

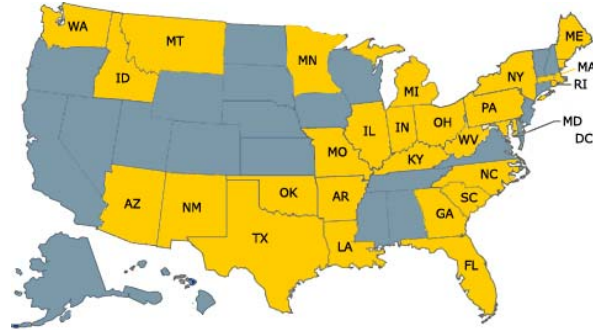


IDEAL Consortium

A Project of the EdTech Center @ World Education

BACKGROUND

IDEAL Consortium (previously Project IDEAL) was founded in 2002 by Dr. Jere Johnston as a consortium of states interested in developing distance education programs to meet the distance learning needs of adults for whom classroom options were either not available or not a good fit. Ten years of collaborative research and program development have shown that distance education is a viable option for many adult learners. As a voice for member states, the consortium has shaped distance education policy at the state and national levels and provided professional development expertise.



Active and Alumni States in the IDEAL Consortium

Recently, Dr. Johnston announced his retirement and with that the closing of Project IDEAL at the University of Michigan. Dr. Johnston selected World Education and its EdTech Center as the new home of Project IDEAL. During fall of 2015, the EdTech Center investigated the feasibility of carrying on the work of IDEAL. Taking the lead in this effort was Jen Vanek, who has played a leadership role in adult education distance learning in Minnesota and in Project IDEAL study groups. Several states reaffirmed their interest in continuing their membership. Renamed the IDEAL Consortium, it is now a project of the EdTech Center at World Education, Inc. IDEAL in its new incarnation is continuing to develop effective blended and distance learning programs for adult learners across the United States through new educational technology innovations and collaborative research and practice.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

IDEAL provides technical assistance, web-based tools, and publications to member states to help them design their distance learning programs, train their staff, and assess the progress of their efforts. The following lists the principal resources developed by IDEAL for its member states that World Education expects to update and expand over time in response to needs expressed by the members.

Annual Institute for member states addresses distance learning (DL) teacher professional development, data analysis, and policy. Participants are invited to look closely at the data on their state's DL program, share findings with other states, revise their plans to meet evolving program needs and policy agendas, and learn new ways to provide professional development opportunities for DL teachers in their state. World Education will add a ***pre-institute workshop for novice members***.

New Models for Distance Classes in Adult Education (2015) report describes the innovations of several teachers and the online tools they use to better meet the needs of learners studying at a distance or in blended learning classes. The report provides descriptions of useful classroom models.

Handbook of Blended and Distance Education for Adult Learners (available May 2016) contains guidance for educators and administrators in areas of planning, implementing, and maintaining a successful distance education program. The revised Handbook provides guidance for integrating new technologies and instructional strategies for blending learning, digital badging, and using mobile devices for learning. The updates to the Handbook inform revisions of the existing courses and development of new courses listed below.

DL 101 - Foundations of Distance Learning

IDEAL's introductory course is designed for teachers and administrators new to distance and blended



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learning. Participating teachers and administrators work together to address critical issues in DL, create, and then pilot a distance learning plan for their center. Print-based course materials include the newly revised *Handbook of Blended and Distance Education for Adult Learners*. Since it is an online course, teachers get to experience what it's like to be a distant learner before they try to teach others at a distance.

DL 102 - Study Groups

- **DL 102 - Instructional Issues.** Experienced distance teachers spend four weeks focusing on how to support learners. Each participant develops a case study describing an instructional challenge. The class discusses each of the case studies, building a "community of practice" that remains available as a resource after the course is done.
- **DL 102 - Program Administration.** This course is for program managers who are more experienced with distance learning. The class is built around relevant articles and developing a case study, which the class discusses. It is an opportunity for DL program managers to share insight and information with each other.
- **DL 102 - Evaluating Web-based Resources for Adult Learners.** Using a template developed by the IDEAL participants, the group reviews and assesses various educational Web resources, with the support of a facilitator. As part of the course, participants develop a shared set of reviewed materials they can incorporate into their teaching.



HOW IDEAL CONSORTIUM SERVES ADULT LEARNERS

In the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), we have national adult education legislation that promotes digital literacy and allows states to use funds for “the development and implementation of technology applications, translation technologies, and distance education...” IDEAL responds to the new realities and promising education approaches and takes advantage of advances in educational technology. New learning opportunities will include:

- Blended learning
- Micro-credentials/digital badges and competency-based approaches
- Mobile learning

We expect the demand for these expanded forms of distance learning will increase significantly as states begin implementing WIOA and collaborating even more closely with the workforce development system. The IDEAL Consortium at World Education stands ready to work with state adult education leaders to respond to the new realities and needs of the field.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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