# Virginia Adult Education Narrative Report 2016-2017

## State Leadership Funds (AEFLA Section 223)

In program year 2016-2017, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education used leadership funds to support a cooperative agreement with the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) at Virginia Commonwealth University to support both required and permissible state leadership activities. In particular, the VALRC provided support for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Sec. 223(1)(a) “Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other one-stop required partners to implement the strategies in the Unified or Combined State Plan,” 223(1)(b) “Establishment or operation of a high quality professional development program,” and Sec. 223(1)(c) “Provision of technical assistance to funded eligible providers.” Activities by the VALRC included:

* on-site and online professional development workshops, institutes, courses, and meetings;
* on-site and online technical assistance, with an emphasis on technical assistance for the integrated education and training model of PluggedInVA, featured in the Combined State Plan, to multiple one-stop system partners;
* websites that serve as clearinghouses of vetted adult education resources;
* a toll-free GED® helpline;
* a listserv open to all adult education professionals, which was used to communicate professional learning opportunities as well as disseminate WIOA implementation and cross-partner agency communications;
* an electronic newsletter and a wide variety of printed and online publications; and
* the hosting of state-wide professional learning communities and electronic communication channels.

The objectives of the VALRC cooperative agreement respond to the WIOA Combined State Plan by supporting implementation of three key title II priorities: 1) standards-based instruction (described on page 8), 2) integrated education and training and workforce preparation for career pathways which accommodates learners at all skill levels, and 3) technical assistance for meeting performance targets and improving program design.

### Integrated Education and Training (IET)

Professional development for integrated education and training (IET) and workforce preparation for career pathways continued with the development and refinement of the three-tiered Virginia IET Blueprint. This Blueprint is based on the PluggedInVA model and aligns adult education and literacy activities with core WIOA requirements and one-stop partnership agreements.

The IET Blueprint includes learning competencies for each level, competencies for modules within each level, a curriculum framework for integrating career and technical interests and resources with academic instruction, programmatic guidance on structuring IET, resources and guidance for partnerships and one-stop activities, and a process for engaging with workforce partners using regional sector strategies.  At the end of program year 2016-2017, the Blueprint was housed on a Wordpress site, and sitemaps had been developed for transfer to an interactive web platform. The outline of the Blueprint has been shared with WIOA partners that are also funding various PluggedInVA programs in community colleges through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) research project, a U.S.Department of Labor-funded Disability Employment Initiative grant project, the Trade Adjustment Act, and philanthropic funding. The statewide Career Pathways Work Group plans to continue to share this resource through program year 2017-2018 as it becomes available on the web and to promote its use as a consistent model and source of technical assistance.

### Online and On-Site Training

Virtual professional development delivered via webinars and unfacilitated online tutorials continued to be the primary delivery methods for professional development in program year 2016-2017. All VALRC professional development activities are managed using the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Knowledge Center learning management system (LMS). This LMS is available to all state agencies free of charge. Highlights of VALRC’s program year 2016-2017 are below.

* Supported completion of over 1,500 training courses by practitioners from across the state.
* Offered six- and eight-week facilitated online professional development courses on topics such as ESOL multilevel classes, reading, and numeracy; and self-paced, unfacilitated courses that provided fundamental knowledge of the College and Career Readiness Standards and instructional strategies for implementing a standards-based approach to instruction and career pathways.
* Provided assessment certification and certification renewal.
* Designed and delivered, in collaboration with the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, a six-week facilitated online pilot course, *Disabilities and the Adult Learner.*
* Created an MOU with the Department of Corrections and conducted trainings at their request.
* Continued hybrid training (both face-to-face and online) for new National External Diploma Program (NEDP) assessors and created guidance for NEDP program startup.
* Designed and delivered *Leading Through Change Parts 1 & 2* at the Fall 2016 Regional Program Manager, Regional Program Specialist, and IELCE Managers meeting.
* Developed and implemented, with VDOE, a four-week, facilitated online training, *NRS Table Changes*, based on the federal NRS-led training; this was offered for three cohorts of program managers and data specialists in the summer of 2017.
* Provided meeting services and subsequent competition review support.

