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Montgomery Coalition for
Adult English Literacy

Establishing Adult Literacy Programs within U.S. Federal Agencies: A Manual

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By the Volunteer Tutors
of the
Volunteer Program for English Proficiency (VPEP) at the National Institutes of Health

Contents

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Purpose & Goals of Adult Literacy Programs in the Workplace

<u>Mission of the Volunteer Program for English Proficiency (VPEP)</u>

The mission of the Volunteer Program for English Proficiency (VPEP) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), is to assist low-skilled employees who are non-native English speakers improve their English language proficiency and independent learning strategies. Improved language and learning skills will help VPEP participants to be more successful in their workplaces and communities.

There are several hundred employees at NIH facilities in the Bethesda, Md., area, who are from other countries and have limited English skills. Some are scientists, researchers or physicians who have access to formal English literacy classes through the Foundation for Advanced Education in the Sciences (FAES). Other NIH personnel and contractors, such as those who occupy low-skilled jobs, do not have the opportunity to take those classes, but are also integral to the functioning of the NIH and make an invaluable contribution to the agency. Unfortunately, because of their limited English skills, many are unable to communicate and participate fully in the NIH community, pursue more advanced employment opportunities, and engage in important activities outside of work, such as communicating with teachers, doctors, and other key individuals. Currently, there are no free English language classes offered at the NIH. The VPEP provides an opportunity to serve this NIH population and enable the adult learners to make even greater contributions to their workplace, families, and communities.

According to the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, the most recent examination of the literacy levels of adults in the United States, some 11 million people are non-literate in English while millions of others read and write at basic or below-basic levels. The U.S.

Department of Education report measured respondents' on three dimensions: prose literacy, or the ability to read and understand text such as news articles; document literacy, or the ability to handle materials like forms and maps; and quantitative literacy, or the skills required to do basic math. The survey found that about 30 million American adults had below-basic prose literacy, 27 million had below-basic document literacy, and 46 million had below-basic quantitative literacy.

> "Approximately 21 percent of the adult population of the United States has limited literacy skills that impede their full participation in American life. These adults have few opportunities for meaningful employment in industries driving economic growth and prosperity because they lack high school diplomas or their equivalents. The needs are clear—business needs qualified workers, and millions of adults need education and training to succeed in the workforce."[1]

The individuals who participate in the VPEP are often faced with life circumstances that impact their ability to pursue English literacy education. As with most adults engaging in English literacy programs around the country, these adult learners often hold more than one job, have child-care responsibilities, and other obligations that consume their time and resources. The evolution of the VPEP, which will be discussed in more detail below, began with the idea of creating a program at work, during the lunch hour, which would provide a convenient, free opportunity for these individuals to access educational services.

Improved English language skills will benefit the individuals who participate in myriad ways. For instance, they would be able to communicate more effectively with their children's teachers,

coaches and school administrators. The ability to speak and comprehend English at a higher level may help them feel more confident in their efforts to participate in school meetings and develop closer relationships with their children's instructors. Many adult learners seek to focus on English conversational skills, as well as reading and writing. These skills will assist them in everyday activities, including shopping, paying bills, filling out job applications, and speaking with law enforcement or other social program providers. Moreover, literacy program seek to improve not just the adult learners' communication skills but their self-esteem.

Goals of the VPEP:

- Improve adult learners' abilities in English comprehension, reading, and writing speaking, pronunciation, through structured, volunteer-based instruction in a comfortable, learning-conducive environment.

- Promote Health Literacy: Develop and use health promotion materials as study guides for reading comprehension and vocabulary building to support the mission of the NIH and DHHS. Promote health literacy, formal education goals, and involvement in the community through these lessons.

- Foster involvement in the NIH community: Encourage adult learners to feel a greater sense of belonging to the greater NIH community. VPEP teachers will teach them about the cultural norms at NIH and the NIH mission. Such inclusion promotes recruitment and retention efforts at NIH.

- Promote Formal Education: Provide adult learners with community-based information on where to take formal English classes at night or on weekends. VPEP volunteers are not professional language instructors and encourage the adult learners to seek out formal language training and certification.

- Cultivate the professional development of volunteer teachers to improve their skills in teaching English literacy.

- Utilize collaborative technology tools for the volunteer teachers to increase effectiveness and efficiency of program coordination.

- Increase Participation/Outreach: Conduct outreach activities to attract new adult learners, volunteers and additional classroom space in order to serve a greater number of adult learners.

- Develop materials and conduct outreach activities in response to requests from other federal agencies in the Montgomery County, Md., area for assistance with starting worksite English literacy programs.

- Serve as a model federal worksite literacy program: Develop instructional materials and conduct outreach activities in response to requests from other federal agencies in the Montgomery County area for assistance with starting worksite English literacy programs.

- Secure funding to provide textbooks and learning materials to each participant free of charge due to unique federal employment ethics rules that restrict charging registration fees.

- Secure adequate classroom space on the NIH campus; explore opportunities to serve needs of people working at other NIH building locations.

History of the VPEP

The VPEP at NIH was started in October 2006 by Maria G. Hessie of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), Laboratory of Immunology. The classes began very informally, with one member of the housekeeping staff talking with Ms. Hessie about the idea of receiving English language tutoring. Ms. Hessie, who is a native Spanish

speaker, learned English as an adult. When the time came for their first meeting, the employee arrived – along with four co-workers of different nationalities who also wanted to improve their English. The sessions were held during the lunch hour and the class size quickly grew as more members of the housekeeping staff sought help improving their English skills. By July 2008, news of Ms. Hessie's tutoring program had reached the highest echelons of NIH leadership. She was recognized by the then-NIH Director, Dr. Elias Zerhouni, and NIAID Director Anthony Fauci, with the prestigious NIH Director's Award for her leadership in teaching English to individuals with limited English literacy.

However, the rapidly growing class size and varied skill levels of the adult learners demanded that the program be expanded. Shortly after receiving the award, Ms. Hessie began assembling a group of volunteer tutors from the ranks of the NIH to assist with teaching. The additional teachers, who came from a host of different departments at NIH, allowed for the division of the adult learners by their skill level: low beginners (very basic knowledge of English) and high beginners (limited ability to converse, read and write in English). Through late 2008 and early 2009, volunteer recruitment was so successful that the program was able to expand its bi-level literacy classes to a second location on the NIH campus and to a new group of adult learners. The VPEP also began using a standard curriculum across its classes, the *Oxford Picture Dictionary* (2nd Ed.), which provides lessons on practical, everyday topics that are useful to adult adult learners. In September 2009, VPEP began holding its first classes in nearby NIH facilities off the main campus. Currently, there are 51 volunteers teaching approximately 50 adult learners.

In the spring of 2009, VPEP applied for and received its first grant. The support from the Montgomery Coalition for English Literacy (MCAEL) in Montgomery County, Md., was designed to help VPEP develop instructional materials on how to establish and operate a worksite literacy program at federal agencies, provide opportunities for volunteer training, and conduct outreach activities with other federal agencies. This manual is the primary result of that work and was completed through the efforts of more than a dozen VPEP volunteers.

