

## 1. Understanding the Revised National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS)

### Section summary

While the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) will provide extensive formal guidance and regulations for WIOA and the revised NRS, this toolkit will provide basic terminology and information that can provide practical support to both state adult education staff and local providers as they navigate changes in their state. In this section, you will review the basics of the impact of WIOA on the NRS including the resulting changes to the NRS reporting tables. Additionally, you will learn how these changes affect the reporting timeline.

By the end of this section you will understand

- key term changes as a result of WIOA that affect data collection and reporting,
- the impact of WIOA on the NRS tables, and
- when various criteria and indicators need to be collected and reported.

### Overview of NRS changes

As mentioned in the *LEAP, Part I* toolkit, WIOA aimed to streamline the following core federal education and workforce training programs through a unified state plan of coordinated services:

**TIP:** Share this section with local providers to ensure all staff are working with the same definition of key terms.

1. adult, youth, and dislocated worker employment training and Wagner-Peyser services;
2. adult education and literacy programs; and
3. vocational rehabilitation services.

WIOA also included new accountability requirements to reflect increased emphasis on employment and postsecondary education, and more tracking of participants after their exit. These new requirements mean changes to the NRS to state and local data systems and the need for additional staff training. In any system change, it is helpful for all parties involved to be working with the same set of terms and definitions so as to reduce misinterpretation. This type of confusion can lead to challenges and frustration further along in the process and hinder progress. For the remainder of this section we will review the most common and relevant key terms for adult education. The good news is that everything is not new. So what is new and what is not? Let's begin with what remains the same.

### *A review of common unchanging terms*

**Participant** – A participant is an individual who has 12 or more contact hours. This definition is consistent with the criteria we have always used.

**Measurable Skill Gains** – While this term is defined in a new way under WIOA (see below), the procedures and policy for pre-post-testing and assessment remain the same.

**Program entry** – As always, this refers to the date of an individual's enrollment in the adult education program or services.

**Program exit** – This refers to the last date the participant received services and has no further services. Program exit cannot be determined until at least 90 days have elapsed since the participant last received services.

**Credential attainment indicator** – This is another term that will be redefined below; however, there is an element that remains unchanged, receipt of a secondary credential.

### ***A review of new terms***

**Reportable individual** – This is an individual who has taken action demonstrating an intent to use program services and who meets reporting criteria, including providing identifying information, but has achieved less than 12 contact hours.

**Period of participation** - A period of participation begins each time an individual enters adult education and gets at least 12 hours of service, even if there are multiple entries during the same program year. A participant may have multiple periods of participation a year and performance is measured and reported on NRS tables for each period.

**Measurable Skill Gains (MSG)** – This is a WIOA performance indicator, which includes educational functioning level gain through pre- post testing, entry into postsecondary education after program exit and awarding of Carnegie Units for progression from ABE Level 5 to Level 6. MSG also includes receipt of a secondary credential. Only one of the outcomes is reported (the last one) on NRS tables for each period of participation.

**Barriers to employment** - WIOA defines 11 types of participant characteristics that can create barriers to employment. The joint ICR reporting form breaks out performance measures for each type of participant by barrier. See the Day 1 PowerPoint for a list of the 11 barriers to Employment under WIOA.

**Credential attainment indicator** – This includes both receipt of a postsecondary credential and receipt of a secondary credential while enrolled or within one year of exit. However, receipt of a secondary credential is only counted if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within 1 year after exit from the program. The secondary credential only applies to participants who exit at the ninth grade equivalent or higher; postsecondary credential only applies to participants in postsecondary education.

**Second quarter employment indicator** – This refers to whether participants are employed in the second quarter after exit.

**Fourth quarter employment indicator** – This refers to whether participants are employed in the fourth quarter after exit.

**Median earnings indicator** – This indicator refers to the median of all participants employed in the second quarter after exit

We will look at three of the above terms—measurable skill gains, period of participation, and credential indicator—more in depth in a later section, *Defining Key Elements of NRS Reporting*.

## Summary of NRS Table Changes

The above changes have direct implications for NRS tables and reporting and the NRS has updated reporting tables to collect new data. Several tables have minor changes, and a few tables are optional. Tables 4 and 5 have the most extensive updates and were discussed in depth at the *LEAP, Part II* regional trainings. For a full review of the table changes and their implications on data systems, refer to the training materials in the appendix. Figure 1 provides a summary of changes to the NRS tables listed by current versus new table number and title.

