

**New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development**  
**Adult Literacy Programs**

**Workforce Investment Act Title II**

*Narrative Report Program Year 2012*  
*(July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013)*



**December 2013**

# New Jersey Narrative Report 2012-2013

## **I. Overview**

A major focus of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) during the 2012 program year has been our literacy programs. Guided by the 2012-2017 [State Unified Workforce Investment Plan \(Section A, page 5\)](#), we began the process of redesigning how we provide basic skills and workforce readiness programs and services to our adult population.

Through solicited feedback from employers and other stakeholders, we found that work opportunities require a variety of skill levels to perform a wide range of jobs. We need to bridge the gap between the current skillset of jobseekers and the requirements of their potential employers. Jobseekers pursuing entry-level jobs must recognize that basic skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century require greater knowledge and adaptability than in the past. The fact is that successful job applicants must demonstrate to prospective employers that they possess the kind of skills that will allow them to function in any organization or workplace.

In response to this, LWD has identified four core values that will guide its current and future strategic and program decisions. Our Core Value 3, Equipping the Workforce for Employment, recognizes that jobseekers must possess basic skills and literacy and workforce readiness skills in order to secure and retain employment. This is the critical foundation for all of the state's talent development initiatives.

LWD made a variety of investments to help individuals obtain their high school diploma and its equivalent, improve their basic math, reading and writing skills and attain basic English and computer proficiencies necessary for employment. The state's 31 Workforce Learning Link (WLL) facilities helped approximately 3,300 individuals raise their basic skill levels using computer labs in One-Stop Career Centers (OSCC) throughout the state.

To foster new innovations, LWD launched the Literacy4Jersey competitive grant program to provide funding to 13 organizations, including a local library, a volunteer organization and a non-profit community group, working to bring literacy education to more people in new ways. Almost 1,000 participants have been enrolled.

## **II. Strategy**

As a result of the renewal of New Jersey's unified five year strategic plan it was determined that New Jersey will focus on four key areas for program development. One of these key areas is literacy services. While New Jersey serves a large number of participants with the WIA Title II Adult Literacy program, the additional literacy services provided through multiple state grant programs do not all work in unison nor do they connect or compliment in an efficient manner with the WIA Title II program. At the same time we know there is a need for innovation in Adult Literacy services as we examine the growing need for services and the changes in technology taking place within the field, including the change in the testing instrument for High School equivalency examination. Through the efforts led by the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC), specifically the subcommittee known as the State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES), the department will begin the process of mapping and outlining a new statewide literacy plan which maximizes the efficiency of all available funding streams while staying true to legislative intent of each funding source. The development of a statewide strategy for Adult Education and Family Literacy will support the intent of the Federal legislation by providing funds to deliver programs, opportunities and services to adult learners to prepare them to succeed as responsible and productive citizens in a global society.

### **III. Implementation**

Through the WIA Title II program New Jersey serves many adult learners. New Jersey leads the nation in the diversity of cultures; there are over 140 spoken languages and various dialects spoken in the state. The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program supports the immigrant community and other limited English proficient populations. During PY 2012, the English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) population represented approximately 57 percent of all the students being served in the WIA Title II program, while 46 percent of these students were assessed at the Beginning ESL Literacy Educational Functioning Level (EFL). This population has very limited reading or writing skills in any language and may function minimally or not at all in English. These limitations directly affect a participant's ability to meet the goals of entering employment in a timely manner, even as 63 percent achieve at least one grade level during the year. The goal of this program is to ensure that new residents acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers and community members. This population is targeted for the IELCE program, which emphasizes contextualized instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and U.S. history and government, in accordance with the *National Standards for Civics and Government* and *CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education*; (CIVITAS sets forth in detail the civic knowledge, skills, dispositions, and commitments necessary for effective citizenship in the 21st century). This type of contextualized instruction is infused into all of our Adult Basic Skills (ABS)/IELCE instructional programs, including those in our correctional facilities and mental health state institutions/agency programs.

