Accelerating Opportunity: Kansas

KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS (KBOR)
AO-K Handbook
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I. Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

ABE: Adult Basic Education, also called Adult Education and Literacy (AEL), non-credit courses for adults to build skills and knowledge

AEFLA: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and one of the six core programs authorized by WIOA

AO-K: Accelerating Opportunity: Kansas, a partnership between the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) and the Kansas Department of Commerce to deliver career and technical education at the same time as adult basic skills instruction within a career pathways framework

AO-K Proviso: A tuition reimbursement program (similar to Excel in CTE) funded by legislative appropriations to encourage institutions to work with those without a high school diploma or equivalent. Must be an approved AO-K college to participate. Pays the full composite rate for tiered courses in approved AO-K pathways.

AY: Academic Year, defined as consecutive SUMMER + FALL + SPRING terms (e.g., Summer '24 + Fall '24 + Spring '25 = AY25)

CCRS: College and Career Readiness Standards, a set of English language/literacy and mathematics standards that reflect the content most relevant to preparing adult students for success in colleges, technical training programs, work, and citizenship

CIP code: Classification of Instructional Programs, a taxonomy of academic programs development by the U.S. Department of Education

CTE: Career and Technical Education, designed to help all students acquire challenging academic and technical skills and be prepared for high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand occupations in the 21st century global economy

Cross-TREK: Cross-Teaching Remote Education in Kansas is a distance education platform that allows learners in one location to be taught by an instructor in another location

EFL: Educational Functioning Level, the skill level of adult learners as defined by the National Reporting System (NRS) and measured with a standardized assessment such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE®); there are six levels for Adult Basic Education (ABE) or Adult Secondary Education (ASE) students and another six levels for English as a Second Language (ESL) students

ELA: English Language Acquisition, programs or courses designed to assist English Language Learners (ELLs); this term is preferred over "English as a Second Language" since many multilingual students are learning English as a third, fourth, or other language

ELL: English Language Learner, an individual learning English as a non-native language

FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid, the form to apply for federal student aid

FY: Fiscal Year, a 12-month period used for budget and accounting purposes. The state fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30 of the following year and is named for the calendar year in which it ends (e.g., July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, is state Fiscal Year 2025).

GED®: General Educational Development, covering four subjects: Math, Science, Social Studies, and Reasoning Through Language Arts

HSE: High School Equivalency, a secondary-school credential equivalent to a high-school diploma. In Kansas, adults have two methods of obtaining a Kansas State High School Diploma, either by passing the GED® Test or by completing the requirements of the Kansas Pathway to Career.

I-BEST: Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training, an IET model developed by the state of Washington that has been used as the basis for many other IET programs across the nation

IET: Integrated Education and Training (IET) is a program model that combines adult education, workforce preparation, and occupational training to enhance participants' readiness for in-demand careers. As guided by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), IET includes three required components delivered concurrently and contextually: literacy and/or numeracy instruction, workforce preparation, and industry-specific training. Programs may use various funding sources, including Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) where appropriate, to meet local workforce needs and ensure equitable career pathways for all participants.

KBOR: Kansas Board of Regents, the governing board of the state's six universities and the statewide coordinating board for the state's 32 public higher education institutions (six state universities, one municipal university, nineteen community colleges, and six technical colleges). In addition, the Board administers the state's student financial aid, adult education, high school equivalency, and career and technical education programs.

KHEDS: Kansas Higher Education Data System, the information management system for higher education in Kansas

LACES: Literacy, Adult, and Community Education System, the information management system for Adult Education in Kansas

MSG: Measurable Skill Gain, a reportable attainment of skills for WIOA Title II participants. MSGs can be attained in several ways, detailed in the Measurable Skill Gain section.

NRS: National Reporting System, the accountability system for federally funded WIOA Title II programs

OCTAE: Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, the office of the U.S. Department of Education that administers and coordinates programs that are related to adult education and literacy, career and technical education, and community colleges.

Pell: A Pell Grant is a federal subsidy awarded to students for postsecondary education. Pell Grants are awarded based on financial need and, unlike student loans, do not have to be repaid except in rare instances.

Perkins V (Strengthening CTE for the 21st Century Act): A federal law authorizing grant funds dedicated to increasing learner access to high-quality career technical education (CTE) programs of study. The purpose is to develop, coordinate, implement, or improve CTE programs.