### Publications and Communications

During program year 2016-2017, the VALRC maintained eight websites, four listservs, and a Provider Directory with contact information for adult education programs around the state. Links to these resources are listed below.

* [Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center](http://www.valrc.org) – www.valrc.org. The Professional Learning and Program Leadership pages includes links by topic.
* PluggedInVa - *(no longer available, 2023)*
* GED Virginia - https://gedva.vcu.edu/
* IEL/Civics Gateways for Teachers - *(no longer available, 2023)*
* CivicsIt Up! - https://www.civicsitup.org *(no longer available, 2023)*
* [Facts and Statistics for Adult Education and Literacy in Virginia and U.S](https://literacyfacts.wordpress.com). - https://literacyfacts.wordpress.com

Publications and Communications produced by VALRC include:

* [YouTube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/user/resourcecenterva) - https://www.youtube.com/user/resourcecenterva
* *Progress* newsletter - http://valrc.org/about/progress.html *(no longer available, 2023)*
* [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Virginia-Adult-Learning-Resource-Center/333037475357) - https://www.facebook.com/pages/Virginia-Adult-Learning-Resource-Center/333037475357
* [Twitter](http://twitter.com/#!/VAELN) - http://twitter.com/#!/VAELN
* Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Network Listserv (VAELN) - Adult educators are encouraged to subscribe to VAELN to stay informed of policy changes, new resources, and staff development information.

To support learners seeking their GED® credential, VALRC operates the GED® Helpline, which provided assistance in 1,064 interactions in program year 2016-2017. This is consistent with the number of calls in the previous year.

As part of VALRC’s support of distance education, the VALRC hosted the Distance Education Curriculum Review Committee meetings. The committee reviews and approves effective and appropriate distance education curricula and provides input on distance education policy. The VALRC also conducted a phone survey with program managers and instructors in programs that report students as distance learners. Several themes emerged that will inform the state’s efforts to develop guidance and potential training for programs incorporating distance education projects in program year 2017-2018.

### Evaluation of Professional Development Services and Professional Development Evaluation Plan

In program year 2016-2017, VALRC contracted with an external evaluation consultant, Dr. Susan McKelvey. The purpose of this evaluation process was to provide meaningful information and evidence to be used by VDOE and VALRC to make informed decisions about professional development choices that contribute to a high-quality professional development program, adult education program improvement, and gains in student learning and outcomes.

This evaluation was composed of two components: 1) the development and pilot of a professional development evaluation plan to be used for all VALRC trainings, and 2) an external evaluation of the standards-based instruction professional development initiative, *SBI:VA*, as an exemplar of implementing the professional development plan and using the data to inform adjustments in activities and program improvement. (See the Adult Education Standards section for resulting recommendations.)

The evaluation plan uses an adaptation of Guskey’s (2002) Five Levels of Data as a framework for the evaluations, providing both formative and summative recommendations. Baseline data were collected through a survey administered in the spring of 2016 via three listservs. A total of 181 adult educators responded. The survey consisted of eight closed questions regarding whether or not respondents used the VALRC resources and training, as well as how recently they had been used. Another six open-ended questions focused on gathering information about additional services needed and professional development received elsewhere.

Findings include that while several areas of support from VALRC are strong and most practitioners do access the VALRC website for resources and materials, few educators are accessing VALRC’s social media, many are researching professional development opportunities on their own, and the Virginia Knowledge Center registration process is not user-friendly. A full report with results, findings, and recommendations was provided by the evaluator to VALRC and VDOE.

