

Montana Narrative Report 2011-12

Describe successful activities, programs, and projects supported with State Leadership funds and describe the extent to which these activities, programs, and projects were successful in implementing the goals of the State Plan.

Facilitating Integration of State Initiatives into Daily Practice

Data Quality/Program Improvement Conference: *The Three-Legged Stool (L2A + SIA=Improved Outcomes as Documented by Data Analysis)* was the theme of the statewide ABE Conference held on September 21-22, 2011, in Helena, MT. This year's conference was unique in the fact that the state tied three initiatives together in order for program directors and staff to understand that research-based, best practice leads to improved outcomes which are supported by data. Learning to Achieve (L2A), Standards-in-Action (SIA), and Data Analysis were presented as instructional activities that support one another, and by implementing all three initiatives, programs would see improved outcomes. A total of 73 participants spent two days in plenary and breakout sessions to participate in hands-on activities primarily focused on Standards-in-Action Innovations and Data Analysis. The Data Analysis activities included the introduction of several new documents that were developed to guide data analysis: all documents tied directly to the Montana Student Information System. The SIA activities included unpacking standards, planning student activities, ratcheting-up lessons, and aligning resources to the state ABE math standards. The L2A portion of the conference was shared through trainer testimonies and snippets from modules to be covered in depth at a future training. As a final conference activity, participants met as teams to discuss how they would begin to weave the strands together in a program improvement plan. To assist in implementation, the state committed to ongoing training in all three targeted initiatives.

Sustained Training-SIA: The fall conference activities were presented to familiarize all participants with the innovations the state pilot team had completed during the SIA Project led by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE). The broad conference overview was intended to generate interest and enthusiasm for standards-based instruction. During the conference, SIA materials were reviewed and sample activities kept the participants engaged and eager to sign up for the Technical Assistance Traveling Team (TATT); the TATT is comprised of teachers who completed the pilot project and wanted to share their knowledge of the innovations with all MT teachers. Over the course of the program year, the TATTs presented five regional trainings to 65 teachers; these trainings assisted teachers in aligning their program's resources, creating activities, and learning how to ratchet-up existing student assignments. The trainers also had teachers participate in a variety of standards-based activities they designed to enhance instruction. In order to maintain this intense level of support and ongoing professional dialogue, the TATT trainers created the MT Wiki, an online site dedicated to standards-based math instruction. At the click of a button, MT teachers can download worksheets, go to interactive Web sites, watch a video, upload their lessons, chat, or connect to the latest research for math instruction. This SIA Wiki is a one-stop for all Montana math teachers that allow the math conversations to continue beyond the one day training. TATTs will continue to be the vehicle for connecting teachers across the state in implementing standards-based instruction. SIA Innovations will be the format for reviewing additional content areas and frame all future discussions regarding classroom instruction and professional development.

Sustained Training-L2A: Montana sent a team of eight directors and teachers to an L2A Training in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho in July 2011. The team members prepared for the week long training through participation in pre-conference online modules. Upon arrival in Coeur d'Alene, they were immersed in research-based instruction on serving adults with learning disabilities. At the end of the week, the MT trainers had developed an action plan on how they could combine their talents to present two regional trainings that would be available to a majority of MT ABE teachers and directors. The team spent the next three months communicating through bi-weekly conference calls to plan the trainings. In order to entice ABE staff to

eagerly attend one of the regional meetings, trainers created quotes to post on the MTLINCS weekly newsletter. Quotes like, "*The Learning to Achieve Training was very challenging and rigorous. Appropriately deemed the L2A Boot Camp, the five day super training left little time to think of anything but the newest and greatest information regarding learning disabilities. This training was very rewarding and I can't wait to share what I have learned with Montana educators,*" confirmed a quality professional development experience was going to soon be available. The thoughtful planning and periodic postings resulted in 78 teachers and directors being trained in the first four modules of L2A in October 2011. Understanding that teachers would benefit from training in all eight modules, the trainers developed additional online professional development opportunities. After the trainings, an L2A *Snippet of the Month* was featured in MTLINCS (MT ABE newsletter). Each snippet featured information from the modules not covered at the conference. The snippets included a brief synopsis of a module, additional research links, pages to read in the manual, and a list of instructional activities to support the module information. This online professional development spanned the remainder of the program year and facilitated completion of all eight L2A modules for participants. Again, sustainability was the goal of the training. L2A *Snippets* kept the best practice conversation going all year long.

