1. ***Describe how the State has used funds made available under section 223 (‘state Leadership activities) for each of the following required activities:***

*Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other one-stop partners to implement the strategies in the Unified or Combined State Plan as described in section 223(1)(a).*

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services/Adult Education Section (ADWS/AES) in conjunction with the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC) strives to create and implement level-appropriate training programs tailored specifically to adult learners, with an end goal of increasing student achievement that leads to gainful employment. ADWS/AES and AALRC work with core one-stop partners regularly to ensure that a comprehensive program of adult education services is provided which meet the needs of students. Collaborating with our core one-stop partners allows input from all involved, providing more comprehensive and effective programming. An adult education provider serves on each Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) and each provider located in a region is asked to attend the meetings. It is during these meetings that adult education is able to provide information regarding its programming opportunities as well as share current performance data. Several providers share the minutes of the meeting with the state office. In addition, twice a year, the WIOA Core Partners gather for a conference to discuss and report pertinent updates concerning their program. This conference allows partners to share details of what each program entails – success stories, areas of growth, etc. and provides opportunities for additional collaboration. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the cancellation of the meeting scheduled for the spring of 2020.

Notable goals accomplished this program year through a collaborative effort include:

* Completion of the 1st year of Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) training for local programs. This training was provided by the Becki Lemke, LINCS Trainer through the Manhattan Strategies Group.
* The revamping of the Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™) program to include basic skills, workforce preparation, and industry recognized certificates to make it a statewide model for Integrated Education and Training (IET). ADWS/AES began developing career pathways to provide students the opportunity to earn certificates in Workforce Preparation, Hospitality and Tourism, Health Science, Business Management, Education and Training, and Manufacturing for later implementation to meet the needs identified by regional workforce development boards.

*Establishment or operation of a high-quality professional development program as described in section 223(1)(b).*

Professional development services are administered by the AALRC, which is funded through the Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative by ADWS/AES. The AALRC coordinates and presents professional development trainings that incorporate an in depth focus on strategies demonstrating how to prepare engaging and interactive lessons that are relevant to students. It also serves as the resource responsible for identifying, evaluating, and disseminating materials and information to adult education and literacy programs. Additionally, the AALRC consistently monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of professional development services and provides any new software, materials, or resources as necessary to accommodate the changing needs of teachers and staff.

Due to the national pandemic, large group meetings were not advised, which dramatically diminished travel expenses related to professional development. Conversely, funding in the areas of technology, virtual training for our partners, education consultants, materials, and resources for staff and students increased. In addition to the services generally provided, this year, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, ADWS/AES and AALRC found it necessary to quickly implement a more advanced methods of online learning. This included purchasing meeting software and programs adapted for meeting or teaching in a virtual setting, such as Zoom for statewide use. ADWS/AES used Zoom to hold its Spring Administrators’ Meeting virtually in April to replace the originally scheduled face-to-face meeting. Continued programming and virtual instruction during the pandemic were major themes of the meeting.

Training programs that taught teachers how to communicate and provide effective online learning strategies for their students were purchased and made available to all teachers. The Canvas learning management system offers teachers a completely online platform to utilize for instructional purposes. This program was implemented prior to COVID-19, and its use continued in the midst of the pandemic. Additionally, the AALRC contracted with Arkansas Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) to develop online training courses for teachers through a teacher portal that offered diversity training, which was released in June 2020. Additional courses on financial literacy, digital literacy and customer service are planned. Each of these initiatives allow teachers to work at their own pace and convenience.

The AALRC utilizes the online ESC Works system to track professional development activities of faculty and staff in Arkansas. Participants are able to manage their own transcript of courses completed through the AALRC and from outside sources (i.e. state conference, national conferences) in ESC Works.

*Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers as described in section 223(1)(c).*

This program year, the technical assistance needs increased dramatically, primarily due to the pandemic. ADWS/AES and AALRC fielded calls from partners and local providers on a variety of topics and specific situations. Some areas technical assistance was provided include:

* Technical training on the agency’s data management system, provided by ADWS/AES staff.
* Technical support provided by the AALRC’s Information Technology Specialist related software and hardware issues and questions.
* As a means of providing assistance during the pandemic, ADWS/AES instituted virtual office hours with the distance learning program advisor to provide an opportunity for instructors to ask questions regarding educational technology as they adjusted to the increase in virtual instruction.

*Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of adult education activities as described in section 223 (1)(d)*

Mandatory Administrators' Meetings are held semiannually, during which policies and procedures are discussed, information is disseminated, and providers are able to gain additional professional development from state staff, guest speakers and each other.

ADWS/AES monitors local programs through submitted quarterly reports, annual one-day site visits and intensive three-day program reviews that are performed on each program every four years or as determined by their level of risk on the risk assessment. One hundred percent (36/36) providers received an annual site visit in 2019-20. The program review tool was updated to provide more clarity in requested information, and the design was updated to make report completion easier and more mechanized. Additionally, IET implementation was added to the program review tool to assess the status of each program’s IET. Best practices identified during program reviews and site visits during the Fall were then shared during the Spring Administrators’ meeting. ADWS/AES also evaluates each program annually through an E&E (Effective and Efficient) calculation, currently based upon the programs’ progress on the federally negotiated benchmarks in Table 4.

ADWS/AES and AALRC disseminates information through email, newsletters, discussion lists, and provides Zoom for webinars. Survey monkey is used for professional development evaluations.

1. ***As applicable, describe how the State has used funds for additional permissible activities described in sections 223(a)(2).***

As mentioned earlier, the state office in conjunction with the AALRC, increase the amount of distance education professional development. During the Annual Teacher’s Summit, state staff provided training on how to be an effective distance education teacher as well as statistics of DL students enrollment and performance.

Career coaches have been hired to work directly with students as well as other personnel needed to guide students in successfully reaching their goals. Career coaches are required to complete specific trainings, one of which is a 120-hour course which qualifies them as Career Service Providers. The state office developed a Bridge Transition program in Canvas as a model for programs to use to prepare students for post-secondary education. At the end of the course, students take a college placement exam for the purpose of reducing remediation.

ADWS/AES developed work groups composed of state staff, local program staff, and business representatives to redesign the Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™). These workgroups have identified the career pathways of focus, determined certificates that should be offered, and discovered and developed curricula.

**2. Performance Data Analysis**

*Describe how the adult education program performed in the overall assessment of core programs based on the core indicators of performance. Discuss how the assessment was used to improve quality and effectiveness of the funded eligible providers and any plans to further increase performance in future reporting years.*

During the 2019-2020 program year, Arkansas achieved 47% MSGs on Table 4, meeting the negotiated indicator. Arkansas met or exceeded 8 out of 11 level benchmarks, including all ESL levels as well as ABE Levels 4-5. Arkansas fell below the targets in ABE Levels 1, 2, and 3.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *CORE INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE* | *2018-2019 Performance* | *2019-2020 Targets* | *2019-2020 Performance* | *Difference of Targets to Performance* |
| *ABE Level 1* | *39%* | *53%* | *43%* | *-10%* |
| *ABE Level 2* | *40%* | *48%* | *40%* | *-8%* |
| *ABE Level 3* | *47%* | *47%* | *46%* | *-1%* |
| *ABE Level 4* | *58%* | *48%* | *57%* | *+9%* |
| *ABE Level 5* | *57%* | *52%* | *56%* | *+4%* |
| *ESL Level 1* | *47%* | *36%* | *43%* | *+7%* |
| *ESL Level 2* | *52%* | *43%* | *52%* | *+9%* |
| *ESL Level 3* | *60%* | *50%* | *54%* | *+4%* |
| *ESL Level 4* | *56%* | *52%* | *54%* | *+2%* |
| *ESL Level 5* | *54%* | *43%* | *50%* | *+7%* |
| *ESL Level 6* | *42%* | *24%* | *39%* | *+15%* |
| *AVERAGE* | *48%* | *47%* | *47%* | *+0%* |

To assess effectiveness, ability to meet the targets, and overall performance, local providers submit quarterly reports to the state office, which includes, but is not limited to, Reportable Individual and Participant numbers; Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs) by EFL, gender, race/ethnicity, and age; post-test percentage; recruitment and retention efforts; and, quarterly expenditures. Once a program year has ended, an Effective & Efficient (E&E) report based on the benchmarks for core performance indicators is generated for each local provider. For the 2019-20 E&E report, local providers were required to meet the state’s MSG benchmark of 47%.