LWD also utilizes state funding to further enhance adult education alternatives directly related to welfare registrants, dislocated workers and other jobseekers. There are 31 WLL labs throughout the state. The majority of these labs are located primarily at the OSCCs. Through a combined training approach and computer-based instruction, the WLLs provide services that include basic computer literacy, financial literacy, job search and employability skills, and GED preparation and testing. This effort has allowed New Jersey to expand its literacy services to provide interactive training services that allow participants to address individual employment-related issues at their own pace.

Additionally, New Jersey has also broadened the areas of literacy to include the Literacy4Jersey Training Grant program. This one-time offer of a performance based literacy program will provide community-based adult literacy training opportunities for unemployed and/or under-employed New Jersey residents to help improve their basic skills proficiencies and connect services to the attainment of key credentials. These opportunities are expected to provide New Jersey employers with a well prepared workforce.

The key outcomes for the Literacy4Jersey grant are the attainment of one or more of the following goals:

- 1) Attainment of an industry-recognized credential;
- 2) Attainment of a General Education Development;
- 3) Functional grade level advancement leading to entrance into occupational skills training programs; or
- 4) Direct job placement.

As these contracts come to conclusion, we will apply the lessons learned from the pilot program in the development of our new statewide literacy plan.

#### **IV. Data Collection**

For national reporting standards (NRS) compliance the state continues to utilize LiteracyPro Systems as its management information system (MIS), which provides for New Jersey's student record management and reporting system, Literacy Adult and Community Education System (LACES). This year LiteracyPro Systems has customized New Jersey's MIS system to meet our specific reporting needs and provided assistance with data analysis and enhancements as needed. For example, LWD and LiteracyPro Systems worked closely to develop and implement reports to enhance the ability for LWD to provide an optimal level of technical assistance. It is anticipated that these reports will save staff time and allow for a better understanding as to where providers are in meeting their performance targets during the year. Training was provided by LiteracyPro Systems to all WIA Title II staff and partner agency staff. State technical assistance staff review LACES data on a regular basis and provide technical assistance to any program having difficulty with data input or output.

New Jersey will continue to utilize LACES as the primary data collection system, but we will also begin the process of integrating the services captured in LACES into our state labor database known as AOSOS (America's One-Stop Operating System). The goal is to further connect labor exchange services with students in need of job placement assistance and continued occupational skills development, and to eliminate the need for double data entry for staff and clients.

#### **USDOE Site Visit and Completion of the Corrective Action Plan (CAP)**

1. The US Department of Education (USDOE) conducted an on-site visit to LWD in August 2012. As a result of this visit, LWD was required to submit a copy of the FY14 WIA Title II Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) proposal to the USDOE prior to its release.
2. As requested, in April 2013, the FY14 WIA Title II NGO was submitted to the USDOE for approval. The NGO was approved, thus closing out the required action of the CAP.

Noteworthy practices include acknowledgements on New Jersey's extensive training regarding our assessment policy and our commitment to staff development and training for adult education providers.

#### **Professional Development – (2013)**

LWD's goal is to promote and provide adult literacy programs throughout the State of New Jersey. Professional development is a required component of the WIA Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). The activities offered during this program year support the goal of the unit and the objective of the New Jersey Five Year State Plan for Adult Basic Education.

In an effort to uphold and maintain the excellence of instructional programs in adult literacy, WIA Title II grant recipients must submit yearly professional development plans which identify their specific needs. These plans are then utilized by the LWD Literacy Services Unit to create a needs assessment plan, which is then facilitated by the Literacy Services Professional Development Coordinator. During FY 2012-2013, the following professional development initiatives were undertaken:

- The data management software, LACES, continued to be a major professional development initiative for adult education administrators and practitioners. LACES training was provided to WIA Title II grantees on a regional basis, individual (and targeted) agency basis and online through LiteracyPro's helpdesk.

