

Iowa Narrative Report 2017-2018 (July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018)

I. STATE LEADERSHIP FUNDS

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Title II Section 223(a) mandates that the eligible agency shall not use more than 12.5 percent of its grant funds for both required and optional activities for State Leadership activities. The activities, programs, and projects supported with State Leadership funds described below are the required elements under AEFLA and have been aligned as indicated.

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

- *Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other one-stop required partners to implement the strategies in Iowa's Unified State Plan as described in section 223 (1) (a).*

On March 15, 2017, the Iowa Department of Education's (IDOE) Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation released a request for proposals for a three-year federal grant opportunity to provide services to develop, implement, and improve adult education and literacy (AEL) services in Iowa. As a requirement for funding, the applications needed to be reviewed by the local workforce development board for alignment of activities with the local plan. The awarded providers were allocated 25 percent of section 223 State Leadership funds to support the local implementation of the plans that were developed in alignment with Iowa's Unified State Plan. These activities included participation in core partner meetings, training and cross-training of front-line staff, and the development of a referral process to co-enroll eligible applicants in each of the 15 local workforce development board (LWDB) regions.

At the state level, the IDOE has worked closely with the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) in the development of a Realignment Committee to review and provide recommendations for the reduction of regional/local workforce development boards. In addition, the IDOE is represented on several SWDB standing committees, such as the Disability Access, Ex-Offender Re-entry, and Youth. The committees are intended to implement the key strategies of Iowa's Unified State Plan, as well as to implement requirements of WIOA. All activities detailed through the use of State Leadership funds has been for the purpose of aligning AEL with Iowa's one-stop partners.

- *Establishment or operation of a high quality professional development programs as described in section 223 (1) (b).*

The State Staff Development Leadership Project is designed to fund and coordinate state level staff development activities within Section 223(a) of the Act based on one or more of the State Leadership activities focusing on the following areas: (1) core measure attainment; (2) quality program instruction; (3) data accountability and integrity; and (4) strengthening program delivery methods. The impact of professional development on instruction and adult learner outcomes is evaluated against the following criteria:

- Statewide implementation, adoption, and diffusion into AEL instructional strategies, methodologies, and curriculum infusion.
- Long-term improvement in program outcomes measured by the state and local programs' ability to continually meet negotiated benchmark levels.
- Adult learner assistance to effectively meet personal and program literacy goals.

Iowa's professional development system is coordinated by the state professional development consultant who works with a team made up of administrators, instructors, and trainers from each funded program

known as the Adult Literacy Professional Development Leadership Committee. A data-driven planning process is used to identify professional development needs and to set priorities for each year. Emphasis is given in a number of key areas, including literacy, math, and English language instruction; assessment; educational technology; learning disabilities; and distance learning.

STudent Achievement in Reading (STAR) - STudent Achievement in Reading (STAR) assisted local programs in making systemic and instructional changes required to improve the reading achievement of intermediate-level adult learners (GLE 4.0-8.9) in Adult Basic Education. STAR provides teachers and administrators with web-based tools that translate reading research into practice, and high-quality training and technical assistance to build capacity for reading reform. STAR focuses on implementing evidence-based practices to provide adults with the reading skills they need to achieve their goals in school, the workplace, and their daily lives. In program year (PY) 2018 there were a total of 18 participants from six programs: Eastern Iowa Community Colleges; Iowa Western Community College; Western Iowa Tech Community College; Indian Hills Community College; Kirkwood Community College; and Southeastern Community College. The three STAR institutes were hosted in Des Moines on 11/30/2017-12/1/2017; 2/22-23/2018; and 4/12-13/2018.

Strategy-Based Reading Instruction: Focus on Informational Text – A three-hour interactive workshop with HiSET and College Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) focus, was offered on 4/5/18 to build practitioner and expertise in teaching reading. Participants reviewed and practiced principles of Explicit Instruction and were provided with comprehension strategies that allow for processing of text or portions of text, inference, application of prior knowledge; vocabulary strategies teaching Tier 2 words; alphabetic strategies teaching higher level skills; and fluency strategies. Participants also created lesson plans incorporating explicit instruction and strategies. Twenty (20) participants attended this workshop.

