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

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

1. *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).*

Alabama Adult Education, a division of the Alabama Community College System, along with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners, strengthened efforts during PY 2020-2021 to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our most vulnerable citizens by reimagining our workforce system. Alabama applied for and was awarded the Reimagine Workforce Preparation (RWP) grant which we call the Alabama Workforce Stabilization Program (AWSP). Many programs were restricted to virtual learning as program participants were still unsure of how to maneuver during these uncertain times. This program allows the partners to be strategic in providing support to employers and in providing training to assist low-income Alabamians displaced, dislocated, or disconnected by COVID-19 to transition into new fields. Alabama was one of only eight states awarded the grant based on its plan to assist employers, incumbent workers, and job seekers affected during the pandemic. The adult education system office and local program providers are integral components of the AWSP and provide leadership and services to the RWP grant. Adult Education also created the Mobilizing Alabama Pathways (MAP) program which is an asynchronous online foundational training in the five AWSP targeted sector areas of *Manufacturing, Healthcare, Construction, Information Technology, and Transportation/Logistics*.

During PY 2020-2021 the state deployed its Dashboard for Visualizing Income Determination (DAVID) system which allows WIOA partners to discuss the “benefits cliff” with jobseekers/students that are receiving public assistance. This virtual tool (<https://alabamaworks.com/david/>) allows the participant to visualize and make informed decisions on the career choices related to current public benefits received. It is a joint endeavor of the state of Alabama, the Alabama WIOA partners, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, Title II Adult Education continued traditional WIOA collaborations while executing new ways to serve the population as described above. Local adult education programs aligned their intake and assessment procedures with local one stop partners to ensure that contextualized basic academic support is embedded in training designed to prepare job seekers/students with the employability skills to be successful in achieving and sustaining gainful employment. Interactive classes include basic literacy and academic support, high school equivalency preparation, workforce readiness preparation, and specific work-related training in virtual and face to face formats.

Leadership funds are utilized to support costs associated with adult education’s participation in the above activities and other activities related to the Alabama State Plan.

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

The hallmark of Alabama Adult Education has always been to offer high quality professional development to all levels of practitioners. Therefore, state leadership funds were used to operate a professional development program that encompasses face to face (f2f), virtual, and hybrid approaches. Certainly, the COVID-19 pandemic created challenges during the last couple of years, but it allowed us to be even more strategic and purposeful in our offerings. For example, many trainings featured the utilization of virtual platforms such as Zoom, Webex, and Microsoft teams that, prior to COVID, were used minimally as compared to today’s new reality. The virtual training allows for more timely and diverse topics to be presented live and recorded for posterity, thus allowing effectiveness and efficiency in the professional development model.

To bring about some sense of normalcy in PY 2020-2021, the annual Adult Education Summer Conference was held in Birmingham on June 9, 10, and 11. Attendees had the option to attend in-person or virtually. The conference was well attended with 248 practitioners attending in person and 179 attending virtually. Session topics spanned the field of adult education from literacy to numeracy, high school equivalency to workforce development, contextualized instruction to integrated education and training for all categories of learners with barriers, including English Language Learners, and the incarcerated. We also had the pleasure of having the Community College Workforce Solution Directors attend which validates the important role adult education plays in economic and workforce development. Many of their sessions addressed the contextualization and integration of education and skills.

Specific national and state level professional development highlights for PY 2020-2021 include being selected to participate in the **LEAD Institute** (*sponsored by NASDAE and AIR*) and OCTAE’s **Teaching the Skills that Matter** (TSTM) training. The state also conducted specific virtual training in state assessment policy, National Reporting System (NRS) performance measures, and compliance monitoring training.

