

STATE OF ALASKA

Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Division of Employment and Training Services



WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

Title II: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

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Alaska Adult Education Program

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Alaska Adult Education

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State Leadership Funds (AEFLA Section 223)

Alignment with Partners to Implement Combined State Plan (223(a)(1)(A))

The Alaska Adult Education (AAE) program implements strategies that align both regional and statewide activities with partners listed in the [Alaska Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) Combined Plan for Program Years 2020-2023](#). In PY 2021, the core partners collaborated with the AAE program on challenges encountered, innovative practices, strategies for implementation, and strengthening partnerships.

The AAE program continued to partner with the WIOA Title 1-B Statewide Activities program 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 paves a clear pathway for individuals who are prepared to test, by eliminating the costs associated with test completion to improve accessibility. In PY 2021, the program served over 560 first-time testers.

The AAE State Director has led an initiative with staff and partners to provide information about adult education services. The Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS) leadership team meets bi-weekly on programmatic touch points, including strategies for overlapping and integrated service delivery. The leadership team consists of the Assistant Director of Workforce Development and Services, Regional Managers from the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN), the Employment and Training Technical Unit Manager, and the AAE State Director. The meetings help all participants to better understand communication expectations and strategies to local programs, including delivery of unemployment benefits and filing, services available through the one-stop job center, and access to workforce development opportunities.

Professional Development (223(a)(1)(B))

Leadership funds support professional development through conferences, in-person and virtual meetings, and other means of programmatic communication.

Program coordinator training and conferences are traditionally held in Anchorage. These meetings are used by the leadership team to disseminate information regarding regulations, policies, and promising practices. Due to COVID-19 precautions, Alaska's PY 2021 Statewide Adult Education Conference was held virtually on March 2-4, 2021. The State AAE Office partnered with the Alaska Adult Education Association (AAEA) to provide a virtual conference platform that brought Alaska's teachers, program coordinators, and staff a viable, virtual conference option.

The PY 2021 conference began with a keynote address by Kate Redmon from Light & Salt Learning. Her feature address was on "Strength for the Journey: Walking Educational Pathways Beside the Adult Learner." The three-day conference included dedicated training for new Program Coordinators. Presentation strands also included English as a second language (ESL), workplace literacy, correction, Integrated Education and Training (IET), assessments, and adult education instructional practices. The second day's keynote speaker was Scott Thornbury who presented on "Teacher talk: how talk scaffolds learning and engagement."

Registration was open to program staff, teachers, program coordinators, data entry clerks, tutors, and adult education staff. The virtual conference was open to any individuals involved or interested in adult education in Alaska and other states who were interested in the available professional development opportunities. Alaska is planning a hybrid conference for PY 2022 to increase participation for rural programs with limited travel funding. We anticipate increased participation due to the hybrid availability.

The AAE Program Coordinator Annual Meeting took place October 5-7, 2021. It began with an intensive New Program Coordinator training on October 5th. The meeting was held in a hybrid fashion with approximately two-thirds of the Program Coordinators attending in person. The State AAE Director presented on topics including the Desktop Monitoring, Barriers to Employment, and Educational Strategies.

The first day intensive training allowed for new program coordinators to ask questions on training topics including Grant and Fiscal Responsibility, Professional Development, Measurable Skill Gains, and Introduction to National Reporting System (NRS) Tables. The AAE Office has found that this training is beneficial to new and seasoned program coordinators that would like to brush up on grant management skills.

In addition to these conferences, the AAE State Director held monthly meetings for program coordinators to provide relevant program information, training with guest speakers, or technical assistance. Depending on their job functions, AAE staff are required to attend a specific number of hours of annual professional development courses. The State AAE Office provides opportunities for professional development, training, and technical assistance. Local programs are required to report annual professional development hours for all staff to the AAE Office through the AlaskaJobs system. Alaska AAE program coordinators, teachers, and staff participated in virtual on-line training offered by the Center for Applied Linguistics, LINCS, GED Testing Services (GEDTS®), Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE), and Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS).

Technical Assistance (223(a)(1)(C))

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

- Administration of TABE, Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), and Basic English Skills Test (BEST) tests
- Age restrictions requirements
- Grant management and allocations
- Intake policies and procedures
- AlaskaJobs (MIS system) training and technical assistance and data entry procedures

The AAE Office sends group and individual emails to programs keeping them up to date with announcements, program changes, and areas of need.