Agency-Specific Policies and Regulations

<u>Ethics, Conflicts of Interest, Outside Activity</u>

The success of the VPEP depends largely on the dedication of volunteers who are federal employees, federal contractors, and non-federal employees. Yet there are many guidelines and laws that define and limit what is considered acceptable, ethical behavior for government employees and their affiliates. Any agency interested in establishing a workplace literacy program must be cognizant of these rules. Employees' official duties and outside activities are subject to the laws and regulations described by the U.S. Office of Government Ethics (http://www.usoge.gov). All federal employees in the Executive Branch must follow ethics guidelines outlined in 5 C.F.R., part 2635,[2] as well as additional agency-specific regulations. NIH's Ethics Office, for example, administers an agency-wide Ethics Program that includes individual ethics programs in each of the agency's 27 Institutes and Centers.

Many of the regulations outlined by the U.S. Office of Government Ethics and the NIH Ethics Office govern issues including pay and gifts for federal employees. None of the VPEP tutors are financially compensated or receive gifts for their participation. The government also tightly monitors whether federal employees use their official position or title to benefit an outside program or other organization. However, because the classes are held in NIH facilities and use government resources, volunteer participation in the VPEP program is considered "official duty" rather than an "outside activity" that would require regulation. As such, federal employees who participate in literacy programs within their agency's facilities and with government resources need not register their activity with their Ethics Office. (As a matter of courtesy and protocol, however, the tutors and adult learners should inform their immediate supervisors of their interest in participating in the program and request permission to do so. This issue is discussed in more detail in other sections of this manual.) Finally, the Hatch Act[3] regulates the political activities of federal employees. These regulations are inapplicable because literacy programs, including VPEP, are not considered political activities.

It is advised that any organization planning to establish a workplace literacy program contact its agency's ethics program to confirm these understandings and inquire as to any other agency-specific rules, guidelines or prohibitions that may affect a literacy program.

Relationship of Literacy Program to Agency Mission

<u>Benefits to Mission</u>

Every federal agency has a mission statement that guides its activities, establishes its goals, and sets out the ways in which it will strive to meet these goals. When planning a literacy program, employees should carefully and creatively consider their agency's mission and how the program might complement and/or help fulfill the mission. It is often possible to find connections between the agency's goals and those of a worksite literacy program. These linkages are not merely coincidental; they can provide a strong foundation for support of a literacy effort and make the program more relevant to the agency itself. At NIH, for instance, the agency's mission statement reads as follows: "NIH is the steward of medical and behavioral research for the Nation. Its mission is science in pursuit of fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to extend healthy life and reduce the burdens of illness and disability." The overall mission of the Department of Health and Human Services is "protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves." The VPEP

supports these mission statements by improving the literacy skills of its participants, which improves their ability to communicate their health needs, work with health care providers, and understand health and medical issues that are discussed in English. Furthermore, the DHHS mission statement's allusion to individuals who are "least able to help themselves" would include people whose literacy limitations could put them at greater risk for experiencing health or medical problems.

Developing Program Components Tailored to Agency Mission

It is strongly recommended that literacy programs include materials clearly relevant to the substantive work of the host agency in order to establish stronger connections between the literacy effort and the mission of the agency. For example, considering that the NIH mission is to "extend healthy life and reduce the burdens of illness and disability," the VPEP includes in its lesson plans various materials related to health education and promotion. For example, VPEP adult learners have attended a lecture by a representative from the American Lung Association. Also, when the learners were working on a lesson involving telephone skills, tutors used materials on how to use 911 if someone may be having a stroke.

Support from Agency Employees

Workplace literacy programs rely on the contributions of leaders and other employees. The support of agency leaders is a critical component to a program's success; keeping officials and executives informed of the program's progress and goals, as well as aware of any challenges it faces, will help build a solid network of support. Most VPEP volunteers are federal employees, though a small number are local residents who learned about the program and wanted to become involved. If a program includes tutors or others from outside the agency, and if the program will be conducted within federal facilities, it is critical that program coordinators research whether security measures in place will allow for non-

federal employees to gain access to the agency's buildings. At NIH, all visitors must go through a security and ID badge process before entering the campus. In addition, it is suggested that visitors be escorted whenever they are within an NIH facility.

Another highly important group of employees are the tutors' and adult learners' supervisors. Any employee interested in participating in a workplace literacy program should notify their supervisor and ensure that the manager approves of the time usage. Volunteer tutors must use their discretion in requesting time out of their offices and base their requests on their roles, responsibilities and the functioning of their workplaces. At NIH, the classes are held during the learners' lunch hour or after their shifts end, which makes it easier for them to attend. VPEP leaders have made efforts to discuss the program with the learners' supervisors and address any questions or concerns that arise.

The establishment of regular class locations also requires the support of other agency personnel. At NIH, VPEP asked for and received permission from various offices to use conference rooms or other appropriate spaces at no charge. Some of the adult learners meet in lightly used library spaces, while classes in other buildings are held in vacant meeting rooms. In the early summer of 2009, one of the volunteers offered her own office as an alternative location while the library facility was under construction. In all of these cases, a key to securing space at no charge was building strong relationships with agency personnel and leaders.

Strategic Partnerships

As federal employees, VPEP volunteers are restricted from raising funds for the program or soliciting payment from the adult learners for materials or services. Given that limitation, VPEP has partnered with the NIH-National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Recreation and Welfare Association (R&W), a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. The R&W is an

employee service and health promotion organization that provides services and programs that focus on enhancing the health and well-being of the NIH and NOAA communities. The VPEP helps the R&W fulfill part of its mission by providing direct literacy tutoring services, enhanced professional development opportunities and increased workplace satisfaction benefits to the volunteers and learners. The R&W, in turn, assists VPEP by serving as a liaison and manager of grant monies awarded to VPEP. The R&W also assists VPEP in its purchase of books and materials for learners. In other agencies, literacy program coordinators should research whether there are agency-related foundations, non-profit organizations or other entities that could serve as partners in managing resources, networking for other sources of support, and generating agency commitment to the literacy program.

It is also possible to explore partnering relationships with organizations in the agency's community or region. For example, VPEP is planning to partner with Montgomery County, Md., hospitals to identify and develop instructional materials related to health literacy. Also, federal agencies in Montgomery County, MD, could contact MCAEL for support for volunteer training and materials , such as a teacher toolkit (www.mcael.org). Agencies outside of Montgomery County can contact their local literacy organization or coalition to find out if support is available. Literacy program tutors might also refer learners to other organizations so that they can continue their English language learning.

Logistics – Class Locations, Tours of Duty, Time and Attendance

It is critical that organizations secure consistently available classroom locations, ensure that volunteers and learners have approval from their supervisors to participate in the program during lunch hours, or before or afterwards, and that participation does not negatively affect adult learners' or volunteers' official time and attendance records.

The classroom space should be well lit, large enough so that all learners can sit comfortably at a table and see the tutor, and contain a whiteboard or easel with large paper sheets. Conference rooms are often suited for this type of format; at NIH, the program uses conference rooms as well as space within the NIH Library that is less heavily trafficked and farther from where people might be working. If classes are to take place in more public areas such as these, endeavor to provide as much privacy as possible. Adult literacy learners may be self-conscious about practicing English skills and asking questions aloud, and literacy classes require a good deal of practice on oral pronunciation, which could disrupt others at work.

