

Montana Narrative Report 2013-14

State Leadership Funds: Describe the major activities supported with State Leadership funds 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.

Major Activities: Facilitating Integration of State Plan

Educational Quality Conference: The title of this year's fall conference was *Educational Quality*, as a planning team consisting of program directors and teachers determined there was a need to present a wide variety of plenary and breakout sessions to provide the foundation for job-embedded professional development in the upcoming year to enhance educational quality. Additionally, the team wanted speakers to motivate and validate ABE staff. A total of 86 adult educators attended the conference. Governor Steve Bullock opened the conference, which set a tone for ABE celebration that was sustained throughout the conference. The morning of day one was a plenary session focused on transition to the new high school equivalency assessment, the HiSET, so all program staff could learn every aspect of the HiSET. Registration to classroom instructional strategies were covered by representatives from HiSET. This prepared all ABE staff to be able to counsel and support students during the transition period from GED to HiSET. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction was the luncheon keynote who continued the message put forth by the Governor; adult education is critical to the state's education system, as low-skilled adults must be prepared for tomorrow's workforce. This keynote address was the lead into an afternoon of presentations on exploring emerging technologies in the adult classroom and looking at student retention through previous successes. Throughout the morning of day two presenters provided information on additional resources for enhancing educational quality. Program participants were allowed to select from concurrent breakout sessions: understanding the components of numeracy; teaching to the reading standards, integrating hands-on activities for the ESOL students, ensuring data quality, or integrating HiSET preparation in the correctional setting. The keynote for lunch on day two was the Deputy Commissioner of Higher Education who spoke to the importance of ABE and postsecondary collaboration. This keynote was followed by presentations from two ABE programs that have successfully implemented bridge programs to support career pathways. At the conclusion of the conference participants left knowing that all statewide professional development for the upcoming year would be follow-up activities to support breakout and plenary session information. The combination of exposure to innovative strategies and hearing speeches from state officials created a synergy and eagerness to continue the conversations throughout the program year.

Communities of Practice: Technology in the ABE Classroom (Standards-based): Educational Quality Conference participants who wanted to continue the emerging technologies discussion enrolled in an online, six-week asynchronous discussion group focused on implementing technology tools in the classroom. This Communities of Practice (COP) was part of the LINCS Literacy and Communication system. The discussion group was led by Tim Ponder, LINCS Regional Director. Each week he presented tools for discussion, and a Montana instructor followed Tim's posting with examples of how to tie each technology tool to one or more of the reading standards. Participants were encouraged to peruse and implement the tool and then share their results, or ask questions, via weekly posts. Forty-two ABE teachers and directors signed up for this discussion group. A lively, professional conversation emerged, and the six-week conversation was extended to nine weeks. Online COP's show great promise for future professional development; it connected teachers to technology, the standards, and engaging curriculum without disrupting classroom instruction. Participants valued to collaboration and ability to join in the discussion according to their schedule.

Adult Numeracy Institute (ANI) (Standards-based): Educational Quality Conference participants who wanted to continue to explore the components of numeracy signed up to attend three ANI trainings that spanned the program

year. The institutes were led by Lynda Ginsburg, Ph. D. Senior Research Associated from Rutgers University. The ANI was sponsored by the LINC Regional Professional Development Center to increase the teachers' and state's capacity to provide high quality, standards-based math instruction. Each of the three institutes gave the teachers an opportunity to engage in hands-on activities designed to integrate into their classroom instruction immediately after the institute. Between institutes the teachers collected student work samples and meet with regional teacher partners to discuss and reflect on the activities and student success. Twenty-eight teachers attended the institutes, and at the conclusion of the trainings they were able to articulate three significant outcomes. First, they increased and deepened their pedagogical content knowledge. Secondly, they increased their repertoire of instructional skills. Lastly, they increased their knowledge and use of the standards. The ability to learn with peers, apply the strategies introduced, and share on lessons learned has successfully strengthened the math instruction in Montana ABE classroom.

