



**NRS** National Reporting System  
for Adult Education

# 2017

## **NRS PRODUCT SHOWCASE**

An Overview of Selected NRS Products and Their Uses





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# INTRODUCTION

## The National Reporting System for Adult Education

The National Reporting System (NRS) is the accountability system for adult education programs. It defines measures for national reporting, establishes data collection methods, and sets requirements for reporting to the U.S. Department of Education. NRS data describe adult education students, including their characteristics; levels of participation in adult education programs; and performance in improving literacy skills, getting and keeping a job, earning a general equivalency diploma or secondary credential, and entering postsecondary education.

## NRS Products

The following pages contain descriptions of the many products and services that American Institutes for Research has created to assist states in meeting the NRS requirements. For example, you will find references to training materials on using data for program improvement, online courses to orient new staff to the NRS, an online database to help you choose an appropriate assessment to measure educational gain, informational briefs that provide practical tips on a variety of adult education topics, and reports that analyze national and state data describing adult education students. To assist you in what you are looking for, we organized the products and services into the following six areas.



- **Policy Guidance.** User-friendly publications and online courses to guide you through NRS policies and procedures
- **Data Quality and Data Use.** Tools and training materials to help you better understand and use data
- **Monitoring.** Adaptable templates and guides to assist you in successfully monitoring local programs for compliance and performance
- **Assessment.** A searchable database and important information to help you select an appropriate assessment
- **Federal Data Reports.** Accessible reports that provide data and analyses to better understand the characteristics and performance of the adult education population at the state and national levels
- **Data Systems for NRS.** Reports and guides that explain the characteristics of effective data systems, NRS requirements for data systems, and states' experiences in developing them

All these products may be accessed on the [NRS Website](#) by clicking on the product title unless otherwise noted. Products not housed directly on the website are available on request.



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## PRODUCTS BY TOPIC

### Policy Guidance

States can request and receive guidance from the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) on implementing the national accountability system. Guidance on NRS policy and procedures comes in several user-friendly formats.

#### NRS Implementation Guidelines

The *NRS Implementation Guidelines* provide basic guidance to state adult education programs for meeting the federal requirements for data collection and reporting. The document is available for download in Microsoft Word, PDF, and online searchable formats. In addition, supplemental documents and templates related to the NRS and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) reporting requirements are available on the [NRS and WIOA Resources](#) webpage.

#### NRS Basics Online Course (Coming Soon)

This self-paced, online course provides a general understanding of NRS and specifically addresses the WIOA indicators and methods for NRS data collection. After completing this course, you should be able to understand the what, why, and how of the NRS.

#### State Assessment Policy Guidance

All states must annually submit an assessment policy to OCTAE that meets NRS requirements. This guide for state staff, updated in 2016, describes the key topics and information that must go into this policy.

#### NRS Test Benchmarks for Educational Functioning Levels

The *NRS Test Benchmarks* provide a quick reference to current test benchmarks for educational functioning levels.



## Data Quality and Data Use

Data quality refers to the collection of relevant, accurate data that can help program staff answer questions about recruitment, retention, and the effectiveness of their programs and components. Data use refers to using quality data to improve program performance. This section includes examples of products to help you with data quality and data use.

### LEAP Into WIOA, Part I: Planning for Change

This guide and its associated training focuses on preparing states for changes related to WIOA. The goal of the guide and the training is to help state teams explore these changes and practice leadership strategies and approaches for communicating with state staff, local programs, and WIOA partners as they plan for adjustments in state reporting and data collection. Major topics include planning for data system changes, staff development, and communication.

### LEAP Into WIOA, Part I: Planning for Change—Companion Toolkit

This toolkit is a companion to Part I: *Planning for Change*. It includes materials and handouts from the training, as well as supplemental handouts and resources for further reading and exploration. These materials are intended for state adult education staff to extend their learning and understanding of the topics and provide materials for working with both state and local program staff. The toolkit exists in an electronic format to enable ease of sharing and printing.

