RHODE ISLAND NARRATIVE REPORT 2020-2021

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

With the reallocation of agency capacity in response to urgent pandemic challenges, regular meetings of Rhode Island's WIOA Interagency Workgroup were paused during PY 2020. The group was convened by the state Workforce Development Board (WDB), and had participation from the local WDBs, and WIOA core and partner programs, including Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) staff (the AEFLA State Eligible Agency), whose salaries are partially paid with section 223 funds. Even without workgroup meetings, core and partner programs continued to work together to implement priority strategies from Rhode Island's Combined State Plan.

Partners convened virtually on an ad hoc basis in response to emerging issues that impacted multiple agencies. They also collaborated on new initiatives that advanced State Plan priorities. For example, an interagency project with participation from the state's WDB, Office of Higher Education, community college, and Department of Education received philanthropic funding to build out education and workforce initiatives designed to ensure a strong post-pandemic recovery for the state. Projects included planning activities to expand and align implementation of Integrated Education and Training (IET), establishing a statewide community of practice for career coaches from across systems (with participation from adult education, workforce development, and postsecondary), and engaging a cohort of employer partners committed to piloting competency-based hiring practices. IET is a key strategy to assist the state in meeting employer demand and diversifying recruitment pipelines during the recovery.

Throughout PY 2020, the operator of RI's one-stop system has supported interagency alignment and information sharing by compiling training, employment, and other opportunities from partner agencies. The information is disseminated in a weekly email summary and in a shared folder. Local adult education programs are included on the email list. Quarterly meetings of one-stop partners - including adult education - were held on a virtual meeting platform.

Furthermore, RIDE continued to convene the Adult Education Core Team on a biweekly basis in PY 2020, with representation from the state WDB, DHS, and OPC. This interagency meeting was a valuable forum for information sharing and coordination of state agency programs that support lower skilled Rhode Islanders. The meetings built partners' understanding of adult education and improved alignment of resources. For example, as a result of meeting discussions, partners expanded AEFLA participants' access to child care vouchers through alignment of policy across agencies.

The state DLT is the lead agency for the demand-drive, sector-based strategy highlighted in Rhode Island's WIOA State Plan. Real Jobs Rhode Island (Real Jobs) and its sister initiative, Real Pathways, are two DLT grant programs that are key to implementation of this approach. While Real Jobs funds projects designed around employer demand, Real Pathways promotes partnerships between education and training providers and employers to develop pathways responsive to the needs of job seekers with barriers. Both grant programs fund adult education activities, including IET and Workplace Adult Education and Literacy. More than half of AEFLA grantees are also grantees of either Real Jobs or Real Pathways, an sign of increased integration between the state's adult education and workforce development systems.

One of RI's local providers is designated to serve as the AEFLA liaison with the state's one-stop system. RIDE funds Providence Public Library (PPL) to deliver adult education services onsite in RI's two comprehensive one-stop centers, Providence/Cranston and West Warwick. During PY 2020, RI's one-stop offices were closed due to the pandemic. PPL was able to transition all but one of its one-stop classes using online platforms, and continued to provide access to one-on-one drop-in coaching and referral services virtually to clients referred for literacy, numeracy, English Language Acquisition, digital literacy skill development, or GED preparation. Thanks to the continued integration, clients received targeted skills coaching that can make the difference in demonstrating eligibility for other WIOA services.

- *Establishment or operation of high-quality professional development programs.*

RIDE funded two local providers, both adult education grantees, to deliver professional development (PD) for the statewide network of adult education grantees in PY 2020. PPL's Tech Hub has been funded to provide PD related to instructional technology and digital literacy for practitioners and learners since 2017. PY 2020 was the second year that the Community College of RI (CCRI) hosted the state's Director of PD for Adult Education, who develops and implements an annual plan for delivery of content and instruction-related PD for the state. All PD offerings focus on the specific learning needs of adults and are accessible to both paid and volunteer personnel.

The dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to AEFLA-funded programs was a priority throughout the program year. RI has statewide memberships in New England Literacy Resource Center and in the Coalition on Adult Basic Education, ensuring that all local practitioners have access to opportunities provided by these regional and national networks. In addition, local providers benefitted from PD on promising approaches to teaching adults delivered by regionally and nationally recognized trainers. Furthermore, virtual networking sessions and other informal opportunities throughout PY 2020 allowed local programs to connect with adult educators around the country and gain a deeper understanding of promising practices in other states.

