

Racial Equity in Adult Education Grant

Administrator Survey
Findings and Recommendations

June 2023

Project Background

Racial Equity in Adult Education - Statewide Grant

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2024

Grantee/Project Lead: See Moua-Leske

Program Manager of Southwest ABE - Marshall region



Minnesota ABE Education Equity Statement

The state Adult Basic Education (ABE) office is committed to creating educational equity.

- We commit to recognizing the historical conditions and barriers that have prevented opportunity and success in learning for students based on their race, class, and other identities.
- We commit to working to dismantle the belief in a hierarchy of human value, with a focus on racial equity.
- We commit to fostering positive and effective learning environments for all by eliminating institutional policies that uphold oppressive systems of power and privilege.
- We commit to collaboratively creating a learning community within the ABE system that promotes opportunities for self-reflection, growth, and change.

We see ABE as key to building educated, engaged, and just communities for all Minnesotans.

Team Members

Grantee/Project Lead:

See Moua-Leske, Southwest ABE

Project Assistant:

Addy Wolbaum, Southwest ABE

Consultants:

Dr. Rose Wan-Mui Chu, Plum Blossom Strategy, LLC

Kaija Bergen, International Institute of Minnesota

ABE State Team Points of Contact:

Jodi Versaw, Adult Education Program Quality Specialist

Astrid Liden, Adult Education Professional Development Specialist

Grant Goals & Activities

1. Racial equity analysis:

Design, conduct and report on an analysis of racial equity within the state adult education system, utilizing a racial equity lens that also includes and acknowledges other marginalized identities (including but not limited to: LGBTQ+, disability, gender, immigration status, socioeconomic status) and considering both qualitative and quantitative means of gathering and interpreting data.

- a. Identify, inventory, and analyze qualitative data relevant to racial equity in Minnesota adult education (e.g. student demographic info, student outcomes, student persistence rates).
- b. Design, implement and oversee a substantive and informative process to gather input and feedback from current and former adult education learners, utilizing tools for both qualitative and quantitative data collection, such as surveys and focus groups.
- c. Compile and disseminate results and findings, using various methods of communications such as written reports, infographics and presentations.
- d. After initial data analysis in the first year of the grant, conduct smaller-scale, targeted data collection and analysis tasks in subsequent grant years.

2. Recommendations and actions based on analysis:

Use data from analysis to make recommendations to support racial equity efforts at both the state and local program level.

- a. Develop, identify and share racial equity analysis tools and processes that can be used and adapted by adult education staff across the state.
 - b. Document and disseminate ideas for effective practices, innovative approaches and high-quality resources.
 - c. Make recommendations for policy changes to the state adult education team.
 - d. Make recommendations for professional development to the state adult education team and other supplemental service grantees.
 - e. Suggest additional actions or adaptations to above actions and recommendations.
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3. Advisory groups:

Convene and facilitate advisory groups to support and inform all grant activities.

- a. Convene a statewide adult education racial equity advisory group which includes a significant percentage of membership who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), and is composed of members who have diverse identities representative of adult education students and staff in various roles and settings.
- b. Convene an adult learner advisory group made up of learners from around the state, who represent diverse aspects of adult education learner identity such as race, ethnicity, culture, tribal nation affiliation, country of origin, religion, setting (urban, suburban, greater Minnesota, rural, corrections), disability status, LGBTQ+ and other diverse identities.

4. **Professional Development (PD) Coordination:**

Coordinate PD efforts with the state adult education team and other state PD providers through participation in state adult education PD Committee communications and quarterly meetings.

5. **PD Communications:**

Communicate information and resources related to the grant activities above to state adult education consortia by entering and maintaining a list of PD opportunities in the adult education PD catalog and PD calendar, and by submitting content to the statewide PD newsletter.