Programs that do not meet the determined percentage of the benchmarks are provided additional technical assistance in order to prepare a performance improvement plan. Plan implementation is monitored throughout the year. Upon not meeting the requirements of E&E for three consecutive years, ADWS/AES makes a recommendation to the Arkansas State Workforce Development Board as to whether or not the program should continue to be funded. Technical assistance is provided to all programs, including those that meet or exceed the overall performance benchmarks to address deficiencies in any particular EFL.

Consultation and technical assistance was provided to assist with the impact of COVID-19 in understanding both participant barriers and services offered. Based on communications with local providers, and regular LACES data evaluation, COVID-19 reflected on-going challenges to timely participation and testing schedules. Student numbers differed from past reporting trends with higher numbers of reportable individuals and a lower number of program participants, creating reduced retention percentages. Initial limitations in program and student access to technology created periods in the last quarter during which attendance dropped considerably. As programs made technological and operational changes, attendance slowly increased.

ADWS/AES has determined the need for a committee to identify the professional development needs indicated by statewide deficiencies to promote continued improvement in program performance. In 2019-20, the ADWS/AES provided more than a dozen trainings, including regional and webinars, to 500+ users of the state’s data management system. Additional general and targeted technical assistance was provided to local providers and staff throughout the program year requested and based on identified need. Topics included best practices for developing data entry processes and procedures, monitoring data at the program and class levels, understanding federal tables, and utilizing state reports detailing participant progress by assessment and subject area.

During the 2019-20 Fall Administrators’ meeting, the state’s 2018-19 performance was shared with local providers in comparison to the national average. Additionally, the 2019-20 negotiated targets were shared with local providers as well as guidance and technical assistance on barriers to employment and the importance collecting this data. Program performance has been determined to be a primary factor in funding. In the current funding formula, a local provider’s ability to meet the Table 4 average and the negotiated core benchmarks for each EFL have been incorporated.

**3. Integration with One-stop Partners:**

***Describe how the State eligible agency, as the entity responsible for meeting one-stop requirements under 34CFR part 463, subpart J, carries out or delegates its required one-stop roles to eligible providers. Describe the applicable career services that are provided in the one-stop system. Describe how the infrastructure costs are supported through the local option. In the event the local option was not used in a local area, indicate that the State option was triggered.***

The ADWS/AES delegates its required one-stop roles to its adult education funded local providers. The designated local providers for each comprehensive one-stop was determined by the provider which services the area in which the one-stop is located. Each provider is responsible for carrying out its roles and responsibilities as assigned in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and infrastructure funding agreement (IFA). The State provided technical assistance on how to fulfill the roles and responsibilities as one-stop partners. ADWS/AES is able to determine if the delegated provider is carrying out its role and meeting its responsibilities by reviewing the MOU and IFA, and narrative reports during annual site visits and program reviews.

The basic career services that are provided in the one-stop system are made available for adults, dislocated workers, and youth by staff on-site. Outreach, intake, and orientation to information and other services are made available to these groups, including TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and SNAP E&T (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training), through the one-stop delivery system. The initial assessment of skill levels including literacy, numeracy and English language proficiency are recorded in the data management system. Labor exchange services including job search and placement assistance, career counseling, and recruitment and other business services on behalf of employers are provided by the staff on-site. The State provides guidance and technical assistance to local programs to ensure that they meet the requirement.

