

VI. Adult Education (AE)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

a. Aligning of Content Standards

Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) Adult Education (AE) Division has worked over the past several years to implement the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) for Adult Education. TDLWD has led trainings across the state to help local providers with standards-based instruction implementation. While the CCR standards have been implemented in Tennessee in a basic sense, refining our guidance and ensuring practitioners are implementing them properly in the classroom will be the focus of the next several years. TDLWD plans to refine and expound CCR standards in several ways, including formalizing and virtualizing training for instructors, creating standardized lesson plans that align to content standards, and using specialized staff to facilitate training and technical assistance activities to improve standards-based instruction statewide.

In the years ahead, TDLWD plans to scale up the usage of distance learning technology, including providing access to quality online training for teachers, and recommending guidance and resources for providing virtual instruction to students. Currently, many local providers develop their own methods of training teachers and determining what curriculum materials are most suitable for instruction. While there is value in some local autonomy, utilizing a statewide training platform to deliver and track training will lead to a coordinated and consistent effort in instructional delivery, and will ensure a standards-based approach is infused across the state. TDLWD curriculum and instruction staff members will focus on the development of teacher CCRS- and ELPS-based resources such as lesson plans, curriculum, and assessments. They will also develop standards training and oversee standards-based curriculum implementation.

b. Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA)

Describe how the State will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

- *Adult education;*
- *Literacy;*
- *Workplace adult education and literacy activities;*
- *Family literacy activities;*
- *English language acquisition activities;*
- *Integrated English literacy and civics education;*
- *Workforce preparation activities; or*
- *Integrated education and training that—*

1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Special Rule. Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

In 2023, TDLWD conducted an Adult Education grant competition per WIOA's requirements. In the early months of 2027, TDLWD will conduct another competition to select new local providers across Tennessee, with the new grant cycle beginning with the 2027-2028 program year, and likely lasting through the 2031-2032 program year. The competitions, to be announced via requests for applications (RFA), will include two grants: (1) Adult Basic Education (ABE), and (2) Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE).

It is our imperative in Tennessee to ensure that, at a minimum, basic adult education and literacy services are offered in each of the state's 95 counties. The ABE RFA will reflect this with designated service areas that encompass all counties. The specific service delivery area designation will be determined based on an evaluation of the labor market and the needs of Tennesseans. AE services provided will include basic math, reading, writing, and high school equivalency preparation instruction. ABE services will also include career pathways activities. These include workforce preparation activities and career advisement services to help students dual enroll in or transition to postsecondary or training opportunities.

The grant will also require applicants to consider the populations of English language learners (ELLs) in a given service area, and grantees will be required to provide English language activities as part of their AE service offerings when there is a sizeable ELL population. In addition, the grant will require applicants to consider the local and county jail populations in a given service area, and grantees will be required to provide ABE services to incarcerated individuals in their designated area. In sum, ABE grantees will be required to provide a large suite of AE services concurrently: basic adult education and literacy, high school equivalency preparation, English language acquisition (if applicable), workforce preparation activities, transition services, and corrections education services.

Because the scope of this suite of services is so large, TDLWD staff will focus much of its time and resources providing technical assistance to grantees to support them in their various service offerings. The core value we will continue to instill in grantees is to focus on individual students' needs. Students who come to a program who are high level and need to pass the high school equivalency exam will receive high school equivalency prep instruction. Students who come to a program with limited English language skills will receive English language instruction appropriate for their skill level. In all cases, local providers will be encouraged to design learning pathways for each student, which will be informed by the student's education and career goals. The learning pathway will define which skills and knowledge a student needs and the classes or activities the student must complete to attain those skills and knowledge. Students' learning pathways will be designed for the ultimate goal of attaining a high school equivalency diploma and/or transitioning to postsecondary education/training or employment.

Grantees will be encouraged to do regular analysis of their service areas and student populations to determine the most efficient and effective structuring of service offerings. Grantees will regularly consider and adjust their class structure—multi-level classes offering all academic subjects, high school equivalency

prep, and workforce preparation at one end of the spectrum, and single-level classes that focus on only one subject at the other end. Grantees will also regularly consider and adjust class locations and times, including virtual/remote offerings, to ensure adequate service offerings.

