**Louisiana Narrative Report 2015-2016**

# **Introduction:**

The adult education vision in Louisiana is built on the notion of recasting the expectations of our most important natural resource - our people. WorkReady U (WRU), Louisiana’s comprehensive adult education system, aims to prepare our students with the skills necessary to compete for family sustainable employment and be contributing members in their communities. This mission is driven by a focus on providing a strong literacy foundation that is embedded in college and career readiness standards. The 611,453 working age adults in Louisiana without a high school credential need an opportunity to obtain the skills necessary to achieve a better life. By placing the responsibility for adult education with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) in 2010, and creating clear pathways into and through career and technical education programs that lead to life-sustaining jobs, Louisiana has radically changed its adult education delivery model and can now substantially increase the number of people who are part of the middle class.

Louisiana ushered in new state leadership in 2016. In January 2016, newly elected Governor John Bel Edwards announced several key cabinet appointments for his administration which included a change in a key position, the Executive Director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission. With new leadership, came a shift in the workforce preparation vision and staff at the state-level. As a result, adjustments were addressed in the development and writing of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan for the State of Louisiana. During this crucial time, all mandatory partners worked diligently to compose a workforce training plan that will best serve the undereducated and underemployed citizens of Louisiana. The result was a comprehensive workforce training blueprint that recognizes each partnering agency’s role and scope in an attempt to realize the intent of the WIOA law – a comprehensive training system that reduces duplication of programming and increases quality of services to Louisianans. In this time Louisiana also faced unprecedented fiscal pressures of state budget shortfall.

The WorkReady U vision and mission for adult education delivery in Louisiana was fully implemented through continuation grants which allowed the established provider network to strengthen and expand services throughout the state as we began the journey of transitioning to WIOA activities. Comprehensive foundational services provided the opportunity for individuals to move toward self-sufficiency by providing high quality basic skills instruction, secondary credential attainment, and transitional services that lead to a seamless matriculation to post-secondary enrollment, technical skill mastery, and industry recognized credentialing resulting in family sustainable employment. Statewide enrollment for FY 2015-2016 increased by 2.9% from the previous year with overall performance increasing by 2.3% for students completing a level (NRS Table 4). Performance increases can be attributed to the establishment of WRU 2020 (Louisiana, Title II, five year strategic plan) that outlined enrollment priorities, a focused professional development plan, targeted technical assistance, and a better understanding and effective application of the College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards. Capability and familiarity with the WRU data management system also contributed to local programs being able to better use data to make decisions.

A commitment to excellence by the LCTCS and its WorkReady U provider network to deliver quality adult education and literacy services that are research-based best practices to the citizens of Louisiana remains strong as evident by significant improvement of measurable skill gains (MSG) in all National Reporting System (NRS) recognized categories. A concentrated commitment to improve performance and exceed national averages is further evident in Louisiana’s academic performance data showing that 80% of the students post-tested completed an educational functioning level (EFL) on NRS Table 4B. WRU continued its quest to build on the solid foundation to provide citizens the Louisiana of tomorrow through comprehensive adult basic education delivery that affords students the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed.

**State Leadership Funds:**

WorkReady U continued to work with local stakeholders and other partnering agencies to facilitate new methods of service delivery, increase secondary credential attainment opportunities, expand instructional content and delivery techniques to include college and career readiness standards, utilize technology to enhance educational opportunities, transition from career pathway pilot initiatives to Integrated Education and Training (IET) opportunities through Louisiana Career Pathways, in addition to fully implementing the WorkReady U vision and mission. Building capacity in Louisiana’s adult education programs focuses on the following five areas: connecting assessment and accountability; developing new models for service delivery and outreach; expanding the use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning; and developing professionalism of personnel.

During FY 2015-2016, WorkReady U was dedicated to challenging the status quo and supporting innovative services based on the needs of the provider network to fully implement the WRU vision and mission. Leadership funds were used to support the following: Regional Resource Centers (RRC) which serve as epicenters of a three pronged approach to professional development delivery activities throughout Louisiana; CCR standards implementation; and English as a Second Language (ESL) program expansion.

***Goal 1****:* ***To connect assessment and accountability***

State Leadership funds were utilized to promote assessment policy awareness, professional development for data quality, policy compliance monitoring, in addition to added focus on using data for decisions, retention techniques, and overall best-practices for instructional delivery.

