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Division of Employment and Training Services

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Alaska Adult Education Program

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State Leadership Funds

(AEFLA Section 223)

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

Alignment with Partners to Implement Combined State Plan

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 Alaska Adult Education (AAE) program continues to implement strategies that align both regional and statewide activities with partners listed in the Alaska Combined State Plan. The WIOA core partners, Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program, and Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) is housed within the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD). Furthermore, Titles I-III is located within the Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS). This organizational structure has been beneficial for partnerships and developing technical assistance to support eligible providers.

In PY19 the core partners collaborated on the WIOA Combined Plan and discussed challenges encountered, innovative practices for plan implementation, and strengthening partnerships. Smaller partnerships emerged to strategically plan individualized approaches for supports and services for students.

Through strategic planning and alignment, the AAE program partnered with the WIOA Title 1-B Statewide Activities program to create a project to fund General Education Development (GED) tests for first-time test takers who are enrolled in an Alaska Adult Education Regional Program. The joint venture created a pathway for individuals who are prepared to test and more likely to pass their first time through. It also dispels the barrier of costs associated with test completion, as many programs have found this a contributing factor to the decrease in testers in Alaska. Although the funding will begin in PY20, the planning of this project began in PY19.

In previous years, Alaska Program Coordinators meet bi-annually to train on a multitude of topics. In October 2019, the new AAE State Director transformed one of the bi-annual meetings to a conference and partnered with the WIOA Title I Youth Program and invited program coordinators, teachers, administrators, and staff from both programs. The conference consisted of both combined and program specific sessions to develop collaboration and strengthen professional development. Collaborative session topics included the “WIOA Framework & the One Stop System (Titles I, II, III, & IV)”; “Pre-Apprenticeship Opportunities”; and “How to Build a Strong AAE/WIOA Youth Partnership”. The joint venture allowed programs to facilitate partnerships, referral mechanisms and performance expectations.

Regional AAE Programs work with community partners to provide wrap around supports and services to their students. During the statewide AAE Program Coordinator Meeting in March 2020, several programs were asked to present strategies that are considered best practices in their community and can be replicated. Local programs used this opportunity to present innovative class ideas, new

strategies, and the use of social media. In groups, the programs were provided opportunities to discuss these ideas in team building exercises. A third day was added for new program coordinator training that allowed for new program coordinators to work together and ask questions on training topics including Grant and Fiscal Responsibility, Professional Development, Measureable Skill Gains, and Introduction to NRS Tables.

The AAE State Director presented on multiple occasions to internal and external staff and partners to inform of adult education services. DETS leadership meet weekly on programmatic touch points including ideas for services delivery strategies that overlap and integration of services. Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic these meetings become a staple for understanding what fluctuations in services could be expected and communicated to local programs; including services delivery of unemployment benefits and filing; services available through job centers; and access to workforce development opportunities.

Examples of Regional AAE partnership activities outlined in written reports and discussed at statewide meetings, include:

- The Alaska Job Center Network
 - increased client referrals between agencies;
 - workforce development support for students, including resume writing, financial literacy activities; and job search;
 - job center staff providing on-site college and career readiness activities at AAE locations; and
 - student referrals to job training services through WIOA Title 1B and Apprenticeship.
- WIOA Title IB Youth grantees serving youth age 16-24. In some instances, supports are provided through an interagency partnerships when both Title IB Youth and AAE are awarded to the same organization. WIOA Youth grantees provide case management and support services that cannot be obtained through AFLEA funding. Youth are also able to pursue their education while placed in classroom based training, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, or work experiences.
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), as needed to support students with disabilities. VR services are provided through DOLWD Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Veteran's Affairs, and Alaska Native Organizations. Students with disabilities that impact their ability to learn and/or secure or maintain employment are co-enrolled with VR and work with a counselor on an individual employment plan (IEP). VR support services can accommodate the educational environment to allow students a greater success rate. Support services can include one-on-one tutors, interpreters, assistive technology devices, and transportation.
- The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) offer programs to support the physical and mental health of Alaskans, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Alaska Temporary Assistance Program (ATAP), Juvenile Justice, and Office of Children's Services. AAE often refer students to these programs while they are enrolled in college and career readiness activities.

- Alaska Native Organization partnerships are critical to many of our eligible providers. Native Organizations provide support in the form of village tutors, classroom space, travel funds for students, and internet usage.
- The University of Alaska is an active partner and, in some cases, a subrecipient of AAE grants. In locations where grants are not administered, GED® tests are offered in Pearson VUE testing centers. The University also provides classroom spaces for local programs, refers students who need additional help in basic math and writing, and provide information to AAE students transitioning to college.
- Local businesses continue to provide support for our students. Examples include:
 - Wells Fargo provides community development grants to several AAE programs;
 - Providence Hospital, in Anchorage, offers training towards a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) certificate and a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) certificate to IELCE students;
 - Municipality of Anchorage offers a Peer Leader Navigator program (PLN); and
 - GEDWorks encourages business to invest in their employees through adult education.

The COVID-19 Pandemic had a huge impact on Adult Education in Alaska. AAE activities, including GED Testing, ceased on March 16th when Governor Dunleavy issued COVID-19 Health Mandate 1.2 that suspended all public schools. Due to local programs being integrated into higher education facilities, educational technical centers, and aligned with school districts, they too had to close their facilities. At the time the pandemic struck, AAE was not prepared to deliver distance education services as distance education was planned to beginning in PY20. Many additional obstacles were faced with providing education to students that wanted to pursue their skills development; including the ability to assess pre/post-assessment through remote testing; assisting students with GED testing; and a reduction in student attendance. Local programs were able to adjust their current scope through creativity, flexibility, and persistence, to transition from in-person to distance teaching.

