

Texas Adult Education and Literacy End-of-Year Report

Program Year 2020–2021

Executive Summary

Each year, the US Department of Education’s Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) requires state agencies that implement adult education and literacy programs under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) to submit a narrative report detailing:

- the use of state leadership funds;
- the manner in which the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program performance was evaluated;
- the integration of the AEL program with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) one-stop partners;
- the implementation of the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program;
- adult education standards; and
- programs for corrections education.

In Program Year 2020–2021 (PY’20–’21), TWC’s AEL program:

- served 5,549 Texans in workforce training programs, including those specifically designed to assist individuals with low literacy or who are English language learners (ELLs), through an Integrated Education and Training (IET) model;
- administered a high school equivalency (HSE) subsidy program using state funds, providing more than 4,000 subsidized HSE vouchers for AEL participants seeking to obtain a Texas HSE certificate (or TxCHSE);
- supported Texas programs by offering statewide virtual meetings, including:
 - a summer business meeting to provide policy, financial, and accountability information and updates to program administrators, attended by 494; and
 - a Fall Institute for AEL programs and workforce stakeholders to hear best practices on career pathways models, remote testing and remote intake processes, serving ELLs, programs for justice-involved individuals, and more, attended by 371 administrators, key personnel, career navigators, and instructors; and
- authored and submitted the [TWC AEL Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021 to 2026](#) (AEL Strategic Plan) to the Texas legislature, the governor, and the Texas Workforce Investment Council, which outlines the following four goals to enhance AEL in the state over the next five years:
 - Increase workforce, secondary, and postsecondary education and training outcomes to support increases in education and work-related outcomes through enhanced delivery and service integration
 - Address demand for AEL programs in Texas by implementing strategies that increase and streamline access for current and future students
 - Enhance the workforce customer’s experience through increased coordination and

integration between state and local system stakeholders

- Improve AEL program effectiveness, which includes program accountability and fiscal integrity, and provide tools to communicate the AEL program impact to AEL stakeholders.

I. State Leadership Funds (AEFLA §223)

In Texas, TWC’s three-member Commission (Commission) approves the state-leadership initiatives required and allowed under AEFLA.

Required Activity: WIOA §223(a)(1)(A), Alignment of AEL Activities with Other One-Stop Required Partners Integrated Education and Training Models

TWC continued to fund Accelerate Texas, an IET initiative in which AEL participants are concurrently enrolled in workforce training and AEL services. The Accelerate Texas model is designed to develop and refine IET models being deployed statewide and track completion and placement into in-demand and targeted occupations. To date, TWC has awarded more than \$13 million for Accelerate Texas grants to support more than 3,500 low-skilled adults entering into postsecondary programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials in targeted industries. In PY’21, 12 Accelerate Texas grants ended, and four new grants—the sixth iteration of Accelerate Texas grants—were procured and awarded in August 2021.

Similarly, TWC’s Ability-to-Benefit initiative provides students lacking a diploma or its equivalent an opportunity to enroll in a career pathways program at an institution of higher education (IHE), while simultaneously working toward attaining a high school credential. Three Ability-to-Benefit grants ended last program year. Grantees reported challenges recruiting and serving AEL customers with hands-on technical training in these models due to closures at colleges throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Others noted new opportunities and positive outcomes to delivering services virtually. As reported by one community college grantee, “The shift to virtual and hybrid models of recruitment and instruction allowed the college to reach participants who would have previously gone unserved.”

Workforce Integration Initiative

This \$2 million initiative, which ended June 30, 2021, supported increases in AEL integration with Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, as well as student connectivity and continuity to postsecondary and employment outcomes. Although the initiative was originally approved to increase AEL integration with Boards and VR services, it was expanded in April 2020 at the onset of the pandemic to address more immediate AEL needs in order to launch or expand various distance and remote learning options for students, as permitted under §223(a)(B). This grant ended in June 2021, and grantees reported using the funding to initiate or expand distance and remote learning options through the purchase of software and hardware, such as creation of laptop loaner programs so students could continue to connect to services virtually during the pandemic. Other grantees focused use of funds on hiring Career Navigators, IET Specialists, and support staff to connect students to postsecondary education and employment opportunities.

