



Education
Strategy
Group

New Adult-Ready Playbook Offers the First Comprehensive Framework to Re-Envision Higher Education for Post-Traditional Learners

Washington, D.C. (August 31, 2021) — Today, Education Strategy Group (ESG) released a new resource to guide higher education leaders through the changes needed to better serve learners over the age of 25. *The Accelerating Recovery through Credentials Adult-Ready Playbook* pulls together the most promising strategies for serving post-traditional learners into a single, comprehensive framework to re-envision education for this population. This is the second major resource created as part of ESG's Accelerating Recovery through Credentials initiative funded by Ascendium Education Group and the Kresge Foundation, following the *Rapid Response Toolkit* published earlier this year.

The dramatic shifts and pressures brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic—including the need for millions of individuals to upskill or reskill following displacement from their jobs—mean that now is the time to dramatically rethink higher education's approach to serving the post-traditional learner. During the pandemic, institutions, systems, and states moved quickly to adapt to new modes of course, operations, and service delivery, demonstrating nimbleness in the face of crises. This is a moment to reflect on the learning and adaptation that faculty, staff, administrators, and students have led and experienced during the pandemic and formalize this innovation through policies and new structures that better serve adult learners.

“Higher education credentials have never been more critical for economic mobility and opportunity,” said Matt Gandal, President and CEO of Education Strategy Group. “As a nation, we will not meet the demands of our economy without equipping people over the age of 25 with the education, training, and credentials they need to succeed, and that will require a commitment to this population and to the institutional innovations necessary to serve them in higher education. The availability of significant federal stimulus funding and potential new infrastructure investments make this a particularly opportune moment to ask ourselves which populations are being left out of higher education and training and to take dramatic steps toward equitable outcomes for all learners including post-traditional students.”



The new *Playbook* puts forward a holistic and reform-minded process that higher education leaders can use to refocus education and training systems and meet the needs of a very diverse population of adult learners; it can be used to harness lessons learned in order to achieve a more adult-ready system of higher education. This work is focused on five key priority areas for adult-ready transformation:

- 1) The **Accessibility** priority strives to intentionally address the pragmatic access, on-boarding, and progression questions that post-traditional learners tend to bring to postsecondary education;
- 2) The **Program Change** promotes strategies to ensure that post-traditional learners thrive and feel engaged within postsecondary classrooms by addressing approaches that shift the structure and delivery of courses and programs;
- 3) The **Operational Change** priority articulates strategies that enable post-traditional learners to more easily navigate postsecondary advising and administrative systems;
- 4) The **Data** priority suggests building capacity and standards to ensure post-traditional learners are effectively captured and monitored through data; and
- 5) The **Partnerships** priority recognizes the need to create deeper connections to industry and community to provide learners with an integrated learning experience from on-ramps through to off-ramps.

Following an introduction to the *Playbook* via the [Overview](#) and [User's Guide](#) documents, [states](#) and [institutions](#) leaders are encouraged to complete a self-assessment, one for states and one for institutions, to 1) assess the degree to which the key strategies have already been implemented and scaled, and 2) prioritize or re-prioritize actions within those strategies to deploy next. Based upon the results of the self-assessment, leaders can then dive into Action Guides that provide detailed strategies and key action steps for each of the five priority areas.

- [Action Guide: Accessibility](#)
- [Action Guide: Program Change](#)
- [Action Guide: Operational Change](#)
- [Action Guide: Data](#)
- [Action Guide: Partnerships](#)



Education
Strategy
Group

Leaders ultimately emerge from the planning process having identified immediate, high-leverage actions to implement on behalf of post-traditional learners, as well as a plan for improving upon these actions over time.

The full *Playbook* is available [here](#). Please contact Annie Phillips at aphillips@edstrategy.org with questions.

###

About Education Strategy Group

Education Strategy Group (ESG) works with America's education, business, and civic leaders to expand economic opportunity and mobility by increasing educational attainment. We are driven by the conviction that a robust education system aligned with workforce demands leads to a stronger, more equitable society.