

Iowa Narrative Report 2019-2020 (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020)

I. State Leadership Funds (AEFLA Section 223)

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 the Unified or Combined State Plan as described in section 223(1)(a).*

On March 15, 2017, the Iowa Department of Education (IDOE), Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation released a request for proposals for a three-year federal grant opportunity to develop, implement, and improve adult education and literacy (AEL) services in Iowa. Local workforce development boards reviewed applications for alignment of activities with local plans. State Leadership funds were awarded to providers to support local implementation of plans developed in alignment with Iowa's Unified State Plan. 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 local workforce development board (LWDB) regions.

The IDOE 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. While the department was also represented on several SWDB standing committees, such as Disability Access, Ex-Offender Re-entry, and Youth a bulk of planning time was spent in drafting the 2020-2024 Unified State Plan. Key strategies of Iowa's Unified State Plan, such as expanding career pathways and collaborating with sector partnerships for the expansion of work based learning models are being specifically supported by Title II providers. In addition, the seamless integration models at the one-stop centers is designed to cater to the diverse needs of the local areas when not all partners can be co-located.

On February 14, 2020, the Iowa Department of Education, Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation released a request for proposals for a five-year federal grant to provide adult education and literacy, activities and services, including programs providing activities concurrently, to improve adult education and literacy in Iowa. The Department shared the eligible applications to be reviewed by Local Board(s) where services will be provided for consistency with the local plan under section 108 of WIOA. A challenge for Iowa at this time was that the local plans had not been updated to reflect the new service areas, nor aligned with the recently submitted and approved Unified State Plan. However, comments and recommendations to promote alignment submitted by the Local Board(s) would be considered.

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

Iowa's professional development system is designed to coordinate state-level high quality professional development activities within Section 223(a), based on the required and permissible State Leadership activities. The projected impact of professional development on instruction and adult learner outcomes is evaluated against the following criteria:

- Potential for statewide implementation, adoption, and diffusion into AEL instructional strategies, methodologies, and curriculum infusion;
- Possible long-term improvement in program outcomes measured by the state and local programs' ability to continually meet negotiated benchmark levels; and
- Capacity for adult learner assistance to effectively meet participant and program literacy goals.

The professional development system is managed by a state professional development consultant in coordination with AEL administrators, instructors, and trainers representing all funded programs. A data-driven planning process was used to identify professional development needs and to set priorities for the program year. Iowa emphasized key areas of quality instruction with training on literacy, math, and English language instruction; assessment; and learning disabilities. In March 2020 the focus of Iowa's statewide professional development pivoted to meet the needs of local programs moving classes to online and distance education in response to the pandemic. The professional development highlights of PY20 included but is not limited to the following:

STudent Achievement in Reading (STAR) - Eleven funded programs participated in STAR training during program year 2019-2020. 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.

English Language Proficiency Standards - An English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards Rollout Institute was finished in 2019 to support Iowa's use of the ELP Standards by local providers. The institute was a four-part series conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). A community of practice framework joined 32 professionals in a shared network to expand knowledge, share and create resources, and solve problems.

Integrated Digital English Acceleration project (I-DEA)- I-DEA is a web-based training from Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges that introduces ESL instructors to a flipped classroom model of instruction with an integrated curriculum. I-DEA faculty trainers lead participants from local AEL providers through a series of activities.

Distance Education - In response to the pandemic, the Department created a webinar series based on feedback and survey responses received from the AEL programs. AEL staff received PD on engaging adults in an online environment, creating videos, develop free open education resources, as well as learning how to operate from a trauma sensitive lens and how to cope with vicarious trauma.

- *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 and required partners, and the education and workforce stakeholders:

- **AEL Coordinators** - The IDOE conducted annual training for new and experienced program coordinators on September 20, 2019. Each year state staff review the *Coordinator Handbook*, including: WIOA Key Provisions; Policies, Program Operations, and Instructional Services; Integrated Education and Training; AEL Standards-Based Framework; WIOA Performance; Monitoring; and Fiscal Management.
- **Core Partners** - Core partners formed a charter that stipulates frequent meetings for the purpose of developing strategies to track performance, assessing effectiveness, and monitoring areas of implementation. The meetings have served as a forum to provide technical assistance on nuances in the law specific to Title II, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and GEPA as it applies to educational institutions, along with state policies for adult education and literacy.
- **Education and Workforce Community** - Iowa AEL is responsive to requests from sector partnerships, Regional Planning Partnerships, and economic development committees. Staff also participates in task forces related to developmental and correctional education, implementing Perkins V, and expanding scholarship funds for returning completers of high demand credentials. These collaborations expand AEL's participant pipeline and help connect students to meaningful pathways toward education and careers.
- *Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of adult education activities as described in section 223(1)(d).*