New Initiatives That Promote Alignment to Core Partners

In June 2021, the Commission earmarked state leadership funds to address the middle skills gap in Texas. Texas AEL will report on the following new initiatives that support the alignment of AEL with one-stop partners in the PY'21-'22 end-of-year report, and which support the agency's middle skills gap statewide response.

The **Career Pathways Professional Development Center (CPPDC)** grant, which began July 1, 2021, supports professional development to improve AEL integration across WIOA Titles that serve priority populations through cross-training of stakeholder groups such as AEL grantees, Boards, IHEs, and career and technical educational providers. The CPPDC grantee Region 6 Education Service Center will provide evidenced-based professional development to stakeholders on:

- quality career pathways models,
- coenrollment across WIOA Titles, and
- strategies that support student success, system alignment, and improved performance outcomes.

In fall 2021, as part of the TWC's middle skills gap initiative strategy, the CPPDC grant was amended to allow the grantee to develop curriculum for the construction trades, enhancing IET models for the trades statewide to support AEL programs and Boards as they work to upskill workers and support job seekers into middle skills jobs in Texas.

Additionally, the following state-leadership funded projects support this required activity by developing IET models and sharing best practices among workforce system stakeholders:

- **IET in Corrections Initiative**—The Windham School District will develop and expand IET models for an estimated 500 incarcerated individuals within two years of release, providing IET programs and reentry and post-release services to those individuals, and sharing best practices to workforce stakeholders to build similar models.
- **Pre-apprenticeship Bridge Training Program**—This initiative will require grantees to develop bridge programs and pre-apprenticeship programs for applicants who need basic skills remediation in order to enter building trades-related Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). The projects will focus on improving reading and math skills to qualify and transition into the first year of a RAP. Grant activities include reading, math, workforce preparation activities, and digital literacy skills to ensure that participants are prepared for the rigor of the RAP.

Required Activity: WIOA §223(a)(1)(B), Establishment or Operation of a Professional Development Program

In PY'20-'21, TWC continued funding its statewide professional development center, Training, Resource, and Innovation Network for Texas Professional Development (TRAIN PD), for AEL providers and other workforce system stakeholders, and awarded grants to establish two new statewide professional development centers: The Distance Education Professional Development Center (DEPDC) and the CPPDC.

Statewide Professional Development Center (TRAIN PD)

TWC continued to operate a statewide professional development center through the TRAIN PD grant, which ended on August 31, 2021. TRAIN PD reported the following data points on this grant in its final narrative report:

- 4,323 unique users completed 15,740 online curricula for 19,876.5 online professional development hours
- 3,414 unique users attended 238 local, state, and/or live online training for 14,093 professional development hours, for a total of 33,970 professional development hours earned for the program year

Statewide professional development services (research, courses, curriculum, and other professional development–related events) were organized through five institutes: Literacy Instruction, Career Pathways, Program Management, Distance Learning and Technology Integration, and Stakeholder Integration Services.

TWC, through TRAIN PD, continued to provide training on the Standards 3.0 project, which included the new civics and family literacy standards.

The Leadership Excellence Academy (LEA), composed of one Administrator LEA and one Instructional LEA, continued with the American Institute for Research to review and revise training materials for a new cohort of participants, which began training in October 2021 and culminates at the end of May 2022, with each participant completing an improvement project that uses leadership strategies learned.

To support virtual learning during the pandemic, the Commission approved additional funds for TRAIN PD to develop 40 virtual learning resources in the areas of basic education, digital literacy, workforce preparation, and job search assistance. These contextualized video lessons, available in English and Spanish as bilingual videos, are available to all workforce system partners on the [Adult Ed Med website](#).

After a rigorous competition, the new Statewide Professional Development Center grant was awarded on June 1, 2021, to TRAIN PD.

New Distance Education Professional Development Center

On June 1, 2021, TWC awarded the grant for the new DEPDC to TRAIN PD. This new center is charged with increasing student outcomes through technical assistance and improving student engagement through remote resources. It is anticipated that the use of remote instruction will continue to grow in Texas, and this center is designed to support expansion for both students and instructors. This center is expected to serve approximately 1,000 participants in its first year, using Freshworks software in the call center, and will be available seven days a week in both English and Spanish, and other languages as needed, to assist customers.

