Alabama Narrative Report 2013-2014

**State Leadership Fund: Describe the major activities supported with State Leadership funding during the reporting period and the extent to which these activities helped you in implementing the goals of the State plan. Specifically describe activities related to the implementation of career pathways.**

In PY 2013-2014 the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) State Leadership funds supported several major activities in Alabama designed to support the implementation of the goals set forth in the state plan particularly in the area of system support, performance, and monitoring. The specific activities involved the enhancement of the state’s data collection and reporting system, a statewide purchase of the on-line Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE®) assessment, and professional development.

The Alabama Adult Education System of Accountability and Performance (AAESAP) is the data collection and reporting system for all the adult education services the state provides under the Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, in compliance with the National Reporting System (NRS) guidelines. AAESAP is the source from which administrative and instructional data driven decisions are made on a state and local level. Enhancing the features and capabilities of the system is critical to ensure reliable, accurate, data. An area of focus during PY 2013-14 was to create an on-line, financial invoicing and budgeting module within AAESAP for the locals to submit their financials in “real-time”. After many months of creation and pilot testing the on-line financial administrative process was unveiled to the field in the summer for implementation in PY 2014-15. By integrating the financial process into the system it has streamlined invoicing, budget requests, and amendments. In order for the program staff to use and understand the new process, a 2 day face to face training was conducted with all directors, financial staff, and select instructors. An electronic user manual was created as a resource and placed into the electronic “drop box” for easy access. The AAESAP training provided the understanding and guidance to ensure the transition from paper to electronic submission. The AAESAP system also underwent normal maintenance upgrades to ensure proper identification and tracking of the NRS performance cohorts. Data collection and reporting are critical to telling the story of adult education. There are plans to enhance the dynamic reporting capabilities of the system, especially on a local program level. Examples include, but are not limited to: “*data dashboards*” at the state, local and individual class level, attendance tracking devices that automate the attendance process and a student portal where students can view their own data dashboard reflecting attendance patterns and performance data.

A statewide purchase of the CTB McGraw-Hill On-line Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE®) was made during PY 2013-14 with the use of state leadership funds. The use of an on-line testing format at all levels of education will begin to bring uniformity into the assessment arena. It will also assist in adherence to the test publisher’s guidelines. The efficiency and effectiveness that is gained from on-line testing has enormous value from a system perspective. The capability of automatic proctoring, instant scoring, and downloadable student education plans and the future integration of the data into the AAESAP system and student portal is an exciting endeavor. Historically, the process for assessing one’s educational functioning level was through a traditional paper-based TABE administration that was proctored and timed by the staff and either scored by hand or through a ScanTron® scoring process. The number of programs that still utilize the paper-based assessment has greatly declined. The online TABE reduces the need for paper-based assessments and expedites the proctoring, scoring, and student diagnostic profile plan. It also eliminates the need for costly scanners.

Professional Development for the adult education system is a typical use of state leadership funds. A mixture of state approved face to face and on-line professional development occurred locally that supported fulltime and part-time teachers in improving instructional strategies and approaches for increased student success for the 2014 GED®. Programs submitted training agendas to the state for approval on the topics that were covered. Particular emphasis was placed on teaching to the higher level concepts of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge and to identify tasks related to each level.

The premier professional development opportunity in 2014 was the Alabama Adult Education Summer Conference, provided jointly by the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education and the Alabama Association for Public and Continuing Adult Education (ALAPCAE). National and state level presenters and trainers covered topics that spanned from instructional strategies in literacy and numeracy to learning disabilities, college and career readiness, 2014 GED® exam, digital literacy, English as a Second Language (ESL), and corrections education. Keynote speakers concentrated their message on the intensity, duration, and quality of services for success on the 2014 GED® test and beyond. Sessions were conducted on the framework for college and career readiness standards, discussing what standards are and are not, and how to determine the current gaps in the curriculum that is being used and will need to be used. All conference activities were designed to strengthen instruction through innovative approaches.

In addition to the state conference, all program directors and select instructors had an opportunity to attend the National Center for Family Learning (NCFL) conference. The directors attended a specialized track that was developed by NCFL and the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC) on College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards. The participants learned how standards are being used and implemented in other states. They also heard the message of how CCR standards are crucial to the success of our adult students in the 21st century economy. More training will occur to build on what has been done up to this point because a major emphasis will be placed on the standards and how to use them to guide the instructional process. Aligning instruction to college and career readiness standards will be critical as a WIOA partner endorsing the implementation of an Integrated Education and Training (IET) model designed to meet the needs of our adult population and stakeholders.

