**Maryland Federal Narrative Report FY 2015-2016**

During Fiscal Year 2016, adult education grantees were funded under a continuation grant and state leadership activities followed goals established in the State Plan. During this period the adult education program worked with WIOA partners to draft Maryland’s Combined State Plan. The groundwork laid by the WIOA workgroups and all WIOA partners informed the process and resulted in a collaborative product. The state provided local programs with guidance as they transitioned to fulfill the requirements of the new law. State enrollment, performance and matched literacy level assessments increased during this period, although student retention remains a challenge.

**State Leadership Funds**

**Alignment of Adult Education with Other One-Stop Required Partners to Strategies in the Combined State Plan**

*Governor’s Workforce Investment Board*

The Adult Education Director is a member of the Governor’s Workforce Investment Board’s Interagency Workforce Committee which is charged with coordinating workforce development programs and policies to meet the needs of high demand industry through collaboration among WIOA partners. Additionally, through the leadership of the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL), all partners played an active role in drafting the Maryland Combined State Plan.

In FY 16, the adult education staff participated in a number of WIOA workgroups and the Director co-chaired the Adult Education and Career Pathways Workgroup. The workgroups were composed of a number of constituents representing WIOA partners and the community and provided input and suggestions for aligning services under WIOA. The State Plan incorporated the suggestions of the workgroups in the draft plan.

*Governor’s P20 Leadership Council*

The Governor’s P-20 Leadership Council is a partnership between State educators and the business community to better prepare Maryland learners for 21st century skill jobs. The High School Equivalency Workgroup of the Council works to develop and recommend policies that will improve and increase access for individuals to earn a high school diploma. The Workgroup works in tandem with DLLR and Adult Education and Literacy Services to increase GED® test preparation services, assist English language learners access literacy services, enhance services for youth with disabilities and provide youth with contextualized career awareness and job readiness.

*Assessment Policy Workgroup*

In an effort to align policies among WIOA partners, a workgroup was formed to revise the Adult Education Assessment Policy under DWDAL. The new Basic Skills and English Language Assessment Policy required that all partners follow the same processes for conducting assessments in order to streamline services for participants and avoid duplicative testing. Local programs are required to address the alignment of assessments in the local workforce development plans. Adult Education invited workforce staff to participate in trainings for TABE and TABE CLAS-E and will continue to include partners in trainings that will prepare staff to provide reliable standardized assessment practices.

*Maryland Adult Learning Advisory Council*

The Maryland Adult Learning Advisory Council (MALAC) continues to play a critical role in strengthening public and private partnerships and promoting and supporting a flexible and integrated education and training system for adult learners. The Council is co-chaired by the Adult Education Director and an official of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and members represent government agencies, the Maryland legislature, community colleges, public schools, funders and community-based organizations. Meetings are held on a quarterly basis and discussions provide the perspectives of a broad base of constituents.

MALAC members are keenly aware of the need to increase access to literacy programs and high school credentials and explored available resources to support testing, access test accommodations and obtain identification and supporting documentation for GED ® testing.

The Council serves as a significant resource to DLLR and the DWDAL on matters pertinent to program and partnership development. In FY 2016 topics included WIOA implementation, the Combined State Plan and a new legislative priority, the Task Force to Study Adult High Schools. The Task Force is chaired by the Assistant Secretary for DWDAL and a legislator and was directed to engage in a broad study of adult high school models. The group will analyze best practices, funding sources, curriculum and community support. The results of the Task Force research will be submitted to the State Legislature as a preliminary summary in December 2016, and a final report in June 2017.

**Professional Development**

During FY 2016 a Specialist was hired for the Adult Education team to lead state professional learning initiatives and provide leadership to strengthen local program staff development. In November 2015, a professional development workgroup, led by the Professional Development Specialist was convened and charged with designing a long-term statewide professional development plan. A diverse representation of local program leadership team members was selected to participate on the workgroup through an application process. Additionally, the results of a statewide needs assessment indicated several additional priorities for the group including an online professional development calendar, alternative methods of professional development delivery (e.g. online courses and webinars), regional meetings and opportunities for local program leadership teams to jointly address program performance issues.

The Professional Development Specialist has been appointed co-chair for the newly formed WIOA Professional Development Workgroup among whose tasks are to systematize, identify and plan professional development for all WIOA partners to promote alignment of programs and cohesion in the workforce system.

