

New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Adult Literacy Programs

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title II

Narrative Report Program Year 2015
(July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016)



December 2016

New Jersey Narrative Report 2015-2016

As required, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJLWD) spent much of the Program Year 2015 (PY15) developing and finalizing its Combined State Plan. Many of the changes listed within the now approved state plan were introduced and implemented for the PY15 grant year as preparation for future expectations and assurance that New Jersey is in line with the regulations set by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The NJLWD is committed to providing excellent adult literacy services to better prepare our workforce and meet the needs of citizens who require instruction in basic education or English as a second language, or assistance in obtaining Citizenship or citizenship services.

State Leadership Funds

(a) New Jersey has used funds made available under section 223 (State Leadership activities) in the following ways:

- As stated in last year's final narrative report New Jersey was selected as one of 13 states to participate in the Moving Pathways Forward grant managed by Kratos Learning. This opportunity allows New Jersey to utilize the grant as the springboard to advance discussions across multiple state departments for purposes of building our own career pathways network. During the 2015 program year New Jersey held a Career Pathways summit that was designed to begin the discussion of a Career Pathway pilot project in two counties specifically between the Title II programs and the local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs).
 - Atlantic Cape Community College developed a career pathway to becoming a Certified Front Desk Attendant. Their target population was English as a Second Language (ESL) level 3 students. The program length was 280 hours over an 8 week period of time. The pilot was funded through a partnership with the local WDB to cover the training costs. The pilot yielded impressive outcomes; 100% passed both of the certification exams (Guest Service Gold Program Certification & Front Desk Certification) and almost half of the students gained full time permanent employment or enrolled in credit classes at Atlantic Cape Community College.
 - Union County Community College developed a career pathway to becoming a Patient Care Technician. They are partnering with the One-Stop counselors and college student service advisors to seek funding for training. The pilot will not be completed until PY2016.
- The NJLWD's goal is to promote and provide high quality professional development to our adult literacy programs throughout the State of New Jersey. In an effort to uphold and maintain the excellence of instructional programs in adult literacy, WIOA Title II grant recipients must submit yearly professional development plans which identify their specific needs. The NJLWD Literacy Services Unit plans to address these needs in the coming fiscal year through professional development opportunities. During PY 2015-2016, the following professional development initiatives were undertaken:
 - NJLWD has built a dynamic relationship with the LINCS Region 1 Professional Development Center. In doing so, we have connected our consortia and their partner agencies with a multitude of free professional development webinar opportunities. A 10 page listing of free online courses and tools was disseminated with multiple offerings in the areas of Assessments, Career Pathways, College and Career Readiness, Differentiated

Instruction, Engagement and Motivation, English Language Learning, Evidence-Based Instruction, Learning Disabilities, Math/Numeracy, Reading, Science, Technology, and Writing.

- Statewide Disability Awareness Trainings were provided to the WIOA Title II frontline staff in an effort to better serve our adult learners with disabilities. New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) presented 3 regional trainings providing information and invaluable resources to the attendees. The training was extremely well received and we are looking to partner with DVR again to provide additional training on the topic of learning disabilities.
 - The Department of Labor and Workforce Development has established a collaboration with Dr. Alisa Belzer, Rutgers University Graduate School of Education, to build professional development leadership capacity as a key step in establishing a comprehensive statewide professional development system. This initiative will be implemented in PY2016.
- For national reporting standards compliance the state continued to utilize LiteracyPro Systems, Inc. as its management information system (MIS), which provides New Jersey's student record management and reporting system, Literacy Adult and Community Education System (LACES). Training was provided by LiteracyPro Systems to all WIOA Title II staff. State staff review LACES data on a regular basis and provide technical assistance to any program having difficulty with data input or output. In order to better assist our grantees, targeted trainings for the LACES database were also provided. These trainings were customized to each grantee and provided clear guidance specifically applicable to the grantee's individual data. It is our belief that these trainings have been an asset to cleaning up the data collection issues that existed in the past.

Statewide trainings were planned to provide WIOA Title II program providers a working knowledge of the NJ Career Connections website, which provides users direct access to career navigation resources, including interactive tools and useful resources such as a directory of training programs, information on hundreds of careers, and advice and guidance on a wide variety of topics. In addition, the website will help jobseekers learn how to network, find employment, and prepare for interviews.

- Grantees of the Literacy Innovations grant presented their project summary and findings. The Literacy Innovations grant, supported by our State Leadership funds, provided funding for eligible training providers to upgrade curriculum and instructional practices to be in line with the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), or to create a pilot to expand current service delivery.

