**1. State Leadership Funds** (AEFLA Section 223)

*(a) Describe how the State has used funds made available under section 223 (State Leadership activities) for each the following required activities:*

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

The AEFLA, called Aspire Adult Education in Ohio, state director directly supervised all state leadership activities to ensure alignment with the Combined State Plan activities. The journey with WIOA implementation started robustly in Ohio three years ago. Ohio Aspire invested ample time and state leadership dollars to train teachers and administrators on implementing career pathways. Much of the training involved creating and executing a local career pathways plan, which requires collaborative services with WIOA partners, other educational institutions, and businesses. The local career pathway plans are fluid documents and updated throughout the year. The focus on career pathways over the past three years has resulted in innovative practices, including growth in IETs, to help Aspire students at all levels achieve credentials and transition to additional training and employment. In PY 17, there were 0 IETs offered in Ohio Aspire. In PY 19, Ohio programs had 22 IETs offered statewide, emphasizing alignment with local workforce plans and needs of community businesses.

Certainly, one-stop partnerships were impacted by COVID. Many of the Ohio one-stops shut down completely and are still closed to date. Although services in adult ed pivoted online quickly last spring, the same is not true for many of the one-stops. Aspire administrators report that referrals are down significantly, and staff turnover at the one-stops has made contacts confusing for staff and students. Aspire programs continue to offer student assessments, in person or virtually, for partner programs when possible.

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

State Leadership funds in Ohio continue to facilitate a culture of sustained learning and provide evidence-based, high-quality professional development to enhance the adult education system as a core partner in Ohio’s Combined State Plan. In PY 19, State Leadership funds supported the Professional Development Network (PDN), comprised of a collaboration with the ODHE Aspire office, Kent State University (KSU), and the Ohio State University (OSU). State leadership funds were also used to contract with national, state, and local content experts to provide high-quality PD.

The PDN consists of highly qualified trainers and content experts. State leadership funds supported a variety of training, some required, that focus on improving local adult education and literacy activities. Examples of required trainings include Orientation by job role (teacher, support staff, administrator), LINCS Learning to Achieve modules, Distance Education Basics, Assessment Fundamentals, and Understanding and Accessing Data.

Ohio Aspire offered the national Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) training to improve reading instruction throughout the state. Thirteen practitioners, representing five local programs, completed the STAR training in PY 18. In PY 19, the STAR cohort 2 comprised of 15 practitioners could not complete the training due to COVID. We are working on a plan to have those participants complete the training with the next STAR cohort as Ohio Aspire values STAR participation and evidence-based reading instruction.

The ODHE continues to use a data-driven planning and evaluation process to determine the needs of the local providers and develop training and disseminate information and models of promising practices to address these needs. For example, In PY 19, 10 Aspire programs were identified as being the lowest performing programs in the state based on MSG. These 10 programs were brought together to take part in the “Conquering Your Data Challenges” training based off of AIR’s training provided to state agencies. The training was offered hybrid model for 8 months; most importantly, program staff learned skills into data diving and setting goals based on improving their data. The PDN and state staff used the same Conquering Your Data Challenges model with four Aspire programs in PY 19 with low performance data in ESL levels 1 and 2. Nine ESOL teachers participated in “Study Circle on Low Literacy ESOL.” These are examples of how the state Aspire team take the information learned from national trainings and apply it to the local programs based on their specific needs.

Before COVID, many of the PDN trainings were offered online or using a hybrid model, so the shift to online PD was not so difficult for Aspire programs. Examples of scheduled PD that pivoted to virtual learning include:

* New Teacher Orientations (ABE and ESOL)
* Administering TABE CLAS-E
* Reading/Writing trainings
* Regular open office hours (topic-based and no-topic) for administrators in lieu of planned administrators’ meeting(s)
* Writing Camp for students and teachers as well as their families

Even Aspire instructional classes were moving to a virtual format option in four programs before the pandemic to reach students who cannot get to in-person classes. Our deaf literacy class has been 100% virtual for three years to provide access to participants around the state. Ohio Aspire was already primed for virtual training, but COVID escalated efforts to quickly get all 47 programs trained with remote orientation, assessment, and learning. Examples of how state leadership funds were used to provide training on high-quality distance learning:

* Distance Education Exploration
* Distance Education Options
* Google Classroom Basics
* Using Google Classrooms to Teach Your Favorite Lessons
* Using Schoology: An Alternative to Google Classrooms
* Formative Assessment at a Distance
* Conducting Remote Orientation
* Supporting Staff at a Distance
* Recording Your Computer Screen
* Wakelet
* Working with a Headset
* And many others

When possible, PD activities emphasized research-based features for effective PD such as longer-term, job-embedded activities with opportunities for participation and application of new skills, such as Conquering Your Data Challenges and STAR. With COVID, much of the PD became just-in-time reactions to getting staff trained on remote learning and assessments. There were opportunities for sharing best practices, what’s working, and what’s not, through the administrator, teacher, and support staff office hours, that we continue today. Other virtual opportunities were provided for adult educators to develop and share their knowledge through peer-sharing discussion lists, a statewide virtual conference, online courses, and webinars.

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

To increase program effectiveness and meet the obligations of a one-stop partner, the state office provided technical assistance in several ways:

(1) Research-based programmatic and instructional practices were disseminated to the field, using nationally known resources, such as STAR and LINCS, and the Ohio PDN. Ohio Aspire offered a variety of required and non-required professional development in-person and online for all job roles. Technical assistance was provided through the PDN hotline, email, and instant messenger. The PDN responded to 2000+ technical assistance requests in PY 19. The PDN provided technical assistance through various email distribution lists such as Ohiolit, ESOL list, and HSE list. Resources and event information was also disseminated through PDN social media channels on Facebook and Twitter.

(2) PD was ramped up and best practices shared with how to administer remote tests, orientations, classes, and IETs virtually. The best way to convince local providers that it can be done is to have successful providers share their experiences. Administering remote assessments seems to be the biggest challenge with Aspire services. Providers continue to say that many students do not have the resources (computer with camera, for example) to do remote testing. There is more work to be done around the collaboration of services, yet, the WIOA partnerships continue to strengthen each year; despite the impacts of COVID, all partners have the same goal of streamlining the workforce system in order to provide Ohioans access to employment, education and training.

(3) Training and technical assistance pivoted from face-to-face and online to all online regarding staff technology use. Ohio Aspire instituted Technology Standards years ago for all Aspire practitioners. Teachers were required, per a grant assurance, to use technology in the classroom to enhance instruction. Students were also required, through a grant assurance, to have access to technology in the classroom. All providers were required to offer distance education. Data entry staff were required to complete training on using the statewide data management system before they were provided access to their program data. Ohio Aspire established these technology requirements years ago and will continue to expand technology use in order to improve learner and program efficiencies.

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

The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education in Aspire programs was done primarily by ODHE Aspire program managers with support from the Kent State University data management team. The extent and type of monitoring are determined using a risk assessment tool with criteria such as NRS performance measures, enrollment, allocation, and audit findings. Programs with a higher risk score receive more intensive monitoring. Additionally, the ODHE program managers monitor each program quarterly via the local Program Improvement Consultation Plan (PICP). The PICP is a prescriptive continuous improvement tool designed to assist local program administrators in examining program areas for improvement and implementing strategies and action steps to address improvement. The state staff and the PDN use data from the PICPs to determine future PD offerings based on data in the statewide database and from Aspire personnel via surveys and a statewide advisory committee.

The pandemic has caused the state staff to get behind in onsite monitoring. The PICP desk audits are effective but nothing is more impactful than actually talking to staff, students, and administrators and observing policies, procedures, and classes in person. We are currently revising our onsite monitoring tool and procedures to be all online for the time being.

The state office and PD providers used various methods to ensure information about evidence-based practices and promising models were disseminated to Aspire practitioners. These methods included:

* Offered “just-in-time” virtual trainings at the state and local levels to meet programs’ immediate needs. By focusing on the specific needs of the program, more local staff were able to participate and see that data improvement is a collective process.
* Sent a weekly electronic digest with information about training opportunities and quality resources.
* Provided more peer-facilitated best practices webinars, webchats, and facilitated practitioner discussion listservs.

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

Ohio continued to support one state literacy resource center located at Kent State University. All PD- related questions were handled through the main point of contact at KSU. KSU responded to over 2,000 PD-related technical assistance requests through a phone hotline, email, and instant messenger. The resource center houses a lending library where resources, such as sets of books and math manipulatives, are mailed to teachers, and low-use/high-cost items such as the TABE test in braille are kept on reserve. KSU contracts with the Ohio State University to provide training, technical assistance, and support to local programs and staff.  Additionally, independent subject matter experts are contracted to provide training and curriculum development.