- A series of adult basic skills activities were conducted by experienced trainers from the Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey (LVNJ) and the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). The training sessions included relevant information on the following topics: train the trainer, tutor training, ESL, immigration/civics, technology training, reading, writing and math skills, and transition to work.
- Sponsorship and support for a number of seminars and panels at statewide conferences with literacy organizations such as the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning Annual Conference (NJALL); LVNJ-Literacy for Life Seminar; Garden State Employment and Training Association's (GSETA) Annual Conference; and support for volunteer literacy tutor training.
- Program directors' seminars on policy and program topics including federal and state requirements; and grant preparation and development (Intake, Goal Setting, Assessment, Evaluation, Follow-Up Survey and Professional Development policies).
- Each WIA Title II consortium was provided a professional development award to address the individual training needs of the consortium. These "consortium professional development trainings" specifically targeted staff training activities, which were not provided by LWD.

In summary, 40 separate professional development activities were provided by LWD serving a total of 900 participants.

### **Leadership Activities**

In PY 2012, LWD renewed New Jersey's State WIA plan. The new state plan identifies four key foundations of an individual's workforce development needs. The first of these foundations is the recognition that an individual's literacy level is fundamental to future success. The New Jersey WIA state plan calls for the development of a statewide literacy strategy to be established. By streamlining these literacy services, we hope to maximize all programs regardless of funding stream and coordinate these services so that all programs are complimentary to one another.

LWD awarded a six-month tutor training grant to the LVNJ for the preparation of additional tutors to serve lower level literacy clients. The purpose of this grant was to support tutor training that included the certification of new volunteer tutors for New Jersey's Literacy Volunteers network. LVNJ has led a tutor training initiative for the past six years that has resulted in a tremendous influx of tutors into the volunteer-based system. As a result of this year's initiative, 266 new volunteer tutors were trained statewide.

Significant efforts were also undertaken regarding the implementation of the LACES data system for reporting into the NRS. These efforts included:

- data quality assurance and quality control efforts;
- export of data files from LACES into LWD's NJ Consumer Report Card;
- data matching from the wage record system to LACES to capture more accurate data for core indicators dealing with attainment of employment and job retention;
- data matching from the GED testing record system to LACES to capture more accurate results for core indicators dealing with GED attainment; and
- efforts to improve the data entry for outcomes reported on NRS Table 5.

The following customized reports were added to streamline data:

- ABE by location
- ESL by location
- Measures by location
- Contracted enrollment summary
- Fiscal year retention and post test
- Performance results
- State report card

## **Program Performance**

Performance targets for PY 2012 were established and agreed upon by LWD literacy staff in collaboration with USDOE. The NRS tables provide the structure for reporting outcomes for clients who participate in the WIA Title II Adult Education Programs. Chart 1 provides a breakdown of New Jersey’s performance targets for PY 2010, 2011, 2012 and our actual performance toward meeting the targets.