Reading Skill Difficulties - An online, self-paced professional development course in Reading Skill Difficulties was offered in PY 2018. This foundational online course taught instructors how to identify the precise reading difficulty for each participant; design the best strategy for each participant; and implement remedial instruction targeted for each participant's needs. Twenty (20) AEL instructors enrolled in this course.

State Leadership Activities: 223(1) (B) - The establishment or operation of professional development programs to improve the quality of instruction provided pursuant to local activities required under Section 231(b), including instruction incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults, instruction related to the learners, instruction provided by volunteers or by personnel of a State or outlying area, and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs.

- *Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers as described in section 223 (1) (c).*

State leadership funds continue to support the following activities and initiatives in providing technical assistance to AEL-awarded providers, core partners, and the education and workforce community:

Staff Orientations - This annual training for new and seasoned program coordinators was held on 9/14/17 and provided a review of selected topics in the *PY18 Coordinator Handbook* and discussed WIOA funded activities for AEFLA funded programs. Topics included: Overview of Coordinator Handbook; WIOA Key Provisions; Awarding Title II Funds; Eligibility; LWDB review; Policies, Program Operations, and Instructional Services; Participant Experience Model; Integrated Education and Training; Workforce Preparation, and Career Pathways; Standards-Based Framework; Professional Development System; Standards; Individual Professional Development Program; Classroom Observation; PD Catalogs; System Accountability; Performance; Targets and Outcomes; Monitoring; Fiscal Management; and Public Awareness & Communications. Program leaders also met face-to-face on 07/19/17 and via zoom on a monthly basis throughout the calendar year.

NRS Training - This technical assistance training was offered on 6/12/18 at the Des Moines Area Community College Southridge Campus. Participants reviewed Periods of Participation, Assessments, and how data is reflected in TOPSpro. Thirty-five (35) participants attended this training.
State Leadership Activities: 223(1)(C)(iii) - Assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies.

- *Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of adult education activities as described in section 223 (1) (d).*

The State Director and consultants monitored community college programs to assess their implementation of the Program Standards Framework. A Programs Standards Framework was designed and used by programs to assess their own performance in providing quality instruction and services to adult learners. By reviewing these standards, indicators, and criterion, programs were able to identify their strengths, as well as areas needing improvement. The standards established benchmarking to make informed decisions in providing resource allocation, professional development activities, and program capacity. These standards are to: 1) assess non-compliance with WIOA provisions; 2) identify areas at risk of non-compliance; 3) provide technical assistance that both strengthens demonstrated areas of weakness and highlights innovation; and 4) provide noted best practices for other grantees. Three (3) on-site visits were conducted at the following programs: Western Iowa Tech Community College, 3/8/18; Iowa Valley Community College District, 4/4/18; and Southeastern Community College, 4/10/18. The remaining 12 programs received desktop monitoring.

State Leadership Activities: 223(1)(D) - The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the State.

b. As applicable, describe how the State has used funds for additional permissible activities described in section 223 (a) (2).

In addition to working closely with the core and required one-stop partners, the AEL team forged partnerships with organizations whose missions are aimed at improving the outcomes of underserved populations. Examples of these organizations and initiatives include: Coalition on Adult Basic Education; Iowa Literacy Council; Des Moines Civil Rights Committee; Iowa Culture and Language Committee; Leadership for a New Century; Minority Unemployment Committee; National Association of State Directors for Adult Education; and United Way.

State Leadership Activity(s): 223(2)(b) - In carrying out this section, eligible agencies shall collaborate where possible, and avoid duplicating efforts, in order to maximize the impact of the activities described in subsection (a).

My Learning Plan (MLP) - To effectively implement the administrative rules and instructor standards, Iowa implemented My Learning Plan (MLP), a web-based professional development platform to capture, track, and report individual professional development plans for all staff; hours of training; and classroom observations. This professional development platform offers the capability of registering for professional development events both at the state and local level through an online system that tracks needs and effectiveness of delivery. Phase II of MLP began with a pilot of the Evaluation (formerly OASIS) system. The purpose of the Evaluation platform is to identify professional development needs with the utilization of the classroom observation, which is aligned with the state's instructor standards. During PY 2018, 14 programs were on-board and trained on this platform.