Another silver lining due to the pandemic is the in-person student and teacher Writing Camps pivoted to family writing camps with so many children at home. Teachers, students, and their children worked on writing prompts together, which ended up being educational and enjoyable for all.

**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.*

Highlights from the Achievements of the Core Indicators of Performance

* Ohio ranked in the 4th Quartile for MSG - 4th nationally for Overall MSG (62.7%), 2nd nationally in ABE MSG, and 13th in ESL MSG (Source: OCTAE Worksheet PY 18 Quartile Rankings.) COVID brought many challenges in testing and data collection and Ohio AEFLA reported a 40.2% MSG in PY 19. Ohio Aspire continues to strive to be a high-performing state and there is still much to be celebrated despite the impact of COVID.

Ohio Aspire was on track to improve key indicators compared to July – February of the previous program year:

* Enrollment +7%
* Total hours +15%
* Persistence +7%

MSG changes

* Pre-pandemic postsecondary enrollments up 3.6% over the previous year and HSE, no change
* Pandemic postsecondary enrollments increased 0.4% and HSE decreased 1.2%
* As expected, MSG pre/post saw a sharp decrease and exit before completing a sharp increase as students were unable to either attend class or post-test

March – July 2020 enrollment and total hours saw a sharp decrease with persistence increase over the previous program year, but persistence was not to the level of July 2019 - February 2020

* Enrollment -38%
* Total hours -35%
* Persistence +4%

Regarding demographic indicators of age, gender, race/ethnicity, employment status, and single parents:

* No dramatic changes from either time period for any demographic groups
* 16-18 and 19-24 already slightly decreased July – February which continued in slightly higher percentages March – June
* Increases overall for PY 19 for adults 25+

Attendance

* As expected, significant decrease in overall hours beginning in March
* As expected, significant increase in DE hours beginning in March after consistent average ebb/flow for the previous 20 months
* Overall average hours/week decreased April – June 2020 with only slight decreases from February – March 2020
* Average distance education hours/week hit 2 year high (3.1 hours/student/week) in June 2020

Areas for Improvement

Ohio Aspire ranked in the 2nd Quartile in Credential Attainment (20.97%) per the OCTAE Worksheet PY 18 Quartile Rankings. Ohio has several optional programs for adults to achieve a high school diploma or equivalence, not funded through AEFLA, causing a competition within our own state for reporting these outcomes. While adult diploma options are wonderful for Ohioans, it does negatively impact Ohio Aspire HSE outcomes.

The state addressed local performance issues in a variety of ways. The State Aspire office conducted Local Program Desk Reviews on all funded programs. The Desk Review is a high-stakes accountability document that measures programs’ achievement levels against state targets in participants’ measurable skill gain and follow-up outcomes. It also evaluates assessments being used, pre and post testing rates, and as compliance with other grant requirements. Desk Reviews scores are calculated into the Risk Assessment tool used to determine levels of monitoring needed. Due to the pandemic and incomplete PY 19 data, the PY 19 Desk Reviews ODHE provided to the programs were informational and not high stakes. The Aspire office did not calculate performance success or failure based on PY 19 data.

100% of the Aspire providers submitted an annual Local Program Data Certification Checklist modeled after the federal checklist. This document verifies program compliance with NRS and state follow-up survey requirements. Aspire staff monitor compliance with this and other federal and state requirements during on-site reviews.

Quarterly, Aspire program managers met face-to-face or electronically with the local directors to review program data in the data management system. Information from the Local Program Desk Review and quarterly data monitoring drives the development of the Local Program Improvement Consultation Plan (PICP). 100% of the Aspire programs receive quarterly data check-ins with the state staff and completed a PICP.

On-Site Reviews are multi-day intensive reviews involving administrators, teachers, and students. The Local Aspire Program Review Instrument consists of three content areas: Administration, Staff Development, and Student Experience Model. A final report citing Noteworthy Practices, Findings, and Recommendations was sent to the agency chief administrator following the review. Any area with a finding or recommendation must be responded to with a corrective action plan. The corrective actions were examined and then verified as completed by the state staff. During PY 19, 8 on-site reviews were completed, representing 18% of the programs. The ones scheduled for the fourth quarter were postponed due to COVID. The state office has changed the instrument and procedures to a full online on-site review for the time being.