**Chart 1: New Jersey Adult Education Performance of the last three years**

| Performance Objectives        | PY10 Target | PY10 Performance | PY11 Target | PY11 Performance | PY12 Target | PY 12 Performance |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| ABE Beginning Literacy        | 35%         | <b>23%</b>       | 30%         | <b>27%</b>       | 32%         | <b>28%</b>        |
| ABE Beginning Basic Education | 38%         | <b>27%</b>       | 31%         | <b>31%</b>       | 36%         | <b>30%</b>        |
| ABE Intermediate Low          | 35%         | <b>25%</b>       | 31%         | <b>28%</b>       | 35%         | <b>29%</b>        |
| ABE Intermediate High         | 34%         | <b>16%</b>       | 22%         | <b>20%</b>       | 28%         | <b>23%</b>        |
| ASE Low                       | 40%         | <b>17%</b>       | 26%         | <b>20%</b>       | 32%         | <b>21%</b>        |
| ESL Beginning Literacy        | 38%         | <b>33%</b>       | 31%         | <b>33%</b>       | 45%         | <b>36%</b>        |
| ESL Beginning Low             | 48%         | <b>42%</b>       | 42%         | <b>38%</b>       | 49%         | <b>40%</b>        |
| ESL Beginning High            | 44%         | <b>42%</b>       | 40%         | <b>39%</b>       | 43%         | <b>46%</b>        |
| ESL Intermediate Low          | 44%         | <b>38%</b>       | 38%         | <b>39%</b>       | 35%         | <b>42%</b>        |
| ESL Intermediate High         | 39%         | <b>28%</b>       | 26%         | <b>29%</b>       | 20%         | <b>32%</b>        |
| ESL Advanced                  | 34%         | <b>16%</b>       | 20%         | <b>22%</b>       | 32%         | <b>23%</b>        |
| Entered Employment            | 40%         | <b>27%</b>       | 48%         | <b>30%</b>       | 38%         | <b>34%</b>        |
| Retained Employment           | 59%         | <b>11%</b>       | 59%         | <b>63%</b>       | 30%         | <b>65%</b>        |
| GED or Diploma                | 31%         | <b>Invalid*</b>  | 52%         | <b>37%</b>       | 38%         | <b>73%</b>        |
| Entered Postsecondary         | 30%         | <b>Invalid*</b>  | 29%         | <b>Invalid*</b>  | 38%         | <b>13%</b>        |

\*Invalid = less than 50% response rate. A 50% response rate is needed to count on NRS Table 5.

(79%, 80% and 96% did NOT respond to the survey).

This chart shows data over the past three years on educational gains in the areas of: reading, writing, and speaking the English language, numeracy, computing, problem-solving, perception and comprehension for English language communication and other literacy skills. The chart also includes data on the follow up measures: entered employment, retained employment, receipt of a secondary diploma or New Jersey state issued diploma, and entry into post-secondary education or training. Over the last three years, New Jersey has demonstrated improvement in ten of the 11 EFL gain areas (see highlight).

As a direct result of the detailed analysis of the wage data match for PY12, New Jersey increased its performance to 1,395 individuals who met the entered employment goals, (increased by 442 from last year). For retained employment, New Jersey captured 1,653 students who met the retained employment goals for this year, (increased by 774 from last year). The GED PY12 performance outcome increased to 1,294 for this year, (increased by 1,216 from last year). As a result of the data match for all core

outcome measures with the exception of post-secondary education or training, New Jersey has achieved a valid response rate of at least 50 percent for its core outcome measures.

**Goal I: To Enable Adults to Acquire the Basic Educational Skills Necessary for Literate Functioning**

During PY 2012, educational services and instruction to adults were provided through a wide variety of program offerings including: ABE, ESL, volunteer literacy programs, adult high school programs, GED test preparation, and programs at correctional institutions and at other state institutions.

In PY 2012, a total of \$13,377,095 (\$10,139,870 in ABE/ESL funds and \$2,875,500 in IELCE funds), in WIA Title II program grant funds was awarded to eligible literacy agencies, and 28,788 adult participants were served. The populations served included 11,113 ABE participants, 1,356 Adult Secondary Education (ASE) participants and 16,325 ESL participants. See Chart 2 for a breakdown of participants by EFL.

**Chart 2: New Jersey Adult Education Participants**

| Educational Functioning Level | PY 2011       |            | PY 2012       |            |
|-------------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|
|                               | Total         | Enrollment | Total         | Enrollment |
| ABE Beginning Literacy        | 791           |            | 849           |            |
| ABE Beginning Basic Education | 2,517         |            | 2,693         |            |
| ABE Intermediate Low          | 3,636         |            | 4,203         |            |
| ABE Intermediate High         | 2,875         |            | 3,368         |            |
| ASE Low                       | 728           |            | 986           |            |
| ASE High                      | 287           |            | 364           |            |
| ESL Beginning Literacy        | 7,704         |            | 7,471         |            |
| ESL Beginning Low             | 2,667         |            | 2,881         |            |
| ESL Beginning High            | 1,958         |            | 1,908         |            |
| ESL Intermediate Low          | 1,786         |            | 1,756         |            |
| ESL Intermediate High         | 1,539         |            | 1,548         |            |
| ESL Advanced                  | 775           |            | 761           |            |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>27,263</b> |            | <b>28,788</b> |            |

