**Maine Narrative Report 2016-17**

AEFLA leadership activities from July 1, 2016- June 30, 2017 were focused on establishing foundational knowledge of the work of our WIOA core partners, forming partnerships of trust, and seeking alignment of services.

**1. State Leadership Funds (AEFLA Section 223)**

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

* **Alignment with other one-stop partners- section 223(1)(a)**

In 2016, the four core partners built on the foundation of collaboration that started with the passage of WIOA and began focusing on implementation of items in the State Plan. MDOL hired a project manager to develop a project management tool, facilitate the group’s meetings and track progress. Each action item was extracted from the State Plan along with notation of the party responsible, timeline and status reports. This group focused on the higher-level view of overall alignment. It has been a long process, but the other core partners are beginning to gain a better understanding of how integrated adult education and literacy services can accelerate entry into workforce training programs or employment and aid in retention. There has long been the view that referring one-stop clients to adult education slows them on their path to employment. With historically low unemployment rates, MDOL moved even very low level adults into entry level jobs. We are beginning to see a change in that mind-set as the discussions about integrated education and training are being held.

To aid in Plan implementation, sub-committees of partners were convened to deal with specific Plan topics. Adult education was present and contributed to the work of the following sub-committees: universal access group (to prepare statewide partner guidelines); the needs assessment and RFP committee for a platform that will allow for gathering, sharing and reporting on data regarding common clients; the adult degree completion group to address barriers to attainment of workforce and educational goals; and next steps to delivering effective inter-agency professional development. Adult education is on target to meet its obligations as outlined in the state plan.

* **Establishment or operation of a high quality professional development program**

The State Office has designed an approach to professional development that maintains quality while recognizing the geographical and logistical challenges local service providers face in largely rural Maine. Professional development is categorized into three types: in-person, blended, and distance/online learning.

**In-Person:** For trainings that focus on large-scale topics that have been adopted statewide, such as standards implementation and research-based instructional topics and practices, the State Office hosts teachers, administrators, and staff (as appropriate) in a centrally-located training. This has included the LINCS Adult Numeracy Instruction and Adults Reaching Algebra Readiness mathematics trainings, and World of Work Inventory interpretation training. This live, large cohort approach is also implemented twice yearly for local service provider administrators to address high-impact topics around WIOA.

**Blended:** A blended model of professional development offers both a distance learning element and an in-person module. The training may include a kick-off or culminating in-person event with follow-up online course elements that include opportunities to try new practices and report back, discussions, or submissions of progress reports or assignments. This included a book study for the book, *New Teacher of Adults,* and CCRS-SIA implementation trainings.

**Distance/Online:** Routine professional development that offers multiple entry points and refreshers for the field occurs entirely online (facilitated or self-directed) and/or through video conferencing or webinar platforms. This included new teacher orientation, CCRS-SIA implementation trainings, and Reading Apprenticeship.

**Support mechanism:** The State Office collaborates with experienced, high-performing practitioners and invests in training trainers who can support professional development efforts and priorities and provide support regionally when needed. The Group feature in the learning management system, Schoology, also allows participants in professional development an opportunity to continue the conversation and sharing outside of the course.

The State Office team includes a full-time professional development coordinator whose primary responsibility is to assess and meet the professional development needs of practitioners in the field. Needs and areas of focus are determined annually as each provider completes an assessment of their needs. The Local service providers capture these professional development needs and goals on their Career Pathways (CP) plans. Their results, along with state office initiatives and priorities are shared with the field. Programs then have the opportunity to offer feedback to the State Office on which topics will be most helpful for them to reach their program goals and objectives. The State Office uses the feedback to plan professional development and technical assistance.

Resources, such as professional development events, articles, and examples and models of promising practices are disseminated to the field through a professional development portal, a statewide listserv, and a distribution list to local service providers. The professional development portal lists all State Office sponsored or facilitated opportunities, tracks event registration, accommodations, and completions, and allows users to manage their transcripts for certification purposes. A statewide listserv, moderated by the State Office, publicizes news, articles, and opportunities both internal and external to the State Office. The distribution list is also used in the marketing and announcement protocol of all training opportunities sponsored by the State Office. The State Professional Development Coordinator maintains an archive of events that are recorded and shares the links with the field, as well as archiving them in the State Office Technical Assistance Schoology group.