TWC's Statewide Professional Development Center will work in conjunction with DEPDC and CPPDC to ensure coordinated professional development services.

TWC will provide an update on these professional development initiatives in the next program year's end-of-year report.

Professional Development Support for a Community-Based Literacy Network

Literacy Texas—an initiative funded by TWC to provide professional development to instructors, tutors, and program staff serving adult learners in the nonprofit space—continued to serve the statewide literacy networks by hosting six regional symposiums and one annual conference that support nonprofit staff. Of note is one symposium which focused on financial literacy. One challenge noted by Literacy Texas is the high staff turnover seen in community-based organizations, so continuous promotion of Literacy Texas' services for training to literacy nonprofit staff has been needed. Literacy Texas also noted that strong partnerships were made with Baylor University to conduct a needs assessment across Texas nonprofits during the pandemic, as well as with the Moody Foundation with which Literacy Texas co-hosted a fundraiser to raise \$14,000 for Texas literacy nonprofits. The grant for Literacy Texas is in its fifth year and will be recompeted in PY'21-'22.

Required Activities: WIOA §223(a)(1)(C), Provision of Technical Assistance, and WIOA §223(a)(1)(D), Monitoring and Evaluation

The initiatives described in this section support both the provision of technical assistance to AEL grantees and the monitoring, evaluation, and improvement of AEL programs.

TRAIN PD @ TCALL

In addition to the professional development services that TWC provides statewide through TRAIN PD, as described in the Establishment or Operation of a Professional Development Program section, TWC provides technical assistance to providers, offering support in monitoring and continuous program improvement. Each AEL grantee is assigned a professional development specialist to assist in developing a continuous improvement plan for addressing each grantee's professional development needs. TRAIN PD also provides TWC with an annual statewide Continuous Improvement Plan to help dictate the direction of professional development trainings for programs.

As described earlier, the LEA provides data-supported training for AEL administrators and instructional leaders, developed specifically for Texas by national adult education consultants and TWC's contractors through TRAIN PD. This equips participants with skills to strengthen instructional and program performance.

Career Pathways Expansion Project

The Career Pathways Expansion initiative, led by Amarillo College and branded as the Texas Peer Mentor Network (TX-PM), ended in June 2021 and provided mentoring support to 17 AEL programs on integrating AEL programs on college campuses, building IET models through on-site training, remote conferences, and peer mentor on-site visits. In the fourth and final year of this grant, TX-PM selected four new mentee institutions (all community colleges) to participate.

In the final grant report, Amarillo College stated, “Many of the Year 4 activities were focused on developing models for integrated services at the system level that would continue well beyond the grant end-date. These included the strategizing sessions on how to better integrate AEL into the community college and how to help AEL students transition into college-credit courses; the equity workshop webinars that provided a vision for how to improve the equity of our services for all students; the Career Pathways Conference that featured further insight regarding equitable services, ELL services, and the growing use of technology in education; the creation of several best practice videos; and the development of a resource guide for instructors and curriculum developers at the local level.”

Quality Performance

As reported in last year’s end-of-year report, in July 2020, the Commission approved funding for a Quality Performance Enhancement Initiative to support continued performance improvement and operational effectiveness statewide. This Request for Proposals was released in winter 2020, but TWC received no applications for this grant.

Permissible Activities under WIOA §223(a)(2)

Through these state leadership activities in PY’20–’21, TWC supported grantees in reaching TWC’s performance objectives.

Math Assistance Call Center

TWC’s Math Assistance Call Center (MACC) launched statewide in October 2020. Math tutoring services through the MACC are provided in several languages, seven days a week, and a live video chat supports this timely math tutoring for AEL participants preparing for a TxCHSE test in math. The MACC reported tutoring 105 students with more than 2,700 half-hour sessions in April to June 2021.

Future Initiatives

In June 2021, the Commission earmarked funds for several new initiatives that TWC will report on in the next end-of-year report, including the Employer Engagement Initiative, which was approved to support ending the middle skills gap in Texas through AEL and employer partnerships, and the Statewide Virtual Provider Program, which the Commission approved to provide increased remote and virtual access to AEL services statewide.

