North Dakota

# 2019 – 2020 Narrative Report

## State Leadership Funds (Section 223)

(a) North Dakota (ND) Adult Education (AE) program continues to work closely with WIOA core partners in helping to better serve the students/clients (eligible participants) of ND. North Dakota has been selected to participate in a Peer Evaluation Cohort along with the states of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, and Idaho on WIOA efforts. This is a technical assistance forum comprised of cross-agency representatives from four to six states. State teams who represent core WIOA programs will collaborate and develop evaluation action plans designed to conduct and implement state and/or local research and evaluations. We are working with a Mayer/Mayer DOL Coach, Cynthia Forland. Our North Dakota Cohort consists of the WIOA North Dakota agencies; Job Service, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Career & Technical Education, and North Dakota Department of Commerce. Objectives are to understand the current capacity for evaluation and then develop an evaluation framework in a timeline of a few years. We did a self-assessment of our agencies and collaborated for a team rating in key areas. Focus of growth will be made on the three areas: strategic planning; staff skills, capacity, and knowledge; funding strategies. The assessment identified our strengths as a state: evaluation culture awareness and data management. There have been several virtual meetings and trainings. AE also continues to work closely with/on the Governors Workforce Development Council (State Board) (WDC) to ensure adult education and literacy activities remain on the forefront of strategies to fill workforce needs. Regular meetings occur with the core partners, this committee is a branch of WDC and called the WDC administrative team. Time and work is centered around aligning work and initiatives found in the new State Plan. We developed a WIOA collaborative online Microsoft Team allows us to communicate on a different level and platform. Ensuring alignment and working relationships at the local level is a key priority. Solid growth has occurred in the area of identifying services for participants across the WIOA programs. Also, ongoing, the WDC has created 3 groups or task force committees to concentrate on initiatives. AE is assisting in the realm of individuals with barriers and this work will provide even greater resources for students. We have implemented and are refining a new way to track co-enrollments with Job Service ND.

The State AE office informally tracks professional development (PD) needs by taking note of questions asked by multiple adult learning centers (ALCs), trends in errors in the data systems, or new items/processes that are either upcoming or recently implemented. Professional Development needs are discussed at our Directors’ meetings with the State office and shared with NDALL board members on present and future trainings. Continuing to improve, even for our higher performing ALCs, is the model. We want to take out State performance from “good to great”. The North Dakota Association for Lifelong Learning (NDALL) assists the State office in finding PD opportunities and delivering PD. NDALL also plays a large roll in orchestrating the annual Adult Education Fall Conference. The NDALL Conference was held in October in a virtual format this year due to COVID. There was a one-hour session each week, five sessions. Conference evaluations were positive and gave us some solid feedback to improve for 2021. The State Director is a member of the NDALL Board and discussion of professional development is one item of focus. She has researched out to speakers and continues to assist on any needs of the ALC Directors. NDALL puts together a conference committee that includes Directors, adult education teachers, and alternative high school principals/staff. The adult education strand of the conference included the following topics: The Foundations of Anti-Bias Education, The Power of Our Self Story, COVID Roundtables sessions, WSI: What do We Do with These Guys, and Safe Zone: Transgender Focus. There was a consensus from the teachers in Adult Ed and Alternative Ed that they would like to continue round table sessions, so they will hold a couple more this year virtually.

In addition, the Directors have had focused PD with their staff on various topics. LINCS is an option encouraged and shared with Directors. Other PD opportunities outside of the annual conference included are a GED Accommodations training by the state for Directors and testing administrators. The Bismarck ALC offered LACES training. TABE training/webinar information sessions were forwarded to the Directors as well. With COVID it has been a bit challenging to offer the same schedule of training but hope to get back on the schedule soon. The State Office (State Director) attended nation-wide conferences and trainings such as NRS Regional Training, NASDAE, OCTAE, COABE, and some in house training. The COABE conference will be held in March and will be available in the virtual format or in person in Nashville, Tennessee. Having all training available on a Virtual platform due to COVID-19 has made them more available to attend. Meetings are held every other month with the ALC Directors to offer support, share information, and assist in solutions/collaborate. The two staff in the State office are readily available for any technical support that is needed.