### LEAP Into WIOA, Part II: NRS Measures and Reporting

This guide and its related training provide state staff with a detailed look at the new NRS reporting requirements and revised tables as a result of WIOA implementation, which will help them develop a plan for meeting these necessary changes. The goal of the guide and the related training is for states to obtain a clear understanding of the NRS data requirements and changes needed in their state data collection and reporting systems, learn ways to implement the changes, and disseminate information to their local programs and state WIOA stakeholders.

### LEAP Into WIOA, Part II: NRS Measures and Reporting—Companion Toolkit

This toolkit is a companion to Part II: *NRS Measures and Reporting*. It includes materials and handouts from the training, as well as supplemental handouts and resources for further reading and exploration. These materials are intended for state adult education staff to extend their learning

and understanding of the topics and provide materials for working with both state and local program staff.

### **NRS Targeted Training: Defining Adult Education Under WIOA: Messaging With Infographics**

This guide and its related training provide an overview of WIOA, focusing on the role of partnerships between adult education programs, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Education, the Rehabilitative Services Administration; and other agencies identified within WIOA. The goal of the guide and the training is to help states define their adult education programs as valuable and central partners in implementing education and training through the WIOA framework. *This resource is available upon request.*



### **The Power of Data Visualization: Advanced Presentations of NRS Data**

This guide and its related training bring NRS data into the world of data visualization. The training focuses on two popular and powerful visualization tools: data dashboards and infographics. The training promotes the use of these tools to convey more powerful and effective messages about state or local programs using NRS data. *This resource is available upon request.*

### **NRS Data Dashboards Online Course**

This course reviews how to use data dashboards to summarize and present NRS data and other information that you need to make decisions, understand challenges, and highlight progress toward your organization's goals.

### **NRS Linking Data Quality With Action: Evaluating and Improving Local Program Performance**

This guide and related training resources offer new approaches and tools for identifying and preventing data quality problems. The guide introduces a local quality checklist—modeled after OCTAE's state checklist—that states can use to understand and evaluate local data collection practices. The guide also brings together previously developed material on improving data quality into a single resource—a data quality toolkit to support ongoing state and local training related to data quality practices.



## **NRS Myth Busters: The Truth About Adult Education**

This collection of tools enables state staff to use NRS data to address an evaluation or research topic that will inform practice and improve programs.



This training promotes the quality and use of data collected under the National Reporting System for Adult Education.

### **NRS Myth Busters Online Course**

The *NRS Myth Busters* course is divided into five parts, providing a detailed model and approach to assist state and local adult education programs in using their NRS data to “bust” common myths and conduct research related to adult education students, teachers, or programs.



### **NRS Evaluation Learning Community**

In 2011, project staff organized the NRS Evaluation Learning Community (ELC), a group of states committed to conducting research using NRS data. The states, selected through a competitive application process, developed research plans, conducted research and analyses, and presented their findings to the field. During the yearlong ELC, states collaborated to share information, approaches, and findings. ELC training materials and links to ELC member presentations are available upon request. *This resource is available upon request.*

## **Diving Deep Into the Local NRS Pool: Attendance, Transition Outcomes, and Educational Gain**

This collection of tools assists state and local program administrators to analyze the core NRS outcome measure of educational gain, the four follow-up transition measures, and student attendance. Materials support state and local planning for program improvement.

### **The Local Connection: Building a Data Use Learning Community**

Learn about the characteristics and essential elements of data use learning communities at the state and local levels. Training materials include a companion guide for the training, learning community pre and post needs-assessment surveys, and other resources.

### **Using NRS Data Online Course**

This course reviews how to use NRS data and the basic techniques on using NRS data to assist in the analysis of educational program data.



## Building and Sustaining Quality in NRS Data: Strategies for Program Improvement

A guide, training materials, and useful tools create a four-step continuous program improvement process for building and sustaining change.

### Data Quality Guide, Training, and Self-Assessment Checklist

A guide and training materials are available to help state and local programs clarify the data collection process and ensure the collection of quality data. We also offer an [online course](#) that helps users understand what goes on at each level of the NRS.