State Office personnel attend relevant and appropriate federal and regional technical assistance trainings such as the OCTAE Shop Talks, annual state directors meeting, high school completion conference, NASDAE National Training Institute, and those offered in-person and online by the National Reporting System. Those who participate then report back to local service providers and relevant partners information, materials, and guidance relating to how we conduct and improve our work.

Local providers and regional alliances also offer professional development to their practitioners that is more program or region specific. The Maine Adult Education Association (MAEA) hosts professional development opportunities and engages with the state office regarding suitable topics for their annual conference.

* **The provision of technical assistance to eligible providers**

The State Office provides technical assistance in the context of the statewide Title II professional development system, pursuant to program monitoring activities and as needed by individual local providers and one-stop partners based on performance, demographics, or staff changes. These have included the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate, in the following 2016-2017 events:

**Reading, writing, speaking:** CCRS ELA standards implementation, Reading Apprenticeship, HiSET essay training, Career-Infused Adult Basic Education

**Mathematics:** Adult Numeracy Instruction (ANI), Adults Reaching Algebra Readiness (AR)^2, Deepening Mathematics Concepts, What Matters Now? Moving Your Mathematics Instruction Forward, CCRS Mathematics standards Implementation

**English language acquisition programs:** Skillful Communication: Integrated English Literacy & Civics Education,

**Distance Education:** IDEAL Consortium Distance Learning 101

**Staff Training:** Navigating the Waters of Adult Education, New Teacher of Adults book study, World of Work Inventory, Level 1 & 2 Training, WorkReady Facilitator and updated curriculum Training, eCASAS Implementation Training, HiSET Examiner training, data training (collecting, analyzing, reporting)

To support the development of technical assistance in presenting proven and promising practices, the State Office continues to collaborate with WIOA partners in studying and piloting collaborative projects to support WIOA goals for AEFLA-eligible clients.

* **Assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies.**

Beginning in 2015-2016, the State Office adopted Schoology as a learning management system to provide both a model of online learning and a repository for educational materials and resources. State Office personnel continue to train local service providers in how to navigate the system and encouraged providers to develop and offer online or blended opportunities for their learners. Courses offered by local service providers include courses in workforce preparation, writing, and mathematics. In October 2016, we held our first online Schoology courses for Maine’s CCRS implementation in both ELA and mathematics. The courses were developed from content that was previously delivered in-person, and the online courses now allow us to reach a larger audience and hold the courses at least three times a year. Phase 3 of the implementation, the CCRS-SIA Observation Toolkit, was developed as a blended model which includes online work on Schoology and a Zoom meeting where participants learn about the tool and practice as a group.

In addition to Schoology, the State Office assisted local programs in transitioning both HiSET and CASAS assessment protocols to computer-based platforms by January 2017 and continues to support them with technical assistance.

In May 2017, the State Office finalized a Distance Learning policy and guidance for the field. Eight programs have submitted and received approval for their distance learning plans. We will continue to review and revise the policy and guidance as we work with programs in implementing their plans.

* **The monitoring and evaluation**

The Maine State Office, along with its contractors and partners, maintains a consistent monitoring and evaluation system of the AEFLA programs. This includes post-event satisfaction and usefulness surveys, analysis of Career Pathways plans, analysis of local AEFLA reporting, and longitudinal data analysis. The State Office continues to conduct numerous trainings and technical assistance activities including providing models and information on proven practices within Maine programs, such as its Top Performer webinar series. These webinars highlight connections between technical assistance and professional development offerings that resulted in improved program outcomes. The State Office continues to provide training for local providers in meeting the new performance measurements of WIOA at bi-annual meetings and in webinars, as well as providing AEFLA providers with research-based, promising practice trainings and technical assistance in instructional practice, the use of technology, data collection, and analysis.