Virtual Conference - Iowa's 2nd AEL Virtual Conference, *Expanding Possibilities*, was held on 1/30/18 to 2/1/18. The conference is a collaborative effort between the Iowa Department of Education's Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation, Adult Education and Literacy, and the Iowa Literacy Council. The purpose of the conference was to showcase best practices and resources, both in and out of

state related to, but not limited to, technology, classroom management, blended learning, distance education, and mitigating unconscious biases and cultural competency. Forty (40) participants registered for this event.

Adult Education and Literacy Conference – A statewide AEL conference was hosted by the Department on 7/18-20/17. Members from the Professional Development Leadership Committee assisted in the planning of the annual AEL Summer Conference, centered on the theme “Building Your Future with Adult Education.” Sessions were provided that equipped AEL educators with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in the 21st century. Over 40 sessions were offered on the following strands: Instructional Strategies, Math, Employability Skills, Career Pathways, ESL, and WIOA. Pre-conference sessions were held on: Creating Sanctuary: Creating Environment Necessary for Growth and Change; and Non-Print Literate English Learners: A VERY special population. A total of 250 participants attended this conference. *State Leadership Activities: 223(2) (K) - The development and implementation of programs and services to meet the needs of adult learners with learning disabilities or English language learners, which may include new and promising assessment tools and strategies that are based on scientifically valid research, where appropriate, and identify the needs and capture the gains of such students at the lowest achievement levels.*

Future Directions in PY 2019

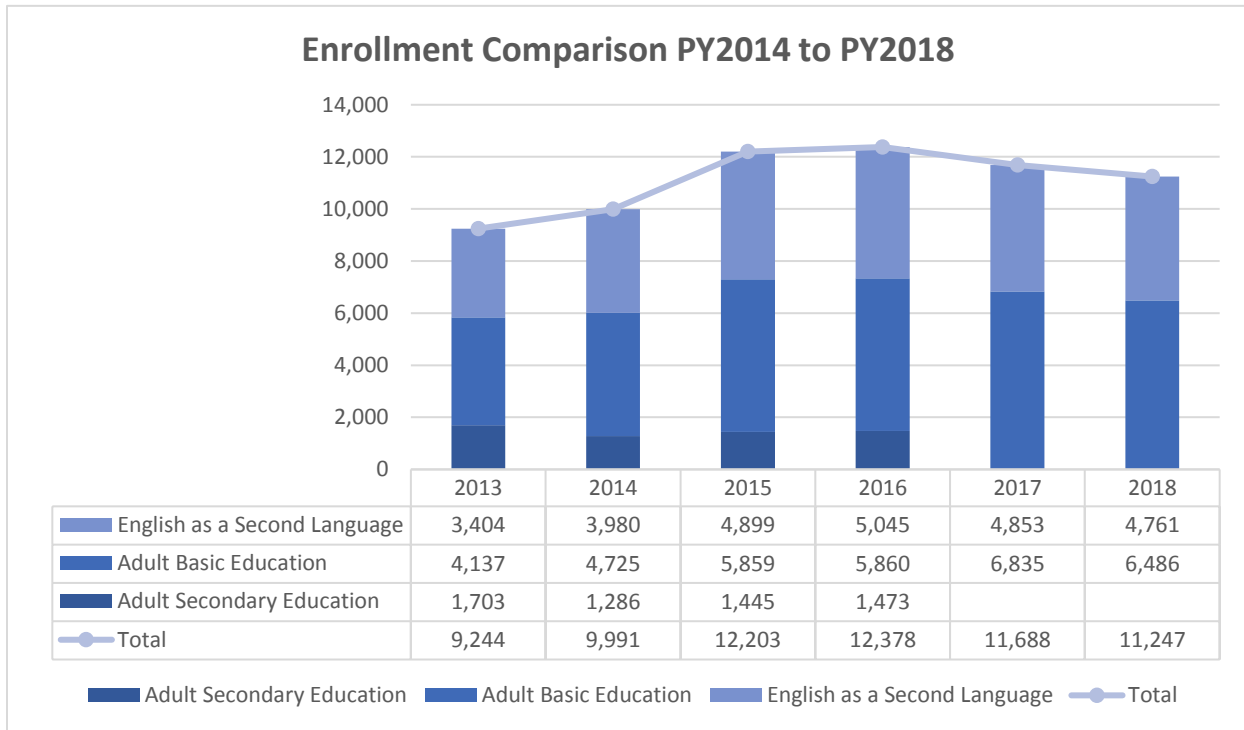
Several high-quality professional development offerings will be offered during PY 2019, including but not limited to the following:

