Colorado is pleased to submit the following narrative report, detailing activities and observed outcomes for fiscal year 2015 (July 1st, 2014-June 30th, 2015) for the adult education state-administered formula grant program.

Part 1 | State Leadership Funds

The narrative below discusses the key activities and work of the Colorado Office of Adult Education Initiatives (AEI) supported by state leadership funds in fiscal year 2015. Activities highlighted include: career pathways work, the work of the Adult Basic Education Teaching and Learning Center, support to local programs and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) transition planning.

Activities Related to the Implementation of Career Pathways

As Colorado prepares to fully transition to WIOA, the state AEI staff continues to deepen its own knowledge of the Colorado talent development system, seeks to actively engage in dialogue at the local, regional and statewide levels, and prioritizes opportunities to build partnerships to best use public dollars to support the educational and workforce needs of Coloradoans.

Adult education and family literacy representatives have participated in focus groups to guide the work under WIOA, including identification of gaps and generation of solutions for service integration. Additionally, adult education and family literacy representatives have been and continue to be engaged in work groups focused on partner alignment, service alignment, state legislative policy, and implementation. Further, adult education and family literacy representatives have been welcomed as members of local workforce development boards. This engagement has initiated dialogue at the local level about the talent development system utilization and function. The purpose of these activities is to ensure that adult education providers will expand and improve the current system of delivering adult education and family literacy services through evidence-based practices and continuous improvement in order to:

- Build career pathways providing adults with basic and secondary education to enable them to earn a high school equivalency diploma, transition into postsecondary education or training, and/or gain or advance in employment in order to achieve self-sufficiency; and
- Help parents and guardians build sufficient skills to become full partners in the educational development of their children.

Adult Basic Education Training and Learning Center at Colorado State University (ABE-TLC at CSU)

The following narrative highlights key activities of the ABE-TLC, which was in its second year in 2014-15 and is fully funded by state leadership fund resources.

- **Online and Hybrid Professional Learning**
  A major focus in FY14-15 was online and hybrid learning to promote instructor access to professional learning opportunities and digital literacy. Haiku learning management system was used to organize groups and collaborate across programs. For many teachers and program staff, this was their first exposure to learning in an online environment. Online courses organized cohesive learning activities for both standardized assessment training and the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) Institute. Additionally, a statewide online math community of practice was convened to explore and vet NROC's open educational resources for college and career readiness. Finally, the director of the Adult Basic Education Training and Learning Center (ABE-TLC) served as the Chair of the NAEPDC's State Staff Work Group and coordinated development of online professional development courses for state staff. Because the Adult Basic Education Training and

Learning Center (ABE-TLC) is situated at Colorado State University, some of the aforementioned professional learning opportunities were offered as courses for graduate credit.

- **Standardized Assessment Training**
  Assessment training was revised to address challenges in implementation that were identified during assessment monitoring visits. In past years, programs sent test administrators to an all-day event to participate in training. A team of assessment trainers determined that solely attending a workshop was not sufficient: there were misunderstandings in policy and local application that could potentially be mitigated with a redesign. The new, multi-faceted process was facilitated through an online class. First, participants attended a policy webinar that was offered live twice and recorded for later viewing to ensure all had access to current rules and procedures. After viewing the webinar, each participant answered discussion questions within the online class to discuss key learnings and changes in practice. Workshops in CASAS, TABE and BEST Plus were then offered in five locations across the state. For those needing to recertify in CASAS, the online module, CASAS BIT, at CASAS.org was offered as an option. After training and administering tests locally, each participant completed an application survey online to reinforce proper assessment procedures. The following table, Table 1.1, gives an overview of participation:

Table 1.1

Event	Number of Participants
Policy Webinars (live only)	155
Online discussions	166
BEST Plus Administrator	12
BEST Plus Recertification	13
CASAS Implementation	30
CASAS Beyond Implementation	11
Online CASAS	38
TABE Implementation	64
Application survey	168

Feedback on this process was collected via an online survey. Eighty participants responded. 75% of respondents found the policy webinar helpful, though only 36% found the online discussion questions useful to their learning. Additionally, 90% indicated that the assessment workshop (face-to-face or online) was beneficial. 59% thought the final application survey helped them learn the content. This feedback informed continual improvement in training delivery.