These tools for monitoring programs help the state staff and PD staff work collaboratively with the local programs to implement strategies for program improvement and stay on top of local performance issues.

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

*Describe how the State eligible agency, as the entity responsible for meeting one-stop requirements under 34 CFR 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 infrastructure costs are supported through State and local options.*

All of the Ohio one-stops, called OhioMeansJobs Centers, had local AEFLA program services accessible to their customers as part of their services menu. Career services that were provided in the one-stop system include outreach, intake and orientation, assessment of skill levels, referrals, provider performance and program cost information, and supportive services information.

The Aspire programs enter into an MOU on the operation of the one-stop where WIOA partners’ roles and responsibilities are identified and cost contributions negotiated. The state AEFLA director did have to step in a few times in PY 19 to assist local AEFLA providers having difficulty negotiating reasonable IFAs. With assistance from the state DOL, we were able to provide data and come to reasonable cost agreements, as standard funding formulas set by some of the one-stops are not always fair nor “negotiated.”

Twenty of the 47 AEFLA providers were co-located at the OhioMeansJobs centers. Due to the pandemic, over half of the Ohio one-stops continue to operate only remotely. The few that are open and allowing in-person Aspire classes have reduced class capacity. Referrals are down significantly. Aspire provides assessments, when possible, either in-person or remotely.

In PY 19, 26 of the 47 AEFLA programs paid cash contributions totaling $127,412 to support the OhioMeansJobs Centers’ infrastructure costs, an increase of $24,484 from the previous year.

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

*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.*

The Ohio Department of Higher Education held a competition for WIOA Title II funds in PY 2017. Providers awarded 222 funds could also apply for 243 funds; the IELCE funds were not a separate competition. Ohio AEFLA received technical assistance from OCTAE in PY 19 where we learned we had not done the competitive process correctly. The next competition for IELCE funds is PY 21 and will be a 3-year grant.

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

The technical assistance we received from OCTAE in PY 19 was the impetus for change that we needed in Ohio. Ohio Aspire had difficulty allocating the $1 million we receive annually for these important services. We incorrectly thought each student had to be receiving all components of an IELCE, including being enrolled in an IET. Once we learned that an IET had to be available to students, not that they must be participating in it, we quickly changed course in spring 2020 updating IELCE policies and notifying the field. In PY 19, Ohio Aspire went from 6 of the 30 ESL providers offering an IELCE program and allocating $300,000 to 13 providers and allocating over $900,000 within a few short months. Several of the new providers had ABE IETS that ESL students could partake in, and providers without an IET were awarded funds if they promoted for referral the IETs offered in contiguous counties.

Ohio Aspire made significant progress in the spring of 2020 educating the field, updating our policies, and allocating funds. A month later, the pandemic closed everything. Some programs were successful in moving to online IETs, and others were not. For PY 20 and moving forward, we only allocate IELCE funds if the program has at least one IET, approved using the OCTAE IET Checklist. This learning lesson about the IELCE grant and the expanded services for all ESL students has prompted more programs to offer IETs. In PY 19, before the pandemic and OCTAE technical assistance, there were 10 IETs offered around the state funded with IELCE funds; in PY 20, there are 26 different IELCE- funded IETs being offered.

*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;*

Local programs submit an IET checklist when applying for 243 funding. Questions in the application pertain to placing participants in unsubsidized employment in in-demand occupations, alignment to a career pathway, connection to a local workforce plan, and solid existing employment opportunities for participants once they complete the IET. Ohio Aspire does not require that each IET ends with a certificate or credential. Still, each IET must be part of a career pathway leading to a credential, certification, or employment. All IELCE grantees have a staff person, typically a transitions coordinator/career navigator, whose job is to assist IELCE participants and all ESL students into postsecondary education/training and employment leading to economic self-sufficiency.

Program goals include expanding IET models and the development of occupational skills training to incorporate internships, on-the-job training, and contextualized work experiences such as working at a local nursing home while in a healthcare IET or working at a local restaurant while participating in a food service IET. Aspire programs are now getting comfortable with this new role in WIOA of offering occupational skills training. Programs are getting innovative and challenging themselves to expand IET services mentioned above.

