# Virginia Adult Education Narrative Report 2019-2020

## State Leadership Funds (AEFLA Section 223)

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) uses state leadership funds to provide, directly and through cooperative agreement with the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) at Virginia Commonwealth University, opportunities for professional development (PD) and technical assistance to adult education and literacy practitioners throughout the Commonwealth. The VALRC disseminates research-based best practices to the field in the areas of adult education and literacy, English language acquisition, integrated English literacy and civics education (IELCE), career pathways, integrated education and training (IET), workforce preparation activities, secondary completion, high school equivalency credential attainment, standards-based instruction (SBI), and technology integration.

In support of the requirement Sec. 223(a)(1)(A), alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners, the vision of the Virginia WIOA Combined State Plan is to expand and enhance the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for low-skilled adults so they are not left behind in Virginia’s economy and can move into family-sustaining wage jobs. To carry out this vision, the VDOE uses state leadership funds to provide training and technical assistance to adult education providers and collaborates with core partners in training and dissemination of best practices.

The VALRC provides technical assistance, training, advising, and resources to eligible providers for offering career pathways and IET programming to ensure that learners have opportunities to acquire digital literacy skills, employability skills, academic skills (through SBI), and employment or entrance into job training. The [IETBlueprint](http://www.ietblueprint.com), an online resource developed by the VDOE and the VALRC for program managers and partners, houses curriculum and planning resources to support career pathways and IELCE programming for adults at all levels and includes information on partner contributions and employer engagement.

During Program Year (PY)2019-2020, two statewide conferences were held with a goal of aligning adult education and literacy services with one-stop partners and stakeholders. The Virginia Literacy Foundation (VLF) was the featured partner of the 2019 Adult Education & Literacy Conference (AE&L) that took place July 10-12, 2019. The VLF, a long-term partner of the VALRC under the Literacy Institute at VCU, provides grants to small, community-based literacy organizations (CBLOs) for the development of innovative programming, and a number of these CBLOs partner with adult education providers to address the needs of the hardest to serve learners in the state. The AE&L Conference, whose theme was “Access, Equity, and Opportunity,” offered a diverse range of learning opportunities, reflecting best practices in adult education and literacy. Keynote speakers represented World Education, the Oliver White Hill Foundation, the National Center for Families Learning, and other notable partners from the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, VALUEUSA, American Institutes for Research, the National Skills Coalition, JEVS Human Services, and state agency partners. Ninety six presenters offered 70 sessions to 417 participants.

Virginia’s Community College System (VCCS) was the featured partner of the 2020 AE&L Conference that took place February 19-21, 2020, with the theme “2020 Vision for the Future.” VCCS plays an important role in helping adult education providers reach, engage, assess, and serve more adult learners with quality and breadth of services. The 340 conference attendees, representing multiple state agencies and adult education providers, participated in the three-day event featuring three keynote events, 18 exhibitor tables, and over 60 sessions. Day-one workshop sessions were partnership focused, offering a glimpse into successful initiatives and promising collaborations. An off-site field trip to the local Virginia Career Works Center provided an opportunity to learn how center service providers partner and combine services. Day two featured instruction-focused workshops that addressed the key theme areas for the conference and provided tools, resources, and insights for increasing student engagement and learning. National experts facilitated mini-institutes designed to provide more intensive PD, offering effective practices and hands-on tools that can be used in the classroom. Day three began with an inspirational speaker followed by conference sessions providing opportunities for deeper learning about collaborative instruction and IET success, correctional education challenges, and data-driven decisions for program managers. Day three also featured a meeting of the Consortium for Higher Education in Prison, a session from the Virginia Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) group, and a CBLO affinity group.

In support of the requirement Sec. 223(a)(1)(B), the establishment or operation of high-quality professional development (PD) programs, the vision of the VDOE is for the continuous improvement of instruction in adult education and literacy and the support of practitioners in all roles to provide high-quality programming and instruction. The VDOE, through its cooperative agreement with VALRC, supports both required and permissible state leadership activities as part of a high-quality PD program.