Support and Assistance to Local Programs
As has been the practice in previous years, the state office continued to use multiple methods to share information with local program directors about policies and activities impacting local management of the AEFLA grant. During fiscal year 2015, primary communication tools used to update and support local programs included:

- A quarterly e-newsletter, "AEFL Notes" to keep programs informed about grants fiscal requirements, state and federal legislation and policy changes and other relevant grant management information;
- A listserv for use by the AEI team as well as local programs to share information, announcements, job postings etc;
- A technical assistance webpage;

- Technical assistance webinars to provided targeted support. For instance in February, a webinar was conducted to coach local programs through the updated state data collection and reporting database, CAESAR;
- Regular virtual Office Hours (via webinar) to share critical information and guidance with programs; and
- In-person communication and support such as that provided at the annual Directors' Meeting.

Planning for WIOA Transition: Standards of Quality Crosswalk

In previous years, programs were asked to comment on their progress toward an identified Standard of Quality (SoQ) in their year-end annual performance report. In preparation for the transition to WIOA, the AEI team prepared a cross walk between WIOA strategies and previously identified standards of quality for each program. As part of the fiscal year 2015 reporting requirements, local programs were asked to report on their progress to date on the indicators associated with WIOA strategies. While AEI recognizes that all programs may have not been fully implementing the new strategies, the AEI staff was seeking to collect qualitative information to help inform technical assistance and professional development in the coming fiscal year. In some cases, local programs had already begun forward-thinking, planning and implementing transition strategies during fiscal year 2015 to support a smooth transition into fiscal year 2016 and WIOA guidelines.

Part 2 | Performance Data Analyses

This section describes findings from the evaluation of Colorado's performance data[1] as well as details planned efforts to improve core indicator performance in future years.

Population Served

In fiscal year 2015, Colorado's AFELA supported 9,230 adult learners across 34 grantees. Of those learners, 56% were enrolled in English language acquisition programs; 35% were in adult basic education programs; and 9% participated in adult secondary education programs. The following shows the racial and ethnic composition of learners served based on learners' self-reports:

63% Hispanic or Latino	19% White	8% Asian or Pacific Islander
7% Black or African American	2% American Indian or Alaskan Native	1% Two or more races

Participants served statewide varied in age as well:

6.4% 16-19 years old	16.2% 19-24 years old	58.3% 25-44 years old
15.4% 45-59 years old	3.7% 60 years and older	

Progress toward Core Indicators of Performance

In fiscal year 2015, Colorado did not meet the eleven performance measures set by the U.S. Department of Education for educational gains. As table 2.1 shows below, educational level completion performance declined at nine levels, increased at one level and remained unchanged at one level. Overall level completion was 29% (n=2,668), down from 31% in FY14.

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[1]Note: Colorado is still working with partner agencies to obtain updated postsecondary and employment outcome data. These data will be provided to OCTAE by February 1st, 2016, per a granted extension.

Table 2.1 Core Indicator Performance FY12-FY15

Educational Level	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	± FY14 to FY15	FY15 Target	± FY15 Actual vs. Target	Trend
ABE Beginning Literacy	51%	52%	45%	**34%**	-11%	54%	-20%	↓
ABE Beginning Basic Education	42%	41%	39%	**37%**	-2%	42%	-5%	↓
ABE Intermediate Low	39%	36%	38%	**34%**	-4%	39%	-5%	↓
ABE Intermediate High	33%	31%	31%	**29%**	-2%	32%	-3%	↓
ASE Low	26%	27%	24%	**23%**	-1%	32%	-9%	↓
ESL Beginning Literacy	44%	38%	30%	**29%**	-1%	44%	-15%	↓
ESL Low Beginning	57%	52%	51%	**46%**	-5%	55%	-9%	↓
ESL High Beginning	49%	44%	41%	**35%**	-6%	45%	-10%	↓
ESL Low Intermediate	37%	32%	30%	**30%**	0	36%	-6%	↔
ESL High Intermediate	35%	29%	29%	**28%**	-1%	32%	-4%	↓
ESL Advanced	19%	11%	11%	**12%**	+1%	20%	-8%	↑

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below show the core indicator performance for the last four fiscal years. As indicated in these two graphs, Colorado has experienced largely downward trending performance. This year's targets most closely resemble the actual performance Colorado saw in FY12. The subsequent section details plans and strategies being implemented to influence more positive statewide outcomes.