Program Data Analysis: The emphasis on data analysis continues to be a statewide initiative for all ABE programs. To support local program staff on how to effectively manage and monitor data, the state renewed its contract with a local program director who facilitated follow-up data activities with local program staff after last year's conference. This contractor continually demonstrates expertise and a keen desire for our state to achieve NRS performance goals and outcomes. This year the contractor took a two-phase approach to help local programs continue to implement data-driven program improvement. The first phase of the technical assistance was launched at the Educational Quality Conference with a research-based presentation on adult student persistence. The contractor then handed out a template for each program that showed data on their student persistence as compared to the statewide data and programs of similar size. Along with the data template, staff from each program was given a Persistence Data Review Worksheet to be completed and submitted to the state after the conference. The worksheet required respondents to reflect on previous practice, data on reportable students, data on non-reportable students, and post testing data. Lastly, the respondents were asked to review the persistence research and comment on concepts and strategies that may be helpful in positively impacting their student's retention. The contractor reviewed all worksheets and then scheduled conference calls for programs of similar size (small, medium, and large) to talk about research, relevant data, and the worksheet responses. Conference call participants were then asked to share successes and challenges with implementation of their work plan. A list of promising practices was the result of the staff sharing successful aspects of their work plan. All ABE staff conveyed that they benefited from this data conversation, and they requested that the state continue to give more time for programs of similar size to have time to collaborate. Phase II of the data analysis for the year focused on the reporting of cohort groups rather than individual student goals. The contractor reviewed the cohort data for FY 2103 and developed a cohort report for each program to provide technical assistance to all program staff to assist them in understanding the cohort data and achieving the NRS negotiated targets. As in Phase I, the contractor scheduled conference calls for programs of similar size to discuss what they had learned about the cohort data. The calls occurred in the spring of 2014. Through this contractor, the data analysis conversation was sustained and personalized.

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

Data Quality Team: In order to maintain ongoing professional dialogue between ABE teachers and state staff, a Data Quality Team consisting of four teachers and state staff (state director, programmer, and IT support staff) organized in 2012 continues to work collaboratively. All enhancements and updates to the student information system are vetted by this team prior to integration into the system. This team has become the liaison between state staff and the field. The teacher representatives are able to bring the practitioner perspective to all of the data work and system development; the creation of this team has had a profound impact on the working relationship between the state and local program staff. All work was completed via conference calls and emails. Working together as one entity has systemized ABE, and data discussions have become part of our infrastructure, not reactive conversations.

Standards-in-Action Reading and Math Updates: The state continued to support updates to the Montana Standards for Adult Basic Education and supporting documents. See response to question 6 for details of this ongoing work.

Program Monitoring (Site Visits): The importance of integrity to data entry at the local level has increased in significance since the adoption of a performance-based funding formula, so the state employed a site-monitor to conduct an on-site review of every program. A majority of the monitor's time was spent on a thorough review of the local data. She assessed the following components of the local data system: attendance records, proper release forms, testing information, student goals, default class attendance, and career counseling. The monitor also conducted an exit interview with each local director to share findings of the data audit that would be included in her final report. She also spent time with them going over program improvement. The directors were asked to provide information on several areas program work. They responded to questions regarding current success with student transitions, integration of the Work Plan, intake protocol, interagency collaboration, and marketing. The employment of a monitor will be continued in the next program year, as the state is able to provide follow-up technical assistance when necessary. Also, the process maintains confidence in the systemic approach to entering data. This confidence is necessary for support of performance-based funding.

Directors' Meeting: The eighth annual directors' meeting was held on April 7th and 8th in Helena, Montana. The agenda of the meeting was developed to provide updates and invite conversation on state initiatives and to assist directors in aligning program instruction to the new high school equivalency test, the HiSET. The first portion of the meeting was with state ABE directors devoted to the following agenda items: funding allocations, student information system enhancements, teacher credentialing, distance learning, and student transition. The remainder of the meeting included state HiSET examiners and representatives from HiSET. The purpose of including these people was to ensure there was coordination between ABE and HiSET examiners to promote a smooth transition for students and to ensure everyone has a clear understanding of the relevant components of the new test. The HiSET representatives hosted a student panel, so everyone would have an opportunity to hear about the new test from the test takers' perspective. HiSET topics covered included: computer-based administration, test registration, test content, student test data, and preparation material. The directors' meetings are essential to provide technical assistance for directors to all align all program activities to support state initiatives. Open discussion at these meetings leads to program improvement, as the directors use networking opportunities and the focused, relevant information presented to begin strategic planning for the upcoming program year.