Administrator Survey

Background

Methodology: Data Collection & Analysis

- Quantitative Survey to target groups in ABE system: Administrators, Educators and Students
- Surveys were organized by sections for ease of progress.
- There were ample opportunities to provide additional comments.
- Surveys included a “preamble” to set the context of request to participate, paying attention to data privacy concerns, and also a general definition of “Equity”.
- Administrator Survey distributed in Spring 2022
- Project Lead See sent survey and instructions to key contacts from 38 consortia
- The key contacts then shared the survey, at their discretion, with staff in administrative/management roles in each consortium
- A total of 53 respondents across the system participated in the survey

Survey Preamble for Participants

Thank you for participating in this survey, which is part of a project led by grantee and Program Manager See Moua-Leske of Southwest ABE and funded by MN Department of Education. The project is also supported by See's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Assistant, Addy Wolbaum, and consultant Dr. Rose W. Chu of Plum Blossom Strategy LLC.

The purpose of the project is to analyze and understand the current state of the adult education system in Minnesota from an equity lens, in order to illuminate insights and strategies for advancing more equitable outcomes for ALL our students. Collecting some baseline data through this survey is an important step in this effort. Please respond to all questions to the best of your ability. All responses will be kept confidential to ensure data privacy. Any findings from this survey will be reported in aggregate so that no individual or site will be identifiable.

Note that some survey questions are statements in quotes. Your response will be the extent to which you agree or disagree with a statement. There are also many opportunities in the survey for you to elaborate on your responses if you so choose. We estimate the survey will take from 10 to 20 minutes to complete. There are 7 sections (from A to G).

There will be multiple questions addressing 'Equity.' Equity involves examining systems, processes and practices to ensure that each student's needs to develop their full academic and social potential are met.

Survey Organization of Questions

Section	Topic	# Required Questions	# Optional Opportunities to elaborate or comment	Total
A	Organizational Structure	6	1	7
B	Student Demographic Data	5	6	11
C	Staff Demographic Data	8	5	13
D	Talent Management	5	4	9
E	Supporting & Advancing Equity	4	6	10
F	Feedback, Comments	0	4	4
G	More About You	6	5	11
	Total:	34	31	65

Survey Findings

53 Respondents

Survey Findings: (A) Organizational Structure

- 87% of respondents (46) were from ABE consortiums fiscally hosted by a school district
- 9% of respondents (5) were from ABE consortiums fiscally hosted by a Community-Based Organization
- The size of each consortium varies widely: from those with over 20 units/clusters/sites to those with only one main site of service and program delivery.
- Over half of the consortiums of the respondents had between 2 to 10 units/clusters/sites.
- Most salary structure of ABE staff are set by the governance body of the fiscal host, often within some bargaining unit (if with a school district). Whether an ABE teacher is in the same salary structure negotiated as the K-12 teacher varies.
- 65% of respondents (29) “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” that ABE educators are paid well and equitably as compared to K-12 educators.
- 83% of respondents (44) “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that their ABE site is well connected to the local school districts.
- 77% of respondents (41) “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that their ABE site receives adequate support and guidance from the local school districts.

Survey Findings: (A) Organizational Structure

Sample Narrative Responses

- *ABE is often forgotten and not included in larger district planning, or is not wholly considered because not many take the time to understand ABE or to acknowledge the value of ABE, ABE professionals, and ABE clients.*
- *...We are not a large enough "group" of people to influence or be considered when the district makes plans; ... Staff are able to participate in surveys, but ABE is usually not a site that they can choose from when respondents are asked to select "where they work".*
- *The are pluses and minuses. ... our input is virtually never sought out nor welcomed; therefore, decisions are made for us without input (weather closures, learning models, graduation ceremonies, etc.)*
- *Each of our program sites will respond differently to these questions - we do not all share the same support from our host districts.*
- *Our contracted ABE teachers are on the exact same pay scale as K-12 contracted teachers.*
- *ABE teachers in our district are not paid on the same scale as K-12 teachers. There are issues both ways with this.*

Survey Findings: (A) Organizational Structure

Noticings and Wonderings

Noticing: Every consortium has their own interpretation and use of terms associated with the different roles in administration, coordination and management of ABE programming and activities at the different sites.

