**Maryland Federal Narrative Report PY19**

In Program Year (PY) 2019, the adult education program provided state leadership to 23 grantees and Correctional Education under a Continuation Grant to carry out the purpose of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the goals established in the Maryland WIOA State Plan.

In January 2020, the State released the FY21 Competitive Application for Adult Education and Family Literacy providers for a multi-year period ending June 30, 2024. The competition was planned and conducted virtually, which proved fortunate with pandemic-related closures in March 2020. Twenty-four providers and Correctional Education received grant awards. The Maryland provider network is diverse and includes community colleges, public schools, community-based organizations, and a public library system.

With the COVID-19 shutdown, local programs rapidly changed course in Spring 2020 and shifted all services online. However, there was a significant drop in enrollment during this period due to student availability, difficulty testing and admitting new students, technology challenges, and adjustment to the virtual environment. Timely professional development and flexibilities in assessment policy were crucial in navigating these changes. Overall, some of the practices developed to meet these challenges have created opportunities to better serve adult students.

**State Leadership Funds**

**Alignment of Adult Education with Other One-Stop Required Partners to Strategies in the Combined State Plan**

***WIOA Implementation***

The Maryland WIOA State Plan articulates a system dedicated to placing people before performance. Collaboration between WIOA partners is a critical driver in policy development and implementation of state and local plans. The State Director of Adult Education and several adult education staff members participate in ongoing workgroups (WIOA Alignment, Data and Dashboard, Communications, Professional Development, and Policy) with constituents representing WIOA and community partners. Recommendations of the workgroups inform policy for the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) leadership to enhance partnerships and improve services for participants.

During the fiscal year, the Career Pathways Connections for Adult Learners co-enrollment grant awarded funds to two additional projects in the final round of applications in PY19. The grant, funded through Governor’s Set-Aside Funds, provided opportunities for adults with low literacy skills to access training opportunities using a range of best practices, including IET, leading to industry-recognized credentials and work opportunities adult learners. The initiative was designed to increase co-enrollment between Title I and Title II programs and included businesses, pre-apprenticeship programs, and local partners.

**Establishment/ Operation of High Quality Professional Development Programs**

In PY 19, local programs planned professional development based on data-driven decisions connected to student outcomes. In order to identify the PD opportunities most needed, programs surveyed instructors, observed instruction and identified gaps in NRS data. The Education Program Specialist dedicated to professional development began to transition more of the responsibility for professional development to the State office to ensure equitable access to high-quality evidence-based training. More events were offered virtually and attracted staff who might otherwise have been unable to attend in person. All scheduled face-to-face professional development opportunities were moved to a virtual environment in March 2020. Local staff were eager to connect with peers and share ideas for engaging students and offering effective online instruction and participated widely.

The Professional Development Education Program Specialist developed, coordinated, and managed multiple Virtual Training Institutes (VTI). The VTI is a fully-virtual, freely-available, and peer-driven conference hosted by the state office. Proposals are submitted and reviewed by the state team. The PD Specialist participates in multiple sessions with the facilitators to ensure the content is connected to a WIOA topic, instructional technique, or student outcomes and is virtually engaging. This fiscal year hosted two VTIs: one VTI was held in December 2019 and another one was held in June 2020. The December VTI hosted 16 presentations with 122 unique participants, 465 total participants (larger number because individuals participated in multiple sessions), averaging 29 individuals per session. The June VTI hosted 22 presentations with 222 unique participants, 1056 total participations, averaging 48 individuals per session. Participants from all areas of adult education are welcome to participate, but the focus has been Maryland instructors. The VTI will continue to be hosted twice annually in June & December. More information can be found on our website: [www.mdadultedvti.org](http://www.mdadultedvti.org).

The State continued to provide opportunities for members of each local leadership position, Administrator, Instructional Specialist (IS), Intake and Assessment Specialist (IAS) and Management Information Specialist (MIS), to meet as a community of practice. Groups met both in-person and remotely. The communities provide support and assistance for new and experienced staff and a continuous avenue for communication.

The State offered in-person and virtual LACES training for grantee leadership during the fall of PY19 and virtually during the spring of PY19. Content included NRS updates and LACES processes.

As instruction quickly moved from in-person instruction to online instruction, local programs developed and offered professional development to provide instructors with the necessary tools and skill set to move to a virtual environment. Local programs gathered and distributed appropriate resources and links to online learning website to make the shift in instructional delivery.