Accountability in adult education in Louisianaisframed by WIOA and the National Reporting System (NRS)**–**the federal and state mandate to disaggregate and report on data relevant to adult education. To meet the requirements of interagency reporting of student outcome factors and the National Reporting System, State Leadership funds are being used to continue development for enhancing the web-based data collection/management system that is used by all federally-funded adult education programs in the State of Louisiana.

The following are activities and initiatives used to connect assessment and accountability in Louisiana as referenced in the State Plan for Title II of WIOA.

* The LCTCS adopted a performance-based funding formula for adult education that is aligned to performance indicators with the NRS and WorkReady U prioritized outcomes.
* Louisiana continued its commitment to reach the “harder to teach” adult learners who are most in need of foundational skills by targeting federal funds to students working below an 8.9 grade level equivalent. During the fiscal year, approximately 90% of the total students served were the “harder to teach” adult learners who are most in need of foundational skills: 74% of the students served were ABE level students and 16% of the students served were ESL level students, a 3% increase over the previous fiscal year. (NRS Tables 1&3).
* The LCTCS’s monitoring procedures included analysis of data and program performance through monthly data submissions and data desk reviews. Based upon desk reviews, state staff requested local data documentation according to a risk assessment determination. Follow-up onsite visits were conducted when warranted.
* During 2015-2016, Louisiana’s onsite monitoring instrument and philosophy utilized a risk-assessment model that incorporates six vital modules - data, recruitment/retention, classroom activities, records/reports, partnerships, and finance in an effort to model the USDE/OCTAE instrument and place emphasis on what is valued and consistent with the WorkReady U blueprint. Onsite visits included an examination of student files, student attendance records, and program data submitted through the statewide data management system. Monitoring reports were prepared after each onsite monitoring visit. Sites that were non-compliant/had findings received recommendations for program improvements. Programs were given 30 days to prepare and submit a written plan of action describing the plan of resolution for the non-compliant/findings noted in the report. State staff were assigned to ensure all plans are adhered to and non-compliance addressed in a detailed follow-up process to ensure that a resolution has been determined and put into effect.
* Technical assistance was ongoing to all projects, with a focus on and follow-up given to sites with indicated findings and low performance outcomes. Future funding may be impacted for sub-grantees who fail to meet corrective compliance measures or continue to perform poorly.

WRU continued to utilize established techniques for providing technical assistance to programs. The three procedures included: performance target negotiations, development of a risk assessment model and enhancing the quarterly review process. Program performance negotiations jointly analyzed individual program data and established baseline performance goals for the fiscal year. The risk assessment model was used to identify programs with low performance data and guided the State in providing targeted technical assistance. Enhanced quarterly reviews included a red, yellow, green risk analysis that ranked and highlighted performance in NRS core measures, target population and adherence to the assessment policy. This system was put in place to help both WRU and program staff identify areas for improvement, technical assistance, and professional development.

* The LCTCS Internal Audit Division conducted onsite fiscal monitoring during FY 2015-2016. Based upon fiscal desk audits which examined program budgets and reimbursement claims, a risk assessment was determined. Onsite visits were scheduled with identified recipients to determine if expenses were reasonable, allocable, and allowable as required by

the U.S. Education Department’s Office of Inspector General (OIG), Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE), AEFLA, the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), and the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 C.F.R. Part 200 or Part 200).

* Providers were trained in the newly-developed *WorkReady U Recipient Grant Management Handbook*. The purpose of the handbook is to provide recipients with a single point of reference for managing/expending all federal Adult Education Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funds and to set forth the policies, procedures and guidelines intended to assist in the proper administration of adult education and literacy programs at the local level. The handbook provides programmatic information on how AEFLA funds are to be used at the local level. It includes information on the process used by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) to review budget information; the process by which successful applicants request reimbursement; how to determine whether a cost is allowable; required fiscal and programmatic reports and their respective due dates; and the process used by WorkReady U (WRU) to monitor eligible recipients for compliance.

***Goal 2: To develop new models for service delivery and outreach***

The Louisiana Adult Education Program student demographics for FY 2015-2016 consisted of 74% adult basic education (ABE) students 10% adult secondary education (ASE), and 16% English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) students (Louisiana 2014-2015 NRS Tables 1&3). The state funding formula for adult education incorporated a financial incentive to recruit new students with literacy levels from 0-8.9 grade levels and ESL students as the skills gap continued to widen. Louisiana is at a cross road as the economy rebounds and the skills gap widens in the workforce. WorkReady U is committed to serving all undereducated and underemployed citizens to meet the growing workforce needs and provide opportunity to family sustainable employment.

