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

*(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).*

The AEFLA, called Aspire Adult Education in Ohio, state director directly supervised all state leadership activities to ensure alignment with the Combined State Plan activities. The journey with WIOA implementation started robustly in Ohio in 2017. Ohio Aspire invested ample time and state leadership dollars to train teachers and administrators on implementing career pathways. Much of the training involved creating and executing a local career pathways plan, which requires collaborative services with WIOA partners, other educational institutions, and businesses. The local career pathway plans are fluid documents and updated throughout the year. The focus on career pathways has resulted in innovative practices, including growth in IETs, to help Aspire students at all levels achieve credentials and transition to additional training and employment. In 2017, Ohio Aspire had 5 IETs the first year of rollout, and in 2021, we have over 100 IETs offered throughout the state, virtually and in-person, emphasizing alignment with local workforce plans and needs of community businesses.

Certainly, one-stop partnerships were impacted by COVID. There were fewer Aspire classes co-located at the one-stops in PY 2020 because many of the one-stops were closed or only operating virtually. Referrals from the one-stops and to the one-stops continue. Aspire programs offer student assessments, in person or virtually, for partner programs.

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

State Leadership funds in Ohio continue to facilitate a culture of sustained learning and provide evidence-based, high-quality professional development to enhance the adult education system as a core partner in Ohio’s Combined State Plan. In PY 2020, State Leadership funds supported the Professional Development Network (PDN), comprised of a collaboration with the ODHE Aspire office and Kent State University (KSU). State leadership funds were also used to contract with national, state, and local content experts to provide high-quality PD.

The PDN consists of highly qualified trainers and content experts. State leadership funds supported a variety of training, including required, that focus on improving local adult education and literacy activities. Examples of required trainings include Orientation by job role (teacher, support staff, administrator), LINCS Learning to Achieve modules, Distance Education Basics, Assessment Fundamentals, and Understanding and Accessing Data.

Ohio Aspire participated in the 2nd cohort of the Teaching Skills that Matter (TSTM) starting in August of 2020. State Leadership funds supported 4 veteran instructors, state staff participation, and PDN support as we completed the cohort in March of 2021 and worked to create a roll-out and sustainability plan and vision.

The ODHE continues to use a data-driven planning and evaluation process to determine the needs of the local providers and develop training and disseminate information and models of promising practices to address these needs. For example, In PY 20, to meet the needs of the 47 local Aspire programs, the PDN hosted a variety of synchronous virtual trainings focused on delivering quality instruction. In addition, an in-house leadership Growth Leadership Series was created as several local Aspire programs had asked for an opportunity to discuss priority topics with local programs. Monthly topics were offered, and the format included some lecture, discussion and networking through breakout rooms, share-out, and a homework assignment. Topics included

* *Unraveling Diversity as a Catalyst for Instruction*
* *Motivating & Retaining*
* *Dealing with Difficult People/Conflict Resolution*
* *Managing and Observing Teachers at a Distance*
* *Managing Time and Priorities*

Aspire instructional classes offered both virtual and in-person programming for PY20. Examples of some of the PD opportunities that were available to support local programs are included below with the delivery method as to how the PD activity was available:

* An Introduction to the Teaching Skills that Matter (TSTM) in Adult Education (synchronous webinar)
* Brain Games for Hybrid Learning (supplemental/complimentary course in LMS)
* Developing Vocabulary for Reading Success (self-directed)
* ESOL Resources and Standards (synchronous webinar)
* Holding Student Orientation at a Distance (synchronous webinar)
* New Teacher Book Club ABE/HSE (web-based)
* Recognize, Recover, Renew, Rewire! Science and Strategies for Anxiety, Stress, and Trauma
* Trauma Informed Instruction (synchronous webinar)
* New Teacher Orientation (blended)
* Keeping Students Engaged (supplemental/complimentary course in LMS)
* Overcoming Job Search Challenges: How to Help Students Find and Keep a Job (supplemental/complimentary course in LMS)

Throughout PY20, the state office worked with the PDN to provide bi-weekly virtual office hours for administrators and monthly virtual office hours for instructors. This opportunity allowed for updates, networking, discussion, relevant PD trainings, and connection with the field. The state office PD program manager had continual communication with the PDN for planning efforts and PD follow-up.