Wondering: Is there value added to have better definitions of sites, consortia, and roles as a way to have to a SYSTEM that describes the infrastructure of ABE - both internally and externally?

Noticing: Support from district or fiscal sponsor varies widely.

Wondering: Would ABE system and the fiscal sponsor benefit from a SYSTEM of shared principles and operating practices?

Noticing: There are system inequities in how ABE is financed (e.g. based on location and size) and how ABE staff are paid and treated.

Wondering: Does everyone understand the historical context and implications of the legislative actions? How might a collective impact vs. local control framing mitigate some of the inequities? What “values” are driving decisions both within ABE systems vs. at the policy level?

Survey Findings: (B) Student Demographic Data

- 42 and 44 respondents (79% and 83%) “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that the Student Information Database (SID) demographic intake form is respectively responsive to the **ethnic/racial identities** and the **languages** represented by the student population of their site.
- The results were less favorable for whether the Student Information Database (SID) demographic intake form is responsive to the **gender identities** represented by the student population of their site. Respondents were evenly split (25 “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” to 25 “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree”).
- 52 out of 53 respondents felt they understood the difference between an individual’s gender identity and their biological sex assigned at birth.
- Nearly half of the respondents collect additional demographic data of their students beyond SID such as accommodations for learning disabilities and religious practices.

Survey Findings: (B) Student Demographic Data

Sample Narrative Responses

- *I think it would be nice to have more ethnic/racial options. Seems groups are lumped together, I think there should be an "other option". If a student chooses "other" it would be nice to be able to write in what they tell you.*
- *Students are often off put by needing to indicate whether they are Hispanic/Latino, and others find that they don't know if they are considered "white".*
- *Also, many students do not want to answer. A decline should be allowed.*
- *Students from some countries/cultures do not know what to select*
- *The SID data system collects racial data that includes native born African Americans and members of the African American community as one group (I believe this is because of federal demographic reporting requirements). These two groups have different needs, and should be tracked separately.*

Survey Findings: (B) Student Demographic Data

Sample Narrative Responses (continued)

- *I think there should always be an option for clients to write/type/speak their languages if not present*
- *Our form includes "other/non-binary" and also includes a place for preferred pronouns*
- *There should be additional options to represent and respect all gender identities.*

Re: accommodations for different learning abilities, cultural/religious practices, etc.

- *I would be very interested in learning more about this; we do ask students in class, in student conferences, and during their planning meetings with their advisors, but we do not have a structured way to collect this data.*
- *If the student offers to disclose the information. We don't seek it out.*
- *We have an individualized learning plan for each student to make sure their individual needs are being addressed and met and that each teacher is aware of.*
- *Zip code, employment situation, public assistance, etc.*

Survey Findings: (B) Student Demographic Data Noticings and Wonderings

Noticing: Depending on local context and needs, everyone thinks of collecting more data differently, and for different purposes.

Wondering: Are there best practices of when and why we collect additional data to better serve our students? What would the benefits be of collecting additional data to improve student outcomes?

Noticing: The categories required in the SID can be confusing and narrow in definitions (Hispanic/non-Hispanic, gender, race/ethnicity).

Wondering: How can the data collection be more inclusive by capturing a student's authentic identity, while being in compliance?

Survey Findings: (C) Staff Demographic Data

Number of respondents reporting/estimating % BIPOC staff and volunteers at their site

% BIPOC	Zero	Less than 10%	Between 10% to 30%	40% or more
Staff	16	9	17	7
Volunteers	18	10	12	5

- Only about half of the respondents reported presence of a process to collect and update staff members' demographic information. The rest reported "No" or "Not Sure".
- Only about 38% of the respondents reported presence of a process to collect and update volunteers' demographic information. The rest (if volunteers are used) reported "No" or "Not Sure".
- 40 respondents (75%) do not think the staff or volunteer demographics are representative of the students they serve.