**1(b) PERMISSIBLE ACTIVITIES—**

The State Office also contracts with outside agencies and individuals to conduct state leadership activities. These contracts, funded through the leadership activities portion of the AEFLA grant, provide a variety of services to support the grantees. The contracts are in the areas of:

**Assessment and Accountability:** Tracking the progress and successes of students and the performance of local programs through a standardized assessment system allows the State Office to determine if programs are meeting their goals and objectives. Use of the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) provides a common assessment for all levels of ABE, ELL, and ASE/HSE, including IET programs. Local service providers can access program-specific data results and are given technical assistance on analyzing the data for local reporting, program planning, and instructional purposes.

**Technology and Distance Learning:** The State Office promotes, models, and provides support around technology integration at the program administration and classroom levels. A contract with a learning management system, Schoology, allowed for a space for online and blended professional development instruction and for local service providers to develop student-level online learning opportunities. Membership in the IDEAL consortium allowed the State Office to offer a facilitated course to help programs develop and implement a distance learning plan. The membership also included technical assistance for the State Office to develop a distance learning policy and guidance for the field. A contract continues with a web developer to provide services for the Maine Adult Education PD Portal, a one-stop, web-based destination for locating, registering, and tracking professional development.

**Professional Development:** Leadership funds supported contracts that delivered high-quality professional development through our train the trainer model. The State Office identifies experienced, high-performing practitioners at the local level and invests in their training so that professional development efforts and priorities can be supported regionally, as needed. The State Office also contracted with national level experts in the areas of IELCE, mathematics instruction, integrating standards, and regionalization efforts. Funds also supported State Office personnel in training in Universal Design for Learning and Academic and Career Advising.

**2016-2017 Professional Development by Category**

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| **Category** | **Number of events** |
| Assessment (academic/career services) | 8 |
| College and Career Readiness | 15 |
| Data Collection and Analysis | 8 |
| Administrator/Leadership | 16 |
| Corrections | 1 |
| Learning Technology | 5 |
| WorkReady | 3 |
| WIOA/AEFLA | 3 |
| Contextualized Instruction/Career Infused | 1 |
| ESOL | 1 |
| Other (external to, supported by state office) | 6 |

**2.Performance Data Analysis:**

**Measurable Skill Gain –** In the 2016-2017 academic year, there was a statewide, concentrated effort to improve the performance outcomes of local providers. Fourteen recorded webinars were conducted throughout the year, including six Top Performer webinars focused on local provider performance measures and outcomes. There were also 8 data-specific, face to face trainings and 20 site visits to local providers throughout the year. In addition to increased awareness, a funding incentive was established to award additional money to local providers meeting their performance measure targets. These efforts along with the WIOA updated measurable skill gain definitions, produced strong improvements statewide in several core indicators of performance for Maine. Most notably, Maine surpassed our target completion rate with an overall completion rate of 36%. This is the highest completion rate in five years and continues our trend of slow, steady improvement in Maine.



**Posttest Percentage –** Although overall enrollment was down 6% in 2016-2017, more learners were post-tested than in the previous year. Thus, Maine’s overall posttest percent increased to 65% statewide, surpassing our 60% posttest benchmark for the first time. This is a 10% jump from last year, and a clear indication that the state led effort to increase awareness and incentivize performance outcomes is having a positive impact on local provider effectiveness.

**High School Completion –** The percent of learners who have achieved their high school credential is essentially the same as last year, (FY16-19.7%, FY17-20.6%) even though overall enrollment was down by 368 learners. While it is still too early to fully calculate the exit-based performance measures for these completers, we are confident we will be able to accurately collect and report this data as required next year by working with the National Student Clearinghouse database and the Maine Department of Labor.

**Employment and Median Wage Outcomes –** Maine continues to make progress both addressing and implementing the exit-based outcome data collection requirement as outline under WIOA. Throughout the 2016 – 2017 academic year, Maine Adult Education has been working collaboratively with the Department of Labor to develop a comprehensive and accurate method for reporting the employment rate and median wage data. Development and pilot testing of the MaineEARNS Data Sharing Portal was conducted throughout the past year and completed in October of 2017. Maine Adult Education has a signed MOU with the Department of Labor that allows us to obtain aggregate employment and median wage data through a data match with this system. Initial data was submitted through this system and processed successfully in August of 2017. It is still too soon to fully calculate the employment and median wage data, but this information will be fully available for next year’s reports. Next year we will focus on social security release practices statewide in an effort to improve the data match percentage and employment outcomes for the coming year.