The state's adult education PD strategy remained responsive to the needs of local programs and their adult learners. All formal and informal training sessions were moved online and a particular emphasis was placed on supporting local programs in using technology for distance instruction. A series of courses from Mockingbird Education emphasized strategies for the design and delivery of effective online learning for ABE learners, while another provided teaching awareness and instructional strategies for students with learning disabilities. Also, with the jobs of many adult education students in mind, a "Safer COVID Cleaning & Disinfection Training" was offered to spread awareness of the hazards of conventional cleaning chemicals and disinfecting products.

RI's PD providers supported dissemination of local promising practices. Role-based sharing opportunities took on a heightened importance as local providers grappled with challenges presented by the abrupt shift to distance instruction. Local programs' Professional Learning Specialists met on a monthly basis, and local program managers on a biweekly basis. Both these meetings were opportunities for sharing promising practices, supporting their implementation, and surfacing local issues that were flagged for the state office. Additionally, a series of workshops led by local instructors elevated promising local practices, cultivated a sense of community among practitioners, and recognized local instructor-leaders.

In PY 2020, career coaches had the opportunity to benefit from a statewide PD initiative sponsored by the state WDB. In partnership with the Markle Foundation's Skillful Initiative, the state WDB launched two statewide PD initiatives for career coaches, a priority named in the WIOA state plan. The Rhode Island Governor's Coaching Corps, an intensive training and leadership development program for job coaching professionals, served an interagency cohort of 35 career coaches (including 10 from adult education). The second project was the development of an online platform to support collaboration and sharing of resources and best practices among a statewide Community of Practice (CoP) for career coaches. To date, over 150 RI-based job coaches have accessed the CoP site.

- *Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers*

Distance education continued to be a technical assistance priority during PY 2020. The Tech Hub was a key resource for guidance on best practices for a more structured and intentional approach to distance education. Staff connected providers with vetted distance education strategies and tools while modeling best practices. For example, a five-week course on blended learning offered during fall 2020 - *Guided Instruction for Creating a Blended Learning Course* - was delivered virtually, combining facilitated synchronous and asynchronous components.

After the emergency transition to distance education during the final quarter of the prior year, supporting an aligned and research-informed approach to distance education at the system level became a technical assistance priority for PY 2020. In response, Tech Hub developed a handbook with guidelines for adult education technology use and distance education. The handbook, _Guidelines for Distance & Blended Learning for RI Adult Education_, provides information and resources to support local providers in planning for distance education, incorporating relevant research. It increases system efficiencies by reducing duplicative development of tools and resources at the local level, and supports local practitioners in developing or improving their distance instructional practices using research-based standards, the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, which were adapted for the Rhode Island context. Tech Hub staff developed the handbook over the course of PY 2020, with a feedback process engaging focus groups of local practitioners. The handbook will be an important reference document for planning and implementation of distance education, and will provide a basis for technical assistance and professional development in future program years.

While the state's one-stop centers remained closed for the duration of PY 2020 due to pandemic restrictions, adult education fulfilled its responsibility to provide access to employment, education, and training services as a required one-stop partner. PPL, the local AEFLA provider designated as the state's liaison with the one-stop system successfully transitioned established services to online platforms, ensuring continuity of services for clients referred by one-stop staff for assessment or targeted skill development. Please see section 3 of this report for details on how PPL and other local providers provided access to career services, even without access to physical space at the one-stops during PY 2020.

Consistent communication within the field was critical to identifying common challenges, sharing of promising practices, and increasing system efficiencies in PY 2020. RI utilized and refined three existing communication tools: RIAdultEd.org, a website with field-facing and learner-facing pages, was reorganized to make it easier to navigate and locate resources; membership lists for Rhode Island adult education's four role-based Google Groups were updated and promoted as the preferred communication channels for sharing of information and ideas; and the PD email newsletter began a weekly schedule for

disseminating information on upcoming local, regional, and national PD opportunities. New in PY 2020, Rhode Island established an online playlist of webinar recordings and the numerous self-access training videos that had been created since the beginning of the pandemic. Local practitioners can access videos on demand; access data serves as a feedback loop for gauging topics of interest that warrant follow up..

