Virginia Narrative Report 2012-2013

STATE LEADERSHIP
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In 2012-2013, OAEL employed leadership funds to provide opportunities throughout the state for professional development, technological advances, and technical assistance.

Professional Development

The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC)

VALRC provided training in online and face-to face formats for 3,547 participants during 2012-13. There were 1,114 participants in face-to-face training, and 2,405 in online training. This represented a 22 percent reduction in the number of trainings and a 25 percent reduction in the number of hours of training over 2011-12 but a 39 percent increase in the number of participants over the same period. The average evaluation score was 4.47 on a five-point Likert scale, down slightly from 4.51 last year but on par with the previous three years.

Although the high percentage of part-time staff continues to present a challenge to programs' effective implementation of professional development efforts, the continued implementation of the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program (VAECP) has established a common, standard platform of knowledge and skills essential for the effectiveness of adult education programs for all instructional administrators, teachers, and support staff statewide.

In the VAECP program, there were 16 Level completions across the ABE/GED® and ESOL strands, bringing the total number of Level completers to 462. Completion of VAECP afterwork continued to improve. During 2012-13 the afterwork completion rate was 95 percent, up from 88 percent the previous year (and 50-60 percent in the previous two years). The ABE/GED® strand had 84 participants, with 76 completing the afterwork assignments for a rate of 90.5 percent. The ESOL strand had 77 participants with 100% completing the afterwork assignment. In addition, VALRC worked with external evaluators to develop baseline data for student performance on NRS as related to teacher participation in VAECP. Although this preliminary report of ABE/GED® and ESOL teachers did not show significant differences between VAECP Level completers and non-VAECP participants, it did provide important baseline data that can be used in further analysis of the effects of certification on student performance. Giving teachers more time between Level completion and evaluation in order for them to actually use what they learned would likely result in more positive results.

Data for 2012-13 reflects changes in both the state adult education landscape and the VALRC. Regionalization caused the demand for VALRC delivered training to decrease in the first half of the year, as programs worked internally to restructure themselves and meet grant requirements. The Office of Adult Education and Literacy (OAEL) instructed VALRC not to schedule training in July 2012 to allow some time for the regional grant awards to be made. In addition, grants in five regions were not awarded until the middle of fall. While the regions were slow to respond to training opportunities, interest in the GED® 2014 and Career Pathways training tended to offset that lag. The net result was an increase in the number of participants reached over the previous year while decreasing the overall number of trainings offered, thus improving the efficiency of the training system.

In addition to the VAECP sessions, VALRC continued to provide training, both face-to-face and online, in reading, writing, numeracy, learning disabilities, assessment, content standards, goal setting, ESOL instruction, GED® instruction, technology integration, and other topics. Highlights of new professional development resources made available during 2012-2013 are noted below.

- VALRC worked with the GED® Chief Examiner to stay current with projected changes in the GED® tests and to identify topics for training related to helping near-passers get their credentials before January 2014 and to provide teachers with information on the new tests. VALRC conducted the *Final 2002 GED® Workshop* in 12 locations across the state during the year to provide adult educators with training to help them get students through the 2002 test. *Unpacking the GED® 2014* training was developed and presented three times during June, 2013.
- Training on Career Pathways was developed and conducted twice.
- VARLC developed and piloted a facilitated online course called *Teaching Reading to Adults*.
- VALRC began the process of moving the VAECP sessions from face-to-face workshops to online facilitated courses with the revision of ABE/GED® Instructor Level I sessions into one eight-week online course.
- VALRC prepared the ESOL Standards for final electronic publication and made them available to the field.
- VARLC contracted with Virginia Commonwealth University's Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory to develop 22 regional profiles, The Survey of Foreign-born Population in Virginia by Regions, 2013, delineating the need for EL-Civics programs and services within each region.