VALRC specialists and contracted, trained facilitators provide training. An annual virtual online facilitator meeting is provided to promote facilitator networking and an update on training guidance. The evaluation protocol, used to ensure high-quality programming through feedback, was expanded to include self-paced courses, bimonthly regional program manager meetings, and conference hours in addition to all on-site and facilitated online courses. In PY2019-2020, the overall participant evaluation rating (out of a 5-point scale) from 2,329 returned surveys indicated that the average response for “understanding the material” was 3.6; the training being “useful for the job” was 3.8; and “objectives were met” was 4.2. The phase one (immediately following training) evaluation return rate was 79.3 percent (up about 6 percent from the previous year). Phase two (implementation in months following training) was 17.4 percent. A revised protocol for Phase 2 evaluation is being established to better capture training impact. A training and evaluation report is provided to the VDOE biannually. Specialists from the VALRC review all evaluation feedback and adjustments to training and technical assistance content are continuously made to ensure relevancy and program improvement.

The VALRC demonstrates high-quality programming that supports instruction by designing and developing facilitated and non-facilitated online courses, self-paced online modules and tutorials, on-site training, and webinars. These PD resources are available free of charge to personnel in AEFLA-funded programs including CBLOs. On-site, often customized, PD is available to all AEFLA-funded programs, upon request. Six- to eight-week facilitated online courses in the core areas of the essential components of reading, writing, and numeracy are offered three times a year. In PY2019-2020, a LINCS TEAL writing course was conducted upon request by a member of VALRC staff. A two-part series, *Reading Components for ABE & ESOL Teachers*,was designed and delivered, and *Online Foundations in Reading* was divided into two parts to focus separately on print skills and meaning skills. To better focus on teaching reading skills virtually, a summer version of *Foundations in Reading: Print Skills* was provided, with the addition of facilitation of a professional learning community for 18 individuals. *Components of Numeracy: Tools for Engaging Learners in Meaningful Math* was delivered as a conference presentation.

Beginning in March 2020, *Open Discussion on Distance Education Fridays* was established in response to the pandemic. For ten consecutive Fridays, two-hour technical support sessions were offered to providers as they began to grapple with their pivot to fully virtual programming. After the first few sessions where the topic was “what to do if the schools close,” the VALRC and VDOE curated weekly topics for discussion and allowed time for sharing of resources and information on partner services from local programs. Topics included learning how to use web-based platforms, serving specific populations virtually, virtual outreach and assessment, using SBI in virtual environments, and policy and data implications for distance education and assessment flexibilities. With the inclusion of these Friday sessions, participant numbers in VALRC trainings increased from 670 in the previous year to 2,936 in PY2019-2020. The number of events offered by VALRC increased by 7 percent and the number of participant hours by 6 percent over the previous year.

In support of the requirement Sec. 223(a)(1)(C), the provision of technical assistance, the VDOE provides technical assistance and guidance to eligible providers by sharing promising practices on high-quality, research-based instruction and programming; program accountability; and serving effectively as a one-stop partner. Technical assistance needs are solicited from program managers throughout the year and are informed by the results of the VDOE’s monitoring and evaluation efforts, described below. Technical assistance is provided to program managers regularly through bi-monthly, virtual meetings on topics including partnership development, coordination of career services, and statewide efforts on serving employers.

The VALRC partners with the VDOE in providing this technical assistance. VALRC disseminates resources through its publications, websites, and listservs. Primary areas of focus include SBI and implementation guidance, distance education, digital media, career pathways, program management, high school equivalency, English language acquisition, numeracy, and learning disabilities. In PY2019-2020, VALRC updated and maintained five resource websites, four listservs, and the [GED®](https://vaged.vcu.edu/) Helpline. Publications and communications produced by VALRC include a quarterly newsletter called *PROGRESS*, a podcast series, a monthly TechTools publication, and a [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/user/resourcecenterva). The April and June issues of *PROGRESS* shared COVID impacts and the Virginia response. In April, members from the field, including student and program leaders, shared responses to the changes in the learning environment with articles focusing on developing student leaders, defining teacher leadership, becoming an effective online mentor, and establishing career pathways for adult educators. The June issue shared resources and stories of resilience and resolve in focusing on strengthening workforce skills through targeted practices for a diverse set of adult learners during a crisis.