As part of the first component, emphasis was placed on developing and refining the overall evaluation design and piloting evaluation survey instruments. In addition, efforts were made by the consultant to provide ongoing feedback to VALRC during the course of the evaluation year so that professional development courses and program adjustments could be made as needed. The development of questions and evaluation methodology was related to Guskey’s Five Levels of Data. Surveys for Guskey level 1 and level 2 were used for all professional development events provided by VALRC in order to achieve a comparative analysis. A standard process for examining the data gathered by the surveys was also established by VALRC staff to ensure that data-informed adjustments were made. These surveys are being used in program year 2017-2018 to provide trend data.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

A significant effort by VDOE in program year 2016-2017 to support Sec 223(1)(d), “Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of adult education activities,” was the management of a statewide competition for adult education providers, compliant with the regulations in Sec. 231. In order to maintain the integrity of the competition, on-site monitoring of providers was scheduled to begin in program year 2017-2018, and state staff delivered direct technical assistance as fiscal, data, or instructional performance issues were identified within local programs.

Consistent with the described process outlined in the Combined State Plan (p. 145), the timeline of the competition began with the release of the Request for Proposals (RFP) on January 13, 2017, announced via VDOE as well as through paid announcements in newspapers and education publications, and a public pre-proposal meeting held January 24. (Competition materials will remain available on the [VDOE website](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/specialized-instruction/adult-education/grants-funding) until March 2018) Following the meeting, all inquiries about the competition or application process were managed as public information. Inquiries were accepted through a central email address, sorted into categories, researched, and answered in weekly sets posted to the adult education webpage. A total of 95 questions were answered in this way prior to the submission deadline of March 1. Applications were reviewed for alignment by the appropriate local workforce development boards between March 15 and April 5. Review panels, made up of retired local and regional adult education program managers, Department of Corrections administrators, and current and retired career and technical education teachers, were oriented and assigned sets of applications to review and score. Panel deliberation meetings were held April 25-27, during which specific areas of weakness for each proposal were identified. Applicants received letters on May 10 requesting revisions and a full resubmission by May 25. Two additional sets of questions were answered and posted during this revision period. These revisions were reviewed by state staff and evaluated against the rubric and as to how well the revisions addressed the identified weaknesses. Letters of award, with the stated condition that key staff must participate in technical assistance and professional development led by VDOE, were issued on June 2. Technical assistance to awardees began immediately with individual calls and emails with local program managers, webinars, recorded videos, shared tools and resources, Directors Memos, and emails from the state office.

Additionally, the state office launched a rigorous monitoring and evaluation process at the start of program year 2017-2018, beginning with reviews of 2016-2017 data and fiscal performance. The phases of the process are modeled after the monitoring process described in the federal Uniform Guidance. The first component consisted of program managers and selected staff completing a program self-assessment in October. The second component was the distribution of a risk rubric to local and regional program managers detailing programperformance, accountability, fiscal, and grant management data for 2016-2017. The third component is a technical assistance call with each program manager and selected staff in December to discuss their program concerns and technical assistance needs. These risk assessment activities will be followed by technical assistance and on-site monitoring activities for four to five programs in the spring of 2018. The process for identifying programs will be based on a review of risk factors and program needs.

## Performance Data Analysis

Enrollment declined in Virginia by 1,013 students in 2016-2017, or almost one percent from 2015-2016. Although the state’s overall Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) attainment rate of 40 percent was below the negotiated federal MSG target of 42 percent, Virginia reported meeting or exceeding the statewide target in six of eleven educational functioning levels (EFLs). In program year 2015-2016, the statewide target was met in only two of eleven EFLs. Five of the six EFLs with performance above the statewide target are in English Language Acquisition (ELA), levels 1-5. Other core indicators were not reported in the statewide performance report in 2016-2017 as not enough time had elapsed to allow the state to build new data collection features in the state management information system to accommodate the new federal reporting requirements, which were released by the U.S. Department of Education in August 2017.