VALRC continued its work in collaboration with the Illinois Adult Learning Resource Center to develop the EL/Civics Gateways for Teachers training modules and resources on EL/Civics and related topics. During the year, modules on health literacy and citizenship were added to the site. In addition, VALRC updated its Web site to include the newly developed *Health Literacy Toolkit* and provided regional and facilitated online trainings on its use. Two study circles were conducted on the use of the *ELLs in the Workplace* module. VALRC contracted with Virginia Commonwealth University to research and compile regional data profiles of the foreign-born population of Virginia. In April, VALRC held an EL/Civics Symposium for 52 attendees. The regional data profiles were introduced and examined by groups in attendance. Additionally, VALRC, guests, and regional programs conducted concurrent workshops on building community relationships, using the *Health Literacy Toolkit*, incorporating workplace readiness into EL/Civics classes, and using the EL/Civics Gateways for Teaching in instruction.

VALRC also published three issues of the statewide newsletter *Progress*; maintained the GED® Helpline; and provided resources, information, and technical assistance to the field through in-person and telephone support, as well as Web sites and listservs.

Radford University (RU)

During 2012-2013, RU supported OAEL through the organization of regional trainings and conferences, as well as professional development initiatives. RU organized the Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP) program meeting (176 participants), the Regional Program Manager Meeting (92 participants), the GED® Chief Examiners Meeting (128) participants), two Regional Specialists Meetings (75 total participants). In addition, RU continued to support the three Targeted Technical Assistance Consultants (TTAC), who provide technical assistance and program development support to local program managers and regional program managers. These contractors assisted the director of the OAEL in facilitating meetings for regional program managers and developing workshops for regional program managers based on the specific needs of their individual regions.

Technology and Technical Assistance

A Learning Management System (LMS) database using FileMaker Pro software has been designed by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Region 1 program (LENOWISCO region) to provide a system for collecting and reporting student data in order to strengthen the program's student recruitment and retention efforts as well as improve the quality of classroom instructional delivery. The pilot project, funded with AEFLA leadership funds, involves upgrading the LMS application to be used for pilot testing, conducting the pilot test, and providing the time and resources required to conduct staff training. If the pilot project yields successful results, OAEL will consider making available future LMS funding to include more adult education regional programs. The pilot test phase has begun and involves four regional AEFLA funded programs, including the LENOWISCO regional program, which designed and revised the database, the New River Valley regional program (Region 4), the Thomas Jefferson regional program (Region 10), and the West Piedmont regional program (Region 12). The pilots are

required to submit monthly project reports to the OAEL and to participate in phone conference calls with the OAEL to discuss the project.

eLearnVA

OAEL continued operating a distance-learning center, administered by VALRC. The center maintains the eLearnVA Web portal (www.elearnva.org).   Using this portal, learners may access a variety of well-known ABE/GED® preparation products and streaming videos. In addition to the central Web portal, eLearnVA also maintained a toll-free helpline for students, mentors, and teachers, and received 4101 telephone calls in 2012-2013.

Under the new regional structure, programs were expected to assume a larger role in the implementation of distance education for 2012-2013.   During the prior year, VALRC offered workshops and technical assistance to aid in the transition of moving distance education from a centralized, statewide system to a regionally operated system.   With the increase in regionally operated distance education programs, VALRC phased out the use of mentors at the state level and provided training for regional mentors.   As expected, the number of students served at the state level decreased as more and more regional programs adopted distance education.   A final transition plan was developed to boost distance education opportunities for GED® near-passers and incomplete testers preparing to take the GED® in the final months of the 2002 test.   ELearnVA will end in December 2013, and distance education for adult learners will be carried out by regional programs.

Career Pathways and PluggedIn VA (PIVA)

In 2012-2013, PluggedIn VA expanded through the ongoing efforts of VALRC and OAEL and with additional funding provided by the Governor's biennium budget and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA).   PIVA, an integrated education and training program that provides GED® preparation, transferrable community college credits, digital literacy instruction, and industry-specific certifications, served 144 students through 13 instructional cohorts. An additional 50 TAA-eligible students with an educational functioning level below the adult secondary level were served through three pilot cohorts.

Through its leadership activities and with additional funding from TAA, VALRC developed a curriculum guide and a badge system for documenting students' skills for lower level PIVA programs.   A PIVA Web site and listserv were launched to provide information about PIVA, serve as a portal for program resources, and promote communication and resource sharing between funded programs.   VALRC, OAEL, and Virginia Community Colleges collaborated to deliver presentations at conferences and workforce development partners' meetings throughout the state.   Technical assistance visits were conducted at each funded PIVA site, and two statewide meetings were held for funded programs during the year.