***National/State Conferences***

Members of the Office of Adult Education and Literacy Services attended the following national conferences during PY19: Coalition On Adult Basic Education (COABE), National College Transition Network (NCTN) Conference, International TESOL Convention, GED® Conference, American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), Workforce Information Technology Support Center (WITSC), National Summit on Adult Literacy, Learning Disabilities Conference, Adult Career Pathways Festival, National Meeting for Adult Education State Directors, Online Learning Consortium, Orientation for New State Directors, and the IDEAL Consortium. Members of the team also presented at COABE, NCTN, and AAACE.

State conferences attended included Maryland TESOL, and Raising the Bar, sponsored by the Maryland Workforce Association, comprised of our WIOA partners. A member of the team presented at Raising the Bar.

***Distance Learning***

The Maryland i-Pathways Distance Learning Program continued to serve learners at the adult secondary level in a completely online class. In PY19, MD i-Pathways offered 12 online class cohorts; three of which continued from PY18. A total of 108 new learners were served with 48 continuing into PY20.

Enrollment had decreased over the years due to a smaller representation of ASE level students who meet the cut scores for admittance. Additionally, students seemed to prefer the support and interaction of traditional or blended instruction. With COVID-19 closures, the program was suddenly in high demand. Unfortunately, with no testing available during the closure and a backlog of students waiting for remote testing, it was impossible to admit new students until a provisional assessment was developed and programs opened for face-to-face testing.

Direct support and assistance with the use of proxy hours for distance learning was provided to all programs across the state. Proxy hour approvals were granted to programs that submitted a form that listed the resource(s) and how it would be used within the local program for distance learning. Direct support to adult education program leadership and changes in program delivery resulted in an increase of distance learning offerings: in PY19 most programs offered some form of blended learning but did not offer distance education, and the programs that offered distance learning only offered clock time with only 4% utilizing teacher verification. At the end of PY19, 83% of programs offered distance learning and 33% of those programs utilized teacher verification in addition to clock time for proxy hours.

**Provision of Technical Assistance to Funded Eligible Providers**

The Education Program Specialist dedicated to data, accountability, and performance management provided program-specific data training to 13 adult education programs during PY19. The training content focused on NRS basics and analysis of program data. New staff was guided through features of the LACES data system and reports that can be utilized to track performance throughout the yea

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Adult education program specialists conducted program evaluation and monitoring throughout the reporting period through a combination of desk review of program data and information, review of the trimester and final reports, and site visits.

Staff made seven team site visits during the fiscal year to monitor program and instructional practices, provide orientation to new leadership staff and to offer technical assistance for targeted issues including WIOA and IELCE implementation. Staff conducted the full site visit, with the exception of one program which did not include the classroom observations due to the pandemic. Conference calls and Administrator’s Workgroup meetings for the grantee network provided information and updates of federal and state initiatives.

Additionally, fiscal monitoring and enrollment data verification audits are performed through the DWDAL Office of Monitoring and Compliance (OMC). In PY19, monitors from OMC conducted enrollment data verification at most local programs. College closures due to the pandemic prevented the monitoring of a few programs. Those programs will have enrollment data verifications conducted for PY18 and PY19 at the beginning of PY20 to minimize the amount of contact between the OMC monitors and the local program personnel. This audit, begun in PY14, revealed sources of data accuracy issues and led to greater consistency of data collection methods in local programs. Programs that failed to meet data quality standards were required to submit corrective action plans and provide professional development that involved all staff in understanding the importance of consistent data collection methods. The verification of program enrollment data will be conducted annually.

Five local programs were identified for fiscal monitoring in PY19 and all were able to demonstrate sound fiscal practices. Although a risk analysis tool is used to prioritize monitoring needs, all grantees will be monitored routinely on a three-year rotational cycle. DWDAL’s fiscal monitors meet with the local program administrator and financial agent to conduct the audit. The adult education program specialist may participate as needed.

**Performance Data Analysis**

***State Analysis Process***

MD Labor monitored data trends on a quarterly basis to identify any anomalies and trends in the data both at the state level and locally. This data is presented at regular team meetings, as well as at quarterly meetings with all local grantees. Data analysis starts with NRS Tables, especially Tables 4 and 4B. Charts of data trends, including enrollment, post-test rates, MSG rates, and other metrics are created using spreadsheets and then presented for group discussion. Additional research questions are then generated as appropriate. One example of these questions includes our efforts to determine the relative effect of each local grantee on the overall state performance, which is helping us to determine which programs to focus particular efforts with in order to drive positive change.

***Enrollment***

Overall enrollment decreased from 25,256 learners in PY18 to 21,473 in PY19, a 14.98% decrease in enrollment. Total enrollment was in decline prior to the pandemic, with a 6.21% drop in enrollment on 2/28/20 compared to 2/28/19. The drop in ABE population due to the pandemic was significantly higher than the ESL population. ABE was on track for 8.15% drop prior to the pandemic, but ended the year with a 21.99% decrease, as summarized in Table 1 below.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **ABE Enrollment** | **ESL Enrollment** | **Overall Enrollment** |
| PY18 through 2/28/19 | | 7,118 | 9,110 | 16,228 |
| PY19 through 2/28/20 | | 6,538 | 8,683 | 15,221 |
|  | **Percent Change** | **-8.15%** | **-4.69%** | **-6.21%** |
| PY18 (full year) | | 11,047 | 14,209 | 25,256 |
| PY19 (full year) | | 8,618 | 12,855 | 21,473 |
|  | **Percent Change** | **-21.99%** | **-9.53%** | **-14.98%** |

*Table 1 – 2-Year Enrollment Comparison Pre-Pandemic and Full Year*

***Measurable Skill Gains***

In PY19, 6,217 Periods of Participation (PoPs) saw either an Educational Functioning Level increase and/or attainment of a Diploma through the GED® or NEDP programs, resulting in a 28.6% MSG rate. Both ABE and ESL students achieved an MSG at approximately the same rate overall, with ABE Level 5 (33.8%) and ESL Level 1 (36.2%) being the most successful NRS Levels for each area. Prior to the start of the pandemic, MSG rates were below PY18 by only 1.9 percentage point. However, by year’s end the difference between PY18 and PY19 MSG rate had increased to 11.17 percentage points. A comparison of these differences is outlined in Table 2.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Total PoPs** | **PoPs with MSG** | **Percentage of PoPs with MSG** |
| PY18 through 2/28/19 | 16,351 | 5,462 | 33.40% |
| PY19 through 2/28/20 | 15,254 | 4,806 | 31.51% |
| **Percentage Point Difference** | | | **-1.90%** |
| PY18 (full year) | 25,768 | 10,259 | 39.81% |
| PY19 (full year) | 21,703 | 6,217 | 28.65% |
| **Percentage Point Difference** | | | **-11.17%** |

*Table 2 – 2-Year MSG Comparison Pre-Pandemic and Full Year*

***Matched Literacy Level Attainment***

The matched assessment percentage dropped by PY18’s rate of 63.48% to 49.54%. This is undoubtedly a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. All grantees were asked to indicate in our state database, LACES, all students that would have been eligible to post-test but were unable to complete a post-test due to the pandemic. This number includes students that may have had a previous post-test during the program year, but continued to attend during the pandemic and were unable to post-test during the pandemic. The total number of students that could not post-test was 6,787, which represents 31.61% of all participants in PY19. While it is certain that not all of these students would have achieved an MSG during the last 4 months of the year, it is clear that this has had an enormous impact on both matched assessments and overall completion rates.

***Diploma Attainment***

In Maryland, students may opt to earn a high school credential through the GED® tests or the National External Diploma® (NEDP).  Successful completers are awarded a Maryland High School Diploma that is jointly signed by the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Labor and the President of the State Board of Education.  The Governor and General Assembly provide funding to reduce the cost of the GED® test for Maryland residents.  With the state contribution, testers pay a reduced fee of $11.25 per section or $45.00 for the entire test.

The total number of Maryland High School Diplomas awarded to enrolled participants was 426 in PY19. This represents a 52% decrease in diplomas from the previous Program Year. The pandemic undoubtedly had a negative impact on this metric, as all authorized GED® test centers in Maryland were closed for testing from March 13, 2020 until June 7, 2020.  From June 7 to June 30, six authorized Pearson VUE test centers began to offer GED® tests in a limited capacity due to the restrictions for social distancing and computer lab spacing. In addition, completing In Office Checks for NEDP required changing procedures from before the pandemic, which affected the NEDP program’s efficacy.

NEDPcompletion declined significantly in PY19. Of learners enrolled in the program, 70 successfully completed the requirements for a high school diploma, compared to 144 in the PY19 reporting period. This represents a 52% decrease. NEDPenrollment also decreased by 12% (453 enrolled in PY18; 398 in PY19). The program grappled with the fallout of the pandemic during most of the reporting period resulting in a sharp decline in learner outcomes. The expectation is that learner outcomes will improve in PY20 since all the components of the program can now be completed in a virtual environment. NEDPpractitioners are also taking advantage of available professional development opportunities to develop their skills in supporting learners in a virtual environment.

State performance data is shared with local programs and technical assistance is provided in reviewing and analyzing local program data for program improvement. In PY19 there was a strong demand for this type of assistance. Local data is also used by the state to identify programs in need of targeted technical assistance. The State is considering a requirement that local programs meet 90% of the state performance data.

**Integration with One Stop Partners**

Local representation on workforce development boards and committees is an effective means for ensuring alignment and provides adult education and partner agencies opportunities to develop resources to mitigate barriers and assist common customers in meeting their educational and career goals.

As directed by the State, local plans address the implementation of WIOA required activities, including representation on the local workforce development board, career pathways, assessment practices, and data sharing for co-enrolled participants. The adult education local programs provide input for local workforce plans, MOUs, and Resource Sharing Agreements with WIOA partners, and our State Director of Adult Education sits as a member of the WIOA Alignment Group, which meets monthly.

During the PY17 – PY19 grant cycle, the State Adult Education Office almost exclusively negotiated the infrastructure contribution. Some local areas did negotiate a system for measuring the proportional use of the One Stop and adjusted the adult education contribution as needed. In the new cycle, all local programs will be required to negotiate and review local infrastructure expenditures.

Although some programs are co-located in the American Job Centers, onsite location is not always feasible. The AJCs are strictly daytime operations, which is unworkable for adult education programs. However, adult education staff regularly participate in orientation/information sessions providing a seamless “no wrong door” model and reducing co-enrollment barriers. Several programs piloted shared intake, including basic skills assessment, and assigned specific staff to facilitate referrals between agencies. Staff are cross-trained to understand eligibility requirements and identify students who are ready to benefit from referrals. Programs have begun to implement shared referral forms to streamline the intake process for participants.

The Career Pathways Connections for Adult Learners co-enrollment grant awarded funding for two additional projects in PY19 in addition to the five previously funded. The grant promotes innovative career pathways to increase adult learner’s access to training and career opportunities and create replicable interventions, including IETs, tailored to local workforce areas.

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

PY19 was the final continuation year of the three-year competitive grant cycle. Twelve local providers applied for and were approved to receive IELCE funds. These 12 IELCE grantees continued to use WIOA 243 funds, in addition to various other funding sources such as community college workforce sequence scholarships, MHEC funds and foundation fund scholarships to offer IELCE, IET bridge classes (Level 3 and above) and IET courses. The number of ESL participants enrolled in the IELCE Program continues to outweigh the number of ESL learners participating in the offered IETs. In PY19, state totals for IELCE are 1,459 participants with 183 IET participants. In PY19, 158 IELCE, 48 IET and 21 IET Bridge classes were offered throughout the state to levels 3-6 ESL learners.

IET course offerings included the following: Banking, Central Sterile Processing, Certified Nursing Assistant/Patient Care Technician, Skilled Trades Welding, EKG Technician, Ophthalmic Assistant, National Apartment Leasing, Bi-lingual Office Administrator, CDL- Commercial Driver’s License, Hospitality- American Hospitality and Lodging Educational Institute Certification, Administrative Support, and Dental Assistant/ Dental Radiologist. Healthcare is a targeted field for occupational training. Most of the options listed were carried over from PY 19 as they proved to be successful offerings based on student interest and completion rates.

While most programs faced challenges as to how they would be able to offer IELCE classes online, with as little disruption as possible, the greatest challenge was the IET. Although social distancing guidelines posed barriers to adhering to industry standards, and state and federal guidelines and requirements for hands on training, the online format allowed some programs to offer virtual IET to a greater number of students via simulations, in addition to asynchronous and synchronous online classes. Other programs found themselves needing to discontinue IET classes or cancel them altogether because they were unable to offer or complete the hands on training and/or certificate training components. All 12 programs have some variation of a Transition Specialist, Transition Coordinator, College and Career Coach, or Community Resource Manager. Many were able to transition into remote services including interview coaching, career counseling, job search assistance, resume writing workshops and basic needs resource assistance.

One challenge that initially continued is the location of the local program, with rural providers experiencing the most difficulty in running classes with sufficient student interest and availability. In addition, COVID-19 restrictions and site closures brought changes to how classes including IET could be offered. IET courses in progress at the time of the pandemic were either discontinued, moved to online whenever possible or cancelled. Partnerships also continue to be a challenge. Contributing factors include the following: time class is scheduled, intensity of course, participant current work schedules, and lack of interest in the occupational cluster. In addition, some local providers continue to experience difficulty collaborating with area employers and local workforce boards to form successful partnerships. The English Language Learner population is not well represented in the American Job Center. This was especially evident with the onset of COVID-19, when some American Job Centers struggled to identify how to offer remote services and local employers were also adversely affected. Additional training is needed to identify the particular needs of these participants. In addition, eligibility for Title I is not guaranteed to this population.

On-site visits and technical assistance from the State office had been taking place up until March when State employees faced a telework order by the Governor. Virtual Communities of Practice, Program-by- program phone contact, Google Meets virtual technical assistance, and IET training via Zoom are being employed during college campus and program site limited access.

**Adult Education Standards**

Maryland adopted the Career and College Readiness Standards for Adult Education to provide a consistent and shared expectation across all adult education programs of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to provide a seamless transition into post-secondary education and the workforce and align with the K-12 Common Core State Standards implementation. The high school credentialing paths, the 2014 GED® test and NEDP are aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards.

The online course, *College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education*, by The Center for Families Learning has been a valuable resource for Instructional Specialists (IS) in promoting a better understanding of the standards and how to integrate them in the curriculum.

***ABE Instructional Framework***

To assist Instructional Specialists and instructors regarding the skills assessed on the TABE 11/12 and the CASAS GOALS series, an ABE Instructional Framework was created. In PY20 a workgroup of Instructional Specialists and others in the field who are well versed in ABE to produce a final product for state-wide use. This will be particularly helpful for multi-level instruction.

The ABE Instructional Framework was completed in May 2020 and presented to the Instructional Specialists in June 2020. One webinar was presented for programs that use CASAS and another one for those programs that use TABE. The webinars were recorded to accommodate the Instructional Specialists who were unable to attend the live webinar.

***Digital Literacy Framework***

The State began work to revitalize its focus on digital literacy in February 2019 and to update The Maryland Technology Standards to more accurately fit the needs of adult learners in a world of emerging technologies. After initial research and development of a draft Digital Literacy Framework, a workgroup of local program administrators and instructors was formed to further develop and fine-tune the newly developed Framework. This update was created to provide structure and definition, offer a reference for evaluation, and encourage technology integration.

The Digital Literacy Framework for Adult Learners resource was completed and launched December of 2019 to Maryland adult education providers as a professional development opportunity during the Virtual Training Institute.

To further support the implementation of digital literacy in instruction, a collaborative Digital Literacy Framework Project was launched in March 2020. This project encouraged instructors to become familiar with the Digital Literacy Framework and provide classroom activities linked to the elements of the Framework. The outcome of this project was the Digital Literacy Framework Instructor Implementation Guide, finalized in June 2020, a resource created to support instructors with implementation of digital literacy in their own professional development and in classroom instruction. Professional development webinars and direct support was offered to instructors and adult education programs across the state.

The state leadership team compiled a list of educational technology/software, textbooks, and packets used for blended, hybrid, and distance learning. This list was entered into a Google Sheet indicating which resource was being used by each program. The list was shared with all the local providers.

**Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals**

The Correctional Education (CE) program is housed in the Maryland Department of Labor. It provides educational opportunities to over 9,000 inmates with services offered at each Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) State institution, the Patuxent Institution, and all pre-release units.

1. In Maryland, an offender is defined as an individual who has been committed by a judge to state prison and is in the custody of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS).
2. CE offers programs in Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and English Language Acquisition (ELA). An offender who does not have a high school diploma must enroll in adult education classes for a minimum of 120 days. Most choose to continue beyond that to earn a diploma and advance into occupational skills training.

DPSCS follows the rules established by the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA) for use in its Performance-Based Measures System (PBMS). After the end of a fiscal year, a release cohort is created and processed against the Offender Case Management System (OCMS). Currently, the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services reports recidivism based on which inmates, released from state custody, return to sentenced state custody in either correctional or community supervision. The Department reports recidivism on a one-year timeframe, in keeping with state reporting requirements. For the most recent year available, PY17, the recidivism rate for return to state custody in one year is 6.2%. The single-year return during PY15 was 6.0%.

The Department is in the process of completing a three-year recidivism calculation for the population released in PY15, based on any sentenced return to custody in a local jail, state community supervision, or state prison. The report has been delayed primarily due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The initial departmental recidivism rate will be a baseline against which program-specific recidivism can be compared. Official recidivism will include returns resulting in the revocation of parole or mandatory supervision, new sentenced offenses, and new probation sentences. Arrests are covered separately by the Criminal Justice Information System.