Having the performance data completed and analyzed in October allowed the state office to share state and regional program performance with local and regional programs in a much more timely fashion. Much of the state’s presence at the 2017 Virginia Association For Adult and Continuing Education (VAACE) annual fall conference and concurrent program managers meeting was devoted to sharing the data and discussing possible solutions for improving performance and identifying technical assistance needs. In particular, performance data for posttested students (NRS Table 4B) were discussed, followed by discussion on student retention and its direct impact on EFL gains achieved through posttesting.

## Integration with One-Stop Partners

In program year 2016-2017, the state delegated the roles and responsibilities for meeting one-stop requirements under 34 CFR part 463, subpart J, to the regional program managers and their fiscal agents. Those programs worked closely with their local workforce development boards (LWDB) and one-stop operators to coordinate services and facilitate access to adult education services through the one-stops. In program year 2016-2017, 14 regional programs contributed to their one-stops either in direct funds or in-kind contributions toward infrastructure or by program personnel working on-site. Virginia has 20 comprehensive one-stops and 41 affiliate or local service locations. The 17 workforce areas do not overlay seamlessly with the 22 regional adult education programs. For example, one LWDB serves four adult education regions with a single comprehensive center, while elsewhere in the state, one adult education region coordinates with two LWDBs that run four comprehensive centers.

As part of the competitive request for proposal (RFP) released in January 2017, applicants were required to begin working directly with their LWDBs to align their proposals to the LWDB’s existing plans and labor market information and to coordinate access to adult education services in the one-stop in their area through direct negotiations on the Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). In their proposals and the negotiations of awards, grantees budgeted infrastructure contributions in their administrative funds and negotiated to increase the administrative cap when necessary.

Technical assistance is being provided to program managers on how to fulfill their roles and responsibilities as one-stop partners, and the state is cognizant of services provided, MOUs, and infrastructure cost agreements associated with comprehensive one-stop centers.

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

Program year 2016-2017 was a transition year for the Virginia IELCE programs with 18 previous awardees granted a continuation grant with the requirement that they implement the IELCE federal requirements. One of the priorities of the state was the implementation of standards-based instruction. All 18 programs held professional learning communities (PLCs) that focused on implementing standards-based instruction in the classroom. The VALRC coordinated a statewide committee to plan alignment and professional development activities around the integration of the Virginia ESOL content standards with the College and Career Readiness Standards (more detail provided below in the Adult Education Standards section). In program year 2017-2018, this committee is expanding its focus to include the implementation of the English Language Proficiency Standards.

Another focus was on strengthening, creating, and planning IET programs. Seven of the 18 IELCE programs ran IET cohorts in the hospitality, childcare, and healthcare occupational clusters. Credentials offered included Medical Billing and Coding, National Certified Insurance and Coding Specialist, ServSafe Food Protection Manager, ServSafe Food Handler, first aid, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), and pediatric CPR / Automatic External Defibrillators (AED).

In program year 2016-2017, the programs made progress toward the goal of preparing and placing learners into unsubsidized employment by implementing workforce preparation activities, including digital literacy, critical thinking, and other employability skills, into instruction. The localities also focused on the job placement of participants by building partnerships with employers, as well as using the services of student advisors, outreach specialist, employment transition coaches, business services, and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) adult career coaches.

**Performance Results:** Through an IELCE-funded program, one locality helped all four participants who went through the ServSafe Manager’s IET program receive promotions at work; two received an increase in pay, one became a manager, and one is opening his own restaurant. Another locality, through its partnerships, was able to place 73 percent of those looking for employment, surpassing their goal of 40 percent. These placements were in jobs in the occupational clusters of manufacturing, warehouse, hospitality, and healthcare. Another locality has a fulltime employment transition coach who held 20 workforce preparation workshops. At this program, nine IELCE participants earned a job readiness certificate, 41 IELCE participants attended at least one workforce readiness workshop, 12 produced a workforce ready resume, five gained verified employment, and two transitioned into the Information Technology program at a community college.

