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Puerto Rico Department of Education Adult Education Program 2021 NRS Narrative Report

December 17, 2021



Table of Contents

1. **State Leadership Funds** (AEFLA Section 223)..... 3

- Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other one-stop required partners to implement the strategies in the Unified State Plan as described in section 223(1)(a). 3
- Establishment or operation of a high-quality professional development programs as described in section 223(1)(b)..... 4
- Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers as described in section 223(1)(c). 5

Performance Data Analysis 6

- The outcome reached..... 6
- COVID-19 pandemic impact..... 6
- Adult Education Participants' profile for PY-2021 7
- Quality and effectiveness of the funded eligible providers and any plans to further increase performance in future reporting years..... 8

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. 8

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program (AEFLA Section 243) 10

Adult Education Standards 10

Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals (AEFLA Section 225)..... 11

Puerto Rico Department of Education
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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 of the following required activities:

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

The Puerto Rico Department of Education of Puerto Rico (PRDE) developed during the fiscal year 2021 several strategies to align adult education and literacy activities with the WIOA core programs and one-stop partners. The staff of the Adult Education Program (AEP) participated actively in the following activities to coordinate services:

1. Negotiation of the new memorandum of understanding with core WIOA partners – American Job Centers for services and shared infrastructure costs.
2. Implementation updates of the distance learning strategy for adult participants under the continued COVID pandemic situation.
3. Promotion of several activities for easy access to services for the population groups identified as the most in-need.
4. Promotion referrals between the Adult Education Program and the American Job Centers One-stop programs.
5. Develop joint efforts to comply with the primary performance indicators and objectives established in the PR Unified State Plan.
6. Professional development activities to eligible training services providers in the development of integrated education and training activities (IET) as per a requirement in the new Unified Plan for the 2020-2023 program year's period.
7. Development of a new career pathways model for use by the eligible service providers education centers.

During the 2021 PY face-to-face activities of some centers were resumed, since the Governor of Puerto Rico issued amendments to an original previous Executive Order which established a curfew to work with the COVID-19 emergency, to resume education activities on a face to face mode.

The AEP used State Leadership funds to promote professional development to virtual delivery and to provide training on high-quality distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, including professional development for remote instruction and administering remote assessments.

Efforts were made to institutionalize working remotely using electronic tools to offer the educational and support services to the participants. During the program year the AEP continued offering training to center directors and teachers to use the MS TEAMS, platform to continue classes through distance education where necessary.

The AEP continued making investment on technology to provide laptop to participants to make accessible the virtual platforms to them. The Program switched efforts to implement CASAS paper and virtual testing for pre and post-test and training staff as virtual testing administrators CASAS tests as innovative solutions to eligibility determination and conducting assessments.

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

During PY 2021 several activities were designed for the education experience of the Adult participants. The following list describes the activities:

1. During the PY 2021 the AEP worked in the design of two three days intensive professional development summit for eligible providers' education centers (first one) and another for adult education teachers focusing on how to comply with the fulfillment of the program objectives and the performance indicators. The two professional development summits were implemented later on October and November 2021. The conferences and workshops included the following issues areas:
 - 1) Andragogy and adult education.
 - 2) The STEAM strategy in Adult education.
 - 3) The WIOA Title II required activities for Adult Education.
 - 4) Career pathways and IET in adult education.
 - 5) The professional counselor role in career pathways for adult education.
 - 6) Data analysis for academic achievement.
 - 7) Career exploration and job market.
 - 8) Academic gain and federal compliance.
 - 9) The management of adult information system.
 - 10) Performance indicators and federal compliance.
 - 11) The development of soft skills.
 - 12) The State Unified Plan for adult education.
 - 13) Contextualized learning and academic achievement.
 - 14) Technology integration for academic achievement in adult education.
 - 15) Serving adults with disabilities.
 - 16) Guides for academic achievement of adult students.
 - 17) Adult Education Program Directives for PY 2022.

2. A ten week intensive professional development workshop for the adult education program counselors, two hours weekly, on development and implementation of a career pathways plan for program participants, at local eligible providers' level. The project was developed with the participation of 48 counselors and a equivalent number of eligible providers education centers
 3. Several short professional developments workshops to centers directors, teachers, and counselors focusing on specific issues: Techniques to access participants learning, Integration of employability skills in the learning process and Teaching strategies for the adult student
- Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers as described in section 223(1)(c).