**Performance Data Analysis: Describe any significant findings from the evaluation of your performance data for the reporting period and efforts to improve outcomes for the core indicators of performance.**

Unfortunately, like many other states, Alabama was not able to achieve the negotiated performance measure goals for PY 2013-14. Many different factors played a part in the national trend of under achievement. The January release of the 2014 GED® test created a mid-year transitional nightmare of converting from the old test to the new. Many students were trying to finish and/or prepare for the 2002 series, while teachers were frantically trying to get ready for the new test. The significant changes in the design, depth of academic knowledge assessed, and delivery format of the 2014 GED® test, caused anxiety with teachers and students alike. The result is a decrease in enrollment, academic performance, GED® attainment, and the additional performance measures, excluding retained employment. Taking it a step further, 59% (12,904) of the 22,016 enrolled students in PY 2013-14 separated prior to completing an educational functioning level (EFL).

Comparing the hard numbers of individuals that are in the entered employment cohort for 2012-13 (2,668) to those of 2013-14 (4,732), we see an increase of 2,064. Then, if you take the number in the cohort for 2012-13 (1,604) compared to 2013-14 (4,622) the increase of 3,018 is even more significant than that of entered employment. These figures tell the story that programs have improved their effectiveness in transitioning more students into employment or assisting them in retaining employment then in previous years. This could also explain why so many students left before completing an EFL. Negotiated percentages are not indicative of the true picture of what adult education is providing for the economy of the state in potential earnings and continued earnings.

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| **Alabama Adult Education** | **Performance Achievement****2012-13** | **Performance Achievement****2013-14** | **Performance Measure Goals****2013-14** | **Performance Measure Goals****2014-15** |
| ABE Beg. Literacy | 46% | 41% | 70% | 47% |
| ABE Beginning | 42% | 38% | 66% | 43% |
| ABE Low Inter. | 41% | 36% | 67% | 46% |
| ABE High Inter. | 37% | 31% | 61% | 38% |
| ASE Low | 41% | 34% | 63% | 42% |
| Beg. ESL Literacy | 35% | 29% | 68% | 43% |
| Low Beg. ESL | 54% | 42% | 81% | 55% |
| High Beg. ESL | 41% | 44% | 73% | 48% |
| Low Inter. ESL | 42% | 40% | 75% | 48% |
| High Int. ESL | 34% | 37% | 74% | 43% |
| Advanced ESL | 23% | 31% | 50% | 24% |
| Enter Employment | 43% | 41% | 53% | 45% |
| Retain Employment | 40% | 46% | 37% | 48% |
| GED®/ HS Diploma | 71% | 61% | 78% | 72% |
| Enter Postsecondary Education/Training | 28% | 26% | 38% | 31% |

In July, 2014 new leadership was established for Alabama adult education and a high priority was placed on targeted professional development. One of the first areas of focus was on program performance and student persistence. The state immediately partnered with NAEPDC (Dr. Lennox McLendon) to create targeted training for improvement in enrollment, performance outcomes, and persistence. The program improvement initiative is called Alabama Program Improvement Initiative: “Getting Better Every Year at Serving Adult Learners” and focuses on cultivating the administrative and instructional leadership of the state’s 28 adult education directors. There were three days of training which included targeted discussions on data analysis, program self-evaluation, program improvement strategies, and student persistence strategies. Program directors and a key instructional staff were required to participate and work together in teams to analyze their data, target areas for improvement, and implement strategies using the “Red Flag Chart” (*a tool that was created by McLendon and Associates*). Each program brought in aggregate student data broken out into: less than 12 hours, 12 to 19 hours, 20 to 29 hours, 30 to 39 hours and 40 hours and above. The training included individual program analysis for weaknesses, exploring possible reasons, exploring possible alternatives, and pilot testing alternative solutions. By increasing student persistence programs shall see an increase in academic gains and core measure improvements. The expectation is for programs to take the strategies to “scale”. As a result, the state has received implementation plans from local programs on how they are incorporating the persistence strategies into their program design. Continued emphasis will be placed on assisting programs to use their data for promoting programmatic change for student success. State follow-up through desk monitoring, technical assistance visits, and additional professional development will assist in sustaining the program’s efforts in continuous improvement and “going to scale”.

