**Arkansas Narrative Report 2015-16**

**1. State Leadership Funds:**

***(a) Describe how the State has used funds made available under section 223 (State Leadership activities) for each of the following required activities:***

* ***Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other one-stop required partners to implement the strategies in the Unified or Combine State Plan as described in section 223(1)(a).***
* ***Establishment or operation of a high quality professional development program as described in section 223(1)(b).***
* ***Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers as described in section 223(1)(c).***

***Alignment with One-Stop Required Partners***

The Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division (ADCE/AED) has worked in close collaboration with its partners to ensure success in implementation of the state plan and thereby, meeting the needs of Arkansans. All core partners gather monthly in “WIOA Roundtable” meetings where plans are made for meeting the needs of clients and students according to the State Plan. Subcommittees, which meet regularly, have been created to ensure continued progress and include the following areas: policy, information technology, finance, core measures, sector strategies, and transition.

Collaboration between ADCE/AED and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services allows adult education students to receive a diagnosis of disabilities and services to assist with identified disabilities through Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Additionally, a local program provides instruction to students with disabilities at the residential Arkansas Career and Technical Institute, a part of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

ADCE/AED works with Arkansas Department of Workforce Services as well as the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to match employment and postsecondary data for its students, providing information essential for reporting. Meetings have been ongoing in order to prepare for the changing data requirements with the implementation of WIOA.

ADCE/AED has continued the growth of the Accelerating Opportunity program, initiated in partnership with Arkansas Community Colleges. The program has been implemented in three additional local programs, offering the opportunity for adult education students to begin their studies in a regionally in-demand career pathway, earning stackable credentials while working toward completion of a secondary credential or increasing English language proficiency. Currently, seven of the 36 adult education programs statewide offer Accelerating Opportunity, and there are plans for continued growth of the program.

Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division funds the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC) to provide high quality professional development programs. It was established in 1990 as a State Literacy Resource Center to provide a source for identification, evaluation, and dissemination of materials and information to adult education/literacy programs. In 1994 professional development was added to the mission of the AALRC.

***Professional Development***

The AALRC is located in Little Rock, Arkansas. The center has seven full-time employees, which include a Director, Professional Development Coordinator, Information Technology Specialist, Disabilities Project Manager, Media Coordinator, Receptionist, and Administrative Assistant. State funds support employee salaries and special projects while federal funds are used for the fulfillment of our mission.

The AALRC provides high quality professional development to local adult education and literacy programs in Arkansas. In the 2015-2016 fiscal year, training opportunities provided by the AALRC for adult education and literacy councils included: College & Career Readiness Standards, Assessment & Technology Week, BEST Plus, Best Practices for Using TABE 9 & 10, Photo/Graphics Editing, Accommodations, Career Development Facilitators Workshop (CDF), Distance Learning Workshop, Teachers As Mentors/Leaders, Smart Board workshop, AERIS for Teachers, ESL Training, LD 101, Diversity Training, New Directors’ Training, AERIS 101, AERIS 201, Excel, LD 201, Local Program Professional Development, Fall Administrators’ Meeting, LD Comprehensive Workshop, Literacy Task Analysis Workshop, ADHD workshop & APPSOLUTE ADHD, Effective Instruction for Adult Students with Learning Disabilities and AMAZING APPS to Help, Introduction to Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities, WAGE Symposium, and Adult Education Spring Administrators’ Meeting, WIOA Fall and Spring Partners Meeting, Career Pathways Institutes, Social Studies, Online Marketing, Leadership Excellence Academy, State Staff Leadership Excellence Academy, The Teenage Brain and Suicide Prevention, and Accelerating Opportunities.

The AALRC continued to work with Neil Sturomski to work with Arkansas Mentors/Leaders. A core group of teachers were trained to be mentors/leaders in their programs to develop strategies for improving teacher quality and retention. The training focused on helping instructors in support the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education’s (OCTAE) College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS): having all youth and adults ready for, having access to, and completing college and career pathways; all youth and adult students having effective teachers and leaders; and all youths and adult students having equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities on demand. During this training the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Instructors became knowledgeable in the reading process and effective reading instruction, including the four reading tenants - Alphabetics, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension; in the Language Continuum – Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing – connecting it to reading, math, and writing instruction. Speaking and Listening are also standards - strands in the CCRS; understanding potential ways to effectively teach reading, math, and writing using the tenants of reading, the language continuum, and a multi-sensory approach to learning; how to support all learning styles while using the language continuum, reading, math and writing instruction, and in addition supporting higher-order thinking; and ways to effectively teach reading, math, and writing while at the same time supporting students in every-day, real-life needs.