**TIP:** Copy and paste Figure 1 into a separate document for an easy handout to share with state and local program staff.

**Figure 1. Summary of Changes by Current and New NRS Tables**

Current NRS Table	Change	New NRS Table
Table 1: Participants by Entering Educational Functioning Level, Ethnicity, and Sex	No change	Table 1: Participants by Entering Educational Functioning Level, Ethnicity, and Sex
Table 2: Participants by Age, Ethnicity, and Sex	Age 45-59 category broken up into 45-54 and 55-59	Table 2: Participants by Age, Ethnicity, and Sex
Table 3: Participants by Program Type and Age	(1) Age 45-59 category broken up into 45-54 and 55-59; (2) ESL named English Language Acquisition; (3) separate reporting for Integrated EL and Civics participants; breakout for IET for all categories	Table 3: Participants by Program Type and Age
Table 4: Measurable Skill Gain and Attendance by Educational Functioning Level	(1) EFL gain expanded to be Measureable Skill Gain, defined as (1) EFL gain by pre-post-testing, completion of Carnegie Units or entered postsecondary education or training; and (2) obtained a secondary credential	Table 4: Measurable Skill Gain by Entry Level



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(2) Number completed a level and advancing a level no longer separately reported</li> <li>(3) New columns for period of participation reporting</li> </ul>	
Table 4B: EFL Gains and Attendance for Pre- and Post-tested Participants	Number completed a level and advancing a level no longer separately reported. "Completed" changed to "achieving EFL gain".	Table 4B: EFL Gain and Attendance for Pre- and Post-tested Participants
Table 4C: Measurable Skill Gain and Attendance by EFL for Participants in Distance Education	Same as Table 4 but for reporting distance education participants.	Table 4C: Measurable Skill Gain by Entry Level EFL for Participants in Distance Education
Table 5: Core Follow-up Outcome Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Outcomes changed to WIOA required indicators</li> <li>(2) rows and columns for sampling eliminated</li> <li>(3) rows and columns for number used for data matching or survey eliminated; new columns added for period of participation reporting</li> </ul>	Table 5: Core Follow-up Outcome Achievement
Table 5A: Core Follow-up Outcome Achievement for Participants in Distance Education	Same as Table 5 but for reporting distance education participants.	Table 5A: Core Follow-up Outcome Achievement for Participants in Distance Education
Table 6: Participant Status and Program Enrollment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Status categories of disabled, on public assistance and living in rural areas dropped</li> <li>(2) New employment status category added of "employed with notice of termination"</li> <li>(3) Optional secondary status categories dropped</li> <li>(4) Program types of homeless and work-based project learner dropped</li> <li>(5) Changed "GED" to "high school equivalent"</li> <li>(6) changed "some college" to some postsecondary</li> </ul>	Table 6: Participant Status and Program Enrollment:

	education" and "high school" changed to "secondary school equivalent"	
Table 7: Adult Education Personnel by Function and Job Status	No change	Table 7: Adult Education Personnel by Function and Job Status
Table 8: Outcomes for Adults in Family Literacy Programs (optional)	Identical to new Table 5 with a row added for measurable skill gain; includes optional measures of increased involvement in children's education and increased involvement in children's education	Table 8: Outcomes for Adults in Family Literacy Programs (optional)
Table 9: Outcomes for Adult in Workplace Literacy Programs	Old Table 9 is eliminated and replaced by now former Table 11 without work-based project learner category. For optional reporting of left public assistance, achieved citizenships skills, increased involvement in children's education, voting or registered to vote, increased community involvement	Table 9: Secondary Outcome Measures (Optional)
Table 10: Outcomes for Adults in Correctional Education Programs	Revised to be identical to new Table 5 with a row added for measurable skill gain; for separate reporting of participants in correctional education programs	Table 10: Outcome Achievement for Adults in Correctional Education Programs
Table 11: Secondary Outcome Measures (Optional)	Now Table 9	See new Table 9
Table 12: Work-based Project Learner by Age, Ethnicity and Sex	Eliminated	NA
Table 14: Local Grantee by Funding Source	Column added to include IEL/EL Civics providers	Table 14: Local Grantee by Funding Source

Note: Table 13 was eliminated in 2012.