- An English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards Rollout Institute will be implemented to support Iowa’s use of the ELP Standards by local providers. The Institute will use a community of practice (CoP) framework to join professionals in a shared and sustained network identified by a strategic context that functions to expand knowledge, share and create resources, and solve problems.
- A sustainable professional development model for maintaining highly qualified math instructors trained in specific pedagogical practices for contextualizing math instruction. Best practices and “train-the-trainer” activities will be used to empower the instructors to return to their program sites ready to implement local and/or regional trainings.
- The Department will fully migrate to the new STAR Toolkit that offers high-quality, evidence-based, vetted materials that help adult education practitioners and state and local staff improve programs, services, instruction, and teacher quality.

II. PERFORMANCE DATA ANALYSIS

a. Describe how the adult education program performed in the overall assessment of core programs based on the core indicators of performance.

Enrollment decreased in the number of participants (n=11,247 that met the NRS guidelines) for PY 2018 as compared to the previous year (n=11,688). Of the total participants, those in Adult Basic Education (ABE), including ABE Levels 1-6, comprised the largest group by program type at 57.7 percent (n=6,486). Participants enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL), including ESL Levels 1-6, decreased slightly to 42.3 percent (n=4,761) enrolled.



In PY 2018, Iowa met all of the 11 federal negotiated benchmarks (compared to meeting eight of 11 benchmarks in PY 2017) and achieved the overall measurable skill gain (MSG) core indicator for performance. Analysis shows that Iowa’s aggregate pre-post-test match increased to 65 percent in PY 2018, compared to 60 percent in the previous year. Of the 11,688 eligible participants, 10,970 were in ABE Levels 1-5 or ESL Levels 1-6 with 65 percent (n=7,082) pre- and post-tested. Of those pre- and post-tested, 57 percent (4,010) made at least one educational functioning level (EFL) gain.

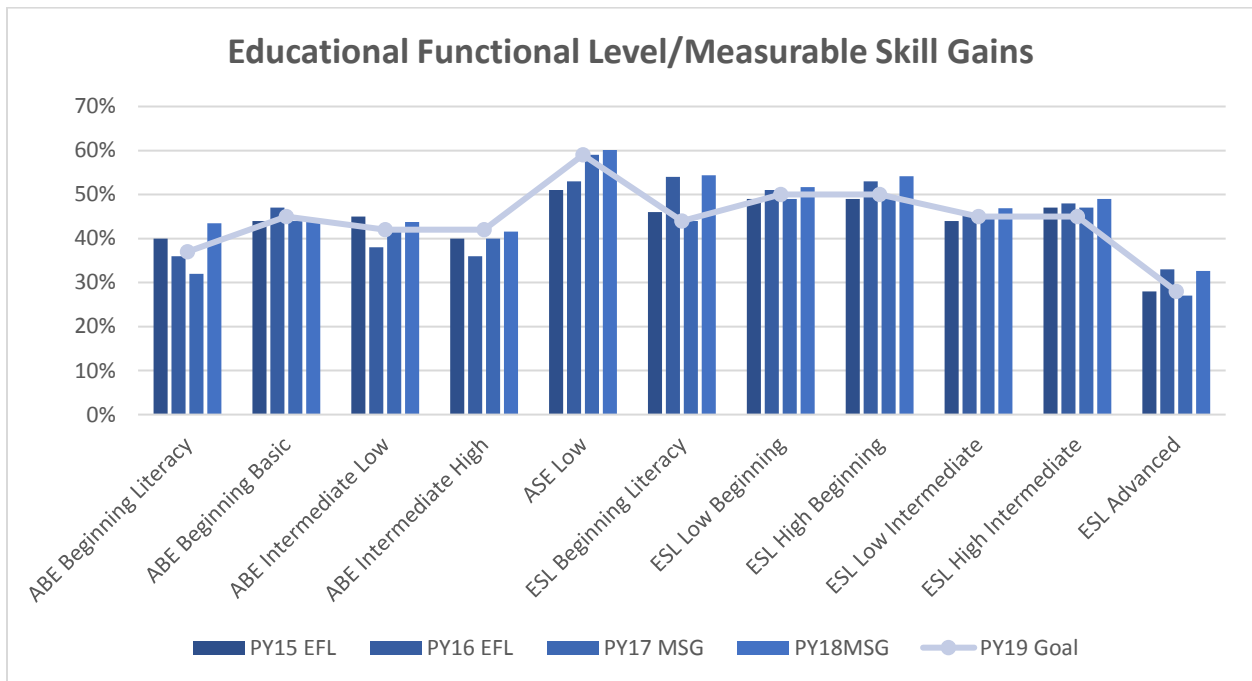
Iowa participates as a data-match state by partnering with Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) for employment and wage information. In addition, the MIS and National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) are used to verify postsecondary enrollment and credential attainment. For PY 2018, the second quarter after exit and median earnings second quarter after exit outcome measures include participants who exited during PY 2017. Complete data sets for outcome measures under WIOA will not be available nor fully reported until PY 2019.

