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

- the use of State Leadership funds;
- how the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program analyzed performance in the state;
- how the AEL program integrated 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 2018–2019 (PY’18–’19), the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) implemented the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) supported vision for the AEL program, establishing AEL as a full and significant partner in the Texas workforce system by aligning accountability models with objectives that support all customers with service delivery. By contracting with core provider grantees and implementing State Leadership projects to support workforce integration and capacity building, TWC continues to expand career pathways with 28,784 cumulative participants surpassing the AEL milestone of serving 20,000 participants in career pathway programs by 2020.

The competition for receiving new grants beginning in 2018 further enhanced the AEL program. The new grants expanded the requirements of aligning AEL services with in-demand jobs and implementing the career pathways models developed during TWC’s first round of grants. Additionally, the new grants focus on workforce integration and alignment of coursework with educational and employment outcomes.

AEL’s focus in PY’18–’19 was to improve the new and expanded models to ensure positive outcomes.

State Leadership Funds (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act §223)

WIOA §223(a)(1)(A): Alignment of AEL Activities with Other One-Stop Required Partners
TWC continued its Career Pathways Expansion and Accelerate Texas initiatives to support the continued development of content and models that support career pathways, as required under WIOA §223(a)(1)(A), and to support and expand TWC’s objectives for the AEL program.

Accelerate Texas
TWC contracted with the grantees in the fifth year of the Accelerate Texas program. Accelerate Texas is TWC’s strategic effort to expand Integrated Education and Training (IET) models and
other postsecondary transition models, including workplace and apprenticeship projects. The use of dedicated funds for IET program development and implementation allowed six grantees to continue service through PY’18–’19 and another twelve grantees were awarded new contracts in spring of 2019.

**Career Pathways Expansion Project**

The Career Pathways Expansion Project entered its third year, during which it continued to support the goal of IET program improvement and college integration for AEL students who are transitioning to postsecondary education and training. The project, called the Texas Peer Mentor Network, has expanded the network of AEL provider mentees and included five peer mentor colleges in the most recent round. In PY’18–’19, an emphasis was placed on improving outcomes for students who are entering IET programs. Twelve of the 36 AEL providers are part of this initiative, with Amarillo College acting as the lead grantee; the providers acted as peer mentors to AEL one-stop partners by providing professional development and by encouraging collaboration. Amarillo College served as the mentor for six mentee programs, thereby supporting IET model expansion, providing on-site technical assistance, and helping to develop a statewide network of trainers who are trained and vetted according to standards developed by the mentors.

To ensure a unified statewide approach and use career pathways expertise and knowledge, Amarillo College aligns its efforts with the efforts of other states and national guided pathways efforts.

In addition to working with the Texas Peer Mentor Network, Amarillo College, TWC, and the Texas Association of Community Colleges convened community college, AEL, and core one-stop partners in four regional events. These events focused on building enrollment connections among AEL, community colleges, and workforce system partners to strengthen career pathways models. Amarillo College also held the first statewide meeting on leveraging Ability to Benefit provisions available in federal financial aid for career pathways students and funding available under the Carl D. Perkins Act Vocational and Technical Education Act to leverage funding and find cost savings in programs implementing pathways for students.

**WIOA §223(a)(1)(B): Establishment or Operation of a High-Quality Professional Development Program**

**The TRAIN PD Consortium**

Texas A&M University continued to operate its Training, Resource, and Innovation Network for Texas Professional Development (TRAIN PD), the statewide professional development center for AEL providers and other workforce system stakeholders. A total of 687 individual training sessions and other professional development activities were held statewide, including 161 online training courses through the TRAIN PD portal. In sum, a total of 6,637 participants were served through this initiative.

TRAIN PD also provides AEL enhancement and expansion efforts to support other areas, such as the statewide rollout of the AEL Content Standards 2.0. Additionally, TRAIN PD supports
volunteer-based providers and continued enhancement of the Texas AEL Content Standards through the PY’18–’19 Standards Alignment to Industry Clusters Expansion. TRAIN PD also published and provided training on the revised standards.