Local program began slowly opening for in-person services in April, however, closures due to COVID-19 outbreaks and positive testing became common. To alleviate stress on students and teachers, the State AAE Office temporarily approve the use of live virtually platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to be considered the same as in-person learning. This exemption was in place through the remainder of PY19.

Professional Development

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

Leadership funds are used to support professional development through conferences, in-person and virtual meetings, and other means of programmatic communications.

Conferences and in-person meetings are held in Anchorage where staff receive training on various topics. These meetings are used by the leadership team to disseminate information obtained from laws, policies and promising practices and provide a platform to train programs.

The PY19 conference was held October 1-3, 2019. Registration was open to program staff, teachers, program coordinators, data entry clerks, tutors, etc. Training topics included:

- Instructor training available with GEDTS® provided by Thomas Ross and Debbie Bergtholdt from GEDTS®;
- Adult Education Ambassador Training;
- Strategies and Resources for Multilevel English Language Learners;
- Using ‘Reading Kits’ for Best Practices for Teaching Reading Comprehension;
- Google Applied Digital Learning Curriculum Boot Camp; and
- Teaching Students to Ask Their Own Questions: Best Practices in the Question Formulation Technique (QFT).

The AAE Program Coordinator Annual Meeting took place March 3-4, 2020. The AAE State Director added March 5, 2020 as an intensive training day for new program coordinators. Training topics included:

- Team Building and Social Media;
- Workforce Programs Training;
- NRS Table Update;
- GED Recruitment, Retention, and Analytics training; and
- AlaskaJobs System Walk through (go-live date: 6/30/2020), data collection, and NRS alignment.

New Program Coordinator training topics included:

- Grant Requirements;
- Measureable Skill Gains;
- Professional Development; and
- Fiscal Responsibility.

In addition to in-person training, the AAE State Director held monthly meetings for program coordinators to inform of relevant program information; training with guest speakers; or technical assistance.

Each year, AAE staff are required to attend a specific number of hours of professional development courses, depending on their job functions. The State AAE Office provides opportunities for professional development, training, and technical assistance. Local programs are required to report annual professional development hours of all staff to the AAE Office. Alaska AAE program coordinators, teachers, and staff participated in on-line training offered by Center for Applied Linguistics, LINCS, GEDTS®, TABE, and Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS). At the onset of COVID-19, staff took advantage of webinars related to working with students through this stressful transition.

Technical Assistance

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

The AAE State Director and Education Associate provided technical assistance on an as needed and group basis to programs. Daily communication with programs regarding updates and questions are handled through the AAE office on topics including:

- Administration of TABE and BEST tests;
- Age restrictions requirements;
- Grant management and allocations;
- Merging accounts and duplication of records;
- Intake policies and procedures;
- Assessment guidelines;
- Data entry procedures; and
- Accommodations.

Group and individual emails are sent periodically to programs keeping them up-to-date with announcements, program changes, and areas of need.

Monitoring and Evaluation

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

Adult education monitoring activities are tracked through various outlets. The AAE State Director monitors student information digitally through the statewide database (MIS system) and GEDTS®. These records are compared for accuracy in reporting student outcomes and credential obtainment. Financial reimbursement reports are submitted monthly or quarterly to the State AAE Office. Evaluations of records, receipts, and allowable costs are calculated prior to processing for payment.

During PY19, the Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS) worked with a third party vendor to develop a grant management system. This new system will provide financial reports and monitoring tools to both the grantee and AAE Program. The system is in the planning stages with go-live expected with the PY21 grant solicitation.

COVID-19 has had an adverse effect on monitoring programs. Monitoring in Alaska has a very tight window of time due to increment weather that could affect many program. Due to travel restrictions, on-site monitoring was put on hold until further notice. Alaska is using this time to further develop program monitoring procedures and tools. Monitoring will resume in PY20.

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.

Participant Eligibility Requirements

The data for the period of July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020 shows significant changes from preceding years. COVID-19 has shown to have an adverse effect on all areas of performance data, including overall enrollment, measureable skill gains (MSG), educational functioning levels (EFL) gain, and employment gains.

Alaska is unique in geographic, cultural, and economic barriers which can hinder access to training, education, and employment. For example, the Kotzebue local program is located in Northwest Arctic Alaska and serves 11 communities. It is roughly the geographical size of Indiana without a road system. Each local program have vast regional areas they serve with barriers they must overcome.

The pandemic has had a profound impact on both urban and rural student retention rates and their ability to access their education. Some challenges include:

- Internet has been the largest barrier in Alaska. Internet issues include:
 - students that do not have internet and prefer to participate in face-to-face classes;
 - local programs are working with community partners to send iPads to students with offline study program, but they have difficulty finding programs that offer offline educational programs that can be used in homes;
 - internet in rural Alaska can run up to \$450 per month; there is a cost for setting up equipment; and providers put a cap on data in rural communities;
 - teachers were not set up to teach at home due to internet challenges and had to get on a waiting list in many cases due to demands in their area;
- GED testing for students in remote villages had traditionally involved taking a flight into the nearest local program and arranging room and board, study time, and taking the exam. This process was interrupted by travel restrictions.
- Local programs have agreements with schools districts and community partners, such as Alaska Native Associations, to provide a location for studying, pre/post testing, formative assessments, and tutoring. When the pandemic shut down these partner agencies, local programs were not able to provide services to students.
 - Many students in the village do not have phones or internet due to high cost.
 - Contact with students is often through community partner case managers, not through traditional means such as phone or internet.
 - Local programs are corresponding with student through sending letters back and forth to try and continue studying.
- Students enrolled in IET programs have not been able to complete their credentialing due to the COVID-19 shutdown.
- With the heavy reliance on technology during this time, students willing to learn and/or more adept to technology had little or no difficulty with adapting learning environments. On the other hand, students who were not adept to technology struggled following simple directions and became easily frustrated in learning basics commands.
- USPS mail to the villages has always been slow, and now due to COVID-19, the lack of planes flying, lack of staff, and shut downs due to community contact, USPS mail services in some villages are only open one day a week. Programs are struggling to mail information out to students and/or get homework back.

Local and state program successes during the pandemic include:

- transition from face-to-face teaching to online teaching and many students were able to join in urban areas resulting in successful outcomes;
- the development of policies for statewide implementation of distance education to go into effect July 2020;
- teachers attended training sessions and brainstormed innovative ideas for student engagement;
- NRS level classes provided teachers a means for scaffold learning including one-to-one tutoring, visual icons, and oral and written information using an online modalities;
- local internet providers in the urban areas offered discounted deals that provided free or upgraded internet access for students and teachers until June 2020;
- since many local programs work for smaller corporations, they were able to send homemade masks to students; and
- local programs embracing the use of social media, including holding Facebook live Q&A sessions to answer AAE and ESL questions.

The overall enrollment numbers decreased in PY19 as a direct result to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Alaska reported 1080 full time students which is a 34 percent decline from the previous year's totals. Distance education was not an approved modality at the time of the pandemic and as an outcome, services to students were temporarily halted at the beginning of the shutdown. With the release of Program Memorandum OCTAE 20-3, Program Memorandum OCTAE 20-4, and Program Memorandum OCTAE 20-5 the State Office quickly released guidance to local programs and made determinations on temporary remote processes could be put into place to assist students. In the meantime, permanent processes, including data collection policies, updated MIS, and training, were instituted for distance education to beginning in PY20.

In PY19 the Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) by entry level as indicated on Table 4 showed 9.81 percent of individuals achieving MSG for the first period of participation (POP) and 9.78 percent MSG throughout all POPs. Although both entering educational functioning levels (EFLs) are below the desired level, English language learners (ELL) still maintains a higher trend of MSG performance and overall success rates, through the MSG level fell this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was first noted in PY18 and additional analysis is needed to determine if this is an overall trend or a cohort of students. There was a significant decrease in MSG in the ELL population. However, with the rising COVID-19 cases transpiring around the state, it is difficult to determine what data is or is not inflated due to over or underrepresentation.

Additional obstacles surround MSG was associated to the disruption of pre/post-testing ability. The NRS-approved assessments were not available to be used remotely at the onset of the pandemic. Programs had to wait until remote assessment guidance was written, approved by OCTAE, and training was released. The State AAE Office approved remote testing as soon as it became available. Through research from past and present MSG data, even with obstacles to assessments, the ABE performance levels increased in PY19. The largest cohort of students appear to be in NRS ABE Level 3 and data shows this level struggled to obtain an MSG with only 4.72 percent of individuals showing a gain. The State AAE Office will continue to monitor this trend to determine what additional

supports are needed to continue growth in overall MSG, including analyzing state approved pre/post assessments in PY20.

Table 5 in Federal PY19 shows a significant increase in core follow up outcome achievement even in the midst of a global pandemic. Throughout PY19 the AAE State Director worked with local programs on understanding the connection to workforce development. The employment and post-secondary performance outcomes are starting to reflect a change as reflected in the data. The data integration process has been strengthened and integrated further with partner agencies to better reflect the data. Additionally, the AAE State Director has been collaborating with partner agencies to determine policies and procedures for collecting common data elements for future reporting. After analysis of the data in Table 5, Alaska is on track with employment goals to meet the negotiated levels for PY20.

The following tables show statistical data on full time student over the last five (5) years. Statistics like these are used with programs to prompt discussions:

State Fiscal Year:	Full-Time Students
SFY16 (PY 15)	2,006
SFY 17 (PY 16)	2,074
SFY 18 (PY 17)	1,917
SFY 19 (PY 18)	1,643
SFY 20 (PY 19)	1,080

Most AAE students locate programs due to a desire to complete high school or improve their English skills. Using statistics like the one above, the need for recruitment is a topic that is frequently discussed with leadership teams and an area of professional development. Full time student data dropped substantially this program year due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Students faced unprecedented barriers to continued education. Local programs were shut down and had to quickly learn distance education and virtual platforms, to adjust to delivering classes virtually. The State AAE Office, in collaboration with local programs, offered training to program in setting up virtual classes and using Zoom.

Recruitment and retention will be an essential component of professional development and brainstorming efforts moving forward. It is unclear at this time what fall out the local programs will see due to the pandemic and change in traditional school structure. Only time will tell if this unique situation will require our local programs to expand our recruitment efforts to include these students.

The drop in attendance; shut down of programs, and inability to test remotely for an extended period of time was also directly related to an overall change in GED® test administration processes and state graduation numbers. GED testing did not offer remote testing until June 2020. This was a barrier to students who could or would not go into a test center to take their test.