A pilot of local programs utilizing Webex to provide services to students and SNAP E&T clients began prior to COVID-19. More recently, some programs have found that other methods such as Zoom are easier to use. Due to COVID-19, use of these methods to provide career services started to expand toward the end of the program year, as the majority of programs resumed a number of services.

The state also invested in an educational software program, Essential Education, which not only has an academic component, but also life skills such as Digital Literacy, Financial Essentials, and Work Essentials. This software program is accessible online and can help teach the workforce preparation skills needed in today’s workers.

**4. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program** (AEFLA Section 243)

*Describe how the state is using funds under Section 243 to support the following activities under the IELCE program:*

*Describe when your State held a competition [the latest competition] for IELCE program funds and the number of grants awarded by your State to support IELCE programs.*

ADWS/AES held a competition in February 2020 for a four-year grant for July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2024 to fund IELCE programs, and awarded seven (7) local providers with Section 243 funding.

*Describe your State efforts in meeting the requirement to provide IELCE services in combination with integrated education and training activities.*

ADWS/AES facilitates monthly/bi-monthly conference calls and an annual face-to-face meeting with the grant award recipients to discuss requirements of Section 243; IET development and recruitment; curriculum and instructional strategies; and, the continual development of a single set of learning objectives for common IETs. In addition, ADWS/AES monitors the data and progress of IELCE participants to provide technical assistance as needed for the local programs. Lastly, during specific IELCE conference calls and meetings, grant recipients are encouraged to attend and participate in statewide trainings and workshops that include IET, ESL, and Standards (CCR and ELP).

ADWS/AES worked closely with several programs to assist them in developing IETs in the service area. In working with programs that receive Section 243 funding, ADWS/AES staff also discuss how the IET(s) for those programs are being utilized to meet the needs of current and potential English language learners.

In response to COVID-19, several IELCE/IETs, such as CNA, with its hands-on requirements, were put on hold as programs worked to change the program structure to a virtual one. In some cases, programs sought different IETs for their IELCE programs that better lent themselves to delivery, while still meeting regional needs.

*Describe how the State is progressing towards program goals of preparing and placing IELCE program participants in unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency as described in section 243(c)(1) and discuss any performance results, challenges, and lessons learned from implementing those program goals.*

The Arkansas IELCE grant recipients have designed IELCE programs that are aligned with the Local Workforce Development Board and needs of students that provide the workplace skills and workforce training needed for employment. This alignment will assist IELCE participants in gaining unsubsidized employment in high demand industries within their local areas/regions.

In addition to the instructional components of the IELCE program, local providers have Career Service Providers (CSP) on staff who work directly with students to assist them in developing educational and employment goals. The grant recipients have developed IETs in healthcare (CNA and Emergency Medical Responders), Hospitality, and Welding, each with pathways for continued growth. Local programs work with local hospitals and nursing homes for the training component and several students were hired directly by the company after obtaining their certification.

The WAGE™ restructure workgroups have been beneficial in bringing employers into the process of developing workforce programming that meet the needs of business and industry during the pandemic and beyond. Employer input has assisted in determining the types of certificates and the skills they need in completers of IELCE students.

In 2019-20, there were 159 IELCE participants, 52.2% of whom achieved a Measurable Skill Gain (83 EFL Gains). Challenges that grant recipients report include recruitment into IET programs, funding the workforce training component, and qualifying for workforce training (language, license/credential exam, etc.). To address these challenges, local providers are developing transitional/preparation courses for ELLs enrolling in an IET, informative workshops on career pathways and available training programs, pre-screening for eligibility, and increasing funding opportunities (braided funding, fee waivers, employer partnerships). COVID-19 has presented challenges to these efforts, but programs continue to seek innovative ways to serve students and employers.

*Describe how the State is progressing towards program goals of ensuring that IELCE program activities are integrated with the local workforce development system and its functions as described in section 243(c)(2) and discuss any performance results, challenges, and lessons learned from implementing those program goals.*

The IELCE grant recipients base the IET programs, including workforce preparation elements, on the Local Workforce Development Boards’ plans and current labor market information to identify the high demand industries in each provider’s service area. Local providers regularly attend Local Workforce Development Board meetings to be aware of local business needs, changes, and challenges in the area/region and ensure Title II is represented.

