

Nebraska Narrative Report 2017 - 2018

Part 1 – State Leadership Funds (AEFLA Section 223)

Nebraska Adult Education as the state agency for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act coordinated State Leadership activities to eleven grant recipients during the 2017-2018 Program Year. The focus of the professional development offerings was to comply with the required activities outlined in Section 223, to include the alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and partners, the establishment of high quality professional development programs to improve instruction and technical assistance to providers to improve best practices, identify roles and responsibilities in the one-stop delivery system and the use of technology, as well as monitoring and evaluation of program quality.

A continued focus of Nebraska Adult Education is identifying the training and development needs of the program providers and implementing training opportunities for improvement and technical assistance when needed. One challenge that persisted throughout the program year was helping programs overcome data integrity issues due to a failing NRS reporting system. The State Office is dedicated to ensuring that only validated student data is presented and reported.

During the program year, a more stringent desktop monitoring program was implemented to identify issues. Upon discovery, technical assistance as well as corrective action measures were implemented. Through this process, we continued to evaluate the needs of local programs and establish goals for professional development and technical assistance.

We continue to support the local program providers through various means and would like to begin supporting more local creativity in the delivery of Adult Education and Family Literacy activities, but must first ensure that all grant recipients are consistently compliant with the delivery of said services. A focus on educating program providers on their roles and responsibilities under the WIOA regulations was a primary focus.

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

- Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other one-stop required partners to implement the strategies in the Unified or Combined State Plan as described in section 223(l)(a).
- Establishment or operation of a high quality professional development program as described in section 223(l)(b).
- Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers as described in section 223(l)(c).
- Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of adult education activities as described in section 223(l)(d).

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

Nebraska Adult Education has made significant improvements in aligning adult education and literacy activities with other one-stop partners. These efforts included attending monthly partner meetings at the local level, state level partner meetings, partner director meetings and the Nebraska Partner Council.

A significant focus of Adult Education is our career pathways model that places emphasis on successful transition of students from Title II to postsecondary education, training or employment with the aid and assistance of our WIOA partners when necessary. Many students entering AEFLA funded programs in Nebraska arrive job-attached

and so a challenge is to encourage students to consider better employment opportunities through additional training through partner programs. With the consistently high employment rate, the need for partner program activities is minimal.

With job attainment and retention being a major focus of shared performance benchmarks, Title II has begun the process of re-evaluating how we prepare students for success on the job and with job retention. We have also identified strategies to approach employers directly. Aligning our efforts with other core partners is not always efficient in rural areas, so outlining strategies to help local programs transition students has become more important.

As Title II providers continue to understand our roles and responsibilities to both participants and partners, we will continue to identify strategies and best practices to ensure collaboration and avoid duplication of services. We have also identified the need to increase capacity and will work with partners to secure resources to better serve WIOA participants.

Nebraska Combined State Plan outlines four specific goals under State Strategy. Goal 1 identifies specific goals that allow Adult Education to contribute towards partner progress. These include development of a common intake system, development and alignment of terminology across programs, technological integration, collaborative assessments and coordination with local and regional areas.

With the importance of improving partnerships, Title II funding under Section 223 provided opportunities for local program staff to collaborate with WIOA partners at the annual Adult Education Conference on October 19-20. WIOA Core partners were invited to present and share ideas on the importance of partnerships and collaboration at the annual Nebraska Adult Education Conference in October 2017. One session conducted by a representative of NDOL and NVR was very successful and highly evaluated.

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

Throughout the program year, state staff conducted an evaluation of professional development needs across programs to determine a more efficient and effective manner of providing professional development activities. During the evaluation process it became clear that each program required different levels of support and training and that providing general development and training across all programs was not sufficient or effective. Effort was placed on redefining the needs and delivery format for professional development statewide.

Professional development was available for staff at each director's meeting and in director's conference calls as well as one-on-one calls with directors and in the annual Adult Education Conference. Professional development was also available through individual program trainings through the Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) Conference. The State also sponsors membership in COABE and in the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) through which our personnel were able to participate in webinars and online research and classes.