The timing of literacy classes will depend on the schedule and needs of your learners, as well as the culture of your agency. For some learners, meeting before or after their tour of duty might be preferable; for others, meeting during a standard lunch hour may be deemed appropriate. The first VPEP learners met five days a week with the tutors. However, that schedule was reduced to four days a week, at the learners' request. They felt they needed a break to interact with their classmates and have one lunch hour free during the week. Also, the day off would give instructors more time to plan the lessons. These class sessions last 40 minutes, which allows the learners enough time to reach the class location and have a quick meal. New VPEP learners at off-campus locations meet for one hour before their workday begins.

Establish a Leadership Team - Roles and Responsibilities

Each literacy program's personnel needs depend on the size, or potential size, and scope of the program. Large programs may require people to fill a range of positions, while smaller programs may do well with just one or two people fulfilling the responsibilities of several positions.[4] Some programs may choose to elect or assign individuals to specific leadership roles. Developing a team to address these needs is among the first tasks in the establishment of a workplace literacy program. As with any effort to create and sustain a program, it is critical to have in place individuals who are willing to: take responsibility for the effort; make a commitment to its survival; handle logistical and coordination tasks; select and develop materials; and teach and train personnel. Leadership is about initiating action, implementing decisions that have been made, and positively influencing the actions of other staff members.[5]

In considering the characteristics of effective, sustainable group leadership in the federal setting, it is helpful to consider the requirements of the government's Senior Executive Service (SES). There are five core qualifications for members of the SES: leading change, leading people, being results driven, having business acumen and building coalitions.[6] These qualifications are also relevant to leaders of federal workplace literacy programs. More specifically, the most successful leaders engage in the following activities:

- Set and maintain high standards for accountability for themselves and all team members
- Communicate clear expectations of all team members
- Promote shared ownership in the team effort
- Encourage open discussion and constructive criticism when debating ideas – allow healthy disagreement to lead to productive

discussion, innovation, and the strengthening of the program
- Recognize and value all team members' contributions
- Be willing and able to make firm decisions (accountability)
- Focus the team on common goals
- Foster a professional, collegial and non-threatening atmosphere

Individuals who serve as leaders, including those in the VPEP, provide a structure for the program and also serve as liaisons with agency managers and executives. They will likely be called upon to answer questions about the program or address any concerns that emerge. In the case of federal agencies, program leaders may have to defend the existence of a literacy program, especially if it receives agency resources, such as funding, free meeting space to conduct classes, and employees' time and attention. A leader's ability to reach out to stakeholders within the Agency and work them to achieve a common understanding of the goals of and need for a workplace literacy program will go far in developing institutional support, recognition and acceptance of the program. To that end, leaders must clearly articulate the organizational goals of the program, as well its underlying philosophies

VPEP instructors decided, through a consensus-based process, to encourage individuals to volunteer for functional and project-based roles rather than elect a leadership team. VPEP asked individuals to commit to the roles for which they volunteered, but did not require individuals to agree to a specific length of tenure in the role. In general, the effort was made to address the following needs:
- Tutor training
- Adult learner recruitment
- Tutor recruitment
- Program and learner evaluation
- Planning

- Finance
- Logistics/scheduling
- Communication
- Educational/curriculum development

The resulting roles and resulting responsibilities are as follows:

New Teacher Orientation
- Develop an orientation program for new tutors that includes practical information about the program as well as teaching advice and tips.
- Conduct orientation and train other tutors to conduct orientation

Lesson Coordinators
- Help develop details, process, and guidance for implementation of new three-week cycle lesson plans and lesson pace
- On an ongoing basis, coordinate discussions with other teachers for the same level and building about how to plan, organize, and develop the classes for each lesson.
- Help add grammar and other skills to current curriculum
- Help add pre-lesson and end-of-lesson assessments to the classes
- Search for lesson-specific materials that would help the teachers (e.g. body map for parts of the body, catalog for shopping lesson)

Adult learner Intake and Yearly Screening Assessment Coordinators
- Gather materials from CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems) for use in our adult learner intake/assessment process
- Work with IDP Coordinators to introduce personal goals and measures into the assessment
- Disseminate new assessment protocol to volunteers and train them on how to administer it
- Coordinate the administration of the assessment
- Conduct assessments and IDP interviews

Individual Development Plan (IDP) Coordinators
- As part of assessment process, work with adult learners to develop personalized Individual Development Plans (IDP) related to their literacy goals
- Help disseminate results of the IDP to building coordinators

Huddle (Online Communication) Webmaster
- Check attendance and class summary pages for completion; create new pages when necessary
- Send Huddle invitations to new tutors
- Troubleshoot user problems; answer user questions

Volunteer Coordinators
- Help with teacher recruitment and respond to new volunteer requests to join the group
- Maintain a spreadsheet of current and potential volunteers with contact info
- Assist with scheduling new volunteers (work with Building Coordinators)
- Maintain an up-to date listserv of current volunteers

Executive Secretary
- In charge of email communications related to new processes, guidelines, voting, etc. for VPEP
- In charge of requesting agenda items for all-hands meetings, scheduling them, and taking and posting minutes

Building Coordinators
- Handle space and logistics issues for classes
- Assign tutors to classes
- Monitor and assist with substitutes
- Welcome and assist new tutors
- Gather feedback from tutors and adult learners on issues, problems, and questions; relay feedback to other building coordinators and others

Professional Development Coordinators
- Help develop programming for Training and Technique sessions
- Identify outside resources (i.e. in-person/online classes) available for

additional tutor training and distribute information to tutors

Adult learner Recruitment
- Develop materials, such as flyers and posters, that can be used to recruit new learners

Health Literacy
- Develop annual calendar of monthly health literacy topics
- Identify existing resources that can supplement our curriculum
- Help develop new materials to incorporate health issues into VPEP

Finance and Budget
- Monitor revenues, expenses and budgeting for VPEP, in partnership with R&W

Marketing/Publicity
- Work with NIH media, others to educate NIH community about VPEP
- Identify potential VPEP supporters within and external to the NIH community

Program Evaluation
- Gather Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program standards, other resources that could be used to evaluate VPEP

Grants
- Prepare summary reports for funders using records from Huddle and other materials
- Identify potential grant-makers/funding opportunities
- Respond to grant opportunities

Literacy Needs Assessment within Your Agency

Before starting a literacy program, it is important to carefully define the target adult learner population within your organization: Who is in most need? What are their literacy needs? What do they hope to achieve by enhancing their English proficiency?

Identifying the Target Adult Learner Population
Following is a list of examples of different considerations and approaches that may be used to determine who might be best served by a literacy program in your organization.

Demographics – Conducting a demographic analysis of your organization's workforce may help determine which populations may be in most need of literacy services. Some of the demographic data may include nation of origin, race/ethnicity composition, population age distribution, and income. While the federal government is prohibited from collecting a good deal of this information about employees, literacy volunteers may examine their locality's demographics (http://www.city-data.com/) to get a sense for the general population in the area. In addition, it may be useful to seek out employees from various countries to gather anecdotal information about non-native English speaking populations in the agency.