The State sponsored a number of foundation trainings and technical assistance for new local program staff including the following: Orientation for New Administrators, Annual Meetings for Administrators, Intake and Assessment Specialists’ (IAS) and Instructional Specialists’(IS) ; Designing Career Focused Basic Skills Instruction (LaGuardia College and Career Planning Institute) Learning to Achieve (LINCS); TABE 9& 10; TABE CLAS-E; LACES Beginner and Advanced Training; Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE and ESOL Classroom, ESL Content Standards and two online courses; College and Career Readiness Standards in Adult Education (National Center for Families Learning) and EL/Civics. Sharing sessions were held for IAS and IS and staff involved in transitions.

Professional development initiatives continue to address the need for training in competencies related to the GED®. The state funded three local staff to participate in the GED® Testing Service (GEDTS) train-the trainer opportunity at the annual GEDTS Conference. The state-sponsored trainers will in turn facilitate professional development events for local programs using the GEDTS model.

TESOL was held in Baltimore in April 2016. This created an opportunity for three local staff to receive scholarship assistance to participate in the international conference and share their experience with colleagues in an annual meeting.

The LACES workgroup led by the Accountability Specialist continued their work during the fiscal year. The membership is composed of local leadership team members, primarily MIS. The workgroup engages in regular discussion on ideas to enhance the already robust data reporting capabilities in LACES. During the fiscal year, the group compiled a Data Definitions Dictionary as well as updates to the Data Quality Checklist and Learner Enrollment Form.

*ESL Pro*

Maryland was one of 10 states selected to participate in the ESL Pro Technical Assistance (TA) Project through the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS). This learning opportunity is focused on helping states improve their capacity to serve adult English language learners (ELLs) and prepare to conduct WIOA required activities. Maryland was provided a subject matter expert to guide programs in creating professional development opportunities and resources to build better connections between English language instructional programs and regional high-growth career pathways initiatives. Eight local programs comprised of administrators and ESL instructors participated in the training. Face-to-face meetings with participants were held at the beginning and end of the program.

The main focus of the work centered on the Maryland’s ESL Pro Online Course, which provided skills and resources to prepare adult ELLs for work and career pathways. The semi self-paced program is divided in four units and takes approximately seven weeks to complete. The content covers contextualizing instruction and training; career pathway program design; curriculum and instructional design; and delivery and evaluation and assessment. Practice-oriented resources are used, illustrating current and effective models for preparing ELLs for work and career pathways that can be immediately applied in the classroom. The eight programs are implementing and sustaining the project in FY 17 through locally designed teacher and student training activities and curriculum development.

**Distance Learning**

Currently the Maryland i-Pathways instructional program approved for learning at a distance. The program offers an educational experience that is conducted entirely at a distance and provides outreach to ASE-level learners with barriers to the traditional adult education classroom. Through the program website and online application process, the program attracted 1,742 new applicants to adult education services. Of those, 493 visited a local program to complete the required pre-testing. Of the tested learners, 180 qualified for i-Pathways and 313 did not achieve the cut score and were offered other education options.

In FY 16, a total of 19 online class sessions were held, four of these continued from the previous fiscal year. A total of 270 new learners were served with 49 carrying over into FY 17.

The program continued the practice of purchasing GED® Ready vouchers for participants as an incentive to complete subject area lesson modules. This has become an effective tool in promoting retention. In FY 16, 67% of new learners completed their 15 week online classes. This represents a 12% improvement over FY 15, although retention continues to be a challenge.

In the latter part of FY 16, an upgrade of the online enrollment and data management website was performed to transition to a more modern responsive design and come in line with the i-Pathways Curriculum that upgraded in FY 14. The responsive design provides greater ease of use for interested learners, many of whom use mobile devices, while maintaining all functionality. Currently 25% of traffic comes from devices other than a MAC or PC.

The adult education program will convene a distance learning workgroup in FY 17 to research and recommend online options for distance and blended learning. The number of learners who are able to complete all coursework from a distance is small, however, traditional students often benefit from options that combine classroom time with the available online instruction, providing greater flexibility for parents and working adults. This would also provide another option for i-Pathways participants who find that a program offered completely at a distance is not compatible with their learning style.

**Local Grantee Network**

Twenty- six local programs and Correctional Education received funding through the continuation grant. During the fiscal year, Calvert County Public Schools notified DLLR that they would no longer be able to support the adult education program. A competition was held in the jurisdiction and a current provider, the College of Southern Maryland, applied for and was awarded the grant beginning to begin in July 2016. Over the years the distribution of grants awarded to community colleges has continued to increase as those held by public school systems, formerly the largest grantee representation, declined. Our current grantees are 58% community colleges, 23% public schools and 15% community based organizations. Maryland also funds a public library system and the State Correctional Education Program.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Adult education program managers conducted program evaluation and monitoring throughout the reporting period through a combination of desk review of program data and information, review of quarterly, midyear and final progress reports, and site visits.