Survey Findings: (C) Staff Demographic Data

Sample Narrative Responses

- *There is a strong desire to have a more diverse staff and volunteer population that better reflects our learners*
- *There is some difference among our providers - some have staff who reflect who they serve more than others.*
- *We are improving our volunteer representation by recruiting and training from our student population. Paid staff is a harder group to change. All but one staff position require a teaching license. We are very willing to work in the tiered system to help someone get a license.*
- *We are certainly taking steps to increase the representation of our paid staff and volunteers including conducting an equity audit with our board that will become a regularly recurring part of our organization's strategic plan.*

Survey Findings: (C) Staff Demographic Data

Noticings and Wonderings

Noticing: It is widely recognized there is a lack of staff and volunteer representation that reflects the ABE learner population.

Wondering: How might this challenge be addressed at the systems level? What benefits could come from having a more representative and diverse staff? What impacts could this have on all students' success and sense of belonging?

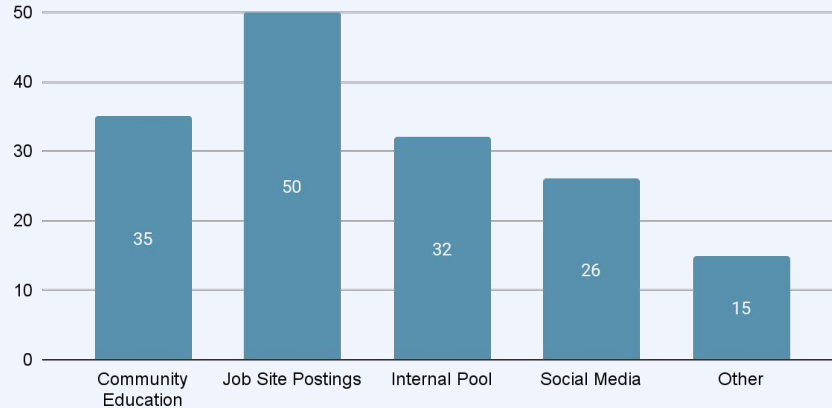
Noticing: Uneven practices and processes across sites regarding data collection, recruitment, etc.

Wondering: How might sites share and learn from each other more intentionally?

Survey Findings: (D) Talent Management

How is an open position filled or marketed?

Select all that apply

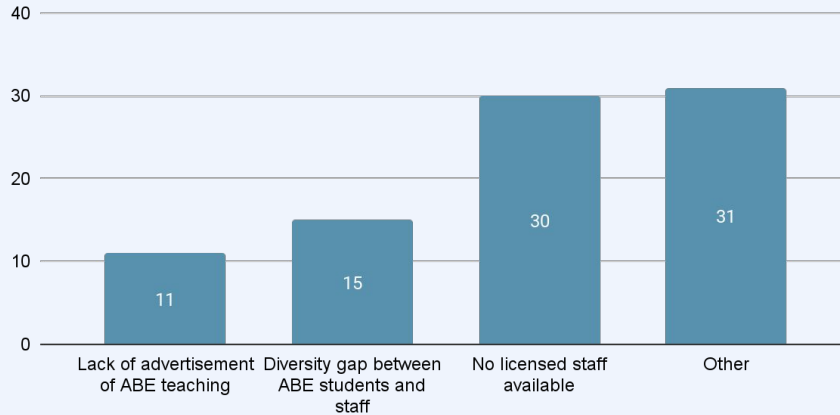


- Over 94% of respondents use job-site postings to market an open position at their site.
- Over 60% of respondents also advertise through Community Education or fill the position internally.
- Less than 50% respondents use social media platforms.

Survey Findings: (D) Talent Management

What are challenges in filling a position?

Select all that apply



The diversity gap between ABE students and ABE staff, along with the lack of licensed staff to fill positions, make up about 85% of the challenges cited in filling a position.