In this follow-up session, the Arkansas Mentors/Leaders gained additional information on mentoring. They could share how their process with mentees is progressing. In addition, they reviewed the CCRS and some aspects of WIOA, received additional information on Metacognition and Soft Skills, as well as the skills in Reading and Writing (and math too). These updates further supported them in their work with their mentees and in-turn in support all students in adult education programs in Arkansas.

The Mentors/Leaders also learned about how they and all instructors can improve reading instruction, especially to low-level readers as one of the goals of WIOA. Through the ‘Reading Piece’ provided to them and in-turn to all adult education instructors throughout Arkansas, the Mentors now have a methodology and specific lesson plan ideas to support all their mentees and in-turn all adult education students who need reading instruction and support. This ‘Reading Piece’ provides instruction in the major reading tenets – Alphabetics (which includes phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding), Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. Within these four elements are the essential components of effective and efficient reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, vocabulary development, reading fluency skills, and reading comprehension strategies. For individuals to become successful at reading, instruction in these areas must be both explicit and systematic. Mentors learned about specific skill areas and ways to teach those skills. They also gained a better understanding of available technology (in reading) for low level readers as well as gained numerous Internet resources in reading to support all adult education students.

***Additional Permissible Activities:***

The AALRC contracted with Carson Consulting using presenters, Michelle Carson and Libby Livings-Eassa to provide three career pathways institutes during the fiscal year. The first institute included information on an overview of WIOA and Impact for Adult Education, Assessment of Career Pathways Programming at Local Level, Beginning Stage of Development of Implementation Planning and Immediate Next Steps. The following two institutes focused on system partners and Systems Integration, Strategies for Employer Engagement with Career Pathways Programs and Instruction, Developing Career Pathways and Designing Instruction for Career Pathways, and Low Level Learners Access to Career Pathways (below 6th grade reading level emphasis) Each institute featured general sessions for both administrators and teachers. Each program completed a plan for implementing career pathways for their local program.

***Technical Assistance***

The AALRC also supports practitioners and trainers through professional development opportunities at state and national conferences. Those include: AR Association for Continuing and Adult Education & Arkansas Literacy Councils Conference (AACAE/ALC), Learning Disabilities Association (LDA), Commission on Adult Basic Education Conference (COABE), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and Hot Springs Institute for Technology.

The AALRC supports local programs by maintaining a library of materials, providing research support/information, purchasing/distributing software and materials, and upgrading/redistributing equipment.

Arkansas requires adult education directors, full-time instructors and counselors to be licensed in adult education within four years of initial full-time employment. The AALRC supports this effort by providing tuition reimbursement for these individuals.

The AALRC continues to provide an effective communication system that is involved, informative, and interactive by holding statewide director’s meetings, numerous committee meetings, publishing a statewide newsletter, publishing a directory of literacy services, and maintaining a web-site (http://www.aalrc.org).

**Major Highlights of the Year:**

116 Meetings and Events were attended by the AALRC Staff

**Professional Development**

98 Days were spent providing professional development

50 Different professional development offerings were available

**Lending Library:**

653 Requests from the field were made for library materials

803 Requests were made for assistance with information and/or services

22 New items were acquired for the lending library

**Adult Learning Disabilities:**

11 Requests for instructional strategies from adult educators/literacy providers

64 Requests for assistance with GED accommodation applications

12 Requests from public sector for strategies and referrals

 15 Requests from other state agencies for assistance with strategies, referrals, etc

**Technology:**

566 Requests for assistance with technical support (on-site/telephone/email/remote control program)

***Program Monitoring***

The ADCE/AED evaluates programs quarterly through a desk audit process in which measures such as average attendance hours, educational functioning level (EFL) gains, number of students post-tested, etc. are reported and reviewed. The desk audits also allow programs to review operational aspects of the program such as the percentage of funds expended, completion of required professional development, and completed personnel activity reports.

ADCE/AED also performs an annual site visit for each adult education and literacy program to ensure that state and federal laws and policies are followed, to review program performance, and to connect with Local Education Agency Administrators. Based upon the findings during the site visit, regional program advisors provide technical assistance to program directors and staff to ensure continuous improvement.