Tech Hub played a critical role in providing assistance in the use of technology to eligible Rhode Island providers throughout PY 2020. Staff offered responsive implementation assistance to local practitioners and program leadership throughout PY 2020 with regular drop-in hours and one-on-one coaching on specific instructional strategies, technologies and platforms.

RIDE staff paid by section 223 Leadership funds held monthly technical assistance meetings with local program leadership virtually during PY 2020. With the state's transition to a new data system in fall 2020, NRS data entry and reporting was a priority topic. In addition to the regular monthly presentations on planned topics for local program leadership, regular, role-specific technical assistance was also provided for local program staff. For example, technical assistance on the new data reporting system was offered twice per month for local data managers. Monthly data system users' group meetings on specifics of NRS data collection and entry were supplemented by monthly drop-in sessions with trainers from the state's data system vendor. Regular feedback from local providers helped inform technical assistance topics. RIDE staff joined the biweekly meeting of the local program directors' Professional Learning Community. These meetings were an opportunity to get a sense of common challenges and emerging needs among local providers. Common questions or themes indicated potential areas for technical assistance. Partially in response to questions about local assessment implementation, the state's CASAS trainers began to offer regular technical assistance meetings for local assessment specialists in PY 2020.

- *Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of adult education activities*

RIDE conducted quarterly virtual evaluations of local providers, with both narrative and data components.The narrative component includes questions related to promising practices and challenges in implementation over the previous quarter, as well as progress made on one-stop integration activities and employer partnerships. New in PY 2020, RIDE required local providers to submit NRS Tables 4, 4b, and 5 for the data component of the quarterly reports. NRS tables provided a snapshot of local enrollment and skill gain outcomes, as well as varying local levels of understanding about post exit indicators. Because most local programs continue to rely on paper-based testing to establish entering Educational Functioning Levels and gains for program participants, enrollment and MSG data for PY 2020 did not accurately reflect the number of participants served, or the skill gains achieved. NRS Table 4b enabled RIDE to compare the MSG rate only for those participants who were able to take a post-test, as well as to compare a provider's PY 2020 post testing rate relative to previous, non-pandemic program years.

RIDE was unable to provide confirmation of state funding sources to providers at the beginning of FY 2020 due to pandemic-related budget uncertainty, and determined that it was not appropriate to hold local providers accountable for meeting enrollment and skill gain targets negotiated at the beginning of the funding cycle in PY 2018. As pandemic continued to evolve during the program year, RIDE worked with local providers to set enrollment and skill gain targets on a quarterly basis. Local NRS tables provided context for review and evaluation the following quarter.

In addition to the quarterly narrative and data submission, RIDE held one-on-one virtual meetings with

each funded eligible provider at the beginning of the program year. These conversations were an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned from the previous year's performance, to identify potential areas in need of monitoring or technical assistance, and to set targets for the coming quarter.

2. Performance Data Analysis

Program Year 2020-2021 (PY 2020) was the third year of RIDE's three-year grant cycle for adult education funding, which supports a statewide network of 20 local providers. RI funding for adult education is a combination of federal AEFLA funds and state sources: General Revenue, allocated by the Rhode Island General Assembly, and Job Development Funds, administered by the state WDB.

Local providers maintained distance instruction for a majority of PY 2020. This proved challenging for some learners, particularly the lower skilled adults, lower level English Learners, and learners without devices, access to an internet connection, or digital literacy skills. Additionally, adult learners are learning to navigate extraordinary challenges, such as pandemic-related job loss or virus exposure as essential workers, increased basic needs insecurity, and closure of childcare and schools. Unsurprisingly, these challenges had dramatic, negative effects on the state's PY 2020 outcomes. RI did not meet its state performance targets for PY 2020; and although the state slightly improved its MSG percentage from PY 2019, its PY 2020 MSG percentage was still almost 20 points lower than pre-pandemic performance.