State staff use on-site and virtual monitoring meetings to assess providers' implementation of the Iowa Program Standards Framework and thereby gauge compliance with WIOA provisions; identify areas at risk of non-compliance; determine technical assistance needs; and note innovation or promising practices to share with other grantees.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing restrictions on travel and in-person meetings forced the team to reconsider the spring monitoring schedule. Onsite-visits, which address all six program standards compared to a targeted two-standard review for desktop monitoring, were rescheduled as virtual meetings. However, to reduce the burden on programs already overwhelmed with facility closures and the shift to online services, the state fulfilled its obligation to assess program compliance by condensing the monitoring criteria and discussing processes for select activities that could not be conducted in person. The team met its goal of conducting a full monitoring (all standards) of five programs identified through its annual risk analysis, one more than the previous year. Sites included in a full monitoring: North Iowa Area Community College (4/21/20), Iowa Western Community College (4/24/20), Northeast Iowa Community College (4/28/20), Des Moines Area Community College (4/29/20), and Northwest Iowa Community College (5/1/20). The remaining 10 programs received virtual desktop monitoring of two standards.

(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 state 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.

Professional Growth - Iowa utilized Frontline Education: Professional Growth, a web-based professional development platform to implement the administrative rules and instructor standards. The professional growth system captures, tracks, and reports in the areas of individual professional development plans; completed hours of training; and classroom observations. This professional development platform offers the capability of registering staff for professional development events, both at the state and local level, and to collect training evaluations. The evaluation component helped identify professional development needs through classroom observations that are aligned with the state's instructor standards.

Virtual Conference - 4th Annual AEL Virtual Conference was held January 28-29, 2020. The sessions were aimed at administrators and educators who help adults get the basic skills they need, including reading, writing, math, English language proficiency, and problem-solving to be productive workers, family members, and citizens.

Iowa Adult Education and Literacy Conference – The 2019 HiSET®/Iowa Adult Education and Literacy Summer Conference, titled Fielding Their Dreams, was a partnership with Educational Testing Service, Iowa Literacy Council and the IDOE. It included best practices, emerging trends, and instructional strategies in adult education.

Future Directions in PY 2020-2021

- Iowa's AEL team will revise the virtual monitoring process to fully address activities that were limited in scope due to the unexpected shift from an on-site to virtual format;
- State staff will introduce an additional performance data point to the annual program risk analysis.
- **Canvas Training** - The current Canvas training course is being refined to target multi-level online teaching experience. This course will continue to be built out and modified to include Iowa's AEL instructor standards, expectations, selected tools and features, participant to instructor feedback and communication, along with best practices for retention and case management.
- **Professional Development Facilitator Project**- The project concentrates on using State Leadership funds to support local program need, state dissemination of products and information, and leadership development through the development of local PD plans that target continuous program improvement and professional growth.
- **Teaching Skills That Matter (TSTM)**- The TSTM project is designed to provide training and technical assistance to teachers in adult basic skills education classes to target the skills that matter in the areas of civic education, digital literacy, financial literacy, health literacy, and workforce preparation, with approaches that work.
- **Iowa Student Ambassador Training**- The goal of the project is to train adult education instructors to help students develop their voice, provide students with 21st century skills, encourage continuing education and career exploration.

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.

In program year 2019-20, a typical adult education and literacy student served was female, employed, a minority, averaging 25-44 years of age, with the highest year of school completed 9-12th grade without a high school diploma.