Additionally, approximately every five years, a team of program advisors conducts an intensive program review through which Division staff assesses each program in the following areas:

1. Program Management and Reporting
2. Financials
3. Advisory Committees
4. Personnel and Professional Development
5. Student Intake, Documentation, and Orientation
6. Program Policies
7. Instruction
8. Teaching/Classroom Observation
9. Technology
10. Recruitment/Retention
11. Collaboration
12. Facilities
13. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

This program review process allows program advisors and the State Disabilities Project Manager to thoroughly assess program operations, observe classroom instruction, and review state and federal laws and policies. Once each program is reviewed, a request for a full financial review is by the state finance department is made.

Each year, ADCE/AED evaluates each program through an E&E (Effective and Efficient) calculation. The number represents a weighted evaluation of each programs’ progress on the federally negotiated benchmarks. Programs who do not meet the percentage requirements meet the determined percentage of the benchmarks are provided additional technical assistance in order to prepare a performance improvement plan. Upon not meeting the requirements of E&E for three consecutive years, the ADCE/AED makes a recommendation to the Career Education and Workforce Development Board as to whether or not the program should continue to be funded.

**2. Performance Data Analysis:**

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

During the 2015-2016 program year, Arkansas met or exceeded 7/15 of its Benchmark Targets, which is a vast improvement from the previous year of 3/15 Benchmark Targets. The highest increase for the state this year was ESL High Intermediate, which was 2%. On the other hand, our entered employment and retain employment dropped significantly by 35% and 20% respectively. This is very surprising, especially in a stable economy.

This year the state office continues to provide training on the state’s Data Management Information System. State staff conducted over 15 trainings, including regional, to over 500 adult education users across the statement. In order to assist providers in meeting targets, the state office continue to provide technical assistance to the field. Each year during the Spring Administrators’ meeting, the state’s previous year performance measures are shared with local providers and compared to the national average. An explanation is provided on how the core indicators are negotiated and the number of students who needed to show educational gains in order for the state to meet or exceed the performance measures. Lastly, we share the 2014-15 Negotiated Targets with providers and explain their responsibility in helping us to reach the targets. We also, require providers to submit quarterly performance reports which includes the current Educational Gains, post-test percentage, testing alerts, and a financial report to name a few.

Another criterion the state uses to evaluate how effective programs are in meeting performance goals is by looking at a program’s Effective and Efficiency (E&E) score. The E&E calculation is based on the number of students enrolled and uses “weighting” to give fair weight to each student with a goal. Programs are required to meet or exceed 80% of the state’s negotiated core indicators of performance. A program that fails to meet E&E the first year must meet with its program advisor and develop a written improvement plan aimed at the program attaining E&E status which will be submitted to the Adult Education Division within 30 days following the review conference. Programs that do not meet or exceed 80% of performance benchmarks for a second consecutive year will be assigned a state technical assistance team to assist the program in addressing its deficiencies and developing a program improvement plan. Programs not meeting or exceeding 80% of performance benchmarks for three consecutive years will be submitted to the State Board of Career Education for appropriate action prior to continuation of funding.

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|  | Figure 1: **Arkansas Performance** ( 2014-15, 2015-16) Targets (2015-16)  |
|   | **ARKANSAS** |
| **CORE INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE** | 2014-15 Performance | 2015-16 Targets | 2015-16 Performance | Change from Targets to Performance  |
| ABE Beginning Literacy | 47% | 48% | 49% | +1% |
| ABE Beginning Basic | 42% | 43% | 42% | -1% |
| ABE Intermediate Low | 41% | 41% | 41% | 0% |
| ABE Intermediate High | 42% | 42% | 41% | -1% |
| ASE Low | 46% | 40% | 40% | 0% |
| ESL Beginning Literacy | 30% | 33% | 33% | 0% |
| ESL Low Beginning | 37% | 40% | 32% | -8% |
| ESL High Beginning | 44% | 40% | 41% | +1% |
| ESL Low Intermediate | 46% | 42% | 42% | 0% |
| ESL High Intermediate | 37% | 34% | 36% | +2% |
| ESL Advanced | 18% | 26% | 17% | -9% |
| Enter Employment |  43% | 67% | 32% | -35% |
| Retain Employment |  70% | 76% | 56% | -20% |
| Obtain a GED |  98% | 97% | 88% | -9% |
| Enter Post-Secondary/Training |  10% | 29% | 7% | -22% |
| **AVERAGE** | 43.47% | 46.53% | 39.8% | -6.73% |