The specific structure of AE services from any given ABE grantee will be dependent on that agency's structure and capacity. TDLWD will use the competition process and regular technical assistance processes to ensure the organization and scope of services is as effective as possible in every service area.

The IELCE grant is narrower in funding and scope and will be designated for specific areas in Tennessee that have the largest immigrant populations. The grant will require local providers to establish and provide all required IELCE services in their designated area: English language acquisition, civics instruction, workforce preparation activities, and integrated education and training. As with ABE services, IELCE grantees will be expected to meet the individual needs of students and provide learning pathways that help students continuously improve and meet their education and career goals.

We began a strategic focus in recent years that we call "workforce development initiatives" (WDIs). A WDI is defined as any of the following programs:

- Integrated Education and Training
- Pre-apprenticeship
- Workplace AE and literacy
- Postsecondary/training dual enrollment

The expectation is for all AE grantees to always be implementing and offering at least one WDI to students in their program—especially to students who are higher level in their academic skills and knowledge (ABE 4-6 and ESL 4-6). To ensure that planned WDIs meet regulatory requirements, are based on LMI data and local industry needs, and involve necessary system partners (such as training providers, employers, and WIOA Title I/III staff), grantees will be required to submit WDI applications to TDLWD before implementation.

In addition to WDIs, we have been pushing for more intentional incorporation of workforce preparation activities from all grantees. We specifically have established expectations for each grantee to provide digital literacy and soft skills instruction to students. We plan to continue the focus of WDIs and workforce preparation activities in the coming years. We will incorporate these expectations into our 2027 RFA and provide ongoing training and technical assistance to grantees to continuously expand and improve these offerings.

To support local providers in this effort, TDLWD has three staff members dedicated to helping local providers design, implement, and expand WDI's and student career pathways. In the coming years, we will make the WDI planning and implementation process more robust by increasing the collaboration among system partners. We will work with state-level WIOA partners to plan and provide system training to local partners across the state, and ensure they are aware of each other's programs and resources. We will train them to think about participants holistically, and to design career pathways for individuals that are grounded in LMI data and draw on all of the partners' resources.

c. Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals

Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II subtitle C, any of the following academic programs for:

- *Adult education and literacy activities;*
- *Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;*
- *Secondary school credit;*
- *Integrated education and training;*
- *Career pathways;*
- *Concurrent enrollment;*
- *Peer tutoring; and*
- *Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.*

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

TDLWD will establish in its Adult Basic Education (ABE) grant competition the expectation that each ABE grantee provides corrections education services in their local service area. The grant will require grantees to make connections with the local and county jail staff in their given service area, and to establish AE programs and services for the individuals incarcerated in those facilities. Grantees will provide, to the extent practicable, the same suite of services to corrections students as they do their free-world students. These services include basic instruction in math, reading, writing, high school equivalency preparation, workforce preparation activities, and English language acquisition (where applicable).

Historically, we have not offered programs specific to English language learners (ELLs) in Tennessee's local and county jails. We have completed an analysis of the jail populations to determine where there are populations of ELLs, and we plan to work with the grantees in those areas to design and implement ELL-focused adult education programs in those facilities.

In addition, we plan to begin a strategic focus on implementing workforce development initiatives (WDIs) with corrections students; we already have WDIs in place in several jails and will scale this up in the future. These initiatives include establishing career goals and pathways with students, and working with system partners to provide pre-apprenticeships, integrated education and training programs, and work release opportunities.

Concerning state-level partnering and plans in the coming years, we intend to work more closely with the TDLWD Office of Reentry, the TN Board of Regents Corrections Education Initiative, the TN Higher Education Initiative nonprofit, the TN Office of Criminal Justice Programs, and the TN Department of Correction to design and implement comprehensive education-workforce pathways for incarcerated individuals. This will include robust systems and processes for referring and tracking students through their participation in various programs and through the reentry process. We have already made great progress in connecting with these various partners, and we will prioritize being more intentional about collaborative goals, initiatives, and trainings as we go forward.