Covid-19 Impact on Performance

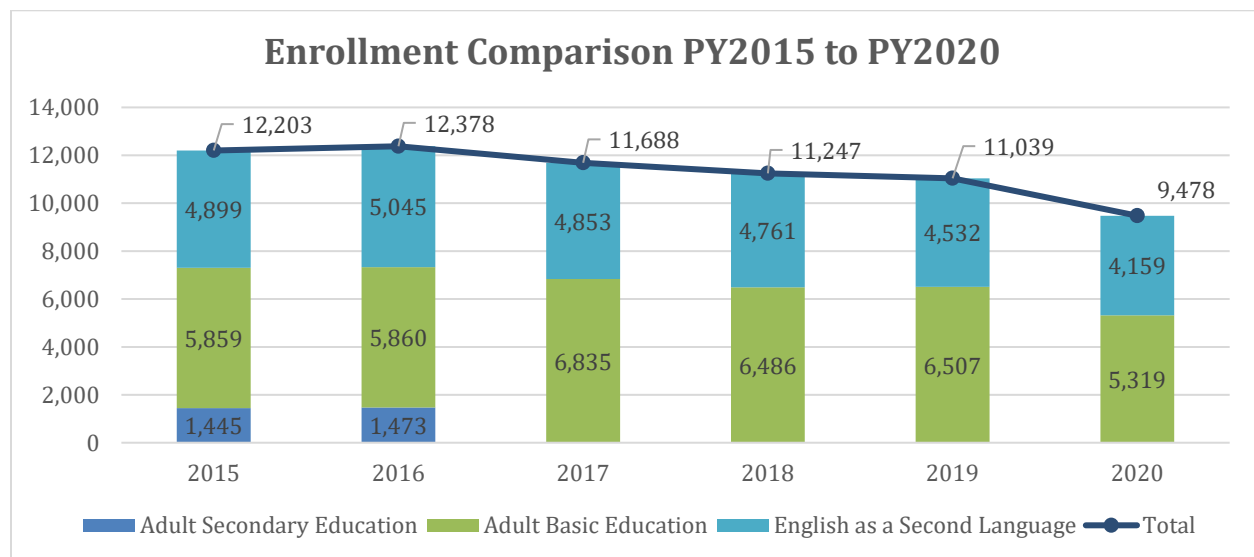
While performance measures have declined, Iowa is taking steps to implement remote learning and testing. Before the end of the program year, 40 percent of programs had administered some form of remote testing. Other programs used innovative steps, such as parking lot administration of assessments.

From March – June 2020, there were 3,881 assessments with 116 administered remotely. This is a 57.5% decrease from the 9,140 assessments administered during the same time in 2019. Our posttest rate has dropped to 50 percent.

In PY 2019-20, distance education served 1,170 participants with 98,355 hours. This is a 659.7 percent increase in enrollment and a 928.2 percent increase in distance education hours. In PY 2019-20, distance education occurred at all levels with 67.0 percent taking place in adult basic education (ABE) while the previous program year, there were zero distance education participants in English as a second language (ESL). Of the 784 participants in ABE distance learning, 41.8 percent were at ABE Level 4. While the overall distance education measurable skill gain rate increased from 35.4 percent to 41.7 percent, the ABE measurable skills gain (MSG) rate was slightly lower at 35.0 percent and the ESL MSG rate was 54.9 percent.

Iowa’s Adult Education and Literacy Enrollment

Overall enrollment has decreased 6.5 percent the past five years. Enrollment decreased 14.1 percent in PY 2020 with 9,478 participants. Of the total number of participants that met the NRS guidelines, students in ABE, including ABE Levels 1-6, comprised the largest group by program type with 56.1 percent of the total learners served. Students enrolled in ESL, including ESL Levels 1-6, increased to 43.9 percent enrolled.