Program managers visited local programs to monitor program and instructional practices, provide orientation to new leadership staff and to offer technical assistance for targeted issues including WIOA implementation. Monthly conference calls for the grantee network provided information and updates on federal and state initiatives.

Monitoring is generally performed though the DWDAL Office of Monitoring and Compliance (OMC). In FY 16, monitors from OMC visited all local programs for enrollment data verification. This audit, begun in FY 2015, revealed sources of data accuracy issues and led to greater consistency of data collection methods in local programs. Programs that failed to meet data quality standards were required to submit corrective action plans and provide professional development that involved all staff in understanding the importance consistent data collection methods. Verification of program enrollment data will be conducted annually.

Nine (9) local programs were identified for fiscal monitoring in FY 16 and all were able to demonstrate sound fiscal practices. Although a risk analysis tool is used to prioritize monitoring needs, all grantees will be monitored routinely on a three-year rotational cycle. DWDAL’s fiscal monitors meet with the local program administrator and financial agent to conduct the audit. The adult education program manager may participate as needed.

**Performance Data Analysis**

**Enrollment**

Enrollment numbers increased slightly from 27,993 learners in FY 2015, to 28,689 in FY 2016 likely due to the slow but gradual increase in English Language Learners. This group currently represents 51% of the learner population (50% in FY 2015 and 49% in FY 2014) with Hispanic/ Latino learners representing the largest segment of learners at 42%. The proportion of students enrolled at the ASE level remained unchanged at 10%. The representation of ABE learners is 39%, slightly below FY 2015’s 40%. For age related demographics, the working adults ages 25-44 remain the largest group of the adult education population (52%).

**Literacy Attainment**

Thirty-six percent (36%) of the enrolled students increased an educational functioning level in FY 16 compared to 33% in FY 2015. By category, the ESL population showed the highest completion rate at 40%, with ABE at 30% and ASE at 34%. All levels show an increase over FY 2015. Of the students who remained long enough to post test, 53% completed a level.

**Matched Literacy Level Attainment**

The state pre-post match rate was 66%, an increase over 2015’s 63%. The percentage of students who separated before completing a level dropped from 59% to 57%. Although student retention is still a significant concern, we are encouraged by the upward trend which we attribute to a stronger emphasis on instruction that is aligned with student goals. Additionally, programs report that enforcing program attendance policies has had a positive effect on classroom dynamics and class completions.

**Diploma Attainment**

The total number of high school diplomas awarded to enrolled participants was 1,452 during the fiscal year. The overall rate of the student cohort for both NEDP and GED® is 67%. The score change decision by GEDTS was a significant factor in the state’s increase in GED® completers for both FY 2015 (958) and FY 2016 (1225). Additionally, professional development efforts have impacted instructional design and delivery. Programs have adjusted curriculum offerings to provide shorter and more intensive single-subject classes to meet the needs of learners who have passed sections of the GED®. Programs that have started to use TABE 9 and 10 report a better alignment with skills needed to prepare for the GED®.

The Maryland state legislature continues to provide funding to reduce the cost of the GED® for Maryland residents. With the state contribution, testers pay a reduced fee of $11.25 per section or $45 for the entire test.

During FY 2016, 227 NEDP ® participants successfully completed the requirements for a Maryland High School Diploma. This number represents a 12% increase over the previous fiscal year. Programs have adapted to the more challenging requirements of the new NEDP® program and implemented tutoring and instruction to help prospective students bridge the gap in skills required for qualification, particularly in math and writing.

**Employment**

The rate of learners who entered employment increased from 31% in FY 2015 to 34% in FY 2016. The retained employment measure dropped slightly from 69% (7684) in 2015 to 67% (5081).

**Entered Post- Secondary Education or Training**

This measure has not been completely calculated due to a delay in receiving the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) results. Unfortunately, capturing an accurate account of this data continues to be a challenge. Community colleges in Maryland do not report to NSC the data from Continuing Education courses where adult education students typically enroll. We, therefore, rely on incomplete information from NSC.

Current results from program self-report indicate that 2% of the cohort achieved the outcome, however, this will be revised when NSC data becomes available in January 2017.

