

Idaho Narrative Report 2013-2014

1) 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.

Overview of State Leadership Goals and Processes

The applicable professional-development goals of the Idaho State Plan are as follows:

- Create continuous learning opportunities
- Promote inquiry and dialogue
- Encourage collaboration and team learning
- Support improved learner outcomes

The state office (referred to in this report as “the Division”) determines the process by which these goals will be met, in partnership with local stakeholders. The Division provides financial support, guidance, general coordination of leadership activities, and program monitoring. Local programs ensure staff participation, keep accurate participant records, and conduct evaluations and follow-up which are reported back to the Division. Together, these activities ensure adherence to federal and state policies and guidelines, as well as continued improvement in program quality.

In order to implement the goals of the Idaho State ABE Plan, Idaho training is tiered to accommodate new teachers as well as experienced teachers and staff. Idaho ABE participates in national training opportunities, provides statewide training, and promotes regional training through the use of regional trainers/regional PD Specialists and state trainers to the region.

Training venues vary and may include any of the following: face-to-face, study circles, video conferencing, webinars, and online training. All training activities promote practice, inquiry, and dialogue in support of improving learner outcomes. Over the past few years we have expanded training to include follow-up, observation, and the collection of classroom data to determine the value of training and how it translates into improved student performance.

Leadership funding is provided to regional programs through state-approved professional development plans to compensate both full-time and part-time teachers for training conducted outside of working hours. Programs can also submit additional project requests for special or additional program improvement initiatives.

FY13-14 Leadership Activities in Review

In FY14, AEFLA-funded programs in Idaho provided a total of 78 training opportunities to 226 individuals. Training opportunities ranged from NRS Training for new teachers to *Standards to Practice* training for entire programs. Some individuals participated in multiple Leadership activities.

In anticipation of her pending retirement, the previous ABE Director for Idaho implemented several statewide training initiatives during FY 2012-13, as detailed in our FY12-13 annual report. The ABE director retired in October 2013, and a new ABE Director was hired with a start date of February 2014. In addition to helping our state meet the goals of our state plan, the intensive activities offered in FY12-13 were also intended to help programs maintain a high standard of quality throughout the transition to new leadership. As a result, our programs were in good standing at the opening of FY13-14.

This proactive approach allowed the Division to narrow its Leadership focus for FY13-14 to three specific areas which are detailed below: 1) OCTAE Required training, 2) Standards to Practice and 3) Local Program Quality Improvement projects.

OCTAE –Required Training

OCTAE-required trainings focused on program compliance and policy. These trainings center around the NRS, use of the state’s MIS, as well as intake and assessment processes. Because these trainings are well established, local programs carried them out with without incident. The Division, in partnership with local programs, will be reviewing Idaho’s processes for OCTAE-required training as we prepare for the upcoming WIOA implementation.

Standards to Practice Training

This was a statewide initiative designed to help local programs transition to the new College and Career Readiness Standards in their ABE classes. Funds were made available to programs to carry out these projects locally. Programs had the flexibility to design their training to meet the specific needs for each region, so long as the training provided teaching strategies around basic skills instruction that incorporated the new standards. Specifically, the training needed to help teachers address higher-level thinking skills in their curriculum and lesson-planning. The Division reviewed each project application to ensure it met the established criteria. Four of our six regional programs implemented a *Standards to Practice* project in FY14.

Local Quality Improvement projects

The state supported several local leadership projects which allowed programs to build on their FY12-13 successes and/or address new challenges or program improvement needs. Program improvement projects are generally aligned with areas identified for improvement in annual reports and quarterly desk audits. Some noteworthy local projects are highlighted below.

ITRP – Idaho continued to support the Integrated Transition and Retention Programs (ITRP) in various forms at each of our regional programs. These projects were supported through a combination of AEFLA Leadership funds and our state’s WIA Incentive grant. In FY13-14, all six of our regional programs offered one or more ITRP classes in partnership with the local technical college. These programs allow ABE students to accelerate transition into credit-bearing postsecondary coursework. In FY14-15 and FY15-16, the focus is and will be on expanding these programs as a more permanent part of our service offerings.