Retention

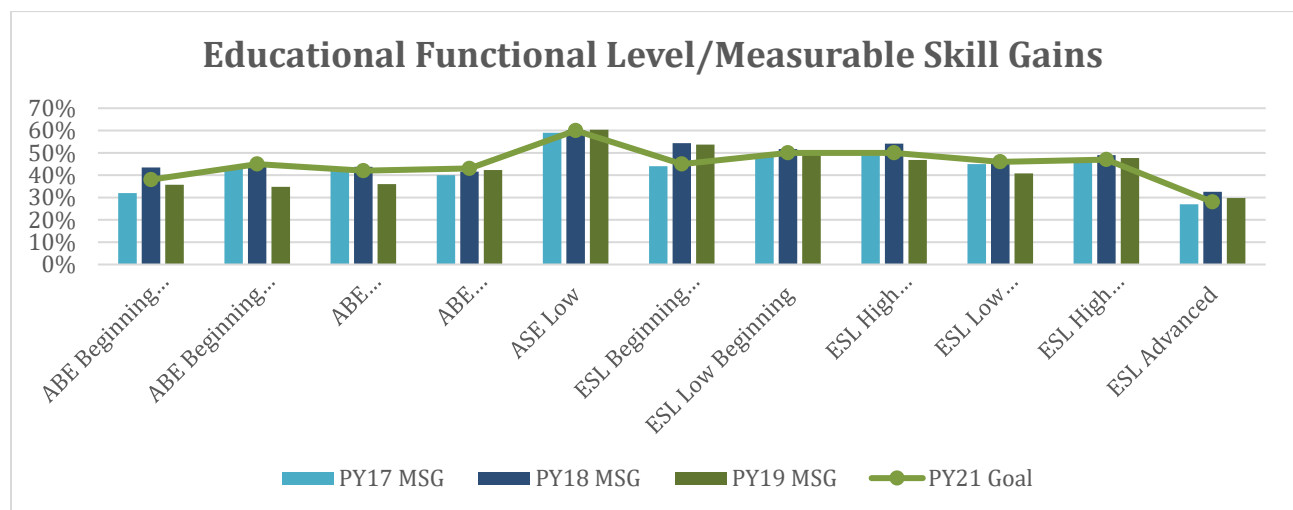
Student retention is critical to the process of accessing progress. Persistence and sufficient hours increased slightly with 73.5 percent of the 12,890 individuals seeking services persisted for a

minimum of 12 or more hours of instruction and a pre-test. Average hours of instruction for the 11,039 enrollees federally reported decreased again this year to 66 hours. This is a significant decrease from two years ago where the average was 124 hours in PY 2018. ESL averaged the highest with 74 hours while ABE also decreased to 60. These hours now include the total hours for the period of participation. Using ABE Level 1-5 and ESL levels 1-6, the post test rate dropped to 50%.

Of the 4,444 post tested, 81.2 percent achieved a measurable skill gain. In addition, the 590 participants at ABE Level 6 also had a 61.5 percent measurable skill gain.

Measurable Skill Gains

Of the 9,478 participants, Iowa had 9,641 periods of participation. Of the 9,641 periods of participation, 37.4 percent (3,608) made a measurable skill gain. This is a 14.6 percent decrease over PY 2019 and a difference of 8.6 points short of our overall target.



Primary Indicators of Performance

Iowa utilizes a data match process to determine if performance targets have been met for the follow-up core measures. Employment the 2nd quarter after exit increased 8.4 percentage points from last year to 57.6 percent. Median quarterly wage earnings for 2nd quarter after exit were also up 7.4 percent from last reporting year to \$5,882. IELCE participants continue to have the highest quarterly earnings with \$9,649 while IET participants have a high rate of employment at 67.0 percent and distance learners employed slightly higher at 67.4 percent. Employment in the 4th quarter after exit is 55.3 percent.

(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.

Quarterly reports have been implemented as an additional check. Both NRS and software webinars were created and distributed in January 2020. Emphasis has been placed on ensuring students who complete their high school equivalency are participants.

Future Directions in PY 2020-2021

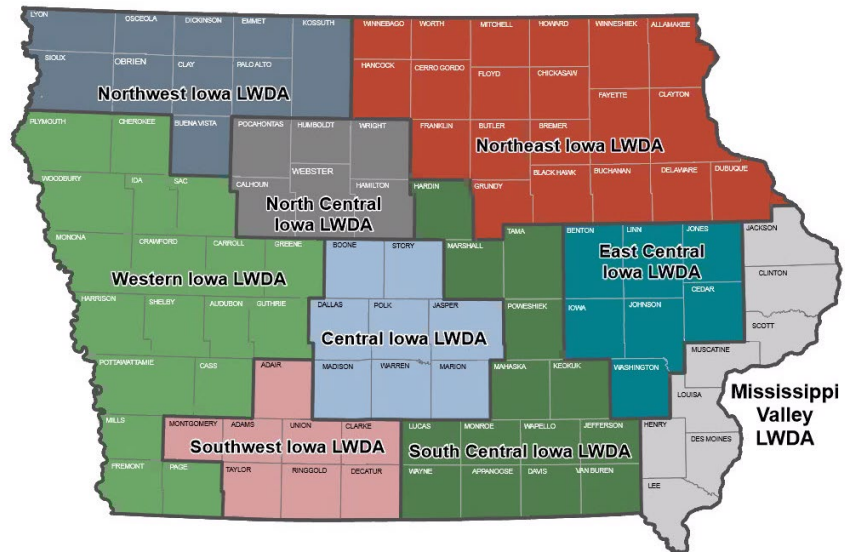
- Iowa will focus on tracking the increase in our distance education learners and ensuring that the additional hours are resulting in an increase in MSG.
- Iowa will also focus on tracking the additional HSED measures as allowable MSG outcomes.