The Jobs for the Future (JFF), Accelerating Opportunity: *A Breaking Through Initiative*, and the numerous Trade Adjustment (TAACCT) grants at our colleges continued to reinforce the WorkReady U vision and suite of services offered to Louisianans. As the initiatives culminated, WRU continued to build upon lessons learned and move forward with Louisiana Career Pathways. The pathways were designed to change the delivery model of adult basic education allowing adults to seize the opportunity to earn family-sustaining wages and break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Leadership funds were used to support mini-grants to scale innovative practices and lessons learned from the above-mentioned initiatives in order to transition to quality integrated education and training throughout Louisiana. These efforts were designed to prepare students to meet their full potential, while at the same time, creating the workforce pipeline our state demands through basic skills mastery that leads to some form of post-secondary training and ends with family sustainable employment.

***Goal 3:******To expand the use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning***

LCTCS’s WorkReady U strives to improve upon and expand the opportunities that are available to adult education providers and students by offering multiple outlets for the increased use of technology in the classroom, including distance learning.

* LCTCS Online offered potential to assist the Louisiana provider network meet the goals and outcomes of WorkReady U. LCTCS Online was utilized as a multifaceted tool to assist with the delivery of professional development activities centered on statewide strands and special projects. WorkReady U providers were encouraged to compete for innovation grants to further explore the limitless potential of technology in the educational space.

The WRU Executive Committee, an advisory group composed of adult education supervisors representing Community & Technical Colleges, Local Educational Agencies, the adult education professional association, and Community-based Organizations, met to discuss a statewide distance learning pilot. After extensive research and best practice presentations, the committee unanimously recommended to move forward with the implementation of a statewide Distance Learning Pilot project to begin in FY 2016-2017. The scope of the project is designed to expand service offerings for the hardest to reach citizens and provide alternative educational opportunities for all students.

***Goal 4: Professionalism of Personnel***

Louisiana had 104 local administrators/support staff, 532 adult education instructors, 159 instructional assistants, and 16 counselors in FY 2014-2015 (NRS Table 7).

All instructional staff participated in the 8-week online, facilitated WorkReady U (WRU) Instructor Certification course. The course provided an introduction to teaching in adult education with a specific focus on Louisiana’s WRU program.

WorkReady U continued its commitment to excellence by offering professional development activities during FY 2015-2016 to ensure professional growth opportunities were offered to support the State Plan and the WorkReady U vision and mission. WorkReady U state staff continued its quest to offer the highest quality professional development opportunities by consulting with national professional development experts and convening a state task force in order to streamline and focus professional development efforts on areas of value to the system - data, recruitment & retention, classroom activities, records/reports, and partnerships. As a result of a professional development task force recommendation, federal leadership funds were utilized to support Regional Resource Centers. The established centers provide regionally appropriate trainings in coordination with state identified professional development priorities, resources, and mentorship opportunities throughout Louisiana. The Regional Resource Centers provide on-site meeting rooms, resource libraries, and leadership to guide research-based adult education best practices.

**Regional Resource Center (RRC) Opportunities:**

WorkReady U (WRU) took a proactive approach to keeping up with national trends by providing unique professional development (PD) opportunities. Historically, WRU has underserved the English Language Learner (ELL) population and fallen behind the national average for EFL

gains with the ESL population. The performance and enrollment focus area for 2015-2016 was

on increasing service to this population.

WorkReady U was accepted to participate in the LINCS ESL Pro Project on *Meeting the Language Needs of Today’s Adult English Language Learner*. Twenty instructors were selected through an application process to build a Community of Practice (CoP) on how to increase rigor in the English Language Learner (ELL) classroom. Through the yearlong project, teacher leaders learned how to replicate the CoP process to share best practices with others in the state, both at annual conferences and within their local programs and/or regional areas. Leadership funds were awarded to programs participating in the project in order to help with program expansion and professional development. Plans to continue this work are underway for FY 2016-2017, as we aim to increase the rigor of instruction for ELLs and promote learning communities within the network.

Professional development activities have been designed to meet the needs of a variety of adult education personnel in an effort to enhance programs and better serve students. Annually, local program administrators meet with WRU staff to review changes in policy and related practices, NRS guidelines, budget management, reporting requirements, statewide performance, and upcoming initiatives. Local and regional institutes addressed instructional needs in the areas of adult education and literacy, ELA, civics, transitional activities, and student support services. Additionally, ongoing data system training demonstrated the expanding system functionalities for use in program analysis and evaluation of services.