ESL Program Improvement – The College of Western Idaho (CWI) used Leadership funds to support improvements at their Boise ESL program (the largest in the state). CWI created both curriculum and improved teaching practices by carefully analyzing student placement and evaluating student CASAS score levels, test form taken, and educational background. The project also incorporated student interviews. The program then standardized their ESL classes and developed curricula that will closely target the class the student is placed in. The project also helped reduce duplication in teacher preparation and addressed gaps in instruction.

EL Civics and Reading – The College of Southern Idaho used Leadership funds to support training for improved outcomes with their EL Civics students. The goal was to provide both new and experienced teachers with strategies to help them integrate reading and EL Civics instruction. The training focused on understanding EL Civics objectives, identifying reading material that met those objectives, and developing effective strategies for presenting reading information. Instructors were required to demonstrate what they learned in their lessons plans and provide additional follow-up responses after the training concluded.

Integrated Workforce Training Pilot Project – North Idaho College used Leadership funds to support a pilot project in partnership with their regional Labor office. Individuals were referred to the program by Labor and participated in 80 hours of basic skills instruction, which also incorporated aspects of team-building, communication, presentations, and group dynamics. Upon successful completion, students/clients would be eligible to participate in an “On the Job Training” opportunity with participating employers.

Monitoring AEFLA Programs

In addition to the activities funded through AEFLA Leadership funds, the Division also ensures continued program improvement through the provision of monitoring and technical assistance. Each year, grantees submit an annual extension application and annual performance report. They also submit quarterly desk audits to the Division. These documents help the Division identify areas in need of improvement and target its technical assistance and site monitoring most effectively.

The Desk Audit includes a random student file review to ensure that student files are being monitored and that the data entered into our MIS matches the information on the written student intake forms. The audit also includes the reporting of post-test data, student performance data, assessment data, and a draw-down of expenditures. If the report indicates a need for improvement, the program is required to address the intervention(s) they plan to implement in order to improve their outcomes in the identified area(s).

2. 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.

In summary, Idaho met all of our performance targets this year except *Entered Post-Secondary*. This section reviews and analyzes our longitudinal data, our EFL outcomes, and our Post-exit outcomes.

FY13-14 Longitudinal Overview

Two long-term trends continue to impact our ABE programs in Idaho. The first is in regards to declining enrollment, and the second is in regards to improved student learning outcomes. The table below illustrates these trends, followed by a more detailed discussion and analysis.

State Fiscal Year/ Federal Program Year	Total Enrollment (12+ hours, as reported on annual report)	Overall Completion Rate (Total % EFL Gains on Table 4)
FY08/PY07	6,953	40%
FY09/PY08	7,535	40%
FY10/PY09	7,429	34%
FY11/PY10	6,675	42%
FY12/PY11	6,329	43%
FY13/PY12	5,632	46%
FY14/PY13	5,086	45%

In FY13-14, Idaho’s enrollment numbers continued to decline. As the table above illustrates, enrollment peaked in FY09 with the advent of the Great Recession. Numbers stayed high in FY10 and began to taper off as the economy recovered. Enrollment in FY11 decreased to below that of our pre-recession levels. Total enrollment has decreased each year since.

To determine if declining enrollment was a recruitment or retention issue, we compared the number of students who completed intake to those who attended at least 12 hours. Our providers were fairly consistent from year to year in the percent of students who they retained for at least 12 hours after intake (77%), and have steadily improved the portion of students they retain long enough for a post-test (62% of NRS-reported). Coupled with steadily increased learning outcomes on Table 4, the data suggests that our programs do well retaining and educating students once they get in the door.

Therefore, our focus going forward will be recruiting new students into the program. We asked each of our programs to examine their recruitment practices and identify reasons why enrollment may have declined. Two common themes emerged. The first was strong competition from proprietary schools, who have the resources to actively recruit adults in our target population. The second was an improved economy resulting in more adults in our target population finding jobs. Adults with jobs, or those with improved job prospects may see less benefit to enrolling in ABE.