One Regional ALC Director has resigned, so a transition is occurring as we are working with the new director. A different Regional ALC is working on a satellite program to better serve students in region. We are thankful for the directors in our 8 regions and DOCR and their dedication and engagement with the students they serve in Adult Education in North Dakota.

The State office acts as the first stop for all technical assistance. This allows for a quick response back to local staff and if needing to take a step further and reach out further, the State office can track and coordinate this inquiry and response. Typically, an answer that would go above the State office will then be posted in our AE Microsoft Team (Teams), so it is documented and accessible by every AE staff member in the State. Two of these AE Microsoft Teams exist, one for those at Director level and then one for all staff. Technical assistance is constant, and questions are encouraged to ensure consistency and accurate implementation. Microsoft Teams has also opened lines of communication between the sites themselves and allow for best practice questions/answers. The threads of conversations are very encouraging to see. Funding used to pay for our databases and systems have built in cost for technical assistance and trainings as well. We will continue to utilize Microsoft Teams, email, and Zoom with our Directors.

Federal and state compliance monitoring last took place at the end of 2017. Site visits occurred in 2018-2019, more of an informal check in, data review, general networking, and questions about a wide range of needs. We are researching virtual evaluation/observation methods during this time of COVID and will be setting goals for on-site visits once it is safe. Federal and state compliance monitoring has been challenging in 2019-2020 due to COVID. Desk audits of data happen regularly, typically monthly, and a data review is sent out quarterly. Lastly, AE holds an annual Directors meeting to discuss previous years data, current issues, best practice, large scale changes, and other items to steer Adult Education for the future. Meetings are held every other month with the ALC Directors to offer support, share information, and assist in solutions/collaborate. The two staff in the State office are readily available for any technical support that is needed. All information collected from monitoring, evaluation, desk audits, trending questions, etc. are used (in real time) to help make adjustments to future professional development topics and technical assistance guidance communicate to the field.

## Performance Data Analysis

The State office often reviews performance data and looks for trends and/or measures that cause concern or that should be commended. Each ALC is looked at individually and this typically occurs monthly. LACES training and PD is concentrated on teaching Directors and staff how to quickly check these data sets and then, more importantly, to use this data in decision making and student academic planning. The overall data performance measures that included the TABE assessment in 2018-2019 were affected. The full transition to TABE 11/12 occurred in 2018-2019 and played a role in the performance dip. We continue to transition to the TABE 11/12 in 2019-2020. It has been an ongoing challenge with COVID on tracking enrollment and growing enrollment at our ALC’s, administrating the pre and posttests and accumulating the hours, tracking POP’s with distance learning, but have remained strong due to having online instruction and teacher/student engagement and to continue the learning. We have had to be creative on methods but continue to serve students in North Dakota. Directors have worked hard to continue services via Zoom and Teams and following COVID requirements to allow for some in person sessions with students. However, the class sizes are quite condensed due to the guidance expectations. Social interactions are different and therefore students do not have the same peer support that they normally would have had, nor relationship building with instructors as it would have been in person. Teachers are exhausted but working hard to bring success. Another challenge and helpful tool during this time is the OnVue online option of GED. It has allowed better accessibility during this time for students wanting to complete the GED, but we have found some of the changed guidance cumbersome. Our state is allowing it at this time as Directors feel this is needed. However, it has created challenges on processes that overlap and confusion. Technology is a needed tool and some students do not have access to technology. Some moms have appreciated technology options to do distance learning as they can study from home while caring for their children. However, it does impact the engagement. Some centers communicate that communication and accountability is better while others communicate it is more challenging from a distance learning perspective.