Overall, RI's 20 local programs served approximately 23% fewer participants in PY 2020 compared to the prior program year: the state served a total of 3,836 adult learners with 12 or more hours of instruction, 1,146 fewer participants than the 4,982 with 12 or more hours in PY 2019. For comparison, in PY 2018 - the last pre-pandemic program year - the state served 5,942 participants with 12 or more program hours.

Although there was a decrease in the number of students served, there was a small increase in RI's PY 2020 MSG percentage relative to the prior year: PY 2020's MSG was 34.1%, as compared to PY 2019's 33%. It is important to consider the dramatic decrease in administration of assessments as a factor in RI's low MSG rates. Of the 3,836 PY 2020 participants, 1,342 - more than a third - were assigned a provisional Educational Functioning Level because they were unable to pre-test due to pandemic-related disruption of services. Unless participants assigned a provisional EFL at entry were able to pre-test at a later date, they were unable to demonstrate a skill gain through pre- and post-testing. RI's local providers have historically relied on pre- and post-testing to document skill gains for the majority of participants. Pandemic disruption of assessment administration is further illustrated in the PY 2020 post-testing rate: only 36% of participants took a post-test, a rate that is considerably lower than PY 2019's 50% rate and the pre-pandemic rate of 75%. Providers were unable to document skill gains by participants who were not assessed. However, the average number of hours of instruction received by participants remained consistent with trends from the two previous years. PY 2020 participants attended 100 hours on average, which is slightly higher than PY 2019's average of 98 hours and even PY 2018's 98 hours. The maintenance of program intensity in spite of pandemic turbulence is a testament to local providers' continued efforts to keep learners engaged and participating.

In PY 2020, 32% of participants were assessed at entry in Adult Basic Education (ABE) levels, 16% assessed at Adult Secondary Education (ASE) levels, and 51% at ESL levels. While the proportion of ABE students stayed relatively consistent from PY 2019 to PY 2020, the proportions of ASE and ESL

students are notably different, a result of pandemic conditions. Where ASE students made up 16% of participants in PY 2020, compared to 9% of participants the prior year - a near-doubling that can be attributed to a few factors: the decrease in the total number of participants (which seemed to mainly impact ESL participants), an increase in enrollment of unemployed Rhode Islanders who might otherwise be in the workforce (which would be consistent with trends in past economic downturns), and a documented influx of 16 and 17 year old students leaving the traditional high school setting to earn a GED. On the other hand, 51% of participants were ESL students in PY 2020, a decrease from 65% in PY 2019. This is consistent with trends reported locally: barriers to participation in distance education especially impacted learners whose limited English skills compounded low digital literacy skills, and lack of access to internet and devices.

State and local staff remain concerned about how lack of access to in-person services has disproportionately affected sub-populations of learners, specifically lower-level learners, those without access to technology or digital literacy skills, and English Language Learners. Maintaining equitable access - especially those who are hardest to serve - is an ongoing priority at the state and local levels as the state returns to hybrid or in-person programming.

NRS Table 4 Analysis
Pandemic disruptions continued to play a role in the state's PY 2020 performance data. As was true in PY 2019, the marked drop in Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) on NRS Table 4 is the most obvious illustration of the pandemic's impact. Only 34.4% of all Rhode Island adult learners served for 12 hours or more made MSG in PY 2020; although this is slightly more than PY 2019's MSG, it is almost 20 percentage points lower than RI's pre-pandemic MSG of 53.0%.

Similar to PY 2019, pandemic conditions and lack of access to assessments caused a drop in outcomes for EFL gains in PY 2020. The state continued data matching with the National Student Clearinghouse to more accurately capture EFL gains through transition to postsecondary and recorded a drop in EFL gains from 108 in PY 2019 to 65 in PY 2020. Likewise, EFL testing gains were significantly lower in PY 2020 than in recent years. However, perhaps due to a marked increase in ASE students during PY 2020, the High School Equivalency (HSE) completions during PY 2020 were higher than in the previous year.

The closure of physical program locations for the last quarter of PY 2019 and the majority of PY 2020 had a disproportionate impact on reporting for enrollment and gains based on administration of NRS-approved assessments. The majority of the state's local providers depend on paper-based assessments, but were unable to administer them consistently due to pandemic disruptions. This depressed the number of PY 2020 learners who were counted as participants, as well as the number of EFL gains.
Local adoption of the allowance for provisional EFL placement during the pandemic has been inconsistent.