III. Integration with One-stop Partners

(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.

As the state eligible agency for Title II, the IDOE did not delegate one-stop responsibilities to eligible providers but supported their efforts to implement WIOA with core partners. Iowa adopted this approach due to the appeal process that was affected the realignment of local areas, and the work being done to establish WIOA compliant local boards. This work was finalized and resulted in a reduction of local areas from 15 to 9 with multiple Title II providers serving in shared areas. The appointment of Title II providers to serve on the local board was hampered in part by the legislative requirement

Figure 1: Iowa's Redesigned Local Workforce Development Areas, 2019



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

Local AEL providers offer career services at one-stop centers and/or via direct linkages. These 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 providers offer direct access to such services as workforce preparation and training at one-stops or nearby classes but have had services interrupted due to the pandemic and in person restrictions. The applicable career services provided in the one-stop system are documented with WIOA partners and tracked locally to help identify duplication, streamlining efforts, and cost sharing information needed for the Memorandum of Understanding. The competitive procurement of a one-stop operator did not happen during 2019-2020. Title II providers have been able to implement remote assessment to determine basic skill needs and have pivoted many services to an online delivery for participants.

(c) Describe how infrastructure costs are supported through State and local options.

Infrastructure costs are not currently supported by local agreements. State agencies responsible for WIOA have not yet intervened in the local negotiations. The new designated local areas have just received certification for board compliance. The state AEL team has provided and will continue to offer technical assistance on relevant federal laws and regulations.

Future Directions in PY 2020-2021

- Title I services will be procured by June 30, 2021 with all areas having a designated one-stop operator and new local plans will be submitted by December 2021.

- Title II will continue to expand career services remotely with a partnership with SkillsUSA.

IV. 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.*

In 2020, the IDOE ended the three-year (3) federal grant opportunity for Section 243 funds and put out a new five-year (5) year bid for the federal grant opportunity. It held another implementation grant competition for IELCE program funds during PY 2020 and five (5) of 5 applicants were awarded funds. The grants ranged from \$25,204 - \$70,612 and were based on scores ranging from the highest at 360.50 to the lowest at 326, along with the number of eligible participants the programs committed to serve per program year. See table 1 below.

The IDOE is providing programs with technical assistance and guidance about designing IELCE activities, programs, and partnerships to service eligible participants, along with a template for claims submission. Currently, the impact from the pandemic has caused some programs to have lower numbers than anticipated and in the worst-case scenario some programs were unable to complete their program as training was restricted by partner companies.

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

During PY 2020, the IDOE continued to work with awarded providers to support the efforts of implementing IELCE programs and services in combination with IET activities. The IDOE provided relevant professional development with an emphasis on local employer needs, employer engagement and partnership. These opportunities were designed to provide program staff with information and strategies necessary to develop and deliver quality IELCE services. Three state wide presentations were offered for all ABE staff working with IET and IELCE. The sessions included guidance and professional development especially regarding the differences in the services provided in 243 compared to 223, along with presentations on guidance for appropriate claim documentation.

- *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;*

During this program year, the IDOE adopted a new form for providers to submit information about the nature, need, and parameters of Integrated English Language and Civics Education (IECE) services available to participants. Reported IELCE activities focused on healthcare, retail, and manufacturing sectors. Department staff also provided statewide technical assistance to address provider questions about IELCE, particularly about the Integrated Education and Training (IET) component, including in-demand industries and occupations.