The ABE program services were delivered through 17 consortia and lead agencies with multiple delivery sites throughout the counties coordinated by the individual consortium, community/technical colleges or public and private non-profit agencies and New Jersey State correctional institutions. Together, 89 agencies participated in delivering services in PY 2012.

Currently, 15 adult high schools operate in various school districts throughout the state. These adult schools provide the opportunity, accessibility and flexibility of obtaining a high school diploma while maintaining established standards inherent in the awarding of a high school diploma. Adult high schools provide the infrastructure upon which the initial WIA Title II programs were infused.

There are currently 29 GED testing centers operating in the state, these sites most often are affiliated with an adult education consortium, adult high school or OSCC. One GED testing center is offered through the New Jersey Department of Corrections (DOC).

During the performance period, grantees were required to integrate an English language/civics education component. The goal of this program is to create voluntary partnerships among federal, state and local agencies to develop, implement and improve English literacy and civics education services. These services are intended to help immigrants and others with limited English proficiency develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become active and informed parents, workers and community members.

Types of activities supported by these funds included:

- tutor support training for LVNJ;
- language proficiency assessment;
- provision of experiential learning opportunities including completing employment forms, completing the voter registration process, engaging participants in volunteer opportunities and linkages with community resources;
- provision of computers and software for instruction;
- citizen preparation including visiting of polling places and government buildings in the state capital;
- field trips to promote American cultural awareness and skills; and
- preparation of curricula focusing on issues of importance to non-citizens such as preparation for becoming a U.S. citizen, job training and placement, housing, parenting and civics preparation.

**Goal II: To Provide English Literacy Instruction for Adults with Limited English Proficiency**

The ESL programs are offered at many different venues from literacy-based volunteer programs to adult education programs. The programs provide services from ESL Beginning Literacy (Beg Lit), to Advanced Level ESL. For the volunteer-based programs, services are provided through the use of tutor-learner matches to sponsor volunteer one-on-one or small group tutorial services.

The majority of the ESL students served (46 percent) were assessed at the Beginning ESL Literacy EFL (ESL Beg Lit). This population may only understand isolated words or phrases, may have no or minimal reading or writing skills in any language and functions minimally or not at all in English. The percentages for each of the other five EFLs ranged from five percent to 17 percent. A total of 28,788 students were served in the WIA Title II program for PY 2012; 16,325 of them were ESL students.

Indications are that proposed immigration reform has increased the demand for ESL and civics education in various counties throughout New Jersey. For many of our limited English proficient adults, participation in these instructional programs and services has assisted them in stabilizing their residency status and ability to contribute more fully to the state’s economy.

**Chart 3: New Jersey Adult Education Participants in Programs for Adults with Limited English Proficiency**

| Educational Functioning Level | Total Number of ESL Students - PY 2012 | Total Percentage of ESL Students - PY 2012 |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| ESL Beginning Literacy        | 7,471                                  | 46%  |
| ESL Beginning Low             | 2,881                                  | 17%  |
| ESL Beginning High            | 1,908                                  | 12%  |
| ESL Intermediate Low          | 1,756                                  | 11%  |
| ESL Intermediate High         | 1,548                                  | 9%   |
| ESL Advanced                  | 761                                    | 5%   |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 16,325                                 | 100%                                       |



**Goal III: To Provide Adults with Sufficient Basic Education to Enable them to Obtain and Retain Productive Employment and to Benefit from Job Training and Retraining Programs**

Provider agencies were required to provide a system of support services, either on-site or through community referral to allow adults the opportunity to participate in programs that would assist them in obtaining and retaining employment, and benefit from job training and retraining programs.