Figure 2.1
ESL Program Performance from FY12-FY15
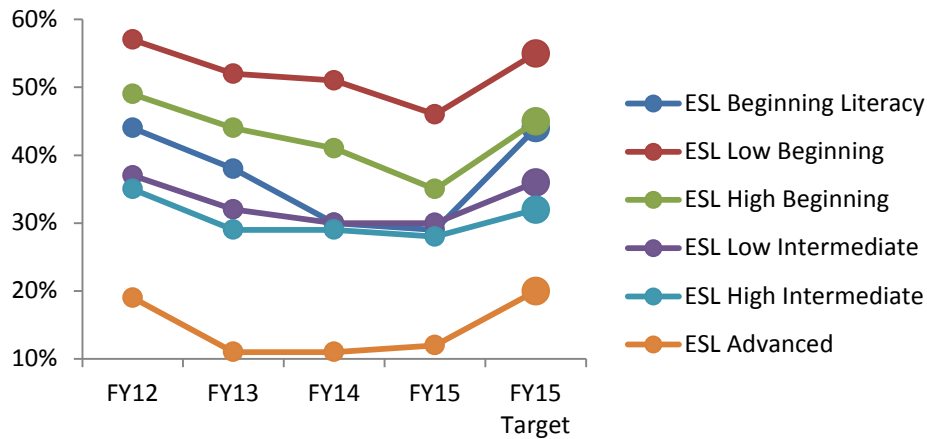
Figure 2.2
ABE/ASE Program Performance from FY12-FY15
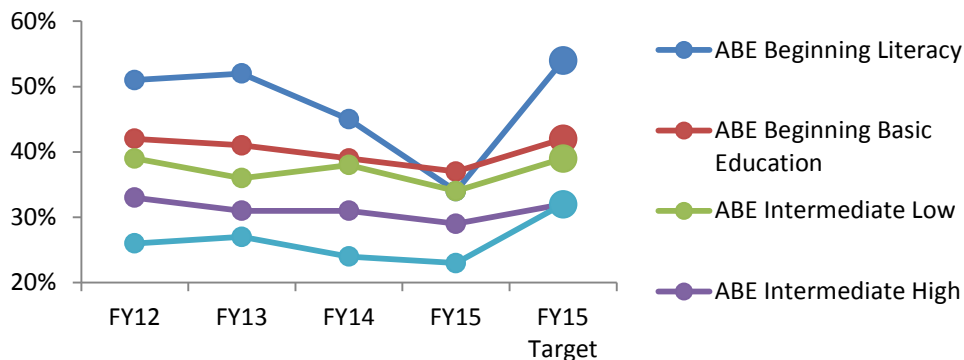
It should be noted that while the state as a whole has not met core indicator performance targets, there are local programs that have been successful in meeting and exceeding targets. The state office acknowledges significant variation in programs across the state: many smaller, rural and/or geographically isolated programs have unique challenges recruiting instructional staff and retaining learners, for instance. When local programs were asked to reflect on their local performance results, some key themes emerged. Staff turnover and student retention have been named as challenges for some local programs, limiting their ability to meet performance targets. There are programs, especially in rural parts of the state that are losing adult learners due to the ebb and flow of industry. For example, in some communities, the oil and gas industry had previously brought high numbers of learners into town. As the oil and gas industry experiences changes, adult learners are leaving and seeking work elsewhere. Recruitment and retention of high quality instructors also continues to be identified as a point of challenge for multiple programs. In the upcoming fiscal year, the state office has started to evaluate this and facilitate discussion around instructor licensure and authorization to better understand the needs, realities and constraints that may be contributing to instructor turnover.