II. Performance Data Analysis

Process on Data

TWC’s AEL program specialists pull data reports each month to review the number of participants being reported, Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs), and posttest eligible students among other performance-related and quality checks. They analyze the reports in order to identify:

- significant increases or decreases in enrollment since last month;
- participants who are eligible for posttest who do not have another MSG in the system;

- time between tests in hours and days;
- IET students who have not earned an MSG or a credential; and
- concerns with retention for students who stopped attending and are in jeopardy of exiting the program early.

As part of TWC's commitment to quality, during the last grant competition TWC required the identification of a staff member to serve as a Quality Assurance and Performance Accountability position. Local providers were required to identify this individual and provide résumés as part of the solicitation process. The job functions were clearly laid out in the contract, and this helped to solidify a control group in which TWC technical assistance staff would train and convene for best practice sharing.

Additionally, during desk and on-site reviews, TWC's Subrecipient Monitoring department reviews and compares the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) data to student and staff files in order to audit data accuracy. Programs that receive findings in this area will receive immediate technical assistance visits from state staff to develop stronger data management controls.

A TWC team of four program specialists, led by a supervisor, provides technical assistance daily, weekly, or monthly, and as needed for assigned AEL grantees. The program specialists conduct analysis of available data from TEAMS to recommend ways to improve program outcomes and/or highlight program effectiveness. To do this, the program specialists identify any areas of concern; determine ways in which assistance should be conducted, either via email, through scheduled calls and webinars, or via on-site or virtual visits, based on the level of technical assistance needed; and notify any subject matter experts from TWC AEL staff, the assigned AEL contract manager, or TRAIN PD's Professional Development Trainers who should be involved in the technical assistance process.

Regularly scheduled calls with grantees are focused on data reported in TEAMS and analyzed to ensure data entry accuracy, quality review of IET programs, timely posttesting, and identification of any inconsistencies between the data and the grantee's qualitative input about program administration. Also analyzed are monthly data reports for grantees that are created by TWC's Innovation, Information & Insight Division, outlining progress toward performance outcomes and enrollment targets.

Tableau

In 2021, TWC has been finalizing data visualization dashboards created by using an enterprise data warehouse combined with a data visualization tool, Tableau. Statewide and AEL grantee-level enrollments data reports were the first reports to be launched, and in the future, TWC will finalize MSGs and monthly performance reports. The early enrollment reports will identify key activities being conducted at the local provider level such as reentry services, workplace literacy, and IET activities for both Adult Basic Education/Adult Secondary Education and English

language acquisition students.

State staff provided an overview of Tableau to AEL programs during the 2021 Fall Institute; technical assistance on how to use this new tool will be provided to programs during the coming program year.

Performance Targets (Federal Negotiated and State Performance)

In PY'20-'21, TWC AEL met the performance measures for the following federally negotiated outcomes:

- Credential achievement was 41.39 percent
- Employed or enrolled in the 2nd quarter after exit was 35.52 percent
- Employed or enrolled in the 2nd–4th quarters was 80.11 percent

Texas did not meet its MSG measure at 38.63 percent. Statewide, HSE test rates dropped significantly, so, logically, a decrease in HSE testing among AEL participants was expected.¹ Programs continued to work through the service delivery challenges created by the pandemic, and there was a significant increase in distance learning activity statewide. Although enrollments decreased from PY'19-'20, a greater percentage—43.2 percent—of participants used distance learning. TWC AEL staff projects that this percentage will increase to 50 percent in PY'21-'22.

III. Integration with One-Stop Partners

TWC AEL grant contracts, which were renewed July 1, 2020, for PY'20-'21 require AEL grantees to cooperate with the Boards in creating a memorandum of understanding that includes an infrastructure cost agreement.

Contracts also require grantees to implement a comprehensive intake process for identifying any support services needs that an individual might have and to create referrals to other workforce system partners as appropriate. TEAMS allows grantees to provide details on career services, including outreach, intake, orientation, initial assessment, and referrals to other programs.