## 2. Defining Key Elements of NRS Reporting

### Section summary

The previous section touched upon broad elements of WIOA changes and the implications for the NRS reporting tables. This section takes a deeper look at three key elements that have an impact on multiple data collection and reporting topics and issues.

By the end of this section you will have a clearer understanding of the following topics:

- measurable skill gains,
- periods of participation, and
- credential indicator.

### Measurable Skill Gains (MSG)

Adults enroll in adult education programs for many different reasons, but most often they attend to gain the skills they need to be successful in school, the workplace, and their everyday lives. Under the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)*, programs are able to determine their success in helping students gain those skills, using the measurable skill gains (MSG) indicator. This section explains what MSG is, how it is measured, who is included in the indicator, and how it is different from the outcome measures that state and local adult education programs previously collected.

#### *What is the measurable skill gains indicator?*

MSG is a WIOA-required indicator used to demonstrate participants' progress toward achieving a credential or employment.

#### *How is measurable skill gains measured?*

For adult education programs, participants can demonstrate MSG in two ways: educational functioning level gain and receipt of a secondary credential (as seen in Figure 1, below).

1. **Educational functioning level gain** can be demonstrated in one of three ways:
  - Comparing a participant's pretest with the participant's posttest, using an NRS-approved test
  - Awarding Carnegie Units or credits in an adult high school program (enough to move to 11th- or 12th-grade status according to *state rule*)
  - Enrollment in postsecondary education and training after exit
2. **Receipt of a secondary credential**, which can be demonstrated by obtaining passing scores on state-approved high school equivalency tests or obtaining a secondary diploma or state-recognized equivalent.

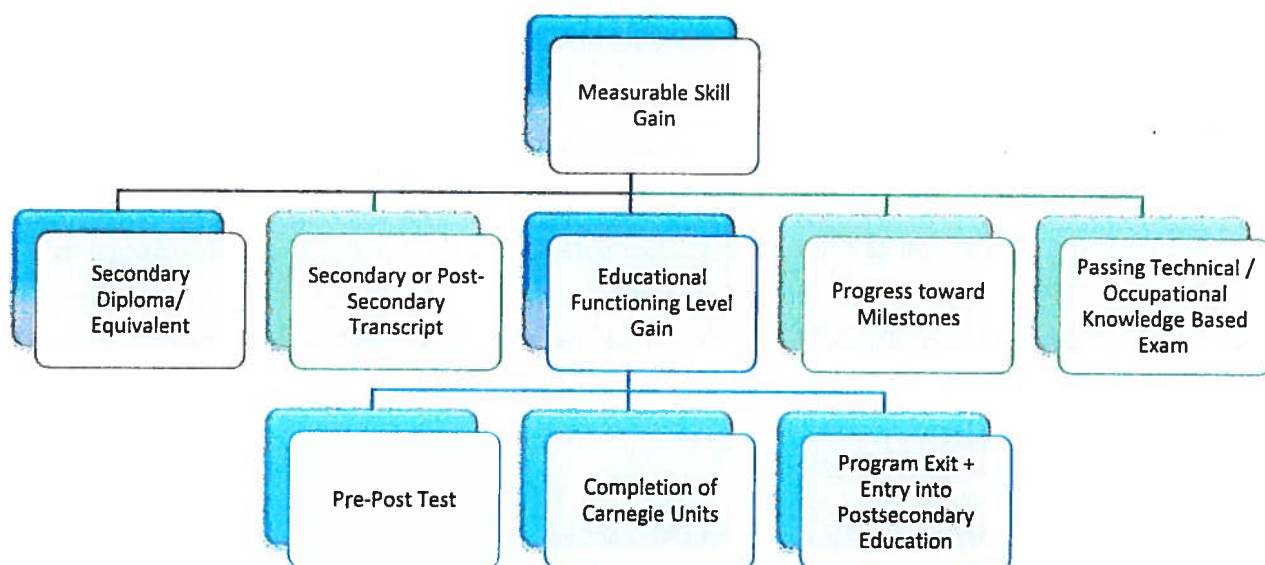
Participants in *other* WIOA partner programs can also demonstrate MSG by demonstrating progress from a secondary or postsecondary transcript, progress toward milestones, and passing a technical/occupational knowledge-based exam (shown in Figure 1).