In PY 2011, significant discrepancies were found in the process followed for data match which lead to lost positive outcomes in the prior program year. In PY 2012, LWD improved the data matching process that allows those participants with the main or secondary goal of either entered employment or retained employment who also provide a social security number to be matched against wage records. LWD has worked closely with program providers and LiteracyPro to eliminate any errors in the process and to ensure that program providers are doing their best to capture participant’s social security numbers allowing for a much larger number of captured positive outcomes.

**Chart 4: Core Follow-up Outcome Data: New Jersey Adult Education Participant Employment and Postsecondary Achievements**

| Indicator                                | No. of Participants Achieving Outcome<br>PY 2011 | No. of Participants Achieving Outcome<br>PY 2012 |
|--|--|--|
| Enter Employment                         | 953  | 1395   |
| Retain Employment                        | 878  | 1653   |
| Entered Postsecondary Education/Training | 407  | 430  |

**Goal IV: To Enable Adults to Continue their Education to at least the Level of Completion of Secondary School**

Educational opportunities were provided to adults via programs ranging from the ABE Beginning Literacy to the ASE High and through the provision of adult high schools in New Jersey school districts to prepare adults to:

- enroll and participate in the appropriate level of an adult education program and receive ancillary support services if necessary;
- move to the next EFL based on program performance;
- sit for the GED test and, if successful, receive a New Jersey state issued diploma; or
- graduate from an adult high school.

In PY 2012, LWD continued to improve the data matching process that allows those participants with the goal of obtaining a GED/Secondary School Diploma and also provide a social security number to be matched against NRSpro’s Adult Education Data Management system.

**Chart 5: Core Follow-up Outcome Data: New Jersey Adult Education Participant Educational Achievements**

| Indicator                             | No. of Participants Achieving Outcome<br>PY 2011 | No. of Participants Achieving Outcome<br>PY 2012 |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Obtained GED/Secondary School Diploma | 1216   | 1294   |

**VI. Conclusion**

New Jersey understands that adult literacy is a critical component to achieving Core Value 3 of our State Strategy: Equipping the Workforce for Employment. We face many challenges in changing the landscape of adult literacy as well as employment opportunities. These challenges come in the form of new high school equivalency examinations for the state aligned with core content standards and changes in the provider background. The alignment of county literacy volunteer organizations into a consolidated “Literacy New Jersey Organization” will ensure that we meet our performance measures at the state and local levels. Promising opportunities come in the form of the integration of the LACES data collection system into LWD’s AOSOS case management system. This incorporation will aid our literacy customers so that they have access to employment services as well as a new set of recommendations and pilot projects to help shape and potentially restructure New Jersey’s literacy system.

In addition to the development of a new statewide literacy plan, New Jersey will utilize a portion of the WIA Title II leadership allocation for the development of new and innovative approaches to literacy services which will identify promising practices, support creative pilot programs and encourage new partnerships. The Literacy Innovations NGO is scheduled to be released in PY13. We have focused on four areas of innovation; these include: developing and/or updating existing curricula; providing innovative technology activities to enhance adult computer skills; integrating literacy instruction with occupational skill training; and lastly, providing technical assistance to local areas to increase the effectiveness of youth literacy/numeracy programs. The pilot project results from literacy innovations, coupled with the strategic plan, will ensure that New Jersey is well-positioned to lead our statewide Adult Literacy System into the future to meet the needs of our adult literacy students.

To this end, in 2013, the SETC-sponsored SCALES report provided recommendations for a framework for improving New Jersey’s literacy system. New Jersey is currently seeking a partner through a Request for Proposal (RFP) to drive a strategic plan for statewide adult literacy based on the SCALES recommendations as well as ensuring that we are prepared to meet our performance goals going forward.