



# The Road to Opportunity

*Sustainable Employment  
Best Practices*



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### Sustainable Employment Terminology

United Way of Massachusetts Bay (UWMB) uses the term “sustainable employment” rather than “workforce development” as a matter of emphasis. Sustainable employment is a desired outcome, whereas workforce development is one of the steps, albeit a necessary step, along the path to sustainable employment. Additionally, the field is increasingly realizing the importance of engaging employers with jobs that have self-sufficient wages, benefits, and opportunities for advancement. Therefore, “workplace” is equally as important as “workforce.” For the purpose of this report, the terms workforce development and sustainable employment will be used interchangeably.





## Adult Basic Education (ABE)

There is an increasing importance placed on skills and education as more than one million Massachusetts citizens lack the skills needed for the new economy.<sup>ii</sup>

The premium on education leaves people who do not speak English, adults without a high school diploma, and those who may have a high school diploma or even some college education but have limited skills, with few options.<sup>ii</sup> On the way to achieving self-sustaining employment, basic education skills—including math, reading, and language proficiency—often need to be mastered. Adult Basic Education can greatly increase low-skilled workers' job options and provide a foundation for further vocational skills development and learning.<sup>iv</sup>

## REDUCE BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Inexperienced and low-skilled job-seekers often must overcome significant obstacles to obtain the basic skills and education needed to get and maintain employment.<sup>xv</sup> Program staff identify and reduce barriers to attendance and participation in basic education programs due to the lack of childcare, transportation, inadequate housing, immigration status, substance abuse issues, and a criminal record.

Select best practices include:

- **Make specific referrals** to appropriate services that are not provided in-house. Maintain good relationships with a variety of state and local bureaus, departments and offices, and other community-based organizations.
- **Follow-up client referrals** with individual advocacy to ensure that services are obtained. Maintain quality working relationships with the local Attorney General's Office, District Attorney's Office, translation services, law firms, and other essential offices and organizations that provide pro-bono services.
- **Make sure programs are accessible.** Set flexible schedules with respect to class days and times. Have convenient class locations that are accessible to public transportation. Provide low- or no-cost programming whenever possible.<sup>xvi</sup>

## BEST PRACTICES IN ACTION



### Project Hope, Boston, MA

Project Hope's Adult Learner Program combines full-time intensive basic literacy, General Education Development (GED) preparation, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) academics with a variety of wrap-around supports to help the low-income and homeless clients flourish within the program and advance economically. The case manager keeps each student's empowerment and self-development in mind as s/he helps the client navigate the organization's many services, including financial literacy, leadership development, career services, nationally accredited childcare, homelessness prevention and housing search, emergency shelter, food pantry, and emergency financial assistance.

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