**Postsecondary Enrollment –** The percentage of learners who entered postsecondary education is currently incomplete. It is important to note that Maine has a robust statewide college transitions model. The most recent postsecondary match for the Maine College Transitions (MCT) cohort indicates that 32% have gone on to postsecondary education. Historically, this percentage has been much higher than the percent included and reported in the federal NRS tables, due in part to incomplete assessment data from the MCT cohort. Many are assessed using only the ACCUPLACER assessment and not the CASAS assessment as well, so they are unable to count under the federal reports. As enrollment for college transitions continues to expand, we have increased awareness of this issue and will strengthen our efforts to better collect and report this data in the coming year.

**State Data Support and Agency Data Partnerships –** Much of the improvement in this year’s performance measures stems from the comprehensive state support we provide to local programs. We see the state adult education office as a resource for local providers and as such every attempt is made to reach all programs throughout the state to provide technical assistance. As mentioned above, throughout the 2016 -2017 academic year, we conducted 8 face to face trainings – including 3 all day events, 11 different recorded webinars, and over 20 site visits to provide program specific support.

As mentioned in Section 1 regarding alignment with one-stop partners, the State Office worked diligently with the core partners at the Department of Labor, One-stop CareerCenters, Vocational Rehabilitation, and local workforce development boards toward better alignment of data and client programming and services. The Maine adult education team has become an integral part of WIOA implementation statewide, serving in numerous work groups throughout the core partners. The Adult Education Data Coordinator serves on the following workgroups with the core partners: the WIOA implementation workgroup, the Performance Accountability Workgroup, the Reemployment and Systems Integration Grant Workgroup, the MaineEARNS Workforce Data Quality Initiative and the WIOA Universal Access Workgroup.

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

To enhance one-stop partner collaboration, a member of the state office team serves on the one-stop operators (OSO) groups. In addition, local adult education programs in each workforce area are represented on the workforce board by of one of their colleagues.

The reorganization of two workforce boards into one caused the delay in the preparation of their plans and MOUs. This also delayed the determination of infrastructure costs.

Even without the formal MOUs, adult education has continued to work with its workforce partners to provide and accept referrals, conduct intakes and assessments, serve DOL clients in academic courses (whether on-site at the one-stop or at adult education), collaborate with one-stop partners to develop and offer customized academic and training opportunities, provide academic and career advising and deliver workforce preparation activities.

**4.Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education**

**IELCE Latest Competition** – Because not all boards had a local plan in place in time for an AEFLA competition, Maine received approval to extend the FY17 extension. The last full competition under WIA was in April 2013 for FY14. Our extensions have included language that local programs receiving former ELCivics funds meet the WIOA requirements for IELCE. The same two programs have had their initial ELCivics grants continued.

**IELCE IET Technical Assistance** – The State Office continued to deliver technical assistance on what IELCE/IET is and offered examples of what it should look like at the local program level. This technical assistance included webinars, PowerPoints and one- on-one assistance. Professional development in IELCE and IELCE IET has been provided to all AEFLA recipients as they are encouraged to develop and offer IETs for English language learners whether they receive 243 funds or not. The State office has also informed other stakeholders regarding this transition to IELCE IET and its opportunities.

**IELCE efforts toward unsubsidized employment and self-sufficiency**.

The program with the largest immigrant population in the state offered 20 courses serving 155 individual students with civics education funding. Courses were held at the adult education site and two housing authority locations. In addition to classroom based instruction, over 200 people volunteered more than 7,000 hours to support English Language Learners inside and outside the classroom with tutoring for citizenship and literacy.

Given all their literacy and civics effort, this program’s transition to an integrated English Literacy and Civics Education model has been slow. This may be due in part to having a new director or perhaps having many long time teachers who are entrenched in their practices and hold the belief that their students are simply not prepared to work as well as having a new director.