Sustained Training-Data Analysis: The overriding theme of the fall conference was that the lynch pin of all state initiative work is data analysis. The data sessions were organized so all participants used their program's data as they walked through managing and monitoring activities (data clean up, pre-post test protocol, tracking attendance/outcomes/gains, and using data to guide program improvement). Participants left the conference with abundant resources, and to facilitate their efforts in using the resources and implementing a more rigorous approach to data analysis, the state contracted with a local program director, who helped plan this portion of the conference to facilitate follow-up activities. This contractor continually demonstrates expertise and a keen desire for our state to achieve NRS performance goals and outcomes. Rather than require a work plan from conference participants, the state invited each director to give the contractor an opportunity to perform a desk audit on their respective data. The audits were scheduled to begin in early 2012 to provide time for staff to have integrated new approaches to data analysis. Every program volunteered to participate in the audit. The contractor completed thorough desk audits that included information on pre/post test outcomes, EFL gains, gains related to primary area of instruction, core outcomes, and retention. The desk audits were sent to each program director when completed, and within one week of receiving the audit, a two-hour conference call was scheduled to walk director and staff through multiple spreadsheets. The staff was then encouraged to continue to email ongoing data questions to the contractor throughout the program year. Through a contractor, the data analysis conversation was sustained and personalized.

Conference Outcome-Data Quality Team: In order to maintain ongoing professional dialogue between ABE teachers and state staff, a Data Quality Team consisting of four teachers and state staff (state director, programmer, and IT support staff) was organized. This replaced what was previously the Data Standing Committee that had formed to submit questions to the state regarding rules and data monitoring and then share information gained with their professional peers. The newly formed Data Quality Team now works collaboratively with state staff on all enhancements and updates to the student information system. During this program year the team has completed a Data Best Practices Calendar, designed a new student intake form, worked collaboratively with the programmer as the NRS changes were programmed, and assisted in planning the fall Data Quality Conference. This team has become the liaison between state staff and the field. The teacher representatives are able to bring the practitioner perspective to all of the data work and system development; the creation of this team has had a profound impact on the working relationship between the state and local program staff. All work was completed via conference calls, emails, and one face-to-face meeting. Working together as one entity has systemized ABE, and data discussions have become part of our infrastructure, not reactive conversations.

Beyond the Data Quality Conference-Program Improvement & Research-Based Instructional Strategies

Distance Learning: A state goal for this year was to support distance learning for programs that had incorporated distance delivery into their instructional practice in the previous years. State support included the purchase of Missouri GED Online (with limited Skills Tutor seats) and staff training. In spite of the challenges that distance learning poses, 34 students completed more than 51% percent of his/her instructional time using the distance learning curriculum for a total of 1044 student learning hours. Seventeen percent of the distance learning students made an educational gain. In the seven participating programs, six distance education students attained their core goals. This data validates that distance learning is helping some students in meeting their core goals and making educational gains. Program staff in the eastern half of the state participated in the Rural Services Education Grant in 2007-08, and this appears to have given them the skill sets required to sustain distance learning, as almost all of the students enrolled in distance learning are from two programs in the eastern part to the state. It is incumbent upon the state to continue to support distance learning in these programs and to continue to provide technical assistance for teachers interested in developing a successful distance learning model. Teachers in the eastern region conducted an online Distance Learning Refresher Course in March to introduce the potential of distance learning with new ABE staff and to reenergize previously trained teachers from programs in other areas of the state.

Montana Bridge Curriculum: The state is committed to developing resources that will assist ABE staff in providing services that readily assist low-skilled adults in successful selection and acquisition of a career pathway. The 2007-2008 WIA Incentive Grant was used to develop a career planning tool for MT adult students called PEP Talk; a common intake used to assist customers in any of three agencies (Job Service, Community College, or Adult Basic Education) in the creation of a personal employment plan, or career pathway, that is transferable across the agencies. With PEP Talk in place the next step was to generate abundant, easily accessible resources for ABE staff to assist each student in pursuing their individualized career plan. The State contracted with two individuals, an adult-education career counselor and a state TRIO director, to develop a virtual curriculum to support student transition beyond the ABE programs. The contractors began their work by surveying all state ABE program staff to determine their current resources and relationships with educational partners and employers. From the foundational survey, the contractors built an online curriculum entitled *Montana Adult Education; Building Bridges*. The work was completed in June of 2012, and the final product is broad and truly expands the role of ABE in Montana. The curriculum is available in two formats to meet teacher learning styles. It includes the following: links to the tools for developing a career pathway system at the program level based on the Six Key Elements from the Career Pathways Institute (2010-11 Washington, D.C. Department of Labor & Department of Education), links to exemplary career pathway models, links to MT specific cross agency partners, links to timely MT labor market information, and links to multiple education and training programs including technology and soft skills. The short-term goal is for program staff to explore the curriculum, identify relevant resources for their program, and be prepared to share their successes and challenges with the state at the fall conference in 2013. The state will use responses from the ABE staff to modify, expand, or delete resources from the curriculum. The online curriculum was developed to promote student engagement, achievement, and transition; it will strengthen the ABE system for preparing adults for 21st century careers.