### **Who is included in the measureable skill gains?**

MSG is reported for all participants (adults who receive 12 or more contact hours) for each period of participation. However, participants who are forced to exit the program due to the following extenuating circumstances are excluded:

- Incarceration or entry into a 24-hour support facility such as a hospital or treatment center
- Medical treatment that lasts more than 90 days
- Being called into active duty in the National Guard or other armed services for at least 90 days
- Death

**Figure 2: Five Types of Measureable Skill Gains Under WIOA**



### **Where are data reported for measureable skill gains?**

The NRS has four tables for reporting MSG:

- **Table 4**—for all participants
- **Table 4C**—for participants in distance education
- **Table 8**—for participants in family literacy programs (optional table)
- **Table 10**—for participants in correctional education programs

Each table breaks down -by NRS educational functioning level- the total number of participants, the number and percentage who achieve an MSG, the total number of periods of participation<sup>1</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> See the section on periods of participation for more information on this topic.

total number of MSGs by period of participation. Only the most recent MSG achieved is reported per period of participation, even if more than one MSG is achieved.

### ***How does this differ from previous reporting?***

Entry into postsecondary education at exit and receipt of a secondary credential count as outcomes, as they did before, but now are counted as an MSG rather than as separate measures. Although measureable skill gains is a new measure, pre- and post-testing, and assessment procedures and policy remain the same as prior reporting for measuring gains in an educational functioning level.

### **Periods of Participation (POP)**

Performance calculations under the new *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)* of 2014 require that indicators be calculated for participants and according to their periods of participation. This section explains participants and periods of participation, and their implications for data collection and reporting to the NRS. In the regional training, *Leap Into WIOA, Part II*, participants delved deeper into these definitions to understand their impact on state reporting.

### ***What is a participant?***

Under WIOA, an individual who completes at least 12 contact hours of service in an adult education program qualifies as a Title II “participant” and any individual who receives adult education services without completing at least 12 contact hours is considered a “reportable individual.” Only participants are reported for WIOA performance indicator purposes. Participant status must be achieved any time an individual enters, or reenters, an adult education program. Participants who continue receiving services across program years do not need to requalify as a participant in a new program year since exit has not occurred.

### ***What are periods of participation?***

A period of participation begins each time a participant enrolls in adult education—even when multiple enrollments occur during the same program year. Subsequent enrollments during a program year result in a new period of participation. Therefore, a participant may have more than one period of participation in a program year.

Exit date is the last day of service for participants, but this date cannot be determined until 90 days have elapsed since the person last received services and there are no future services planned. Services do not include self-service, information-only services, activities, or follow-up services

For example, a student who enters an adult education program in September, exits in December, and re-enrolls in May has two periods of participation for the purpose of reporting MSG, and only one POP for the purpose of reporting exit-based indicators because only one exit is reported. A participant who enters an adult education program only once within a program year has one period of participation for the purpose of reporting both MSG and exit-based indicators (upon their exit). For all performance indicators, each period of participation is counted separately, resulting in duplicate reporting of individual participants with more than one period.



***How are periods of participation used for calculating performance indicators?***

State performance on all core outcome measures under WIOA, excluding median earnings, is calculated as a percentage of the total number of outcomes achieved by the total number of periods of participation.

***Do the WIOA performance measures apply for each period of participation?***

Every period of participation is treated as a separate event for a participant and performance indicators apply separately to each period. This means that for each period of participation, the state must report measurable skill gains and conduct follow-up on the participant after exit from each period to collect data on the appropriate post-exit indicators. Each exit date from a period of participation is used to determine the follow-up time. For example if a student exits in December, reenrolls in April, and exits again in June, the state would report on appropriate post-exit indicators for both exits. The second-quarter employment outcome, for example, would be reported in the April through June quarter for the December exit, and in the following October through December quarter for the June exit.

***How do periods of participation affect pre- and post-testing of participants?***

At entry into each period of participation, a participant must be placed in an NRS educational functioning level (EFL) on the basis of an approved NRS assessment. EFL placement in a new period of participation can carry over from a prior period, or a new placement test may be administered. However, it is important to note that policy and procedures for assessing students should not change because of periods of participation. Proper assessment practices should always be followed.