Given these challenges, it may not be sufficient to simply increase our outreach efforts. Our programs will need to improve their messaging around the value of ABE services, especially for students who want to go to college and/or want to retain or improve their current employment. As reported in FY12-13, we continue to explore new avenues of collaboration within the technical colleges and with outside agencies in order to recruit populations who may need remedial coursework prior to entering or persisting in post-secondary education and training. These efforts may take several years to affect a significant change in enrollment.

Despite our decreased enrollment, Idaho ABE programs demonstrate a commitment to program quality, as demonstrated by steady improvement in our student learning gains. In FY13-14, 45% of all NRS-reported students demonstrated a skill gain, 11% had not made a gain but were continuing at the end of the year, and 44% left the program prior to demonstrating a skill gain. We post-tested 62% of NRS-reported students, and of those post-tested, 72% demonstrated a gain. Average contact hours for all students was 82, while average contact hours for those who post-tested was 108. Post-testing is not automatically administered when a student reaches 60 hours, but with *no fewer than* 60 hours of instruction and after a review of the student's readiness.

FY 2013-14 EFL Outcomes

Idaho met all of our EFL targets in FY13-14, as demonstrated by the table on the following page. We also exceeded our previous year completion rate in the five yellow-highlighted levels. We attribute our success to the continued focus on instructional quality within our programs.

Although we met the target in our A4 level (Intermediate High), performance fell short of previous years. In order to meet the changing needs of students in this level, many of whom were preparing for the new GED, our programs updated their curricula to align with the new test and the CCR standards. As a result, students did not always have the opportunity to practice skills in the classroom that were measured on the TABE/GAIN assessments.

The curricular misalignment theory is supported by a decline in A4 post-test outcomes on Table 4b (65% compared to 72% the previous year). Additionally, we had a higher attrition rate in this level (50% as compared to 44% the previous year), which supports the theory that more students were leaving prior to post-testing, in order to complete the GED before the 2002 series expired.

Completion Rates for Table 4				
Educational Functioning Level	FY 12 Actual	FY 13 Actual	FY14 Target	FY14 Actual
ABE Beginning Literacy	39%	52%	41%	48%
ABE Beginning Basic	46%	51%	44%	52%
ABE Intermediate Low	43%	46%	43%	48%
ABE Intermediate High	39%	43%	33%	37%
ASE Low	40%	38%	31%	42%
Beginning ESL Literacy	51%	50%	42%	45%
Low Beginning ESL	53%	54%	44%	56%
High Beginning ESL	48%	54%	46%	51%
Low Intermediate ESL	48%	43%	42%	45%
High Intermediate ESL	41%	44%	35%	47%
Advanced ESL	27%	24%	21%	24%

FY13-14 Post-Exit Outcomes

Idaho's targets and actual performance for the Table 5 outcomes are listed in the table below. These outcomes are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Outcome Measure	FY13-14 Approved Target	FY13014 Actual Performance
Enter/Obtain Employment	37%	38% (exceeded)
Retain Employment	50%	75% (exceeded)
HS Diploma/GED	82%	82% (met)
Enter Postsecondary	65%	23% (did not meet)

Entered and Retained Employment

Idaho met both of our Employment targets for FY13-14. Employment outcomes for this report were determined by matching applicable students against employment activity in the four quarters of calendar-year 2013. As our outcomes indicate, ABE students who enter our programs with jobs have a strong likelihood of remaining employed. However, those who enter our program without jobs face significant barriers to finding full-time employment with family-sustaining wages.