Upon further analysis of data related to full-time student cohorts, there are some clear trends in enrollment numbers based on EFL. The Alaska ELL population remains stable and student

enrollment has remained consistent over the last 5 years, though the struggle to transition these students to adult education classes will always be present. This trend did not fluctuate as much as expected during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the ELL population decreasing slightly (6 percent) during the program year. Enrollment in adult education basic skills classes dropped significantly with a 43 percent drop in attendance in basic skills classes. This is a direct correlation to the pandemic and it is unclear how long the recovery period will take. However we saw a slight increase in secondary education students with a 14 percent increase from the previous program year. The following table shows statistics in adult education and ELL student population trends:

State Fiscal Year	Adult Ed	Secondary Ed	ELL
SFY16 (PY 15)	1,219	107	590
SFY 17 (PY 16)	1,299	109	661
SFY 18 (PY 17)	1,183	65	665
SFY 19 (PY 18)	1,046	20	580
SFY 20 (PY 19)	605	23	452

SFY19 was the third year of a three-year grant competition. There were no new regional grants or eligible providers. Although new grants were awarded at the beginning of the grant cycle, project implementation was well underway in this fiscal year.

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.

Required One-Stop Roles to Eligible Providers

Describe how the state carries out or delegates its required one-stop roles to eligible providers

Alaska’s Adult Education (AAE) program, Wagner-Peyser labor exchange services, and WIOA Title IB training services are all housed in the Department’s Division of Employment and Training Services which provides a natural link between AAE and on-stop services. These labor exchange and training services are delivered through 14 Alaska Job Centers collectively known as the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN). The AJCN collaborates with partner agencies to provide universal access and services under one roof to employers, job seekers, and workers.

Each community has an inclusive partnership that allows for eligible providers to not only provide services within job centers, but also job center staff, in some communities, provide services in adult education facilities.

Another joint endeavor planned and launched in PY19 was the integration of several disparate WIOA program databases into one combined system named AlaskaJobs. AlaskaJobs was launched June 30, 2020 and houses Alaska’s online labor exchange, WIOA Title I, II, III, JVSG, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and Alaska’s state funded employment and training programs’ participant data management and reporting tools, and online access to the Work Opportunity Tax Program. This new, integrated system enhances user experience, co-locates data, and provides for a single sign-on between

the Adult Education, Wagner-Peyser Employment programs, WIOA training programs and Unemployment Insurance programs. The system allows for federally required common participant performance reporting, is user friendly, smart phone compatible, and integrated with real time labor market information.

AlaskaJobs links each of the programs through common identifiers to provide data matching for performance indicators. The common reporting built into the system reduces the need to pool data, but rather has a data sharing component. The system is built as a federated system with common intake as well as data sharing. The interagency partnership offers joint accountability requirements between the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) and National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS).

The AAE section of AlaskaJobs has enhanced Alaska's data collection measures to further meet the federal guidelines and WIOA requirements of the NRS reporting requirements. The State AAE Office worked with programmers to implement standards, resources, and support for the data collection process. AlaskaJobs establishes a statewide system for local programs with uniform technical standards, including error checking capabilities, for data collection. Technical assistance and training will continue into PY20 for local programs. The State AAE Office also worked with the Employment and Training Technical Unit to cross-train individuals on reporting requirements associated with Title II, including definition, reporting tables, and data integration.

Career Services Provided in the One-Stop

Describe the applicable career services that are provided in the one-stop system.

Employment Service Technicians in the AJCN provide both Job seeker and employer services. Job seeker services include job search assistance, referral, and placement. Additionally, job center staff provide assessments of skill levels and abilities, aptitude testing, and career guidance. Many job centers offer regular workshops including job seeking tips, resume writing, cover letters, interviewing skills, employment after incarceration, and annual free IRS-certified tax services provided through My Free Tax Initiative. AJCN staff routinely provide referrals to partner agencies, veteran's representatives, and WIOA Title I and II programs for assistance with education, training and support.

Job center staff are also trained to serve employers with dedicated Business Connection staff at the state's five largest job centers. Alaska's approach to serving employers emphasizes proactive, staff initiated outreach designed to meet employers' current and future needs. Staff assist employers with special recruitment, ensure job applicant suitability, conduct job fairs, refer to case managers for Incumbent Worker Training, and provide information that helps ensure compliance with state and federal laws. This focus facilitates long-term business relationships built on confidence and results. The AJCN also houses apprenticeship specialists who support employers sponsoring apprenticeship programs. Registered Apprenticeships allow employers to establish their own standards of proficiency while developing a local and loyal workforce.

Career Support and Training Services (CSTS) case managers in the AJCN work with participants to determine the appropriate set of goals, programs, and assistance to address the needs of each

individual including; comprehensive assessments, career evaluation, and labor market analysis, to develop an individual employment plan, with referral to additional resources if needed. Eligible individuals may receive pre-vocational, vocational, apprenticeship, on-the-job, incumbent worker training and support services to help meet costs of housing, transportation, tools, clothing, books, and supplies needed while participating in program services.

Infrastructure Costs

Describe how infrastructure costs are supported through State and local options.

The Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) for Alaska began its design in fall of 2017 with the Alaska Job Center Network One Stop Operator Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) being finalized and signed by September 2018 and became effective in State Fiscal Year 2019.

The IFA was developed in partnership with the agencies listed in the MOU that are either physically or programmatically located in one or more Alaska Job Centers. The infrastructure costs are identified as the space, equipment, supplies, and network costs necessary for the operation of the one-stop center and benefiting WIOA required partner programs operated by the parties to the IFA.