VALRC conducted workshops on career pathways and contextualized instruction during the year.   Because of ongoing requests from regional programs for these trainings, VALRC will continue the workshops for 2013-2014.

EFFECTIVENESS OF ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES
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NRS Highlights

Fiscal year 2012-2013 was a year of change for adult education in Virginia, especially with respect to data collection and reporting.   The Office of Adult Education and Literacy (OAEL) was responsible not only for making adjustments to the state's management information system (MIS) to accommodate approved federal changes to adult education reporting, but also to accommodate the state's move to a regionalized system of adult education service delivery.   Adjustments in connection with the latter were particularly complicated since in 2012-2013 some of the available federal and state adult education funding was available on an individual program basis, requiring that the MIS be flexible enough to enable regional as well as individual program reporting depending on funding stream.

OAEL's efforts to improve the state's NRS performance with respect to educational gain started to pay off in 2012-2013.   In 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, Virginia did not meet any educational functioning level (EFL) targets.   In 2012-2013, however, Virginia met three targets, ASE Low, ESL Intermediate High, and ESL Advanced.   Having met the latter two targets was especially gratifying since the performance benchmarks at these two levels are normally the most challenging.

In addition, the state came within three percentage points of meeting the targets for four other EFLs. In 2011-2012, Virginia came within three percentage points of meeting the target for two EFLs and was not close to meeting any of its EFL targets in 2010-2011.

Staffing
Virginia's adult education programs are largely supported by staff employed on a part-time or volunteer basis.   Only 5.3 percent of all staff is full-time, whereas 37.8 percent of all staff is part-time, and 56.9 percent of all staff is volunteer.   In terms of job function, approximately four percent of all staff identified themselves as administrators, 92.4 percent as teachers, and 3.6 percent as counselors or paraprofessionals.

Participants
Virginia programs reported a total enrollment of 24,163 for 2012-2013.   In terms of general demographic information, the three largest adult student populations in ranked order by race-ethnicity are Hispanic or Latino (8,522 students; 35.3 percent of total enrollment), Black or African American (6,475 students; 26.8 percent of total enrollment), and White (6,223 students; 25.8 percent of total enrollment).

In terms of age categories, the three largest adult student populations in ranked order are 25-44 years of age (12,732 students; 52.7 percent of total enrollment), 19-24 years of age (5,154 students; 21.3 percent of total enrollment), and 45-59 years of age (4,107 students ; 17.0 percent of total enrollment)

In terms of gender, more females registered in adult education classes than males.   Approximately 60 percent of the total enrollment was female whereas only 40 percent of the total enrollment was male.

English as a Second Language
A total of 11,127 learners were reported as participating in ESL programs, which represents the largest population of learners served of the three program types (ABE and ASE are the other two program types.)   Of the six EFLs that comprise ESL, ESL intermediate Low was reported as having the highest participation, with an enrollment of 2,385 learners, and ESL Intermediate High was reported as having the second highest participation, with an enrollment of 2,241 learners.

Overall, ESL learners averaged 92 hours of attendance with Low Beginning learners averaging the fewest attendance hours at 77.5 and Advanced learners averaging the most attendance hours at 101.7.   Correlating the percentage of students completing a level with the average attendance, it appears that educational achievement improves with increased attendance.   Of the six ESL EFLs, the two with an average attendance of 100 hours or more were the two whose targets were met.

Adult Basic Education (ABE)
ABE learners comprised the second largest population served by Virginia adult education programs in 2012-2013.   Approximately 10,352 adult students, or 42.8 percent of the total enrollment, participated in ABE programs.   More ABE learners enrolled at the Intermediate Low level (4,768, or 46.1 percent of the total ABE enrollment) than at any other EFL.   The lowest ABE enrollment was at the Beginning Literacy level (275 adults, or 2.7 percent of ABE learners).