Special Collection: This optional data collection will help institutions prepare for the academic year collection. The academic year collection will be used to calculate funding eligibility on student credit hour production and other indicators for the Excel in CTE and AO-K Proviso (2021 Kansas Session Laws, Ch. 116, Sec. 47(a) and Sec. 48(c))

TABE®: Test of Adult Basic Education, the assessment system used to measure skills and knowledge of Adult Education learners in WIOA Title II programs

TABE CLAS-E®: Comprehensive Language Assessment System – English, the assessment system used to measure English language proficiency among English Language Learners (ELLs) in WIOA Title II programs

WIOA: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, signed into law on July 22, 2014, and designed to strengthen and improve our nation's public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers

I. Introduction

Accelerating Opportunity: Kansas (AO-K) is an integrated education and training (IET) model delivered in partnership between adult education and career technical education (CTE) programs. AO-K is designed to help students complete career pathways, earn industry-recognized credentials, and begin their careers. Career pathways are approved career technical education programs at Kansas's public community and technical colleges in which:

- Courses are team-taught with a basic skills instructor
- AO-K pathways are a minimum of 12 credit hours in a high-demand and high-wage occupation
- Institutions provide wraparound support services, including, but not limited to, advising, transition coaching, and assistance in connecting to community resources
- Supplemental instruction is provided

Nationally, IET programs such as AO-K have been proven to help students earn more credit hours, complete programs, and succeed where they may have otherwise struggled.

This handbook serves as a guide for institutions and practitioners in Kansas who wish to implement the AO-K model on their campuses and support their students working toward earning CTE credentials and degrees.

II. Student Qualifications

Qualifications

AO-K is designed to support low-skilled students as each student pursues a chosen career pathway. To determine student eligibility, institutions must use the following criteria:

A) The student does not have a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate *and*
B) The student is adequately prepared to succeed in an AO-K pathway. KBOR recommends students only be placed into an AO-K pathway if they score into an Educational Functioning Level (EFL) of NRS ABE Level 3 or above or NRS ESL Level 5 or above. Programs may place lower-scoring students into an AO-K pathway based on the assessment of the adult education program, but this should be done only with the approval and documentation of the adult education director.

*A student qualifies for adult education if

1) The student does not have a high-school diploma, *or*
2) The student is an English language learner, *or*
3) The student tests into the adult education range using the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) 13&14 or the TABE Complete Language Assessment System – English (CLAS-E).

Note: While the AO-K model is designed to help underprepared students succeed, AO-K students do not require their own course sections. KBOR encourages the implementation of the AO-K model into all classes, where appropriate, regardless of the presence of students who do not qualify for adult education. Although present in the classroom, these students would not be entered as adult education students in the Literacy, Adult, and Community Education System (LACES).

Requirements

Students enrolled in an AO-K pathway must maintain concurrent enrollment in supplemental, contextualized adult education courses, as applicable. This may include enrollment in distance education, Cross-TREK, or other adult education services provided by local programs.

III. AO-K Pathways

AO-K pathways must be a minimum of twelve (12) credit hours. Apart from healthcare (which is a grouping of courses), all pathways must be a currently approved exit point for an existing CTE program at the institution. Healthcare pathway courses must be updated and submitted to the Kansas Board of Regents annually.

Career Pathway Requirements

Institutions seeking AO-K pathway approval must submit a pathway application, providing additional information on the co-facilitated courses, adult education activities, workforce preparation activities, and occupational training provided to pathway participants. A minimum of 25% of the entire pathway, based on credit hours, must be co-facilitated. Co-facilitation of more than 25% is encouraged. (Note: This is a minimum of 25% of the *pathway*, not of each class. Co-facilitation should occur at the points most beneficial to students.) Pathways should be reviewed every year and an updated application submitted, unless a program change necessitates a review earlier.

IV. AO-K Instruction

Curriculum Requirements

To properly implement the AO-K instructional model, CTE and adult education instructors must work together to develop a common set of learning objectives for co-taught courses within each AO-K pathway. These objectives should describe the integration of adult education content into the CTE classroom and how team teaching will deliver the content to students.