TABE Training: The state required TABE training was held on May 21, 2014 for 32 participants. The state has supported the train-the-trainer model for TABE training for several years, and due to a large number of new trainers attending the meeting, the state contacted Mike Johnson from CBT/ McGraw-Hill to provide the initial training to officially certify a TABE trainer at each site. Mike covered all pertinent aspects of the TABE; test security, development, and administration. Following the training, participants are required to annually submit a list of all teachers they train to the state. This documentation validates that tests are being administered similarly across the programs, which ensures student test data is valid and reliable.

Distance Learning: A state goal is to support distance learning for programs that have incorporated distance delivery into their instructional practice in the previous years. State support included the purchase of Missouri Learns (with limited Skills Tutor seats). In spite of the challenges that distance learning poses, 23 students completed more than 51% percent of his/her instructional time using the distance learning curriculum for a total of 842 student learning hours. Thirty-five percent of the distance learning students made an educational gain. In the seven participating programs, the distance learning students also achieved core goals; five entered employment, four retained employment, eleven obtained high school equivalency, and ten entered postsecondary education or training. This data validates that distance learning is helping some students in meeting their core goals and making educational gains. Program staff in the eastern half of the state participated in the Rural Services Education Grant in 2007-08, and this appears to have given them the skill sets required to sustain distance learning, as almost all of the students enrolled in distance learning are from two programs in the eastern part to the state. It is incumbent upon the state to continue to support distance learning in these programs and to continue to provide technical assistance for teachers interested in developing a successful distance learning model, so the state contracted with an ABE teacher to enroll in the NRS Online Course on Distance Learning in the spring of 2014. The state asked the contractor to present a white paper at the conclusion of the course that would cover the following; available distance learning programs, benefits and challenges for facilitated and non-facilitated delivery, student persistence, curriculum approval process, and assessment of the future needs. The state will continue to encourage distance learning in ABE, and the contractor's report will be available for a distance learning task force. Their review that will likely result in assessment policy revisions.

Montana LINCS: MTLINCS continues to be the virtual vehicle for supporting statewide initiatives and keeping all adult education teachers on the cutting edge of state and national activities. The state renewed its contract with a state ABE teacher, who has worked on the MTLINCS Web site since it began as a collaborative effort between the Northwest Consortium and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). The original site was developed to provide a variety of teacher/student resources. MTLINCS has evolved from a teacher/student resource center to become the linkage for ongoing professional development tied to the state initiatives. The home page for MTLINCS now features a star with a link to the current program improvement initiatives (L2A, distance learning, data quality, ESL, Career Pathways and SIA). All state activities related to each strand are posted. In minutes, readers can access Power Points, videos, and relevant state documents from trainings and meetings. The importance of MTLINCS cannot be emphasized enough; it is our virtual faculty lounge promoting research-based, ongoing professional development. Additionally, a weekly newsletter is sent to all ABE teachers, directors, and volunteers providing links to new information on each component of the star. Upon opening a link, recipients note a snippet of research on the selected strand with additional links to further resources and Web sites. All information in the weekly newsletter is from the LINCS Community of Practice to provide a condensed version of the national conversation on an ongoing basis. The use of this site is steadily increasing. Below is summary of MT LINCS stats for this year.

SUMMARY OF MTLINCS STATS: 12/31/13 TO 12/11/14

Observations

- Even though the annual stats report for 2014 was run two weeks later than the 2013 report, growth in all areas may indicate the growth of more online usage for professional development than face-to-face delivery. This may be due to a variety of factors.
- The number of visitors who have accessed resources more than once has doubled which may indicate the relevancy of MTLINCS.
- The average growth for all links below is 156%. Only one area had less than 70% growth: the review of the Adult College Completion research.