Policies and procedures regarding the assessment of individuals who return after an exit or an extended absence must be detailed in the state's assessment policy, and those policies and procedures must follow test publishers' guidelines, when available.

If the test publisher does not have retesting guidelines for returning students, the state must establish a policy for retesting that local programs must follow. These procedures will provide uniformity to testing practices within the state. After a participant is placed in an EFL in the new period of participation, either by a new assessment or carryover from a prior assessment, an EFL gain (via pre-/ post-testing) in the new period of participation requires that a new posttest be given. A posttest used in the additional period of performance may not be used to also reflect a gain in a prior period of performance.

***Must barriers to employment and student demographic data be collected for each period of participation?***

Yes, all barriers to employment data must be collected for each period of participation. Each new program entry is a new period of participation, and after 12 contact hours, the enrolled individual is treated as a "new" participant.

Demographic data—age, sex, employment status, and race/ethnicity—are not likely to change over the year. Therefore, depending on how a state requires programs to keep demographic information on file,

participants may simply verify that all the information in their record, from the first period of participation, is still current.

## **Credential Indicator**

Adult education programs have always tracked the number of students obtaining a secondary credential as a follow-up outcome measure for NRS reporting. However, the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)* establishes a credential indicator that includes secondary and postsecondary credentials. This section explains the credential indicator, who is included in the measure, how it is calculated, how it differs from previous measures, and how it is reported.

### ***What is the credential indicator?***

The credential attainment indicator measures two types of credentials:

- Receipt of a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent during participation or within one year after exit from the program. The receipt of this credential is only counted if the participant also enters postsecondary education or training, or employment within one year after exit.
- Receipt of a recognized postsecondary credential during participation or within one year after exit from the program.

### ***Who is included in the credential indicator?***

The secondary school diploma credential component of the indicator applies only to participants enrolled in a secondary education program at or above the ninth grade level who exited the program and who did not have a secondary school diploma or its equivalent. The postsecondary education credential component of the indicator applies only to participants who were enrolled in a postsecondary education or training program who exited.

Participants in correctional education programs (WIOA Section 225) are excluded from the indicator. In addition, participants are excluded from the indicator if they are forced to exit the program due to the following extenuating circumstances:

- Incarceration or entry into a 24-hour support facility such as a hospital or treatment center
- Medical treatment that lasts more than 90 days
- Being called into active duty in the National Guard or other armed services for at least 90 days
- Death

### ***How is the credential indicator calculated?***

The credential indicator is calculated as a percentage of the total number of participants who exited during the reporting period who achieved either credential as defined above *divided by* the total number of participants (1) who exited and were enrolled in a postsecondary education or training program *plus* (2) all participants who exited and were enrolled in a secondary education program at or above the ninth grade level and did not have a secondary school diploma or its equivalent.

### ***How is this different from previous reporting?***

Participants must be enrolled at the ninth-grade equivalent or higher during participation in the program to be included in the measure, and they must be employed or enrolled in postsecondary education within one year after exit in order to be counted for achieving a secondary credential. Attainment of a postsecondary credential is a new performance indicator for the NRS under WIOA.

### ***Where are data reported for the credential indicator?***

NRS Table 5 reports the indicator and other WIOA-required exit-based measures. This indicator is also included in the following tables:

- Table 5a—for participants in distance education
- Table 8—for participants in family literacy programs (optional)
- Table 10—for participants in correctional education programs

Performance on this indicator cannot be measured until one year after a participant's exit.

## **Activities**

### ***Table Changes in Action***

During the training, participants were provided Handout 6. After each set of tables was presented, state teams discussed a related scenario and determined the appropriate response for how to complete the corresponding NRS table. To adapt this activity, go through the tables and note which of the tables uses measurable skill gains, period of participation, or credential indicators in its reporting. Highlight the most common mistake or concern you have seen from local programs regarding each of these issues and completing the tables. Craft a communication that explains to local programs how each of these elements works in conjunction with completing the tables.