Montana LINCS: MTLINCS continues to be the virtual vehicle for supporting statewide initiatives and keeping all adult education teachers on the cutting edge of state and national activities. The state renewed its contract with a state ABE teacher, who has worked on the MTLINCS Web site since it began as a collaborative effort between the Northwest Consortium and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). The original site was developed to provide a variety of teacher/student resources. MTLINCS has evolved from a teacher/student resource center to become the linkage for ongoing professional development tied to the state initiatives. The homepage for MTLINCS now features a star with a link to the current program improvement initiatives (L2A, distance learning, data quality, ESL,

Career Pathways and SIA). Each week a newsletter is sent to all ABE teachers, directors, and volunteers providing links to new information on each component of the star. Upon opening a link, recipients note a snippet of research on the selected strand with additional links to further resources and Web sites. All state activities related to each strand are posted. In minutes, readers can access Power Points, pictures, and relevant state documents from trainings and meetings. The importance of MTLINCS cannot be emphasized enough; it is our virtual faculty lounge promoting research-based, ongoing professional development. The use of this site is steadily increasing. Below is summary of MT LINCS stats for this year.

MTLINCS has continued to grow. Overall, there has been a 30% growth from 2007 to 2012.

• 2007 Total Visits	• 2012 Total Visits	• Growth from 2007 to 2012
• 168832	• 219195	• 30%

○ Comparison 2011 to 2012

- Major growth occurred in visits to all of the sites associated with **new** state initiatives except one.
- The decrease in site visits to the Data Resource page may now be due to more state-supported data tech support along with individual programs becoming more aware of data practice and expectations.
- The top three sites visited may be due to national and regional focus on Career Pathways, state training for L2A workshops along with specific curriculum suggestions, and a possible increase in student and program awareness statewide.
- Distance Learning stats appear to be more realistic this year. Last year may have been a data anomaly.
- Access to Calendar and Email archives indicates usage on a more constant basis by state users.

NEW as of 2011	2011 BASELINE	2012	Growth for NEW 2011-2012	OLD	2010	2011	2012	Growth/Loss for 2010-2011	Growth/Loss for OLD 2011-2012
Career Pathways	45	211	368%	Calendar	829	1260	880	52%	-30%
Data Resources	326	203	-38%	Content Area Websites	65	271	246	316%	-9%
L2A	124	369	197%	Data	201	481	302	139%	-37%
L2A Resources	86	360	318%	Distance Learning	5452	689278	256	Question validity	-----
OPI ABLE Update	347	415	205%	OPI ABLE	535	602	524	13%	
Policies	104	323	210%	Email Archive	8385	605	507	-92%	-16%
Research	61	222	264%	ESL	7184	630	369	-91%	-41%
SIA	92	318	246%						
SIA Resources	58	159	174%						
Student Highlights	52	232	346%						

Request for Proposal (RFP): The last AEFLA competitive grant in MT was in 2000. Since that time, grant recipients submitted annual extension applications. The state determined that it was in the best interest of program staff and students to conduct a statewide RFP in the spring of 2012. The RFP allowed existing providers an opportunity to reflect on their program delivery in more depth and thoroughness than had been required through an extension application. Analysis of community need, program design, intensity of service, performance targets, and budgeting priorities renewed existing providers' level of understanding of the critical importance of funds awarded to provide services. Additionally, the application incentivized program staff to expand or renew community partnerships, modify current instructional practice, and redesign other components of their program's infrastructure. Eighteen of twenty providers applied for the grant award, and all eighteen received an award. No new eligible providers applied for an award. The RFP process resulted in positive outcomes for the local programs and the state. Local programs refocused on relevant curriculum and reenergized instructional practice in order to submit a quality application. The state solidified partnerships through its selection of grant readers; the State Workforce Investment Board, WIA Youth and Adult, Youth Corrections, Department of Labor, and the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education had representative grant readers. The State anticipates improved student outcomes as a result of the RFP.