### NRS Data Flow Online Course

Learn who does what with NRS data, where it comes from, where it goes, and how it gets there. After completing this course, you should be able to give a detailed account of what goes on at each level of the NRS data collection and reporting process.

### NRS Data Detective Templates, Training, and Guide

Learn to be a data detective with materials from this training, which provide guidance on the policies and procedures for collecting and using data as well as tools that help state and local staff question and analyze data in three areas: assessment, setting goals, and achieving goals.

### Learning to Be an NRS Data Detective Online Course

Continue learning about data use and data searching by participating in this online course based on the topics and concepts found in the *Guide to Learning to Be an NRS Data Detective*.



## Monitoring

State administrators are obligated to monitor local programs for performance and compliance with state and federal policies and procedures. NRS products for program monitoring help with performance data review to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and identify areas for improvement.

### Smart Fiscal Management for Adult Education Programs

This guide and accompanying training materials are designed for state directors of adult education and other state staff responsible for managing the adult education grant budget and expenditures. The guide focuses on fiscal management but maintains the goal of improving state data quality—in this case, financial data—for NRS reporting.

### Desk Monitoring: Improving Program Performance

Using a quantitative desk monitoring tool reduces the burden on state staff and supplements qualitative information gathered through on-site monitoring visits. The guide and training explain the monitoring process and how a desk monitoring tool fits in the larger process. The monitoring tool is a template for state and local staff and is designed to determine what can be measured and how to evaluate programs using their data system.

### Demonstrating Results: Developing State and Local Report Cards for Adult Education

Report cards can be powerful and effective tools for accountability and program improvement. State and local programs can develop attractive, easy-to-understand report cards to evaluate quality, identify levels of performance, and provide information to people so that they can make informed choices.

### NRS Developing Report Cards for Adult Education Online Course

Learn to develop your own state or local report card in this four-part self-directed course based on the NRS Guide *Demonstrating Results: Developing State and Local Report Cards for Adult Education*. This course provides an overview of how report cards are used in adult education and the five steps for developing a report card.

### NRS Tips: Desk Monitoring

Desk monitoring is an effective and efficient way to assist states in meeting their monitoring needs. This issue of *NRS Tips* provides an approach to reviewing and tracking program performance by using quantitative data that serves as a supplement to on-site monitoring.

## Assessment

Assessment provides a measure of student educational gain and is central to program accountability and improvement. The NRS has several products to help select and use the appropriate assessment.

### State Assessment Policy Guidance

All states must annually submit an assessment policy to OCTAE that meets NRS requirements. This guide for state staff, updated in 2016, describes the key topics and information that must go into this policy.

### NRS Assessment Database: How Do Tests Compare?

With so many tests available for adult education students, how can you decide which test to choose? The NRS has developed a database to compare more than 20 key features of tests used in adult education settings, including summaries, training required, test administration time, and other features.

## Data Analyses and Reports

The NRS is a repository of data collected by the U.S. Department of Education. Several reports analyze national program performance data, the characteristics of the adult education population, and related topics.

### Federal Report to Congress on State Performance

The annual *Report to Congress on State Performance* provides the federal government and the public with an overview of the adult education program, including data on student enrollment and demographics and a summary of student outcomes across time.

State-by-state statistics are provided in tables and graphs; data sheets in the appendix provide further analysis.



## Data Systems for NRS

NRS Support Project staff have established guidance on developing data systems that meet WIOA and NRS requirements for reporting and using data for program improvement. The guidance provides tips for developing new database systems and evaluating and updating currently used systems.

## **NRS Targeted Training: 21st Century Data Systems for the NRS: WIOA and Beyond**

This collection of tools and related training materials is designed to support state administrators as they think through, plan for, and communicate requirements for updating their current data systems to meet the accountability requirements of WIOA, which includes modifying it to produce data reports to support program operations and improvements.