Twelve teachers are members of a teacher leader, virtual professional learning community now in its second year. Facilitated by the VALRC staff, these teachers meet to share their practices and build on each other’s knowledge and experiences. Between PLC meetings, all members participate in calls with VALRC staff to discuss teaching experiences, including resources, schedules, types of PD, access to data, and other topics of importance to the individual as they develop skills to handle situations as a leader. Nine recurring themes emerged from the discussions: recruitment, retention, instructional space, distance education, PD, shifting student characteristics, teaching to the new assessments, student support, and instructional strategies and resources used in the classroom. Several members submitted articles for the April issue of *PROGRESS* to share beyond the virtual group and extend discussions about what it means to be a teacher leader.

In support of the requirement Sec. 223(a)(1)(D), monitoring and evaluation of quality, VDOE uses state leadership and administrative funds to support monitoring and evaluation activities, which include not only evaluating the quality of and improvement in local adult education activities but also the effectiveness of efforts by the VALRC. The requirement to disseminate information about models and proven and/or promising adult education practices within the state is discussed as an integral component of the work that the VALRC delivers as PD and technical support under 223(a)(1)(B).

A Virginia team participated in the National Reporting System (NRS) Evaluation Learning Community in 2019. Their study, *Exploring Relationships Between Standards-based Training, Instructional Practices, and Learner Outcomes,* focused on two research questions: How do learner outcomes differ for teachers who participate in college and career readiness standards (CCRS) trainings and what does CCRS implementation look like with varying levels (number of hours) of PD? The team established a methodology to examine relationships between training, instructional practice, and learner outcomes to support impactful PD.

The VDOE’s system for assessing the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities is based on five major activities, which can occur both consecutively and concurrently throughout the program year: (1) a program self-assessment survey completed by each provider, (2) the distribution and review of an annual risk rubric for each program, (3) ongoing data monitoring of information entered by each program in the state Management Information System (MIS) and Online Management of Education Grant Awards (OMEGA) fiscal system throughout the program year, (4) technical assistance calls, the content of which is based on 1-3 above, between the VDOE and each funded program, and (5) the identification of programs for on-site reviews, based on information collected in activities 1-3 above.

In PY2019-2020, the activities listed above were successfully completed, starting with the distribution of the Program Self-Assessment Survey, which is designed to allow a means for programs to document their leadership and management processes and assist the VALRC and state office staff to plan technical assistance. Risk rubrics were created and distributed and technical assistance calls were conducted with all funded programs. These direct conversations with program staff allow the VDOE to combine the quantitative analysis provided by the risk rubrics with the more qualitative nature of the responses provided on the program self-assessment survey and serve a primary role in ascertaining the specific technical assistance needs of individual programs. All corrective actions plans for the four programs that received an onsite monitoring visit in PY2018-2019 were closed successfully during PY2019-2020. All required actions described in the Report of Findings for each program were satisfactorily and fully completed.

Because of travel restrictions put into place by the VDOE as a result of the pandemic, no on-site site visits were conducted in PY2019-2020. Beginning in March 2020, steps were taken to develop a virtual monitoring process. The monitoring protocol used for on-site visits was adapted for monitoring in a virtual environment. This new process was put into place in November 2020 when the office conducted a virtual monitoring pilot effort with one of the adult education regional programs in the southwestern part of the state.

The VDOE also invests state leadership funds to support permissible activities, including the following initiatives.

If there is a silver lining to the pandemic, distance education programming (Sec. 223(a)(2)(B)) is one of them. The VDOE, through the VALRC and state membership in the national Innovating Distance Education in Adult Learning (IDEAL) Consortium, supports PD for program managers, teacher leaders, and classroom instructors to develop and support high-quality distance education, exploring regional solutions to the challenges such as Internet availability and affordability, lack of technology and connectivity in homes, and the provision of live technical support. This work also includes identification of appropriate curricula that demonstrate best practices in adult online learning and aligns with the priorities of SBI, permissible activity Sec. 223(a)(2)(C). In October, VALRC hosted a two-part webinar with Jen Vanek, Director of Digital Learning and Research at the IDEAL Consortium, to learn about innovative and high-quality blended and distance learning models. A follow up mini-institute was held as part of AE&L 2020. In response to the pandemic, VALRC began curating a resource bank for adult education program managers, program specialists, and instructors