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

To increase program effectiveness and meet the obligations of a one-stop partner, the state office provided technical assistance in several ways:

(1) Research-based programmatic and instructional practices were disseminated to the field, using nationally known resources, such as STAR and LINCS, and the Ohio PDN. Ohio Aspire offered a variety of required and non-required professional development in-person and online for all job roles. Technical assistance was provided through the PDN hotline, email, and instant messenger. The PDN responded to 2000+ technical assistance requests in PY 20. The PDN provided technical assistance through various email distribution lists such as Ohiolit (general PD announcements and resources), ESOL list, Data management system list, and the HSE list. Resources and event information was also disseminated through PDN social media channels on Facebook and Twitter.

(2) PD was ramped up and best practices shared with how to administer remote tests, orientations, classes, and IETs virtually. The best way to convince local providers that it can be done is to have successful providers share their experiences. Administering remote assessments was a challenge at the beginning of the program year but through technical assistance and more experience, the local providers became more comfortable administering virtual assessments. There is more work to be done around the collaboration of services with WIOA partners. There is now a bimonthly WIOA stakeholder meeting to better coordinate services since we have the same goal of streamlining the workforce system to provide Ohioans access to employment, education and training.

(3) Last year, training and technical assistance was offered all online, synchronously and asynchronously. The pandemic sped up everyone’s technology use. Years prior to the pandemic, Ohio Aspire required teachers to meet level 2 of our statewide Technology Standards. Teachers were required, per a grant assurance, to use technology in the classroom to enhance instruction. Students were also required, through a grant assurance, to have access to technology in the classroom. For in-person classes, these technology requirements still exist. Ohio Aspire has valued digital literacy skills and access to education outside of the physical classroom by requiring all programs to offer distance education since 2010. Data entry staff were required to complete training on using the statewide data management system before they were provided access to their program data. Teachers had access to the data management system via Teacher View. Ohio Aspire established these technology requirements years ago and will continue to expand technology use in order to improve learner and program efficiencies.

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

The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education in Aspire programs was done primarily by ODHE Aspire program managers with support from the Kent State University data management team. The extent and type of monitoring are determined using a risk assessment tool with criteria such as NRS performance measures, enrollment, allocation, and audit findings. Programs with a higher risk score receive more intensive monitoring. Additionally, the ODHE program managers monitor each program quarterly via the local Program Improvement Consultation Plan (PICP). The PICP is a prescriptive continuous improvement tool designed to assist local program administrators in examining program areas for improvement and implementing strategies and action steps to address improvement. The state staff and the PDN use data from the PICPs to determine future PD offerings based on data in the statewide database and from Aspire personnel via surveys and a statewide advisory committee. 100% of the local programs submitted a PICP and participated in the quarterly consultative process.

100% of the Aspire providers submitted an annual Local Program Data Certification Checklist modeled after the federal checklist. This document certifies programs’ compliance with NRS data quality standards. Aspire staff monitor compliance with this document annually.

Local programs are also monitored via the Local Program Review. In PY 20, the state office revised the instrument and procedures from a hybrid model to all virtual since most of the schools were not open. The virtual program reviews still allowed state staff to observe classes and talk to staff, students, and administrators and observe policies and procedures in operation. The Local Aspire Program Review Instrument consists of three content areas: Administration, Staff Development, and Student Experience Model. A final report citing Noteworthy Practices, Findings, and Recommendations was sent to the agency chief administrator following the review. Any area with a finding or recommendation must be responded to with a corrective action plan. The corrective actions were examined and then verified as completed by the state staff. In PY 20, four program reviews were completed.

100% of the grantees received a Local Desk Review in PY 20. Due to the pandemic, the state office did not calculate performance success or failure based on FY20 data. The annual desk review was provided to each program as an informative, not evaluative, tool.

These tools for monitoring programs help the state staff and PD staff work collaboratively with the local programs to implement strategies for program improvement and stay on top of local performance issues.