To develop the administrative and instructional leadership among AEL practitioners, TRAIN PD and American Institutes for Research developed and implemented two new Leadership Excellence Academies to equip participants with data-proven and supported skills to strengthen instructional strategies and program performance. The Administrator Leadership Excellence Academy focuses on developing leadership, strategies, customer engagement, performance measurement, workforce engagement, and change management to identify opportunities for improvement based on self-analysis and program data. Participants will acquire skills and receive support to lead a program improvement initiative. Participants in the Instructor Leadership Excellence Academy (ILEA) will use several collaborative models and strategies to support initiative, persistence, and planning. Through action research, ILEA members will learn to identify and evaluate instructional problems or weaknesses and develop practical solutions to address them. Participants will learn to use data analysis to make decisions about instruction in the classroom and across departments or programs.

Local Funding for Professional Development
To support professional development, TWC provides State Leadership funds directly to grantees, which provided local professional development training to their staff members in PY’18–’19. Direct funding allows providers to offer professional development training to their staff members and contract directly with trainers through the Contract Trainers and Training Database. In PY’18–’19, local grantees continued to provide professional development training sessions to their staff members using State Leadership funding.

Professional Development Support for a Community-Based Literacy Network
In PY’18–’19, TWC contracted with Literacy Texas, a statewide literacy volunteer training and advocacy organization, to provide professional development to nonprofit and community-based organizations through its annual conference and eight regional events. The Literacy Texas initiative hosted 1,031 individuals in its professional development sessions, highlighting best practices in instruction and opportunities for nonprofit providers to align their services with the WIOA-funded system.

WIOA §223(a)(1)(C): Provision of Technical Assistance to Providers
While TWC staff continues to use strategic evaluation and monitoring processes that allow staff to provide just-in-time technical assistance, several State Leadership projects were implemented in PY’18–’19 to augment the state technical assistance efforts as required under §223(a)(1)(C).

The statewide professional development center, TRAIN PD supported the following statewide technical assistance efforts:

• Implementation of the Teaching English Language Learners in Texas (TELL TX) Academy, a project that provides an English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum and professional
development designed to build capacity for delivering higher-level ESL instructional services. The project includes reading, writing, and math courses that are aligned with the new Texas AEL Content Standards 2.0 (Standards 2.0) and applies research-based best practices, curriculum development methods, and frameworks for training and follow-up. To date, both the reading and math modules have been successfully piloted. The trainings are now available through the contract trainer database maintained at TRAIN PD.

- Distance learning and technology development, deployment, and support as required under §223(a)(1)(C)(iii), which is planned through the Distance Learning and Technology Integration Institute at TRAIN PD to enhance the development and implementation of technology applications, including increased distance learning and the expansion of a statewide learning management system to provide online professional development for staff training.

- The Distance Learning Capacity Building Initiative comprises a total of six grants allocated to existing AEL providers. The cornerstone of this project is to reduce, mitigate, or eliminate obstacles of AEL participation by overwriting old physical limitations with simple digital solutions. Of the six community colleges currently funded under this initiative, all have shown significant increases in measurable skills gains (MSGs) for their hybrid distance learning students.

**WIOA §223(a)(1)(D): Monitoring and Evaluation of Quality and Improvement of AEL**

TWC staff is deploying a strategic evaluation and monitoring process that draws from best practices developed across TWC’s divisions. Texas is implementing a program quality model that links deployment of WIOA program enhancements, evaluation of monthly program performance, and information and findings from TWC’s monitoring department to technical assistance and the deployment of targeted professional development to support program improvement. Section 223 funds support activities within this quality improvement model and includes the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the state-funded mentoring and professional development projects.

TWC began evaluating one element of the AEL quality model, which is a student’s initial intake and orientation experience before class placement—referred to as “comprehensive assessment.” The evaluation includes review of various components of comprehensive assessment, such as previous work and educational experiences, career and educational goals, outside support needs, financial counseling, and so forth. The goal of the evaluation is to determine whether comprehensive assessment leads to better retention and MSG and HSE performance.

This year, Section 223 funds were used through TRAIN PD to support the development of and training on models to reduce the upfront testing time for students so that more time can be spent implementing elements of the comprehensive assessment model before class placement.

This year, TWC’s Division of Operational Insight will evaluate the impact of comprehensive assessment on retention and educational outcomes. This project will use Section 223 funds and is also supported by the American Institutes for Research/OCTAE National Reporting System for...
Adult Education (NRS) Evaluation Learning Community project.

**WIOA §223(a)(2): Permissible Activities**
TWC supported grantees through these State Leadership activities in PY’18–’19 to reach TWC’s performance objectives.