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

Alabama Adult Education consistently provides technical assistance based on program data and program self-evaluation. Due to COVID- 19 restrictions much of the technical assistance was done virtually at the beginning of PY 2020-2021, but in the latter six months of the year face-to-face technical assistance was also utilized to support and guide the local programs. As with professional development, technical assistance is derived from national, state, and local evidence-based practices and innovative strategies designed for continuous program improvement. Alabama uses courses and resources from LINCS to ensure that program leadership and instructors are supported with the best in nationally developed resources. We also produce much of our own resources, toolkits, and programmatic guidance through webinars and face to face training based on researched based best practices in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language, distance education, and staff training We have an entire section dedicated to adult education resources and professional development in our data collection system called the Alabama Adult Education System for Accountability and Performance (AAESAP). For example, during the program year a comprehensive technical assistance regarding the new Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) types based on workplace literacy and IET training occurred with all programs through individual virtual meetings followed by regional discussions and f2f follow-up. This also led to a change in processes to support programs understanding and implementation. The state used Zoom and Webex as the delivery mechanism to disseminate information and to provide quality technical assistance to the field. This approach provided the example of how local programs can design structured virtual classes. Classes that can be delivered live and recorded to be shared and used as a reference resource for students learning at a distance. This is one of many examples of how resources were created, disseminated, and archived within the Alabama Adult Education System for Accountability and Performance (AAESAP) to assist program directors and instructors to continue quality educational services during the Pandemic.

As discussed in last year’s report, the state created a more defined regional approach to technical assistance and support by dividing the state into north, central, and south regions. Each region has an assigned Regional Director that is a Title II Adult Education liaison to assist collaborative growth with career centers, business, industry, and other WIOA partners and stakeholders. The regional team provides technical assistance support to local programs to ensure equity and access to adult education services throughout all locations including the thirty-five Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act comprehensive and satellite Career Centers in Alabama. Alabama Adult Education, as one of the core partners, takes a lead role in the state’s WIOA implementation. The Regional Directors have significant roles in ensuring that their adult education programs are instrumental in all education and training aspects of the seven WIOA local areas in the state, which includes but not limited to TABE assessments, instruction, career preparation, and training.

The Regional Directors have structured, bi-weekly meetings with their local program directors to discuss pertinent topics and issues ranging from career pathways, integrated education and skills training, delivery models that provide equitable access to all students impacted by the COVID Pandemic, as well as other topics targeted to recruitment, retention, and overall performance results.

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

To evaluate the quality and continuous improvement of adult education activities, as described in Section 223(1)(d), the Alabama adult education monitoring team conducts **quarterly desk-top audits** of each local program, **compliance monitoring**, and **targeted follow-up monitoring**. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state monitoring team created a virtual compliance monitoring process. The team utilized virtual platforms such as Zoom and WebEx to communicate with programs and conduct the virtual compliance monitoring. As a side note, from a state and local perspective, Zoom seem to be much easier to navigate and utilize for monitoring purposes and was the platform of choice. The state monitoring template was revised to accommodate various electronic devices such as laptop, tablet, and smart phone application. Alabama’s virtual compliance monitoring process was showcased during the 2021 National Meeting for Adult Education State Directors (ASDM) sponsored by OCTAE.

On-site or virtual on-site compliance monitoring is conducted by the state team following a minimum schedule of eight programs per year, which ensures that each local program will participate in a full compliance monitoring at least once during the state’s three-year Request for Funding Proposal (RFP) cycle. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, compliance monitoring performed within the first eight months of the program year was conducted virtually as described previously.

Targeted monitoring was performed to follow-up and verify the completion of findings identified during on-site monitoring. Adult education staff conducted targeted monitoring visits after receipt of the provider’s response addressing findings. Identified measures ensured that program services and activities considered the findings of program reviews and evaluations.

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

Leadership funds were used to support the Alabama Adult Education System for Accountability and Performance (AAESAP) which is the state’s Management Information System (MIS). AAESAP is owned by Alabama Adult Education and operated through an annual contract with the Alabama Supercomputer Authority (ASA). ASA programmers are assigned to the management and operation of AAESAP. They function as an extension of the adult education state staff to ensure that all aspects of adult education are recordable, trackable, and provide the usability to make data driven decisions at the state and local level. During the COVID-19 pandemic we were able to enhance the usability of AAESAP to create the ability for online self-enrollment. Also, the resource section of AAESAP was improved to provide a plethora of instructional methods to assist the pivot to virtual distance learning.

**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.*

It is an understatement to say that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the educational systems throughout the United States and the world. The effects will be impactful for years to come, none greater than the negative impact on the adult education population. The main objective during Program Year 2020-2021 was to assist local programs in retaining current students and recruiting new students that may have been displaced or negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Simply put, the goal was to provide solutions and resources for engagement and results during the crisis. At the beginning of the program year, the pandemic continued to be a factor for students not attending class in person. A method for remotely proctoring pre and post assessments was established, but local programs were still challenged by many students lacking the skill and the technology to communicate at a distance. Adult Education began a computer equipment loan program to increase the ability to provide assessment and remote learning opportunities. This effort was also coupled with preparing adult education classrooms to accommodate social distancing protocols to ensure a safe learning environment for face-to-face instruction.