*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 goal is that all local ESL programs work with the community partners, such as other training providers, OhioMeansJobs centers, employers, and support service agencies to provide IELCE activities that align with the local workforce needs. One of the required questions on the IET checklist for Ohio asks how the IET program reflects the criteria of being a part of a career pathway aligned to the local workforce plan and how it supports the requirements that a career pathway helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster. The incorporation of the OCTAE IELCE Self-Assessment Tool helps programs self-evaluate if they are integrating IELCE program activities that meet the needs of the local workforce development system.

Although a few regions in Ohio are following the spirit of WIOA and workforce collaboration, a challenge we face with IELCE and IETs, in general, is recognition from some of the local workforce development boards that the first rung in a career pathway is a valuable one. Many workforce development agencies continue to narrowly perceive Aspire Adult Ed’s role in career pathways as “the GED program.” Some of that perception will take time to overcome because Ohio Aspire is new to IETs, only offered within the last three years. In our upcoming competitive grant, having the workforce boards review the AEFLA grants and make recommendations for improved alignment with the local plan should prove beneficial for them to learn more about IELCE and IETs and see there is a significant role in Aspire IETs in the local career pathway plans.

**5. Adult Education Standards**

*If your State has adopted new 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.*

Ohio’s adult education program has a long history, over 26 years, of standards-based education. In 2014, the ODHE Aspire program adopted the rigorous College and Career Readiness (CCR) [Standards for Adult Education](https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/able/reference/standards/Ohio%20ABE%20ASE%20Standards%20-%20Jan%2029%202018%20%28rebranded%29.pdf) (U.S. Department of Education, 2013) for use in all ABE/ASE classes. In 2018, the Aspire program adopted and adapted the [English Language Proficiency Standards (ELP) for Adult Education](https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/able/Ohio%20Aspire%20ESOL%20standards.pdf) (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) for use in all ESOL classes. By utilizing national standards, Ohio Aspire programs are situated to meet the academic rigor outlined in WIOA. The CCR standards were developed and aligned to the K-12 Common Core State Standards, adopted by the Ohio Department of Education. The CCR standards are evidence-based standards intended to provide all adult students with the opportunity to be prepared for postsecondary education/training and the workforce without needing basic skills remediation. All Aspire programs are required to implement these standards as a grant requirement. Standards-based lesson plans are reviewed as part of the on-site local monitoring and classroom observations.

Ongoing PD and technical assistance to enable teachers to deliver intentional, standards-based instruction in the online environment include:

* Effective Lesson Planning – ABE/ASE and ESL (asynchronous)
* Reading/Writing Together (synchronous)
* Writing camps (synchronous)
* Writing Foundations: How Teaching Narrative Writing Can Help Students Improve Their Academic Writing (synchronous)

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

Ohio Aspire invested substantial state leadership dollars when the CCRs were first implemented several years ago. Resources were developed such as Standards-Based Lesson Plan Templates by subject, Lesson Plan Rubric, and an online [Teacher Resource Center](http://trc.ohioable.org/) with thousands of standards-based lesson plans and resources. The goal was to set the expectation that every program’s curriculum must be aligned to the CCRs; the state office made it easier to implement the new standards by providing lesson plans, PD, and technical assistance. Now, six years later, all Aspire programs are using the CCR standards to some degree. Standards-based education is a challenge with some teachers who do not see the value in standards-based education and want to teach directly to a standardized test, since performance is evaluated based on testing and not whether they are teaching to the standards.

**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 Ohio, twenty-one AEFLA grantees provided correctional education (CE) in community-based correctional facilities (CBCFs) and jails. Ohio CBCFs and jails do not track recidivism rates, per the Chief at the Bureau of Community Sanctions for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC). Recidivism is tracked in the state prisons, but state prisons were not funded with AEFLA dollars in this recent grant cycle.

In PY 2019, 2,589 participants were enrolled in CE, a decrease of 27% from the previous year due to COVID-19.

Of the CE participants, 58% achieved an MSG, significantly higher than the state average of 41% for all participants in PY 2019. 249 CE participants achieved an HSE and obtained employment or enrolled in postsecondary education. These outcomes are impressive as COVID significantly impacted corrections education. Ninety-five percent of the correctional facilities suspended AEFLA programming from March – June 2020. Without access to the internet and computers, distance learning was not an option. Some facilities are slowly opening up for classes, but class sizes are reduced. Services are often disrupted because as COVID outbreaks occur in the facility, they close down. The silver lining is that some correctional facilities are now considering implementing distance education.