**Integration with other Programs: Describe how you have integrated activities funded under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) with other adult education, career development, and employment and training activities. Describe your efforts to develop or advance career pathway systems that include career and technical education, postsecondary education, employers, and economic and workforce development. Include a description of how your agency is being represented on the State and Local Workforce Investment Boards, the provision of core and other services through the One-Stop system and estimate the AEFLA funds being used to support activities and services through the One-Stop system.**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) places emphasis on the effectiveness and efficiencies of preparing adults for the workforce through a collaborative targeted approach to education and training services. Alabama Adult Education coordinates and collaborates with regional and local economic development, education, and training providers to facilitate job seeker access to high-demand, high growth jobs by requiring all adult education grantees to have a relationship and presence with the local One Stop Career Centers. Comprehensive Adult Education services are provided to 92% of the One Stop centers throughout the state either by on site classes or satellite classes. Adult Education also provides the Alabama Career Readiness Certificate, based on the ACT Work Keys assessment (*Locating Information, Reading for Information, and Applied Mathematics*) to adult education students at no cost. This credential, coupled with a high school equivalency, provides proof of the accomplished skills that can lead to additional postsecondary training or employment opportunities.

In relation to the Alabama Community College System, adult education has been established as a starting point for a student career pathway system. Adult Education students have the opportunity to attend seminars and campus tours presented by the college admissions and financial aid offices. A completion of a GED® can lead to academic scholarships and skills training courses such as *Ready to Work*. Adult Education programs located in the college system is already partnering with the College’s *Ready to Work* program where students can be enrolled in *Ready to Work* and adult education simultaneously. This has allowed for adult education and *Ready to Work* to be co-located not only on college campuses but at several business sites. Each college program has a *Transitional Specialist* in place to counsel students as they progress. Employers assist by conducting mock interviews and offering industry and plant tours that demonstrate the skills needed to become employed at their site. Successful completers of *Ready to Work* can earn an Alabama Certified Worker (ACW) certificate.

The Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education’s Vice Chancellor for Alabama Adult Education is an appointed member of the Alabama State Workforce Investment Board. There are three local area workforce investment boards that are under the State Workforce Investment board. A member of the state adult education office will represent adult education on each of the three local boards. The State Workforce Investment Board is responsible for coordinating the WIOA efforts in the state.

The One Stop Career Centers are located on the college campuses where the college also serves as the provider for adult education services. This allows for ease of providing the educational and training services that are requested. Adult Education has been and will continue to play a supportive and important role in the one stop system. Currently, adult education provides assessment and instruction leading toward a high school equivalency (GED®), Workkeys instruction leading to an Alabama Career Readiness Certificate and an integrated approach to soft skills. Adult Education also partners with the Alabama Department of Human Resources in a short term Job Readiness Activity program for teaching employability soft skills. This program is in addition to the *Ready to Work* program through the college system that was described earlier.

A current estimate of the AEFLA funds used last year to support instructional and other related costs in the One Stop system would be in the range of $720,000. This amount does not include the state funding that is used by the Department of Labor to pay infrastructure costs for adult education.

**English Literacy/Civics Program: Describe the activities and services supported with EL/C funds, including the number of programs receiving EL/Civics grants and an estimate of the number of adult learners served.**

Civics education is an integral part of the English as a Second Language (ESL) services in Alabama. An emphasis is placed on the contextualized instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and U.S. history and government to help students acquire the skills and knowledge they will need to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members. English literacy and civics education classes introduce students to civics-related content and provide them with opportunities to apply that knowledge in their daily lives while building their English language and literacy skills. The skills learned in these classes strengthen the ESL adult’s ability to actively contribute to the community and economy.

The state provides grants to local programs for the English Literacy Civics (EL/Civics) component in a competitive process. Last fiscal year there were 10 programs that received an EL/Civics grant. Of the 10 programs, there were 9 in a community college and 1 in a community based organization. A total of 1,413 participants were served through EL/Civics, however, the impact and benefit to the economy and families of Alabama is far beyond just these numbers. The state is currently funding the same number of programs for PY 2014-15.

An increased emphasis on college and career readiness will be extended to the ESL and EL Civics programs. Integrated Education and Training (IET) activities will focus on preparing all adults (including ESL/EL Civics) for employment opportunities in the demand industries and with full coordination with the local workforce system. Providing targeted IET professional development to the ESL/EL Civics instructors will be crucial in preparing the ESL population to be an active participant in the college and career readiness initiatives of the state.

**Secondary School Credential and Equivalencies: Describe your state’s policies related to how it awards a secondary school diploma or its equivalent to individuals who are no longer enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law. Include state recognized tests that are used to award the diploma as well as other criteria that may be recognized, such as competency-base or credit-based methods.**

The Alabama State Board of Education, the governing board for the primary, secondary, and postsecondary (2 year) public education systems, has the responsibility to provide to individuals who are no longer enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school and unable to successfully complete the necessary requirements to earn a high school diploma, the opportunity to earn the State of Alabama High School Equivalency Diploma through the administration of the **GED® (General Educational Development) Test.**  The GED® Test is currently the only test or method that is used and recognized by the state to award a high school equivalency diploma.