The IFA states the following:

- **Infrastructure Space**

Space costs are calculated based upon current lease diagrams for each location, identifying areas utilized by the common participant. Notably, the resource rooms and workshop rooms where the majority of customers engage in self-service, staff-facilitated, and staff assisted WIOA Career Services. For each job center, this space is multiplied by the current lease cost to arrive at the Infrastructure Space Total Annual Cost.

- **Infrastructure Operations**

Operational costs are calculated based upon the inventory of public accessible resource room and workshop PCs; public accessible copiers, printers, and associated supplies (e.g. paper and toner); and public furniture (e.g. customer work station chairs, etc.). Server costs are based upon percent of public use. The Technology equipment (PC's, copiers, printers, and servers) costs per job center were then multiplied by a factor of 0.25 to represent a four-year, industry standard replacement schedule.

Technology network costs were attributed to each job center based upon annual software and internet service costs.

- **Additional Costs - Tech Staff**

Included in the scope of the IFA is the cost for staff directly supporting the technology related services accessed through the job center's public accessible technology resources. These costs are determined by each job center's number of supported public access PCs.

- **Additional Costs - IFA Management**

Costs directly associated with the development and ongoing annual data matching performed by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development Research and Analysis section in support of this IFA.

COLLECTION OF FUNDS

This IFA, as part of the MOU, serves as the master agreement. State government agencies will develop Reimbursable Service Agreements (RSAs) separately with the One Stop Operator to facilitate the billing and receipt of allocated costs. RSA billing will be conducted on an annual basis once costs are calculated with a year-end true-up as appropriate. If additional, non-state agencies are included in the IFA, then standard billing processes will be implemented on a quarterly basis.

Adult Education grants are housed within the Department of Labor and appropriate costs are calculated and allocated annually.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program

(AEFLA Section 243)

Describe how the state is using funds under Section 243 to support the following activities under the IELCE program:

IELCE Competition and Grant Awards

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.

Alaska held an open competition in April 2017 for the IELCE program. Alaska Literacy Program was awarded a three-year statewide IELCE grant for PY17-PY19 and extended to a fourth year due to the broad impact of COVID-19 and in accordance with Program Memorandum 20-3. A new request for grant application is scheduled for solicitation in March 2021.

IET Activities

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

The IELCE provider, Alaska Literacy Program, is a full-service English as a Second Language (ESL) Program. They employ full and part-time staff to recruit, train, certify, and support volunteer teachers and tutors to teach reading, writing and speaking English to adults. The provider offers year-round classes for adults and families with young children. Their classes range from beginning reading and speaking in English, to Citizenship classes, and Literacy classes to increase self-sufficiency. They maintain a schedule to effectively run seven classrooms and have an up-to-date computer lab for students to supplement their learning with computer-based curriculum. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the provider moved their services online and ran 12 online classes. They did have a break in service during the month of March while this transition occurred. By June 30, 2020, the provider was offering English, Citizenship and workforce development courses to 60 students.

Along with English and workforce development, Citizenship and Civics information and classroom time are a high priority for the provider. They are offered at varying times during the year, depending on student need and interest. Courses offer students foundational knowledge of US Government and Civic with an opportunity to enhance their in-depth communication skills. Courses offered include, but are not limited to:

- A Complete Guide for Naturalization: Allowing students to practice interview skills and provide them the probability to become involved in their local communities.
- Civics and Literacy Skills: Focuses on word pronunciation used in spoken answers, key words for recognizing and answering oral civics questions. This course also offers official spelling list identified in Citizenship and Civics test and review the possible 100 questions which could be asked during the test.
- Ready for the Interview: Learn to prepare for various interview situations and answer questions from the N-400 application. Vocabulary and communication skills are reinforced.
- Interview/Discussion: Whole language course focuses primarily on in-depth discussions of questions asked during the naturalization interview; the proper way to fill out the N-400 form; and what to expect during the interview, including U.S. history and culture.
- Know Your Rights: Weaves civil rights literacy into English instruction for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) adults.
- Preparation for Citizenship: All-inclusive class to prepare students for citizenship questions, writing practice, dictated sentences and reading, US and world maps, and questions and answers for the 65/20 exception.

The IELCE provider works with students on workplace literacy skills and provide the groundwork for English language and numeracy skills needed by employees in order to effectively integrate ESOL students into careers. Their workplace literacy courses encompass not only reading and writing, but soft skill development in listening, speaking, problem solving, and critical thinking that are essential to employers. They also work with employers to build career pathway courses that integrate English language learning with workplace development skills. COVID-19 has been challenging for workforce development and has caused the provider to rethink their courses. During the pandemic, they have focused on offering courses for students entering post-secondary education. A goal for PY20 will include entrepreneurship and health literacy and certification classes.

As a part of the curriculum and outreach, the provider incorporates information related to the pandemic for students. They worked with the Municipality of Anchorage, through the Peer Leader Navigator program (PLN) to ensure information is provided in plain language and the information is translated into multiple languages. Participants in the PLN program use the English and health terminology they acquire to disseminate information to their communities.

The provider's family literacy program is funded through community partners. The family literacy instructor provides preschool services to children of the ESL students who are attending classes. As a result of the pandemic, the family literacy instructor's role has changed. The instructor is now focused on one-on-one preschool lessons and direct outreach to families. She assists families with locating resources, understanding the Anchorage School District's policies regarding remote learning plans, and assisting with general technology access needs. She also works with parents who are struggling to teach the children by offering additional resources and support as needed.