Need - At NIH, VPEP has focused its efforts primarily on housekeeping contract employees. There are several hundred such housekeeping personnel employed throughout the NIH. VPEP tutors determined that this segment of the NIH workforce presented the greatest learning need and had the least access to English literacy opportunities and resources. VPEP tutors gathered anecdotal information that revealed that most of the housekeeping contract employees are first-generation immigrants from non-English speaking countries who came to the United States with a high-school or grade-school levels of general education. Most of the workers are of lower socioeconomic standing. Many hold multiple jobs and have significant family responsibilities that have prevented them from pursuing English literacy training. From the outset, VPEP decided that the English literacy program would be free of cost to the adult learners. While NIH offers intermediate, advanced, and conversational English classes to the NIH community through the Foundation for Advanced Education in Science (FAES) (http://www.faes.org/), these courses require payment and are designed for students who have a working knowledge of English and at

least an undergraduate-level education. FAES courses are incredibly successful for the general NIH community but do not satisfy the unique needs of VPEP adult learners.

Mission Justification – It may be possible to target an adult learner population by considering your agency's mission, initiatives, or programs. At the NIH, it was logical to work with individuals who are less proficient in English due to the mission of both the Department of Health and Human Services and the NIH. Also, the literature is ripe with studies documenting the detrimental effect of poor English proficiency on health literacy and health care. Most health care materials are written at a 10th-grade level or higher and many health care facilities do not have access to interpreter services. Improving the English and health literacy of NIH staff will assist them throughout their lives, including situations involving health care and medical situations.

Other agencies may consider beginning their work with the housekeeping staff. These employees typically work through contracts and may not have access to English proficiency courses offered to federal employees. While they may be 'unseen' members of an agency's workforce, they are an important part of its work environment and are contributing members of the local community.

Surveying Target Adult Learners – Once the target adult learner population has been identified, one option is to conduct focus groups or interviews with potential adult learners to better gauge their literacy levels, learning objectives, and logistical requirements. For example, program coordinators may ask about the general working schedule of prospective adult learners and identify what free time might be available to them. In some cases, learners might need to get permission from their supervisors before they can participate. Informal survey conversations may also include questions related to learners' access to educational materials, such as a dictionary, and other resources, including computers and after-work literacy programs. These initial interviews will allow programs to tailor their efforts to the specific needs of the learners and will help determine the most suitable curriculum to employ. In the VPEP, tutors have had several conversations with new and existing adult learners to help us understand what the learners are hoping to accomplish and how we can tailor the program, in regard to curriculum and logistics, to best meet their needs.

Designing an Instructional Program for Adult Learners

Teaching adults is not the same as teaching children. Adults come to the classroom with lifetimes of knowledge, experience, skills and tools at hand. There are several widely accepted assumptions about adult learners that help guide adult educators in the design and implementation of an instructional program. Adults:

- Want to know why they should learn.
- Need to take responsibility, and be seen as competent and able to do so.
- Bring experience to learning.
- Are ready to learn when the need arises
- Are task-oriented.[7]

Additional studies of adult learners provide some suggestions for how to design a program that will encourage and engage them[8]:

- Involve adult learners in planning and implementing learning activities.
- Draw upon learners' experiences as a resource.
- Cultivate self-direction in learners.
- Create a climate that encourages and supports learning.
- Foster a spirit of collaboration in the learning setting.
- Use small groups.
- Develop and/or use instructional materials that are based on learners' lives.
- Develop an understanding of learners' experiences and communities

VPEP selected the Oxford Picture Dictionary (OPD) series, which is designed for adult beginning adult learners and offers flexibility to tailor lesson plans to different support various proficiencies. The OPD focuses on practical and useful topics, such as child care, everyday language, housing, and work-related material. It allows tutors to create communicative objectives based on the adult learners' needs assessments. The OPD offers learners the chance to learn, comprehend and use new information, vocabulary, and communication skills – all of which are central to adult learners' needs. Beginning learners in VPEP are introduced to common English language phrases and basic grammar and practice writing, reading and speaking in English. High beginner adult learners are provided grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and reading comprehension training. All learners are exposed to health literacy topics. Learners are also encouraged to bring in materials they would like to discuss, such as utility bills, job application forms, or other documents to use as practice.

In order to promote self-determination and give adult learners a greater sense of ownership of their literacy efforts, the VPEP has also implemented a program of developing Individual Development Plans (IDPs) with each learner. This process may sound familiar to federal employees – indeed, it is based on the Office of Personnel Management's program of the same name. Several agencies, including NIH, have adopted the IDP process as way to help identify employees' career development goals the strategies for achieving them.

Recruiting Adult Learners

The methods used to recruit literacy adult learners will depend on the population of learners sought, as well as the logistics and culture of the agency. Questions and issues to consider include:

- The location of the adult learners (in which building(s) do they work? What areas do they frequent, such as a specific cafeteria?)
- The learners' working hours (early morning, day, evening, overnight)
- The learners' native languages
- Agency/facility regulations on posting signs and fliers publicizing the program
- Existence of a free, widely distributed agency publication or newsletter, and the availability of that publication in other languages

- Location of classroom space relative to the location of most of the targeted population
- Availability of other forums to reach adult learners (local schools, churches, community centers)
- Availability of local newspapers in other languages

When posting fliers, one of the methods used to recruit learners for the VPEP, the focus was on the most-frequented campus areas, such as the main cafeterias. Using fliers is helpful because it allows a wide range of individuals to access information and share it with others. However, it is important to carefully consider the wording used in any recruiting materials – it should be friendly, welcoming and provided in English and other languages relevant to the target population in your agency.

Screening and Testing Adult Learners

The effectiveness of any literacy program largely depends on how well it addresses the needs of its adult learners and community. Standardized tests are often used because they are easy to administer to groups, require minimal training for the test administrator, and have documented reliability (consistency of results over time) and validity (the test measures it says it measures).[9]

Assessment or screening tests in literacy programs allow tutors and program administrators to objectively evaluate learners on the four components of literacy: reading, writing, comprehension, and pronunciation.

The results of the assessments can help determine the proper placement for adult learners into groups based on skill level; serve as a common tool to measure learners' progress over time; and determine individualized need for instruction or review.