- About $\frac{2}{3}$ of respondents considered their talent management practices to be centered on equity.
- More than $\frac{1}{2}$ of respondents reported presence of an exit procedure or protocol when a staff member leaves their site.

Survey Findings: (D) Talent Management

Sample Narrative Responses

- *There are licensed staff available, but few are BiPOC. Overall, the lower pay for ABE teachers due to limited funding makes it very difficult to compete with K12 for the few licensed BiPOC teachers available.*
- *We can only afford part-time teachers. Benefits are too expensive and eat up our whole budget.*
- *Most of our jobs are part time without benefits so it's hard to entice candidates.*
- *The most common reason is retirement. The second most common reason is because they are looking for a full-time job and most of our ABE positions are part-time.*

Survey Findings: (D) Talent Management

Sample Narrative Responses

- *The most common reason is retirement. The second most common reason is because they are looking for a full-time job and most of our ABE positions are part-time.*
- *We are limited in our efforts in part by the policies and restrictions of the school district.*
- *Not sure there is much I can do about district HR policies that group and treat my ABE teachers the same as EAs. My teachers have to punch in on a time clock like they are at a factory.*
- *It is very rare for us to get ABE teachers younger than the age of 50. All of our positions are part-time, and the positions financially do not compare to a regular K-12 position. The candidate pool for ABE is very small due to these reasons.*

Survey Findings: (D) Talent Management Noticings and Wonderings

Noticing: The challenge of having a diverse pool of ABE teacher candidates and the inequities in comparison to K-12 teachers showed up again and again.

Wondering: Are there system-level strategies and practices that are more collaborative and/or innovative from an HR perspective? Are there already innovative practices that are working? What does the industry say about this challenge? Other sectors? (e.g. shared pool of candidates, better use of social media?)

Noticing: $\frac{2}{3}$ of respondents considered their Talent Management practices to be centered on equity. That's really high.

Wondering: So what does this mean to each site? How does each site know if these practices are effective? What data are they collecting? Are there improvement processes systematically built in to continually improve HR practices?

Survey Findings: (E) Supporting & Advancing Equity

- Over 90% of respondents (48) “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that there is a professional development plan to support staff and volunteers in achieving equitable outcomes for their students.

Sample Narrative Responses:

- *Staff focus their professional development plans on the needs specifically relevant to the learners at their sites as well as to the areas which are mandated by the PELSB board.*
- *We don't have a certain plan in place.*
- *This differs by site, but each site addresses this in some way to the best of my knowledge.*
- *Staff and volunteers are allowed to take as much PD as they need or want. This includes inside and outside our district.*
- *For teachers but not for volunteers.*
- *We utilize and adapt our district equity training and plan.*

Survey Findings: (E) Supporting & Advancing Equity

- All but 1 respondent reported opportunities at their site for staff and volunteers to discuss, reflect, share and apply professional learning opportunities/resources and other related topics to advance equity.

Sample Narrative Responses:

- *We offer opportunities to share and debrief at monthly staff meetings. Following attendance at trainings, staff are expected to submit a follow up form that talks about what the training covered and how they can put it to use in their classroom. This is not required, however, and many fail to submit this form because they get busy with daily routines and job expectations.*
- *Staff is encouraged to reflect on PD and other events in the community during all-staff, department, and individual meetings.*

Survey Findings: (E) Supporting & Advancing Equity

- 83% of respondents (44) “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that as administrators, they are supported with professional development opportunities to lead from an equity lens.

Sample Narrative Responses:

- *....there is too much focus on looking at everything with an equity lens ... It has become a repellent to my staff who are interested in learning more about topics, such as math instruction*
- *There are PD opportunities but not with the lenses of leading from an equity lens.*
- *Opportunities are available and I am taking advantage of them. I am encouraging my staff to take advantage of them. It is primarily volunteer though. I can only require the PD that I can pay staff to participate in. As we gain knowledge and skills through PD we can use it to improve our teaching and our classroom routines. We do not have the influence to make more systemic changes.*

Survey Findings: (E) Supporting & Advancing Equity

- Over 92% of respondents (49) “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that as administrators, they are confident in their ability and capacity to lead from an equity lens.