The vision for the NJLWD WIOA Title II unit was expanded to include the addition of state staff with educational qualifications and expertise to help expand the reach of the unit into grantee and partner site classrooms. The requirements for the new state staff included: the attainment of a Master's degree in a related field, four years of professional experience with an emphasis on curriculum, training, and program development, and possession of a valid New Jersey Standard Teacher's Certificate. State education staff hired as part of the NJLWD WIOA Title II Unit are expected to develop rapport with program directors and instructors to further address the needs of grantee/partner sites, and to share common unit directives under WIOA. The overarching goals of the new NJLWD WIOA Title II unit staff will also include addressing the professional development needs of instructors, and providing guidance to grantee/partner sites in aligning their curricula to the College and Career Readiness Standards.

All instructors were surveyed in an effort to assess the professional development needs and wants

on the local levels. The results of this survey have helped and will continue to help direct the focus of our professional development efforts.

In an effort to promote best practices throughout the state, three committees were developed in the areas of Data Collection & Performance, Managed Enrollment, and Curriculum/Standards. Each of the Best Practice Committees is made up of Lead Agency Directors who have volunteered based on their expertise in those specific areas. The committees will meet regularly, in person or remotely, and will have the opportunity to provide updates at the quarterly Directors' Roundtable Meetings. The quarterly Directors' Roundtable Meetings are in-person meetings held in Trenton that include all WIOA Title II lead agency directors for each of the 17 consortia, and provide an opportunity for directors and NJLWD staff to discuss policy and program topics including federal and state requirements.

(b) New Jersey has used funds for additional permissible activities described in section 223(a)(2) in the following ways:

- In order to better align New Jersey's WIOA Title II programs with the federally recognized standards and data measures, the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) formally adopted the CCRS for Adult Education as the standards for New Jersey's Adult Literacy system effective January 2016. Recognizing the need to train our adult educators about the key shifts in instruction and curriculum design that will support the implementation of the CCRS, we have begun the process of contracting with StandardsWork and Susan Pimentel to help New Jersey build an implementation team that can drive the use and understanding of CCRS across the state. This team will consist of approximately 60 adult educators as well as our Educational State staff. The training of the implementation team will occur in PY2016.

A major area of concern expressed throughout the WIOA Title II provider community is student retention rates. As part of the professional development contract with Rutgers University Graduate School of Education and Dr. Alisa Belzer, the training to build professional development capacity will focus on the topic of improving student retention.

Each WIOA Title II consortium was provided a professional development award to address the individual training needs of the consortium. These "consortium professional development trainings" specifically targeted staff training activities, which were not provided by the NJLWD.

In summary, 62 separate professional development activities were provided by the NJLWD serving a total of 834 participants.

Performance Data Analysis

In PY 2015, our programs collectively met 14 out of the 15 core indicators of performance, missing the *Entered Employment* indicator by just 2%.

Educational Functioning Level (EFL) gain performance targets for PY 2015 were established and agreed upon by the NJLWD literacy staff in collaboration with the USDOE. Performance targets for the core outcome follow-up measures were established by New Jersey and provided to WIOA Title II programs. A comparison of New Jersey's performance targets for PY 2013, 2014, and 2015 and our actual performance toward meeting the targets is provided in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1: New Jersey Adult Education Performance for the last three years

Performance Objectives	PY13 Target	PY13 Performance	PY14 Target	PY 14 Performance	PY15 Target	PY 15 Performance
ABE Beginning Literacy	32%	33%	39%	48%	44%	48%
ABE Beginning Basic Education	32%	31%	38%	42%	36%	47%
ABE Intermediate Low	32%	30%	36%	42%	37%	43%
ABE Intermediate High	30%	24%	35%	34%	27%	35%
ASE Low	25%	23%	33%	34%	34%	36%
ESL Beginning Literacy	35%	37%	40%	46%	40%	49%
ESL Beginning Low	39%	43%	49%	49%	47%	59%
ESL Beginning High	40%	47%	48%	50%	49%	60%
ESL Intermediate Low	40%	41%	45%	52%	42%	56%
ESL Intermediate High	35%	30%	38%	35%	34%	43%
ESL Advanced	23%	24%	25%	36%	25%	37%
Entered Employment	32%	52%	35%	54%	53%	51%
Retained Employment	40%	95%	65%	98%	70%	98%
HSE or Diploma	39%	66%	75%	87%	76%	91%
Entered Postsecondary	30%	12%	20%	19%	22%	30%

This chart shows data over the past three years on educational gains in the areas of: Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and English Language Acquisition (ELA). The chart also includes data on the follow up measures: entered employment, retained employment, receipt of a secondary diploma or New Jersey state issued diploma, and entry into post-secondary education or training. Over the last three years, New Jersey has demonstrated significant improvement in all of the 11 EFL gain areas and in all of the core outcome follow-up measures.