**Challenge:** A significant challenge was the broadening focus of the IELCE programs and providers’ mission. Previously, programs had focused on life skills instruction for learners, who were often at quite low levels of English proficiency. Skills training and employment placement were not a component of the providers’ scope. Also, programs report the challenge that current learners often perceive the IELCE programs as solely providing English language instruction; they do not seek employment and training from the existing providers. One program states that 55 percent of its learners are already employed.

**Lessons Learned:** Re-messaging the services programs offer to potential students and business customers in the community is an imperative for future success. Programs are beginning to discuss how to attract a new clientele, one that may be more prepared to engage in IET programming.

Virginia is making progress with ensuring that IELCE program activities are integrated with the local workforce development system. The focus of the 2016-2017 grant year was on building partnerships that included working with the LWDBs, one-stop workforce system, the Virginia Employment Commission, the Virginia Department of Social Services, Telemon Corporation, Goodwill Industries, VCCS, and postsecondary Career and Technical Centers.

**Performance Results:** Two localities included their LWDB manager on their adult education advisory board. Eight localities offer classes at the one-stop centers. Five localities have a formal referral process. A fulltime, one-stop liaison funded by one IELCE program met with 820 potential English Language Learners and reported that 186 individuals were interested in citizenship, 91 were seeking employment, 294 were interested in obtaining a high school equivalency credential, and 112 individuals were referred to other workforce partners.

**Challenge:** Many of the localities stated that their biggest challenge was building working relationships with the various workforce development partners and educating them on the value of the IELCE program for their business customers. Geography was also a challenge as some program managers stated that not being co-located in a one-stop was a challenge while others stated the distance to the nearest one-stop center was a barrier.

**Lessons Learned:** The programs funded in the new 2017-2018 cycle have, by design, established closer relationships with their LWDBs and become more aware of and informed about the labor market information of their region. Technical assistance will continue to be provided to ensure that this is a dynamic relationship and IET programs continue to reflect current employment opportunities.Coordinating with the LWDBs for assistance with employment placement is also a new activity for the IELCE providers and may require technical assistance and strategizing.

The 2017-2018 IELCE funds were awarded to 14 eligible providers. All grants were awarded with the condition that program managers and key staff participate in technical assistance and professional development to improve their compliance with federal regulations, particularly the design and rigor of the IET component, the rigor and labor market value of the credentials offered, the effectiveness of the employment placement plans, and engagement in professional learning around the English Language Proficiency Standards.

## Adult Education Standards

Implementing standards-based instruction for adult education in Virginia continued in program year 2016-2017, with the overall goal of planning, coordinating, and implementing standards-based instruction for all eligible providers in the state using the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and the Virginia ESOL Standards, focusing on key instructional practices that result in increased student engagement and achievement and continuous improvement of instruction in adult education and literacy. To support this goal, the VALRC led several efforts through the program year.

VALRC held a three-day institute as a pre-conference to the annual statewide conference, focused on standards-based instruction that included representatives of Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, ELA, and IELCE programs. In addition to over 100 educators trained on understanding and facilitating standards-focused PLCs using a protocol for *Looking at* *Student Work*, 44 educators from across the state, including representatives from community-based literacy organizations, received *Standards-based Instruction I* in-depth training on the CCRS and the key instructional shifts. This teacher-leader cohort served as trainers in addition to the train-the-trainer cohort that was trained in November, 2015. Following the summer institute, practitioners across the state held more than 250 PLC meetings at local programs during the program year. VALRC staff monitored PLC updates from the field and provided technical assistance via phone calls, emails, and, upon request, site visits.

Additional trainings and resources were developed to align with the CCRS, including those offered through the VALRC’s existing training catalogue, the three self-paced *Introduction to the CCRS* online modules, the Standards-based Instruction section of the VALRC website, and the newly-developed face-to-face workshop: *CCRS Key Instructional Advances for Math with a Special Focus on Rigor*. Regional program managers were familiarized with the *Looking at Student Work* protocol at the fall 2016 state managers’ meeting. Virginia completed the National College and Career Readiness Standards-in-Action grant with a September 2016 standards-focused strategic planning meeting facilitated by national CCR SIA coach, Joanne Kantner.