The effect of program closures is reflected in RI's low post-testing rate for the year on Table 4b. In PY 2020, only 36% of participants took both a pre- and post-test, a rate that is less than half the pre-pandemic rate (75% in PY 2018). The state's historically strong performance on MSG percentage has been linked to its strong post-testing rate. The low PY 2019 and PY 2020 MSG percentages reflect the difficulty in administering assessments to capture gains while adhering to public health and safety guidelines. Unfortunately, a majority of PY 2020 participants never had an opportunity to demonstrate the skills

gained from participation because they were not able to take a post-test before the end of June.

Additionally, the state recorded 194 HSE completions among participants during PY 2020, representing a modest increase from PY 2019 but about half of the HSE completions earned statewide pre-pandemic. This is another indicator impacted by site closures due to the pandemic. Most of the state's GED testing centers were closed for a majority of the year, which limited access to testing appointments and amplified transportation barriers. Those that were open had reduced capacity to comply with public health guidelines. Limited availability of testing slots meant some students were unable to schedule a test promptly. Waiting to test had adverse impacts on outcomes as programs worked to keep participants engaged and ready to test until their appointment.

The state's dependence on paper-based testing made the state's outcomes more vulnerable to turbulence caused by the pandemic. RIDE is committed to working with local programs to expand capacity for remote testing in the state. Last year, the program designated as the state's CASAS trainer carried out a pilot of remote proctoring for CASAS test administration and continues to provide support to local providers transitioning to e-testing or interested in remote proctoring. Although programming had largely returned to in-person instruction by the end of PY 2020, RIDE is exploring opportunities to implement system-level support for remote assessment, and has begun a conversation with other state agencies about WIOA partners' need to develop the state's remote testing infrastructure.

NRS Table 5 Analysis
Rhode Island saw an increase in the second quarter employment rate (from 28.1% to 34.6%) and a $345 increase in second quarter median earnings on its NRS Table 5 in PY 2020. The fourth quarter employment rate increased from 21.8% in PY 2019 to 35.7% in PY 2020. The postsecondary enrollment and employment rates within a year of exit for ASE learners saw modest gains: enrollment raised from 9.7% in PY 2019 to 12.5%, while the percentage attaining a postsecondary credential while enrolled or within a year of exit had no outcomes (as was also the case in PY 2019). The overall deduplicated credential attainment rate was 13.65%. The low percentages and lack of data are due to limitations in the state's system for reporting these data as well as inconsistent understanding and difficulty tracking the post-exit indicators at the local level.

Rhode Island transitioned data system vendors at the beginning of PY 2020, launching the new system in October. The incomplete export of historical data from the legacy data system affected the data available for PY 2020 Table 5 reporting. RIDE worked closely with the new data system vendor and with local providers to mitigate gaps in the migrated data; however it was not possible to compensate fully for limitations in the legacy data. We anticipate that gaps in the migrated data will continue to impact the state's reporting on post-exit outcomes through PY 2021.

Learning a new reporting data system in the midst of the pandemic has been a challenge for local programs, especially as they navigate how to identify and accurately record post-exit outcomes for Table 5. The state has prioritized the need for ongoing technical assistance to build local providers' understanding of data entry and reporting in the new system. RIDE continues to hold two technical assistance sessions per month with local providers to ensure clarity about NRS reporting, confidence with the new data system, and to communicate updates related to data collection during the pandemic. These sessions are responsive to gaps in understanding identified by local users as well as issues flagged in a

monthly report from the data system help desk.

RIDE's priority is ensuring accurate local data serve as a basis for quarterly desk reviews and annual reviews of local provider performance. Data integrity is a key element of a monitoring practice that will allow the state office to identify promising local practices to highlight, as well as areas that require targeted support or monitoring of compliance issues.