On behalf of the State Board of Education, the Chancellor of the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education awards a State of Alabama High School Equivalency diploma to candidates that meet the eligibility requirements of both GED® Testing Service and the state of Alabama and who have attained a standard score of not less than one hundred fifty (150) on each of the four (4) subject area tests comprising the GED®Test. The equivalency diploma includes the signatures of the Alabama Governor and the Chancellor of the Department of Postsecondary Education. The diplomas are printed with the *Seal of the State Board of Education* and the *Alabama Great Seal*.

The GED® is a well-designed assessment which allows adults to validate skills and abilities equivalent to a current high school graduate, in addition to the skills considered to be college and career ready when testing in a subject at or above a score of one hundred seventy (170). The 2014 GED® was created on Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK), which allows for a systematic alignment between standards, instructional design, and standardized assessments. It reflects the complexity of the cognitive processes demanded by a task outlined by the objective rather than its difficulty.

**Adult Education Standards: Describe your state’s progress toward implementation of adult education college and career readiness (CCR) standards, including whether your state has formally adopted a validated set of CCR standards. Describe how the state has determined the standards to be representative of CCR and the timelines by which such standards will be or have been implemented by all local programs. Describe how the state is supporting the use of standards by local programs and State Leadership funds that are being used to support implementation.**

In order to be globally competitive, the state must set high expectations aligned to college and/or career readiness. It is the intent of the Alabama State Board, the governing board of the Alabama Department of Education and Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education, chaired by the Governor of Alabama, to ensure that secondary students and non-secondary adults are college and career ready. Therefore, the goal for every Alabamian entering postsecondary education and/or training will be to enter directly into core competency classes without the need for developmental education instruction.

Alabama Adult Education is committed to prepare the adult education target population with the educational skills required to go beyond just passing the GED® exam. The Alabama State Board has not formally adopted College and Career Readiness standards; however, the State Board has made a strong demand on the Alabama Department of Education to ensure secondary students are adequately prepared for postsecondary education. A formal adoption of standard parameters should be articulated in Spring/Summer of 2015. The current standards being modeled are the College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards which are fundamental to the preparation of students for postsecondary education and employment opportunities. Integration of these standards will provide the educational support to achieve a high school equivalency and be ready for postsecondary training without the need of remediation.

In PY 2013-14, the professional development trainings supporting CCR standards were not systematic in their delivery nor were they strategically lead at the state level. There were examples of standards training on a local, regional, and state level but not significant enough to bring about systemic change. Alabama Adult Education is in the process of creating a system wide standards based professional development training to ensure all teachers understand the College and Career Readiness standards and the innovative instructional approaches for teaching to the standards. Alabama Adult Education is in discussions with the National Center for Family Learning (NCFL) concerning their facilitated online standards courses and their experience with the CCR standards. The courses that have been developed and administered initially to teachers in the state of Kentucky can easily be adapted for use in other states. Accessing professional development and resources from the Literacy Information and Communications System (LINCS) is and will continue to be a fundamental part of preparing instructors. Creating a multi-faceted approach to professional development trainings which would include face to face, facilitated on-line professional development, and a hybrid model will allow the state to meet the needs of part-time and fulltime staff alike. New offerings beginning after January 1, 2015 will enhance the professional development offerings up to this point

The Alabama Adult Education Summer Conference (scheduled in July) will be used to introduce new initiatives for the coming year and lay the foundation for continuous improvement in all facets of instruction and administrative requirements. The focus will be on innovative instructional practices that teach beyond high school equivalency to include the skills needed to be successful in postsecondary education, training, and job opportunities.

Another exciting initiative that incorporates standards and innovative instructional strategies is the Integrated Education and Training (IET) Career Pathway models. The state is currently examining different approaches to IET and will be implementing a statewide approach in the near future. Utilizing an approach which provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training is the effective way to serve the adult population. The training must be specific to occupations or clusters that assist adults in attaining or advancing in a career and the educational supports must be there to ensure achievement. Criteria must be established so that basic academic skills instruction is sufficiently addressed within the IET model. The academic basic skills piece must be fully integrated and contextualized into the curriculum so that it is embedded in the workforce preparation and skills training.

 Training on the 2014 GED® was provided at the local, regional, and statewide levels for all adult education teachers and administrators. Also, a curriculum committee composed of adult education directors and staff was established to review instructional software and textbooks that are aligned with CCR standards. Programs are selecting online software and text curriculum that is aligned to the 2014 GED® test and beyond.

State leadership funds will be used in the development, coordination, and dissemination of training and resources for implementation of college and career readiness standards within innovative educational approaches as described above.