As described above, the standards-based instruction initiative was the second of two components of the external evaluation conducted by Dr. Susan McKelvey. From this component, recommendations for the success of the standards-based instruction initiative and PLCs include:

* consider tracking fidelity of professional development delivery;
* use CCRS observation forms to better reach Guskey Level 3;
* interview a sample of instructors and program managers;
* provide data to program managers so they can make informed decisions and program and/or instructional changes;
* collect data on a comparison group who have not participated in the PLCs; and
* determine a set time for people to collaborate, even if it is online.

VALRC, together with state staff, has begun to incorporate these recommendations into the program year 2017-2018 VARLC work plan.

Another effort to support standards-based instruction was the assembly of a team composed of VALRC specialists and 14 Virginia adult educators from across the state to draft curriculum frameworks for English language arts/literacy and mathematics CCRS. The English language arts/literacy framework includes anchor and leveled standards, teacher notes addressing essential understanding for each anchor, leveled sample activities for each anchor, a crosswalk to GED Reasoning through Language Arts assessment targets, and helpful instructional resources. The mathematics framework includes teacher-friendly overviews of the CCRS math domains, teacher-friendly introductions to the leveled content standards by domain, an exploration of math practices contextualized by domain and level, and sample activities and assessments in each domain. In program year 2017-2018, VALRC plans to host the framework online, continue to supplement the framework, and develop training and resources to support the framework launch.

Two math crosswalks have also been developed. One is a full crosswalk of all of the CCRS math standards, all of the GED math Assessment Targets, and all of the math components on the VCCS Virginia Placement Test. The other crosswalk highlights strategic math areas using CCRS Major Work of the Level, GED® High Impact Indicators for math, and Virginia Placement Test math content aligned with the other two areas. This second crosswalk has been reviewed by the VCCS Math Pathways Project Manager, a K12 Math specialist, and the CCRS Frameworks math team. It appeared in the summer issue of the *Progress* newsletter, with concurrent rollout to the field.

Committing to full implementation of standards-based instruction by July 2019 was a key principle in the competitive RFP. A technical assistance roadmap that defines “full implementation” of SBI and provides technical assistance in the key areas of program design, instruction, and professional development was released in November 2017.

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

During program year 2016-2017, there was no methodology in place for capturing the recidivism rate for criminal offenders served in programs for corrections education and the education of other institutionalized individuals. However, the Virginia Department of Corrections (VDOC) has published state definitions and formulas for setting the state rate of recidivism of re-arrest, re-conviction, and re-incarceration at intervals of 6, 12, 18, 24, and 36 months. In 2017-2018, the state will work with VDOC, local and regional program managers, and other related entities to determine consistent and practical methods to capture and report the relative rate of recidivism for adults who have participated in corrections and reentry education in Virginia. Through the 2017-2018 program year, the state will work with Corrections and Institutions (C&I) programs to provide technical assistance and professional development to program managers and instructors to assist them in offering high-quality, effective services to this population.

Regional programs funded for program year 2017-2018 are offering educational services in local and regional jails, state institutions, and community reentry programs. Innovations proposed include enhancing workforce readiness curricula and career and technical opportunities for incarcerated individuals, increasing access to computers and offline technology-based instructional resources, and strengthening collaborations with local re-entry councils and other community partners to serve individuals upon release. During 2016-2017, a paper-based high school equivalency (HSE) testing option was offered in six local and regional jails that had not yet transitioned to computer-based testing. A total of 168 incarcerated individuals took the paper-based test and 55 of those individuals earned a HSE credential. All programs made progress through program year 2016-2017 in converting to computer-based testing, and, beginning in January 2018, computer-based testing will be implemented in all local and regional correctional facilities, providing incarcerated individuals continued access to HSE testing.