PoP with MSG ABE Total (Table 4) 39.4%

PoP with MSG ESL Total (Table 4) 32.5%

PoP with MSG Grand Total (Table 4) 36.9%

PoP with MSG ABE Total (Table 4b) 38.5%

PoP with MSG ESL Total (Table 4b) 63.7%

PoP with MSG Grand Total (Table 4b) 47.7%

Employment Rate (Quarter 2) 53.9%

Employment Rate (Quarter 4) 56.0%

Median Earnings (Quarter 2) $5200.00

Credential Rate 61.6%

The data above is looked at closely at the end of the year. As mentioned, during the year, audits are done monthly, and reports are sent out quarterly. Also, two times a year, a deeper dive into LACES produces a Data Analysis. This deeper dive goes into student level data and reveals small but very relevant pieces of information such as students missing small items such as Highest Education Level that would keep them from being an NRS participant or NRS participants post-tested below minimum hours. There are around 15 different criteria that are involved in the Data Analysis. LACES staff can do these for a fee, the State Director can perform them if time allows. The last piece of data that is shared with the ALCs and Directors is more of an overall look and includes GED data as well. This report looks at Table 4, posttest percentage, NRS participants v. students with 1 hour but not NRS participants, GED Pass Rate as defined by GED Testing Service, and a real Passed/Given percentage on GED official exams. Each quarter the ALCs must look closely at their data for the Quarterly Report that is required before funding is released. Performance data is examined at the local level to drive increased performance and professional development needs. We also try to align newer local Directors or Directors who are struggling a bit in a certain area with a Director who is excelling in that same area. It is helpful to hear best practice and a plan to improve from their cohort as well as the State level. Lastly, fine tuning the data match process and working with our core WIOA partners on utilizing the SWIS, we hope to continue to get closer to the true number of folks who can help our employment and median earnings outcome data. In ND, we use data match and survey at the site level to try and obtain as many positive matches as we can. Fine tuning the data match process has involved being precise on when we run the report, when sites should check the data system after matches are imported, and lastly increasing the effectiveness of LACES tables and searches to make this process more user friendly. North Dakota has a very low unemployment rate when comparing to other states and, according to multiple studies by WIOA core partners and the Governors Workforce Development Council, more open jobs than people available/looking for work. Action: We continue to monitor and offer support to the Directors in moving students along in reaching their goals. We are monitoring the instruction and data, but trust our Directors as they lead their staff in the tools they need in delivery methods. Much like learning loss that is heavily expected in K12, it is also occurring in Adult Education in ND. Not only has the method of delivery needed to be shifted, but peoples’ needs have increased and a focus on improving academic standing was not a priority. Our great dip from 2018-2019 to 2019-2020 data occurred with EL students and we have heard from our EL instructors that distance education is much harder due to the language barrier and skills to utilize technology.

## Integration with One-stop Partners

Job Service of North Dakota (JSND) is the main provider of career services in our single workforce state. An ongoing MOU between ND Governor, his Workforce Development Council (WDC), and JSND explains they are to provide and make available the career services described in WIOA and 34 CFR 463 subpart J. The MOU also includes language dealing with core and required partners of WIOA to work as a one-stop system to more effectively serve students and participants well accomplishing the Governor’s workforce goals laid out in the WIOA State Plan.

AE in ND provides basic career services by assisting participants in eligibility determinations, providing information on available programs and assistance offered, assessing skill/academic levels, sharing in-demand occupation information, access to current job openings and skills/requirements for those positions, postsecondary training information for job attainment, providing information about support services available in the area and statewide, assistance with financial aid and guidance to individuals who specialize in this area but also help assist in filling out forms such as FAFSA. Meaning assistance in the above areas is provided, but not provided in all areas as listed in 34 CFR subpart J. Some individualized career services are provided however due to COVID this has been more challenging connecting students to these vocational services, but centers continue to provide what opportunities they are able for employment preparation. They have worked with virtual meeting options and in person if available. Directors continue to communicate with the local agencies. these would be pre-vocational services or soft-skills such as communication skills, interviewing skills, acting as a professional etc., work and training experiences, workforce preparation activities, financial literacy, digital literacy or technology based training, and English language acquisition and in some local sites, IET/IELCE programs. Follow up is conducted for students who exit AE. Areas of the career services that AE does not cover are covered by one-stop partners. These services, for example, would be placement assistance, more intense labor market information, unemployment compensation claim assistance, diagnostic testing and other non-academic testing or assessment, development of more intense individualized employment plan.

Core partners have committed to the WIOA required Infrastructure Cost Agreement. ND did request a waiver of Section 121(h)(1)(B)(i) and 121(h)(2)(C)(i) of WIOA concerning funding of one-stop infrastructure. The waiver was not approved. Currently, the infrastructure cost (no co-location) for AE remains being calculated on co-enrolled participants.

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

The agreement resulting from the first competitive grant process ended in 2018-2019. A new competition was recently completed. ND DPI awarded one grant to one Regional provider and that was the Fargo Adult Learning Center. They were the only ones to apply.

