North Dakota

# 2020 – 2021 Narrative Report

## State Leadership Funds (Section 223)

(a) North Dakota (ND) Adult Education (AE) program continues to work closely with WIOA core partners in helping to better serve the students/clients (eligible participants) of ND. North Dakota continues to participate in a Peer Evaluation Cohort placing our efforts on developing a state-wide evaluation action plan. We are working with a Mayer/Mayer DOL Coach. Our North Dakota Cohort consists of the WIOA North Dakota agencies; Job Service, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Career & Technical Education, and North Dakota Department of Commerce. Objectives are to understand the current capacity for evaluation and then develop an evaluation framework in a timeline of a few years. We did a self-assessment of our agencies and collaborated for a team rating in key areas. Focus of growth will be made on the three areas: strategic planning; staff skills, capacity, and knowledge; funding strategies. The assessment identified our strengths as a state: evaluation culture awareness and data management. Adult Education also continues to work closely with/on the Governors Workforce Development Council (State Board) (WDC) to ensure adult education and literacy activities remain on the forefront of strategies to fill workforce needs. Regular meetings occur with the core partners, this committee is a branch of WDC and called the WDC administrative team. Time and work are centered around aligning work and initiatives found in the new State Plan. We developed a WIOA collaborative online Microsoft Team allows us to communicate on a different level and platform. Ensuring alignment and working relationships at the local level is a key priority. Solid growth has occurred in identifying services for participants across the WIOA programs. Also, ongoing, the WDC has created 3 groups or task force committees to concentrate on initiatives. Adult Education is assisting in the realm of individuals with barriers and this work will provide even greater resources for students. We have implemented and are refining a new way to track co-enrollments with Job Service ND. In addition, our state is working to develop a comprehensive state plan to address the digital skills gap among adults, especially in rural areas and/or minority populations. A representative from Adult Education sits on that committee.

The State Adult Education office informally tracks professional development (PD) needs by taking note of questions asked by multiple adult learning centers (ALCs), trends in errors in the data systems, or new items/processes that are either upcoming or recently implemented. A Teams form survey was shared with directors and staff to respond on topics of interest for Professional Development, which the goal is to create a continuing credit option through an institution for growth in the LINCS platform of an intensive or targeted study plan approach. This will allow collaboration within our state and allow them to take courses pertinent to their field of study. Professional Development needs are discussed at our directors’ meetings with the State office and shared with NDALL board members on present and future trainings. Continuing to improve, even for our higher performing ALCs, is the model. We want to take out State performance from “good to great”. The North Dakota Association for Lifelong Learning (NDALL) assists the State office in finding PD opportunities and delivering PD. NDALL also plays a large roll in orchestrating the annual Adult Education Fall Conference. The NDALL Conference was held in September in a virtual format this year due to the variant. We hope to return to in person next year. The conference was a three-day conference this year. First day had an emphasis on LACES training. The next two days were filled with presentations on the topics of “Discovering and Igniting Your Ultimate Potential”, “Fostering Resilient Learners”, “Cultivating a Growth Mindset”, “Radically Candid Leadership”, and “Advocating for students with Traumatic Brain Injuries.” Our state uses conference evaluations as a part of the process to continuously improve. The State Director is a member of the NDALL Board and discussion of professional development is one item of focus. She has researched out to speakers and continues to assist on any needs of the ALC Directors. One example of this is the state pays for a one-on-one session for each site and pays for one focused day of LACES training/data analysis for all sites. We typically like this in person, but due to the variant we arranged a virtual option. NDALL puts together a conference committee that includes Directors, adult education teachers, and alternative high school principals/staff. Virtual round tables were offered on a few different topics and offered the needed collaboration and support that staff were requesting. A couple of directors and state director attended the virtual IET Camp to learn more about IET development in Adult Education in our state. We shared out the resources. In addition, we were able to run a grant competition with outside of Adult Education funds for IET development. Three sites applied and are working on their plan. In addition, one site has a partnership with CTE in working on expansion of IET program at their site. The Adult Education director is also the CTE director.