Even with the numerous challenges local programs are facing, the state office has observed local programs that are flourishing, even in the face of limited resources and capacity. The best and promising practices these programs are demonstrating include leveraging technology, partnering with other adult education programs or community agencies to expand service reach, or even finding ways to reduce barriers learners face in getting to classes, such as providing bus passes. In the future, the state office sees an opportunity to create intentional space for sharing of best practices and highlighting local program successes in an effort to scale-up and replicate strategies that generate positive gains and outcomes for learners.

Efforts to Improve Core Indicator Outcomes in the Coming Fiscal year
In looking ahead to the changes WIOA would introduce, the state office underwent a strategic restructure to ensure that the AEI team reflected the needed expertise and capacity to successfully implement the new legislation. As part of this restructure, the state office experienced a significant staff turnover between fiscal years 2014 and 2015. Another element of the reorganization included significant changes to the state's service and support delivery model. This has included updating the state's monitoring and compliance expectations for local programs as well as reviewing and revising, as needed, state policy and procedures.

The state office has a commitment to high performance and is working to address barriers local programs may face. The state office has already begun implementing new strategies in fiscal year 2015-2016 designed to better support programs as they work toward the core indicator performance targets. Some of these strategies include:
- A revamped staffing model with designated regional specialists as contact persons for all programs to ensure timely assistance and dedicated, consistent support;
- New workgroups comprised of program stakeholders to evaluate current policies and procedures;
- Intentional opportunities (in person and electronically) for programs to share best and promising practices with each other; and
- More frequent and intentional in-person contact with local programs.

Many of these strategies have been implemented with the goal of creating a paradigm shift for local programs. The state approach is to continue strengthening communication and professional

relationships with local programs, in an effort to increase opportunities to learn about emerging best practices, troubleshoot issues, identify continuous improvement strategies and progress monitor.

Part 3 | Integration with other Programs

The narrative in part 3 describes Colorado's work to integrate AEFLA activities and to advance career pathway systems.

Efforts to Advance Career Pathways

Colorado has been very intentional about its work to advance career pathways and integrate adult education with other partners to strengthen these pathways and systems. One primary way this work is currently being done is through a state-level grant program where career pathways programming has been piloted. Established in 2014, the Adult Education and Literacy Grant Program at the Colorado Department of Education provides state funds for public and private nonprofit adult education and literacy programs who will serve as lead agencies and fiscal agents for Adult Workforce Partnerships. Workforce Development Partnerships are a collaboration that assists adults in attaining basic literacy and numeracy skills leading to additional skill acquisition, postsecondary credentials, and employment. At a minimum, a workforce development partnership must include a local education provider, at least one postsecondary education or training provider, and at least one workforce development provider.

The goal of this state-level work is twofold. First, this work allows for the investment in and support of additional programs beyond the federally funded grantees. By supporting additional service providers Colorado serves a larger share of the state's eligible adult population and ensures that more adults can reach and complete the next level of education and training. These training gains lead to better employment outcomes and ultimately economic self-sufficiency for more low-income, low-literacy adults. Secondly, the intention of this work is to deliver targeted technical assistance for grantees as they navigate and implement career pathways. As part of this model, the state office is providing coaching to service providers as they pilot tools that allow programs to frame what career pathways look like for their programs, communities and learners. The best practices and successful strategies that emerge from this work will be shared with programs supported by federal AEFLA dollars. The intention is to scale up the use of tools, coaching models and technical assistance to support federally funded adult education programs in Colorado as they transition to WIOA and increase their focus on career pathways. A professional development opportunity has been planned for Spring 2016 to begin this work.

Representation on Workforce Investment Boards

The structure of Colorado's Workforce Development Council has been intentionally designed to include the education voice. Council bylaws require that its membership include a voting position for the Colorado Commissioner of Education, representing both p-12 and adult education. Additionally, the AEI Office provided guidance and support to aid local programs' selection of eligible providers to serve on respective local workforce development boards. In the event that local programs were unable to identify a representative, the AEI Office prepared the following criteria as suggestions for local boards for selecting one eligible adult education and literacy representative:

- Alignment of program activities with regional workforce needs;
- Service of individuals who have low levels of literacy skills or are English language learners;
- Service of individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities;
- Delivery of instruction based on rigorous research;

- Effective use of technology;
- Activities promoting integrated education and training; and
- Coordination with education, training, employers, and social service resources to promote career pathways.