The state office and PD providers used various methods to ensure information about evidence-based practices and promising models were disseminated to Aspire practitioners. These methods included:

* Offered “just-in-time” virtual trainings at the state and local levels to meet programs’ immediate needs. By focusing on the specific needs of the program, more local staff were able to participate and see that data improvement is a collective process.
* Sent a weekly electronic digest with information about training opportunities and quality resources.
* Provided more peer-facilitated best practices webinars, webchats, and facilitated practitioner discussion listservs.

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

Ohio continued to support one state literacy resource center located at Kent State University. For quality customer service, all PD- related questions were handled through one main point of contact at KSU. KSU responded to over 2,000 PD-related technical assistance requests through a phone hotline, email, and instant messenger. The resource center houses a lending library where resources, such as sets of books and math manipulatives, are mailed to teachers, and low-use/high-cost items such as the TABE test in braille are kept on reserve. KSU contracts with content experts to provide training, technical assistance, curriculum development, and support to local programs and staff.

**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.*

Highlights from the Achievements of the Core Indicators of Performance

* Pre-Covid, Ohio used to rank in the top five states for overall MSG at 60%. COVID brought many challenges in testing and data collection and Ohio AEFLA reported an overall MSG of 40.2% in PY 19. In PY 20 Ohio saw a slight increase to 42% overall MSG as more programs improved pre and posttesting virtually. Ohio Aspire continues to strive to be a high-performing state and there is still much to be celebrated despite the impact of COVID.
* Student persistence remained relatively the same at an average of 60 hours per student despite the change from the previous year, when classes were in-person and virtual, to almost all virtual learning in PY 20.
* Despite the 26% overall decrease in participants from PY 19 to PY 20, Ohio had a significant increase in the number of IET students (+430) in PY 20.
* The increase in IETs and better reporting showed an increase of 15 postsecondary credentials attained in PY 20, again, with a much smaller denominator of participants.
* PY 20: Employment rates 2nd quarter after exit: 41.11%. In PY 19, Ohio was over 47% demonstrating a decrease in employment rates 2nd quarter after exit in PY 20. The global COVID pandemic may have affected the outcomes for employment 2nd quarter after exit . There is a possibility that programs had less follow-up with students to learn to capture employment outcomes.
* PY 20: Employment rates 4th quarter after exit: 42.19%. In PY 19, Ohio was over 45% demonstrating a decrease in employment rates 4th quarter after exit in PY 20. The same factors noted above may have contributed to the decrease.
* PY 20: Median earnings 2nd quarter after exit: $4,554.00. This was a small increase from PY 19.
* PY 20: Credential attainment: 19.25%, demonstrating a decrease from over 21% in PY 19. Traditionally, Ohio has never excelled in credential attainment. With Ohio now seeing more credentials in IETs that are recognized as postsecondary credentials, we hope to see an increase in postsecondary credential attainment.

Areas for Improvement and Action Steps Needed

* The focus for improvement are employment rates and HSE attainment. There were variables from the pandemic that impacted these outcomes, and it is hard to predict and plan for how they may continue to be impacted from covid. In PY 20, many of the HSE test centers were closed or had limited test-taker availability. As more centers open, the number of test takers should increase. There are more opportunities for employment now than in PY 20. With the state office emphasis on programs utilizing career navigators to help students transition to employment and training, Ohio Aspire hopes to see an increase in performance outcomes.
* The percent of reportable individuals increased from FY 19 (26%) to FY 20 (42%). Local administrators reported that since most programs only had virtual options last year, students would start and then decide virtual learning was not their preferred style. This year most programs are offering in-person and virtual classes and the number of reportable individuals will be monitored closely to see if the learning options help or if we need to strategize deeper.
* MSG attainment outcomes should improve as Ohio has implemented the two new MSGs, credential exams and progress milestones, this program year.
* After a decrease in employment rates in 2nd quarter and 4th quarter after exit, Ohio needs to increase partnerships with local employers to help students transition into employment after exit. In addition, some of our IETs end in an opportunity for employment, so it is possible that we will see increased employment rates. Aspire has been a part of the Workforce Stakeholder Meetings with other WIOA Core partnerships, hopefully allowing for more opportunities to learn about employment opportunities and initiatives to help increase employment. Continued improvement needs to occur with local program student follow-up for self-reporting of employment.
* To address the issue of increasing Ohio’s Credential Attainment Measure, state staff will strategically structure our state into region by type of program and performance vs. the traditional geographic split. The goal is to work with community colleges and 4-year colleges and universities to help programs create a sustainable plan to help increase this measure.