Directors have had focused PD with their staff on various topics. LINCS is an option encouraged and shared with directors. Adult Ed. Lead at NDDPI wrote a plan through the University of Mary, approved, and partnered with LINCS, to offer a credit plan option to educators in the Adult Ed. field. Educators will be able to take courses in their respective areas for credit and update their credentials. Other PD opportunities outside of the annual conference include mini check ins with directors or staff on GED, data analysis, TABE testing, Grant Management system, and LACES. All pertinent information and training/webinar sessions is shared with directors when changes occur. In addition, we moved to a new management system for awards, budget review, and quarterly reports, so ongoing assistance and training continues. With COVID it has been a bit challenging to offer the same schedule of training but hope to get back on the schedule soon. The State Office (State Director) attended nation-wide conferences and trainings such as NRS Regional Training, New State Directors’ Conference, NTI Conference, NASDAE, OCTAE, COABE, and many in house trainings required/optional in our department. The COABE conference will be held in April and will be available in the virtual format or in person. Having all training available on a virtual platform due to COVID-19 has made them more available to attend. Meetings are held every other month with the ALC directors to offer support, share information, and assist in solutions/collaborate. The two staff in the State office are readily available for any technical support that is needed.

One Regional ALC Director has resigned, so a transition is occurring as we are working with the new director. Teacher/educator shortage is a real issue, so exploring options. In addition, at another site, the satellite teacher is retiring, so we are encouraging more focus on the regional site instead of continuing a satellite in efforts to strengthen their program. We have 8 regional sites, 4 satellite sites, and Correctional sites that we work with in our state. We are thankful for the directors and their dedication and engagement with the students they serve in Adult Education in North Dakota.

The State office acts as the first stop for all technical assistance. This allows for a quick response back to local staff and if needing to take a step further, the State office can track and coordinate this inquiry and response. Typically, an answer that would go above the State office will then be posted in our Adult Education Microsoft Team (Teams), so it is documented and accessible by every Adult Education staff member in the State. Two of these Adult Education Microsoft Teams exist, one for those at Director level and then one for all staff. Technical assistance is constant, and questions are encouraged to ensure consistency and accurate implementation. Microsoft Teams has also opened lines of communication between the sites themselves and allow for best practice questions/answers. The threads of conversations are very encouraging to see. Funding used to pay for our databases and systems have built in cost for technical assistance and trainings as well. We will continue to utilize Microsoft Teams, email, and connect via Teams in meetings with our directors.

Federal and state compliance monitoring continued even through a pandemic. Formal on-site Monitoring visits occurred in 2020-2021, data review continues, general networking, and questions about a wide range of needs. We continue to be available for Teams meetings as needed individually and as a group. Onsite informal visits will be conducted at our local sites this year, 2021-2022. Desk audits of data happen regularly, and a data review twice a year. Lastly, Adult Education holds an annual Directors meeting to discuss previous years data, current issues, best practice, large scale changes, and other items to steer Adult Education for the future. Meetings are held every other month with the ALC Directors to offer support, share information, and assist in solutions/collaborate. All information collected from monitoring, evaluation, desk audits, trending questions, etc. are used (in real time) to help adjust future professional development topics and technical assistance guidance communicate to the field.

## Performance Data Analysis

The State office often reviews performance data and looks for trends and/or measures that cause concern or that should be commended. A desk audit is conducted individually and monthly. LACES training and PD is concentrated on teaching Directors and staff how to quickly check these data sets and then, more importantly, to use this data in decision making and student academic planning. The overall data performance measures that included the TABE assessment in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 were affected. We continue to transition to TABE 11/12 since 2018-2019. It has been an ongoing challenge with COVID on tracking enrollment and growing enrollment at our ALC’s, administrating the pre and posttests and accumulating the hours, tracking POPs with distance learning, but have remained strong due to having online instruction options while still offering in person learning with teacher/student engagement and connection at the top of priorities. We have had to be creative on methods but continue to serve students in North Dakota. The class sizes are quite condensed due to the guidance expectations at various sites with combinations of hybrid in some locations to meet the needs. On Vue online option of GED has been an added option to students in rural areas. It has allowed better accessibility during this time for students wanting to complete the GED. Technology is a needed tool and some students do not have access to technology. We continue to work on options for our students if this is needed.

