programmatic innovation to more effectively serve students.</td>
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<td>f. The coalition has developed relationships with organizations and individuals (either coalition members or community members) that can assist students to achieve next steps including college, further training, advancement in the 21st century workplace, and civic engagement.</td>
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</table>

15 *Facing the Future*, p. 22  
16 Ibid, p. 23  
17 Ibid, p. 24
Steps the coalition will take to align its work with internal and external contextual factors are:

1.

2.

3.

These steps can be used as a basis for developing an action plan with goals, objectives, timelines, benchmarks, persons responsible and intended outcomes.

**Indicator 6 – Contextual Factors**

**Outcome Example:** The assets and needs assessment conducted by the coalition revealed a high level of poverty in the community. A research report about poverty among children in the same community was also released during the same period. The coalition, working with many community organizations and students and staff from 5 ABE programs, conducted a community-wide forum on the correlation between education and poverty. They used concrete data from the research report on poverty among children and the results of the assets and needs assessment. This forum was well attended and received high praise. With the help of its coalition members, the ABE programs also developed lesson plans that were implemented in their classes on this topic.

Based on the steps the coalition will take, what is the intended outcome(s)?

Prior to this self-assessment, what outcomes have already been achieved that reflect the coalition’s functioning in this area?
## Community Planning Self-Assessment and Planning Tool

**COALITION ASSESSMENT BY STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT**

(Preliminary Assessment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FORMATION</strong></td>
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<td>1. A core group of relevant organizations has been identified and initial members recruited.</td>
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<td>2. A leadership team is built.</td>
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<td>3. A community needs and assets assessment has been conducted</td>
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<td>4. Coalition structures are in place (such as chair/co-chairs, facilitator, work groups, rules, and operating procedures, etc.).</td>
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<td>5. Member resources are identified and shared.</td>
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<td>6. A clear mission and vision have been developed.</td>
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<td>7. An action plan and goals have been developed.</td>
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<td><strong>MAINTENANCE</strong></td>
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<td>1. Coalition members are retained and commitments renewed.</td>
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<td>2. New coalition members are recruited as needed.</td>
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<td>3. The coalition has implemented action plan goals.</td>
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<td>4. The coalition continues to assess community assets and needs.</td>
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<td>5. Outcomes have been identified and documented.</td>
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<td><strong>INSTITUTIONALIZATION</strong></td>
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<td>1. The coalition identifies and solves new challenges.</td>
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<td>2. The coalition maintains diverse membership.</td>
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<td>3. The coalition diversifies and strengthens its resource base.</td>
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<td>4. The coalition maintains infrastructure to support ABE</td>
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<td>5. The coalition leadership succession plan is in place.</td>
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18 The indicators take into consideration the three stages of coalition development (formation, maintenance and institutionalization). Long-standing established coalitions may be in the institutionalization stage and other coalitions may be new or re-forming. These new or re-forming coalitions may not yet be in a position to use the full self-assessment and planning tool. Therefore, the preliminary self-assessment can be used for the coalition to identify in which stage of development they are. Once the coalition has completed most or all of the tasks associated with the formation stage, they can more effectively use the full self-assessment and planning tool.
APPENDIX A

RESOURCES AND RESEARCH

Online Resources


Building and Sustaining Coalition Partnerships, CoalitionsWork http://coalitionswork.com/services/building_and_sustaining_coalitions/

Building Effective Community Partnerships, The Institute for Educational Leadership (with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice) http://www.ccitoolsforfeds.org/doc/Building_Effective_Community_Partnerships.pdf

Community Coalition Action Theory as a Framework for Partnership Development, Jane Osmond, MPH, RRT www.dshs.state.tx.us/wellness/PDF/ccat-10.29.08.pdf


District Standards and Indicators, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/general/

Education Leadership Tool Kit http://www.nsba.org/sbot/toolkit


Evidence-Based Practices for Coalition Building, Champions for Inclusive Communities, Utah State University, Center for Persons with Disabilities, www.championsinc.org


Guidelines for Effective ABE Community Planning in Massachusetts, Adult and Community Learning Services, 2007 www.doe.mass.edu/acls/cp/guidelines.doc


Strategic Planning in Smaller Nonprofit Organizations: A Practical Guide for the Process
http://www.wmich.edu/nonprofit/guide7.htm


**Resources in Print**

Community Planning in Action, MA Adult Basic Education Community Planning 2002 – 2003; A collection of the experiences of Program Community Planning Coordinators and Partnership Members

Community Planning Evaluation, Final Report, 2010, MADESE/ACLS, Prepared by Denise A. Bell, Ph.D.

Developing Collaborative Partnerships, Practice Application Brief, Sandra Kerka, 1997

Toward a Comprehensive Understanding of Community Coalitions: Moving from practice to theory. In R.J. DiClemente, R.A. Crosby, & M.C. Kegler (Eds.) Butterfoss, F.D., & Kegler, M.C., 2002
APPENDIX B
FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE CALC COMMUNITY PLANNING COALITIONS