**3. Integration with One-stop Partners:**

***Describe how the State eligible agency, as the entity responsible for meeting one-stop requirements under 34CFR part 463, subpart J, carries out or delegates its required one-stop roles to eligible providers. Describe the applicable career services that are provided in the one-stop system. Describe how the infrastructure costs are supported through State and local options.***

The Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division delegates its required one-stop roles to its adult education funded local providers. Through a network of eligible one-stop providers, and to minimize duplication of services, each partner provides one or more requirements of the program, services, and activities that are linked, physically or technologically, to an affiliated site or access point that assures customers are provided information on the availability of career services, as well as other program services and activities, regardless of where they initially enter the public workforce system in the local area. Individuals seeking assistance have access to information and services that lead to positive outcomes.

The basic career services that are provided in the one-stop system are made available for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. Outreach, intake (including worker profiling), and orientation to information and other services are made available to these groups, including TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), through the one-stop delivery system. The initial assessment of skill levels including literacy, numeracy and English language proficiency, as well as aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs are provided. Labor exchange services including job search and placement assistance, career counseling, and appropriate recruitment and other business services on behalf of employers, including information and referrals to specialized business services other than those traditionally offered are provided through the one-stop delivery system.

Infrastructure costs and other partnering agreements are encouraged between sub-grant recipients and Local Workforce Development Boards. The Adult Education Division requires its local providers to negotiate and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that addresses the service delivery elements required by WIOA with the workforce board of their respective region. Two or more local areas in a region may develop a single joint MOU if they are in a region that has submitted a regional plan. The MOU must include a description of services to be provided through the one-stop delivery system, agreement on funding the costs of the services and the operating costs of the system (including funding of the shared services and operating costs of the one-stop), methods for referring individuals between the one-stop operators and partners for appropriate services and activities, methods to ensure the needs of workers, youth and individuals with barriers to employment. The duration of the MOU and procedures for amending it and assurances that each MOU will be reviewed, and if substantial changes have occurred, renewed, not less than once every 3-year period to ensure appropriate funding, and delivery of services are to be included in the MOU development. The MOU may contain other provisions, including in-kind partner contributions and alternative funding, agreed to by the parties that are consistent with WIOA title I, the authorizing statutes and regulations of one-stop partner programs, and the WIOA regulations.

**4. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program (AEFLA Section 243)**

**Describe how the state is using funds under Section 243 to support the following activities under the IEL/CE program:**

***A. Describe when your state held a competition [the latest competition] for IELCE program funds and the number of grants awarded by your state to support IELCE programs.***

Arkansas has not held a competition for IEL/CE program funds under WIOA. A competition for funds was held in 2014-15 for EL/Civics program funds under WIA. Funding for the 2016-17 PY was a continuation of EL/Civics program funding. The State is in the process of holding a competition for IELCE funds that will go into effect July 1, 2017.

During the 2015-16 PY, ACE/AED awarded EL/Civics Grants to 14 local programs, which included 13 Adult Education programs and 1 Literacy Council. There were 2,064 enrolled adult learners served, a decrease of 29% from 2014-15 (2, 907).

***B. Describe your State efforts in meeting the requirement to provide IELCE services in combination with integrated education and training activities.***

Arkansas has not implemented the requirement English Literacy in combination with integrated education and training activities. However, the Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division has partnered with the Arkansas Community Colleges to offer career pathways opportunities such as Accelerating Opportunity (AO) to adult students across the state. Although the AO program is offered to all adult students who qualify, a special effort will be used to target English Language Learners. In addition, programs focused on delivering English language instruction through topics of rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and US history and government. Lessons included the constitution/Bill of Rights, electoral process, government structure, criminal justice system, citizenship forms and tests, community involvement, major historical figures and events. Activities included mock elections and job interviews; field trips to local recycling centers, local post-secondary institutions, libraries; guest speakers from the local and city government, Credit Counseling of Arkansas, Fire and Police Departments, and the local community colleges and universities; and, provided information and support for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and community resources and organizations, such as The Arkansas United Community Coalition and the Hispanic Women’s Organization of Arkansas (HWOA).