Provision of Services through the One-Stop System

At this point in time, Colorado has not finalized the specific amount of AEFLA funds to be used to support activities and provision of services through the one-stop delivery system. As AEI works with its state-level agency partners, Colorado is looking to identify the best way to support a robust and sustainable One-Stop delivery system. The state intends to develop and deliver training and professional development for system staff to help promote the "no wrong door" philosophy that is to be made available for jobseekers.

Part 4 | English Literacy/Civics Program

The English Literacy and Civics (EL/Civics) allocation continues to be an important part of Colorado's service delivery model to support the needs of Colorado's adult learners. This section describes the activities and services supported with these dollars during fiscal year 2015.

Newcomers and longer-term immigrant populations struggle with language and basic skills barriers as they become acquainted with living in Colorado communities in their new country. These barriers make English Literacy and Civics programs vital to the service of these Coloradans. Through EL/Civics grants, 14 of 35 AEFLA-funded programs were able to provide services to 1,182 learners in Colorado during fiscal year 2015. These grantees focused on four state-prescribed areas (US and state history, political systems, economics, and civic participation) to guide learners towards community engagement and citizenship.

Historically, Colorado AEFLA programs integrated civic activities into all levels of ESL. However, EL/Civic programs effectively blend civics and literacy skills by using core curriculum and materials that help learners understand the American system through field trips, guest speakers, role plays, workshops, mock voting and elections. EL/Civics teachers have effectively blended core curricula for English language and literacy development by utilizing core texts and supplemental materials containing civics content. Programs report using the following for core texts: *Step Forward, Future, Future U.S. Citizens, On Common Ground,* or *Ventures*. In addition to print resources, teachers incorporated online resources from various websites with content focused on real-world application. Learners accessed OCTAE's USA Learns online resource both at their adult education programs and at home. Many programs continued to increase learners' knowledge of the American political system through teaching the three branches of government and "Know Your Rights" legal clinics using *Our Courts,* a nonprofit program run by judges and lawyers who provide workshops on local, state and federal court systems.

While the main focus on helping learners understand the American system of government remained, EL/Civics programs also held some notable local events this year in related areas. For example:

- Within Metro Denver, a visible increase in the number of people moving to the area has created the gentrification of traditionally lower income areas of the city. Therefore, low income families who live in the I-70 corridor were invited to participate in decision-making committees as a way to become involved in their changing communities. These committees have been instrumental in helping design new programs, support services, and living accommodations;

- Programs' learners were invited to meet with state representatives and senators on special field trips to the State Capitol;

- EL/Civics learners across Colorado were interested in understanding the new requirements of a 2014 state law allowing undocumented immigrants to receive Colorado driver licenses. Learners discovered that licenses can be obtained regardless of immigration status and the class shared information with the community; and

- Finally, one program developed an adult education, student English mentor program and encouraged learners to volunteer in the community to help newcomers learn English. Many of these learners were at higher levels of English

Part 5 | Secondary School Credentials

The subsequent narrative explains Colorado's current policy for awarding a secondary school equivalency diploma as well as pending changes to this process.

GED Testing

During fiscal year 2015, Colorado continued to use the General Educational Development (GED) test as the sole assessment tool to determine eligibility for and award High School Equivalency (HSE) Diplomas. The Colorado GED Testing Program provides oversight and resources directly to GED Testing Centers in the state of Colorado.

Exploring Alternative Vendors to Award Secondary School Equivalencies

In the coming year, the tool and process used to award secondary school credentials may change. At a recent Colorado State Board of Education meeting, the Board directed Colorado Department of Education staff to enter into contract negotiations with vendors of three high school equivalency examinations including: GED, HiSET (The High School Equivalency Test), and TASC (Test Assessing Secondary Completion). Until the successful conclusion of negotiations and the settlement of any final contracts, a process not to exceed 90 days, Colorado will continue to recognize the GED examination as the only high school equivalency examination contracted to be provided in Colorado.