**Ability to Benefit**
The Ability to Benefit (ATB) provision in federal financial aid allows individuals without a high school diploma or equivalency to receive federal Pell grants if the individuals are participating in a career pathways program. ATB grantees fund tuition and provide other services. Because of the success of the pilot ATB initiative and the statewide interest in the model, three colleges were awarded a new round of grants in PY’18–’19.

**Distance Learning Call Center**
The Distance Learning Call Center provides just-in-time math support to adult education participants through telephone conversations, screen-sharing, and using a virtual whiteboard. The center was designed to provide 20- to 30-minute tutoring sessions on specific math questions. However, in the first two years since the center opened, TWC found that on average the sessions last more than an hour, with many participants requesting additional sessions. Because of this, TWC revised the model in PY’18–’19 so that tutors were eligible to record their contact time with participants so that grantees could track the time in the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) by subcontracting with the project vendor, StudentNest. This revised model encouraged system usage, but TWC staff found that the system was still not used as a hotline for short sessions.

**Standards Alignment to Industry Clusters**
To further align AEL competencies in demand by employers, TWC contracted to add entry-level industry skill requirements to the AEL Content Standards. Four lead organizations, industry experts, and adult educators worked with TWC to align standards with four target industries. The result of this project, which was completed in 2018, was the Texas Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards 2.0 (Standards 2.0), which updates and aligns the 2016 Texas Adult Education and Literacy Standards with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success in in-demand entry- and intermediate-level jobs in the following four industry clusters:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Construction and extraction
- Health care sciences
- Transportation, distribution, and logistics

Standards 2.0 is a resource for workforce development specialists and educators to focus on instruction and career guidance, guide the skills development needed for work, and define skills and tasks not easily identified in academic standards. In PY’18–’19, TRAIN PD and the American Institutes for Research rolled out the Standards 2.0.
Performance Data Analysis

TWC saw much improvement across many core measures in PY’18–’19, influenced by proactive technical assistance efforts and performance-based incentive measures.

Achievement of Measurable Skill Gains

AEL staff acknowledges the need to continually develop program retention and testing strategies that support program performance related to measurable skill gains achievement. Therefore, AEL staff members continue to research the issue and find ways to remediate through:

- statewide trainings on optional MSGs that might not require as much time on task;
- development of additional reports and tools in the statewide data management system, Texas Educating Adults System, to provide local programs with oversight; and
- programs designed to target specialized populations. For example, individuals who only lack one or two tests to achieve a high school equivalency will bridge to:
  - college programs targeting individuals who need to improve their college entrance exam scores; and
  - employers seeking specific learning gains for incumbent workers.

TWC acknowledges that while it aims to increase outcomes related to high school equivalency and entrance into postsecondary education, the majority (approximately 95 percent) of MSGs come from pre-/posttesting. To enforce more stringent local oversight on testing practices, AEL implemented both participation and posttest rates requirements to encourage grantees to retain and track individuals eligible for posttesting.

To assist grantees with this task, TWC has developed several participant-level reports that focus on increasing awareness of both posttest eligible participants and those who have stopped out of services.

One area of note is that, on average, participants in IET models performed better than participants in other models. AEL staff members are analyzing successful practices of the IET models to see how they can be applied to other models. In PY’18–’19, TWC required the implementation of a program alignment model that requires grantees to align a portion of their services with those of academies that focused on career and education objectives. As a result, participants more quickly see that their career and education objectives are being met through engagement in curriculum that is aligned to their career and life goals. Given the higher performance of IET participants, TWC hopes that the model will improve MSG outcomes.

TWC continues its effort to align the TEAMS data collection system with WIOA. The continuous review and modifications give grantees increased access to data that is aligned with WIOA methodology. TWC also purchased interactive data visualization software (TABLEAU®) with real-time, query-based report capabilities to assist grantees with performance analysis.

Achievement of Credential and Employment Outcomes

Staff members continue to monitor and analyze program performance using the local and state performance data that is reported to the Texas legislature each quarter.
The number of AEL participants employed or enrolled in postsecondary education in the third through fourth quarters after exit (one of TWC’s state legislative targets) increased by 1.9 percent during the January 17 through December 17 reporting period, and the number of AEL participants employed or enrolled in postsecondary education in the second quarter after exit increased by almost 3 percent during the reporting period of July ’17 through June ’18.