***C. Describe how the State is progressing toward program goals of preparing and placing IELCE program participants in unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency as described in section 243(c)(1) and discuss any performance results, challenges, and lessons learned from implementing those program goals.***

Arkansas is holding a RFP competition in 2016-17 to award IEL/CE grant funds for 2017-19 PYs. To be awarded funds, an applicant must describe how English language instruction will delivered in combination with integrated education and training. Programs will be required to provide English language instruction in a content-based curriculum that will cover the 4 pillars of citizenship and suggested topics from UCIS. Programs will also be required to provide accessible integrated education and training specifically designed for IELCE participants or open to program participants. The IET programs must be based on local and participant needs that will lead to economic self-sufficiency through unsubsidized employment.

***D. Describe how the State is progressing towards program goals of ensuring that IELCE program activities are integrated with the local workforce development system and its functions as described in section 243 (c)(2) and discuss any performance results, challenges, and lessons learned from implementing those program goals.***

Arkansas will hold a RFP competition for IELCE program funds for 2017-18 grant funds. The State will require programs to integrate with the local workforce development system and provide services that include English literacy and integrated education and training.

**5. 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.***

Arkansas Adult Education Division’s content standards are aligned with K-12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which has been adopted by the Arkansas Department of Education for K-12 schools beginning with the 2013-2014 PY, through the adoption of the Career and College Readiness (CCR) standards. Arkansas Adult Education chose to adopt the CCR standards due to its rigorous research and scientific evidence of effectiveness and applicability to Adult Education and to ensure students are prepared postsecondary education and training and/or unsubsidized employment. The CCR standards used the CCSS to “identify a manageable set of the CCSS most indispensable for college and career readiness and important to adult students”.

Arkansas Adult Education Division initiated a task force comprised of approximately 18 individuals, which included five state staff members, two professional development members, four adult education directors and seven adult education teachers in order to implement and meet the CCR standards. On May 22, July 10, and July 11, 2014, the task force met and developed a plan to assist teachers in adopting CCR Standards. A draft framework was released to the task force on October 16, 2014 with follow-up bi-monthly meetings to discuss the research and progress towards a framework that could be used statewide

Task force members researched frameworks and curriculum guides from other states and to gather best practices, including Kentucky, New York, Georgia and Florida. The task force members researched online and printed curriculum to provide examples and resources for each standard and skill. The initial phase, 2014-15, focused on grade levels 6.0 – 12.9 while the second phase was initiated to address k- 5.9 grade levels. After the initial phase, the framework was distributed to the field for use and feedback.

The Arkansas Adult Education Division completed the Arkansas College and Career Readiness Framework in the fall of 2016 and released it to the field. The Arkansas CCR Framework encompasses language, math, reading, science social studies and writing and contains a list of references and all materials utilized in the document in addition to a key of all terms used. The framework is content standards, sample classroom activities and various learning materials to facilitate learning for all learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Adult education teachers can utilize the framework to build their own curriculum and lesson plans to further impact student learning. The Arkansas CCR Framework will be available on the Adult Education Division’s website: <http://ace.arkansas.gov/adulteducation/pages/default.aspx> and also at the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center website: <http://aalrc.org/>. The framework is meant to be a living document, that is, it will change over time as resources and student needs change.

Leadership funds were used to support the task force meetings and included webinars, conference calls, and face-to-face meetings. State office technical assistance was also provided to support the project and include site visits, conference calls, and regional trainings. The framework was presented as a break-out session at the State’s Spring Administrators’ Meeting in May 2015 and at the Arkansas Association of Continuing Adult Education Conference in November of 2014, 2015, and 2016. Participants were given the opportunity to provide additional input. Several workshops were held at the AALRC, such as Career & College Readiness Mathematics, Language Arts, Integrating Technology in the Classroom, and Regional GED® trainings to help prepare teachers to teach to a more rigorous curriculum.

**6. Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals** (AEFLA Sec. 225)

***What was the relative rate of recidivism for criminal offenders served? Please describe the methods and factors used in calculating the rate for this reporting period***.

In Arkansas recidivism is calculated based on three major areas:  re-arrest, re-conviction and re-incarceration within three years of intake to supervision during a three-year period following release from custody. The state Correction Department, which operates prison units, released a report on recidivism last week indicating that the three-year recidivism rate had increased by five percentage points, from about 43 percent to about 48 percent. Of all the inmates who got out of prison in 2011, slightly more than 48 percent were back behind bars within three years. In other words, the Correction Department released 6,859 inmates in 2011 and 3,308 were back in prison within three years. A smaller group- 6.4 percent, or 440 inmates - were back in prison within six months of their release. Within a year of release, 1,200 were in prison again. That is 17.5 percent. There are more than 18,500 inmates in state prisons and county jails in Arkansas.