Finally, the provider works with students on financial literacy skills. Their financial literacy course was developed for students from other countries to not only comprehend the US monetary system, but also guide them in basic personal finances. Understanding money management topics, such as bank accounts, insurances, loans, and credit reports, is vital for students, especially ESOL students.

Courses are eight weeks long and vary from quarter to quarter depending on need.

Unsubsidized Employment

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

According to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section the "health care industry has grown steadily during the past 20 years and that trend is expected to continue. Even in Alaska's smallest rural communities where jobs are often scarce, health care offers year-round employment opportunities. With a major customer base for health care is likely to increase by more than 125 percent, the population growth will most likely equate to continued industry growth"¹.

This was especially pertinent this year as the COVID-19 Pandemic had a significant effect on the healthcare industry and the likelihood of the industry's continued growth, even after the pandemic, is eminent. The IELCE provider continues to focus and expand occupational training in this field. Although they explore other unsubsidized self-sufficient occupations, with the impact of COVID-19, the healthcare field has been the biggest contributor of training, including staying up to date on new innovations, terminology, and progress that affects this field.

The provider, Alaska Literacy Program, takes these statistics into account when creating courses and continues to partner with Providence Hospital in Anchorage, Alaska to provide a viable career pathway for students interested in the healthcare field. As part of the learning environment, the provider's healthcare modules focus on the student's understanding of health-related issues as they are presented and studied in English. This year, that included updated information related to the Novel Corona Virus, its effects, and how students can remain safe in and out of the workplace. Students use the English language to discuss and write about a wide variety of issues that affect health, such as nutrition, exercise, and the human body. They have also designed a three-level series that provides reading and language activities to assist students with navigation of the U.S. healthcare system. Courses are taught in conjunction with instructors from Providence Hospital and through continued communication, revisions to the curricula, as needed, reflect continuing advancement in healthcare.

Students interested in a career in healthcare, may choose to enroll in the above foundational courses that teach the necessary knowledge base. Once the knowledge base has been established students may co-enroll in training for Direct Support Professionals (DSP) through the provider's partnership with

¹ "Alaska's Health Care Industry", Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section, Retrieved from: <http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/oc/hcover.cfm>

South Central Area Health Education Center (SCAHEC). The curriculum for DSP is taught by an Integrated English Instructor who is a content expert. Although the first training is anticipated to begin in September 2020, the provider has spent PY19 preparing for this venture. Preparations included curriculum oversight, partnership meetings, and marketing strategies.

Upon completion of the DSP training, students can continue to co-enroll and enter courses which results in a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) certificate and/or a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) certificate. The provider's Integrated English Instructor health content expert provides training to students in an IET model for PCA certification. If a student is interested in CNA certification, the provider refers the student to their community partner, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc's Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG) program. The course is paid for by HPOG for students who choose to apply and qualify for the funding. Students enrolled in these courses are offered additional tutoring available through in-person and computer-based programming.

Direct Support Professionals (DSP) are professionals who assist individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities with daily tasks and support them in community activities. Assistance may include, but is not limited to, transportation, goal setting, community involvement, cleaning, and ensuring the safety of the client. DSPs are closely related to Personal Care Assistants (PCA). DSPs focus on the social aspects of care whereas a PCA's focus is on the health of their client. PCAs are professionals that assist with day-to-day home, community, or hospital care services. The PCA certificate can provide a career path to assisting older adults or individuals with short or long-term disabilities. According to Alaska Trends Magazine, "The number of senior citizens has increased by more than 5 percent each year since 2010, faster than any other state. As of 2018, Alaska had an estimated 87,304 seniors, up from 54,938 eight years before, and we project the state will have more than 138,000 seniors by 2035"². With this rise in healthcare, the need for qualified healthcare workers continues to be a need. Furthermore, PCA certification continues to provide students a career ladder into other health career related occupations such as Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Pharmacy Technicians, Radiologic Technologists, Medical Assistance, etc.

Much like DSPs and PCAs, Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) are professionals that assist patients with basic care. They work directly under the supervision of a Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse. Unlike PCAs, in Alaska CNAs are required to meet the minimum training standards and pass the state-approved licensing board examination. The exam is comprised of two sections, a skills and written portion (which can alternatively be taken orally). The eligible provider works with ESOL students on making a connection between the English seen or heard on the exam in relation to the realia of patient care. As stated above, the career ladder potential is available for individuals who choose to further their careers.

² "Alaskans 65 and Older. Our current senior citizen population and how it's changing". By Eddie Hunsinger. Alaska Economic Trends. June 2019. Page 4. Retrieved from: <https://labor.alaska.gov/trends/jun19.pdf>

According to the Alaska DOLWD the occupational outcomes for DSPs, PCAs, and CNAs are thriving with an estimated growth rate up to 23.1 percent; an average median wage of \$19.84 per hour; and approximately 1,100 annual job openings each year³.

The provider encourages Anchorage ELL students to participate in the Peer Leader Navigator (PLN) program created in conjunction with The Anchorage Health Literacy Collaborative (TAHLC) and other community partners. The PLN program is a health education and outreach initiative designed to improve the well-being of Anchorage residents. TAHLC, along with the provider, identifies multicultural, multilingual community leaders to train as navigators within their peer community. Although the PLNs are primarily from the refugees/immigrant community in Anchorage, the provider continues to identify leaders that emerge in the classroom setting. Students undergo a yearlong training to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to become a PLN. Once training is complete, they are able to provide health promotion and disease prevention activities to their communities. A total of 44 PLNs have been trained since the program began in 2013, representing 19 language groups and reaching more than 1,000 residents.