Mountain Plains Adult Education Association (MPAEA): The state director deemed the MPAEA 2012 Conference, *Implementing Career Pathways*, an incredible opportunity for MT ABE staff to participate in quality professional development, network with regional professional peers, and share MT best practices and innovations. The director worked collaboratively with the MPAEA board members to bolster conference attendance and include Montana state trainings in conjunction with the conference. For MT ABE staff, this collaboration minimized days away from the classroom and offices and maximized professional development opportunities for the program year. The state sponsored the following conference activities:

Bridge Curriculum Pre-Conference Workshop-The contractors for the newly designed MT Bridge Curriculum presented a pre-conference institute as one of their contractual obligations. This was the perfect venue for unveiling the curriculum for MT adult education teachers, as well as showcasing the MT plan for supporting adult career pathways for our regional partners. Eighty-one conference attendees participated in this pre-conference activity that demonstrated our state's vision for supporting teachers and students in the career pathway process.

PEP Talk Breakout Session-The state director and staff from the MT Department of Labor introduced neighboring states to our PEP Talk process through an afternoon workshop; 30 people participated. At the conclusion of the afternoon, attendees had a clear understanding of how MT agencies are working collaboratively to assist adults in developing a career pathway.

TABE Training-The state required TABE training was held on April 11, for 38 participants as a morning workshop. Due to the state's emphasis on integrating data analysis into daily practice, the state maintained a unique approach to TABE training that was instituted last year. In collaboration with the state data team and Mike Johnson, McGraw Hill/TABE representative, the TABE training was designed to expand beyond test security, development, and administration, to include specific instructional strategies and show the connection between TABE testing and student success. The training opened with TABE Basics (information required to cover for individuals new to TABE) and moved to *TABE and the Teacher*, a segment focused on using TABE effectively with students. The last segment of the training was entitled *TABE and MABLE* that tied testing, our student information system, and data analysis together. Three documents were included the training: MABLE FAQ, Tracking Assessment and Gains in MABLE, and Data Clean Up! Participants received TABE certification and were trained to understand how assessment and data work together. Previously, the TABE training provided participants the skills to return to their programs to retrain other staff members on the proper administration of the TABE test. This training gave participants a new perspective to share with their staff; proper administration of the TABE and routinely referring to

MABLE for assessment analysis is best practice. Through the MPAEA venue other states are now able to approach TABE training as more than assessment training. It is a directly connected to program improvement.

Best Plus Training-The state required BEST Plus training was offered as a pre-conference activity. Seven ESL teachers attended this training to obtain certification or refresh their skills. This training did include two teachers from other states, which assisted their states in teacher training.

ESOL Mini-Institute-The state supported their ESOL leadership team in presenting a session on the Montana ESOL Wiki, an online one-stop for ESL teachers. Twelve teachers attended including colleagues from other states. This session exhibited the strong integration of technology throughout MT ABE.

State Directors' Meeting-Scheduling the sixth annual directors' meeting to coincide with the conference allowed the directors the time to participate in professional development with their staff. The state minimized the meeting time in order for the directors to spend a vast majority of the conference in sectionals and plenary sessions with staff. The meeting agenda items included: MABLE updates, NRS changes, state initiatives, and the calendar of upcoming events. The state will continue to bring the directors together annually, as the meeting is essential in assisting them in short-term and long-term planning, or in helping them gain a deep understanding of current initiatives, as was the case this year. Pride in adult education and local program improvement are the results of meetings that provide focused, relevant information.

Bonus Conference Sectionals- Additionally, the state contacted teachers to share specific strategies and activities that are underway. This resulted in our SIA Innovations and data team work to be offered as conference sectionals. Montana ABE teachers and directors were able network and glean ideas from professional colleagues from eight states, but most importantly we were able to show case what is working for us. This was a wonderful once in a decade opportunity.