Monitoring and Evaluation (223(a)(1)(D))

Adult education monitoring activities are tracked through various outlets. The State AAE Office monitors student information digitally through AlaskaJobs (MIS system) and GEDTS®. Records are compared for accuracy in reporting student outcomes and credential obtainment. The State AAE Office, in partnership with WIOA Title I (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and III (Wagner-Peyser) programs, continue to provide common data validation procedures for monitoring participant case files and validating data. The State AAE Office pulled five percent of all student files to monitor and validate data from PY 2021. Programs that had files out of compliance were given examples and were asked to correct data. Under data validation protocol, severe data accuracy issues may result in a program improvement plan (PIP). PY 2021, data validation revealed no severe data accuracy issues resulting in PIPs. Smaller issues were immediately addressed and corrected.

Financial reimbursement reports are submitted monthly or quarterly to the State AAE Office through the grant management system. Records, receipts, and allowable costs are evaluated against regulations in Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200) and state policies prior to processing for payment. During PY 2021, DETS worked with a third-party vendor to develop a new grant management system, still currently in planning stages. The new system is expected to go live by PY 2022 and will provide financial reports and monitoring tools to both the eligible provider and the AAE State Office.

The AAE Office traveled to Juneau, Bethel, Dillingham, and Kotzebue to visit four programs for on-site monitoring. The AAE Office used monitoring tools, including on-site monitoring, financial monitoring, and teacher observational tools to

evaluate each program. The local programs were provided with technical assistance, recommendations, and placed on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) if suggestions were noted.

Additional Permissible Activities (223(a)(2))

The AAE Office used funds for additional permissible activities to focus on researching subject matter and curricula for the incorporation of Integrated Education and Training (IET) practices. In PY 2021 the AAE Office participated in national design camp training. This foundational training allowed the State AAE Director a better understanding of IET practices to integrate technical assistances and statewide training focusing on viable career pathways in Alaska.

Performance Data Analysis

Participant Eligibility Requirements

Although still recovering from challenges associated with the pandemic, the data for the period of July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022 has started to show increased numbers in almost all areas of performance, including Overall Enrollment, Educational Functioning Levels (EFL) gain, and Employment Gains. The AAE Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) decreased this program year.

Alaska is unique in geographic, cultural, and economic barriers which can hinder access to training, education, and employment. Each regional program serves vast areas with barriers unique to Alaska. Transportation, weather, and the digital divide are among the most prominent barriers to adult education. Some examples of Alaska's regional barriers include local programs:

- Serving vast numbers of communities with regions the size of most states in the Continental US.
- Without a road and must be accessed by boat, ferry, bush plane, snowmobile, dog sled, or distance delivery.
- Serving communities with little or no internet access.

Alaska Adult Education contends with challenges that have a profound impact on both urban and rural students' ability to access education, as well as retention rates. Some challenges include:

- The digital divide is of great concern to AAE programs. Reaching students through digital means, including the internet, continues to be the largest barrier to instituting distance education and working with rural students. The most prominent barriers continue to be slow internet speed; expensive, unreliable, and unaffordable 3G networks; lack of internet access and technology; and students struggling to pivot to remote learning.
- GED testing for students in remote villages involved taking a flight to the nearest local program, arranging room, board and study time, and taking the exam. Remote testing provided some options for village students with adequate internet access.
- USPS mail service to remote villages which relies on private air carriers and contractors continues to be a slow process. This can be frustrating to students who must wait for materials. Programs also struggled to mail information out to students and/or get homework back.

Local and state program successes during PY 2021 include:

- Local programs continue to incorporate online teaching which increased student access education where internet access allowed. This included increased attendance via Zoom by students who had been unable to commute or were limited by care giving needs in the past.
- NRS level classes provided teachers a means for scaffolded learning including one-to-one tutoring, visual icons, and oral and written information using online methods.
- Local programs continued to use social media to inform students of closures, hours, graduations, success stories, and other important program information.

Overall enrollment numbers increased in PY 2021. Alaska reported 933 full time students, a 12 percent increase from the previous year’s totals. As indicated on Table 4: Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) by Entry Level, showed 14.7 percent of total number of period of participations (POP), which was a decrease from PY 2020. The MSG for English language learners (ELLs) decreased, while the adult basic education (ABE) levels remained steady. The ABE MSG rate was 20.28 percent, and the ELL MSG was 6.80 percent. There was a significant drop in educational functional level (EFL) gains due to post testing. The AAE Office has addressed these concerns with programs and through professional development.