In support of development of content and models for IET and career pathways (Sec. 223(a)(2)(D)) and the development and implementation of programs and services to meet the needs of adult learners with disabilities (Sec. 223(a)(2)(K)), the VALRC, in partnership with the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), continues to offer the facilitated online course, *Teaching Adults with Disabilities* as part of its online series. This course draws about 20 teachers per year. Conference sessions included *A Panel of Partners for Innovation: Adult Education, Workforce Development, and Goodwill;* *Accessibility 101: Access for All*, *Tools and Strategies for Expanding Career Pathways Access to Adults with Disabilities*; and *Universal Design for Learning.* In addition, VALRC strives to adhere to 508 compliance requirements in all documents and our website, this year adding the accessibility icon and creating a fully accessible video player for the the VALRC website. The VALRC, through an annual Memorandum of Understanding, provides training for the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) instructional staff. A cohort of five instructors participated in the six-week, online *Disabilities and the Adult Learner* course with a facilitator experienced in correctional education instruction.

The VALRC assists with performance accountability requirements and in meeting the state adjusted levels of performance (Sec. 223(a)(2)(E)) through training and technical assistance. Data use and interpretation is emphasized across all PD in order to assist practitioners in understanding their role in achieving the state-adjusted levels of performance. A Blackboard site was established to house all recorded tutorials, webinars, and documents relating to data training. Two tutorials were created and added: *Understanding NRS Tables 1-3, 6, and 7* (enrollment and characteristics) and *Understanding NRS Tables 4, 4A, 4B* (gains). A listserv for communication to all regional data specialists participating in the tutorials, data training events, and data office hours was created. A Data Professional Learning Community (Data PLC) consisting of 12 representatives from the field was established for the purpose of creating a data leadership team to discuss improvements to the state MIS and promote data-related best practices. Four Data PLC meetings were held in PY2019-2020. *Data Office Hours* for state, local, and regional data staff and others who wish to attend began in early April and was held weekly throughout the summer. These office hours provide technical assistance on data challenges related to the flexibility extended to enroll and serve students without initial assessments and on attendance reporting in various distance education situations.

## Performance Data Analysis

Performance for PY2019-2020 was adversely affected by pandemic-related closures put in place in March 2020. Although programs were able to continue offering services, a number of classes were paused or discontinued. In addition, a number of students who enrolled in adult education classes prior to the pandemic did not continue at an unprecedented rate. In PY2018-2019, the percentage of participants who separated before achieving an MSG was 35.22 percent; in PY2019-2020, the rate jumped up to 55.6 percent, or an increase of almost 60 percent. In the previous five years, the highest one-year increase was 25 percent.

In keeping with federal guidance distributed to state adult education agencies, Virginia re-configured its MIS to recognize new students as participants without requiring an NRS-approved pre-test and permit programs to assign an NRS-approved post-test when students reached the minimum required number of contact hours for post-testing. For both situations, program staff selected a placeholder assessment name so that the state could track the impact of the closures on reporting. The data show that in PY2019-2020, 230 students were enrolled with a non-NRS approved pre-test, and 1,768 students were unable to post-test at an expected time. During this same time, 183 students were pre-tested using an NRS-approved assessment.

A comparison of the number of students pre- and post-tested after March 12, 2019, with the number of students pre- and post-tested after March 12, 2020, may provide a more telling indication of the impact of the pandemic on adult education service delivery. During the same period a year earlier, 2,324 students were administered a pre-test, or more than five times the number who were placed during the pandemic period this year. In terms of post-testing, 1,960 students were recognized as eligible for a post-test or administered an NRS-approved post-test versus 5,167 students who were administered a post-test during the same period last year. This information is presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Comparison of COVID-19 Impact**

| **Program Year** | **Number of Adults Pre-tested** (March 13-June 30) | **Number of Students Post-tested** (March 13-June 30) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2018-2019 | 2,324 | 5,167 |
| 2019-2020 (COVID Marker) | 230 | 1,768 |
| 2019-2020 (NRS Assessment) | 183 | 192 |

The Data PLC engaged in a December session to discuss the PY2019-2020 state aggregate reports and interpret the impact of pandemic-related closures and disruptions. This conversation with data specialists who serve on the Data PLC assisted the state office in exploring how regional and IELCE programs handled the challenges of serving and reporting students with limited ability to administer assessments, keeping students engaged in synchronous and/or asynchronous remote learning, and offering online SBI. The state’s performance data is also presented annually in October to the Advisory Committee for Adult Education and Literacy for discussion by the committee members.