3. Integration with One-Stop Partners

RIDE is a full partner in WIOA implementation efforts in Rhode Island as the AEFLA State eligible agency. Apart from RIDE participation in the WIOA Interagency Workgroup convened by the state WDB, a local provider is a member of the state WDB, and RIDE staff are members of the state WDB's Education and Employment Advisory Committee. Adult education is also represented by a local provider on each of Rhode Island's two local WDBs. As the State Eligible Agency, RIDE enters into Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) with both local WDBs related to coordinated service delivery and infrastructure cost sharing. Infrastructure Funding Agreements are part of the MOAs. Infrastructure Funding Agreements are based on a cost allocation methodology where costs are charged to each one-stop partners' proportionate use of a one-stop center, and relative to the benefits received from the use of the center. In Rhode Island, cost sharing is based on the number of seats allocated to each of the one-stop partners. RIDE pays the cost of one seat at each of the local WDBs.

Adult education services are integrated into Rhode Island's one-stop system because of partnership at the state and local levels. At the state level, RIDE has delegated the responsibility for delivery of adult education services onsite at the state's comprehensive one-stop centers to PPL, a local provider. Locally, other providers also partner with regional one-stop centers to deliver services onsite, conduct outreach, and support referrals. Finally, all local providers are connected with the Rhode Island one-stop operator's weekly email digest, a vehicle for broad information sharing about employment and training opportunities statewide, including adult education services, that reaches both one-stop and community-based providers.

Rhode Island one-stop centers remained closed for in-person services throughout PY 2020, and adult education's partnership with the one-stop system adapted accordingly. Services delivered onsite at one-stop centers moved to online platforms. PPL shifted services usually delivered onsite at the comprehensive one-stop centers to virtual platforms, offering drop-in hours on a regular schedule for clients referred by one-stop staff for targeted skills development prior to enrollment in training programs. They also provide virtual instruction on digital literacy skills for workforce preparation and resume preparation, and virtual GED intake and assessment services. Their device and hotspot loaning program ensured that clients were able to access virtual services. Similarly, local providers who partnered with regional one-stop centers continued to collaborate virtually when possible. One provider's career coaches worked with one-stop staff to organize a virtual job fair with participation from local employers. Another provider continued to offer basic skills assessment for one-stop clients interested in training programs. They provided remote advising to clients referred for adult education services, and enrolled them in online classes if appropriate. Without being able to meet in person, some services were paused out of necessity - for example, a bilingual jobs club supported by a local provider.

Overall, Rhode Island learners' access to WIOA one-stop services was limited during the time that the one-stop offices were closed, though local providers adapted to meet learners' needs. Providers helped

learners access benefits like Unemployment Insurance, Temporary Disability Insurance, and child care assistance by providing information and support with applications.. Providers adapted and expanded existing career coaching services in order to support job seekers who might otherwise have been served by in-person one stop services. Local adult education staff participated in the state WDB's Virtual Career Center (VCC) initiative, a secure online platform where Rhode Island job seekers can research job openings and arrange a virtual consultation with a career coach. Career coaches from community-based organizations across the state, as well as the one-stop system are participating in the VCC initiative.

RIDE continues to encourage collaboration between local providers and the one-stop system by promoting WIOA's requirements around one-stop integration and highlighting opportunities for partnership. Local providers' partnership activities are monitored through quarterly narrative report submissions as well as an annual reporting request.

4. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program (AEFLA Section 243)
Rhode Island's IELCE funds were granted through a competition held in spring 2018, which identified four IELCE grantees. PY 2020 was the third year of a three-year funding cycle. Annual funding allocations range from $60,972 to $76,331. Local providers' partnerships with the state and local workforce development systems bolsters delivery of IELCE activities. All four of Rhode Island's IELCE providers are also grantees of the RI DLT, and partner with their local WDBs. Specifically, providers leverage workforce development funding to support in-house IET pathways accessible to IELCE participants. Thanks to regular information sharing by the local WDBs, providers are also able to provide supported referrals to workforce development-funded IET programming offered by other organizations. Additionally, providers partner closely with local one-stop centers to provide career services designed to be accessible for participants with limited English proficiency, like job clubs and job fairs.

