

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) recently published three new “[WIOA Opportunities for Action](#)” memos with concrete recommendations for state and local workforce development leaders [to set performance targets that encourage improved workforce services to individuals with barriers to employment](#); [ensure strong implementation of the priority of service for high-need adults](#); and [develop integrated employment and training \(IET\) programs combined with support services](#) to build career pathways for participants at every skill level. We urge states and local areas to seize this moment to provide effective services to those facing the greatest challenges competing in today’s labor market.

- CLASP’s Opportunities for Action memo on [WIOA’s policies for setting and adjusting performance targets](#) urges states and local areas to act now to serve more individuals with barriers to employment. The participants that states serve and the results they achieve over the next two years can lay the groundwork for federal-state and state-local negotiations to set performance targets that accurately reflect the realities of serving those with the greatest needs. In addition, CLASP reinforces positive messages sent by recent federal guidance that should help to dismantle the perception that states and local areas may be punished with workforce development performance targets that deter them from serving those with more barriers. For example, in one key policy clarification, the U.S. Department of Labor now defines “continuous improvement” to include changes in service strategy and delivery or changes in the types of customers served – rather than merely ever-increasing expectations for absolute levels of performance.
- CLASP’s recent update on the [WIOA adult program’s priority of service](#) for “recipients of public assistance, other low- income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient” shows how states and local areas can implement and monitor a strong priority of service, and provides a reference guide including text and citations from the statute, the final rules, guidance, planning requirements, and data collection, all in one place for easy reference. CLASP’s guide suggests practical ways for states and local areas to take the initiative to reach out to populations eligible for this priority of service, with the goal of increasing the number of high-need adults who receive workforce development services that can enable them to escape poverty.
- CLASP’s Opportunities for Action memo on [building career pathways through IET combined with support services](#) includes highlights of several career pathway models using IET programs for participants at every skill level. The final WIOA regulations, released in July 2016, provide assurance and incentives for adult education, workforce development, and postsecondary education partners to design and implement a key strategy in career pathways. IET is a promising practice based in adult learning theory and the core educational strategy for career pathways developed between WIOA partners, but IET programs alone won’t meet the requirement to be part of a career pathway aligned with the occupational needs of industry sectors. Above and beyond classroom innovations, career pathways must provide robust participant support services, including career counseling, navigation, placement, and retention services, and result in education and skills with regional labor market value.