All staff have an opportunity to attend two annual statewide professional development conferences. The LCTCS conference focuses on post-secondary education, transitional support services, and in-demand career training, while the annual statewide professional development conference hosted by the Louisiana Association for Public, Community and Adult Education (LAPCAE) provides a vast selection of adult education related sessions and provides a unified means of communicating the WorkReady U vision to participants.

**Performance Data Analyses:**

The Louisiana Adult Education Program, WorkReady U, served 31,156 undereducated and underemployed citizens in FY 2015-2016 with 23,207 students participating in basic skill instruction (NRS Tables 4&12). As part of the WRU 2020 strategic plan an emphasis was placed on workforce preparation and training activities thus explaining the significant increase in total students served versus those that populated to the NRS tables. Data reveals that 48% of those who participated in academic services during the FY 2015-2016 program year completed or advanced an educational functioning level (NRS Table 4). Effective instruction at the local level is evident by the fact that 80% of students post-tested demonstrated an EFL gain.

The total amount of federal and state funds expended by LCTCS and local programs was $11,785,081.79. This amount includes Federal Funds of $7,298,438.44 and $4,486,643.35 of State Funds for 2015-2016.

The total number of participants served statewide across all groups and at all levels was 31,156. In FY 2015-2016, the total number of student attendance hours was 2,258,580 (Gains Report), which equates to the following:

average cost per adult education student………..$378.26

cost per contact hour…………….…………… $5.22

Administering the adult education program statewide were six full-time professional staff members. The professional background of these staff members ranges from K-12 and adult education teaching experience to correctional and higher education administration experience. Staff members have participated in professional development activities including NRS workshops and OCTAE-sponsored meetings.

The Louisiana Community and Technical College System maintained a presence in state-level meetings of state agencies relating to adult education. Close alignments also were maintained with the Department of Corrections, the Workforce Commission, Workforce Investment Council, Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Louisiana Board of Regents and the Department of Education.

In 2015-2016, the Louisiana Community and Technical College System expended federal funding at the following levels (including carry-over federal funds from prior year):

State Leadership $874,069.49

Administration $511,791.20

Basic Grant to Local Providers $7,298,438.44

Total $8,684,299.13

After a thorough review of the 2015-2016 adult education performance data, it is clear that the continued implementation of the WRU philosophy was beneficial to the students as the state experienced increases in the following areas:

* the number of students served with one hour increased by 10%;
* the number of reportable students served increased by 3%;
* the number of students post-tested increased by 7.6 %;
* the number of students completing a level increased by 8.2%; and
* the number of ESL students completing a level increased by 55%.

Much of the success in student outcomes was due to local programs expanding their menu of services in order to better meet the needs of the community. Additionally, a focus on instructional cycles that are offered at times conducive to the learner in lieu of the traditional K-12 model, drove student performance outcomes and attendance.

Furthermore, in examining secondary outcomes, it was evident that WorkReady U better assisted the undereducated and underemployed citizens of Louisiana to realize opportunity at a greater rate and in an accelerated timeframe. The first year post-secondary cohort enrollment increased by eighteen percentage points. Additionally, there was a 2% increase in the second year cohort enrollment compared to the prior year. It should be noted that WRU served an additional 1,236 students who enrolled in post-secondary from the previous year but did not populate to Table 5 because they did not exit the program. These indicators suggest that WorkReady U is significantly contributing to a highly skilled workforce as we build toward the Louisiana of tomorrow.

The collaborative efforts of the Louisiana Department of Education and the LCTCS continued to focus on lowering the percentage of 16-18 year olds that were being served in adult education. Through clearer defined state mandatory attendance laws and more diverse alternative programs being offered in the K-12 system, Louisiana was working hard to address the dropout rate. Louisiana was also committed to ensuring that all individuals who were undereducated and underemployed had an opportunity to receive basic skill remediation and an opportunity toward self-sufficiency as evidenced by Table 3 that reflects 90% of the students served were Adult Basic Education or English-as-a-Second Language learners. This long-term commitment was yet another measure that WorkReady U was dedicated to building the Louisiana of tomorrow by providing comprehensive adult educational services to Louisiana’s most at-risk citizens.

**Integration with One-Stop Partners**

The Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) supported the integration of activities sponsored under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) in multiple areas relative to adult education, career development, and employment and training activities.