Pathway applications will include course syllabi and will also answer the following four questions:

1) What specific adult education and literacy content is taught during the program?
2) What specific workforce preparation activities are included in the AO-K program?
3) What occupational training is included in the AO-K program?
4) Who are the team teachers (CTE and adult education) for this pathway? Which team-teaching model(s) will be used?

Team-Teaching Models

Team teaching is a system in which two or more teachers work together to plan, conduct, and evaluate the integrated outcomes, curriculum, learning activities, and assessments for the same group of learners. Based on information by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), Kansas promotes the use of any of the six research-based team-teaching models listed. Links to example videos from SBCTC are included below.

Traditional Team Teaching – Teachers actively share instruction of all students.
Collaborative Teaching – Teachers exchange and discuss ideas and theories in front of learners.
Complementary/Supportive Team Teaching – One teacher teaches the content; the other provides follow-up activities.
Parallel Instruction – Teachers teach the same material to different groups.
Differentiated Split Class – Each teacher teaches a group based on their learning needs.
Monitoring Teacher – One teacher instructs while the other monitors student understanding.

The team-teaching model used when implementing the AO-K model may vary based on class, content, or student variables. There might be a combination of team-teaching models used in one class depending on the activity and lesson plan. More information on different team-teaching models and their implementation can be found on the Washington SBCTC website or during the periodic team-teacher training hosted by KBOR staff.

As noted under Student Qualifications, students who do not qualify for adult education may be in the same classroom as AO-K students. Both the CTE instructor and the adult education instructor are free to assist all students in the classroom, regardless of enrollment in the adult education program.

V. Career Navigation

Career navigation is an important aspect of the AO-K model. Career navigation services provide additional support to students outside of the classroom to help remove barriers to participation and completion. State standards for Career Navigators can be found on the KBOR website.

VI. High School Equivalency (HSE)

Learners should work toward earning the HSE while enrolled in the AO-K pathway. In Kansas, adult students have two options for earning the HSE: the GED® and the Kansas Pathway to Career. Those options are detailed below.

GED®

The primary option for students in Kansas to earn the HSE is through the GED®. The GED® consists of four tests that a student must pass, after which a Kansas State High School Diploma will be issued. More GED® information can be found on the KBOR website.

Kansas Pathway to Career (SB199)

The Kansas Pathway to Career is a high school equivalency option that uses completion of an AO-K pathway as part of the HSE criteria. For a list of participating institutions and qualifying AO-K pathways, please refer to the most recent Approved Credentials and Pathways list.

In addition to completing a designated AO-K pathway, students must meet the criteria outlined on the High School Equivalency Credential Requirements checklist. Once the student has completed all the established criteria, the adult education program must submit a completed checklist, supporting documentation, and a $25 payment to the designated Kansas Board of Regents staff member. Upon receipt of the required documentation, KBOR will verify and approve the student's application, and a Kansas State High School Diploma and transcript will be issued to the student by the Board of Regents' chosen vendor.

More information about these options is available through the local adult education program.

VII. Funding

This section provides an overview of the funding available for both students and institutions. The first part, Student Funding, focuses on the funding available to students to pay for the college courses in their selected AO-K pathway. The second section, State-Funded Tuition Reimbursement, provides information on tuition reimbursement programs that reimburse institutions for students who take qualifying courses. The third part, Institutional Funding, focuses on the funding available to individual institutions to pay the additional instructional costs incurred when implementing the AO-K model.

Student Funding

Students who already have a high-school diploma but still qualify for adult education may use federal financial aid to pay for the courses in their selected AO-K pathway, where applicable. These students should follow the

normal financial aid process at the institution, with the support of adult education or other Career Navigator resources.

State-Funded Tuition Reimbursement
The AO-K Proviso is a funding stream that funds tiered courses for AO-K students who do not have a high-school diploma. Tuition for these courses is waived by the institution, which then submits for reimbursement during the KHEDS special collection process.

The AO-K Proviso will pay tuition for students up through the end of the semester in which the student passes the GED® or obtains high-school equivalency, after which students are eligible for federal financial aid and other scholarships. If an AO-K student continues postsecondary courses after finishing the high-school equivalency process, institutions should assist the student with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or applying for scholarships so the student can use other funding to complete courses.

Example 1: A student who completes the high-school equivalency in September will have tuition paid through the end of that semester (generally ending in December).

Example 2: A student who completes the high-school equivalency in March will have tuition paid through the end of that semester (generally ending in May).