While unemployment has dropped steadily in Idaho (4.1% as of December 15, 2014) this figure alone does not tell the entire story of employment in our state. Below is an overview of the barriers to sustainable employment that Idahoans faced in 2012 and 2013. These figures were taken from the December 2013 and January 2014 editions of *Idaho Employment*, a monthly publication of the Idaho Department of Labor:

- **Aging Workforce:** 1 in 4 Idahoans is aged 55 or older. Many Idaho workers are retiring or on the brink of retiring. As a result, a significant portion of Idaho's job market came from replacing workers in existing jobs, rather than a net growth in new jobs.
- **Low Wages:** Idaho's median wage in 2012 (\$30,300) was in the bottom quartile among states. In that same year, both Idaho's per-capita (\$34,481) and average (\$36,136) wage numbers ranked 50th among states and the District of Columbia. Only Mississippi had lower wages for both. In Idaho, 7.7% of jobs are minimum wage, the highest rate in the country. Finally, 24% of non-farm jobs (nearly 1 in 4) are part-time. These factors make it difficult for those seeking full-time, family-sustaining wages to find employment.

- **Quality of Work:** During the recession, our state experienced a significant job-shift, away from higher-paying manufacturing jobs to lower-paying service-sector jobs. Idaho Department of Labor estimates that 24,000 pre-recession jobs in production (paying about \$44,000 a year) were “replaced” (on net) with 14,000 service-sector jobs paying around \$35,00 a year. About 82% of all non-farm jobs in Idaho are in the service sector.

Overall, low wages and stagnant net job-growth led to an outmigration of labor in Idaho in 2012, especially in younger workers. In 2011 the Idaho DMV reported a net in-migration of 4,700 people aged 20-29 year olds (based on surrendered/returned drivers’ licenses). In 2012, the DMV reported a net outmigration of 149 in this age group. This was the first time in two decades Idaho recorded a net out-migration for this age group.

The overall economic picture does not look good for those seeking family-sustaining, full-time work in our state. Our ABE students face fierce competition for these jobs, in addition to the other barriers they face. Additionally, most of Idaho’s major population centers are located along the state’s borders, making it that much easier to seek employment outside of Idaho. (Interior Idaho is primarily wilderness and agricultural lands). Employment data supports the theory that many of our NRS-reported students could be seeking employment outside of the state.

Obtain GED/HSE

Idaho just met our GED outcome at 82%. With the release of the new 2014 series GED test in January, FY13-14 was a big year for GED. As a state, we had a rush of testers in the fall of 2013 hoping to pass before their scores expired. Many of them were successful. Students who may have otherwise put off testing till after January 2014 were encouraged to test before December 2013. Therefore the rush we saw in 2013 was followed by a dearth of testing in 2014. This pattern is typical of years in which a new test series is released.

The 2014 series GED was considerably more difficult than the 2002 series, which was expected. Our local programs have worked diligently to update their curriculum in the A4, A5, and A6 levels to ensure students are adequately prepared. In Idaho, the statewide pass rate for the general population on the 2014 GED is 68% (as of December 23, 2014). This is compared to 59% nationally. We will have a better sense of how our ABE students fare as a sub-set population after a full program year of 2014-series testing. Our GED outcomes for FY14-15 will be especially enlightening, as they will not contain a mixture of test-series.

Post-Secondary Education & Training

Idaho achieved a post-secondary outcome of 23% in FY13-14, which is slightly lower than what we achieved the previous year in FY12-13 (26%). The approved target for FY13-14 was 65%, as compared to an approved target of 30% for FY12-13. The 65% target appears to be based on our actual performance in FY11-12 (64%), before the cohort system was implemented. Given our actual performance in the new cohort system of 26% last year, the FY13-14 target is clearly outside the expected performance range for the new cohort system.

Idaho has a relatively high graduation rate from its K-12 system (83.6% in 2012-13 according to IdahoEdNews.org). However, as a state we struggle with a relatively low rate of high-school graduates who go on to college (45% in 2010 according to NCHEMS Information Center). Given the context of Idaho’s low go-on rate for traditional high-school graduates, it is not surprising that our ABE population has a post-secondary enrollment rate of only 26%. ABE students face many additional obstacles that the general population does not (e.g, low income and language barriers).

We continue to work with our colleges and with the Division of Professional-Technical Education to explore ABE pathways for college entrance and establish bridge programs that assist in retaining students already enrolled in technical training programs. Our ITRP programs show promising results, and ABE students who participate in these programs typically have higher post-secondary enrollment rates.