PY 2021 Core Follow-up Outcome Achievement measure remained high for employment outcomes and decreased for both Credential Attainment and MSG, as noted above. The AAE State Director continued to collaborate with partner agencies to maintain policies and procedures for collecting common data elements for future reporting. Data in Table 1.1 below shows Alaska is meeting three of the five performance indicators. Further analysis from NRS Table 5, demonstrates that Alaska is on track with employment goals to meet the negotiated levels for PY 2022.

Table 1. 1 PY 2021 Indicator of Performance

	PY 2021 Negotiated Levels	PY 2021 Indicators of Performance	+ or - Achievement
Employment 2nd Quarter After Exit	30.00%	45.08%	+15.08%
Employment 4th Quarter After Exit	30.00%	40.22%	+10.22%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$4,200.00	\$4,757.72	+\$557.72
Credential Attainment	30.00%	21.88%	-8.12%
MSG	30.00%	14.70%	-15.30%

Table 1.2 below shows full time student counts over the last three years which are used with programs to prompt discussions about recruitment needs, training delivery methods, and retention.

Table 1. 2 Full Time Student Data

State Fiscal Year:	Full-Time Students
PY 19 (SFY 20)	1,080
PY 20 (SFY 21)	823
PY 21 (SFY 22)	933

Most AAE students enter programs due to a desire to complete high school or improve their English skills. Based on trend data from Table 1.2 above, the need for recruitment and retention are essential components of professional development and brainstorming efforts. Programs continue to use creative solutions, such as social media campaigns, for outreach and collaboration with partner agencies.

As indicated in Table 1.3 below, enrollment in ABE skills classes dropped slightly, with a 3 percent drop in attendance. The secondary education student numbers remained consistent. Alaska saw a 33 percent increase in ELL students from the previous program year. This is consistent with the overall increase in refugees.

Table 1. 3 Adult Education and English Language Learner Trends

State Fiscal Year	Adult Ed	Secondary Ed	ELL
PY 19 (SFY 20)	605	23	452
PY 20 (SFY 21)	535	26	262
PY 21 (SFY 22)	519	27	387

PY 2021 was the first year of a four-year grant competition for service delivery. There were two new regional grants, but no new eligible providers. The PY 2021 grant competition was released in March 2021 and new grants were awarded in July 2021. Due to programs not scoring high enough on the grant matrix, 3 grants were awarded with a late start (October 2021) and one region is now observed by a well-established program.

Integration with One-Stop Partners (34CFR part 463, subpart J)

Required One-Stop Roles to Eligible Providers

Alaska's Adult Education (AAE) program, Wagner-Peyser, and WIOA Title IB Adult and Dislocated Worker services are all housed in the department's Division of Employment and Training Services, which provides a natural link between AAE, Title I and III services. The employment and training services provided through the Alaska Job Center Network (AJCN) are the foundation of the One-Stop delivery system in Alaska, providing universal access to labor exchange, career, and training services. The goal of universal access is that workers, job seekers, and employers may all obtain services under one roof from easy-to-find locations and distance delivery.

Alaska has an integrated Monitoring Information System (MIS), that 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, as well as a Work Opportunity Tax Credit module. The system allows for federally required common participant performance reporting.

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).

Local programs continue to integrate with job centers in their regions to provide wrap-around services to students. The following highlight successes and challenges:

- Set up meetings to establish collaboration between job centers and adult education programs.
- Established referral systems connecting students to jobs and training.
- Smaller programs continue to face challenges with scheduling collaboration within one-person offices.

Career Services Provided in the One-Stop

Employment Service Technicians in the job centers 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 the My Free Tax Initiative. Job center staff routinely provide referrals to partner agencies, veteran's representatives, and all WIOA partner programs for assistance with education, training and support.

Programs working with job center Career Support and Training Services (CSTS) case managers had the following successes and challenges in PY 2021:

- Students who are referred due to no job center in the area.
- Several AE programs are located in the University of Alaska system. The university system offers a variety of training options with job centers providing necessary support.
- Some programs are working on Integrated Education and Training (IET) plans to include the CSTS staff. Trainings include: paraeducators, hospitality and tourism, healthcare, and veterinary technician programs.