Of the 11,688 PY 2017 participants, 7,181 (61.4 percent) exited the program. Of those, 5,755 individuals (80.1 percent) were able to be tracked through the databases used to match employment data. By matching two quarters after exit, it was found that 47.9 percent were employed and earning a median quarterly wage of \$5,100.

b. Discuss how the assessment was used to improve quality and effectiveness of the funded eligible providers.

Iowa’s funded providers use the federally approved Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) and Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to assess all incoming participants for proper placement, as detailed in the Iowa Assessment Policy Guidelines. After recommended hours of instructional intervention, participants are again assessed to determine their skill levels. If a participant’s skills have improved sufficiently to place him or her at least one level higher, an “advance” is recorded. Of the 11,247 eligible participants, Iowa had 11,565 periods of participation. Of the 11,565 periods of participation, 47 percent (5,430) made a MSG, which represents a three (3) percent increase over PY 2017. These skill gains serve as an indicator for completing the high school equivalency assessments. Iowa also had 1,602 participants completing high school equivalence diplomas between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018, with 1,496 awards issued. Of the 1,602 completing a high school equivalence diploma, 1,056 were counted as a MSG in PY 2018.

Participant retention is critical to the process of accessing progress. Persistence and sufficient hours increased slightly at 72 percent. In PY 2018, 11,247 of the 15,684 reportable individuals persisted for a minimum of 12 or more hours of instruction. In PY 2017, 11,688 of the 16,438 reportable individuals persisted. Average hours of instruction for the 11,247 enrollees federally reported increased significantly from 85 hours in PY 2017 to 124 hours in PY 2018. ESL averaged the highest with 142 hours, while ABE also increased to 111 from 83 over the previous program year. These hours now include the total hours for the period of participation.



Future Directions in PY 2019

Iowa will continue to meet benchmarks while striving for a 65% post-test rate. Collaboration through WIOA will support referrals and alignment of activities to support the core measures. The addition of pathways for completion of a high school equivalency diploma, including the attainment of Carnegie units, should contribute to Iowa’s measurable skill gains.

III. Integration with One-Stop Partners

As core partners under Title II of WIOA, Iowa's AEL providers contributed to the development of local plans that described regional needs and strategies to assist in the streamlining of services as a deliverable of strategic planning and value mapping work groups.

a. Describe how the state eligible agency, as the entity responsible for meeting one-stop requirements under 34 CFR part 463, subpart J, carries out or delegates its required one-stop roles to eligible providers.

On September 2016, the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOL/ETA) Region 5 conducted a review of Iowa's WIOA implementation based on Title I and Title III with feedback from all partners. The report identifies 16 WIOA Areas of Opportunity, each accompanied by a recommendation aimed at improving the general management and administration of programs. Those recommendations addressed concerns on the state and local workforce board structure and encouragement to develop guidance on the coordinated provision of services for the one-stop system in Iowa and regions to ensure consistency of policies and operations at all 15 regional one-stops. Additionally, during the 2016 Legislative Session, Iowa Section 84A.1A (2016) was passed, which updated the membership structure of the State Workforce Development Board. The bill only allows for a single representative from the Department of Education (IDOE). Based on these current conditions and the need to address WIOA implementation opportunities, the IDOE, which is the state eligible agency for Title II, has not delegated one-stop responsibilities to the eligible providers but supports them in their efforts to implement WIOA requirements.

b. Describe the applicable career services that are provided in the one-stop system.