**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.*

All of the Ohio one-stops, called OhioMeansJobs Centers, had local AEFLA program services accessible to their customers as part of their services menu. Career services that were provided in the one-stop system include outreach, intake and orientation, assessment of skill levels, referrals, provider performance and program cost information, and supportive services information.

The Aspire programs enter into an MOU on the operation of the one-stop where WIOA partners’ roles and responsibilities are identified, and cost contributions negotiated. Due to COVID, the agreements were extended another year, through June 2022. With coaching from the state director, the local AEFLA administrators have gotten better about negotiating their fair share and asking for assistance from the state office, when needed.

Fewer AEFLA providers were co-located at the OhioMeansJobs centers in PY 20 because many of the one-stops were closed or only open for virtual services. The local programs report that referrals from the one-stops were down in PY 20. Aspire provides assessments, when possible, either in-person or remotely and offers referrals to one-stop services to applicable participants.

In PY 20, 29 of the 47 AEFLA programs paid cash contributions totaling $133,165 to support the OhioMeansJobs Centers’ infrastructure costs, similar to the previous year’s contribution.

**4. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program** (AEFLA Section 243)

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

The Ohio Department of Higher Education held a competition for WIOA Title II funds in PY 2021. In PY 2020, programs were completing year three of a three-year grant cycle. Forty seven agencies received continuation Basic Grant funds and fifteen received continuation IELCE grant funds.

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

The technical assistance we received from OCTAE in PY 19 was the impetus for change that we needed in Ohio. Once we learned that an IET had to be available to students, not that they must be participating in it, we quickly changed course in spring 2020 updating IELCE policies and preparing to accurately award IELCE grants through a competitive process for PY 21. In PY 19, Ohio Aspire went from 6 IELCE providers and allocating $300,000 to 15 providers and allocating over $900,000 within a few short months. In PY 20 Ohio Aspire allocated over $1.1 million as the IELCE programs were able to serve more ESL students with IELCE funds, still with the requirement of offering a minimum of one IET; students could choose to participate in the training piece or not.

Due to the pandemic, many of the in-person IETs had to be restructured to a virtual format. Through technical assistance, most were successful in offering the occupational training piece virtually. If not, programs changed course on what was offered.

*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;*

Questions from OCTAE’s IET checklist are included in the 243-funding application since IELCE programs must provide a minimum of one IET per year. Specific questions must be addressed pertaining to placing participants in unsubsidized employment in in-demand occupations, alignment to a career pathway, connection to a local workforce plan, and solid existing employment opportunities for participants once they complete the IET. Ohio Aspire does not require that each IET ends with a certificate or credential. Still, each IET must be part of a career pathway leading to a credential, certification, or employment. All IELCE grantees have a staff person, typically a transitions coordinator/career navigator, whose job is to assist IELCE participants and all ESL students into postsecondary education/training and employment leading to economic self-sufficiency.

Program goals include expanding IET models and the development of occupational skills training to incorporate internships, on-the-job training, and contextualized work experiences such as working at a local nursing home while in a healthcare IET or working at a local restaurant while participating in a food service IET. Aspire programs are now getting comfortable with this new role in WIOA of offering occupational skills training. Programs are getting innovative and challenging themselves to expand IET services mentioned above.

*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.*

The goal is that all local ESL programs work with the community partners, such as other training providers, OhioMeansJobs centers, employers, and support service agencies to provide IELCE activities that align with the local workforce needs. One of the required questions on the IET checklist for Ohio asks how the IET program reflects the criteria of being a part of a career pathway aligned to the local workforce plan and how it supports the requirements that a career pathway helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster. The incorporation of the OCTAE IELCE Self-Assessment Tool helps programs self-evaluate if they are integrating IELCE program activities that meet the needs of the local workforce development system.