There are several key principles to consider when developing assessment tools and procedures:

- Clearly identify the purpose of the assessment (why the adult learners are being assessed) and what learning is to be assessed (e.g., increased speaking proficiency).
- Select assessment instruments and procedures that match the program's learning goals (e.g., an oral interview to show progress in speaking skills, writing samples to show progress in writing) and that engage adult learners so they are interested and will strive to do their best.
- Whenever possible, use multiple measures to present a more complete picture of what has been learned.
- Ensure that adequate resources are available to carry out the assessments (e.g., adequate materials, comfortable environment, trained administrators and scorers).
- Be aware of the limitations of the assessments selected.
- Remember that assessment is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Share assessment results with adult learners and instructors, as well as with administrative staff and funders and the results as a basis for decisions.[10]

As mentioned above, an assessment should be multifaceted, involving exercises that measure the four components of literacy. VPEP initially used an adult learner assessment that was based on a tool developed by the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia. The tool was composed of several exercises: writing basic personal information (first name, last name, employer); writing letters of the alphabet; identifying letters at random; and reading nonsense words. These exercises were designed to measure the learners' skill levels in the four competencies, as well as their ability to follow spoken directions in English. This assessment was used to help VPEP place the learners in either the high beginner or low beginner class. As the VPEP evolved, however, a second assessment was developed to refine the process and provide more specific information on the learners' skill levels. (*See Appendix*)

There are several key points to note when conducting an assessment with a non-native English speaker:

- Give the adult learners enough time to answer the questions; they may be nervous, concerned about appearing to "fail," embarrassed about their accent, or otherwise uncomfortable.
- Encourage the learners to continue their efforts; be supportive of their attempts whether or not they are answering correctly
- Speak at a natural speed. If the learner struggles to understand the volunteer, note it as part of the assessment
- Be mindful of the vocabulary used to conduct the assessment; keep language clear and simple
- Note whether the learners were able to respond to questions in full sentences, phrases or just yes/no

Literacy programs may consider drafting their own assessment tool or use one of several standardized tests available for purchase. Among the most common evaluations for adult literacy adult learners are the Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT, http://www.slosson.com/index.html), the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE, http://www.ctb.com), and products available from Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (http://www.casas.org).

There is also a need to engage in continuous evaluation of adult learner progress. In the VPEP, various forms of review are embedded

within the classes. These may include warm-up exercises that go over the previous day's activities or closing exercises that review the current day's activities. The reviews engage learners in reading, writing and demonstrating comprehension of the lessons' topics. The reviews help the instructors identify topics and points that require additional development and identify learners who may require one-on-one instruction or support. In late December 2009, VPEP began using the OPD curriculum's assessments to establish learners' baseline knowledge at the beginning of new curriculum units and then again at the completion of the unit to measure achievement. These informal

"testing" methods may help avoid some of the anxiety that can result from more traditional testing, which can be uncomfortable for adult learners who may have little formal education. Furthermore, many of these learners may be somewhat apprehensive about the idea of being "tested" in a work environment, fearing that poor results may affect their employment status. For these reasons, it is advisable to use multiple approaches – screening, informal evaluation, and at times some thoughtful quantitative testing – to provide a well-rounded picture of each adult learners' strengths, challenges and progress.

Recruiting Volunteer Tutors

Many of the considerations given to recruiting potential adult learners also apply to recruiting volunteer tutors. Where do the potential volunteers work and what areas do they frequent? What media, such as a newsletter or website, exist within the agency to communicate with a large, diverse population of employees? How might a literacy program make volunteering an attractive option for employees, perhaps by connecting the effort to the agency's mission? What details can the program provide that would encourage employees to participate (ex: recognition for volunteer work)?

Once a literacy program has identified potential volunteers, the recruiting effort should include preliminary steps that are designed to communicate expectations and requirements to tutors, as well as provide an opportunity for training, all in service of attracting and retaining committed volunteers. Quantity will not trump quality when it comes to adult literacy education. Also, rapid tutor turnover, poor instruction or unreliable scheduling will quickly erode adult learners' commitment to a literacy program. Rather than wait for problems to arise, it is important to build a robust recruiting effort that results in a reliable, informed tutor cadre.

PROCESS STEPS

Program Announcement & Information
Create a hard-copy announcement or web page that includes the following information:
- An overview of your program and mission statement to give potential tutors a sense of the program's values and goals. This may also include background information on the targeted adult learner population and the needs assessment that supported the creation of the program.
- Information on the role of the volunteer, including time commitments, class locations, scheduling, communication requirements, lesson planning and attendance-keeping requirements, materials, and average class size. This section may also include a description of the range of learners' literacy levels.
- If your program is going to include a training component, outline the details and requirements here.
- Volunteer application (optional)
- Organization Chart:
  o Contact information of persons in leadership/coordinator positions
  o Whom to contact when in need of assistance with an issue
  o Leadership positions that are available/vacant
- Volunteer Guidelines
  o The development and sharing of informal volunteer guidelines (*See*

Appendix) will assist recruiters in determining which volunteers are able to commit to the needs and requirements of the program before the volunteer begins to tutor. This pre-instruction step will help reduce the chances of recruiting individuals who ultimately are unable or unwilling to put forth the effort needed to maintain a reliable program.

Read and agree to volunteer guidelines

Designate a Volunteer Coordinator(s) and Others to Address Recruitment Needs
The coordinator(s) will be:
- A resource for volunteers
- Responsible for outreach efforts and responding to prospective volunteers
- Responsible for providing all training and orientation materials to the new volunteers
- Responsible for tracking volunteer retention; conducting exit interviews

Volunteer Recruitment & Training Cycle
Volunteers will:
- Submit a volunteer application (optional)
- Interview with the designated program volunteer
  o In the VPEP, these interviews are critical in making early determinations about the suitability of an individual to the task of working with adult learners. This discussion also includes a conversation about the expectations of the program.
- Begin shadowing/co-teaching with experienced tutors
- Attend Volunteer Orientation
  o VPEP conducted its first new tutor orientation session in the fall of 2009. The two-hour session covered the mission and background of the VPEP; offered a profile of the adult learners and their literacy goals; explained volunteer requirements; reviewed program logistics; and introduced our materials and curricula.
- Attend professional development seminars
  o VPEP is in the process of developing bimonthly seminars on topics related to teaching techniques.

Conduct Outreach
- Utilize existing networks and listservs, such as Presidential Management Fellowship and other federal intern and/or alumni groups, to identify potential volunteers.
- Reach prospective volunteers via email, websites, agency newsletters or other internal news media
- Post an internal webpage with up-to-date information on the literacy program's monthly meetings, social events, special curriculum dates, and program achievements.
- Post teaching and training resources on a shared website

Evaluate Volunteers & Measure Retention
- Create a survey to administer after recruitment and training to determine where improvements are needed and where the program was useful/successful
- Gather volunteer retention statistics, including why volunteers leave the program. Establish a benchmark for ideal retention.
- Track volunteer training and attendance at all-hands meetings.

Training Volunteer Tutors

At VPEP, all volunteer instructors have had access to free, basic training provided by our grantor, the Maryland Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL). The courses were held at NIH and videotaped for tutors who could not attend. The suggested shadowing and co-teaching for all new volunteers, as mentioned above, also provides hands-on training experience. In addition, the VPEP is

developing regularly scheduled professional development seminars to ensure that volunteers are able to continually hone their skills and have a forum to ask questions and learn from one another. The goal is to hold training sessions every other month (for a total of six per year) to provide volunteers with training in a new skill, technique, concept or theory. A portion of the sessions will be

dedicated to discussing any issues going on in the classroom and lessons learned.

Meeting/Training Attendance

All volunteers will be highly encouraged to attend the meetings. VPEP's volunteer guidelines suggest that volunteers attend at least four of the six meetings. The meetings will be staggered as to the start time, meeting location, and day of the week in order to maximize attendance. It is important to note, however, that scheduling conflicts, work responsibilities and other constraints will likely mean that many volunteers will be unable to attend all of these meetings. Still, the more timely, useful and engaging the sessions are, the more likely that volunteers will make an effort to incorporate the meetings into their schedules. An agenda with the topic and location will be sent to the group in advance.