General Summary of Number of Visits: Yellow Highlighted Area Shows New Pages

Page	2011	2012	2013	2014	Growth/Loss for 2011-2012	Growth/Loss for 2012-2013	Growth/Loss for 2013-2014
Calendar	1260	880	557	1145	-30%	-37%	106%
Career Pathways				612			
Career Pathways Resource	45	211	291	701	368%	38%	141%
Conference 2014				124			
Content Standards (Condensed Versions)			179	348			94%
COP				403			
Data	481	302	248	507	-37%	-18%	104%
Data Resources	326	203	225	514	-38%	11%	128%
Distance Learning	689278	256	266	570	-----	4%	114%
ELA Standards			40	293			633%
Email Archive	605	507	475	1034	-16%	4%	118%
EQ 2013			141	381			170%
ESL	630	369	540	1040	-41%	46%	93%
HISSET Resources			355	2640			644%
L2A	124	369	322	924	197%	-15%	187%
L2A Resources	86	360	331	675	318%	-8%	104%
MT Facts & Statistics			352	693			97%
MTLINCS Home			2405	5857			144%
OPI ABLE	602	524	740	1417	-13%	41%	91%
OPI ABLE Update	347	415	428	790	205%	3%	85%
Policies	104	323	277	673	210%	-14%	143%
Research Home			491	930			89%
• Adult College Completion			274	339			24%
• Improving Adult Literacy Instruction			273	921			237%
• Student Persistence			185	373			102%
Reading Research	61	222	247	486	264%	11%	97%
SIA	92	318	370	697	246%	16%	88%
SIA Resources	58	159	230	441	174%	45%	92%
Student Highlights	52	232	344	669	346%	48%	94%
Teacher/Tutor			412	713			73%
WIOA				230			

Shop Talks: Monthly *Montana Shop Talks*, modeled after the *Shop Talks* conducted by OVAE for the state directors of adult education, were held throughout the program year. Regularly scheduled talks involving the state staff and all program directors were used to disseminate information, promote instructional leadership, and provide technical assistance.

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

Activities Specifically Related to Career Pathways

PEP Talk Curriculum: In 2009, the ABE collaborated with the Departments of Labor and the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education to develop a career planning tool for adults. The planning tool provided adult students with a series of self-paced modules that helped them create their Personal Employment Plan (PEP) that could be shared electronically across the agencies. The original curriculum was designed so adults could go through it on their own or with the assistance of staff at one of the partner agencies. Over time, we discovered the adults who benefited the most from the PEP experience were those who completed PEP Talk in a classroom setting. To fully

integrate career planning into the adult education classroom, the state ABE director and the Department of Labor PEP developer will launch a new PEP curriculum in the fall of 2014; the new curriculum is designed for adult to complete all career planning steps in a series of teacher-led lessons. A series of training webinars were designed to prepare teachers for instruction and site administration. The Department of Labor will be tracking data from each program, so we can assess the impact of the new curriculum.

Career Pathways Weekly Updates in MTLINCS: In the Montana LINCS Weekly Newsletter, there is a weekly update on career pathways resources or activities. The information is divided into state and national pathways sections. This is for readers to be able to quickly link to Montana specific information, and when necessary link into the broader national conversation. This will be the hub for all the upcoming *Moving Career Pathways Forward Initiative*.

Moving Career Pathways Forward Initiative: Montana was one of 14 states selected to work on this 2014-16 project. The purpose of this project is to give Montana ABE the support it needs to further integrate adult education in the broader career pathways system development at the state and local levels. Access to coaches who are assisting the state in leveraging and enhancing existing resources and tools will result in the essential components of state career pathway system being in place across the state agencies; alignment of pathway services for adults will smoothly transition low-skilled adults to employment and positively support economic development. The state has made this the major state initiative for 2014-2016. The state is supporting a pathways team from each program to participate in all regional and statewide pathways meetings and trainings. The state ABE is also facilitating interagency team meetings that are working to attain the statewide systemic approach to the career pathways.

Showcasing Student Bridge Programs at State 2013 Educational Quality Conference: The presentations by program staff, who are successfully implementing bridge programs, were very significant in advancing the ABE career pathway system. From a panel of ABE teachers, postsecondary faculty, and developmental education teachers participants learned how they had collaborated to ramp up ABE instruction to prepare students for entry into postsecondary without a need for remedial classes. Following the panel, the individual ABE program staff and their postsecondary partners shared the resources they had developed to support a bridge program. All material was posted after the conference, so other ABE staff could have immediate access to the materials. The success of this work led to an invitation from the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education to one of the ABE program directors to present at the Montana Board of Regents meeting in December 2013. This presentation was the first time ABE has had a presence at a Board of Regents meeting; and it provided a venue for further conversation between ABE and postsecondary education.