In the past, the post-secondary education or training outcome has been a difficult outcome to meet and New Jersey has struggled to meet this benchmark due to the inability to data-match for this outcome. However, New Jersey increased its performance this year to 1,402 individuals who entered post-secondary education or training. This is an increase of 502 from last year. Our target for this outcome was 22% and we exceeded meeting our target by 8%. The High School Equivalency (HSE) PY 2015 performance outcome is 982 which is a decrease of 119 from last year. Discussions with providers suggest the new HSE exams are proving to be more difficult for students to pass. In addition, the inability to data match on the new HSE tests has also contributed to the slight decrease in the number of participants obtaining a HSE.

During PY 2015, educational services and instruction to adults were provided through a wide variety of program offerings including: ABE, ELA, volunteer literacy programs, adult high school programs, HSE test preparation, and programs at correctional facilities and other state institutions.

For PY 2015, WIOA Title II programs served 19,474 adult participants. The populations served included 8,040 ABE participants, 986 ASE participants and 10,448 ELA participants. Chart 2 provides a breakdown of participants by EFL for PY 2014 and PY 2015 demonstrating some of the fluctuation that occurs in New Jersey's WIOA Title II participants from one year to another.

Chart 2: New Jersey Adult Education Participants

Educational Functioning Level	PY 2014 Total Enrollment	PY 2015 Total Enrollment
ABE Beginning Literacy	741	649
ABE Beginning Basic Education	1,920	1,889
ABE Intermediate Low	3,138	3,035
ABE Intermediate High	2,708	2,467

ASE Low	797	695
ASE High	329	291
ESL Beginning Literacy	5,078	4,450
ESL Beginning Low	2,208	1,800
ESL Beginning High	1,538	1,420
ESL Intermediate Low	1,423	1,234
ESL Intermediate High	1,198	1,072
ESL Advanced	616	472
Total	21,694	19,474

The ABE/ELA and Integrated English Language and Civics Education (IELCE) program services were delivered through 17 consortia and lead agencies with multiple delivery sites throughout the counties coordinated by the individual consortium, community/technical colleges or public and private non-profit agencies and New Jersey State correctional institutions. Together, 81 agencies participated in delivering services in PY 2015.

The ELA programs are offered at many different venues from literacy-based volunteer programs to adult education programs. The programs provide services from ESL Beginning Literacy to Advanced Level ESL. For the volunteer-based programs, services are provided through the use of tutor-learner matches that deliver one-on-one or small-group tutorial services.

The majority of the ELA students served (43%) were assessed at the ESL Beginning Literacy EFL. This information is reflected in chart 3 below. This population may only understand isolated words or phrases, may have no or minimal reading or writing skills in any language, and functions minimally or not at all in English. A total of 19,474 students were served in the WIOA Title II program for PY 2015; 10,448 of them were ELA students. New Jersey met six out of six ELA EFL gain targets for PY 2015. This can be attributed to technical assistance and targeted training focused on managed enrollment, accurate data entry, improved inter-agency staff communication, case management and effective assessment procedures. Provider agencies were required to provide a system of support services (either on-site or through community referral) to allow adults the opportunity to participate in programs that would assist them in obtaining and retaining employment.

Chart 3: New Jersey Adult Education Participants in Programs for Adults with Limited English Proficiency

Educational Functioning Level	Total Number of ELA Students - PY 2015	Total Percentage of ELA Students - PY 2015
ESL Beginning Literacy	4,450	43%
ESL Beginning Low	1,800	17%
ESL Beginning High	1,420	14%
ESL Intermediate Low	1,234	12%
ESL Intermediate High	1,072	10%
ESL Advanced	472	5%
Total	10,448	100%

In PY 2015 the NJLWD utilized a data matching process that allows participants with the cohort designation of either *entered employment* or *retained employment* who also provide a social security number to be matched against wage records. The NJLWD has worked closely with program providers and LiteracyPro to eliminate any errors in the process and to ensure that program providers are doing their best to capture participants' social security numbers, resulting in a much larger number of captured positive outcomes. Chart 4 below shows the total number of participants that achieved employment, training, and educational outcomes for PY 2015.