Part 6 | Adult Education Standards

Colorado continues to advance its commitment to implementing college and career readiness standards for adult education and this section details the related work and initial outcomes in fiscal year 2015.

College and Career Readiness in FY 2014-15

In 2013, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) formally adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) as the validated set of academic standards for adult education in Colorado. In addition to the formal adoption, the CDE had also declared a goal of shifting all AEFLA-funded providers to the CCR Standards-based Instruction by July 1, 2017. In pursuit of this goal, the Office of Adult Education Initiatives (AEI) has continued to invest a significant amount of state leadership resources toward the statewide adoption and implementation of the College and Career Readiness Standards.

Building on success from the previous year's eight-month professional development initiative, "Making the Shifts to GED 2014," Colorado's work continued with a workshop connecting the CCRS to NRS levels and the state's emerging WIOA vision during regional annual Directors' Meetings at the start of the fiscal year. This workshop concluded with a request for all programs to participate in a forthcoming standards-integration professional learning opportunity.

In support of this effort, the Director of the Adult Basic Education Training and Learning Center was tasked with designing, facilitating, and implementing an intensive CCRS professional learning model for AEFLA-funded programs across the state. A total of thirteen programs participated in the 9 month professional development opportunity entitled, *The CCRS Institute*. Training content included materials that were adapted from StandardsWorks' CCR Standards Implementation Institute in Phoenix, AZ.

Over 50 instructional leaders from across the state engaged in a curriculum focused on understanding the key shifts (both English Language Arts and Math) found in the CCRS and the application of these shifts at the local program level. Because research identifies that change in teacher practice happens when activities are local and collaborative, the model consisted of face-to-face regional workshops that were enhanced with the following activities:
- An online class that included select readings, assignments, and opportunities for asynchronous discussions with other participants;
- Instructional coaching once per month for 30 minutes for each participant;
- Local teams met in professional learning communities once per month to focus on the five phases of the Design Thinking process to develop a standards-based instruction project; and
- Four interim webinars to continue working with standards and to allow groups to share their progress across the state with other groups.
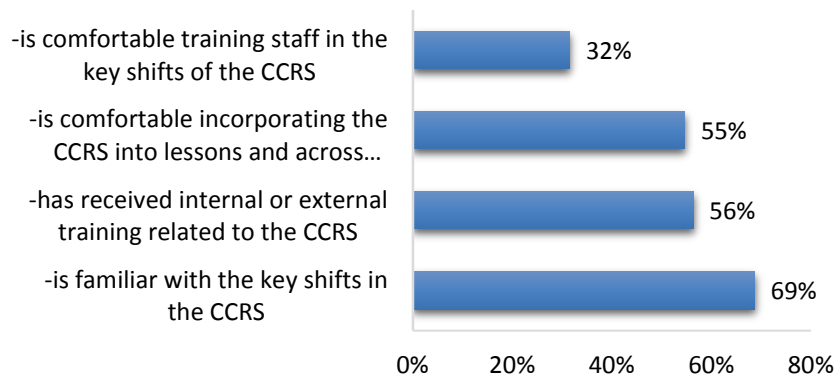
The CCRS Institute culminated with a webinar for disseminating final projects and lessons learned from the program. After completion, participants were awarded 90 professional development hours and were eligible for 6 graduate-level credits from Colorado State University.

Another key advance in support of the statewide adoption of the CCRS by 2017 was Colorado's acceptance into the College and Career Readiness Standards-in-Action initiative. Participation in this initiative has solidified a diverse implementation team tasked with crafting the strategies used in the scale-up of the CCRS across the state. Colorado's team had the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. in March to learn about advanced standards implementation tools. Upon returning, the team worked with StandardsWork coaches monthly to develop and carry-out a pilot of the advanced tools. The coaches have been active in supporting the team as it worked to draft a sustainability plan. As a result of this work, Colorado now has a four-year sustainability plan that articulates all of the essential elements to successful implementation. It has become the Colorado's blueprint for statewide adoption.