The WIOA credential attainment rate has increased by almost 13 percent over the past three years, with a numerator that continues to grow in size, indicating that a larger number of individuals are exiting the program having obtained secondary and postsecondary credentials. PY’18–’19 brought about successful changes to TWC’s data-matching practices with partner agency, Texas Education Agency, that captured more high school equivalency completions and data matching on participants who are taking high school equivalency exams but have yet to obtain the high school equivalency, Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE), certification. This allows grantees to be more proactive and strategically create services specific to participants’ goals and objectives.

**Technical Assistance to Improve Program Performance**

AEL staff members continue to provide technical assistance to AEL grantees on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly basis to improve program performance.

**Daily and Weekly**

TWC program staff members communicate with AEL grantees based on the provider’s performance and needs. These communications are tracked internally to ensure continuity of service in the event of AEL staff turnover, technical assistance provided to increase consistency in response to inquiries, development of or modification to policy, and sharing of best practices.

Staff monitors program data regularly to check for anomalies that may indicate a large-scale misunderstanding related to program implementation. For instance, staff might notice that a service type is coded in a way that does not align with the types of participants who are receiving the service. In PY’18–’19 there are new developments around a variety of topics, including program eligibility and assessment, program performance, implementation of the IET model, and requirements and best practices related to aligning AEL services with postsecondary education.

With increased written guidance, AEL staff created a streamlined process for disseminating information to ensure that grantees understood new policies and/or procedures; this was done through a variety of methods, including individual on-site trainings, conference calls, and webinars to ensure that grantees were adequately supported.

**Monthly**

AEL program support specialists hold a priority-based conference call with his or her assigned grantee, following a standard agenda. The call includes discussing key areas of concern, including performance and finances, dispensing new information, and providing clarity on the programmatic issues that staff members report on during the Monthly Performance Report.
(MPR) meeting. The AEL contract manager, who manages the financial aspects of each provider grant, contributes to the call to identify expenditure challenges or other areas of concern and to ensure that contract deliverables are clearly identified and met. An assigned professional development specialist also attends the call to assist with planning staff development events to assist with needs related to improving local effectiveness.

During MPR meetings, program staff, contract staff, finance staff, and division managers discuss performance trends, issues, and potential corrective action. The meetings result in action plans to be carried out and reported on at the next MPR meeting.

Quarterly
In addition to the monthly call, staff presents performance results to TWC’s three-member Commission (Commission) during the quarterly performance work session. The work session keeps the Commissioners apprised of areas of concern, helps staff to better understand TWC’s priorities, and furthers technical assistance efforts.

Annually
Each year, TWC AEL staff holds at minimum two statewide convenings for grantees. In July 2018, TWC held one of its most extensive convenings to date. The three-day event considered topics such as contract and fiscal compliance, program compliance, performance and data management best practices, peer mentoring on persistence, distance learning, and IET models. In April 2019, TWC held a statewide business meeting as part of its integrated Workforce Forum. This meeting provided an update on statewide level performance, showcased innovative projects, and presented any upcoming changes to policy. Additionally, it allowed AEL grantees access to Local Workforce Development Board (Board) and vocational rehabilitation sessions regarding all TWC-administered programs, thereby supporting the agency’s continued efforts to integrate WIOA programs.

Integration with One-Stop Partners
TWC AEL grantees served as the one-stop providers under renewal grants that were executed July 1, 2017, and continued to serve as the one-stop providers under grants awarded during the procurement period in PY’17–’18.

TWC briefed AEL providers about requirements and processes related to Board plans, memoranda of understanding, and infrastructure costs, as well as provided support throughout PY’17–’18 to ensure that appropriate negotiations were taking place. Where applicable, TWC considered allowable administrative increases to pay for infrastructure costs and ensured that such requests were handled during the competition for services in PY’17–’18.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program (AEFLA §243)
IELCE Competition
The TWC grants that were awarded in 2017 contained requirements for English Literacy and Civics (EL Civics). TWC incorporated new requirements for IELCE into its grants in 2018 for all 36 AEL grantees. During the grant competition period in 2017, TWC combined the
competition of Section 231 and Section 243 IELCE services, requiring the IELCE model of all
funded grantees across the state. There was not a separate competition for IELCE program funds.