Sample Narrative Responses:

- *As an individual I am able, whether or not I can is highly limited by the decision making process.*
- *It would be helpful to have equity lens defined, as I believe perceptions of what this means can vary widely.*
- *I think we all need more work in this area.*
- *You have to be willing to do the work and be vulnerable and open first and foremost. All the tools in the world won't help you if you won't use them. I have an equity leadership team that supports me in my efforts (a teacher and ESP) along with support from the district level*

Survey Findings: (E) Supporting & Advancing Equity Noticings and Wonderings

Noticing: When 90% respondents said there is an equity PD plan for staff and volunteers, the comments inferred that most meant “each staff and/or volunteer develop their own PD plan and chooses from many choices of equity PD opportunities voluntarily and according to their own needs and interest.”

Wondering: How could leaders think in systems to intentionally and systematically build capacity in staff and volunteers to achieve equitable outcomes? How might a state-level or even regional-level approach support leaders to do this?

Noticing: There is not a lack of PD opportunities and offerings. It is up to the individual to decide what PD they want to participate in. Equity PD is seen as a separate thing, rather than included into other PD topics.

Wondering: How could leaders develop a framework to connect PD opportunities, including reflections opportunities, and a method to measure the impact of PD implementation? Would ABE programs benefit by having a framework that connects PD opportunities?

Section F: Optional Comments and Feedback

Sample Narrative Responses regarding respondents' hopes and dreams:

- *Growth through hiring, growth through discussion. We have hired from students in the past and they have moved on to bigger and better positions which is a good outcome.*
- *It's important that program sites prioritize staff development beyond academic prep strategies for our students. They are individuals, often with families and have goals (spoke and unspoken) to share in the collective rise of our society.*
- *All staff and students feel welcome and supported. No one is afraid to ask for what they want or need. We don't settle for the status quo. Everyone feels free to express their opinion about the program whether it is good or bad.*
- *Having adequate resources to meet the needs of all students, whatever their needs. This would include childcare, transportation, and culturally relevant programming.*

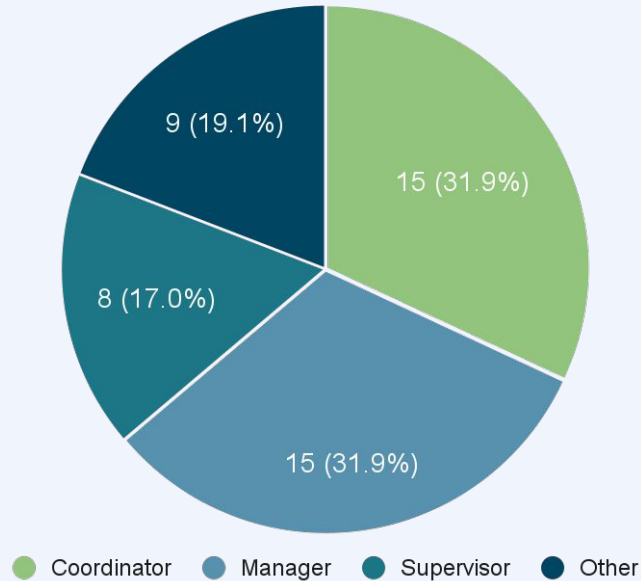
Section F: Optional Comments and Feedback

Sample Narrative Responses regarding respondents' thoughts on advancing equity:

- *I think the State should continue to offer PD in this area, whether it is repeating sessions or bringing new content -- it needs to have a presence in all settings/sessions*
- *I believe that it's important work and there is a long road ahead, but I also think that we should not only be thinking about what is happening at our sites, but also considering how we can have an impact on BIPOC communities taking an interest in an ABE path and having access to the resources to receive the necessary education/training and test support for becoming licensed in the state. Drawing a more diverse population of education is one really important way to address equity in our field.*
- *There needs to be more opportunity to discuss what this means, at all levels. I believe state staff have developed a specific approach and perspective which does not necessarily reflect statewide perspectives, and this may lead to poor overall outcomes as 'top down' programs rarely are very successful.*

Survey Findings: (G) More About You

Job Title



The most common job titles are “Coordinator” and “Manager” followed by “Supervisor” and “Director”. Some hold multiple roles including being an instructor.

