

Adult Basic Education Funding in Minnesota

How It Works

The Formula: In 1999-2000, a representative statewide group of ABE and Community Education staff met intensively for several months to develop a statewide funding formula. Facilitated by the Minnesota Department of Education, the group grappled with the issue of how to insure an accessible system of ABE services statewide. The focus was not on insuring funding for specific providers, but on insuring all Minnesotans had access to meaningful ABE services.

A major component of discussion involved the challenges facing Twin Cities vs. Greater Minnesota programs. In the Twin Cities, demand for classes was high (especially among English Language Learners), thus making it important to find a way to serve large numbers of students in classes. In Greater Minnesota, sparse population and great distances between population centers presented challenges in delivering services in a meaningful and accessible way, through one-on-one and small group instruction.

The recommendation from the group, adopted by the legislature during the next session, recognized public schools as the primary means of ABE delivery, as they existed throughout the state and already served as the primary ABE delivery conduit. There are four primary components to the formula¹:

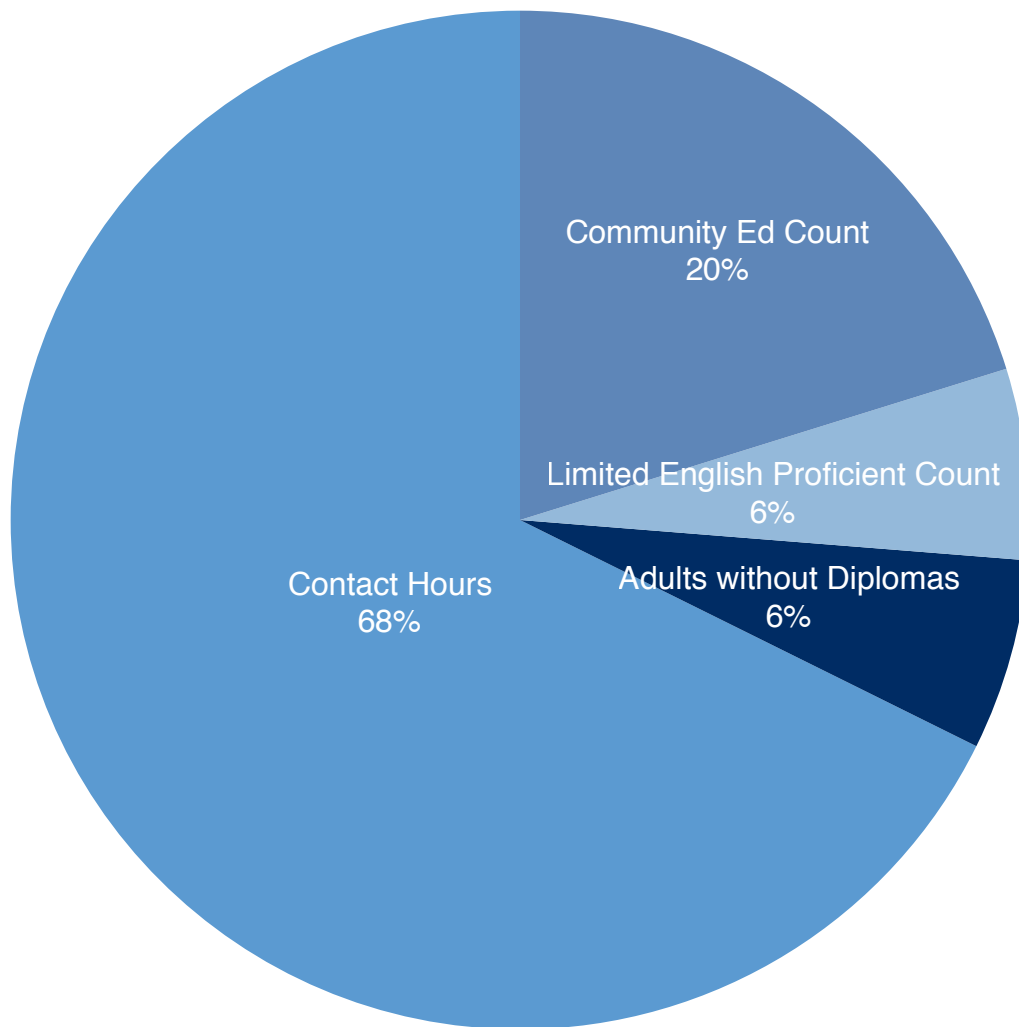
- Contact Hour Aid, based on the number of student contact hours in each consortia
- Total population in the service area of each school district consortia
- Number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in the service area of each school district consortia
- Number of adults 25 and older without a secondary credential in the service area of each school district consortia

The strategy of this approach was that all parts of the state would receive equitable funding. Greater Minnesota received proportionately more funding, recognizing the unique challenges posed by long distances and sparse population. While the effective rate of all four components combined has been \$7-8/per hour in the Twin Cities core, consortia in Greater Minnesota receive as much as \$22 per hour. There is also an annual cap on revenue hour growth of 11% per consortium.

In addition to school districts, non-profit community based organizations were allowed to access contact hour funding only, whether they belonged to larger district consortia or existed independently. School districts may choose to share their base with CBO members, but are not required to, and none appear to do so.

The formula has proven highly effective in developing and maintaining an ABE delivery system that serves the entire state, and has resulted in a system admired nationally for innovation and effectiveness.

Formula Distribution of ABE Funding



¹ In addition, 2% of all funds (later changed to 3%) was reserved for statewide professional development via Supplemental Service grants awarded on a competitive basis.