State Policy Development: Tips and Tools for Writing Policy and Guidance

Judith A. Alamprese
Abt Associates Inc.

Teresa Bestor
OVAE
Goals for Mini-Session

Provide state directors and staff with...

- Frameworks/processes for developing, implementing, and evaluating adult education policies

- Ideas about using policy to facilitate systemic change in a state’s adult education system
Approach

- Presentation/discussion of concepts, frameworks, and tools
- Interactive sessions for states to provide examples of activities in policy development
- Exercises and discussion
Key Points for Mini-Session

- State policy has a role in facilitating program improvement and implementing systemic change through state initiatives.

- Using a planning, implementation, and evaluation process for developing and carrying out state policy can strengthen the policy and its effectiveness.

- The “set up,” “buy in,” and training phases of policy development are critical to successful implementation.
Setting the Stage: What is Public Policy?

Range of Definitions...
- A course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a problem
- A law or regulation that governs a particular issue area or problem

Most definitions incorporate concepts of...
- Responses to new goals, values, relationships that emerge out of crises
- Commitments to something
Setting the Stage: Purposes of Policy/ Guidance

Formal written statement or informal guidance...

- Meet federal/state legislative requirements

- Address barriers to implementing vision or to improving quality of services

- Implement vision for adult basic education
Setting the Stage: Sources of State Policy/Guidance for Providers

- State plan for adult education
- State-developed policy manuals (e.g., data collection/assessment requirements)
- RFP/RFA for local provider services, special initiatives
- Contract with subgrantees
- Provider self-evaluation forms
- Guidance on content standards, coordination guidelines...
**Setting the Stage: Challenges to Implementing Policy/Guidance**

- Providing training/ongoing monitoring on use of policies
- Keeping policies current
- Determining when to adjust policies
- Evaluating effectiveness of policies
Current State Practices in Developing State Policies

What are:

- Factors that have prompted the development of policy/guidance in your state?
- Processes that you use to identify the content of potential policies?
- Ways in which you have obtained “buy in” about potential new policies and from whom?
Developing State Policy: PPIE
Process...Policy Planning, Implementation, Evaluation

- Determine Goal or Problem Policy is to Address
- Research/Review/Analyze
- Prepare Framework on Issue
- Prepare Draft Policy
- Consult with Internal Agency Stakeholders
- Consult with External Stakeholders
- Finalize Policy
- Implement/Monitor/Evaluate Policy
Developing State Policy: PPI E Process...Planning

- **Determine Goal or Problem Policy is to Address**
  - Review legislative requirements to identify missing practices or policies
  - Analyze data from learners, program annual reports, monitoring site visits to determine issues/problems in programs that could benefit from new practices/policies
  - Analyze state data, state context for national or state problem that a policy could address
Developing State Policy: PPIE Process...Planning

- **Research/Review/Analyze**
  - **Identify research and information**
    - Relevance of issue to state
    - Political climate
    - Other related initiatives
    - Potential “good” practices—whether practices associated with a national or state initiative would benefit the state
    - Possible barriers to implementing policy/practices

- **Review:**
  - Other states’ adult education policies
  - Other activities in the state related to the issue
Developing State Policy: PPIE Process...Planning

- **Research/Review/Analyze**
  - **Analyze:**
    - Whether potential practices related to policy will work in the state
    - Data that will be used as benchmark(s) in implementing policy

- **Prepare Framework on Issue**
  - Synthesis of need for policy
  - Justification for practices that policy will address
Developing State Policy: PPIE Process...Planning

- **Prepare Draft Policy**
  - Use state formats/mechanism if required
  - Provide overview of state context for policy
  - Specify the requirements of the policy
    - Activities to be undertaken and any conditions for activities
    - Who is to conduct the activities
    - Where activities are to be conducted
    - Timeline for activity
  - Specify requirements of policy in separate statements
  - Write policies that are clear and concise
  - Specify life of policy (e.g., until this date, until further notice)
  - Develop processes for review and editing
Developing State Policy: PPIE Process...Planning

Characteristics of Policy...Should be:

- Precise—specific actions to take
- Clear—easy to understand
- Accurate—complies with law
- Complete—contain all steps of an action
Consult with Internal Agency Stakeholders—Staff in Adult Education Office, in Other Agency Offices

- Provide justification for policy development
- Make sure key players understand importance of policy
- Have someone willing to carry message up the institutional hierarchy
- Request to meet with approvers during development process
- Remain accessible for questions and clarifications
- Provide sufficient time for review of policy
- Include state adult education staff in obtaining buy in from local providers
Consult with External Stakeholders—Local Provider Staff

- Explain reason for planned policy early in the process
- Obtain “input” from a variety of local providers—those who are supportive and those who may resist
- Circulate drafts of documents for review and comment
- Remain open to feedback and provide responses to any questions in a timely manner
Developing State Policy: PPI E Process...Planning

- **Finalize Policy**
  - Revise policy based on feedback from internal & external stakeholders
PPI E Process...Implementation and Evaluation

- **Implement/Monitor/Evaluate Policy**
  - **Implement Policy**
    - Provide professional development—intent of policies, processes for using policies
    - Provide ongoing technical assistance on use of policies
    - Update policy as needed
    - Provide easy access to policy

- **Monitor Use of Policy**
  - Review learner data & program practices related to policy
  - Conduct feedback sessions at provider meetings
PPI E Process...Implementation and Evaluation

- **Evaluate Results from Policy**
  - Review/analyze data related to policy—learner characteristics & outcomes, staff characteristics & outcomes
  - Assess quality of program practices addressed by policy
  - Determine whether policy needs to be expanded or contracted, or whether a new policy is needed
Case Study of ABE Transition to Postsecondary Education

- **Problem Policy is to Address**
  - Insufficient number of skilled workers to meet employers’ needs or to sustain/increase economic growth
  - Adults will need to work longer than planned; may need to develop new skills for new jobs

- **Goal of Policy:** Increase number of adults with skills to meet employer demands through participation in postsecondary education
  - BA and graduate degrees
  - Associate degrees
  - Occupational certificates
Case Study of ABE Transition to Postsecondary Education

- **Policies Related to:**
  - Types of Interagency Partnerships Local Providers Should Establish/Expand
  - ABE Instruction
    - Level of basic skills course to offer to facilitate transition
    - Skill ranges of learners who should be referred to courses
  - Provision of Advising, Counseling as ABE Services
  - Qualifications of Staff/Types of Professional Development Local Providers Should Access or Conduct
Case Study of ABE Transition to Postsecondary Education

- **Policies Related to:**
  - Performance Goals to Set
    - Number of ASE-level learners who set postsecondary as a goal
  - Types of Data to Collect
    - Enrollment in postsecondary courses
    - Completion of postsecondary courses
    - Attainment of certificates/degrees
Small Group Exercise

- Think about Current State Policy or New Policy that Needs to be Developed

- Discuss:
  - What steps in PPIE Process are challenging?
  - What are possible approaches to undertaking the steps?
Key Points for Mini-Session

- State policy has a role in facilitating program improvement and implementing systemic change through state initiatives.

- Using a planning, implementation, and evaluation process for developing and carrying out state policy can strengthen the policy and its effectiveness.

- The “set up,” “buy in,” and training phases of policy development are critical to successful implementation.