Maryland transitioned to the LACES data system in 2014 and, as expected, experienced lower performance during the baseline year, FY 2015. Since transitioning to LACES, programs are able to better analyze data and effectuate changes to improve performance throughout the year. Quarterly data reviews have been an important tool as managers hone their ability to recognize trends and problem areas throughout the year. The results of annual data monitoring have helped programs identify best practices for ensuring high data quality standards.

As the state transitions to meeting WIOA performance requirements, we will provide additional technical assistance to program leadership team members to identify performance issues and discuss locally based solutions for program improvement.

**Integration with One Stop Partners**

Maryland required Local Workforce Development Agencies to submit local plans by September 30, 2016, including a description of service alignment with local partners. In their instruction to the Local Workforce Development Boards, DWDAL required that Title II providers be involved in developing the Local Plan. DWDAL will monitor this process to ensure that adult education input is included. Resource Sharing Agreements will be negotiated on the State level based on adult education students’ use of One Stop services.

**Integration English Literacy and Civics Education (IELC) Program (AEFLA Section 243)**

A total of 19 programs were awarded EL Civics funds through the statewide FY 2011 AEFLA competitive application process. Maryland’s State Plan allowed for a continuation of EL/Civics programming during the FY 2016 transition period. During FY 2016, 4,523 learners enrolled in EL/Civics programming; of these, 3982 met their goals to achieve citizenship skills and or to receive U.S. citizenship. During FY 2016, DWDAL provided guidelines to Local Workforce Development Boards for local plan development and set a September 30th deadline for submission. All plans are to be approved and implemented in January 2017 and the Adult Education Request for Proposals (RFP) will be released in mid- January 2017. Applicants may apply for IELCE funds to implement activities described in section 243 during the competitive application process. Information about IELCE programming and allowable uses of these funds was provided to current providers and will be described in detail in the RFP and technical assistance briefing. We foresee the need for additional technical assistance when grant awards are finalized so that all providers are prepared to provide the three program elements and to partner with the local workforce development area and other partners to deliver integrated education and training

**Adult Education Standards**

Maryland adopted the Career and College Readiness Standards for Adult Education to provide a consistent and shared expectation across all adult education programs of the knowledge, skills and abilities need to provide a seamless transition into post-secondary education and the workforce and align with the K-12 Common Core State Standards implementation. Adult students earn a Maryland High School Diploma that is jointly signed by the Secretary of the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation and the President of the State Board of Education and the high school credentialing paths, the GED® 2014 and NEDP® are aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards.

Professional development efforts have focused on a train-the-trainer model. The online course, *College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult* *Education*, by The Center for Families Learning has been a valuable resource in promoting a better understanding of the standards and how to integrate them in curriculum.

In June 2016, three local staff members and the Professional Development Specialist attended the OCTAE College and Career Readiness Standards Institute in June 2016 and received technical assistance in developing a CCRS Implementation Plan. A team was formed to develop a toolkit to support standards implementation in Maryland. The Professional Development Specialist will continue to oversee this effort and facilitate statewide implementation with the state- supported trainers.

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

The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) will be unable to release a full year’s recidivism rate until July of 2017, based on their method of calculation for each fiscal year. Recidivism numbers for each event are compiled for each fiscal year, for three years after release. For FY 2016, the last released inmate from the cohort is June 30, 2016.

Although a partial year’s recidivism rate was run, actual numbers cannot be released externally until the information is complete. From the data that was collected, the inmates in LACES show a very low rate of recidivism when compared to the overall population, indicating a successful program.

DPSCS follows the rules established by the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA) for use in their Performance Based Measures System (PBMS). Fiscal Year 2016 is the first year that DPSCS will be able to calculate inmate recidivism for the following reasons: the last mainframe- based recidivism program, RISC, became unstable. The last cohort processed from RISC was FY 2009. The three year results were published in 2013; a new Offender Case Management System (OCMS) was placed in production but a migration decision to only migrate the inmate’s last release prevents calculation of recidivism for previous years; while OCMS went into production in July 2014, the intake and release data did not become stable until change notes were implemented in the fall of 2014.

A release cohort is created after the end of a Fiscal Year and processed against OCMS. An inmate whose new sentence after release has an offense date that is prior to the release date is excluded from cohort processing. The most common reason for this is split consecutive sentencing.

Recidivism is counted for the following events:

* The inmate has a technical violation while on Community Supervision and is returned to DOC custody.
* The inmate is found guilty of a new offense and court paroled to Community Supervision
* The inmate is found guilty of a new offense and sentenced to DOC custody.

When one of these events occurs, the inmate is no longer processed for that cohort. If the inmate is released again, the new release will be added to the cohort for that fiscal year.