While these efforts were intended to foster growth in training services, the level of IELCE programs and participation declined this year in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some students were unable or unwilling to continue their studies and many training classrooms or worksites were inaccessible for extended periods of time. Consequently, less than half the number of participants enrolled in IELCE than last year (162 compared to 354) and less than half the number of IELCE participants achieved a measurable skill gain than in the previous program year (61 compared to 173).

Despite the drop in IELCE services, funded eligible providers maintained strong connections to workforce boards, employers, and other stakeholders through participation in regional workforce board activities and engagement with local community colleges. These relationships afforded providers the opportunity to participate in discussions with a broad range of stakeholders about how to recover and move forward to address regional training and employment needs.

- *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.*

Funded eligible providers maintained strong ties to local workforce development systems through participation on regional workforce boards and established referral processes with local one-stop centers. With the guidance and support of the state AEL team, every funded provider has secured one or more opportunities for program staff to be represented on workforce boards as members of a local board and/or members of workforce board standing committees. Provider engagement with community college continuing education and career and technical education programs that have established relationships with employers likewise assured their integration with local workforce development systems and the opportunity to promote IELCE as an avenue to address workforce needs.

Workforce boards, one-stop centers, community colleges, and employers initially restricted physical access and/or hiring and training as awareness of the pandemic increased, which limited opportunities for engagement with IELCE participants and services. However, providers have modified operations to meet recommended safety precautions and providers have been engaged in conversations with them to determine how to proceed with IELCE and the extent to which services and training may be offered in online or blended formats.

Future Directions in PY 2020-2021

- State staff will update the IELCE program form for providers based on information needs identified after implementing the form last year.
- State staff will provide technical assistance to promote effective and expanded IELCE services by fewer funded providers.
- State staff will provide guidance and support to assure that all IELCE providers are represented on the newly forming regional workforce boards.
- State staff will survey providers' IELCE training needs.

V. 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, as amended, describe how your Adult Education content standards are aligned with those K-12 standards.

The Common Core State Standards (Iowa Core Standards) were adopted for all K-12 grade levels in 2010. All federally funded adult education programs in Iowa are required by Iowa's

Administrative Rule 23.7(1), adopted January 14, 2015, to align reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English acquisition, distance education, and staff training practices with content standards for adult education. These standards include the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), 21st Century Skills, and English Language Proficiency standards.

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

Iowa holds federally funded adult education programs accountable to the alignment with adult education standards through the AEL monitoring process. Iowa uses the monitoring to track the implementation of adult education standards in lesson plans, curriculum, and assessment for preparation in transitioning participants to further education or employment.

Future Directions in PY 2020-2021

The rapid transition to online learning in PY 20 due to the pandemic has increased the need to ensure that the online curriculum meets Iowa's requirement to CCRS, ELP standards, and 21st Century Skills. The Department will utilize its monitoring process to review standard aligned lesson plans for online courses, curriculum, and assessment for preparation in transitioning successfully to further education or employment.

VI. 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.

The Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA) developed definitions and terms used in Iowa's reporting on recidivism to establish standard performance measures. They defined a measure of recidivism—the return rate to prison—as the percent of offenders released from prison who return within three years. The releases tracked include parole; discharges due to end of sentence; and sex offender releases to special sentence supervision. The recidivism rate for PY2019 in Iowa was 38.8 percent – a slower growth rate than in previous years. Iowa's AEFLA funded providers enroll participants at state correctional institutions and local correctional and institutionalized facilities. Based on the terms of an MOU and the use of shared state leadership funds, all correctional education programs are accountable to the required WIOA performance, except when excluded, and they are subject to Iowa's assessment policies.

Corrections and institutionalized individuals constituted 1,403 of the total periods of participation in adult education and 36.7% of them achieved a measurable skill gain. The significant decrease in outcomes is largely attributed to the decrease in post testing opportunities due to testing centers being closed during the pandemic.

Future Directions in PY 2020-2021

Iowa's AEL team will continue to work with the Iowa Department of Corrections as part of Ascendium's Optimizing Post Secondary Education in Prison initiative. This has led to the development of a statewide advisory board of educational providers that will develop pathways from basic skills to in-demand industry credentials. In addition, educational services will work to increase access to services through technology.