## **NRS Data Systems Online Course**

This course presents the key steps for planning and implementing a data system that can be used for years to come. The course chronicles the process for identifying needs, recognizing key challenges, preparing for key elements of planning, implementing the system, and launching the data system process. Integrated planning worksheets help apply the course's content to your state's specific needs.

## **Going Longitudinal: Building an Adult Education Longitudinal Data System**

This collection of tools has a twofold purpose: The tools (1) allow state and local program administrators to bring the adult education program into the world of state longitudinal data systems and (2) create a plan for developing an adult education longitudinal data system independently or in collaboration with existing systems.

## **Developing an NRS Data System: Putting the Pieces Together**

This guide is designed to help state and local adult education staff make informed decisions on the design and development of a data system. It outlines a process for identifying requirements that reflect the range of needs from functional and operational perspectives.

## **NRS Tips: Planning for a Successful Data System**

This edition of *NRS Tips* outlines a process to plan and build a successful data system.

## **NRS Tips: Creating a Longitudinal Data System**

This edition of *NRS Tips* describes some benefits of and the elements necessary to create a quality longitudinal data system.

## TYPE OF PRODUCTS FOUND AT *NRSWeb*

### Training and Guides

- *21st Century Data Systems for NRS: WIOA and Beyond* (2017)
- *LEAP Into WIOA, Part I: Planning for Change* (2016)
- *LEAP Into WIOA, Part II: NRS Measures and Reporting* (2016)
- *Defining Adult Education Under WIOA: Messaging With Infographics* (2015)
- *The Power of Data Visualization: Advanced Presentations of NRS Data* (2014)
- *NRS Linking Data Quality With Action: Evaluating and Improving Local Program Performance* (2014)
- *NRS Myth Busters Evaluation Research Guide* (2013)
- *NRS Guide to State Longitudinal Data Systems* (2012)
- *Evaluation Research Planning Model for the Evaluation Learning Community* (2011)
- *Diving Deep Into the Local NRS Pool: Attendance, Transition Outcomes, and Educational Gain* (2010)
- *The Local Connection: Building a Data Use Learning Community* (2009)
- *Building and Sustaining Quality in NRS Data: Strategies for Program Improvement* (2008)
- *Desk Monitoring: Improving Program Performance* (2007)
- *Demonstrating Results: Developing State and Local Report Cards for Adult Education* (2007)
- *Guide to Learning to Be an NRS Data Detective: The Five Sides of the NRS* (2006)
- *Guide to Developing an NRS Data System: Putting the Pieces Together* (2004)

## Online Courses

- NRS Basics (coming soon)
- Data Quality Guide Training Courses
- NRS Data Flow
- NRS Data Dashboards
- NRS Data Systems
- Developing Report Cards for Adult Education
- Using NRS Data
- Data Use Guide Training Courses
- Learning to Be an NRS Data Detective
- Myth Busters: The Truth About Adult Education

## NRS Tips

- Measurable Skill Gains
- Credential Indicator
- Participants and Periods of Participation
- Performance Measures Under WIOA
- Desk Monitoring
- Planning an NRS Data System
- Creating a Longitudinal Data System

## Other Resources

- *NRS Implementation Guidelines*
- NRS and WIOA Resources
- NRS Policy on Reporting Distance Education Students
- State Assessment Policy Guidance
- NRS Test Benchmarks for Educational Functioning Levels
- NRS Assessment Database
- *Report to Congress on State Performance*
- NRS Resource Guide to Data Systems
- State Snapshots

For more information, please write to [nrs@air.org](mailto:nrs@air.org).





## **About American Institutes for Research**

Established in 1946, with headquarters in Washington, D.C., American Institutes for Research (AIR) is an independent, nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts behavioral and social science research and delivers technical assistance both domestically and internationally. As one of the largest behavioral and social science research organizations in the world, AIR is committed to empowering communities and institutions with innovative solutions to the most critical challenges in education, health, workforce, and international development.





## Contact NRS

[www.nrsweb.org](http://www.nrsweb.org)

U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education  
Division of Adult Education and Literacy  
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/index.html>