ABE learners averaged 69.8 hours of instruction.   Beginning Literacy students averaged the highest attendance at 79 hours, and Intermediate High students had the lowest average attendance at 62.4 hours.   With each succeeding EFL, the average number of instructional hours decreases.   In terms of educational achievement, the students with the highest attendance also achieved the highest EFL completion rate.   The completion rate mirrors the average attendance, decreasing as the average number of instructional hours decreases.

Adult Secondary Education (ASE)
Approximately 2,684 adult learners, or 11.1 percent of the total adult education population, enrolled in an ASE program.   Of the two EFLs that comprise ASE, more students enrolled at the ASE High level (1,541, with an average attendance of 41 hours and level completion rate of 46.8 percent) than enrolled at ASE Low (1,143, with an average attendance of 53.4 hours).

Follow-up Outcomes
Tracking student success with achieving follow-up outcomes continues to be an important aspect of program performance.   Participant status and program exit determine the number of adult learners who are evaluated for core follow-up outcome attainment.   Approximately 2,899 adult learners, or 12 percent of total enrollment, indicated a status of being "unemployed, in the labor force," whereas almost twice that number (5,731, or 23.7 percent) indicated a status of "employed."   A total of 1,927 adults, or 8 percent, participated in an institutional program, such as those based in a correctional facility or in a community-based corrections program.   Approximately 28 percent of adult learners reported living in a rural area.   Although the number of rural-based participants decreased from last year, there continue to be challenges for programs to provide services in rural areas, and the state, working with its rural programs, continues to explore ways to overcome these challenges.

OAEL uses a data match process to measure student follow-up outcome attainment statewide.   Three databases are used to perform the data match.   They are the Virginia Employment Commission, for wage and earnings data; the National Student Clearinghouse, for postsecondary education enrollment data; and NRSPro.com, for secondary credential (GED®) holder data.

GED® Testing Services

The Virginia GED® testing program provides adults who lack a high school diploma with the opportunity to earn a high school equivalency certificate.   Like many states, Virginia has a high number of working-age adults without a secondary credential.   In 2012-2013, there were 78 official GED® testing centers located throughout the Commonwealth.   Approximately 24,715 adults took the GED®, and 17,940 earned a GED® credential this year. The number of adults taking the GED® represents a 22 percent increase over last year; the number of students passing, a 50 percent jump.

Monitoring and Evaluation

2012-2013, OAEL continued to revise its monitoring system in accordance with the five-year strategic plan developed in 2011-2012 and with the move to competition-based, regionalized adult education service delivery.

OAEL continued to fulfill its responsibility of oversight of federal program funding.   In this capacity, OAEL followed up its investigation of the adult education program administered by Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS).   Based on two site visits in the spring of 2012, ACPS was found to be in non-compliance with a number of federal and state grant requirements.   OAEL staff worked with the ACPS administration in 2012-2013 to develop an appropriate corrective action plan and ensure that the terms and conditions of the corrective action plan had been met.   OAEL conducted a follow-up site visit in May 2013 to confirm that ACPS was fully compliant with all required grant requirements.   In June 2013, OAEL officially released ACPS from any further corrective action.

In the spring of 2013, OAEL staff identified expenditure issues with the Northern Virginia Adult Education Program (Region 8), administered by Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS).   A technical assistance visit was conducted in May 2013 and goals were established.   FCPS did not meet all of the goals and was placed on probation for 2013-2014.   OAEL is currently working with FCPS to ensure that it meets the terms of its probation.

In addition to developing a new site visit system for monitoring programs, scheduled for implementation in 2013-2014, OAEL staff started work on developing a new desk audit process, called a desk review, which will provide programs with evaluations of program performance throughout the course of the grant period.   Prior to the desk review, programs received a performance evaluation once a year through the program performance report card.

While programs valued the information on the report card, they found receiving feedback at the end of the year to be challenging for making adjustments. The desk review process will provide quarterly performance updates and help programs stay focused on federal and state performance targets throughout the year.

INTEGRATION OF ACTIVITIES
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Integration and Partnerships

Federal Policy2Performance Project (P2P)
Through its participation in P2P, OAEL gained invaluable guidance and resources for the continued development and expansion of PluggedInVA. During the project, OAEL and VALRC solidified and carried out a plan for ongoing program development, formalized its workforce development partnerships, and advanced the development of curriculum and implementation guides. Realizing the limitations of the current system for data matching, OAEL continues to work on its plan for evaluating PIVA and expects the state's newly developed longitudinal data system to ease evaluation. In May, OAEL staff participated in the P2P mini-institute at OVAE's annual state directors meeting in Arlington, VA.