3) 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.

Executive Order No. 2012-04, issued from the Executive Department of the State of Idaho, establishes the Workforce Development Council for planning and oversight of the state's Workforce Development System, repealing and replacing executive order 2010-02.

The Order states that the Council will be responsible for advising the Governor and the State Board of Education as appropriate and at regular intervals, on the following:

- a) Development of a statewide strategy for workforce development programs which encompasses all workforce programs;
- b) Development of the WIA State Plan;
- c) Development and continuous improvement of services offered under the statewide workforce investment system.
- d) Development of applications for an incentive grant under section 503 of the WIA.

The Council is jointly staffed by a management team of directors or administrators of state agencies that administer workforce development programs, as designated by the Governor. The State ABE Coordinator is a member of this group, and participates in all planning meetings where Council agendas are set. The State ABE Coordinator also attends all quarterly Council meetings. Funding for the Council is provided by the agencies who staff the council. These agencies agree upon appropriate ratios for the allocation of administrative funding.

In FY 2005, the State of Idaho sought a waiver to apply for 20 CFR 661.300(f), which permits a state board to carry out the roles of a local board in a single local area to a statewide regional planning area. The waiver allowed the state to address ETA's strategic priorities and to further reforms envisioned in the Workforce Investment Act. To maximize resources available for service delivery the state continued to use the Workforce Development Council (WDC) as the local workforce board throughout the state.

The ABE program in Idaho is housed with the Division of Professional-Technical Education, which oversees the CTE and Carl Perkins programs for the state, and also provides Workforce Training through the college system. The Division and ABE participate in the state's One Stop initiative. The local ABE programs coordinate with their regional one-stop partners and Adult Basic Education is fully represented in all press release materials, both print and web-based.

The One-Stop Management Team provides a data cross-match to local programs and includes calculations based on shared clients. In addition, many site-based program managers serve on quick response teams (Commerce and Labor, technical colleges, and ABE) during plant closures to assist workers facing lay-offs and displacement.

4) 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.

EL Civics Program Overview

Four of the six regional ABE programs submitted proposals for EL Civics funding, and all of Idaho's EL Civics funding was awarded to direct service activity. State data shows very few adults in this target population reside in the northern part of the state; therefore, our northern programs do not typically request EL Civics funding. In FY13-14, English Literacy and Civics instruction was provided to 894 students (compared to 1,109 in FY12-13 and 933 in FY 2010-11). The decline in EL Civics numbers is in line with the enrollment decline we experienced overall in FY13-14.

The EL Civics programs across the state provide a good balance of English language instruction and civics instruction. The general rate of demonstrated skill gains for our EL Civics students this year was notably higher than for the general ABE/ESL population (49% for EL Civics compared to 45% for the overall program). Our programs report that EL Civics students are generally more motivated to attend class regularly and complete each block of instruction.

Idaho has two primary EL Civics populations. As a predominantly agricultural state, we have a large migrant population. The Boise metro area is also home to a thriving refugee population. Our providers partner with a number of community organizations and agencies to streamline both ESL and EL Civics services. These partners include the state's Migrant Council, public and nonprofit Refugee service groups, as well as other nonprofit organizations such as Catholic Charities.

Highlights from the Year

The College of Southern Idaho currently operates the largest EL Civics program in the state (579 students this year). In FY13-14, the college implemented an intensive instructional training around Reading in the EL Civics classroom. This training is described in more detail in Section 1 of this report. College of Southern Idaho also reported that three of their EL Civics students achieved citizenship this year.

The College of Western Idaho, which operates in the greater Boise metro area, serves the largest population of refugees in the state. In April of 2014, the US Department of Education/OCTAE selected the Idaho Refugee Community Plan (Neighbors United) to be one of five networks to participate in a new initiative: Networks for Integrating New Americans (NINA). The ABE program at College of Western Idaho was identified as a core AELFA-funded partner in this project, helping the Boise network get selected through a rigorous competitive national application process. The goal of this national project is to identify and enhance local efforts to adopt a "collective impact" approach to helping immigrants achieve linguistic, economic, and civic integration within local communities. We are excited that the College will be participating in this prestigious work and look forward to following this project as it progresses.