WorkReady U and One-Stop centers coordinated partnerships to provide shared, unduplicated services. WRU partnered with each of the 15 Workforce Investment Areas to nominate local adult education supervisors and have representatives appointed to each board. This coordination and communication provided opportunities for Title II representatives to serve on the local workforce development boards and act as a conduit for the exchange of information. LCTCS leadership participated in all appropriate committee and board activities with regard to the State agencies responsible for Workforce, Corrections, Higher Education, and Economic Development. In an effort to stay informed of the latest board activities across the state, WRU and adult education staff serving as newly-elected board members met, bimonthly, via conference calls and a virtual meeting platform provided by LCTCS Online.

In fall 2015, WRU staff set up Regional Roundtables with local providers. The aim of these discussions was to develop strategies for meeting performance targets established in the adult education strategic plan, WRU 2020, and WIOA goals within the eight workforce regions. Each program’s expertise and local knowledge of their service region provided insight into the valuable information in defining actions for improving service delivery to the adult learners in each area.

Louisiana Career Pathways were embedded in regionally appropriate labor market data that possessed stackable/ portable credentials tied to national certifications and job readiness skills. Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) and Louisiana Economic Development/ Louisiana FastStart (LED) assisted in identifying the labor market demands and desired skill sets/credentials. WorkReady U and LCTCS colleges built career pathways and offered foundational skills, resulting in LWC and LCTCS colleges assisting completers in securing internships, apprenticeship, and/or employment. All partners worked collectively to foster business and industry partnerships to guide and support the process. Louisiana’s leaders in workforce, economic development, and education convene annually in Baton Rouge for the Louisiana Workforce Symposium to help shape collaboration and maximize the impact of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) for our state.

An example of these cooperative agency endeavors is the executive order issued by Governor Edwards creating a new Louisiana partnership that will require all Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) who participate in the SNAP food assistance program, but who are not currently working or in school, to participate in job training and assistance programs in order to remain eligible for federal food assistance. The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) will administer the new program. WorkReady U will provide additional basic skills and job training opportunities for these new entrants into the workforce.

**Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program:**

English Language Learners (ELLs) had the opportunity to participate in Louisiana Career Pathways and workforce preparation activities during the fiscal year. WRU began offering these activities as the ideal way to engage a new audience and expose them to the scope of services available to prepare them for the high-skilled workforce through integrated education and training opportunities. Course guidelines and offerings were developed and shared throughout the network in Workforce Readiness, Computer & Digital Literacy, Financial Literacy, and Health Literacy. Curriculum guides include a collection of open source materials that are adaptive in nature and customizable. WRU workforce preparation activities stress the importance of career exploration, workforce navigation, and transitional support utilizing all core partner services.

**Adult Education Standards:**

Louisiana made great strides in FY 2015-2016 towards better understanding and implementing the college and career readiness (CCR) standards adopted the previous year. Comprehensive training for ELA and math teachers in CCR-related instructional strategies was provided by the Literacy Assistance Center, ETS/HiSET’s (Louisiana’s official high school equivalency provider) professional development partner, during the Louisiana Association for Professional, Adult and Community Education (LAPCAE) annual conference. CCR standards permeated the conference as all session content was aligned to standards, and the opening session on the standards set the tone for the importance of incorporating CCR in our adult education classrooms.

During FY 2015-2016, a team of four (4) staff members from WRU and local programs attended the two-day College and Career Readiness Implementation Institute in Nashville, TN in order to gain best practices for CCR work. Participation in the institute led the WRU team to develop a session that was delivered during the annual LAPCAE summer conference. Feedback from conference session participants guided the upcoming CCR project that began in 2016-2017.

**Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals:**

The most current recidivism rate reported by Louisiana Department of Public Safety & Corrections (LA DPS&C) was in 2014. The rate reported is for state offenders released from adult institutions, local facilities, and transitional work programs that have completed an education class while incarcerated in a state facility.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **YEAR** | **TOTAL RELEASES** | **1ST YEAR RETURNS** | **%** |
| 2014 | 1,268 | 109 | 8.6 |

Recidivism rates are reported in March of each year. Offenders are released and tracked for one year. Recidivism rates for 2015 will be reported in March 2017.

**Conclusion:**

With a renewed set of expectations and a vastly different culture, adult education in Louisiana is no longer just about obtaining a high school equivalency diploma, but acquiring the means to improved life circumstances resulting from gaining the skills that lead to quality jobs and family-sustainable wages. The primary emphasis of WorkReady U in Louisiana is to provide highest quality adult educational services to our undereducated and underemployed citizens.