Program Directors' Meetings: A formal program director's meeting was held at the end of the program year on June 27. This meeting focused on assessment policy regulations and assessment requirements at the local level. Earlier in the year, the State Office hosted the Title II funding competition under WIOA, therefore an earlier director's meeting was not hosted. Program Directors were encouraged to provide feedback on topics related to monthly reporting, their roles at the local level, responsibilities under AEFLA and the future direction of the program across the State.

Program Directors' Conference Calls: During this program year, the State Office hosted fewer conference calls as preparations were made to host the WIOA funding competition for Title II. Emphasis was placed on preparing for the competition and disseminating information in a fair and equitable manner.

Adult Education Annual Conference XXXVI: The thirty-sixth annual Adult Education Conference was held in Kearney, Nebraska at the Holiday Inn Convention Center October 19 – October 20, 2017. The theme of the conference was *The Future and Beyond*. The focus of the conference was the importance of Adult Education instructors. Training topics included blended learning, career pathways, college planning services, critical thinking, leveraging partnerships hosted by DOL and VR, math, online resources, TABE and performance, ESL, creative thinking, distance education among others.

COABE: Twelve delegates from Nebraska including educators and state staff attended the annual Commission on Adult Basic Education Conference held in Phoenix, AZ. COABE is the major professional development opportunity for adult educators throughout the year, covering a multitude of topics with emphasis requirements under WIOA as well as Career Pathways, Corrections, ELL, Family Literacy, Immigrant Integrations, Learning Difficulties, and many others. Networking is also a major benefit of attending COABE. Nebraska Representatives attending COABE are encouraged to present later in the year at the annual Nebraska Adult Education Conference.

Assessment: BEST Plus 2.0: BEST Plus 2.0 is an assessment test given for placement for English Language Learners and to ascertain movement in Educational Functioning Levels. BEST Plus 2.0 is a product of the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington, D.C.

All personnel who administer the BEST Plus 2.0 assessment must receive certification through participating in an initial eight-hour training session, delivered by one of Nebraska's three BEST Plus Trainers, before being allowed to administer tests and then, within 60 days, a Verification session to reaffirm what has been learned during the initial training. Each test administrator must attend a Recalibration training each year for three years following the initial training. Recalibration is a four hour training in which the principles of BEST Plus are reiterated and a test is administered. The administrators must successfully complete the test in order to continue administering the BEST Plus test for incoming students. Failure to do so leads to more remediation prior to being able to continue training. A series of new test administrator trainings as well as BEST recalibration trainings were held across the State.

TABE Testing and TABE Online: TABE testing and TABE Online information was made available to program directors through webinars and reports at director's meetings. Program specific sessions of TABE training were arranged for local programs that requested such training. Training was conducted in August at Crete Public Schools as well as in March at Omaha. One-on-one targeted trainings were also provided on an as-needed basis to each program.

NRS Training: NRS training is a vital part of professional development activities offered to the local programs. NRS data is meant to help the local programs maximize opportunities for EFL gains among the students. NRS specific training was held at Metropolitan Community College in February. Additionally, NRS reporting is a topic at director's meetings and the annual conference in October. The State Director and a State data team member attended the NRS Regional Training in Austin, Texas. During the program year, the decision was made to purchase a new NRS system.

Distance Education: Nebraska Adult Education continues to sponsor and support distance education curriculum and encourages programs to utilize these instructional offerings. Curriculum vendors provide both onsite and remote training and professional development activities directly to local program staff.

LINCS: NDE staff maintain contact with the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) personnel and disperse LINCS information throughout the Nebraska programs. NDE staff members emphasize the importance of LINCS resources for staff development in Nebraska considering the geographical size of Nebraska, the need for conservation of fiscal resources at the local programs, and the lack of size of the NDE staff.

National Training Institute: In Program Year 2017-2018 the State Director was unable to attend the NTI due to scheduling conflicts, but did have the opportunity to review the training materials and implement new strategies presented at the NTI.

State Director's Training: In September, the State Director attended a new directors training at the OCTAE office at USDOE in Washington, D.C.