5) 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-based or credit-based models.

The issuance of GED testing and High School Equivalency Certificates is the joint responsibility of the Idaho State Board of Education and the Idaho Department of Education. These activities are governed by *Idaho Administrative Code, IDAPA 08.02.01.650: General Education Development Tests/Idaho High School Equivalency Certificate*.

This code authorizes the use of two complimentary tests for determining high-school equivalency. The primary test, which all students must pass, is the GED. The second test only applies to pre-2014 GED completers. This is a state-specific American Government test. More information about the use of this test is described below.

Idaho code states that the “primary objective of the State Board of Education is to have all students complete their formal education and graduate from high school. However, students who drop out of school and believe it is in their best interest to take the General Education Development (GED) test may do so under the [conditions described by this policy], and, upon successful completion of all GED requirements may apply for an Idaho High School Equivalency Certificate.”

The eligibility criteria for issuing an “Idaho High School Equivalency Certificate” (HSEC) differ depending on which GED test series a student passed. Idaho’s high-school graduation requirements dictate that students take a minimum of one semester American Government. The GED tests prior to 2014 did not require sufficient knowledge of American Government to meet Idaho’s standard. With the update to the 2014 test, this gap has been addressed.

For those who tested in the 2014 GED series, an official transcript of passing GED scores is sufficient to qualify and apply for an HSEC. For students who took the 2002 or earlier series, they must provide a transcript of passing GED scores as well as proof that they completed a course in American Government, including study of the U.S. Constitution and principles of state and local government.

The American Government requirement can be met by resident study in high school or college, correspondence study from an accredited university, DANTEs, or by successfully passing the Idaho-issued American Government test furnished by the testing center.

While the HSEC is an option for all qualifying students, most students in Idaho find that the GED alone is sufficient to meet their needs. Most colleges and employers in Idaho only require that students provide a GED transcript with passing scores. The HSE Certificate is typically not required, and most students choose not to complete the extra steps and cost (\$10 fee) to obtain it.

6) Describe your state’s progress toward implementation of adult education college and career readiness 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 timeline 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.

Statewide adoption of the CCR Standards is Idaho’s long-term goal, as this will provide the greatest benefit for our students and programs under WIOA, the new 2014 GED, and other national changes on the horizon. However, Idaho faces several barriers to full CCRS implementation at this time. Our primary barrier is one of capacity. Idaho only has one staff person (the ABE Director) at the state level to coordinate and oversee such an implementation project. The program administrators from each of the six regional providers do contribute, but are limited in their ability to do so, given their other responsibilities. Because of our limited capacity, we must undertake these changes incrementally.

Additionally, Idaho underwent a change of leadership in FY13-14. The previous ABE director retired in October 2013 and the new director did not start until February 2014. The previous director did not set a comprehensive vision or timeline for CCRS implementation prior her departure. As a result, the process for implementation has been left to the discretion of local programs. The Division has encouraged our local programs to begin moving towards the CCR Standards but has not mandated how or when this should be done. We have provided resources such as technical assistance, training and Leadership funds to help programs begin this transition. The *Standards in Practice* project as outlined in Section 1 was part of this effort.

As a result, our local providers are at various stages of implementation. Most of our programs have focused their alignment efforts around levels A4-A6, as these students derive the most immediate benefit from the more rigorous standards. Several programs have convened Curriculum Committees to review their current curriculum and begin the process of updating it.

As our state prepares for WIOA implementation, this may also be a good time to set a cohesive vision for how CCR Standards will be implemented in our state. Such a vision would help ensure that all programs receive consistent technical assistance and guidance and that all programs are held accountable to the same expectations. This becomes especially important in a Performance-Based Funding environment like Idaho.

Idaho did consider applying for the Standards in Action project offered by OCTAE, but given the recent staff changes at the state level, was not in a position to do so in December. However, such opportunities would be of great interest in the future.