As with most states, we saw an overall decrease in all populations and ages of students served versus the previous year. The most significant decrease for Alabama was in the number of non-white students, especially males. The data shows that the overall non-white population of students were thirty percent less than the number served in PY 2019-2020. Also, the first six months of PY 2020-2021 saw a significant decrease in overall enrollment, MSGs, and high school credential attainment compared to the same six-month timeframe the year before which was prior to COVID-19. The OCTAE level completion percentage for the first six months in PY 2020-2021 was 11%. This was a nine-point decline for the same time of the pre-covid months of PY 2019-2020. As you will see described in the Corrections Education section at the end of this report, the inability to have direct or virtual access to the state correctional population to pre/post-test and provide high quality instruction also impacted the overall educational functioning level and MSG performance. The OCTAE educational functioning levels affected the most were *ABE Beginning Literacy*, *Beginning Basic Education*, *Beginning ESL Literacy*, and *Low Beginning ESL*. These lower-level students were certainly impacted by the effects of COVID-19 which exacerbated their already inconsistent ability to learn through distance education formats. However, the second half of the 2020-2021 year gained momentum from students returning to face-to-face learning while others continued to hone their ability to learn virtually from a distance. Local program providers became more comfortable using technology to create asynchronous instruction for all levels of learners and employing interactive hybrid approaches.

The Performance Dashboard on the Alabama Adult Education System for Accountability and Performance system, AAESAP, provides valuable real-time information for enrollment, progress post-test rate, MSG and EFL gain rate, and Career Pathway completions. The dashboard emphasizes federal and state performance goals in real time. This information allowed providers to self-analyze their program data to identify potential problems and proactively work to resolve the issues. As described in other sections, technical assistance is a continuous process. Local providers receive a quarterly desk-top monitoring assessment from state staff as well as monthly performance data checks.

The AAESAP system also allows students to self-enroll online for Adult Education services. Classes are offered for on-site, virtual, or a hybrid combination. An auto alert notification allows a local program to know when a public inquiry or enrollment has been created.

Regarding core performance measures for PY 2020-2021, Alabama Adult Education performed as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Employment 2nd QTR after exit | **41.10%** |
| Employment 4th QTR after exit | **42.72%** |
| Attained HSE and enrolled in postsecondary within one year of exit | **11.12%** |
| Attained HSE and employed within one year of exit | **32.66%** |
| Attained a postsecondary credential while enrolled or within one year of exit | **37.46%** |
| Attained any credential | **38.30%** |
| Measurable Skill Gain | **36%** |

Alabama’s MSG percentage saw improvement because of the ability to count gains specifically related to Workplace Literacy and Integrated Education & Training programs. Another area of opportunity for the State regarding continuous improvement of the MSG percentage is EFL gain. The State has enacted a monthly theme-based strategy to motivate and focus programs while highlighting best practices to increase educational functioning level gains. The last theme for the month was called “Bread and Butter” which symbolizes and emphasizes the importance of Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs) to overall student and program performance. The new strategy assists local programs in identifying obstacles impacting gains and prescribes strategies and professional development to alleviate barriers and enhance opportunities for increasing program performance.

**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*.

The Alabama Community College System, Adult Education Division is responsible for the requirements under 34 CFR part 463, subpart J, and carries out this responsibility. Adult Education provides adult education services as stated under 34CFR part 463, subpart J, throughout the state in the designated comprehensive career centers and in the affiliate career centers where possible. Adult Education has fulfilled a vital part of the assessment and training role in the career centers. The relationship between the partners is one that fosters and demands collaborative teamwork. Education and training services between partners are provided through direct referral and reverse referral.

Alabama Adult Education is a leader in workforce development. We assist the career center system with TABE testing for WIOA programs and skilling up clients for a viable and strong workforce. For accessibility purposes, classes specific to workforce development are held on-site at the comprehensive career centers. GED, Ready to Work (Alabama Adult Education’s Employability Skill Development Program), and Digital Literacy are regular classes held on-site at our Comprehensive Career Centers. Reverse referrals for these classes are made by our smaller affiliate career centers to our local adult education programs. On-site TABE testing is also provided to all our career center partners to determine WIOA eligibility for career center clients who want to enter workforce training programs. Career Pathway development, Short Certificate Training (*such as* *MSSC, NCCER CORE, OSHA 10, and ServSafe*) and transitional counseling are also collaborative services provided through adult education for the Career Center partners.