### **Adaptations**

*For use with local program staff:* For this activity, after local program staff identify which tables use each of these key elements, brainstorm common questions or concerns and develop answers in small groups. Then discuss the results as a whole group and identify any misinterpretations or areas for clarification.

## **Additional Resources**

- OCTAE: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act webpage  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/wioa-reauthorization.html>
- RSA: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act webpage  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/wioa-reauthorization.html>
- DOL: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act webpage  
<https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/>
- Performance Accountability Guidance for WIOA Title I, Title II, Title III and Title IV Core Programs  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-17-2.pdf>



### 3. Practical Scenarios for Addressing Needs of Local Providers

#### Section summary

Learning and memorizing new terms and concepts is one thing, but applying that information to real-life situations can be more difficult. Situations that happen in the everyday running of adult education programs, including data collection, often do not have clear solutions, or yes or no results. Throughout the NRS regional training, we interspersed the presentation with example scenarios for participants to practice applying their knowledge. In this section we provide three sample adult education student profiles as well as probing questions that can help you or your staff understand how changes to WIOA and the NRS reporting tables affect data collection in your state.

**TIP:** Adapt these scenarios for your own state context and add names and locations that will help others relate more to the situation.

#### Profile 1: Juanita

Juanita is an immigrant to the U.S. who has worked in others' homes for many years. She decides she wants to improve her English and try to get a better job. Juanita enrolled in ESL classes in September and tested at ESL Level 3. She attended until class ended in November, achieved a level gain, but never returned.

#### Questions:

- What is Juanita's participant status? Is she a reportable individual or a participant and why? She is a participant because she achieved more than 12 contact hours.
- Which measurable skill gain (MSG) does she have? She has one EFL gain.
- Where would it be reported? Table 4, Columns D & J.
- How many periods of participation (POP) does she have and how do you know? Where would it be reported? One POP from September to November which is determined 90 days after her last attendance date. It should be reported in Table 4, Column I.

#### Profile 2: Tony

Tony has been working odd jobs and wants to get the technical skills required to get a steady job in a particular field. Tony enrolled in ABE Level 2 in September, but left after 10 hours. He returned in November but dropped out in December, after 40 contact hours. He returned as a participant in April, posttested in June and showed a level gain, and then exited that same month.

#### Questions:

- Which MSG does he have? One EFL gain, reported in Table 4, Column J.
- How many POPs does he have and where is it reported? Two POPs reported in Column I. 1) September to December and 2) April to June. These are both determined 90 days after exit.

- Can Tony's pre-test be reused in December for placement and reporting? Why or why not? If Tony was pretested in September, his test can be reused in November for placement and reporting, according to state policy.
- Does he need to be retested in April? Why or why not? He must be retested for placement in April if his September test is beyond the retesting time set by state policy and has expired.

### ***Profile 3: Angela***

Angela never finished school and has been unemployed for several months. She decides to get her diploma in the hopes of getting into a degree program. She became a participant in ABE Level 4 in October, achieved an EFL gain, and then dropped out in December. She returned in April, passed the GED tests in June to get her secondary credential, and exited.

#### Questions:

- How many POPs does she have and what are the entry/exit dates? Two POPs from October to December, and April to June.
- Which MSG does she have? One EFL gain (first POP), and obtained a secondary credential (second POP).
- Where is each MSG reported? EFL is reported in Table 4, Columns D (unduplicated) and J (for the first POP). The secondary credential is reported in Table 4, Column J (duplicated).
- Which POP must be followed up on and when? Angela has two periods of participation and must be followed up for employment indicators in the second (April-June) and fourth (October-December) quarters after exit for Period 1; and must be checked second (October-December) and fourth (April-June) quarters after exit for Period 2.
- Can her posttest be used for placement in April? Why or why not? If not expired according to the publisher or state policy, Angela's posttest in December can be used for placement in April.
- Can she be included in the median earnings calculation? If she was employed in the second quarter after exit for either or both periods, she will be included in the median wage calculation.
- Will Angela be included in the numerator or denominator for the credential indicators? She moved into the ABE Level 5 (ninth-grade equivalent or above) during the first period of participation, and began the second period of participation at that level. She is included in the credential measure denominator for both periods of participation. She received her GED in the second period of performance, but must be employed or have entered into postsecondary education within one year after exit from the second POP to count in the numerator.