For additional information regarding financial aid and scholarships, contact the local postsecondary institution.

Institutional Funding
Implementing the AO-K model requires adding a second instructor to team teach selected CTE courses, increasing instructional costs. While there are often competing priorities for instructor time, team teaching in an AO-K program is an allowable and encouraged activity for adult education instructors. Institutions and their adult education programs should carefully assess the benefits provided to students using the AO-K model and determine how institutional funding, WIOA Title II funding, and other resources can be reorganized to allow current instructional staff to fill the needs of AO-K team teaching.

VIII. Data

Literacy, Adult, and Community Education System (LACES)
LACES is the student information system that contains all student demographic, attendance, testing, and outcome data for each Kansas adult education participant. LACES was developed to facilitate federal reporting and accurately track student participant data. As all AO-K students qualify for adult education, their information must be entered in LACES based on the guidelines in the LACES Manual.

Hours of attendance
Hours of attendance must be recorded and entered in LACES for all qualified AO-K students. Students may demonstrate attendance in several ways, including but not limited to:

1) CTE class time in which the adult education instructor is present
2) Out-of-class tutoring
3) Supplemental adult education classes
4) Distance education including clock time from distance-learning software approved by KBOR, or proxy hours using Learner Mastery or Teacher Verification (please see the Kansas WIOA Title II Assessment Policy)

Measurable Skill Gain (MSG)
There are multiple ways by which an AO-K student might demonstrate an MSG. There is no preference as to how a student earns an MSG.

Educational Functioning Level (EFL) Gain Through Posttesting (MSG 1a)
AO-K students may be posttested using the TABE or CLAS-E assessment when they have accumulated the number of attendance hours required by the Kansas WIOA Title II Assessment Policy. An increase of at least one Educational Functioning Level (EFL) on the posttest from the pretest will demonstrate MSG 1a.

Postsecondary Enrollment (MSG 1c)
MSG 1c is recorded upon enrollment in postsecondary education. Postsecondary enrollment must occur in the same program year as enrollment in adult education.

Passing One or More GED® Subject Tests (MSG 1d)
MSG 1d is recorded when a participant passes at least one GED® subject test (Math, Reasoning Through Language Arts, Science, or Social Studies). In the case of a participant's AO-K enrollment crossing fiscal years, it is possible the participant might pass some GED® subject tests in one fiscal year, earning MSG 1d, and the remaining subject tests in the next fiscal year, earning MSG 2.

Obtaining High School Equivalency (MSG 2)
For students without a high-school diploma, MSG 2 is recorded for students when they obtain their high school equivalency.

Progress on Transcript (MSG 3)
Participants enrolled in an Integrated Education and Training (IET) program can demonstrate an MSG by successfully completing 12 credit hours within a consecutive 12-month period. A paper or electronic copy of the transcript would be needed to document the skill gain.

Passing a Technical/Occupational Exam (MSG 5)
Participants enrolled in an Integrated Education and Training (IET) program can demonstrate an MSG by passing a technical or occupational knowledge-based exam.

Kansas Higher Education Data System (KHEDS)
KHEDS is the portal through which public postsecondary institutions in Kansas submit student data, business training and enrichment information, program inventory, course inventory, and courses within programs. Information entered in KHEDS supports informed decision-making and funding determinations through the collection, analysis, and reporting of Kansas postsecondary education data.

Special Collection
For detailed information on the KHEDS special collection, please refer to the KHEDS manual (must log in to KHEDS to access). Data verification between LACES and KHEDS is necessary when submitting for AO-K Proviso funding.

Social Security Number (SSN) or Unique ID
The most important aspect when submitting for funding through the AO-K Proviso is that students' Social Security Numbers match in both LACES and KHEDS. The SSN match is the basis for all data verification checks, and if the numbers do not match, no funding will be awarded.

For students who have provided a Social Security Number, institutions should check to ensure that no data-

entry or typographical errors have occurred in either system.

For students who do not provide a Social Security Number, adult education programs will assign a proxy SSN that begins with the letter A (A**-**-****). Edits are in place that will allow the postsecondary institution to submit the same number in the special collection documents, allowing for the match process between the two data systems to successfully run.

IX. AO-K Application

Complete the online AO-K application for automatic submission to KBOR. The application can also be accessed by scanning the QR code below: