***Maine Narrative Report PY 2019***

1. ***State Leadership Funds***

***i.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 State’s three workforce boards host regular meetings for one-stop partners through the one-stop operator. The primary agenda items for those meetings are to share available program offerings, address how to meet the needs of common clients, and to look for opportunities to collaborate. Only a few adult education programs are physically co-located within a one-stop so it is especially important to have an effective referral and information sharing process in place. A major alignment effort in PY19 was to develop a referral and client facing portal where adults could learn about the programs and services of the core partners, complete a VR intake form, fill out a self-referral form and request additional information from any of the partners. Adult education participates with other one-stop partners in sharing brochures, providing updates to practices, placing adult education programs on the Eligible Trainer Provider List and cross-training opportunities.

PY19 was a year of real progress with the post-secondary partners. A large community college campus entered into an agreement with area adult education programs to provide dedicated classroom and advising space on the campus, include AE courses in their class listings, and provide college ID badges to adult education students. These badges enabled learners to access the library and other campus support services and ride the city buses for free. A campus in western Maine hosted a regional adult education college transition program. The college provided access to the college’s learning management system, recruited learners who needed extra support before enrolling in college level classes. The local adult education programs provided instruction in English, mathematics and academic success skills. Right when the pandemic hit the Community College System office reached out to adult education to contract with our providers to deliver remote CNA courses.

We also worked with the university system to pilot IT micro-credentials for adults with low-incomes, members of Maine’s tribes and people of color. These pilots benefitted our learners and provided evidence of the role adult education can play in the development of micro-credentials as pathways to postsecondary and employment.

***ii. Establishment or operation of high-quality development programs as described in section 223(a)(1)(B).***

The state office’s goals for the professional development system in PY19 were to increase the input of the field into professional development needs, increase technical assistance related to distance learning and digital literacy, and continue to deliver high-quality PD opportunities that improve adult education services for learners. Even with the rapidly changing climate of the pandemic, we were able to meet these goals because of the structures we had in place before March.

In PY 19, we convened a new statewide professional development advisory committee made up of administrators, teachers, advisors, and support staff who represent a diversity of programs (i.e. rural vs. urban, small vs. large, student population size and makeup, etc.). Informed by the requirements of section 223 and using program responses to federal and state grants, committee members developed a comprehensive professional development questionnaire that was distributed to the field in February 2020. The results determined the priorities for professional development for the rest of PY 19 and PY 2020, including working with learners with disabilities, integrating technology in teaching and learning, and improving content area teaching using evidence-based instructional strategies aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education.

Due to the geographical and logistical challenges local providers face in largely rural Maine and the primarily part-time staff, the state office had already developed a system for delivering professional development virtually. Most professional development focused on improving instructional strategies, including Reading Apprenticeship, learner accessibility, courses in career and education advising, CCRS-SIA trainings, and courses for integrating mathematics into English language learning, occured through facilitated or self-paced courses on Schoology or through Zoom. This approach enabled the state office to offer courses as scheduled for the fall, late winter and spring. The familiarity of most instructors with receiving professional development remotely was an asset when the pandemic curtailed any face-to-face meetings. To meet the fields’ needs and increased demand for professional development, additional sections of courses were offered.

Trainings typically offered in-person, and often regionally, were moved to Zoom which allowed greater participation from across the state. The state office adapted the CASAS implementation trainings, HiSET Test Center Administrator training and the Introduction to the English Language Proficiency Standards to be delivered remotely. A training on best practices for intake and data originally scheduled to be in-person for 25 attendees was held via Zoom for 66 participants. Virtual trainings were recorded to share in the state Schoology groups for later or repeated viewing.

The state office’s membership in the IDEAL consortium ensured that we had access to high-quality distance learning resources to share with the field. The state staff participated in the weekly distance learning strategy sessions, shared resources with the field, and used their learnings in the revision of the state’s distance education guidance and plan. IDEAL member states opened their PD to other member states. We shared many of those additional distance learning resources that we did not have the capacity to deliver with our practitioners. As IDEAL members we also were able to offer introductory courses in blended and mobile learning and open educational resources through WorldEd’s elearning platform. The generosity of other states in sharing their professional development, resources, strategies for communicating with the field helped us refine our approach to distance learning and offer opportunities beyond our scope.

The state office used systems we already had in place and added new structures to support the field. The Group feature of Schoology, the state learning management system, was critical for sharing information and resources with the field. In our State Office Technical Assistance group, we created a folder for resources for all program roles and started discussions to encourage sharing around planning for remote services. We continued to use the statewide listserv (over 300 members) to disseminate promising practices and to share listings for upcoming professional development opportunities sponsored by the State Office and our partners.

Beginning in March we began offering weekly office hours for adult education staff to come together and discuss how they were delivering services to learners. The office hours created community among staff and gave them an opportunity to problem solve and learn from each other. We have continued to offer the office hours monthly, but now offer times for specific program roles (advising, data, ESOL teachers, math and ELA/Literacy teachers) and have recruited local practitioners to facilitate the discussions. The sessions are recorded and shared in Schoology with notes and resources from the meetings. The State Office used information from the office hours, as well as Town Hall meetings, to inform our priorities both immediately and longer-term.

As CASAS, HiSET, and OCTAE released guidance around supporting programs during the pandemic, the state office offered specific sessions related to the new guidance and shared resources and opportunities for training via email and in the Schoology groups. One Maine local provider volunteered to field-test CASAS GoRemote which assisted the state office in communicating information and expectations around the process. We continued to offer support through office hours and shared documents as providers implemented remote testing. For those who were unable to offer remote testing, we shared other assessments for local providers to use for class placement, including the CASAS Reading Level Indicator and ReadTheory.

State office personnel attend relevant and appropriate federal and regional technical assistance trainings, such as National Reporting System on-line and in-person trainings, OCTAE Shop Talks, LINCS professional learning groups, the NASDAE National Training Institute, IDEAL consortium summer institute, and then report back to our local service providers with information, materials, and guidance on those impacts. Since many conferences and trainings shifted to virtual events, state office personnel were able to participate in opportunities that were usually not available due to travel costs.

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

The state office provides technical assistance in the context of the statewide Title II professional development system, pursuant to program monitoring activities and as needed by individual local providers and one-stop partners based on performance, demographic, or staff changes.

Following the model of OCTAE, we hosted a Town Hall meeting for local providers in March to learn how we could support them with the transition to emergency remote services. We shared updated OCTAE and NRS guidance on assessments, tracking attendance, and answered many questions. The information from this Maine Town Hall and several other surveys related to technology and device access allowed us to tailor our technical assistance and offer resources to meet the immediate needs of local providers.

As local providers became overwhelmed with the increased volume of electronic communication and changing dynamics due to the COVID-19 situation, we instituted a weekly ICYMI (In Case You Missed It). The ICYMI is a bulleted list that summarizes recently shared important information from the state and federal levels in various WIOA and state aligned categories. It is a reminder of deadlines, upcoming professional development, links to articles or other resources highlighting best practices, and successes from the field. The ICYMI has been so positively received we will continue to share it through our statewide listserv and in the State Office Technical Assistance Schoology group.

In thefall of 2019 members of the state team began meeting with a former adult educator to discuss her company, Maine Intercultural Communication Consultants, regarding working with local adult education programs and WIOA partner agency staff. Plans were underway to do training in the spring of 2020 on intercultural development. Unfortunately, the training did not happen but to temporarily fill the need, local educators were encouraged to participate in other remote offerings regarding multicultural awareness, sensitivity and implicit bias.

COVID-19 really clarified how deeply divided our state is on access to technology and devices and internet connectivity. Several surveys were conducted with directors to determine the technological needs of their learners. We learned that not only were many of our students unable to access online learning, but so were many of our teachers who had relied on using computers and internet at their schools. Many ESOL learners were frustrated by the lack of curricula compatible with their mobile devices. Certificate students were unable to continue job training programs and high school equivalency testing stopped. Programs diverted very limited financial and human resources to check in with learners to help them stay not just academically, but emotionally connected with their programs.

Through the result of a private donation, CARES Act and GEER funding, several hundred computers, tablets and hotspots were distributed to adult learners with the greatest need.

In PY19 we increased technical assistance aimed at improving instruction in English Language Acquisition. As more local providers began serving English learners, we identified the need for assistance with teaching adult English learners, including implementation of the English Language Proficiency standards, integrating mathematics into the ELA classroom, and increasing rigor in ESOL instruction.

Additionally, the state office offered the following PY19 events based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate:

* **Reading, writing, speaking:** CCRS-SIA ELA/Literacy Implementation; Reading Apprenticeship, Part 1 & 2; Reading Apprenticeship in Writing; Seamless: Soft Skills in the Classroom and Beyond (online)
* **Mathematics:** CCRS-SIA Mathematics Implementation; Mathematizing ESOL I: Integrating Whole Number Operations; Mathematizing ESOL II: Integrating Benchmark Fractions, Percentages, and Decimals; Integrating Math into Employment for ELLs
* **English Language Acquisition:** Serving the English Language Learner; Module 1: Introduction to the English Language Proficiency Standards; Nexus of Rigor and Adult ESOL Instruction
* **Distance Education:** Digital Citizenship: Preparing the 21st Century Citizen for the 21st Century World (in-person and online)
* **Staff Training:** World of Work Inventory (WOWI) Level 1 & 2 Training; Learner Accessibility; Universal Design for Learning; Career and Education Advising; WorkReady Facilitator Training; eCASAS Basic Implementation Training; CASAS Linking to Instruction; Using TopsPRO for Instruction; HiSET Reboot Training; HiSET Test Center Administrator training; Best Practices for Data Match; Why We Ask What We Ask Data Training; MaineSTARS data training (collecting, analyzing, reporting); GEPA Technical Assistance Webinar; fiscal management (best practices); new program administrator training series.

The state office uses Schoology, a learning management system, to provide both a model of online learning and a repository for educational and programmatic materials and resources. In PY19, state office personnel supported local providers in the transition to emergency remote learning using Schoology as a repository for relevant distance learning resources, offering targeted support about navigating the system, and holding office hours for group problem solving around online learning. Consortia of local providers also use the Schoology group feature to create online professional learning communities where instructors and advisors across the consortia can share resources and best practices. In FY20, the State Office continued its revision of its CCRS-SIA trainings and launched updated Phase 1 CCRS trainings, a combination of on-demand and shorter facilitated trainings. Phase 2 is in development.

We revised the Maine Adult Education Guidance for Distance Education to clarify language around tracking attendance and reporting and to encourage a collaborative approach to distance education among local providers. The pandemic interrupted its dissemination, and ­we held back its release to make sure it reflected the most recent guidance from OCTAE and NRS, including information about assessing learners remotely. The implementation plan is also under revision.

2019-2020 Professional Development Opportunities by Category\*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Number of events** |
| Assessment | 5 |
| College and Career Readiness | 16 |
| Instructional Practice | 15 |
| Data Collection and Analysis | 5 |
| Advising | 7 |
| Administrator/Leadership | 12 |
| Distance Education | 1 |
| WorkReady | 3 |
| WIOA/AEFLA | 5 |
| Office Hours | 43 |

\* This table does not reflect the self-paced courses offered throughout the year.

While Maine has not conducted state-wide onsite program monitoring for several years, we have relied on desk monitoring, the submission of standardized quarterly reports, targeted technical assistance to address any issues coming up in reports (i.e. SSN collection, data sharing agreements, etc.), evaluations of professional development courses offered, and one-on-one visits initiated by a program or the state office as needed.

We decided to go on listening tours in 2019-2020. We believed personal visits not connected to any type of training or monitoring would help improve relationships with programs and show our interest and support of them. This was their opportunity to design the agenda, to highlight accomplishments and point out any challenges they wanted to share. Each visit was different and reflected the character of the programs. We saw facilities, met with teachers, learners, admin staff, and community partners. Due to a state team member’s schedule conflict, one visit was conducted remotely, a preview of things to come. The final visit was cancelled due to the pandemic and everyone was too overwhelmed to carry it out through technology.

The success of the tours in relation to building good will and the experience of doing one remotely, made it apparent that with the inability to travel due to COVID-19 and the size of our state, it was time to develop an online monitoring system and revised risk management tool. Those will be developed during the spring of 2021.

Most of the information regarding the section on permissible activities is captured in the section above.

1. ***Performance Data Analysis***

Based on the core employment indicators, adult education in Maine showed improvement from the previous year. Rates in employment for both the second and fourth quarter after exit increased and the average median earnings for Maine adult learners increased by over 10%.



The data used to calculate employment outcomes is prior to March of 2020 and indicated that Maine adult education programming and services were showing slow, steady growth in aiding learners enter and remain in the workforce. In the coming years, we anticipate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be reflected in the employment and wage outcomes of Maine learners.

Other performance measures clearly demonstrate the negative impact Covid-19 had on Maine’s adult education programming and services.



In PY 19 Maine saw significant decreases in overall enrollment numbers, learner posttest rates, and measurable skill gains. To minimize the effect of COVID-19 on our data we compared each year’s program data from July through February only.

Overall enrollment in PY19 was down over 16% from PY18 and enrollment from July 2019 through February 2020 was also down from the previous year, but by just 8 %. Learner demographics continue to shift toward serving more ESL learners. July through February PY19 data indicated that ESL enrollments were actually up 1.69% year-to-date from the previous year.



These enrollment trends indicate that without the impact from Covid-19, Maine learner enrollments would have held steady or declined only slightly with English language learners continuing to increase as a percent of the overall adult learner population. This has clear implications for future programming and suggests that meaningful English language acquisition programming and services will need to be prioritized. Clearly, as new Mainers begin to resettle throughout the state, Integrated English Language and Civics Education programming will need to expand beyond the greater Portland and Lewiston areas.

When comparing enrollments after March 1st, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are clearly demonstrated. From March to June of 2020, only 94 new learners enrolled in Maine adult education, a drop of more than 85% from the same period in 2019. This represents less than 2% of overall state enrollment and measurable skill gains.



In the previous year, 638 new enrollments occurred after March 1st, accounting for 11% of the overall enrollment for the year and 10% of the Measurable Skill Gains achieved. Maine adult education is open year-round, but the bulk of posttesting and measurable skill gains occur after March 1st. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are also seen in high school equivalency test volume and credential data. Of the 5,894 HiSET tests given in PY18, almost half (2,834) were administered after March 1st. In PY19, this number decreased 67% to 927 tests administered. In a normal year, Maine averages around 490 HiSET tests administered per month, but in April of 2020 just 35 HiSET tests were administered statewide- almost 94% less than April of 2019. This lack of testing can be attributed to the state-wide closure of school building where the majority of our testing sites are located.

One area less effected by the Covid-19 pandemic is the percent of adult education learners agreeing to a data match. Historically, this has been a problem for Maine with just over half of Maine’s learners agreeing to a data match in any given year. To improve our data match release rate, we developed an Emergency Response Team (ERT) of practitioners whose focus was to provide guidance, resources, and technical assistance to increase the rate of learners signing the data match release form. We also established a new state target- the Data Match Release Rate Target, and challenged all local programs to achieve a 90% data match release rate. The rate was calculated and tracked on the quarterly data report and available to all programs to view.

