



## Welcome to ICF *Education Connections*

ICF is helping to improve educational outcomes by navigating clients through current and future challenges. From early education to K-12 and postsecondary schooling, ICF gives clients the insights they need to turn research into practice. In this issue, learn about:

- Conducting research that illuminates adult education and employment pathways
- Delivering evaluation expertise through training and technical assistance
- Managing national clearinghouses and technical assistance centers

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## Defining the Path to Success: Findings from Adult Education Research

ICF has led several recent multi-year evaluations of postsecondary programs designed to help adults successfully complete education pathways and earn credentials toward employment and self-sufficiency. These studies, which incorporate the perspectives of educators and students, produce findings that address gaps in knowledge as well as the most critical policy issues facing adult educators.

Our research for the RXTN evaluation (A Prescription for Healthcare Training in Tennessee) found that adults who had participated in noncredit "bundled" or "stacked" certificate programs were statistically more likely to report finding new work after completing the program and to report receiving a wage increase if they were already employed.

ICF's study of *Maine is IT!*, a program designed to address the gap in skilled IT workers across Maine, confirmed that earning credentials was not the only requirement for employment. Researchers interviewed employers likely to hire through *Maine is IT!*, who reported that they also looked for less technical skills like the ability to work in groups, interact with customers, and think critically.

## Advising State Commissions to Improve Organizational Capacity

In addition to federal work with CNCS, ICF provides training and technical assistance (TA) on program evaluation to staff and grantees of the [CNCS state service commissions](#). These organizations implement AmeriCorps programs in all 50 states, receiving funding from CNCS but retaining programmatic autonomy. Early in 2017 ICF delivered evaluation training institutes to the state service commissions in Texas and West Virginia, which covered evaluation basics—such as how to create logic models, write clear evaluation questions, and develop effective surveys—as well as more advanced topics like how to design quasi-experimental and experimental studies.

Part of ICF's follow-up TA focuses on ensuring that grantees meet the evaluation requirements of the AmeriCorps program, but ICF is also helping them understand how to make better use of evaluation to improve their programs and show their effectiveness. By reporting back to service commission staff about the challenges that their grantees face and our proposed solutions, ICF is also improving their organizational capacity to support grantees on their own in the future.

For more information about these efforts, please contact [Andrew.MacDonald@icf.com](mailto:Andrew.MacDonald@icf.com).

## Delivering Clearinghouse Management that Engages Clients with Stakeholders

ICF's successful management of national and regional clearinghouses and technical assistance centers is made possible by the wealth of expertise and content knowledge that

we marshal for these efforts. Through strategic communications and knowledge management, we provide comprehensive solutions that enable our clients to engage with their audiences and stakeholders more effectively.

A longstanding and trusted partner to the U.S. Department of Education, ICF has provided high quality technical and logistical support for national centers and clearinghouses, training and technical assistance. For the Reform Support Network, ICF established and actively managed an expert database of more than 200 subject matter experts who specialized in key areas of education reform.

For the Child Welfare Information Gateway, ICF provides comprehensive clearinghouse services on all aspects of child welfare via a broad collection of resources and services, ranging from journal articles, publications, and research studies, to videos and other media.

ICF also manages the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) for the U.S. Department of Labor's Chief Evaluation Office. CLEAR serves as a central repository for labor and workforce research and evaluation studies, targeting researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and the general public

## Applying Passion to Evaluation: ICF Thought Leader Thomas J. Horwood



*“Working with a variety of clients at all levels of the education and workforce systems over the years has provided me with opportunities to help practitioners improve the ways in which programs are implemented and understand how their programs are or are not improving outcomes for those receiving services. I lead our project teams, who use a collaborative approach to work with clients, to develop and implement solutions*

*to accomplish project objectives, whether it is to provide technical assistance, develop resources, or design an evaluation.*

*Ultimately, my work is focused on the betterment of our society through high-quality education and workforce initiatives for traditional and non-traditional students, particularly those from underserved populations." – Thomas J. Horwood, ICF Principal*

For more than 15 years, Thomas J. Horwood has worked with educators and community agencies to develop, implement, evaluate, and improve programs at the federal, state, and local levels. He has spent his career conducting and managing evaluations and applied research studies of education programs and outreach activities in such fields as college/career readiness, college access and success, career pathways, workforce development, literacy, science, dropout prevention, teacher and principal effectiveness/development, charter schools, and virtual learning. He has provided services to state education agencies, community colleges, and the U.S. Department of Education. He has contributed to more than 20 written reports of findings and recommendations from program evaluations he has conducted.