Performance Data Analyses: 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.

The state is in year six of using a Web-based data system to gain longitudinal trend data and support a systemic approach for collecting and measuring student data. The data system provides instructors and directors' clear understanding of what students need in their learning plan and what they need to do to help students make academic gains and achieve core goals. This has promoted changes in instructional practice, intake, and goal setting. The chart below shows the annual percentage change for students' educational progress.

<u>Entering EFL</u>	<u>PY 12-13</u>	<u>PY 13-14</u>	<u>Annual Change</u>
Beg Lit	43%	48%	+5%
Beg Basic	37%	40%	+3%
Int Low	37%	37%	0%
Int High	30%	28%	-2%
ASE Low	25%	24%	-1%

Montana's ESL population remains very small at 159 students, and the number of students in each functioning level varies significantly from year-to-year. The list of proactive steps to improve education gains for ABE students was the same for the ESOL teachers, and again the positive impact is evident. The ESL teachers have formed a very collaborative network committed to student gains; their recent efforts have contributed to substantial increases in student educational gains.

<u>Entering EFL</u>	<u>PY 12-13</u>	<u>PY 13-14</u>	<u>Annual Change</u>
Beg Lit	54%	62%	+07%
Low	65%	71%	+06%
Beg High	69%	67%	-02%
Int Low	63%	72%	+09%
Int High	75%	61%	-14%
Advanced	61%	73%	+12%

The state will continue to provide multiple forms of technical assistance to all programs to ensure student education outcomes continue to improve.

The outcomes in the core areas are listed in the table below. This is the second year of tracking student outcomes with cohort designation. The state has created a cohort report that can be used to help program staff identify students' potential cohort designation and plan instruction and goal setting accordingly. Additionally, the state will continue to support professional development to help instructors more effectively prepare students to be workforce/postsecondary ready. Transitioning students beyond earning their high school equivalency diploma will continue to be a focus for the next program year. Outcome data demonstrates the state initiatives on college and career readiness standards and student career pathways are positively impacting instructional delivery.

<u>Outcomes</u>	<u>PY-12-13</u>	<u>PY 13-4-14</u>	<u>Annual Change</u>
Entered Employment	35%	50%	+15%
Retained Employment	50%	68%	+18%
HSE	87%	90%	+03%
Post-Secondary (current)	39%	47%	+16%
Post-Secondary (prior)	68%	46%	-24%

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 an estimate of the AEFLA funds being used to support activities and services through the One-Stop delivery system.

State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB): The state Superintendent of Public Instruction appointed the state ABE director as full voting member of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) in 2012. As a member of the Board, the state director is automatically given a subcommittee assignment. The director is serving on the Life-Long Learning Committee. This committee meets the day prior to the Board meeting and is responsible for making

recommendations to Board in all areas addressing the needs of an educated workforce. The state ABE program director was also appointed by the governor in January 2008 to serve on the Youth Council, an ad hoc committee of the SWIB. The Youth Council is responsible for coordinating and researching the most current work force information related to youth education and employment for the purpose of making recommendations to the SWIB. The Youth Council holds quarterly meetings designed to augment the vision and mission of the SWIB. In March 2010, the state ABE director was selected as vice-chair of the Council. The state director continued to serve as vice-chair for the 2013 program year. Montana does not have Local Workforce Investment Boards, but all local ABE program directors serve on their County Management Teams, which focus on regional economic development. Although only one ABE program is located in a one-stop delivery system, the remaining programs have established strong relationships with the one-stops in their community. Due to the small population in all Montana communities, all adult education programs are able to operate as though they are part of a one-stop delivery system. Current partnerships sustain formal and informal communication among the agencies. One-stop delivery is embraced conceptually in Montana and is in action on a daily basis. The state does not contribute any funds to support activities and services through the One-Stop delivery system.

Montana Career Information System (MCIS) Task Force: The state ABE director was selected by the State Commissioner of Labor to serve on an interagency task force charged with reviewing the state's career information system web site to determine what enhancements and additional features are needed to sustain this site as the career planning tool to be used by all state educational and workforce programs. The task force developed a strategic plan to garner information from stakeholders and compare the MCIS to career planning tools in other states. The findings from this task force will be presented to the State Commissioner and agency bureau chiefs, who have agreed to use the report to make decisions on future MCIS developments and promotion of the system.