WIOA Title IB Youth programs are not offered directly within the job centers and instead are awarded to subrecipients, some of which are housed in the same local programs as Title II grants. One of our biggest successes is being able to create on-the-job training opportunities for students who are interested in the working world. Challenges have included:

- Current WIOA Youth programs are limited in rural areas of the state.
- Age limitations in some programs limited the youth that could be referred and served.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational rehabilitation services are provided through the Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). DVR provides vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities who, because of their disability/ies, have difficulty obtaining or maintaining employment. Disabilities that result in an impediment to employment could include psychiatric, physical, or orthopedic disabilities, as well as cognitive impairments, auditory disabilities, and visual impairments. AAE programs work with DVR to provide services individually with disabilities may needs to reenter employment.

Infrastructure Costs

The Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) for Alaska began its design in fall of 2017. The Alaska Job Center Network One Stop Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was finalized and fully executed in September 2018 and became effective in PY 2018.

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 benefitting 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 used 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 personal computers (PCs); public accessible copiers, printers, and associated supplies (e.g., paper and toner); and public furniture (e.g., customer workstation chairs, etc....). Server costs are based upon percent of public use. Technology equipment (PC's, copiers, printers, and servers) costs per job center are then multiplied by a factor of 0.25 to represent a four-year, industry standard replacement schedule.

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

- **Additional Costs - Technology 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**

These are costs directly associated with the development of 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

The IFA, as part of the MOU, serves as the master agreement. Under the IFA, 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 occur on a quarterly basis.

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

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

IELCE Competition and Grant Awards

Alaska held an open competition in March 2021 for the IELCE program. Alaska Literacy Program (ALP) was awarded a three-year statewide IELCE grant for PY 2021-PY 2025.

IET Activities

The IELCE provider, Alaska Literacy Program, is a full-service English as a Second Language (ESL) Program. It employs full- and part-time staff to recruit, train, certify, and support volunteer teachers and tutors to teach reading, writing and speaking English to adults, as well as workplace literacy and test preparation. Through PY 2021, ALP offered 125 in-person classes and 71 online classes over four eight-week quarters and a summer session. By June 30, 2022, the provider had offered classes in English, Citizenship and Workforce Development to 621 students.

ALP continues to grow their Peer Leader Navigator (PLN) program and graduated nine new PLNs in Cohort 9 to assist community members navigate barriers in health access, food, and housing and financial insecurity.

Finally, in partnership with Alaska Primary Care Associates, ALP conducted Pre-Apprenticeship Training in Healthcare (PATH) classes to ESL students using the IET model. During PY 2021, two new classes were successfully completed with 17 new graduates. Eighty-eight percent of the graduates continued to additional training, post-secondary education, or employment.

Unsubsidized Employment (243(c)(1))

Alaska Literacy Program partners with Providence of Alaska and local healthcare providers to determine employer's need for ESL community members. The provider has been successful in offering individualized tutoring to meet the employer's goals in conjunction with PATH classes.

ALP also encourages Anchorage ELL students to participate in the PLN program, which requires a year of training to develop knowledge and skills. PLNs promote disease prevention and health activities to their communities. In PY 2021, PLNs helped over 7,974 individuals access information, public assistance, the Anchorage School District, and job support.

Through a partnership with Providence, the Community Health Workers Apprenticeship Program is now in its second year. ALP continued to provide tutoring services to individuals in the program to ensure that students are successful.

ALP will continue to research other in-demand industries in Alaska and find ways to provide sustainable career pathway options to their students.

Local Workforce Integration (243(c)(2))

ALP relies on partnerships to achieve IELCE program goals. Partners to help place students into employment opportunities and assist immigrants to utilize their previous education. Partnerships include: the Anchorage Midtown Job Center, the Municipality of Anchorage's World Education Services Global Talent Bridge, Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP),

South Central Area Health Education Center (SCAHEC), and Providence Health Systems. These partnerships assist the IELCE students to build career pathways by providing IE, and IET for DSP, PCA, CNA and CHW certification classes.

Adult Education Standards

Content Standards

In PY 2021 Alaska released and awarded a competitive informal request for proposals (IRFP) from qualified vendors to create Alaska specific college and career readiness (CCR) standards for adult education and English language learners (ELL) for alignment with Alaska's k-12 academic standards.

The 5-year project will develop Alaska specific standards that align with both the national CCRs and Alaska K-12 standards. Professional development will also be provided to teachers and program coordinators. The project is set to begin in July 2022.

Challenges

Staff turnover remains a challenge in Alaska. Rural areas can go months without program staff to ensure continuity of services. Once staff are hired, the AAE Office and local program policies require that staff are trained in curriculum to deliver consistent standard-based education.