The PRDE provided technical assistance to eligible providers as described in section 223(1)(c). During the PY 2021 the AEP Program worked in the planning for the implementation of a training workshop on CASAS testing for location, appraisal and pre and post-test for in ESL English teachers as testing administrators for CASAS tests. The training was performed later on December 2021.

The AEP implemented technical assistance activities focused on the effective use of the Adult Information System (AIS) at AEP which purpose is to maintain accurate participants' data and continuous improvement in data quality. Training was offered to service providers' centers directors through two workshop on how to prepare the RFP for two new competences for providing services on ABE, ESL and IET. The training was focused on key issues such as how to gather and save data, data quality validation, data usefulness to demonstrate services effectiveness, performance levels standards negotiated with NRS and follow-up to performance indicators.

Additional technical assistance was provided through phone calls and electronic mail. Issues were attended through the Adult Information System (AIS) call center. This effort was implemented at central AEP offices to guide local providers in the daily operations of the data collection for adult education activities.

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

During the 2021 PY, the PRDE-AEP, through the Adult Information System (AIS) continued reviewing local activities data gathering on educational functioning level gains, and number of participants post-tested. This review process allows program staff to thoroughly assess program operations. The COVID pandemic has made the monitoring process more challenging due to limitations on visits to local centers operation and as a consequence, remote review of local activities is more relevant to secure the local programs effectiveness.

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.

The AEP performed an analysis of the performance data reported this year. To perform that analysis the process conducted at the State and local levels was based on the data collection done by the service providers and uploaded to the Adult Information System (AIS) at AEP central level. A detailed data review and validation for each data indicator was performed by the central office. The specific anomalies identified were checked for corrections. The errors, when identified were resolved by telephone calls and discussion of the raw data indicators with the education centers directors, teachers and counselors at each center.

The outcome reached

The State performed adequately regarding its negotiated levels of performance and outcomes for each indicator for PY2021. The targets and outcomes are the following:

Performance indicator	PY 2021 negotiated level (%)	PY 2021 outcome level (%)
Measurable skills gains	54.5	59.0

COVID-19 pandemic impact

The services were severely impacted by the pandemic COVID-19 during last program year and the program continued in a recovery process during PY 2021. During 2021 program year the difficulties in participants' recruitment continued as result of the initial lock-down of schools and the federal economic stimulus program providing cash incentives to individuals that resulted in a lack of incentive for work in the whole economic system. In addition, Puerto Rico continues the recovery from the sequence of earthquakes during the period of December 2019 January to March 2020. During 2021, a lesser sequence of earthquakes continued in a lower intensity affecting the emotional stability of families in the Southwest side of Puerto Rico. The Southwest part of Puerto Rico was the most impacted region. The Department of Education Adult Education Program has invested in technology, including laptops and internet access to provide connectivity for participants, but the digital divide reality in most rural remote areas of Puerto Rico prevented a large group of participants from access to an adequate internet signal. This situation provoked a challenging situation for enrollment of participants that has been lagging during the 2021.

Adult Education Participants' profile for PY-2021

The Adult Education Program served, during 2020-2021 school year, an active enrollment of 5,801 participants. The previous year 2020 the enrollment was significantly lower, with 1,366 participants. The previous 2019 year the program had 5,289 participants onboard. In conclusion, the PY 2020-2021 has been more successful in participants served than the previous two years.

The distribution by gender in participants served was as follows: 2,678 males, equivalent to 46.2% of total and 3,123 females, equivalent to 53.8%.

Participants by services was as follows:

- a. Basic Education (ABE 1 thru ABE 4) 233,
- b. Secondary Education (ABE-5 thru ABE-6 and Equivalency Exam Tutoring) 3,756,
- c. Conversational English 1,812.
- d. The participants in ABE 5 and 6 represented the greater share, 64.7% of total participants, followed by the share of conversational English, equivalent to 31.2%.

Correctional education program: A total of 501 were served while in the correctional education program or in rehabilitation.