The Governor's Work Group on Career Pathways System Development
A member of OAEL staff serves on the work group as one of two members representing the Virginia Department of Education. During 2012-2013, the work group produced a short video to promote career pathways in Virginia, published a report card of career pathways programs in Virginia, and drafted an updated report on Virginia's workforce development partners. The work group also invited OAEL staff to participate on an advisory committee to the Virginia Workforce Council and to submit a proposal for funding for PIVA for the Governor's budget for 2014-2016.

Regional Adult Education Transition Specialists
OAEL entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Virginia Community College System to jointly fund two Adult Education Transition Specialists, one in Northern Virginia and one in Southeast Virginia. OAEL funded an additional regional specialist in Central Virginia. The Regional Adult Education Transition Specialists worked with GED® candidates in an incomplete and non-passing status to support secondary credential completion and to transition into employment or postsecondary education or training. During 2012-2013, the Regional Adult Education Transition Specialists contacted 20,918 GED® incompleters or non-passers. This effort resulted in 718 students completing their GED® tests and 1,783 students being retested. Targets were met for the number of students who received support from the Adult Education Transition Specialists and went on to pass the GED® test (855 students) or enroll in postsecondary education or training (252 students).

WIB and One Stop Representation

No staff member from OAEL sits on the Virginia Workforce Council; rather, the Secretary of Education holds a seat. Representation at the local level, however, is pervasive. There are 15 local WIBs in Virginia. Within one-stop centers of each workforce investment board, adult education programs may provide referrals, collocate services, or both.

Funds Used to Support One-Stop System Activities and Services
For 2012-2013, local programs reported that approximately $261,265 in cash and $105,742 in in-kind support was contributed to activities and services provided at the one-stop centers throughout the Commonwealth. The majority of the funds were used to support salaries and benefits. Listed below are the types of activities and services provided by local programs.

- ABE/GED® instruction
- In-service presentations for one-stop employees
- Career and job fair participation
- Continuous quality improvement training
- TABE training for one-stop staff
- Rapid response team participation
- Shared recruitment and referrals to and from one-stop partners
- KeyTrain training and WorkKeys assessment
- One-stop office staffing
- Internet job listing
- ESOL classes for one-stop partners

ENGLISH LITERACY (EL)/CIVICS EDUCATION ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES
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Overview

In 2012-2013, Virginia issued EL/Civics grant awards to 16 programs.   The competitive grants were awarded to address priorities such as meeting NRS accountability targets, incorporating civics education into ESOL classes, providing citizenship preparation, and increasing access to EL/Civics services.   Two competitions were held during the year to expend available funding.   Because of the poor quality of applications received during the spring competition, a second competition was held in the fall.   Funding for the second competition went out in mid winter, affecting some programs' ability to effectively recruit students and to schedule sufficient hours for students to posttest during the fiscal year.

The sub recipients reflect a broad geographic distribution and multiple organizational types, including public school divisions, postsecondary institutions, regional adult education programs, and community-based literacy organizations (CBLOs).   Students enrolled in community-based literacy organizations make up the single largest portion of the funded population, 50 percent (1172 students).   This is a change from last fiscal year during which public school divisions provided the largest portion of enrolled students of any category of providers, but reflects the trend for the two previous fiscal years, 2009-2011.

Statewide Activity

In 2012-2013, 2,347 EL/Civics learners were served, representing a decrease of 30 percent from 2011-2012's enrollment of 3,351 and a 38 percent decrease from 2009-2010's enrollment of 3,761.   During the year, 1,071 (46 percent) EL/Civics learners took a post-test.   Of those, 803 (75 percent) made an educational gain, a two percent increase over 2011-2012.