Finally, in the coming years, we will continue to expand the jail tablets program in county jails across the state. These tablets provide safe and secure access for incarcerated individuals to work on adult education coursework, workforce training programs, and rehabilitative programs, with in-person or virtual instruction

from teachers. This a system-wide initiative that will positively impact the tens of thousands of individuals incarcerated in Tennessee. As we expand the project, we will develop comprehensive training plans, key performance indicators, and reports to ensure the project's success and sustainability. WIOA funds will not be used to pay for the tablets, but our local providers will be expected to use staff time and resources to teach corrections education students via the tablets.

d. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program

Describe how the State will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA, for English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, including how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities.

Describe how the State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II, subtitle C, an Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program and how the funds will be used for the program.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

In 2023, TDLWD conducted an IELCE grant competition per WIOA's requirements. In the early months of 2027, TDLWD will conduct another competition to select new local providers for IELCE across Tennessee, with the new grant cycle beginning with the 2027-2028 program year, and likely lasting through the 2031-2032 program year. The competition will be announced via a request for applications (RFA). Because the IELCE grant is limited in funding, it will be designated for specific areas in Tennessee that have the largest immigrant populations. The grant will require local providers to establish and provide all required IELCE services in their designated area: English language acquisition, civics instruction, workforce preparation activities, and integrated education and training, all provided in a concurrent and integrated model. IELCE grantees will be expected to meet the individual needs of students and provide learning pathways that help students continuously improve and meet their education and career goals.

To ensure IELCE students are being prepared for employment in in-demand industries with livable wage jobs, we will require IELCE programs to design, implement, and offer integrated education and training (IET) programs to students. To ensure that planned IET programs meet regulatory requirements, are based on LMI data and local industry needs, and involve necessary system partners (such as training providers, employers, and WIOA Title I/III staff), IELCE grantees will be required to submit IET applications to TDLWD before implementation.

A critical component of an IELCE IET program, and for helping students become more employable, is the inclusion of workforce preparation activities. We will ensure IELCE grantees are incorporating these activities into their instruction, including digital literacy and soft skills. We will purchase or recommend curriculum products, such as Worldwide Interactive Network (WIN) Learning soft skills and Northstar digital literacy and provide training to local providers on how to use these tools with students. We also plan to recommend or procure curriculum such as BurlingtonEnglish to help IELCE students become more employable, especially through utilizing the career-contextualized English language learning materials within the curriculum.

We will incorporate the expectations for providing IET programs and workforce preparation activities into our 2027 IELCE RFA and provide ongoing training and technical assistance to grantees to continuously expand and improve these offerings.

To support local providers in this effort, TDLWD has three staff members dedicated to helping local providers design, implement, and expand IET programs and student career pathways. In the coming years, these staff members will work specifically with IELCE grantees to ensure the various component of the IET programs and workforce preparation activities are effective and leading to positive student employment and training outcomes.

In the years ahead, we will increase our efforts on advocating among state-level partners and with local system partners for the IELCE programs and their services. We will ensure that these programs are considered in the local workforce development partnerships and plans. We will ensure that our IELCE providers' interests are advocated for by the Adult Education representative on each local board. To do this, TDLWD AE staff will review local workforce plans to ensure the IELCE program and students are included in the plan. We will advocate for strong WIOA partnerships at the local level, including through developing postsecondary/training pathways for IELCE students, and through establishing relationships with local employers from in-demand industries to encourage employment opportunities for IELCE students. Our staff will guide local IELCE program leaders in participating in local board meetings and ensuring their students are advocated for and included in the local workforce strategy.

e. 1. Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA

Required Activities

TDLWD will utilize funds through various methods in order to carry out required State Leadership activities. These methods are addressed individually below.

Aligning Adult Education with Core Programs and One-stop Partners

To support local providers in aligning with core programs and one-stop partners, TDLWD has three staff members who will work with local AE providers. These staff members will conduct extensive planning and training activities with local AE providers, and will work at the state level and locally with system partners to design a more holistic and aligned workforce system. They will also review local plans to ensure AE interests are advocated for. They will review local workforce plans to ensure the AE program and students are included in the plan. We will advocate for strong WIOA partnerships at the local level, including through developing postsecondary/training pathways for AE students, and through establishing relationships with local employers from in-demand industries to encourage employment opportunities for AE students. Our staff will guide local AE program leaders in participating in local board meetings and ensuring their students are advocated for and included in the local workforce strategy and operations within the American Job Center (AJC) delivery system. They will also ensure AE providers have guidance concerning sharing in the AJC infrastructure costs. Lastly, we will provide regular technical assistance and guidance to local AE providers concerning their processes for informing students of the various AJC service offerings, their effectiveness at co-enrolling students in other WIOA programs and supportive services, and their processes for transitioning students to postsecondary education, training, and employment opportunities.