Program

The Professional Development Coordinator(s) will set the agenda and conduct the meetings. Following is a suggested program format:

Teaching a technique
- Work with other literacy organizations to find resources and experts/guest speakers to supplement the program
- Provide refresher trainings on the techniques learned in the previous trainings. A current volunteer can demonstrate how they use a current technique and what works for them.

Roundtable Discussion
- Discuss teaching issues, volunteer questions, and other topics relevant to improving the classroom environment.

Setting the Agenda
- Allow the volunteers to have input into what is addressed in upcoming sessions and roundtable discussions

Group Leadership

Creative, ethical, flexible and decisive leadership is a key to sustaining a workplace literacy program. As mentioned earlier, there are several important characteristics of literacy education team leaders and tasks that responsible, committed volunteers can undertake. As the program continues, all volunteers, especially those in leadership positions, must work to establish a clear vision of success as well as model the behaviors and values that undergird the literacy program.

To ensure the long-term viability of the literacy program, leaders and volunteers should:

- Consistently operate with transparency and accountability toward volunteer tutors, other Agency staff and program partners so that there is continuity between the program's stated goals and standards and its actual work and conduct;
- Consider the bigger picture, including changing constraints and opportunities within the Agency, with a view towards practical short- and long-range planning;
- Engage in and facilitate thoughtful, clear and respectful communication with volunteer tutors, adult learners and other Agency personnel. Through regular and open communication, the program will be able to quickly identify and address questions as well as strengths and weaknesses;
- Hold each other the same agreed-upon, openly stated standards of performance and commitment. Feelings of resentment, jealousy, unfairness, and confusion can undermine the success of volunteer-dependent programs;
- Set the pace with an optimistic outlook, energy, clear-spoken manner, inclusiveness, and respectfulness;
- Recognize and value each team member's contribution;
- Acknowledge mistakes and use them as a tool for learning and innovation. Engage in

team problem-solving to generate creative options for changes and improvements; and
- Apply the same philosophy to conflict – healthy debate and disagreement, conducted in a safe space where criticism and expressions of emotion are supported, can be a resource for positive change. Welcome a diversity of opinions and the possibilities that multiple perspectives may foster.[11]

Other considerations for federal workplace programs

Certain aspects of the federal setting, specifically the frequency of staffing and leadership changes, also may affect the way the program's leadership is enacted and maintained. Transitions in Agency leadership and personnel resulting from political or fiscal changes are quite common in public agencies. Literacy programs that draw on volunteers from Agency ranks may lose staff due to these human resource decisions. For that reason, there is an even greater need to establish consistency in the program, create clear requirements and directives for leadership functions, and establish standards of practice for leaders and other volunteers. These policies and procedures will help ensure that the workplace literacy program at your Agency survives changes in leadership and staffing, including changes in Agency executives and officers.

When there are changes at the top of the Agency, literacy program leaders also must be committed to educating new executives about the mission of and need for a workplace literacy program. This type of education and 'marketing' may need to be undertaken on several occasions as new individuals assume top roles within the Agency. Ultimately, the goal of this outreach is to institutionalize the literacy program within your organization and attract sustained support that can weather changes in the Agency's organizational chart.

Keeping Records

Federal employees are familiar with the task of record maintenance. For a literacy program, records serve several purposes. Attendance records may be needed to provide data to funders/supporters; correlate attendance with adult learner progress; and identify trends in learner attendance that might signal a scheduling conflict. Maintaining a schedule of learner evaluation (informal or formal) can assist tutors in tracking learner progress in achieving their short- and long-term goals. Evaluation records are also critical when seeking grant funding.

Another type of record to consider is a survey of adult learner feedback. VPEP is discussing the idea of establishing a learner survey that will capture both qualitative and quantitative data about the program and learners' progress in achieving their goals. Since one of our key aims is to help learners become more active in their local community and the NIH workforce, we may ask the learners to report whether they have increased their participation in these areas. We also expect to request feedback on their satisfaction with the VPEP and their reflections about their own sense of confidence and proficiency with their English literacy skills. Such a survey should be conducted at regular intervals to generate

longitudinal data as well as important information on areas of the program that are working or require improvement.

VPEP currently maintains its records using a free online file-sharing, project management and communication program called Huddle (www.huddle.net). Within this space, we maintain lesson discussion boards in which tutors share what they covered each day, report on the learners' achievements, note where challenges remain, and make recommendations on what to focus on in subsequent sessions. The online space also houses our attendance records, allows us to post and edit VPEP documents including grant applications, and provides the opportunity to share important documents. The website also allows volunteers to post questions, substitution requests and other messages without filling up other tutors' email inboxes, a major convenience for all in our email-based workplaces. There are various "virtual collaboration" programs available to the public; some are free and others are fee-based. It may also be useful to contact your agency's Information Technology department to explore whether your organization already has a file-sharing program that a literacy program could access.

Supporting Volunteer Communication

It is vital that volunteers and program organizers remain in constant contact. This is especially true in a program like VPEP, in which there are multiple volunteers teaching the same adult learners in several locations. Communicating via the online collaboration site, as well as email, phone conversations and staff meetings, allows the group to coordinate its activities, troubleshoot problems before they worsen, schedule meetings, and plan for the short- and long-term in a consensus-based manner. In addition, our communication also

focuses on skill-building by providing forums for volunteers to share new techniques, brainstorm on how to resolve difficult problems, and generate ideas for how to improve the quality and consistency of our instruction. We ask that volunteers maintain regular communication via our online file-sharing site and, when necessary, email and phone. Indeed, this requirement is strongly emphasized during the initial interview and shadow-teaching phases of volunteer recruitment.

Volunteers' Continued Learning

Supplemental training will assist tutors throughout their work as volunteers. Continuing

education can be obtained in numerous ways, but the most commonly utilized methods are

on-site training, in which teachers instruct volunteers in a classroom setting; and virtual training, in which tutors access online tutorials on their own schedule.

Classroom-style programs can be conducted in a variety of ways, from a day of intensive training to a series of short sessions over a longer timeframe. A literacy program can bring an instructor on-site and conduct training in the workplace, schedule training in another location, or suggest or require that volunteers attend classes held by local literacy programs. To illustrate the latter example, the Literacy Council of Montgomery County, Md., the Washington Literacy Council, and the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia are local non-profit organizations dedicated to helping adults in the Washington, D.C., metro region learn to speak, read, write and understand English. These programs may be willing to conduct training for volunteers from your agency, or allow your tutors to attend their trainings without taking on a registered adult learner. As part of a grant received from the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL), VPEP tutors received six hours of free training at NIH. The trainings were conducted at NIH after work hours. MCAEL also offers complimentary

training for volunteers and instructors in Montgomery County. Literacy organizations in many locations also provide free instruction.

