**North Dakota**

Adult Education and Family Literacy

2013-2014 Narrative Report

***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.***

The North Dakota Adult Education State Office is proud to represent seventeen local Adult Learning Centers and staff who work diligently and with passion to give adults a second chance for success through additional education and services. State Leadership funds are used to implement the goals of the North Dakota State Plan which align with the strategic goals of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, as well as the North Dakota Governor’s Workforce Development Council’s state plan and biennial strategic goals.

The State Office continues to craft, implement and evaluate its professional development (PD) plan to better prepare for and respond to the changes and opportunities the pending WIA reauthorization (specifically college and career readiness) and the 2014 GED series. State Leadership funds support the work of the Professional Development Advisory Council; Adult Learning Center staff representing instruction, administration, ESL/ELCivics, displaced homemaker program and technology. This Council, representing the ‘front line’ of adult education, works in concert with the State Office to design the PD plan utilizing multiple delivery formats. The annual PD plan is the result of the PD needs assessment, conference evaluations, Performance Indicators and local program monitoring reports. The PD plan is reviewed and revised annually to accurately reflect both state and local needs and appropriate follow up. The PD calendar is developed each summer to allow staff to adequately plan for attendance and includes multiple formats of webinars, online book studies, conference calls, quadrant trainings, local ALC trainings, and statewide trainings. Topics include GED instructional topic / content areas, assessment, national trends in adult education, ESL citizenship programs, common core state standards, college and career readiness, digital literacy, NRS and LACES, and understanding the reluctant adult learner. Additionally, we are working on a field study to better understand the career readiness features of the booming oil and energy industries and how best to prepare students for those related careers.

As part of the PD delivery plan, the State Office continues to support quadrant trainings; the goal is to provide a structured forum for ALC’s to meet and discuss similar topics. The state was divided into 4 quadrants – all staff from each quadrant met on the same day with the same agenda. This was of particular value to those small ALC’s who only have one or two staff; the opportunity to network and discuss like topics was helpful according to the evaluations. Building on this success, the State Office then arranged for quadrants 1/2 and 3/4 to meet, also on the same day with a common agenda and then quadrants 1/3 and 2/4 met. With the relational foundation in place, the PD plan builds upon these critical relationships, geographical and industry sector similarities.

The State Director was involved in various issues, conversations and legislation preparation for the 2015 legislative session January – April 2015. There was agency initiated legislation related to adult education funding increase. The State Director will monitor and participate accordingly to support partner legislation as it pertains to adult education (i.e. Job Services, Career & Technical Education, University Systems, and Department of Commerce).

North Dakota has been using the LACES student data management program for just over three years. Training continues to be offered via monthly/quarterly site audits, group webinars and conference calls. Training is regularly provided to all Adult Learning Centers on NRS tables and data.

As in past years, in collaboration with the North Dakota Association for Lifelong Learning (NDALL), State Leadership provided support and funds for the annual Adult Education Fall Conference held September 17 - 19, 2014. The Conference was attended by 105 participants from both the Adult Learning Centers and alternative high schools. Conference evaluations remain highly positive. Preconference sessions on college and career readiness and ESL program development were well attended.

The State Office continues to monitor all Adult Learning Centers on a two - three year schedule; annually if there has been a change in administration, previous monitoring compliance findings or upon request. A self assessment process is used which allows ALCs to evaluate their programs prior to the site visit. Seven (7) ALCs were monitored during the fall of 2014 and three (3) are scheduled for spring 2015.

State staff provide ongoing technical assistance, resources and professional development to all ALCs and staff as needed throughout the year on a variety of related topics. Leadership funds support a conference call every other month with all ALC Directors.

The Director continues to participate in multiple meetings and subgroups as it relates to the State Longitudinal Data System. Improvements to the system are routinely discussed as are the growing needs to access information for data driven decision making.

The State Adult Education Director attended the OVAE Director meeting in May 2014 and the WIOA meeting in November 2014. The Director also participates in the monthly Shop Talk OVAE conference calls.

All ALC’s submitted grant applications for the PY 14-15; each application was reviewed, approved and budgets finalized. New ALC Director training was provided in September; subsequent follow up conference calls each month on varying topics continue through February 2015.

The grants management website was again reviewed, revised and updated to be more functional for ALC’s to access their budget information, request for funds and submit quarterly and final narratives, as well as the application each spring using this online tool.

State Office activities related to the implementation of career pathways have included the Director’s participation in multiple participation in webinars, books and conversations to cement an understanding of career pathways; a review of the college and career readiness standards; preparation of a PowerPoint on career pathways for the ALC directors and staff; quadrant meeting agenda’s devoted to career pathway assessments and resources; a developed timeline to formally incorporate standards into instruction, program management, and monitoring, as well as a series of PD related activities for statewide staff.

***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 Office works with the Governor’s Workforce Development Council and local ALC programs in preparation of reviewing existing measures and determination of new Performance measures for annual negotiations with OVAE. This same group reviews each quarterly status of our Performance Indicators; conversations generally focus on priorities of quality service provisions, access and student outcomes and work-based learning. The State Office reviews and analyzes Performance Indicators, as well as individual ALC LACES data to further assess all measures and strategies are shared for student success on a constant basis. The incorporation of a dashboard feature in the LACES system is an easy tool for program staff and directors to use to regularly gauge their performance and focus interventions accordingly.