PEP Talk: Between 2008-10 program years, the Department of Labor, ABE, and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education utilized their Workforce Incentive grant to develop PEP Talk, a common intake activity to assist adults in developing a Personal Employment Plan (PEP), or career pathway, to seamlessly transition adults between agencies as client/student needs evolve. Since the Incentive Grant funds were one-time only, the team produced a sustainable, no-cost program. All materials continue to be available online; this includes workbooks, brochures, and training modules. The continuance of the PEP Talk collaboration does not rely on additional funding, and with each successive year an increasing number of students are completing their PEP Talk portfolio. Enabling unemployed and underemployed adults to gain the skills necessary to attain self-sufficiency and move up the economic ladder was identified as the collaborative goal for this grant, and PEP Talk is now the common language across the agencies. Each month the Department of Labor sends monthly data to the state ABE director showing the number of ABE students creating PEP Talk portfolios, the beginning of the career planning process. This year there were 2,295 logins and 395 new portfolios created at ABE centers. Montana agencies are working collaboratively to strengthen our career pathway system, and PEP Talk is the lynch pin for all interagency planning.

TANF Eligible Support Grant: The 2011 legislature approved an amendment to the budget for DPHHS to include grant dollars to support ABE programs in creating ways to expand service to TANF eligible individuals during the summer months in 2012 and 2013. Five ABE programs were awarded grants to expand services to this targeted population. The awards ranged from \$10,000 to \$30,000 for each summer. The proposals submitted were unique and meet the needs of each area. During the 2013 legislative season, the grant was increased to \$400,000, and there are now seven ABE programs providing services to TANF eligible clients. Ultimately this grant is building a strong bridge between DPHHS and ABE, and it is challenging the ABE culture to think about serving students in different locations through technology integration and innovative strategies. The ultimate goal of this grant is to unite ABE and TANF programs to more effectively transition TANF eligible clients to the workforce and a career pathway.

GEMS: The Montana ABE dashboard was completed and launched in 2013. Through this web site ABE is part of the state's longitudinal data system and showcases ABE student transition to workforce and postsecondary.

Montana College Access Network (MCAN): The state director was selected to represent the state education agency on the Montana MCAN workgroup. The presence of ABE on this board is helping the group modify outreach activities that go beyond the secondary school audience. Beginning in 2014, the group added low-skilled and under-educated adults as a target population to be included in marketing material and college awareness activities.

English Literacy/Civics (EL/C) Program Describe the activities and services supported with EL/C funds, including the number of programs receiving EL/C grants and an estimate of the number of adult learners served.
(Only states receiving EL/C funds should respond to question #4).

BEST Plus Training: The state is committed to designating a portion of EL/Civics dollars to comply with the state policy's assessment requirement. Each year designated BEST Plus teachers must participate in refresher assessment training. In order to effectively use state resources and staff time, BEST Plus training was held in conjunction with the ESOL teachers' state meeting. Six instructors participated, and the training prepared participants for a perfect transition into the meeting the next day. They used the BEST Plus training to contrast and compare presentations on other approved ESOL assessments. To ensure readily available assessment training the state has paid for a Montana ESOL teacher to complete the BEST Plus training and serve as our state trainer.

Professional Development: Five programs have been awarded the EL/Civics grant. Each year the number of students served with this grant remains small and relatively constant. This program year 159 students were served. Since the expiration of the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) Network Grant that spanned July 2008-June 2010, the ABE director has signed contracts with the state CAELA team to continue to build on the professional development model put in place with the CAELA grant. This year the state supported the team in presenting an ESOL day-and-a-half training. Fourteen teachers attended, and on day one the leadership team presented a variety of projects and strategies for the instructors to adapt in their own classrooms. The agenda also included a representative from CBT McGraw-Hill sharing a review of the components of TABE Clas-E, as well as responding to questions that had been sent to him prior to the meeting. The questions were from teachers who had piloted TABE Clas-E over the school year. The pilot teachers presented summaries of their pilot data and made assessment recommendations to the group. At the conclusion the TABE Clas-E discussion, the teachers responded to a state survey on how they would like to proceed with ESOL assessment. The state will take these responses into consideration in the next program year. On day two of the meeting, the teachers revisited the wiki web site that was introduced to them at the meeting last year. The team leaders shared how they would maintain the ESOL professional dialogue by posting monthly professional readings and student activities on the wiki. The team leaders then gave the ESOL teachers the opportunity to expand their use of technology, as each teacher set up a Skype account that will be used for monthly professional development meetings in 2014-15. Our Montana ESOL leaders are engaged in continually promoting a thoughtful professional development process that will enhance instructors' abilities to meet the needs of ESOL students and sustain a statewide ESOL system that can meet the demands of this population.