The grant recipients have reported IET enrollment has been a challenge, even prior to COVID-19. While IETs are selected based on local plans, the needs identified there at times do not align with student interest and language skills. Grant recipients are working towards addressing this issue by diversifying IET options that align with both the local plan and students’ interests.

ADWS/AES made progress during the 2019-20 year working directly with program administrators in developing IETs that helped develop quality concurrent and contextualized training that could support ELL learners. These efforts help expand ESL programs, leading to new IELCE programs applying during the 2020-2024 Request for Proposal. COVID-19 has impacted in-person ESL classes and many Civics Education programs. Most ESL classes find success due to the community environment the teachers foster, and, as of the end of the program year, that had not transferred as well to a remote environment.

**5. Adult Education Standards**

***If your State has adopted challenging K-12 standards under title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, describe how your Adult Education content standards are aligned with those K-12 standards.***

***· Optional – Describe implementation efforts, challenges, and any lessons learned.***

ADWS/AES lesson plans and curriculum maps continue to be aligned with K-12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which have been adopted by the Arkansas Department of Education for K-12 schools beginning with the 2013-2014 year, through the adoption of the Career and College Readiness (CCR) standards. ADWS/AES chose to adopt the CCR standards due to its rigorous research and scientific evidence of effectiveness and applicability to Adult Education. Additionally, it will ensure that students are prepared for post-secondary education and training and unsubsidized employment. The CCR standards used the CCSS to "identify a manageable set of the CCSS most indispensable for college and career readiness and important to adult students." The CCR Standards then are translated into curriculum and lessons for teaching the content of the standards to students. Classroom activities, assignments, and a range of formative and summative assessments all help determine whether students are absorbing the essential skills and knowledge included in the standards.

ADWS/AES continues to engage in an instructional task force composed of individuals, including state staff members, AALRC staff, and local program directors and teachers, to implement the CCR standards. Following the completion of the framework, the task force continues to utilize the CCR frameworks, along with professional development, to focus on the content areas.

The Arkansas CCR Framework is available on the ADWS/AES's website: http://arkansascareereducation.gov/adulteducation/pages/default.aspx and also at the AALRC website: http://aalrc.org/. The framework is designed as a living document, changing over time as do resources and student needs.

Currently, the committee's focus is to help teachers align the CCR framework into the curriculum and integrate employability, digital, and financial literacy standards within lesson plans. The task force also recognized the need to improve the quality of instruction. Therefore, ADWS/AES provides ongoing professional development using evidence-based practices in core subject areas.

Leadership funds were used to support the task force meetings and included webinars, conference calls, and face-to-face meetings. Technical assistance was also provided to support the project and included site visits, conference calls, and regional training. The framework was presented to local directors and staff during State Administrators' Meetings, conferences, and during multiple workshops at the AALRC, including Career & College Readiness Mathematics, Language Arts, Integrating Technology in the Classroom, and Regional GED® training to help prepare instructors to teach to a more rigorous curriculum.

***· Optional – Describe implementation efforts, challenges, and any lessons learned.***

ADWS/AES requires that 75% of classes be designed as managed enrollment, which has been proven to increase student retention and performance and which allows more effective use of the standards in instruction. In the transition of local programs moving from a primarily open enrollment structure, the need for additional professional development in the implementation of managed enrollment has been identified.

In May 2020, ADWS/AES focused on lead teacher professional development for Adult Education staff centers. This training required programs to identify instructional leaders and targeted training on standards with the CCSS shifts, planning with data, active engagement, teacher competencies and teacher resources. This was a strategic professional development effort was to provide alignment and consensus of Arkansas Adult Education instructional Best Practices.