2020-2021

PoP with MSG ABE Total (Table 4) 42.1%

PoP with MSG ESL Total (Table 4) 32.3%

PoP with MSG Grand Total (Table 4) 39.5%

PoP with MSG ABE Total (Table 4b) 43.3%

PoP with MSG ESL Total (Table 4b) 56.9%

PoP with MSG Grand Total (Table 4b) 47.6%

Employment Rate (Quarter 2) 49.4%

Employment Rate (Quarter 4) 50.6%

Median Earnings (Quarter 2) $5200

Credential Rate 54.2%

The data above is looked at closely at the end of the year. As mentioned, during the year, desk audits are conducted monthly, and reports shared two times a year. In addition, a deeper dive into LACES is conducted on each site to produce a Data Analysis. This deeper dive goes into student level data and reveals small but very relevant pieces of information such as students missing small items such as Highest Education Level that would keep them from being an NRS participant or NRS participants post-tested below minimum hours. There are around 15 different criteria that are involved in the Data Analysis. LACES staff can do these for a fee, the State Director can perform them if time allows. The last piece of data that is shared with the ALCs and Directors is more of an overall look and includes GED data as well. This report looks at Table 4, posttest percentage, NRS participants v. students with 1 hour but not NRS participants, GED Pass Rate as defined by GED Testing Service, and a real Passed/Given percentage on GED official exams. Each quarter the ALCs must look closely at their data for the Quarterly Report that is required before funding is released. Performance data is examined at the local level to drive increased performance and professional development needs. We also try to align newer local Directors or Directors who are struggling a bit in a certain area with a director who is excelling in that same area. It is helpful to hear best practice and a plan to improve from their cohort as well as the State level. Lastly, fine tuning the data match process and working with our core WIOA partners on utilizing the SWIS, we hope to continue to get closer to the true number of folks who can help our employment and median earnings outcome data. In ND, we use data match and survey at the site level to try and obtain as many positive matches as we can. Fine tuning the data match process has involved being precise on when we run the report, when sites should check the data system after matches are imported, and lastly increasing the effectiveness of LACES tables and searches to make this process more user friendly. North Dakota has a very low unemployment rate when comparing to other states and, according to multiple studies by WIOA core partners and the Governors Workforce Development Council, more open jobs than people available/looking for work. Action: We continue to monitor and offer support to the Directors in moving students along in reaching their goals. We are monitoring the instruction and data but trust our directors as they lead their staff in the tools, they need in delivery methods. Much like learning loss that is heavily expected in K12, it is also occurring in Adult Education in ND. Not only has the method of delivery needed to be shifted, but peoples’ needs have increased and a focus on improving academic standing was not a priority. Our great dip from 2018-2019 to 2019-2020 data occurred with EL students and continued in 2020-2021. We have heard from our EL instructors that distance education is much harder due to the language barrier and skills to utilize technology. In addition, equally staff turnover has impacted services and depth of data entry.

## Integration with One-stop Partners

Job Service of North Dakota (JSND) is the main provider of career services in our single workforce state. An ongoing MOU between ND Governor, his Workforce Development Council (WDC), and JSND explains they are to provide and make available the career services described in WIOA and 34 CFR 463 subpart J. The MOU also includes language dealing with core and required partners of WIOA to work as a one-stop system to more effectively serve students and participants well accomplishing the Governor’s workforce goals laid out in the WIOA State Plan.

AE in ND provides basic career services by assisting participants in eligibility determinations, providing information on available programs and assistance offered, assessing skill/academic levels, sharing in-demand occupation information, access to current job openings and skills/requirements for those positions, postsecondary training information for job attainment, providing information about support services available in the area and statewide, assistance with financial aid and guidance to individuals who specialize in this area but also help assist in filling out forms such as FAFSA. Meaning assistance in the above areas is provided, but not provided in all areas as listed in 34 CFR subpart J. Some individualized career services are provided however due to COVID this has been more challenging connecting students to these vocational services, but centers continue to provide what opportunities they are able for employment preparation. They have worked with virtual meeting options and in person if available. Directors continue to communicate with the local agencies. These would be pre-vocational services or soft skills such as communication skills, interviewing skills, acting as a professional etc., work and training experiences, workforce preparation activities, financial literacy, digital literacy or technology based training, and English language acquisition and in some local sites, IET/IELCE programs. Follow up is conducted for students who exit AE. Areas of the career services that AE does not cover are covered by one-stop partners. These services, for example, would be placement assistance, more intense labor market information, unemployment compensation claim assistance, diagnostic testing and other non-academic testing or assessment, development of more intense individualized employment plan.

Core partners have committed to the WIOA required Infrastructure Cost Agreement. ND did request a waiver of Section 121(h)(1)(B)(i) and 121(h)(2)(C)(i) of WIOA concerning funding of one-stop infrastructure. The waiver was not approved. Currently, the infrastructure cost (no co-location) for AE remains being calculated on co-enrolled participants.

## Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program (AEFLA Section 243)

The agreement resulting from the first competitive grant process ended in 2018-2019. A new competition was recently completed. ND DPI awarded one grant to one regional provider and that was the Fargo Adult Learning Center. They were the only ones to apply.