However, scheduled trainings on-site or off-site may be inconvenient for some tutors, and others might prefer self-directed programs rather than classroom settings. For these volunteers, online training may be a better alternative. There also are many online resources that offer forums on literacy tutoring techniques, alternate lesson plans, and other useful tools to aid volunteers in improving their skills, developing innovative lesson plans, and understanding the needs of adult adult learners. Some of these resources are free, while others are available for a fee. Several organizations offer clearinghouses of resources for literacy tutors and program leaders: the California Teachers of English to Students of Other Languages (www.catesol.org); the Pennsylvania Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (www.able.state.pa.us); the Center for the Advancement of Adult Literacy (www.caalusa.org); and the National Institute for Literacy (www.nifl.gov). MCAEL offers a teacher toolkit ; joining the MCAEL listserv provides access to information such as new online learning spaces and websites.

Short- and Long-Range Planning

During the first few months, volunteers in newly established literacy programs will likely focus a good deal of their efforts on recruiting teachers and setting up program logistics. It is important to address these needs early on – they are the basis of a stable and effective program. However, amid the excitement of the first few months, it is equally important to maintain an eye towards long-term goals for the adult learners, teachers, and the program.

Following is a description of how VPEP volunteers initiated and engaged in short- and long-term planning during the initial growth period. Volunteers held lunchtime meetings approximately every two weeks and maintained regular email communication, which permitted the teachers to discuss and

settle on the basic logistics of the program. However, from the outset, the objective of the program was to serve as many adult learners as possible in the NIH community. Thus, early in the program's organization, efforts were undertaken to outline long-term goals, develop a program description, secure a source of funds to purchase books and other materials, and examine strategies for expanding teaching services to other buildings of the NIH extended campus. These initial planning efforts provided a strong foundation on which to expand the VPEP. As with any new program, VPEP encountered unexpected obstacles and difficulties, such as maintaining communication among volunteers and developing an effective curriculum. Indeed, that work is still ongoing. But our clearly defined goals and objectives

allowed us to identify and resolve emerging issues and, at the same time, develop plans to proactively address problems and strive to prevent future conflicts.

What follows is an ideal planning outline that may be modified to accommodate the priorities and time constraints of your organization. Although situations are seldom *ideal,* the thrust of the plan is to encourage literacy volunteers to think carefully about how to develop a program and ensure it is well-resourced. In other words, it is the process, as well as the final plan, that is important. Finally, note that planning should be a continual process of reassessment and evaluation throughout the course of the program.

Short-term Planning
Below are recommended steps to establish short-term plans.
- *Establishing a planning team* – Initially, your planning team might just be the handful of teachers or program staff. Once the program has been established, it might be wise to establish a leadership team with roles and responsibilities, including ongoing planning and program refinement.
- *Conducing needs assessments* – What is discovered through needs assessment should dictate all other aspects of planning
- *Development core goals and objectives* – What is the mission and vision for the group? What are the long-term goals and short-term objectives? Establishing these upfront will dictate most of the program characteristics and will guide ongoing planning efforts.
- *Establishing key program characteristics* – What type of program will best serve the target population, address the needs identified, and fulfill agreed upon goals? The development of specific program characteristics is addressed in several sections of this manual and might include:
  - Establishing requirements for Volunteer Tutors
  - Establishing class locations and times

- Identifying curriculum and teaching materials
- Recruiting adult learners and volunteer tutors
- Basic processes and policies – Adult learner attendance, classroom etiquette, record keeping, etc.
- Adult learner assessment and level placement
- *Teacher and class coordination strategies*
- *Securing necessary funds for start-up* – A financial and budget-keeping strategy should also be developed for the long-term

Long-term Planning
Short-term planning might be essential for getting a program off-the ground and running, but long-term planning is critical for ensuring the program's sustainability. Below are different areas that may take more time to develop and/or implement but that will help you develop a robust literacy program.

- *Program leadership and group protocol*
  - *Establishing a leadership model* – Small programs, with a small number of staff, may be able to make decisions via open discussion and consensus. However, if your program is big or expands significantly, it may be necessary to examine whether or not it requires a leadership structure and a voting process to implement program decisions and changes.
  - *Roles and responsibilities* – Large programs may want to assign different volunteers to different roles or ask individuals to volunteer for specific tasks.
  - *Volunteer guidelines for tutors* – These guidelines need not be mandatory but can ease the orientation of new volunteers to the program and enhance its long-term strength. Topics that may be included in volunteer agreements may include classroom etiquette, expected tasks, and protocols.

- *Continual assessment of program and adult learner progress* - How to monitor and track adult learner progress.
- *Establish a long-term financial plan* - Explore various financial resources. It is important to remember that most sources of funding may last a few years and require re-competition. Thus, it may be necessary to continually evaluate financial needs and to look for avenues of support. A financial plan may help determine which organizations could be approached for funding and what activities may help in securing donations or contributions.
- *Expansion strategies and plans* – Expansion might be a long-term goal of your program. If so, you may want to consider how you will recruit and orient new teachers and adult learners, identify and secure new class locations, and ensure the volunteers communicate, adhere to program guidelines, and operate in a coordinated fashion.
- *Teacher development* – Volunteer literacy programs rely on volunteers and not teaching professionals. As such, your program may want to develop opportunities for tutors to improve their teaching skills through training and tutor development seminars.

Finance and Budget – Constraints and Opportunities in Federal Agencies

The financial needs of a workplace literacy program will vary depending on several factors, including whether the group has to pay for classroom space, materials, training and other necessities. Organizations can apply for grants from outside funders, or agency resources. However, according to 5 CFR § 950, federal employees can only engage in fundraising activities in the federal workplace under the annual Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) or for the promotion of federal savings bonds. CFC-designated recipients must be approved by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, which requires that the Internal Revenue Service recognize the recipient as a 501(c)(3), or charity, organization.

VPEP has few operating expenses. Courses are held in donated empty conference rooms and underutilized space. VPEP currently has no direct administrative costs and thus has no need to solicit donations or pursue the steps needed to become a charitable organization and become eligible for inclusion in the CFC. VPEP applied for and received a grant from the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy in 2009 to cover the cost of workbooks for adult learners, lesson plan books for tutors, classroom materials, and photocopying and printing costs. As mentioned above, VPEP works with the NIH-NOAA Recreation & Welfare Foundation, Inc. (R&W) to manage monies received through grants. R&W sponsors the project, which requires a written agreement representing the voluntary transfer of money by a sponsor in exchange for specifically enumerated performance of activities. The R&W also can receive financial gifts on behalf of VPEP. Gifts are irrevocable transfers of assets made by a donor without any expectation or receipt of benefit or tangible compensation from the recipient commensurate with the worth of the gift. To date, VPEP has not solicited for financial gifts.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is defined as the task of collecting information about a program, or one component of it, and analyzing that data to determine if the program is still aligned with its stated mission. If discrepancies are identified, then the program can choose how and whether to make any changes. There are myriad evaluation methods. The approach that is selected should be based upon key factors such as: why the program is being evaluated; the audience that will review the information; what information is needed; and who will provide the information. Some of the most popular forms of program evaluation include goals- or needs-based evaluations, process-based evaluations, outcome-based evaluations, formative evaluations, and summative evaluations. These evaluations are briefly described below:

- *Goals/Needs-Based Evaluation*: Many programs are developed to meet a specific need or goal. These type of evaluations aim to ensure that the goal/need is being fulfilled. In order for a program to use goals/needs-based evaluations they must have predetermined goals and objectives, otherwise the information will be biased.
- *Process-Based Evaluation*: This type of evaluation is usually designed to promote full and thorough understanding of how a program works. This is more often used for programs that have been around for a long time and may experienced many changes. Many of the questions asked are focused on processes, such as the requirements of the clients, the delivery of the product and services, and how improvements are identified and implemented.
- *Outcome-Based Evaluation*: This evaluation examines whether the processes and program activities being done are bringing the desired outcomes. Outcomes are usually defined as the benefits that the clients receive as a result of participating in the program.
- *Formative Evaluation*: This is aimed towards improving a program and can be used as an accompaniment to outcome evaluation. These evaluations usually involve small groups that "test" various program material, e.g. a small group of literacy adult learners may rate the use of activities in the classroom. This type of evaluation has become the recommended method of evaluation for in U.S. education
- *Summative Evaluation*: This method focuses on the assessment of learning and the development of the participating adult learners. Often, this method is used by a supervisor to determine the level of productivity of their staff.