The local providers have designed IELCE pathways aligned with priority industry sectors in Rhode Island, combining occupational skills training, relevant industry-recognized credentials, and contextualized English Language Acquisition and civics instruction. All four local providers offer IELCE in combination with in-house IET programming supported by section 243 funds; providers may also refer IELCE participants to IET programs supported by non-section 243 funds, specifically DLT funding. Grantees provide education services in combination with IET by delivering occupational skills training that integrates contextualized English Language Acquisition and civics instruction. Many of these pathways include work-based learning; all include wraparound supports to address barriers to persistence. Local providers highlighted multilingual career coaching or advising as a promising practice that provides learners with valuable barrier mitigation and systems navigation support.

The majority of the state's IELCE programs are within the health care sector: Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Medical Assistant, Dental Assistant, Pharmacy Technician, Direct Support Professional, and homemaker. Other sectors represented include education (Teacher's Assistant), hospitality (Kitchen Manager), and the building trades. Local IELCE programming is responsive to employer demand. Spanish-speaking healthcare students are especially valued by employer partners who serve the state's growing Latinx communities. Multi-year partnerships with employers have established pathways into the healthcare sector that benefit IELCE students as well as the employers' Spanish-speaking patients, who are able to receive culturally competent care in their native language. This is not unique to the healthcare professions, as employers in hospitality fields are also interested in workers who speak other languages.

Rhode Island's IELCE providers have adapted to the challenges presented by the pandemic, shifting to distance instruction in whole or part, depending on requirements for work-based learning components. Access to work-based learning opportunities has become more of a challenge with COVID, especially in the healthcare sector - but more than one of the provider programs has successfully implemented hybrid instruction to allow student learning at a distance and required clinical experience in person. Individualized coaching and support for students' digital literacy skills were key supports in meeting this challenge.

The state's IELCE programs will be important partners in upskilling Rhode Islanders to meet workforce demand post-pandemic. Programs are working with multiple employers to assist with current staffing shortages in the healthcare sector. Students complete classroom training and then are immediately employed to gain required clinical hours. One provider reported that one hundred percent of their eligible IELCE students in healthcare pathways received employment offers upon completion of program requirements, demonstrating the recognized value of IELCE in meeting local employers' needs.

5. Adult Education Standards
The Rhode Island Board of Education officially designated the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) as Rhode Island's standards for adult education in January 2014. Adult education providers' use of the CCRS ensures alignment between Rhode Island's adult and K-12 educational systems since CCRS are a subset of the Common Core State Standards used by Rhode Island's public education system. Support for local standards implementation continued to be a priority for state adult education professional development activities in PY 2019, as the state PD providers sought out resources and training relevant for the distance setting. For example, when PD budget was used to purchase access to online curricular resources for local providers, all software options were vetted for alignment with CCRS.

6. Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals (AEFLA Section 225)
Per WIOA guidelines, RIDE allocates AEFLA funds to the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (DOC) to deliver transition services to inmates who are within five years of release. Through a partnership with the Cognitive Restructuring and Anger Management Program, the DOC provides Cognitive Behavioral Treatment services to inmates for whom behavioral issues have been identified as presenting a barrier to participation in educational programming. The services are intended to support inmates' progress on their individual plans to succeed post-release.The results of screenings conducted at intake into the Adult Correctional Institutions (ACI) - including educational, emotional/personal, and attitudes/orientations assessments - help identify inmates for participation in the program. Participants are either co-enrolled in educational programming, or on the waitlist for an education program. Services supported by AEFLA funding are located at the medium- and maximum-security facilities. Apart from this supportive transition programming, AEFLA funds also partially support a contract with CCRI for coordination of educational programming and postsecondary advising services delivered on site at the ACI. These services are available to inmates enrolling in certificate-based courses, courses leading to industry-recognized credentials, and college courses.

Multiple pandemic-related challenges impacted delivery of programming in PY 2020. While there was a return to in-person services with limited numbers of students in the classroom, intermittent building

closures due to COVID-19 outbreaks and chronic staff shortages resulted in many school days being canceled. In the end, DOC programming was delivered at a distance for the majority of the year, using paper packets since inmates do not have access to wifi. In PY 2020, 54 inmates participated in transition services. Of these, 39 completed.

The relative rate of recidivism among participants served with AEFLA funds during PY 2020 was 47% for sentenced offenders. This percentage was determined by dividing the number of AEFLA-funded participants who returned to the ACI by the number of participants released between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.