Professional Development

TDLWD will continue to provide AE grantees with professional development opportunities to improve instruction to students. We will utilize state leadership funds to continue to fund our “curriculum and instruction” team of staff members. These include a director of professional development, a director of academic services, and a director of ESL services. Further, we will use state leadership funds to maintain a training and professional development platform. We plan to use this platform extensively for teachers’ professional development opportunities. Additionally, we will use state leadership funds to provide regular regional trainings, webinars, and conferences for local staff professional development. Where necessary and feasible, we also plan to use these funds to bring in third-party experts to provide targeted professional development in various subjects to teachers, such as math instruction, literacy instruction, and leveraging technology for teaching and learning.

Technical Assistance

TDLWD plans to use state leadership funds to provide technical assistance to local providers in the areas of (1) instructional and programmatic practices, (2) one-stop partnership roles, and (3) the use of technology. We will fund technical assistance primarily through TDLWD AE personnel costs. These staff members will plan and carry out technical assistance to local providers.

Instructional and Programmatic Practices

TDLWD personnel who will conduct technical assistance for instructional practices include the curriculum and instruction team—a director of academic services, a director of ESL services, and a director of professional development. These individuals will be at the forefront of researching best practices for AE instruction. They will also observe and gather best practices from local instructors. They will build out our training and professional development platform to house and disseminate these best practices.

Similarly, we will use funds for personnel who focus on technical assistance related to general program development and operations. These staff members will analyze local provider performance and provide targeted technical assistance to improve program design, operations, and service delivery strategies for the providers struggling the most. The staff will provide guidance concerning program development best practices and conduct trainings to facilitate discussions about best practices among local program leaders.

One-Stop Partnership Roles

TDLWD personnel who will conduct technical assistance for one-stop partnership roles include our workforce programs specialist and career pathways specialist. These individuals will work with local AE providers in collaboration with other system partners, to plan and carry out training and technical assistance to help local providers understand their responsibilities as one-stop partners. They will also make training available on our online platform. Staff will update and disseminate our “WIOA Partnership” guidance document and conduct discussions with local program staff to ensure they understand and follow the requirements laid out in the guidance.

TDLWD staff will also conduct local monitoring visits, during which we will interview local staff about their one-stop practices, and observe local American Job Centers to determine the extent to which the AE program is meeting its responsibilities. We will provide technical assistance to buoy up areas where the one-stop responsibilities are falling short. In addition, we will work with state-level WIOA partners to plan and provide system training to local partners across the state, and ensure they are aware of each other’s programs and resources.

Use of Technology

TDLWD personnel who will conduct technical assistance for using technology include the grants analyst, the data specialist, and the curriculum and instruction team.

We will continue to use the state's fiscal and grants management software, SmartSimple, to process local fiscal activities, such as submitting invoices for reimbursement. TDLWD staff will do system troubleshooting and testing to ensure it meets the needs of local AE programs and will plan and conduct training and technical assistance to the local programs.

We will conduct an RPF for a student data management system in 2024. Our data specialist will oversee this, in addition to planning and conducting regular training of local program staff on how to effectively enter data, retrieve reports, and conduct analyses to benefit their program.

We will procure a training platform in 2024. Our curriculum and instruction team will oversee this, in addition to planning and conducting regular training of local program staff on how to access the systems, create coursework for students, and complete professional development and training courses.

Our jail tablets initiative for corrections education students will need continuous support with ongoing maintenance and software renewals. TDLWD staff members will oversee this, in addition to planning and conducting regular training of local program staff on how to access and utilize the tablets and programs to maximize student usage and outcomes.