The PLN program has a track record of success bridging the linguistic divides that prevent residents from accessing basic and necessary community services. This program has become a valuable link to ELL students during the pandemic. The provider partnered with the Municipality of Anchorage to ensure limited English proficiency was not a barrier to residents in need of relief. Students were chosen to enter an intense training with a high focus on COVID-19 facts, resources, and assistance. The students in the cohort underwent intensive training with the municipality and other community partners to provide food; access to rental and mortgage assistance; and information related childcare, healthcare, and other critical services in this time of crisis. These efforts have led to over 345 individuals and families being assisted with over 544 hours of dedicated service.

The PLN program is funded through the provider's community partners. The program has grown from an idea to a full IET model pathway into DSP, PCA and CNA certification programs. The provider has found students who participate in the PLN program are more likely to apply for and be successful in the healthcare fields. Due to the success of the PLN program, the provider and their partner, Providence Health Systems, have been in a yearlong discussion centered on creating a Community Health Worker (CHW) apprenticeship program. Included in these discussions are talks of removing traditional barriers for immigration populations and focusing on student strengths. As a part of this program, ELL students will receive training for certification, on the job training and the possibility of being hired at the end of the apprenticeship. The program is expected to start in early 2021.

Community Health Workers (CHW) inform individuals and communities of healthy behaviors and assist them so they can achieve those behaviors. They do this through outreach, promotion and

³ "Healthcare Support". Alaska Occupational Forecast 2018 to 2028. Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis. Retrieved from: <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/occfest/index.cfm>

advocacy. Depending on their training and job description, they may collect data to help identify what health needs are needed within a community.

The IELCE provider continues to research other in-demand industries in Alaska and ways to provide sustainable career pathway options to their students. They also work closely with adult education programs in their regions to provide their students an option to obtain an Alaska High School Diploma.

Local Workforce Integration

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.

In 2019, the IELCE eligible provider's (Alaska Literacy Program) Executive Director was appointed to a seat on the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) by Governor Dunleavy. She was appointed due to her understanding of the methods for evaluating the effectiveness of career and technical education programs in serving varying populations. It is anticipated over the next few years, this appointment will strengthen the IELCE program as they learn more about integration of workforce and how to support ESOL students in achieving a livable wage and utilizing their skills.

The provider relies heavily on partnerships in achieving IELCE program goals. Partners include the Anchorage Midtown Job Center to help place students into employment opportunities; the Municipality of Anchorage's WES Global Talent Bridge; Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP) to help skilled immigrants fully utilize their talents and education; and SCAHEC and Providence Health Systems to build career pathways for ESOL learners, providing IE, and IET for the DSP, PCA, CNA and CHW certification classes.

The partnership with Providence has been active and developing since 2009. It directly addresses the goal of preparing an educated and skilled workforce, particularly for English language learners (ELL) by providing Integrated English and Integrated English and Training classes and programs. The provider works to establish clear routes to careers that are focused on the individual and their particular circumstances, such as the CHW apprenticeship program.

The partnership with SCAHEC was established in fall 2019 as a result of the SIIP partnership and the need for skilled immigrant workers to receive Integrated English Training to enter the workforce so they can fully utilize their talents and education.

The provider continued to strengthen these partnerships during the pandemic. The healthcare sector suffered greatly during the pandemic and will require additional support in the years to come. The provider continues to target this sector as other sectors recover.

The IELCE provider, as do the other Alaska Regional AAE eligible providers, meets with the local job center staff with a specific focus on what is needed for ELL students to access the career services.

Lessons learned: Creating and maintaining partnerships is essential to the growth of IELCE programming. Through new and established partnerships, the provider has created additional

programming to serve the ELL community. However, it takes time and effort to establish and maintain partnerships outside the targeted healthcare sector. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, partnership discussions in other sectors stagnated at the end of the fiscal year. The provider continues to seek additional partners in other sectors. Also, as a result of the pandemic, many ELL students have established a “survive” mentality as they struggle with covering basic necessities such as food and shelter. This has altered the strategies of the provider as they continue to find ways to reach this vulnerable population.

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.

Content Standards

Alaska adopted College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards for Adult Education. CCR standards have been analyzed and discussed at many of the statewide AAE meetings. Implementation efforts center on identifying and teaching from materials and or texts which are based on CCR standards.

The CCR standards used by AAE’s regional programs scaffold student learning, build common knowledge, and explore workforce development skills. The standardization of content has allowed programs to understand common foundational knowledge and build learning communities. CCR standards related to English language learners (ELL) will be reviewed for content and alignment. The AAE office will implement standards to maximize effective instruction and student preparedness for ELL transitioning students.

Challenges

A Program goal for PY20 was to adopt new standards for AAE and ELL. However COVID has pushed back the timeline and it appears that this goal may be pushed to PY21.

Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals

(AEFLA Section 225)

Recidivism

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.

According to the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission’s 2020 Annual Report, the recidivism rate has decreased over time. The Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) “measures recidivism as the percentage of individuals convicted of felonies who are released from DOC custody within a given year and who return to DOC custody within three years for any offense conviction (felony or misdemeanor) or probation/parole violation”⁴. Evidence suggests the recidivism rates in Alaska has declined from the 2006 to the 2016 cohort. DOC measured the cohorts over the 3 year span and found the recidivism rate declined 10 percent comparatively. Although the current rates in Alaska

⁴ Alaska Criminal Justice Commission 2020 Annual Report. October 30, 2020. Retrieved from: <http://www.ajc.state.ak.us/ajc/docs/ar/2020.pdf>

show approximately 60 percent of all inmates reoffend and will return to prison within three years, DOC is focusing on education and vocational training as part of the individual's reentry or case plan. This includes finding ways to incorporate computer access and training for incarcerated individuals⁵.