Data Collection Methods
Each of the evaluation methods can use a number of instruments for data collection. These tools can be used alone or as part of a package to provide needed quantitative and/or qualitative data. Some of the data collection methods include:

- Questionnaires/Surveys: Forms that can obtain information easily and quickly in a non-threatening manner.
- Interviews: A conversational exchange that can provide a detailed understanding of someone's experiences or opinions.
- Documentation Review – Provides an impression of how a program operates without interrupting the program. Review all relevant documentation, such as teaching materials, graded assignments, classroom notes, and surveys of adult learner expectations.
- Observation: This non-obtrusive method can provide an accurate picture of how the program operates on a daily basis.
- Focus Groups: Allows for in-depth discussions about the programs, areas that need improvement, and possible solutions.
- Case Studies: Provides in-depth understanding of the adult learners' perceptions.
- Needs Assessment: An exploration of the current program and what needs to be done

Fostering Commitment – of Tutors, Adult Learners and Agency Leaders
Once you have secured the tutors, adult learners, and leaders for your program, how do you sustain that commitment? What steps are necessary to cement the budding relationships and encourage participation for the long term? Here are some suggestions on steps to take to help build interpersonal bonds and trust, foster a sense of ownership of and pride in the program, and generate goodwill and inspiration for adult learners and tutors.

Adult learners:
- Host an annual volunteer recognition ceremony that celebrates the accomplishments of your learners.
- Highlight learners' accomplishments in a visible manner, such as by presenting achievement certificates for each level of

success as outlined in the learners' individual development plans.

- Provide bookmarks to each learner with your program or agency's logo and an inspirational poem.
- Create a festive social event per month, such as "Ice Cream Thursday," "Pizza Tuesday," or "Hot Tea/Warm Cocoa/Tasty Coffee Monday."
- Have a drawing each month where one learner can win a new book (this will encourage additional reading and improvement of their literacy skills).
- Provide framed inspirational quotes to each learner.
- Organize a volunteer activity, perhaps once per quarter, for the learners and tutors to participate in as a group (i.e. Race for the Cure) to encourage teambuilding and volunteerism).

Tutors:
- Host an annual volunteer recognition ceremony that celebrates your tutors' achievements (April is National Volunteer Appreciation Month)
- Conduct a volunteer tutor retreat (select a weekend day to review processes, discuss challenges and achievements, plan future activities, and share ideas for next steps).
- Purchase and distribute "Thank You" candy bars to tutors that feature an image of the

tutors and adult learners and your program's logo.
- Provide small clock with a card reading: "Thanks for the gift of your time."
- Provide small globes with the words: "Volunteers Make a World of Difference."
- Create a festive social event per month "Ice Cream Thursday," "Pizza Tuesday," or "Hot Tea/Warm Cocoa/Tasty Coffee Monday."
- Have a drawing each month where one tutor can win a training from a literacy education provider (this will encourage tutors to improve their teaching skills).
- Provide framed inspirational quotes to each tutor.
- Invite the tutors to recommend volunteer activities and participate as a group.

Leaders:
- Nominate your volunteers for consideration as recipient of the government service or agency-specific recognition.

Sample Intake Assessment Form

Name: _____   Date:_____

Level: _____

_____

Please read the alphabet. *(note: Instructor then asks adult learner to identify and write six specific letters.)*

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

_____

Please read the numbers. *(note: Instructor then asks adult learner to identify and write six specific numbers.)*

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

_____

Introductory Information

    Colors **-** Select the correct color that is shown in the picture.
    1.

        a. Blue
        b. Pink
        c. Green
        d. Yellow

2.

    a. Orange
    b. Gray
    c. Brown
    d. Black

3.

    a. Black
    b. Blue
    c. Gray
    d. White

Feelings – Select the correct emotion that matches the picture shown.

1.
    a. Happy
    b. Sad
    c. Angry
    d. Confused

2.
    a. Surprised
    b. Happy
    c. Shy
    d. Sad

3.

   a. Confused
   b. Angry
   c. Scared
   d. Happy

4.

   a. Bored
   b. Happy
   c. Scared
   d. Shy

Verb Tense – Please select the appropriate form of the verb.

1. Alana needed vegetables from the store so she grabbed her car keys so that she could
   _____ to the store.
   a. Driving
   b. Drive
   c. Drove
   d. Sing

2. Since Kelly's right hand was broken, she _____ her entire paper with her left
   hand.
   a. Wrote
   b. Write
   c. Writing
   d. Wear

3. Caroline was hungry so she _____ a sandwich.
   a. Eat
   b. Eating
   c. Ate
   d. Feed

Sample Volunteer Agreement

Volunteer Program for English Proficiency (VPEP)
National Institutes of Health
Volunteer Agreement

The purpose of this agreement is to set out shared expectations for VPEP volunteers. Nothing in this agreement may be considered mandatory, however, adherence to the items listed below will greatly enhance the strength of our program, improve our ability to best serve our adult learner population, and contribute to the long-term viability of the VPEP. This is a living document; as the program evolves, the VPEP Executive Committee will modify, add or delete items to ensure that the agreement remains appropriate and useful.

Volunteers will:

1. Attend at least four of six bi-monthly Teaching and Technique sessions

2. Strive to consistently tutor no less than one day per week, and be encouraged to tutor more than one day per week

3. Show up on time (no later than 11:30am) for class sessions, prepared with curriculum materials and supplies; be prepared to remain for entire class period (until approximately 12:30pm) and straighten up the classroom space for the next user. (Note: Some classes off-campus may begin at different times, but the process will remain the same.)

4. Remain in communication with the VPEP through the Huddle website:
    a. Post class reviews no later than 9am of the day following the volunteer's tutoring session (ex: If a volunteer tutors on Tuesday, he/she will post a review of the lesson no later than 9am on Wednesday)
    b. Immediately alert your Building Coordinator if you will be unable to teach on a specific day
    c. Assist in finding a substitute to fill in on the day you will be absent

5. Take attendance during each class session and post the results in the appropriate spreadsheet on Huddle no later than 9am the following day

6. Begin as a "shadowing" tutor for at least four class sessions

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