North Dakota’s current economy continues to drive our educational goals. As of November 2014, our state unemployment rate was 2.9%. The oil and energy industries continue to drive the economic growth, but all industry sectors are seeing increases in demand and employment. The need for employees continues to be ‘front page’ news and there continues to be a strong demand for employees across the state. As a result, potential students are currently working rather than attending school and as such, statewide adult education enrollment is down. We have focused our attention at the state and local offices on meeting with local and statewide human resource professionals to influence hiring requirements in hopes of directing students to the adult learning centers to increase skill sets for employment retention, and secure their GED for optimal employment hiring. As reported in previous annual reports, employers such as McDonalds continue to offering $18/hour for front line workers; Wal-Mart offers a signing bonus as a recruiting tool in addition to paying cashiers $23/hr. The oil and energy related job opportunities prevalent in the western part of the state have impacted the state in a positive way; there is a current demand for 60,000 workers and a projected demand for over 111,000 workers through 2018 (JSND 2014). Revenues from the positive job conditions and industry are on track to exceed $2 billion in state surplus revenues for 2014.

While the above traits lend itself to a strong economic platform, it also creates difficulty in effective service delivery. Given fluid factors beyond our control, it is becoming more difficult to continually improve upon great results:

* It is difficult to mandate attendance to reach the 60 hour rule for post-testing with an audience of voluntary students who come and go at will;
* Projecting progress one year in advance when economic and social factors can change quickly make the process of Performance Indicators difficult;
* Many rural sites serve small numbers of students. When one or two students don’t remain in the program long enough to be post tested, no progress is recorded. Consequently, the percentage drops significantly and the absence of educational gain is then reflected in lower Indicators.

As a result of the diligent work of the state’s Longitudinal Data System and participation of the DPI Adult Education staff, the capabilities for highly effective and efficient data matching has become more evident. This process is complimented at the local program level with personal survey and follow up to compensate for data not collected for certain employment sectors (self employment, contract work, small business).

***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.***

North Dakota is a single service area; as a result, all eligible agencies continue to work collaboratively and effectively in meeting common goals and outcomes. Through the Workforce Development Council (quarterly meetings) and its sub**-**committees (monthly meetings), all partners have opportunities to share program needs, successes, data, and reporting.

The State Office continues to coordinate program services with partner agencies at the state and local level. Key state partnerships are maintained through the Governor’s Workforce Development Council and sub-committees to include the Youth Development Council, Workforce Intelligence Council and Governor’s Workforce Summit Executive Planning Committee.

There is a strong collaboration with state partners: Job Service, Department of Human Services, Workforce Safety & Insurance, Career & Technical Education, University Systems, Department of Commerce and local education agencies. The State Director of Adult Education is a Governor appointed member of the North Dakota Workforce Development Council, actively participates in many related committees representing the Department as well as the Title II programs.

Local ALCs, which are funded by Title II funds, maintain a strong working relationship with all local WIA partner agencies. This includes Job Services, Human Services, education, higher education, Career & Technical Centers, Job Corp, business and government. All ALC’s have an advisory committee which meet at least three times each program year to coordinate student services, network and partner on community and regional projects.

The State does not contribute Title II funds to support activities and services through the one-stop delivery system; however, we do share non-cash resources at the state and local level.

***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*.**

North Dakota receives the minimum allocation ($60,000) for ELCivics. As in past years, Lutheran Social Services, a statewide social services ministry that provides lifespan care to individuals, families and communities, supports New American adults and families relocation to North Dakota. Three (3) local programs are funded which have the largest concentration of New American (ESL) students; additionally, all ALCs but three, report serving New Americans. Both funded and non-funded programs have effectively implemented the following activities:

1. Provided citizenship classes.
2. Civics instruction for all ESL students.
3. Developed civics curriculum for entry**-**level language classes.
4. Field trips to historic, community and cultural sites as well as integrating daily living activities into instruction.

ND ALCs have long since recognized that educational services in isolation will not advance any ESL student’s opportunities alone; comprehensive services in the areas of housing, healthcare, transportation, daycare, employment, religion, and social connectiveness are critical to full community inclusion and quality of life. An example can be illustrated by this scenario as one of many collaboratives across the state: For the third consecutive year, the Fargo ALC worked with the Fargo Lions Club and several local ophthalmologists to initiate a free vision clinic. Approximately 112 ESL and GED students were screened this past year; 44 students received reading glasses, 21 were referred for more services and, approximately 11 were prescribed treatment/medication for conditions not currently under diagnosis or treatment.

Historically, New Americans residing in ND opted to live and work in the four largest communities; however, their comfort and desire for employment have resulted in relocation into all areas of the state and as a result, all ALC’s have provided ESL services. Our assessment toolkit now includes both the TABE CLAS-E and BEST Plus for ESL assessments. The NDALL State Fall Conference includes a conference strand for ESL specific sessions and was attended by over 40 educators. North Dakota joined the Dakota TESL – a partnership with South Dakota to address ESL needs of both public schools and adult education students.

During the reporting year, ND adult education programs served only 361 ESL students with 12 or more hours, a decrease from the past reporting year.

***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 North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Adult Education unit, has the legislative authority to grant/award a high school equivalency diploma to recipients over the age of 16 who successfully complete the GED with a passing score. The Department does not recognize other high school equivalent exams at this time, and the state century code specifies the GED.

***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.***

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction will formally adopt the College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards at the conclusion of the 2015 legislative session, slated for April 2015, unless the legislative assembly formally rejects the Common Core State Standards. If not, the State Superintendent will adopt the CCR for adult education at that time. If the CCSS are rejected, the Department and Adult Education unit will determine “plan B” – another set of standards representative of college and career readiness and a respective timeframe.

However, the State Office has reviewed the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education; has disseminated them to all local programs; has had two webinars to introduce the topic, relevancy and integration into instruction; has offered two NDALL Conference sessions (a one day pre-conference session and a concurrent session) on implementation of CCR standards. State Leadership funds were used to support the speakers.

Additionally, the State Director has also engaged in conversation with the WIOA partners about standard inclusion of CCR standards into the unified plan requirement and the implications for responsibilities of partners.