Through a joint venture with DOLWD and DOC, adult education is present at all correctional site throughout Alaska. Education Coordinators plan, coordinate, implement, monitor, and evaluate the educational and vocational programs, activities or opportunities for inmates in thirteen correctional sites.

Alaska Adult Education services within DOC include:

- Adult Education: Education instruction in reading, writing, and computational skills below the ninth-grade level;
- English as a Second Language (ESL): Instruction on improving basic English speaking, reading, and writing skills;
- General Education Diploma (GED): Secondary education and testing opportunities leading to a GED; and
- Vocational Services: Job training, skills development, and apprenticeships in more than 35 specific programs.

In PY19, the Department of Corrections assisted 106 inmates in adult education and literacy activities. DOC is committed to the reduction of recidivism and offers many courses for inmates while waiting for release.

Per COVID-19 Health Mandated 1.1 issued by the Governor Dunleavy on March 13, 2020, visitors, volunteers, contractors and non-essential staff were restricted from entry into DOC facilities statewide. This mandated remained in effect throughout PY19 and the restriction resulted in educational services, supports, and contracts being cancelled. Each institution faced unique challenges based on location and population. Education Coordinators were limited in services they could provide, and AAE contracted tutors and vocational educators were unable to deliver services. Since COVID-19, many of the offered vocational credentialing or occupational trainings have been unavailable and the measureable skills gains limited. Therefore, the overall enrollment in AAE across the DOC system has dropped.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on incarcerated students as they have been unable to receive many educational services throughout most of the DOC system. Prior to the pandemic, courses provided foundational knowledge and skills to assist with reintegration into communities and a smoother transition into employment. In March 2020, policies were put into place to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID within DOC facilities. Some institutions required additional measures to maintain the health and safety of the students and staff.

⁵ Alaska Criminal Justice Commission 2020 Annual Report. October 30, 2020. Retrieved from: <http://www.ajc.state.ak.us/ajc/docs/ar/2020.pdf>

To further flatten the curve, four of the Alaska pre-trial correctional institutions suspended most education programs and instituted COVID-19 precautionary and mitigation lockdowns. Staff at these facilities are limited in what educational services are provided. Education Coordinators have provided book carts for ease of access. They have set up a system where they work with the community partners to fulfill requests through book purchases and donations. In most cases, self-study materials have not been made widely available and they are not easily tracked once distributed. In the pre-trial institutions, the inmate population is transient with shorter stints of incarceration.

Prior to COVID, the pre-trial institutions offered comprehensive educational services, including NRS approved pre/post-testing measures, remedial and preparatory adult education classes, and GED proctored testing. Since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the classrooms at these facilities are being used to temporarily quarantine inmates and relieve overcrowding. Other classrooms have been turned into sewing shops to produce face masks for inmate use. Prior to release into the community, the Education Coordinators had been assisting pre-trial students by referring them to community based adult education sites and job centers to further their employment and educational opportunities.

Like the pre-trial institutions, the long term correctional facilities in Alaska have also been limited in delivering adult education services. Few of the institutions were able to continue with NRS approved pre/post-testing and GED proctored tests. As part of the DOC protocols, Education Coordinators followed all requirements established to ensure student and staff safety. Meetings with students were changed to either a one-on-one or small groups of no more than 3 students. To help eliminate close contact and abide by social distancing recommendations, students were given the opportunity to work on computer based programming such as Essential Education and Teknimedia. Education Coordinators also offered printed materials for independent study. However, this strategy has been found to be the less successful as students would often not follow through with completing and turning in assigned work.

One institution has continued their partnership with a local university to provide supports to inmates throughout the pandemic. The university conducts a course designed to encourage journal entries and strengthen the students' writing abilities. They are able to distribute workbooks to inmates and once writing assignments are complete, university staff review, evaluate, and provide feedback on the entries. In PY19, seven students completed the books and received grades through this remote learning opportunity. It is unclear at this time if the low attendance is due to COVID-19, low morale, or other reasons. However, this course will be offered again in the future.

Students' ability to focus has been a challenge when working outside the classroom. Students have noted the distractions and interference experienced while studying in their housing units. With the decrease in classroom availability and/or one-on-one instruction, DOC as a whole has noted a significant decline in student attendance, credential attainment, and measureable skill gains.

In PY19, DOC's Education Coordinators adapted to the challenges of the pandemic by offering customized access to quality education for every student opting to participate. Peer-to-peer tutoring is one strategy that has seen further implementation in order to provide instruction within the housing units. Education Coordinators assigned inmate tutors within housing units, provided them with

materials and directed students to the tutors to receive instructional assistance. While this system has not had time to be proven effective, it is meant assist students with achieving their educational goals under the present circumstances. With the onset of COVID-19, there are additional strategies being explored by the Department, to include: the implementation of tablets for students engaged in education related programs, options such as on-line streamed courses, and other courses conducted over distance learning. Although internet-based programs are under consideration for DOC, State statutes currently prohibit inmates from accessing the internet. The conditions presented by COVID-19 have renewed discussions among DOC management, offenders, and community advocates for consideration to changes related to DOC's educational delivery approach.