In addition, an ESL Standards Advisory group was established to evaluate existing ESL adult learning standards across the country and determine the best course of action for Colorado. The group consisted of program directors, instructors, and state staff.
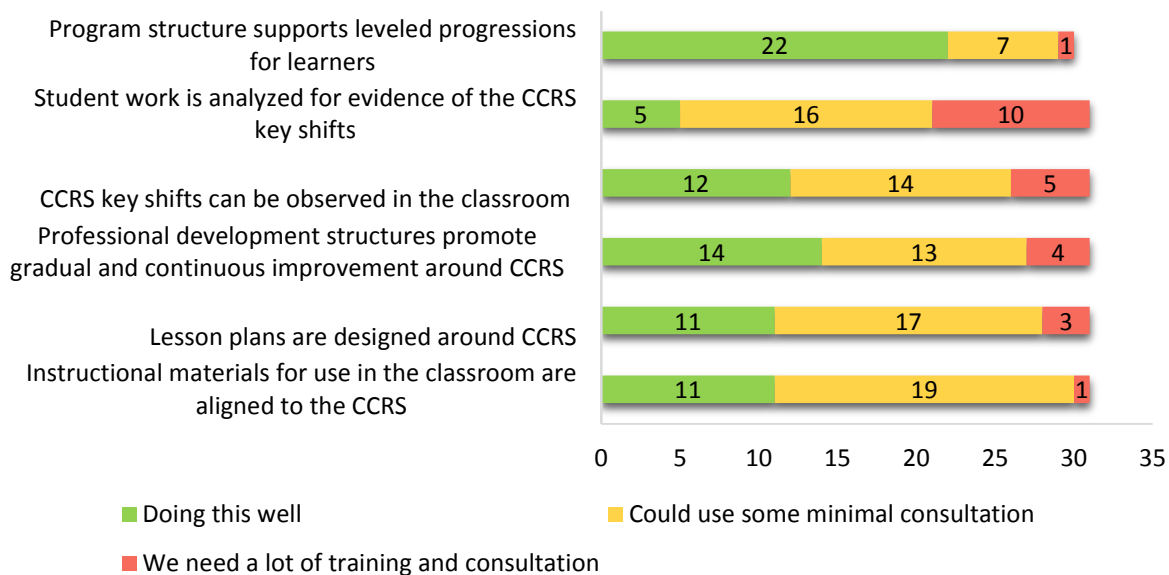
All 34 AEFLA funded programs were asked to participate in a statewide needs assessment and 33 responded. This survey was developed to determine the present depth and scope of statewide implementation. As reflected in figure 6.1, the state collected self-reported data from local programs to determine the depth of CCRS adoption. Programs were asked to identify what percentage of their staff members understand various components of successful CCRS integration.

Figure 6.1
Depth of CCRS Integration

-is comfortable training staff in the key shifts of the CCRS	32%
-is comfortable incorporating the CCRS into lessons and across…	55%
-has received internal or external training related to the CCRS	56%
-is familiar with the key shifts in the CCRS	69%

In addition to assessing local programs' current depth of CCRS integration, the survey also asked respondents to identify areas for future professional development and training. Figure 6.2 best aligns with the innovations provided by StandardsWork and Colorado's action plan for providing targeted technical assistance. As presented in figure 6.2 below, red indicates the programs with a high need for technical assistance while yellow indicates the program with a targeted need. These self-reported data have been included in the sustainability plan and will inform technical assistance in the coming year.

Figure 6.2 Statewide Need for Professional Development

	Doing this well	Could use some minimal consultation	We need a lot of training and consultation
Program structure supports leveled progressions for learners	22	7	1
Student work is analyzed for evidence of the CCRS key shifts	5	16	10
CCRS key shifts can be observed in the classroom	12	14	5
Professional development structures promote gradual and continuous improvement around CCRS	14	13	4
Lesson plans are designed around CCRS	11	17	3
Instructional materials for use in the classroom are aligned to the CCRS	11	19	1

■ Doing this well   ■ Could use some minimal consultation
■ We need a lot of training and consultation

Conclusion
During fiscal year 2015, Colorado had the opportunity to serve over 9,000 adult learners. The state office looks forward to the upcoming year and full implementation of WIOA. The AEI office has started and will continue to assess its work to ensure the needed capacity and strategies are in place to support local programs and improve experiences and outcomes for learners statewide.