Infrastructure costs are directly charged to each partner based on square footage for those that are co-located. The state adult education office provides the financial support for each local program’s fair and equitable share of the infrastructure costs based on benefit received and as determined through the funding formula created by the Alabama Department of Labor. An example of infrastructure cost is attached to this report (Attachment A). In this example, the local adult education provider is responsible for 8.46% of the lease, communications, utilities and supplies which is adult education’s fair share of the Alabaster Career Center costs. This type of equitable sharing can be found with each of the Career Center locations where adult education has a presence. Alabama Adult Education is a strong supporter and integral part of the Career Center System.

**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.*

Alabama held a multi-year competition for IELCE funding in early 2021 for PY2021-24. The IELCE Request for Funding Proposal (RFP) was released on February 24, 2021 and proposals were due on April 5, 2021. Announcements of the competition were posted, and a bidder’s webinar was held. Questions from the field were received and responded to during the bidder’s webinar and listed in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document which was posted on the Request for Funding (RFP) website for all interested parties to see. Eight IELCE proposals were received and reviewed. A key component of the review was the demonstration of sufficient need for IELCE services in the community to warrant additional programming. All eight applicants were selected for funding based on a demonstrated need in their service area and the ability to provide IELCE instruction and services to English language learners. Notifications of intent to contract were sent on May 21, 2021. The total amount awarded for IELCE is $291,737.

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

To meet the requirement of providing IELCE services in combination with integrated education and training, the State team has provided training to the programs regarding the requirements, as well as access to resources and toolkits available through LINCS and other sources. Eligible providers have designed programs that deliver high quality instructional activities, such as the integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, which lead to employment. Local program activities have reflected the local, regional, and state specific workforce sector strategies.

Local program providers use the regional labor market information and other tools such as EMSI (*national, state, local labor market and community data assessment tool*) to help place English Language Learners in unsubsidized employment for in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency. The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) has a statewide contract with EMSI which is used by adult education practitioners to augment program design and career navigation. The integration of language and workforce skills enables the English Language Learners to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the skills to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States.

*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*

In PY2020-2021, there were 1,690 IELCE participants statewide. Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs in PY2020-2021 were offered in occupational clusters including *manufacturing, healthcare, construction, information technology, transportation/logistics, and hospitality*/*customer service*. Some examples of credentials earned include Certified Nursing Assistant, FDIC Money Smart, Forklift Operator, National Council for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Core, and Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) class A, B, and C.

Regarding how the State is progressing towards program goals of providing and placing IELCE participants in employment, leading to self-sufficiency as described in 243(c)(1), please see the data below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Employment 2nd QTR after exit | **12.41%** |
| Employment 4th QTR after exit | **12.25%** |
| Attainment of postsecondary credential while enrolled or within one year of exit | **6.76%** |
| Measurable Skill Gain | **19.28%** |

During PY 2020-2021, there was an increased emphasis on college and career readiness professional development for ELL/IELCE instructors. Virtual training and technical assistance focused on the why and the how of integrating English literacy civics education with Integrated Education and skills Training (IET) based on the demand occupations in alignment with the state workforce system goals as established by the Governor. Alabama’s goal of producing 500,000 skilled workers by 2025 will incorporate all residents, none are more important than the English as a Second Language population.

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

Alabama has identified five major sectors (*Manufacturing, Healthcare, Construction, Information Technology, and Transportation/logistics*) that are critical for the success of our state. All sectors are important, but these five high demand/high wage sectors in our state have been negatively impacted by the COVID pandemic. Basic foundational training for these areas as well as the other remaining 16 career clusters are used in the IELCE classes to prepare English Language Learners (ELL) with the ability to attain and/or retain employment.

The English Language Learner population is a challenging population to serve based on the educational and workforce preparation deficiencies that most of the learners have in addition to the lack of English acquisition skills. Teaching the skills to learn to read, write, and speak the English language while integrating Workforce preparation and skills training to ELL students that are basic skill deficient in their foundational education is a demanding proposition. Instructors must be prepared and equipped to deliver a wide array of instructional techniques to learners with many different modalities and digital literacy capabilities. Ongoing professional development for integrated, virtual, and distance education instruction is critical and has been a focus and will continue to be one in 2022.