Survey Findings: (G) More About You

- The ABE administrator respondents were predominantly female (83%), white (83%), and between age 45 to 64 (79%).
- Very few respondents are proficient in a language other than English
- Very few respondents identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community

...Regardless of my demographic profile, our site is lead with passion and conviction for the students we serve in learning to use their voice and rich life experience to add value to our collective existence.

Recommendations

- Build capacity as a learning system, within each site, within advisory committees, and for the state as a whole:
 - Topics include but not limited to:
 - Systems thinking and systems change
 - collective impact
 - technical vs.adaptive leadership
 - Use collected data to measure impact (for local and system level decision making)
 - Common language in equity, in describing each site's organization, etc
- Formalize advisory committees - charters, roles and responsibilities, relation to MDE etc.
- Narrative shift IS a critical part of systems change:
 - Attend to external perceptions of and internal relationships to the field
 - Consider leveraging the work of Elevate Teaching and other initiatives/research
<https://www.elevateteaching.us>
- Intentionally create and sustain authentic spaces to deepen sense of community and belonging at the systems level

Recommendations

- Develop ABE statewide equity framework
 - Lots of PD offerings, and equity opportunities - develop a equity framework/model that ties everything together
 - Strategic visioning as a system, then contribute to local site visioning
 - Theory of Change/Action framework
 - Create an equity framework for next 3 to 4 years - yearly work plan - priorities, actions toward specifics - then surveys have a purpose for assessing impact
 - With a equity framework - then have an assessment process (aka “equity audit”) to ascertain how well a site/a program fair against the framework established - continuous improvement, student-centered, equity
 - Inventory current equity offerings and prospective learnings via the framework
 - Revamping Equity section of the 5-Year Narrative
 - Build infrastructure for the purpose of research, evaluation and assessment

Recommendations

- Cadence and systems of PD, of staff support, of documenting work, of PLCs, etc
 - Timeline (how often, when), content (learning topics, updates, discussions etc), spaces (design of sessions, breakouts, meetings, etc), audiences (for whom?)
 - System or guidelines of “follow up” - documenting, reflecting, applying, adjusting - iterative in nature
- Expand site PD plans, beyond the individual, and to the site and system, as a whole.
- ABE - pretty small system - consider some sort of lean process. With such a wide variety in size of sites/consortiums, what are technical functions and/or processes that could be streamlined (yet expandable to local context)? E.g. Exit interviews, Equity PD reflection forms, HR recruitment/posting practices - more integrated, instead of competing? Think outside the box.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Impact on participants' confidence
 - Some questions were not nuanced enough
 - Did not ask about how they know/measure the impact
 - Evidence of “confidence”
- Better tool than google forms
- Better outreach
 - 39 consortiums
 - Only sending to fiscal manager - to push out to sites
 - Include incentives for ABE staff
 - It is not part of any initiative - hindsight of this being optional - not part of any existing initiative to draw attention

Acknowledgements

The Racial Equity Grant Team would like to thank the State ABE Team for creating this supplemental service grant and putting an emphasis on equity in adult education. This work would have not been possible without the State Team's passion and support.

We would also like to thank our Advisory Group members for providing us insight on their ABE experiences. Through our conversations we were able to understand ABE through many different lenses, creating a better conception of Minnesota's ABE system.

Lastly, we would like to extend our appreciation to all of those who participated in the surveys, and those who contributed to conversations regarding this grant work.

Any questions regarding this research can be directed to

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