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

Technical assistance to funded eligible providers has been a focus of state leadership activities directed by the State Office. Through a process of evaluation and review, focus was placed on providing one-on-one technical assistance as needed and requested. Many local providers contact the state office for specific assistance requests and through phone calls, emails, zoom meetings and on-site visits, progress has been made in improving the quality of assistance. Due to the small number of program providers, this method proves to be the most efficient and effective.

As the need for ongoing technical assistance to eligible providers continues, the state office has evaluated various delivery methods including the use of technology to deliver high quality professional development and technical assistance activities.

Both NRS reporting and assessment continue to be a main focus of technical assistance to local programs. Through desk monitoring and on-site visits, the importance of ongoing technical assistance is validated. Additionally, the need for IELCE training continues with the requirement to establish IETs across the State. Plans to improve delivery of assistance continue with input from local programs. Our distance education vendors have also been instrumental in providing direct technical assistance to local programs and provide an invaluable level of support.

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

Monitoring and evaluation was a key focus of PY 2017-2018. Through desk monitoring and two on-site visits, progress has been made in identifying compliance concerns and the need for program improvement, but more importantly, ensuring that local providers understand the regulations governing AEFLA and their roles and responsibilities to meet compliance requirements.

During the program year, local programs were provided with expectations for program improvement and were repeatedly reminded of the requirement and need to improve performance and adhere to the State's approved assessment policy. Evidence of non-compliance was addressed through contact with local program directors, and in two cases, the issuance of corrective action.

Throughout the program year, the increase in desk and data monitoring was instrumental in identifying areas of improvement and helped define the need for increased quality improvement. State Staff provide continuous technical assistance through emails, phone calls, webinars and site visits. Local program staff have access to state staff through these delivery methods and often rely on email communication and direct phone calls for technical

assistance related questions. Additionally, the need for refining monitoring processes by the SEA were identified and an outline for overall program improvement have been initiated.

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

Distance Education continues to play an important role in serving adult learners across the State. Due to geographic challenges which include distance and travel, providing access to distance education options has proven successful

NRS reporting requirements were also a strong focus. Two NDE staff attended an AIR sponsored NRS training which helped the State office determine the need for a new NRS reporting system to comply with WIOA requirements.

The continuation and development of Career Pathways was another focus. Work was conducted to further develop the transition of students into postsecondary education, training and employment. Efforts were made through the State's career pathways committee.

Improvement of program delivery through technology was also a focus and time and consideration were spent on evaluating various improved methods of delivery via technology.

Evaluation and study of implementing IETs was yet another focus of State Leadership activities. With Nebraska lagging behind in establishing IETs through Section 243, this was made a priority during the latter part of the program year.

Part 2 – Performance Data Analysis

Describe how the adult education program performed in the overall assessment of core programs based on the core indicators of performance. Discuss how the assessment was used to improve quality and effectiveness of the funded eligible providers and any plans to further increase performance in future reporting years.

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

Nebraska Adult Education's measurable skill gain improved for PY 2017-2018 with program performance exceeding the negotiated standard. Programs were provided with guidance on the importance of accurate pre and post-testing. One program was placed on corrective action due to non-compliance with post-testing requirements. Overall, programs strive to ensure that eligible participants are post-tested in a timely and efficient manner. Programs were required to submit weekly, students needing post-tests reports to the State Office. This provide a means of ensuring that program directors were monitoring on a regular basis.

Due to reporting limitations in the NRS system, Nebraska Title II was unable to report on all positive performance for shared performance measures under WIOA. These limitations have since been remedies with the implementation of a new NRS reporting system for PY 2018-2019. Regardless, through data mining, Nebraska was able to report data on available employment rates and median earnings through data match as well as credential attainment through data match. Nebraska is currently drafting a plan to implement secondary follow-up surveys to improve overall data outcomes.

Overall, Nebraska Adult Education continues to track an overall decrease in student enrollments. Despite this continued trend, programs show evidence of more effectively serving the students that do enroll and seek services.