All AE providers in ND have been trained in the concepts of IELCE and IET. Fargo is the only site that is mandated to provide both services, an IELCE program that includes IET. Ideally, with increased knowledge of the programs and educating stakeholders, we can secure additional resources to duplicate the work being done in Fargo. It is a goal to expand our IET offerings across the state. Currently, talks are in place with CTE to form a partnership that would allow AE students access to trainings/courses that K12 students have access to. Also, access to some of the postsecondary CTE options while students are working toward their GED. CTE and AE share two physical locations currently. There are also conversations on-going with TrainND about cost reduction and how other core partners can help alleviate the cost. These two concepts will, hopefully, drive future IET offerings. The Fargo ALC currently assists students in achieving their C.N.A. license. Fargo ALC started a CNA Nursing program provided for students on an online platform and we are working to expand a virtual option for access to the program for Bismarck ALC students. It is still a state goal to grow and scale IET programs. This is an in-demand industry and the training piece is assisted by an employer who very gladly hires individuals who finish the program. This partnership and program are working very well, we are in search of ways to duplicate this program for other pathways. The one lesson that really stuck out in setting this process up was finding a partner to assist with training. With funding that is somewhat limited for all that is required in an IELCE program, Fargo ALC had to really sell the idea of the program being a feeder program for filling open C.N.A. positions. All local sites in ND are aware of the in-demand occupation list and relate to the local workforce through advisory committees and work with local job service centers. There are only two or three more sites that could incorporate a solid IELCE program (serving ELL students). Fargo has agreed to mentor and share best practices, challenges, and lessons learned from implementing their program. The hope is to less implementation time and keep costs to a minimum. Conversations and partnerships are in place, the next step or progression would include moving from meetings/conversations to action. Challenges have been being able to network with the surrounding agencies in person during this time of COVID, but the Director has done a nice job of trying to find virtual options for students. As mentioned earlier and as out data shows, it is more difficult for EL students in a distance learning model.

## Adult Education Standards

North Dakota Adult Education program adopted the College and Career Readiness standards (CCR) for Adult Education in 2015. NDDPI, regarding K-12 standards, began to write and release North Dakotas own version of standards. The Mathematics and English Language/Literacy standards came out in 2017 and the Science and Social Studies standards were released in 2019. The plan is to, after an initial review, do a deeper dive to compare/contrast the North Dakota Content Standards and the CCR standards. Both have a concentration on 21st Century Skills and the 4 C’s. The assessments used in Adult Education are also built upon the CCR standards. ND K-12, as apart of ESSA Plan, recognizes Choice Ready to assess and ensure students are ready for post-secondary education or training. Work has begun to align with the work we do in Adult Education. In an early review, plenty of alignment exists with the concentration of post-secondary and education in Adult Education.

## Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals (AEFLA Section 225)

Federal AEFLA and State fund are provided to the ND Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations (DOCR) for Corrections Education and the education of Other Institutionalized Individuals. In ND, if an individual is incarcerated at a DOCR facility and does not have a high school diploma or its equivalent (as determined by the State), they are (by law) mandated to work towards one. Recidivism, as defined by the ND DOCR, is an offender committing a new crime and not returning on a status offense, such as a parole violation within three years.

ND DOCR can specifically extrapolate data for adults in custody who were served with state and federal adult education funds for the time period of July 2018-June 2019 required by OCTAE. This data was requested of DOCR and provided to DPO. A U.S. Sentencing Commission report on recidivism among federal prisoners, released on January 24, 2019, showed that nearly 64% of prisoners who had been convicted of violent offenses were arrested within eight years compared with about 40% of those convicted of nonviolent offenses. The data confirms national recidivism rates for adults ranges from 64% to 42% and for youth is 34%; ND rates are calculated differently between the Division of Adult Services (DAS) (re-offended within 3 years) and the Division of Juvenile Services (DJS) (re-offended within 1 year). DAS recidivism rate is 38%; DJS recidivism is 15.2%. With that explained, additional data regarding recidivism rates for students while incarcerated is as follows:

* Students with only a reading program: DAS 37% & DJS 15%
* Students completed GED/HSD: DAS 14.2% & DJS 9.4%
* Students with GED/HSD and workforce training/post-secondary: DAS 11% & DJS 7.1%