Chart 4: Core Outcome Follow-up Data: New Jersey Adult Education Participant Employment, Postsecondary, and Educational Achievements

Indicator	Number of Participants Achieving Outcome PY 2014	Number of Participants Achieving Outcome PY 2015
Enter Employment	2,841	1,836
Retain Employment	8,223	8,148
Entered Postsecondary Education/Training	900	1,402
Obtained Secondary School Diploma	1,101	982

Educational opportunities were provided to adults via programs ranging from ABE Beginning Literacy to ASE High to prepare adults to:

- enroll and participate in the appropriate level of an adult education program and receive ancillary support services if necessary;
- move to the next EFL based on program performance;
- sit for the HSE test and, if successful, receive a New Jersey state issued diploma; or
- graduate from an adult high school.

The NJLWD made a variety of investments to help individuals obtain their high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, improve their basic math, reading and writing skills and attain basic English and computer proficiencies necessary for employment. The NJLWD utilizes state funding to enhance adult education alternatives directly related to welfare registrants, dislocated workers and other jobseekers.

There are 30 Workforce Learning Link (WLL) labs throughout the state. The majority of these labs are located at the One-Stop Career Centers (OSCCs). Through a combined training approach and computer-based instruction, the WLLs provide services that include basic computer literacy, financial literacy, job search and employability skills, and HSE preparation and testing. This effort has allowed New Jersey to expand its literacy services to provide interactive training services that allow participants to address individual employment-related issues at their own pace. For PY 2015, the state’s 30 WLL facilities helped approximately 3,836 individuals raise their basic skill levels, obtain employment, enter training, and obtain their HSE using computer labs in OSCCs throughout the state. This is an increase of 836 EFL gains and performance outcomes from PY 2014.

During the performance period, grantees were required to integrate an English language/civics education component. The goal of this program is to create voluntary partnerships among federal, state and local agencies to develop, implement and improve English literacy and civics education services. These services are intended to help immigrants and others with limited English proficiency develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become active and informed parents, workers and community members and achieve in-demand employment leading to economic self-sufficiency.

Types of activities supported by these funds included:

- provision of experiential learning opportunities including completing employment forms, completing the voter registration process, engaging participants in volunteer opportunities and linkages with community resources;
- provision of computers and software for instruction;
- citizen preparation including visiting of polling places and government buildings in the state capital;
- field trips to promote American cultural awareness and skills; and

- preparation of curricula focusing on issues of importance to non-citizens such as preparation for becoming a U.S. citizen, job training and placement, housing, parenting and civics preparation.

New Jersey leads the nation in cultural diversity; there are over 140 spoken languages and various dialects spoken in the state. The IELCE programs support the immigrant community and other limited English proficient populations. During PY 2015, 3,544 participants were served through the IELCE program and 329 participants passed their citizenship exam. The ELA population represented approximately 54% of all the students being served in the WIOA Title II program, and 43% of these students were assessed at the Beginning ESL Literacy EFL. This specific population has very limited reading or writing skills in any language and may function minimally or not at all in English. These limitations directly affect a participant's ability to meet the goals of entering employment in a timely manner.

The IELCE program emphasizes contextualized instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and U.S. history and government, in accordance with the *National Standards for Civics and Government* and *CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education*; (CIVITAS sets forth in detail the civic knowledge, skills, dispositions, and commitments necessary for effective citizenship in the 21st century). This type of contextualized instruction is infused into all of our ABE/ELA and IELCE instructional programs, including those in our correctional facilities and mental health state institutions/agency programs.

Integration with One-Stop Partners

New Jersey requires all grant applicants to ensure that their program plans are in line with the literacy needs of counties where services are to be provided. New Jersey held summits and meetings encouraging adult educators to be active participants in the development of the WIOA state plan specifically describing the State's strategic priorities and operation activities for adult education and workforce preparation. In the upcoming program year's NGO, it will be indicated that WDBs will be charged with reviewing adult education funding proposals to ensure alignment with local plans and county literacy needs. In addition, New Jersey requires that by January 2017, all WIOA Title II grantees must establish and provide Memoranda of Understanding with their local WDB and One-Stop system. This requirement will serve to ensure seamless referral, co-enrollment, and transitional processes for participants in need of both Title II and other WIOA services (e.g. Title I).