Regarding obstacles in integrating IELCE participants with the local workforce development system, the same barriers are seen with this effort as with other efforts on behalf of this population. In many cases, the paperwork and documentation are not available, literacy skills are below the level needed to participate in some training, as well as other barriers such as transportation, childcare, and cultural issues.

Local program providers are making a consistent effort to develop connections with companies to employ ELL and IELCE participants directly after completion or in some instances, while training is occurring. The collaboration with Tyson food corporation and their *Upward Academy* and *Upward Pathways* program is an example of how IELCE integrated education and training is occurring with new employees and incumbent workers.

**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.*

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

At this time, Alabama Adult Education follows the adopted College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards promulgated through the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). Based on the rigorous national K-12 standards, these standards were developed for Adult Education in the areas of Reading Language Arts (RLA) and Mathematics. These standards serve as the instructional blueprint for instructors to create plan(s) of instruction for students and to provide accountability for student results. Each local program provider utilizes a Plan of Instruction (POI) document for each student allowing for a structured, targeted path for successful outcomes.

During the 2020 pandemic, training was provided to teachers to move content and delivery of instruction to virtual and hybrid learning models. Students were also provided on-line and asynchronous training before utilizing the Canvas learning management system, Google classroom, Zoom and other regionally supported web platforms. Computers and wi-fi hotspots were loaned to students with technology deficiencies to allow for completion of programs. On-line courses were developed by experienced lead teachers from various programs to allow for continuation of learning statewide as all programs were brought online with Canvas. Online learning training was provided to teachers in all programs from these mentor “lead” teachers. Technical support of online training was also provided to teachers, staff, and students to ensure the continuation of classes. This included resource pages for all students and staff on the state website including ESL/IELCE and academic remediation resources.

Remote proctoring training was provided for the Tests for Adult Basic Education (TABE) and other online testing sites. GED Testing Service provided workshops and webinars for test alignment to the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). Online standards courses offered from LINCS, and the Institute for the Professional Development of Adult Educators (IPDAE) were used to improve online instruction. NorthStar Digital Literacy and Goodwill Community Foundation (GCF) *Learn Free* were also promoted for staff and students throughout the state to increase technology skills. The statewide Ready to Work program for soft skill instruction was moved to the Canvas platform and training provided for all staff to deliver curriculum to the same rigorous standards as in-person instruction. This allowed for other course offerings to be migrated to the online learning platform.

The challenges and lessons learned with virtual online learning involve students and programs having equal access to technology and Wi-Fi networks. Also, continuous state level and program level follow-up is required for implementation and performance as well as moving more course offerings to the virtual platforms.

**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.*

Alabama measures recidivism of an offender by rearrests, reconviction, and/or return to prison during a three-year period following the offender’s date of release. Alabama is making a strong investment in adult education and workforce training for the Department of Corrections. This investment in educational programming is working to reduce the rate of recidivism.

During Fiscal Year 2018-2019, there were 3,704 correctional students served in the Alabama Adult Education Program. The fiscal year is used to better align the data with the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) reporting period. Of this number, 2,789 students were matched by the Alabama Department of Corrections. There have been **1,119** incarcerated students served in FY 2018-2019 who were released back into society and only **22** of those have been reincarcerated. This gives us a 3-year recidivism rate of **2.0%,** which is an exceptionally low rate that demonstrates the role education performs in reducing recidivism. In comparison, the 2019-2020 AL report touted a very respectable 3-year recidivism rate of 3.5%.

With the COVID-19 shutdown, local programs were unable to provide in-person or virtual instruction due to COVID-19 concerns and restrictive ADOC Internet and/or technology policies. Access to direct instruction was not allowed until late into the 2020-2021 program year (May 2021). Some programs were able to provide paper-based distance education opportunities through instructional packets which allowed students to work independently in their cells with feedback coming from verbal communication when inmates were on the yard and instructors were allowed to talk with them through the fence. Instructional support and feedback were also provided through written correspondence. However, the ability to provide an approved, proctored posttest was not possible, thus impacting overall educational functioning level gains and measurable skill gains for PY 2020-2021. A reduction in traditional face to face instruction, coupled with the reality that incarcerated students demonstrate overall lower literacy levels, may lead to fluctuations in future recidivism rates.

**Attachment A**