IELCE in Combination with IET Requirements
In PY’18–’19, all 36 grantees were required to implement IELCE programs. As reported in
Table 3 of the NRS report, 10,858 participants were served using Section 243 funds. To support
the requirement that IELCE be provided in combination with IET, TWC developed a differential
cost model, calculating at a higher cost per participant for the purpose of setting targets for all
career pathways models, including IELCE with a required IET component. This additional
funding is expected to help pay the:
• costs of aligning the curriculum; and
• participants’ tuition in postsecondary education and training.
To further support the provision of IELCE in combination with IET, TWC requires that grantees
provide all participants with a class syllabus that includes all courses delivered in the program of
study, including IET courses. The syllabus must describe the following:
• Each of the three core components of an IET program of study, including:
  o AEL activities;
  o Workforce Preparation Activities; and
  o Workforce Training
• The single set of learning objectives that identifies specific adult education content,
  Workforce Preparation Activities, and Workforce Training competencies
• The schedule for the IET program of study, showing how the core components are provided
  concurrently within the scope of the program
• Information about the recognized postsecondary credential for which participants will
  prepare, including how the credential is earned and which organization administers the
  credential

Grantees are required to enter participants who receive Integrated EL Civics services in
combination with IET, into the statewide data system using a specific code for tracking these
participants.

Preparing and Placing IELCE Program Participants in Unsubsidized Employment
As a requirement of all program implementation, including the IELCE model, 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.

Key Program Challenges
A key challenge to implementing the IELCE model is that the population of English language
learners in Texas varies. South Texas serves individuals who have limited English proficiency
but are higher skilled and can benefit from the IET model. Other areas of the state, such as
northeast Texas, serve much smaller numbers of individuals who have limited English
proficiency, making it a challenge to develop robust workforce training programs for these
populations. Therefore, many programs focus on lower-skilled English language learners who
will benefit from the model in the long run, but who will take longer to show positive performance outcomes.

To address this challenge and to further support the transition of English language learners into the United States, increasing both enrollment in the IELCE programs and employment, Texas will begin the process of incorporating civics competencies into all ESL curriculum by updating the Texas AEL Content Standards and related professional development according to the standards and associated curriculum and instruction models.

**Adult Education Standards**

As mentioned earlier, in PY’17–’18, TWC developed the Standards 2.0, which aligns the 2016 version with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success in entry- and intermediate-level jobs in in-demand industries. The industries selected for this project represent those in which there is documented growth, statewide representation, and career pathways articulation. In PY’18–’19, TWC disseminated the Standards 2.0 with a training rollout effort with TRAIN PD and the American Institutes for Research. Trainings on the Standards 2.0 included webinars, face-to-face trainings, and regional trainings from January to May 2019. As part of the rollout, TWC developed four promotional videos that highlighted each of the skills needed in the four industry clusters of advanced manufacturing, construction and extraction, health care sciences, and transportation/distribution/logistics. These videos are on TRAIN PD’s website at https://tcall.tamu.edu/taesp.html.

**Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals**

Individuals who have been incarcerated or have some other criminal histories are distinctly challenged in regard to benefitting from AEL services and finding employment.

In PY’18–’19, 2,757 participants had indicated that they had been incarcerated or had other criminal histories; 2,195 participants were served with corrections funding, and 751 (34.21 percent) of those attained an MSG.\(^1\) TWC will continue to develop ways to track these participants, as well as participants previously reported in PY’17–’18, to determine the recidivism rate of AEL participants.

In PY’18–’19, 1,012 individuals were served using the reentry model, which has more than doubled from last year. Additionally, 188 participants were served in IET models designed for justice-involved participants nearing release or under community supervision. This number will continue to grow as TWC works to reduce recidivism in Texas through thoughtful integrated and collaborative efforts.

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\(^1\) These numbers were reported on Table 6: Participant Status and Program Enrollment, of the NRS End of Year Report, and Table 10: Outcome Achievement for Adults in Correctional Education Programs of the NRS End of Year Report.
In the adult cohort data from 2015, the most recent years of data available for statewide recidivism rate, the rate of recidivism for Texas was 38.8 percent (n = 22,593). The 2014 adult cohort was 38.3 percent (n = 22,018) and 39.2 percent (n = 23,125) for the 2013 cohort.²