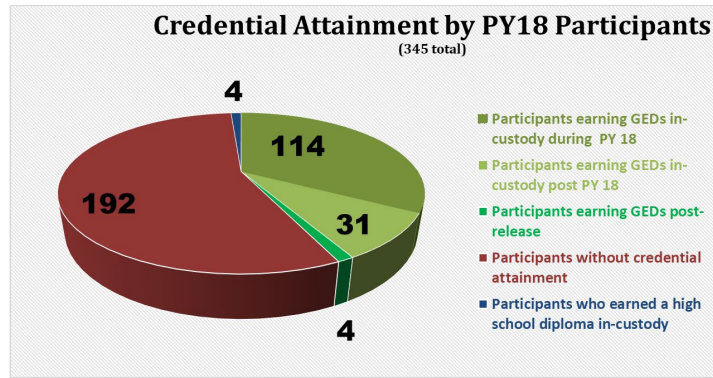
Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals (AEFLA Section 225)

Recidivism

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 remand due to conviction (felony or misdemeanor) or probation/parole violation. Therefore, recidivism rates are looked at retroactively each year to measure the rate of those releasing three years prior.

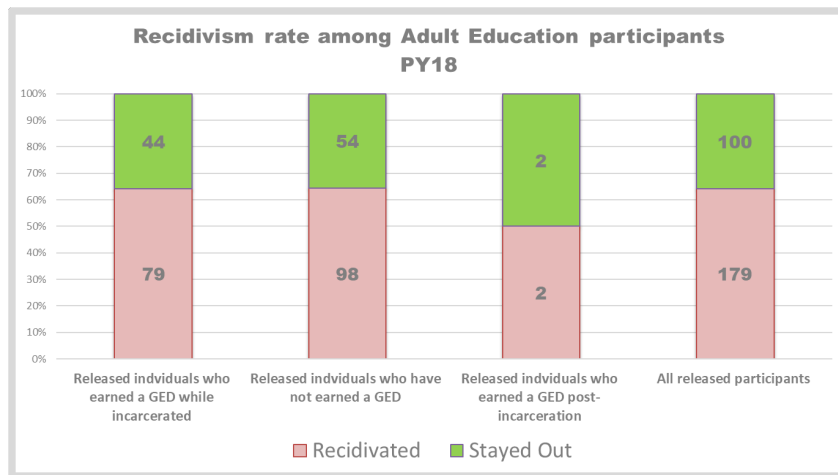
Inmates are either referred by their Probation Officers to education based on risk-needs assessment or they voluntarily enroll in the program. All participation in programming is voluntary.

The DOC Reentry Unit reviewed data from adult education participants from Program Year 2018 (July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019) to study if a correlation existed between program involvement, credential achievement and recidivism. PY 2018 data is the most recent data set available for analysis as it incorporates the three-year threshold required by Alaska statute to measure the recidivism rate. Full-time and part-time student participants' information was extracted from AlaskaJobs, GED Manager, and the Alaska Corrections Offender Management System (ACOMS) to determine what education achievement was attained prior to, during, and post their adult education period of participation while incarcerated in PY 2018; in addition, credential achievement and participation was compared to their custody status over the three-year period to analyze what correlation may exist between the high school equivalency achievement and the rate of remand post-release. Those rates of recidivism are then compared to the known state recidivism rate of the general population of releasing offenders. Some individuals captured within the dataset were released at various times within the three subsequent years, not having completed a full three-year post-release period. Thus, the reported rate could potentially be higher.



* Only New Path High School students who received Adult Education services are included in the above graph.

The cohort data reflected in the chart above reflects the 345 individuals who participated in Adult Education in PY 2018. Of those, 64 have remained incarcerated with 22 having earned GEDs and 2 earned High School Diplomas. Of the 345 participants, 279 individuals released from custody with 179 of those individuals recidivating, which represents an overall 64 percent rate of recidivism for program participants.



The data also revealed that those who had released and had earned a GED while incarcerated had the same recidivism rate (79 of 123), 64 percent, to those who had not earned a GED while incarcerated (100 of 156). The rate of recidivism for those earning a GED was higher than the previous year's cohort (52 percent) by 12 percent, whereas the overall program recidivism rate remained nearly constant (63 percent the previous year). The Department of Corrections 2021 *Offender Profile* details how recidivism rates have ranged from 60 percent to 66 percent from 2014-2018 years, indicating there is not a statistical significance, derived from the PY 2018 data, that neither participation in adult education nor credential attainment had an impact on recidivism.