Thirty-four percent of the total enrollment made an educational gain – a decrease of three percentage points over 2011-2012.   Eight programs met at least 50 percent of their EFL targets and four met at least 70 percent of their EFL targets – a decrease over last year.   Only one program, Henrico County Public Schools, met all EFL targets for EL/Civics students for the year. However, Commonwealth Catholic Charities had the highest overall EFL gain percentage for the year at 58 percent and the third highest enrollment.   For each of the last two years, Virginia Beach reported the highest enrollment of any funded program, and last year it met all of its performance targets.   However, the Virginia Beach program underwent changes in leadership in 2011-2012 and did not receive funding in 2012-2013.   Consequently, a community based organization in Northern Virginia reported the highest enrollment (485) of EL/Civics students in the state for 2012-2013, but it met only one of six performance targets.

A comparison of the data of the two largest funded groups of providers, CBLOs and public school divisions, indicates that they performed similarly in student persistence but varied significantly in overall retention and EFL gains.   Of the 1,172 students served by CBLOs, only 30 percent made a gain, while 26 percent persisted beyond the fiscal year.   This is an increase of three percentage points in EFL gain, but a decrease of 37 percentage points in

students persisting to the next year.   In contrast, public schools increased their student persistence to 27 percent from last year's 19 percent while maintaining an EFL gain rate (43 percent) similar to last year's (45 percent).   The CBLOs' change in the percentage of students persisting to the next year significantly impacted their retention rate which dropped from 90 percent for 2011-2012 to 56 percent for 2012-2013.   In contrast, public schools increased their retention rate by five percentage points.

Of the 193 EL/Civics students who set the goal of obtaining citizenship, 77, or 40 percent, achieved it. This is an increase of 11 percentage points from 2011-2012.

Local Program Activity

Peninsula Area
Literacy for Life (Community-based Literacy Organization)
Literacy for Life (LFL) focused on expanding EL/Civics content for ELLs and increasing EFL gains among enrolled students.   To meet this goal, LFL offered one-on-one tutoring, instructor-led classes, workshops, open computer lab with English language and civics software, and distance education.   To improve student outcomes, LFL ensured 100 percent of eligible students post tested and offered workshops on special interest topics to increase civics awareness and language skills and improve retention.   In addition, it created a new program, Health Education and Literacy (HEAL), to assist ELLs with navigating the American healthcare system.   As a result, LFL met five of six targets for student gains in EFL.

Northern Virginia
Prince William County Schools (PWCS) applied their EL/Civics funding to the continued development of civics curricula, implemented four citizenship classes, provided one-on-one counseling, and collaborated with the regional One-Stop to provide expanded counseling, topical seminars, and work readiness workshops.   Additional workforce development efforts for ELLs were carried out in conjunction with the One-Stop and local employers and included employment mixers, workshops, newsletters, and walk-in assistance.   PWCS offered 46 hours of EL/Civics professional development to instructional staff addressing goal-setting, CASAS training, new teacher training, content standards, and topics that included technology, instructional strategies, online resources, citizenship, and college and career readiness.

Central Virginia
Through its EL/Civics award, Albemarle Adult Education (AAE) created discrete civics classes and integrated civics content into existing ESOL classes.   In addition, AAE held two ten-week citizenship classes and created family literacy classes focusing on civics related topics.   AAE continued to develop its online civics education unit delivered through Blackboard.   Unit topics included the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights; federal, state, and local governments and elections; employability skills; Martin Luther King and civil rights; health and public safety; and education in the United States.   Three levels (beginning, low intermediate, and high intermediate) were developed for each unit.   AAE also produced a print publication, *America's Foundations: A Historical Framework of the U.S. Civics System*, for use in all civics and ESOL classes.   Students volunteered at community organizations and completed community training programs, for example, E-911 Community Emergency Response Team.

Charlottesville Adult Learning Center expanded its number of EL/Civics classes by offering a blended distance education class, a satellite civics class for ELL parents and grandparents held at an apartment complex, and a citizenship class.   All ELLs participated in topical speaker series, Directed English Conversation on American Foundations (DECAF), and a student-written newsletter.   With the development of 27 additional lesson plans, civics education was further integrated into the ESL curriculum framework.   Staff attended and presented at local, state, and national professional development conferences.   During the year, Charlottesville served 197 students through its grant award and met five of six targets for EFL gains.