Monitoring and Evaluation

TDLWD plans to use state leadership funds to conduct monitoring and evaluation of the statewide AE program. We will fund monitoring and evaluation, and dissemination of best practices, primarily through TDLWD AE personnel costs. We will conduct regular, overarching monitoring and evaluation activities as well as in-depth monitoring of specific local providers.

TDLWD staff will regularly analyze program data to determine areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. We will conduct regular strategy meetings to look at performance metrics resulting from various initiatives that we have instituted, and to plan necessary changes that will help to improve outcomes. We will seek various forms of stakeholder feedback that will provide insight on the effectiveness of various components of the statewide program (such as new initiatives that have been instituted, barriers to successful outcomes, state-level changes needed, additional resources needed, etc.).

In general, we will hold regular training events and conferences to disseminate best practices to the local AE providers (e.g., quarterly leadership meetings, annual conferences, regional trainings, etc.), based on regular evaluation of the statewide program from TDLWD AE leaders. The planning of these events and costs associated with them will be funded with the state leadership funds.

e. 2. Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable

Permissible Activities

TDLWD will utilize state leadership funding to carry out several additional permissible activities. We will fund personnel who will focus on developing resources for instructional use, and we will provide guidance curriculum resources (including software for distance learning) that can be used by local providers across the state. We will fund personnel who will focus on developing systems, process, and training related to

transitioning students from AE services to postsecondary or training. Similarly, we will fund personnel who focus on improving and increasing local providers' collaborative activities with employers, training, providers and WIOA partners. We will fund personnel who develop content and models for integrated education and training programs, workplace learning programs, and career pathways. We will fund personnel who will focus on expanding occupational skills training for integrated English literacy and civics education students. We will also use state leadership funds for outreach resources and activities to help recruit more students into the statewide AE program.

f. Assessing Quality

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA.

To assess the quality of local AE providers, TDLWD staff will conduct regular monitoring activities with specific local providers. We will complete a yearly monitoring plan that includes a risk assessment of each of the local providers and describes the expected schedule of which providers will receive a formal monitoring. The TDLWD staff will spend significant time conducting monitoring activities, drafting monitoring reports, and assisting local providers to complete corrective actions.

The TDLWD AE leaders will also regularly assess local providers' performance data to determine which programs are in most need of support and technical assistance. We will then deploy staff members to investigate the programs and discover the possible reasons for the struggling performance. We will then work with the local program leaders to draft a program improvement plan which will outline suggested changes for the program, goals and targets to achieve, and specific training activities that the local program staff should complete. We will follow up with the local program on a continuous schedule to adjust their program improvement plan as needed and to offer additional support. After the prescribed period of time, we will re-assess how the program is performing and determine if their program improvement plan needs to continue, or if their quality has improved to a satisfactory point.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)

In the text box below, describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs provide the information to meet the requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), consistent with the following instructions posted at <https://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/gepa427.doc>.

TDLWD will work to ensure that there is equitable access to and participation in all Adult Education activities and services across the state. The steps TDLWD will take include:

1. Training, technical assistance, and professional development activities will be made available to all local program staff, in accordance with their roles in the program.
2. Critical program information and public outreach messages will be offered via a variety of media and communication tools and will be translated into other common languages in Tennessee such as Spanish and Arabic.
3. Professional development opportunities will be made available to all state staff members, in accordance with their roles.

4. For hiring practices, equal employment opportunity rules will be followed, job postings will be announced broadly, and processes will incorporate principles of increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion.
5. During local program monitoring activities, TDLWD staff will conduct observations and interviews to ensure equitable access to services, Title VI non-discrimination rules are being followed, ADA rules are being followed, and teaching and learning accommodations for students with disabilities are being provided.
6. For local AE grant competitions, TDLWD will ensure applicants provide information to meet the requirements of Section 427 of GEPA.

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Adult Education and Literacy Program Performance Indicators

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Performance indicators table				
Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2027 Expected Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	50.0%	50.5%	51.0%	51.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	50.0%	50.5%	51.0%	51.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$3,950	\$4,000	\$4,050	\$4,100
Credential Attainment Rate	42.0%	42.5%	43.0%	43.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	40.5%	41.0%	41.5%	42%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

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