	ABE	ASE	ESL
2013	3577	755	2928
2014	3368	629	3010
2015	2927	514	2927
2016	2718	518	2718
2017	2492	434	2492
2018	2310	400	2310

(b) Discuss how the assessment was used to improve quality and effectiveness of the funded eligible providers and any plans to further increase performance in future reporting years.

Assessment was a major focus of the program year. Through evaluation and desk monitoring, it became clear that program providers needed support and training in the area of assessment. The current NRS system has several flaws that make effective monitoring at the local level challenging. Regardless, the system did provide reports that aid in the identification of assessment deficiencies. Programs were required to submit these reports frequently to encourage program directors to closely monitor student testing.

Based on monitoring outcomes, training was provided to those programs most in need of training. Additionally, the need to increase frequency of assessment training and technical assistance to local programs is evident and will be a main focus on the coming program year. An increase in desk and onsite monitoring is also planned.

Part 3 – Integration with One-Stop Partners

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. Describe the applicable career services that are provided in the one-stop system. Describe how infrastructure costs are supported through State and local options.

As Nebraska Title II continues to better understand our roles and responsibilities to our partners with regard to shared costs of supporting infrastructure of the American Job Centers, the SEA continues to serve in negotiating capacities under WIOA. Local providers provide direct payment for Title II costs.

Essentially, most Title II participants do not access services through the American Job Centers and quite often come to Title II programs job attached. The need for shared program activities in Nebraska continues to be minimal. WIOA in Nebraska continues to develop and await the launch of a common intake system that should help each partner better identify commonalities with participants and identify how to avoid duplication of efforts.

Part 4 – Integrated English Literacy and Civics education (IELCE) Program (AEFLA Section 243)

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.
- Describe your State efforts in meeting the requirement to provide IELCE services in combination with integrated education and training activities.
- 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.
- 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 described in section 243(c)(2) and discuss any performance results, challenges and lessons learned from implementing those program goals.

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.

Nebraska held a competition for funding in early 2018 for the 2018-2019 program year beginning July 1, 2018. A total of nine grants were awarded under this WIOA compliant competition.

Describe your State efforts in meeting the requirement to provide IELCE services in combination with integrated education and training activities.

Although Nebraska has not yet been able to establish an IET under Section 243, we were able to acquire more understanding and knowledge of best practices through the Building Opportunities Collaborative. Due to the hosting of the competition for federal funding under WIOA, we were not able to have a local program join the collaborative. In PY 2018-2019 we will move towards establishing our IET and working with grant recipients to increase capacity and explore expanded opportunities for training and collaboration to serve ELLs.

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.

As of June 30, 2018, Nebraska's unemployment rate was 2.9% compared with 4.0% nationally. The need for qualified, skilled workers in Nebraska continues to grow. This need for skilled workers tends to inhibit a strong willingness to work with programs to develop training for English language learners. Many of our English language learning population come to our local programs job attached and so encouraging them to consider advanced job training is a challenge. We are working with a national employer to serve English language learners at their place of employment, which is the beginning of great partnership that can eventually lead to an industry credential.

We also continued to improve learning gains for this population as well as identifying ways to increase outcomes in Nebraska's Career Pathways plan.

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 described in section 243(c)(2) and discuss any performance results, challenges and lessons learned from implementing those program goals.

Due to hosting the WIOA competition and staffing changes at DOL, we have not made a lot of progress under IELCE. In the new program year, Nebraska Adult Education will be hiring a new program specialist to focus on section 243 activities and work more closely with our workforce partners to improve performance and outcomes.

Part 5 – Adult Education Standards

If your state has adopted new challenging K-12 standards under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, describe how your Adult Education content standards are aligned with those K-12 standards.

Nebraska Adult Education is currently updating content standards to align with K-12 standards as they are updated.

- **Optional – Describe implementation efforts, challenges and any lessons learned.**

Part 6 – Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals (AEFLA Section 225)

What was the relative rate of recidivism for criminal offenders served? Please describe the methods and factors used in calculating the rate for this reporting period.

Nebraska is continuing to collaborate with Nebraska Department of Correctional Service on sharing information to be able to accurately provide data for this report.