Montana Student Information System: Each program year a portion of the state leadership allocation is set aside to pay for ongoing maintenance and updates to the Montana Adult Basic and Literacy Education (MABLE) student information system developed by state programming staff. MABLE is viewed as an evolving program that is continually updated and modified to meet the needs of the National Reporting System (NRS) and local programs. This program year the state agency continued its focus on strengthening the relationship between state staff and local programs in order to help them better utilize the student information system. Throughout the program year, state staff consulted with the state data team on every modification to the data system, and the team continually sent questions and ideas for improvement to the state staff for consideration. We relay information on all modifications and enhancements to every local program via e-mail from the state/field data team. Inclusion of representation from local programs in state level data work has promoted ownership and interest in data. This state level activity is the underpinning of all ABE work, as valid and reliable data will drive all innovations.

Performance-Based Funding (PBF): In conjunction with the Data Quality Conference, there was a special directors' meeting held to review how funds had been awarded for the program year as prescribed by the funding formula. Statewide and individual program data were discussed, and the directors were given time to discuss how they would use this information in their ongoing data analysis. Additionally, the individual contracted to conduct desk audits agreed to tie components of the funding formula to her desk audit reports. The impact of this work cannot be underscored enough; allocating funds according to a formula that is aligned to state and federal goals has changed the way local programs view their work. Funding inequities have been totally eliminated, and there is a clear understanding that performance is rewarded. This understanding has created a heightened awareness and desire to help students make education gains and meet goals.

Shop Talks: Monthly *Montana Shop Talks*, modeled after the *Shop Talks* conducted by OVAE for the

state directors of adult education, were held throughout the program year. Regularly scheduled talks involving the state staff and all program directors were used to disseminate information, promote instructional leadership, and provide technical assistance. Each month the state includes a minimum of one local director to share information about one or more state level activities in which his or her program is involved.

The National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC): NAEPDC continues to be a source of information and support for the state director. The connection to the NAEPDC has allowed the state director to learn from and network with colleagues both nationally and regionally on issues that are important for successful state administration. The benefit of this type of affiliation is access to important information that can benefit the state.

Describe any significant findings from the eligible agency’s evaluation of the effectiveness of the adult education and literacy activities based on the core indicators of performance.

The state is in year four of using a Web-based data system to gain longitudinal trend data and support a systemic approach for collecting and measuring student data. Instructors and directors now have a clear understanding of what students need in their learning plan and what they need to do to help students make academic gains and achieve core goals. This has promoted changes in instructional practice, intake, and goal setting. The chart below shows the percentage of students making educational gains over a four-year span. There was a considerable drop in the number of students attaining an education gain in 2009-2010 due to the state's new requirement that all students have 60 hours of instruction prior to a post test. Before 2009, programs allowed post testing after 12 hours of instruction. It is important to note, that although the percent of students making a gain this program year only increased marginally (excluding Intermediate Low), there are significant gains since 09-10. This does validate that the time and resources spent on data quality are positively impacting student educational gains. The state will continue to provide multiple forms of technical assistance to all programs to ensure student education outcomes continue to improve.

Entering EFL PY 08-09 PY 09-10 PY 10-11 PY 11-12 Annual Percent Change

Beg Lit	47%	31%	37%	42%	+5
Beg Basic	33%	26%	33%	35%	+2
Int Low	40%	23%	33%	30%	-3
Int High	34%	20%	22%	24%	+2
ASE Low	46%	18%	25%	26%	+1

Montana's ESL population remains very small, and the number of students in each functioning level varies significantly from year to year. The list of proactive steps to improve education gains for ABE students was the same for the ESL teachers, and again the positive impact is evident if you consider the gains from 2009 to the 2011 program years.

Entering EFL PY 08-09 PY 09-10 PY 10-11 PY 11-12 Annual Percent Change

Beg Lit	44%	38%	52%	41%	-11
Low	67%	44%	60%	50%	-10
Beg High	56%	39%	67%	56%	-11
Int Low	45%	43%	50%	62%	+12
Int High	65%	47%	46%	47%	+01
Advanced	49%	25%	38%	56%	+18

The outcomes in the core areas are listed in the table below.

<u>Outcomes Measures</u>	<u>PY 08-09</u>	<u>PY 09-19</u>	<u>PY 10-11 P</u>	<u>Y 11-12</u>	<u>Annual Percent Change</u>
Entered Employment	38%	46%	45%	46%	+1
Retained Employment	80%	65%	79%	80%	+1
GED	62%	60%	73%	80%	+7
Post Secondary	51%	61%	64%	64%	-

Beginning in program year 2008, the state required programs to submit quarterly goal setting reports. Data indicates the attention given to the importance of goal setting may account for the increase in GED attainment, retaining employment, and enter employment. Additionally, the state will need to explore what programs can do differently to ensure GED recipients are workforce/postsecondary ready. Transitioning students beyond the GED will continue to be a focus for the next program year.