Local AEL providers offer career services on-site at the one-stops and/or via direct linkage. The career services offered include: outreach, intake, and orientation; skills and supportive services needs assessment; program coordination and referral; training provider performance and cost information; and information on the availability of supportive services and referrals. Some Iowa local AEL providers offer classroom instructional opportunities at the one-stop or have classes nearby providing direct access to educational services, including workforce preparation and training.

The applicable career services listed that are provided in the one-stop system are currently being documented with WIOA partners and are being tracked locally to assist with identifying duplication, streamlining efforts, and cost sharing for use in completing a Memorandum of Understanding. During this year, there was an interruption in the competitive procurement of a one-stop operator due to a realignment task force reviewing the number of local workforce development boards needed to serve Iowa.

c. Describe how infrastructure costs are supported through state and local options.

Infrastructure costs are currently not supported through local agreements. The state agencies responsible for WIOA have not yet intervened in the local negotiations. The state's AEL team has provided, and will continue to offer, technical assistance on the federal regulations and the law.

Future Direction in PY 2019

Local AEL providers will work with the designated regional one-stops based on the State Workforce Development Board's recommendations. This could include designating a single provider, when multiple providers are in an area, to serve on the local workforce board or various standing committees. All providers will ensure that access to career services.

IV. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program

a. Describe how the state is using funds under Section 243 to support the following activities under the IELCE program:

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

The IDOE is in the second year of the three-year federal grant opportunity for Section 243 funds. The IDOE is providing technical assistance and guidance in designing IELCE activities, programs, and partnerships to provide services to IELCE eligible participants. During PY 2018, the state held a competition for IELCE program funds and eight (8) of 12 applicants were selected for funding. The awards ranged from \$15,000-\$40,000, and were based on the number of IELCE eligible participants that the programs committed to serving per program year.

- *Describe your state efforts in meeting the requirement to provide IELCE services in combination with IET activities.*

During PY 2018, the IDOE conducted a competition among awarded providers to support the efforts of implementing IELCE programs and activities in combination with IET through a Planning Grant. These planning grants were aimed at providing professional development, feasibility studies, and pilots for implementation to awardees. The total amount awarded was \$50,000.

In PY 2018, professional development opportunities to provide IELCE services in combination with integrated education and training (IET) activities were offered. The purpose of the opportunities were to provide all staff with the knowledge to develop quality IELCE programs.

The combination of planning grant funds and professional development opportunities served to increase knowledge of IELCE federal requirements which has been a foundational step that has generated awareness for the need to develop opportunities designed to meet IELCE goals.

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

Overall, sector partnerships are increasingly recognized as an effective method for aligning education, economic, and workforce development systems to address industry-identified labor market needs. Through this partnership, Iowa's IELCE programs are strongly aligned with local in-demand industries and occupations. Applicants for IELCE funding indicate their career pathway integration and provide status updates as their programs evolve. Data is used to drive local decisions to ensure IELCE program participants are being prepared in identified areas of need which have included: number of recently posted vacancies; expected growth; and median wages.

With low unemployment rates in many of our service areas, Iowa's IELCE programs and activities have included collaborative partnerships with employers. These partnerships have engaged businesses in the development of customized employer training contextually and concurrently with English language acquisition, basic and civic education, and workforce preparation activities. Employer driven curriculums have been aimed at advancing through internal pathways promotions for participants to family-sustaining wages.

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

During PY 2018, professional development opportunities were provided for one-stop center front-line staff during regional meetings as well as at a state-wide WIOA conference which included: Title I; Wagner-Peyser; and Vocational Rehabilitation staff. These opportunities detailed the guidelines for implementing IELCE activities. Technical assistance has also been offered regionally when core partners have looked at ways to support on-the-job training opportunities or other strategies aimed at incorporating blended funding.