The One-Stop system in New Jersey provides career-counseling services to assist participants with interviewing skills, résumé writing, job search strategies, job readiness, employer expectations, and possible referrals to meet participants' individual goals. The One-Stop system provides ABE/ESL/IELCE participants with a connection to opportunities for occupational training, certification and licensing programs to enhance their employability.

A number of NJ counties have implemented the co-location of the One-Stop system and other NJLWD-granted service providers (e.g., providers of Title II services). It is anticipated that this model will be expanded, which will allow for the sharing of One-Stop infrastructure costs among multiple partners.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program

New Jersey is using funds under Section 243 to support the following activities under the IELCE program:

- New Jersey held a competition in the 2012-2013 Program Year. Seventeen grants were awarded. It is expected that 2016-2017 Program Year will be competitive.

- Efforts are currently in the planning stages as final regulations were late coming therefore providing insufficient time for a task that requires significant change and planning to the current design. New Jersey will require in its upcoming NGO for Program Year 2017-2018 that grantees offer IELCE services in combination with integrated education and training services (IET). New Jersey holds quarterly Directors' Roundtable meetings and New Jersey's State Director has indicated that this will be a grant requirement for the coming program year. Adult educators will be tasked with offering IET services either on their own or in collaboration with appropriate partners to design and carry out IET programs to meet the needs of participants.
- A significant number of New Jersey's WIOA Title II programs have hired job coaches, transition coaches and/or case managers to concentrate exclusively on assisting participants in addressing and removing barriers to obtaining, retaining, or improving employment. While New Jersey conducts data matching and often meets its employment performance benchmarks, a large number of its English language learners either do not have or are hesitant to provide their social security numbers, therefore preventing data match results from being as strong as they could be. New Jersey faces challenges such as a transient immigrant population, substantial seasonal employment, participants' transportation and childcare issues, and shifting the mindset of the grantees toward employment and the provision of concurrent services. These challenges can be addressed through effective case management, managed enrollment, nontraditional hours of instruction, and strict yet reasonable attendance policies.
- New Jersey is working towards the goal of ensuring that IELCE programs are integrated with the local workforce development system (see page 7).

Adult Education Standards

The state of New Jersey utilizes the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) as their K-12 standard to build the skills and knowledge of students in kindergarten through grade twelve. The CCRS are utilized as the adult education standard currently in New Jersey. Very much like the NJSLS standards, the CCRS provide a clear scope, sequence and collection of objectives to meet the various needs of adult learners.

The CCRS reflect the following qualities of the NJSLS in Language Arts/Literacy: exposing students to appropriately complex texts in both instruction and assessment; prioritization of textual evidence across the domains of reading, writing, and speaking and listening, which has been found to be a widely utilized college and career readiness skill; and utilization of nonfiction to help build upon prior knowledge. This is a focus not only on English Language Arts, but also on literacy across the disciplines of science, social studies, and technical subjects. Informational text makes up the vast majority of required reading in college and the workplace. Additionally, the CCRS reflect the following qualities of the NJSLS in mathematics: an emphasis on numeracy throughout grade levels to create a bridge of learning; use of appropriate concepts and tools even when not prompted, and emphasis on processes and proficiencies.

The NJLWD Literacy Unit has researched the importance of creating partnerships through guided efforts, and plans to create a contract with Susan Pimentel (author of the 2013 College and Career Readiness Standards currently implemented in NJ) to train NJLWD staff and select members of Title II

programs to become more familiar with the CCRS, implementation of, and assessment in Title II programs in the future.

Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals

The NJLWD was informed by the Research and Evaluation unit at the New Jersey Department of Corrections that the most recent recidivism data was published and dated 2012 and can be found on the department's website at the following link: http://www.state.nj.us/corrections/pages/offender_stats.html. The report includes the methodology used to determine the recidivism outcomes with more recent data being forthcoming as the re-incarceration rate for 2015 has not yet been published.

This recidivism report is not disaggregated, but rather for the entire population. They are exploring how they can provide this data specifically on the WIOA Title II population in the future.

In conclusion, New Jersey acknowledges that adult literacy is a critical component to preparing our workforce for the future. We face many challenges in improving the landscape of adult literacy and employment opportunities; however, through the implementation of the College and Career Readiness Standards and the Career Pathways program, we will continue to provide participants with the opportunity to improve their English proficiency, earn credentials that enhance employability, and obtain employment that provides sustainable income.