Describe how the eligible agency has supported the integration of activities sponsored under Title II with other adult education, career development, and employment and training activities. Include a description of how the eligible agency is being represented on the Local Workforce Investment Boards, adult education’s involvement on the State Workforce Investment Board, the provision of core and other services through the one-stop system and an estimate of the Title II funds being used to support activities and services through the one-stop delivery system.

State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB): The state Superintendent of Public Instruction appointed the state ABE director as full voting member of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) in 2012. As a member of the Board, the state director is automatically given a subcommittee assignment. The director is serving on the Life-Long Learning Committee. This committee meets the day prior to the Board meeting and is responsible for making recommendations to Board in all areas addressing the needs of an educated workforce. The state ABE program director was also appointed by the governor in January 2008 to serve on the Youth Council, an ad hoc committee of the SWIB. The Youth Council is responsible for coordinating and researching the most current work force information related to youth education and employment for the purpose of making recommendations to the SWIB. The Youth Council holds quarterly meetings designed to augment the vision and mission of the SWIB. In March 2010, the state ABE director was selected as vice-chair of the Council. The state director continued to serve as vice-chair for the 2012 program year. Montana does not have Local Workforce Investment Boards, but all local ABE program directors serve on their County Management Teams, which focus on regional economic development.

Montana Career and Technical Education Advisory Council: The state ABE director continues to serve on the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Board which provides advice and counsel on career and technical education programs funded through Perkins IV. ABE and CTE are working collaboratively to promote Montana Big Sky Pathways.

One-Stop Delivery Systems: Although only one ABE program is located in a one-stop delivery system, the remaining programs have established strong relationships with the one-stops in their community. Due to the small population in all Montana communities, all adult education programs are able to operate as though they are part of a one-stop delivery system. The flow of information and students between agencies is seamless and continuous. Current partnerships sustain formal and informal communication among the agencies. Students are served efficiently and effectively. This collaboration gives our students the support they need to be successful. One-stop delivery is embraced conceptually in Montana and is in action on a daily basis. ABE’s role in the one-stop delivery system has been validated by its presence being required on the governor’s Rapid Response Team. The ABE state director is consulted regularly by local community management teams to share information needed to help transition unskilled and low-skilled adults to the workforce.

Shared Youth Vision Task Force: The Shared Youth Vision (SYV) task force was formed in 2007 to bring federal agencies serving the neediest youth together to coordinate and integrate services. The state ABE director has served on the SYV core team since that time. The SYV core team (ABLE director, WIA youth coordinator, Job Corps Coordinator, and youth corrections director), continued to meet in the 2011-12 program year to formulate recommendations to the Youth Council and SWIB regarding statewide outreach activities that support at risk youth in advancing beyond the GED to career pathways. The task force continues to disseminate marketing materials developed in 2012 to entice at-risk youth to complete their GED and work with their respective agencies to continue on a career path. The task force was responsible for a Face Book and MTGEDNOW web page being launched this year. This ongoing work demonstrates the partnership that was forged through SYV; it was the springboard to continuing work on behalf of at risk youth.

PEP Talk: Between 2008-10 program years, the Department of Labor, ABE, and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education utilized their Workforce Incentive grant to develop PEP Talk, a common intake activity to assist adults in developing a Personal Employment Plan (career pathway) to seamlessly transition adults between agencies as client/student needs evolve. Since the Incentive Grant funds were one-time only, the team produced a sustainable, no-cost program. All materials continue to be available online; this includes workbooks, brochures, and training modules. The continuance of the PEP Talk collaboration does not rely on additional funding, and with each successive year an increasing number of students are completing their PEP Talk portfolio. Enabling unemployed/underemployed adults to gain the skills necessary to attain self-sufficiency and move up the economic ladder was identified as the collaborative goal for this grant, and PEP Talk is now the common language across the agencies.