IELCE providers have learned that successful implementation can look very different across regions and by occupation or industry. While the core required elements exist in each program, the content and topics covered will vary dependent upon the participants being served and that adjustments to the activities are needed for almost every cohort. In addition, IELCE providers have noted a high percentage of participants achieving a MSG (63 percent in PY 2018).

Future Direction in PY 2019

The IDOE will continue to work with the recipients of section 243 IELCE funds. Additional professional development opportunities will be extended through an implementation grant in support of the recipients of planning grant funds. All eligible providers will be able to participate with the goal of providing assistance and guidance to build rigorous and aligned IELCE activities that support the regional workforce development needs of Iowa.

V. ADULT EDUCATION STANDARDS

In 2010, Iowa adopted the Common Core State Standards (Iowa Core Standards) for K-12, which were articulated vertically through all grade levels. Additionally, all of Iowa's federally funded adult education programs are required to institute the CCRS, as per Iowa's Administrative Rule 23.7(1) adopted January 14, 2015:

23.7(1)(c) Appropriate reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, and staff training practices aligned with content standards for adult education.

In PY 2017, Iowa updated and aligned the AEL monitoring process to include program standards that address WIOA implementation, along with developing a quality assurance system that ensures participant performance improvement, financial accountability, program quality, and regulatory compliance of local providers. The monitoring is used to track the implementation of the CCRS in lesson plans, curriculum, and assessment for preparation in transitioning successfully to further education or employment.

a. Describe how your adult education content standards are aligned with those K-12 standards.

The IDOE's implementation of and support for academic content standards grounded in research was evident in several ways. National trainers were brought to Iowa to offer CCRS training in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. Clear expectations for standards implementation were incorporated into the 2017 AEFLA grant competitions and given high priority. Additionally, a program standards framework was developed that consisted of two broad categories: 1) Learner Success, which includes standards that help programs support learners' progress towards their next steps in postsecondary education, training, and/or employment leading to a family-sustaining wage; and 2) Organizational Capacity, which includes standards that help programs support their staff and guide directors in administering a quality program. The standards framework is used by programs to assess their own performance in providing quality instruction and services to adult learners.

Future Direction in PY 2019

The IDOE will continue building on the implementation of standards-based instruction and the program standards framework for monitoring and identifying best practices. The implementation process will include ways for providers to assess their own performance in high-quality instruction and equitable access, as well as services to adult learners.

Iowa will also address the urgent need for educational equity, access, and rigor for adult English Language Learners (ELLs) by ensuring that program instructors are trained in the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards for Adult Education (AE). The ELP Standards for AE are essential to ensuring that adult ELLs receive the focused and effective instruction they need to access our state's academic content standards. Iowa's English language acquisition programs will be designed to support ELLs in becoming skilled in reading, writing, and comprehension of English, and also help ELLs obtain a high school credential and support them as they move toward further education, training, or employment.

VI. Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals

a. Describe the relative rate of recidivism for criminal offenders served and the methods and factors used in the calculation.

The Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA) has developed standard definitions of performance measures that the Iowa's Department of Corrections follows when reporting data, which includes the measure of tracking recidivism rates. A benefit of using this standardized method allows states adopting these measures to compare their performance with similar states and set benchmarks for improvement. ASCA has defined a measure of recidivism -- the return rate to prison -- which describes the percent of offenders released from prison who return within three years. The releases tracked are paroles, discharges due to end of sentence, and sex offender releases to special sentence supervision. The recidivism rate may be further defined by the reason for the prison return: new convictions with sentences to prison; and technical returns.

The PY 2018 reporting year describes recidivism for offenders leaving prison in FY 2015 and tracked 4,374 offenders. It was determined that 965 (22.0 percent) returned to prison due to a new conviction and 692 (15.8 percent) returned to prison for technical reasons associated with a previous conviction. This amounts to a 37.8 percent recidivism rate for Iowa.

Future Direction in PY 2019

Iowa's AEL team will continue to work with the Iowa Department of Corrections to explore providing IET opportunities that support the recently awarded Second Chance Pell Grant, as well as the expansion of apprenticeship programming. As part of the State Workforce Development Board's Ex-Offender Re-entry Standing Committee, an increased collaboration in the provision of educational services to this at-risk population is expected.