Coenrollment Awareness

Coenrollment has been a challenge largely due to the collection of social security numbers (SSNs) and the inability to data match services provided to an individual across different workforce programs. Currently, the statewide average for AEL participant coenrollment in other Board programs is 12.33 percent. Services included in the data match are support services, preemployment activities, job search services, employment experience, assessment and planning, and case management. Texas AEL will continue providing technical assistance to increase awareness on the importance of SSN collection, in order to track and support an individual's employment and educational progress, and to bring more knowledge to workforce partners on services that each partner may provide to Texas workforce customers. To further advance these

¹ Texas Education Agency's "[Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency Statistical Report](#)"

efforts, the Commission approved the Coenrollment Performance Quality Improvement Award, with the aim of increasing coenrollment between Titles I and II programs.

IV. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program (AEFLA §243)

IELCE Competition

During the grant competition period in 2017, TWC combined the competition for §231 and §243 IELCE services, requiring the IELCE model of all funded grantees across the state. There was not a separate competition for IELCE program funds. In PY'20-'21 all 37 AEL grantees were contractually required to provide IELCE services.

IELCE in Combination with IET Requirements

In PY'20-'21, as reported in Table 3 of the NRS report, 9,666 participants were served through the use of §243 funds.

To further support the provision of IELCE in combination with IET, TWC AEL policy requires that grantees provide all participants with a class syllabus that includes all courses delivered in the program of study, including IET courses. This policy requires that grantees implementing IELCE services submit an implementation plan to TWC AEL that details information on how the program is meeting IET requirements in combination with the civics content.

Grantees are required to work with their Boards to identify and understand labor market information, support participants with supplemental services to remove barriers from achieving their educational goals, and identify career opportunities.

New Requirement: Civics in all ESL Programs

In fall 2020, TWC began planning the next phase of content standards enhancement, the Standards 3.0 project, which added Family Literacy and Civics Education benchmarks to the Standards 2.0. TWC developed training on implementing these benchmarks in the adult education classroom and, through TRAIN PD, held regional training events in late spring 2021. With the publication of the Family Literacy and Civics Education standards, starting in PY'21-'22, both amended AEL grants and TWC policy required that all ESL coursework include a civics component.

In PY'20-'21, TWC issued revisions to three AEL policy letters that required all ESL coursework to include civics instruction. Civics instruction must align with the civics standards within the content standards. Contracts under the current AEL grants were also amended to reflect this policy change, which requires grantees to include civics instruction in all ESL activities.

V. Adult Education Standards

TWC requires that all AEL programs develop coursework that aligns with the statewide AEL

academic content standards, which provide AEL instructors with a clear foundation for teaching rigorous academic areas such as mathematics, English language arts, and English as a second language to adult learners in the 21st century.

In May 2021, the [Standards 3.0: Introducing the Family and Civics Content Standards](#) were published, and TRAIN PD held several training sessions and webinars as well as offered digital materials to roll out those standards.

VI. Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals

In PY'20-'21, 537 participants indicated that they had been incarcerated or had other criminal histories; of the 500 of those funded with §225 corrections funds, 38.60 percent attained an MSG.² TWC will continue to develop methods for tracking these participants to determine the recidivism rate of AEL participants.

In spring 2021, OCTAE accepted TWC AEL to participate in a national technical assistance initiative to develop IET in corrections models to support the expansion of such models in Texas. In September 2021, TWC approved a state leadership-funded initiative to expand IET models in correctional facilities through a contract with Windham School District. The initiative would develop IET models for an estimated 500 incarcerated individuals who are within two years of pre-release, provide reentry and post-release services to those individuals, and disseminate best practices on developing such models for AEL and workforce system stakeholders. Both the national technical assistance project and this IET corrections initiative will enable state staff to provide enhanced technical assistance to AEL corrections programs funded by §225.

The "[Texas Department of Criminal Justice Biennial Reentry and Reintegration Services Report](#)," published in September 2020, reported that the state's overall recidivism rate was 20.3 percent, and the latest data showed that 411,629 individuals were categorized as part of the justice-involved population, meaning individuals on probation, on parole, or incarcerated.

² These numbers are reported on the NRS End-of-Year Report in Table 6: Participant Status and Program Enrollment and Table 10: Outcome Achievement for Adults in Correctional Education Programs.