ADWS/AES had the opportunity to participate in the first group of the Teaching Skills that Matter Pilot and the TSTM National conference. Therefore, ADWS/AES staff as well as the teachers that participated in the pilot created trainings for teachers to use the skills, and approaches. The state also created Health Literacy and Civic Education standards to pair with the Teaching Skills that Matter subject focus. This pilot helped focus programs to "intentional" course planning, data analysis, and evaluating teacher effectiveness. The integrated and contextualized approaches that TSTM lessons provided offered Arkansas teachers the ability to resolve course development issues, and isolation of skills.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic brought a demand for educational adaptation with major adjustments in the field.  Fortunately, ADWS/AES had previously begun the training and expansion of distance learning in all centers, in an effort to remove barriers to learning due to schedule conflicts and/or transportation limitations.  Each center had been required to have at least one teacher specifically trained in distance learning use and implementation.

Another asset was the statewide implementation of Essential Education, an online learning system.  Essential Education was piloted in several programs from July 2019 through February 2020.  The success of the pilot resulted in adoption of Essential Education into all ADWS/AES centers. Instructional staff for local centers received training in June 2020.

March 2020 brought about a more targeted approach to the expansion of training in distance learning to all teachers as centers across the state were forced to temporarily shut down or dramatically decrease attendance at physical sites.  As a result, 121 additional teachers were immediately trained on methodology and resources for online teaching virtually.  Rural areas in the state experienced difficulties due to lack adequate internet access and learners lack of equipment appropriate for online learning.  To combat this barrier, ADWS/AES centers adapted by offering outdoor classrooms, drive by packet pickups, and scheduling multiple but smaller onsite classes.  TABE pre- and post-testing and high school equivalency testing was adapted to individual rather than group testing procedures, as well as remote proctoring for those with access.  This targeted response enabled programs to continue the provision of services.

**6. Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals** (AEFLA Section 225)

*What was the relative rate of recidivism for criminal offenders served? Please describe the methods and factors used in calculating the rate for this reporting period.*

In Arkansas, recidivism is calculated based on three major areas: re-arrest, re-conviction, and re-incarceration within three years of intake to supervision during a three-year period following release from custody. Recidivism rates are calculated using the nationwide correctional standard timeframes of 6-, 12-, and 36-month follow-up periods. When examining recidivism rates, factors such as the released inmate’s inability to obtain employment, difficulty in finding a place to live, lack of support, impulsiveness, association with other criminals and lack of transportation influence the likelihood of a successful return to society. Personal characteristics such as age, gender, racial/ethnic groups, etc. also appear to impact recidivism.

The Arkansas Department of Corrections (ADC), which operates prison units, released a June 2020 report based on the findings from the 2015 Release Cohorts which included all offenders released from an Arkansas Department of Corrections (ADC) facility, Arkansas Community Corrections (ACC) facility or who flattened their sentence from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015. This study shows that the DOC’s 3-year recidivism rate is 49.17% of those released during CY2015. Of the 10,629 offenders released in 2015, 46.52% violated their parole and received a new sentence, 44.24% violated their parole due to a technical violation and discharged offenders recidivated at a rate of 9.24%. For offenders released in 2015, those with a GED at time of release demonstrated the highest rate of recidivism overall, with an average recidivism rate across all facilities of 58.25%; however, not all of those who were released with a GED were provided services directly by ADWS/AES.

Currently, the ADWS/AES provides services in 40 centers, including county jails, state and federal prisons, detention centers, reentry facilities, and community corrections centers. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, there were 1,901 participants in correctional facilities, with a Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) rate of 53%. Out of those who earned an MSG, 165 attained their GED and 842 achieved at least one Educational Functioning Level Gain. This represents a 9% increase in MSG attainment from the 2018-2019 PY, despite programs having to vacate their respective correctional facilities in March 2020, due to COVID-19.

Even though programs were not able to offer in-person services inside correctional facilities, many of them were able to create instructional packets and some were even able to offer instruction via Zoom. Since then, programs have become even more adept at offering services in corrections from a distance while others have been able to resume in-person classes in a limited capacity.