Although most of the regions in Ohio are following the spirit of WIOA and workforce collaboration, a challenge local programs face with IELCE and IETs, in general, is recognition from some of the local workforce development boards that the first rung in a career pathway is a valuable one. Many workforce development agencies continue to narrowly perceive Aspire Adult Ed’s role in career pathways as “the GED program or the ESL program.” Having the local boards review the AEFLA grants in the next competition and make recommendations for improved alignment with the local plan should prove beneficial for them to learn more about IELCE and IETs and see there is a significant role for Aspire IETs in the local career pathway plans.

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

Ohio’s adult education program has a long history, over 27 years, of standards-based education. In 2014, the ODHE Aspire program adopted the rigorous *College and Career Readiness (CCR)* [*Standards for Adult Education*](https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/able/reference/standards/Ohio%20ABE%20ASE%20Standards%20-%20Jan%2029%202018%20%28rebranded%29.pdf) (U.S. Department of Education, 2013) for use in all ABE/ASE classes. In 2018, the Aspire program adopted and adapted the [*English Language Proficiency Standards (ELP) for Adult Education*](https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/able/Ohio%20Aspire%20ESOL%20standards.pdf) (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) for use in all ESOL classes. By utilizing national standards, Ohio Aspire programs were situated to meet the academic rigor outlined in WIOA. The CCR standards, intended to provide all adult students with the opportunity to be prepared for postsecondary education/training and the workforce without needing basic skills remediation, were developed and aligned to the K-12 Common Core State Standards, adopted by the Ohio Department of Education. All Aspire programs are required to implement these standards as a grant requirement. Standards-based lesson plans are reviewed as part of the on-site local monitoring and classroom observations.

Ongoing PD and technical assistance to enable teachers to deliver intentional, standards-based instruction in the online environment include:

* Effective Lesson Planning – ABE/ASE and ESL (asynchronous)
* Reading/Writing Together (synchronous)
* Writing camps (synchronous)
* Writing Foundations: How Teaching Narrative Writing Can Help Students Improve Their Academic Writing (synchronous)

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

Ohio Aspire invested substantial state leadership dollars when the CCRs were first implemented years ago. Resources were developed such as Standards-Based Lesson Plan Templates by subject, Lesson Plan Rubric, and an online [Teacher Resource Center](http://trc.ohioable.org/) with thousands of standards-based lesson plans and resources. The goal was to set the expectation that every program’s curriculum must be aligned to the CCRs; the state office made it easier to implement the new standards by providing lesson plans, PD, and technical assistance. Now, seven years later, all Aspire programs are using the CCR standards to some degree. Standards-based education continues to be a challenge with some teachers who do not see the value and want to teach directly to a standardized test, since performance is evaluated based on testing and not whether they are teaching to the standards.

**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.*

In Ohio, twenty-one AEFLA grantees provided correctional education (CE) in community-based correctional facilities (CBCFs) and jails. Ohio CBCFs and jails do not track recidivism rates, per the Chief at the Bureau of Community Sanctions for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC). Recidivism is tracked in the state prisons, but state prisons were not funded with AEFLA dollars.

In PY 2020, 2,024 participants were enrolled in CE, a decrease of 22% from the previous year due to many of the correctional facilities being closed due to COVID and no virtual class options available.

Of the CE participants, 57% achieved an MSG, significantly higher than the state average of 43% for all participants in PY 2020. Fifty-nine CE participants achieved an HSE and obtained employment or enrolled in postsecondary education. This is significantly lower than in pre-covid years but understandable as many of the facilities were closed for classes and testing and finding employment during the pandemic added to the challenge. In PY 20, 23 CE participants attained a postsecondary credential while enrolled or within one year of exit whereas the previous year there were 0 credentials reported. This increase is due to IETs being implemented in correctional facilities, a win for the offenders.