All AE providers in ND have been trained in the concepts of IELCE and IET. Fargo is the only site that is mandated to provide both services, an IELCE program that includes IET. Ideally, with increased knowledge of the programs and educating stakeholders, we can secure additional resources to duplicate the work being done in Fargo. We offered a grant outside of AE funding to assist local sites on development of IET programs with a thorough application process. Three sites have applied and implemented an IET: Bismarck and Minot CNA programs and Fargo a para-educator program. In addition, Valley City is partnering with CTE to offer an IET program in area. It is a goal to expand our IET offerings across the state and strengthen our partnership with CTE. CTE and AE share two physical locations currently. There are also conversations on-going with TrainND about cost reduction and how other core partners can help alleviate the cost. These two concepts will, hopefully, drive future IET offerings. The Fargo ALC currently assists students in achieving their C.N.A. license. Fargo ALC started a CNA Nursing program provided for students on an online platform and we are working to expand a virtual option for access to the program for Bismarck ALC students. Fargo ALC is also starting an Intro to Education (starting January 2021): This 10-week class is designed to help prepare students to become a para educator and pass exams such as the Para-Pro. This class reviews literacy and math skills, classroom management, behavioral and academic supports, school safety, and post-secondary education. It is still a state goal to grow and scale IET programs. Both are in-demand industry areas, and the training piece is assisted by an employer who very gladly hires individuals who finish the program. This partnership and program are working very well, we are in search of ways to duplicate this program for other pathways. The one lesson that really stuck out in setting this process up was finding a partner to assist with training. With funding that is somewhat limited for all that is required in an IELCE program, Fargo ALC had to really sell the idea of the program being a feeder program for filling open C.N.A. positions. All local sites in ND are aware of the in-demand occupation list and relate to the local workforce through advisory committees and work with local job service centers. There are only two or three more sites that could incorporate a solid IELCE program (serving ELL students). Fargo has agreed to mentor and share best practices, challenges, and lessons learned from implementing their program. The hope is to less implementation time and keep costs to a minimum. Conversations and partnerships are in place, the next step or progression would include moving from meetings/conversations to action. Challenges have been being able to network with the surrounding agencies in person during this time of COVID, but the Director has done a nice job of trying to find virtual options for students. As mentioned earlier and as out data shows, it is more difficult for EL students in a distance learning model.

## Adult Education Standards

North Dakota Adult Education program adopted the College and Career Readiness standards (CCR) for Adult Education in 2015. NDDPI, regarding K-12 standards, began to write and release North Dakotas own version of standards. The Mathematics and English Language/Literacy standards came out in 2017 and the Science and Social Studies standards were released in 2019. The plan is to, after an initial review, do a deeper dive to compare/contrast the North Dakota Content Standards and the CCR standards. Both have a concentration on 21st Century Skills and the 4 C’s. The assessments used in Adult Education are also built upon the CCR standards. ND K-12, as apart of ESSA Plan, recognizes Choice Ready to assess and ensure students are ready for post-secondary education or training. Work has begun to align with the work we do in Adult Education. In an early review, plenty of alignment exists with the concentration of post-secondary and education in Adult Education.

## Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals (AEFLA Section 225)

Federal AEFLA and State fund are provided to the ND Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations (DOCR) for Corrections Education and the education of Other Institutionalized Individuals. In ND, if an individual is incarcerated at a DOCR facility and does not have a high school diploma or its equivalent (as determined by the State), they are (by law) mandated to work towards one. Recidivism, as defined by the ND DOCR, is an offender committing a new crime and not returning on a status offense, such as a parole violation within three years.

ND DOCR can specifically extrapolate data for adults in custody who were served with state and federal adult education funds for the time period of July 2018-June 2019 required by OCTAE. This data was requested of DOCR and provided to DPO. A U.S. Sentencing Commission report on recidivism among federal prisoners, released on January 24, 2019, showed that nearly 64% of prisoners who had been convicted of violent offenses were arrested within eight years compared with about 40% of those convicted of nonviolent offenses. The data confirms national recidivism rates for adults’ ranges from 64% to 42% and for youth is 34%; ND rates are calculated differently between the Division of Adult Services (DAS) (re-offended within 3 years) and the Division of Juvenile Services (DJS) (re-offended within 1 year). DAS recidivism rate is 38%; DJS recidivism is 15.2%. With that explained, additional data regarding recidivism rates for students while incarcerated is as follows:

* Students with only a reading program: DAS 37% & DJS 15%
* Students completed GED/HSD: DAS 14.2% & DJS 9.4%
* Students with GED/HSD and workforce training/post-secondary: DAS 11% & DJS 7.1%