For the most part, the results of this effort have been effective. The data match rate overall has increased 1.39% from PY17 (the 2017-2018 academic year). Except for Maine’s largest adult education program, all other programs have contributed to a steady upward trajectory to 83.42% in PY19. Unfortunately, the largest adult education program in Maine continues to struggle to improve this metric. Since that program makes up over 25% of Maine’s NRS enrollments, their low data match release rate has a significant negative impact on the total state data match rate. Despite all our technical assistance efforts, the rate for this program actually declined in 2020, resulting in only 14.35% of their learners agreeing to a data match.



Our largest local program insists their low rate is due solely to their high percentage of English language learners and that there is no way it can be improved. However, the second largest program has similar demographics and their data match rate for 2020 is 71%. Clearly more can be done to improve this metric. If our largest program had even a 50% data match release rate, the overall state rate would increase to over 70%. This data compels us to try and improve this metric in the coming year. Without the ability to capture the employment and postsecondary outcomes of hundreds of adult learners, Maine Adult Education will be unable to demonstrate its effectiveness to our WIOA partners, legislators, and the Maine people we serve.

In addition to the next steps included in the preceding information, our data analysis has led to plans to address continued professional development on the delivery of all phases of student enrollment and participation, including referrals, intake, instruction and assessments as well as implementing the HiSET at Home remote testing option. We will also work with our data system provider, local providers, Maine Department of Education data director and workforce partners on guidance regarding the secure transfer of personal identifiable information, electronic signatures and data storage.

1. ***Integration with One-stop Partners***

The state delegated the role of one-stop partner to local programs. Due to the geographic and varied regional economies of the state it was determined that the partnerships would be more productive if decisions were made at the local level. Conversations were beginning regarding updating MOUs and determining IFA costs when COVID-19 hit. Those meetings are to resume in the fall.

1. ***Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program***

Maine competed for IELCE funds in February 2019. Two local programs applied and were funded. The initial grant period is for 2 years with two additional 2-year extensions**.** In the RFP, programs were asked to develop at least one IELCE IET.

Classrooms are serving microcosms of the community. Classroom expectations and processes reflect those that are expected in the community and at work, with an emphasis on habits of success: punctuality, active participation, respect, a democratic norms process, and classroom job assignments that alternate weekly.All students participate in career pathways exploration activities through which they begin to see the connection between education and work. Funded programs are to ensure that integration of academics, civics and employability skills and career planning takes place. With employers and industry sector involvement, each funded provider developed more than one IET resulting in an industry recognized credentials (ELL CNA, ELL Teller Program, WelcomeME, IT Industry, NCCER certificate as introduction to Construction programs, and Educator Academy) entering employment.

Of the 144 learners enrolled in the IELCE IETs by the funded providers, 70 completed and 35 entered employment. One of the providers was in an area harder hit by COVID-19 and learners had more barriers transitioning to a remote format and employment opportunities were far fewer. This program spent substantial funds and other resources addressing the basic emotional and poverty-based needs of the learners.

1. ***AE Standards***

Maine adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education in 2014 and continues to provide professional development and technical assistance to local practitioners in effectively implementing the CCR Standards. The State Office contracts with an ELA lead trainer to facilitate the Standards-in-Action Phase 1, 2, and 3 trainings, and the State Professional Development Coordinator facilitates the mathematics trainings. In FY20 we launched a redesign of the mathematics CCRS trainings as on-demand and short facilitated courses. This followed the ELA revisions in FY19. The statewide Professional Development Advisory Committee recommended that the State Office explore next steps for supporting the field with integrating the CCRS into instruction meaningfully. Training was also provided in PY19 on the English Language Proficiency Standards. We continue to explore how to evaluate the local providers’ implementation of standards.

***6. Programs for Correction and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals***

Learners receiving adult education services are tracked in the MDOC data system (CORIS) for participation and return to custody should that happen. Of those who successfully completed adult education programming in 2018, the return to custody rate in the first year was 8.3%. The chart below indicates the return to custody rate for the past three years.