Career Pathways Initiative (Pathways out of Poverty): In 2010 Montana was one of 11 grantees selected to participate in training directed at strengthening a career pathway system for low-skilled adults and dislocated workers. The initiative was co-sponsored by the federal Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration and OVAE. Upon completion of the Department led institutes in April 2011, the MT taskforce determined that a state Career Pathways Summit was the most appropriate way to bring the institute information to a broad audience of stakeholders; the Summit was held in August 2011. Participants were privileged to hear presentations from national leaders in the pathways movement. Following an introduction to national career models, a state panel discussed various agencies plans to support a career pathways model. Cross-agency round tables followed the presentations, giving partners time to share strategies, challenges, and ideas. Integrated, regional round tables were the last activity of the day; during this time participants discussed the next steps for their region. Following the Summit was a September 28th meeting for participants to continue the conversation with Debra Mills from CORD. This meeting focused on the role of advisory committees in a career pathway system. MT career pathway models are evolving to meet the educational needs of the low-skilled adults and local employers. Each year activities such as this Summit will bring refinement and new partners to the process.

College!Now Grant: The state director of ABE co-chairs one of five working groups for this grant. In 2011 the ABE work group was reconfigured to include representation from developmental education. During this program year, this new work group accomplished two significant tasks. The first was approval to use College!Now funds to offer three grants for up to \$10,000 for development of a pilot project that supports the state's capacity to serve Montana's low wage and educationally underprepared adult population in acquiring credentials that lead to a career pathway and employment. The grants required a partnership between an ABE program and a two-year post secondary institution, and the goal of this grant was to increase the education, skills, and employability for under-prepared adults for occupations in demand in the grantee's regional area. The workgroup envisions the grants will assist the state in developing a statewide pathway model for all ABE programs replicate. The second accomplishment was the first state wide ABE/Developmental Education Conference that included representatives from ABE programs and two-year post secondary institutions. The

conference featured renowned national speakers who have worked with other states in redesigning and rebranding ABE on two-year campuses. ABE participants left the conference with a sense of partnership and identified ways to modify program delivery to transition a greater numbers of students to postsecondary with little need for academic remediation.

TANF Eligible Support Grant: The 2011 legislature approved an amendment to the budget for DPHHS to include grant dollars to support ABE programs in creating ways to expand service to TANF eligible individuals during the summer months in 2012 and 2013. Five ABE programs were awarded grants to expand services to this targeted population. The awards ranged from \$10,000 to \$30,000 for each summer. The proposals submitted are unique and meet the needs of each area.

Ultimately this grant is building a strong bridge between DPHHS and ABE, and it is challenging the ABE culture to think about serving students in different locations through technology integration and innovative strategies. Data will soon be available on this year's summer program.

GEMS: ABE is currently collaborating with the K-12 longitudinal data team to include ABE student data in the system. Development of the ABE dashboard began this program year and is to be launched in 2013.

Describe successful activities and services supported with EL/Civics funds, including the number of programs receiving EL/Civics grants and an estimate of the number of adult learners served.

MPAEA BEST Plus: The state is committed to designating some EL/Civics dollars to comply with the state policy's assessment requirement. Each year designated BEST Plus teachers must participate in refresher assessment training. In order to effectively use state resources and staff time, BEST Plus training was held in conjunction with the MPAEA Conference in April 2012. Seven instructors participated, and it was the perfect transition into the MPAEA conference that followed. The assessment training gave participants the background they needed to glean essential information presented at the conference regarding taking an ESOL student from assessment to preparing them for speaking and moving into the workforce, as the conference theme was career pathways for all adult learners. To ensure readily available assessment training the state has paid for a Montana ESOL teacher to complete the BEST Plus training and become our state trainer.

Professional Development: Five programs have been awarded the EL/Civics grant. Each year the number of students served with this grant remains small and relatively constant. This program year 177 students were served. Since the expiration of the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) Network Grant that spanned July 2008-June 2010, the ABE director has signed contracts with the state CAELA team to continue to build on the professional development model put in place with the CAELA grant. This year the state supported the team in presenting an ESOL mini-institute at the MPAEA conference, which introduced their Wiki Web site. The Wiki site features a teacher page and a student page. (Teachers have access professional readings and student activities based on a monthly theme. Students have access to cross-program activities and extended friendships through the Wiki.) The conference allowed 12 ESL state teachers the ability to share our use of technology, as well as network with ESL teachers from across the region. Our Montana ESOL leaders are engaged in continually promoting a thoughtful professional development process that will enhance instructors' abilities to meet the needs of ESL students and sustain a statewide ESL system that can meet the demands of this population.