Demographic Characteristics

The Composition of participants by age, during school year 2021, showed that:

- 1) The greatest participation in the program was among participants between 25-44 years of age, a total of 2,056 participants which represented 35.4% of the enrollment.
- 2) The 2nd group in relative importance was the 16-18 years of age for a total of 1,915 participants making up 33.1% of the enrollment.
- 3) The 3rd group was the 19-24 years of age group with 858 participants, representing 14.8%.
- 4) The 4th group in relative importance was the group age of 45-54 with 585 participants representing 10.0% of the total.
- 5) The 5th and 6th groups were the 55-59 and 60+ age representing 387 participants, a combined 6.7% of total participants.

These groups represented the 100% of the participants served.

The 99.1% of the participants identified themselves as Hispanics or Latinos.

The employment rate: The employment rate was 19.4% with 1,125 participants employed, which is greater than the previous year, 11.9%. The unemployed were 2,054, representing 35.4%. There were 2,622 participants in the category of not in the labor force, representing 45.2% of the total participants served, a significant lower percentage in comparison with the 67.4% in this category the previous year.

The level of schooling: The level of schooling of the participants before registering in AEP is divided in nine schooling levels. The frequency of levels is as follows:

1. The largest frequency was in the 9th-12th grade with no high school diploma. This group included 2,981 participants, representing this represented 51.4% of the total participants.
2. The second most important group was the category of participants with a university or professional degree with 863 participants, representing 14.9%.
3. The third group in relative importance was the category of unknown degree, with 701 participants, representing 12.1%.
4. The fourth group was the 6 – 8 grade completed, with 570 participants, representing 9.8%. The group with secondary school diploma or alternate credential, was the fifth in relative importance, with 409 participants, representing 7.1%.

These five groups accounted for 95.3% of the total participants served.

Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) achieved.

The Adult Education Program achieved the general objectives in skill gains: A total of 2,496 participants, (58%) achieved at least one functioning level of measurable skills gains, ABE and ESL level. (Table 4 NRS).

A total of 1,500 participants, out of 1,812 on ELS program, equivalent to 82.8%, achieved an average level of ESL measurable skills gains. (Table 4 NRS).

In ABE, the percent of MSG is 50.3%. The number of participants who passed at ABE levels was 708 participants. In ABE there were 1,407 participants in total.

Overall MSG total for ABE and ESL is 58.0%

Quality and effectiveness of the funded eligible providers and any plans to further increase performance in future reporting years.

The Adult Education Program (AEP) implemented a plan to improve quality. The plan is based on a quarterly review and inform each provider on their performance. Each service provider must submit a plan explaining how it propose to improve the services.

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.

The AEP continued during the 2021 program year executing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the OneStop Partners. The program participated in a joint process for reviewing infrastructure agreements (IFAs) among State workforce partners and was directly involved in an intensive local level negotiation. In the MOUs negotiation, the primary methods used to determine proportionate share and relative benefit was

square footage of location space in one-stop center, actual use, and staff involved. The negotiation process was a challenge and negotiations involved several months during the Program Year, but all parties reached an agreement and the MOUs were signed and are under implementation.

During the new competition application held during the PY 2021 the AEP has instructed eligible education services providers that, each eligible agency must fulfill the roles and responsibilities with one-stop partners. To determine that the delegated eligible provider is carrying out its roles and responsibilities, the AEP provides to each eligible service provider a copy of the MOU's with the corresponding One Stop partners and review with them the MOU and infrastructure funding agreement. Also, the AEP program requires a narrative report to each service provider about the activities performed and has established a monitoring procedure, that is implemented by the Federal Funds Division of the Department of Education. The federal funds division perform desk review monitoring on how local programs provide access to career services and the types of services provided through the one-stop system.