With targeted technical assistance from the state office, the local program did prepare an integrated course for students with low levels of English proficiency (ESOL 3 and below). The course integrated civics instruction, vocabulary development, and US history and included time to practice reading, writing and speaking in a civics context. All students had the chance to be matched up with a volunteer tutor before the class ended so they could continue their preparation for the citizenship test. The local program also provided training for the volunteer citizenship tutors and matched 22 students with a tutor if they were not able to attend the citizenship course. The local program is aware of 15 students who achieved citizenship during this reporting period.

To receive FY18 continuation funding, this program has received additional technical assistance and had to submit detailed plans on steps to be taken to integrate appropriate workforce preparation activities that will prepare participants for employment and assist with placement. This particular program does work closely and successfully with employers and the city to receive funds for several English Literacy and Workforce projects. They have been charged with integrating that type of program with their IELCE for FY18.

The other program funded served a total of 178 students who completed an average of 76 program attendance hours each. Of these students, 111 advanced one or more levels, had a 91% post-test rate and 62% demonstrated a measurable academic gain. Classes utilized curricula that enhanced students’ civic participation and development of language skills for the local workforce. The provider drew on partners with expertise in case management, financial literacy, career services, and other specific immigrant and refugee services. In addition, one partner assisted with health screenings, lead awareness, housing assistance, legal services and workforce preparation.

This program took an already developed Ready-to-Work framework that pairs soft-skill job training with industry specific hard-skills, and recently integrated civics education. The program has successfully developed this training for the following jobs and industries: CNA, Construction, Customer Service, Office Skills, and Financial Services. This framework has been a model for other programs throughout the state. This local provider has also successfully implemented IET programs for English language learners – with academic instructors embedding the language and vocabulary needed for identified jobs community employers need to fill.

Both programs identified the need for State assistance in developing methods to use our management enrollment system to collect employment data and produce reports that clearly identify credentials earned by participants.

* **Progress toward integrating IET with IELCE**

Though not at the same pace, both programs have employer engagement and are fusing workforce training and academic skill building to implement Integrated Education and Training programs for non-English speakers. They are only in the beginning stages of integrating the civics portion.

The State office has learned that to best support local providers and learners, we need to work with workforce partners and employers to develop and implement a long-term vision of creating a seamless pipeline to academic, career, and life success. We will transform academic English Language Literacy programming by intentionally integrating employment and training curricula and experiences along with contextualized civics education.

We will build on work previously done with workforce partners and employers in local, in-demand industries to provide programming that seamlessly assists students in developing effective workplace communication and hard and soft skill training, along with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities of citizenship. We need to better communicate to employers the services we can provide to develop better prepared potential and incumbent employees. The end-result will be a community of learners that possess the essential basic skills needed to be effective members of their local community and part of a skilled workforce with the ability to grow our economy.

In addition, we have learned that attention must be given to effective learner intake processes that identify barriers and make the appropriate connections to address them. With changing immigrant demographics, we must become ready to adapt the civics and literacy curricula to serve highly trained asylum seekers, many who speak and read in multiple languages. These students often require sector-specific conversational English, essentials of workplace communication and math skills to prepare them for training that will result in employment.

**5.Adult Education Standards**

Maine last changed standards with the adoption of College and Career Readiness Standards in 2014. Maine has spent the last 3 years on implementation strategies summarized in our 2015 sustainability plan. In monitoring our plan, we realized that our attempts to train local CCRS leads did not provide the results we wanted. The message often became distorted at the local level so we brought the training back to the state office. The math and ELA lead trainers now conduct in person and online courses which are easily accessible and address the issues of staff turnover and part-time instructors. We also learned we must put more effort into technical assistance related to curricula development. Programs needing more intensive and target technical assistance have also been identified.

**6.Programs for Corrections**

Maine currently does not have an automated method to determine recidivism rates for those learners in the county and local jails who are served by adult education providers. We did obtain recidivism rates for those learners served with AEFLA funding in the state correctional system. The unduplicated count for those receiving adult literacy and secondary completion services was 498. The number of those released was 234. Of that number, only 10 returned.