Secondary School Credentials 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-based or credit-based methods.

The state issues high school equivalency diplomas based on the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) which are adopted by the Board of Public Education. In 2013 the Board repealed all language from Chapter 66 Subchapter 1 referencing GED. GED was replaced with High School Equivalency (HSE); state diplomas are based on 10.66.117: **ISSUANCE OF EQUIVALENCY DIPLOMAS AND OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS** 1) All HSE diplomas are issued by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Official transcripts and diplomas will be awarded to those who

successfully complete the HSE test. Candidates will have access to test results through an official database. The Office of Public Instruction will maintain HSE records permanently. HiSET is the assessment used to issue Montana high school equivalency diplomas.

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 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.

A major initiative for the Montana adult basic education program in 2008-2009 was the development of content standards. With a team of exemplary adult education instructors, the standards were completed in September 2009. The adoption of these standards positioned the state for the guidance and technical assistance provided by the Standards-in-Action (SIA) Project. State participation in the SIA spanned two years. The SIA provided pilot teams the opportunity to revise the standards, explore innovation strategies, develop state resources, and form a cadre of teachers who sustained professional dialogue using technology blended with face-to-face meetings. The result of the SIA project was a true commitment to standards-based instruction and going to capacity. Moving to statewide capacity was accomplished through a two-pronged approach; a statewide launch followed by on site professional development. The ABE fall conference in 2010 was devoted to bringing relevant segments of the SIA Innovations to all programs through a one-and-a-half day hands-on workshop that included unpacking, identifying cognitive levels, developing sample activities, aligning resources, and ratcheting up lessons. Following the conference, pilot team teachers formed a Technical Assistance Traveling Team (TATT) that traveled across the state to give a one day workshop to assist all teachers with the integration of the SIA resources and the development of engaging standards-based lessons. The TATTs created a wiki web site that was used to sustain the professional development for the remainder of the program year. The theme for the 2011 fall conference built on the conference from the prior year with two major plenary sessions dedicated to SIA implementation. The TATTs continued to provide assistance to teachers through a second round of regional meetings and the math standards wiki web site. This model of state support for the math standards continued through 2012-13. Also in 2012, the state utilized the SIA innovations to review the reading standards. Four distinguished reading teachers volunteered to serve on the reading standards team to review and revise the standards, unpack the standards, develop sample activities, align resources, and ratchet-up lessons. The reading standards project culminated in a plenary and breakout session at the 2013 fall conference. To ensure teachers had a clear understanding of the shifts in the reading standards and the instructional strategies needed to teach to the new standards, the state contracted with Susan Pimentel, from Standards Work, Inc., to provide a day training that followed the fall conference. Susan’s presentation gave the teachers specific ideas, resources, and activities to integrate into their instructional practice to help students prepare for new assessments aligned to the common core. The teachers experienced first-hand the key advances in the standards that are critical to preparing students for postsecondary success. The release of the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards for Adult Education in April 2013, prompted the math and writing teams to complete a cross walk between the Montana Adult Education Standards and the CCR standards. This work was completed in the fall of 2013. As the Montana Adult Education Standards have evolved, teachers are kept on the cutting-edge through our continuous professional development. The state requests that all professional development providers align their trainings with the content standards, as all instructional strategies must support the state adopted standards. The expectation for professional development is that all teachers return to their classrooms with new standards-based techniques to improve student learning. The standards initiatives and numerous volunteer hours confirm Montana commitment to accountability, professionalism, and content standards.