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

The services available in the AJC One Stop Centers in partnership between the AEP and the AJCs will be:

1. Determination of eligibility to receive services under the activities of the WIOA Title II Adult Program, of the Adult Education Program of the Department of Education.
2. Initial evaluation of the participants skill levels, including aspects related to literary and numerical skills and level of fluency in English as a second language (ESL), as well as initial evaluation of the aptitudes, attitudes and needs of support services.
3. Services to change an individual's employment status ("Labor Exchange Service"), including job search and placement services and when an individual needs it, career counseling services, including providing information on industrial sectors and occupations in demand; and information on job opportunities in non-traditional sectors.
4. Referrals for service activities with other programs available in the Adult Education Program (AEP), and if appropriate, on other workforce development programs.
5. Information on the characteristics and conditions of the labor market, including statistical information on the local, regional, and state employment market, such as:
 - 1) List of vacant occupations in the labor markets.
 - 2) Information on the employment skills necessary to obtain a job described in the job vacancy listing.
 - 3) Information related to occupations in demand in labor markets and income levels, required skills and opportunities to access and obtain these occupations.
6. Provide information on the level of unemployment and costs on training activities for service providers.
7. Provide information on the unemployment level and any other unemployment information related to the Local Area.

8. Provide information on available support services and assistance and the process for their referral.
9. Assistance in meeting the eligibility requirements for programs that provide financial assistance for training and educational activities not provided under WIOA.
10. Provide information and assistance related to filling out applications for services under the Unemployment Insurance Program.

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/ESL program:

PRDE held the latest competition during the PY 2021, in a three-year competition. During FY 2021, PRDE implemented a pilot project for ISL /IELCE services in combination with integrated education and training (IET) activities focusing in short term credentials for job opportunities in several industrial clusters, including, health care, tourism and hospitality and services to business. The project was successfully implemented in a partnership with the San Juan Metro Campus of Interamerican University of Puerto Rico (IAU). The project will be expanded during PY 2022 to other four IAU campuses island wide and to other universities and technical colleges.

- *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).*

During PY 2021, the program implemented a new career pathways operational plan adjusted at local level workforce needs. The local eligible provider's centers were 49 centers. The staff participants list included the center director, a counselor and a conversational English teacher. Each participant received a training certificate endorsed by Ohio State University Continuing Education Faculty and each center developed an operational plan to implement the career pathways model at local level. The career pathways model will be the roadmap to implement IELCE/ESL/IET activities in coordination with post-secondary education institutions to place program participants in unsubsidized employment of in-demand industries and occupations.

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 Adult Education Program of the PRDE initiated during PY 2021 the planning for the development of a new curriculum aligned with the State K-12 standards and plans. The new curriculum design will be completed during PY 2022-2023. During the design of the

new curriculum the AEP will survey local eligible providers' adult education centers to determine the extent they are using the current curriculum and how they are using it. The new curriculum will include:

1. Alignment to the College and Career Readiness Standards.
2. Integration of Workplace Preparation Activities (also known as soft skills, employability skills, work readiness skills); contextualization activities to life and careers.
3. Attention to instructional shifts, including focus, coherence, rigor, evidence, complexity and knowledge.
4. Use of relevant materials and technology.
5. Integrated education and training (IET) curriculum lessons for in-demand occupational and industrial clusters using OCTAE IET curriculum guidelines

The AEP will hire a professional curriculum specialist to facilitate and guide the effort with the assistance of a team of teachers hired by the AEP.

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

The DE-AEP implement an adult education effort for justice involved persons, island-wide in Puerto Rico. During the 2021 program year a total of eight (8) prisons had adult education services for inmates, including the following: Ponce Correctional facility, Guayama, Correctional facility – 1000, Guayama, Correctional facility – 500, Guayama, Correctional facility – 296, Rio Grande, Zarzal, Correctional facility, Mayagüez Correctional facility, Aguadilla, Correctional facility and Arecibo, Sabana Hoyos, Correctional facility-216.

The AEP has a cooperative operations agreement with the Puerto Rico Correction Department to provide services to these adult participants. The services are provided to inmates who are expected to leave the correction institution in less than five (5) years. All the academic and career services provided to the regular participants are offered to this population, including ABE, ESL, and High School Equivalency testing and career services. After the pandemic COVID-19 this area of services has suffered a severe impact and challenges because visits to prisons were suspended and the distance education alternative is not a viable strategy because inmates are not allowed to use internet connection. During the PY2021 there was zero recidivism rate in justice involved offenders served.

Submitted by:

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End of this report