Post-exit indicators were boosted by two new data match agreements in PY2019-2020: the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) and the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS). Programs have often told us that students find employment across state lines and the SWIS data match confirmed that to be the case. Given the close working relationship many adult education programs have with their local community colleges, it was anticipated that expanding the data match to include VCCS data would provide a more accurate postsecondary credential attainment rate. Relying on the NSC data match, Virginia would have reported a postsecondary credential attainment rate of 19.62 percent. By expanding the data match to include VCCS data, the state reported a postsecondary credential attainment rate of 31.46 percent, an increase of more than 50 percent.Virginia’s rate of transition to postsecondary education within one year of exit for participants who had earned a secondary credential also rose; in PY2019-2020, Virginia reported an 8.56 percent rate compared to a 6.32 percent rate reported on this measure in the previous year.

On several outcome measures, IET students outperformed the state aggregate measures. The IET students had an MSG rate of 25.68 percent compared to the state’s overall rate of 24.15 percent. On employment measures, IET student records show 46.21 percent employed in the second quarter after exit and 40.86 percent in the fourth quarter compared to the state’s overall rates of 24.81 percent and 24.88 percent, respectively. Overall credential rate for IET students was 42.42 percent, compared to the state’s overall rate of 27.92 percent.

In PY2019-2020, 33 percent of the state’s total GED® graduates attended adult education classes (488 out of 1,436, which excludes in-school youth and local and regional inmates). This is a greater share than the previous year when 28 percent of GED® graduates attended adult education classes. Virginia worked with the GED® Testing Service to create attractive banners and messages for the GED.com website and for our programs and partners to share to promote enrollment in adult education and the opportunity to earn free testing vouchers. Virginia had a 76 percent pass rate, mirroring the national pass rate for GED® completion.

The number of National External Diploma Program (NEDP) participants decreased from 237 in PY2018-2019 to 186 in PY2019-2020, and the completion rate decreased slightly from 22 percent (54 graduates) in PY2018-2019 to 20 percent (38 graduates) in PY2019-2020.  The VDOE and the VALRC will continue to provide technical assistance to program managers and NEDP practitioners on promising practices to enhance program outreach and improve completion rates.

## Integration with One-Stop Partners

In PY2016-2017, the state delegated the roles and responsibilities for addressing one-stop requirements under 34 CFR part 463, subpart J, to the regional program managers and their fiscal agents. Those programs work closely with their local workforce development boards (LWDB) and one-stop operators to coordinate services, identify regional workforce needs, and facilitate access to adult education services through the one-stops, called Virginia Career Works Centers. Virginia has over 50 comprehensive and affiliate Center locations in the 15 workforce regions throughout the state. In PY2019-2020, 20 regional programs and four IELCE programs contributed to their Centers either in direct funds or in-kind contributions toward infrastructure in accordance with the MOU established by each LWDB. Many programs offer adult education classes and academic skill assessments on-site at the Centers. In the continuation awards made to Section 231 AEFLA recipients in PY2019-2020, applicants identified the contributions budgeted to the LWDBs and submitted current MOUs and infrastructure funding agreements (IFAs). As MOUs and IFAs are renegotiated or updated, regional program managers submit them to the state office.

Technical assistance is provided to program managers regularly through bi-monthly webinars and periodic calls and communications on how to fulfill their roles and responsibilities as one-stop partners. During the COVID-related closures, communication across partner entities was critical, and agencies as well as local boards began communicating much more widely about which programs were open for which services and how individuals could request appointments or file for unemployment benefits. For example, the VDOE alerted LWDB directors and one-stop operators of the assessment flexibilities approved for adult education and emphasized that adult education programs were able to enroll and serve students even in the absence of an assessment.

The process of writing and presenting for public comment the 2020-2024 Combined State Plan (the Plan) offered many opportunities for adult educators to be involved in statewide workforce development strategies. The Plan development team held listening and feedback sessions through the winter months of PY2019-2020, and the main goals of the Plan were the guiding themes of the AE&L conference in February 2020. Additionally, there are three statewide initiatives that reinforce cross-partner coordination and alignment.

1. PY2019-2020 was the third year of the cross-agency training initiative, *Sector Strategies and Career Pathways Academy,* which offers 26 hours of content on the two topics. All applicants in the AEFLA competition for 2020-2023 awards were required to either demonstrate that a leader in their program had completed the Academy or planned to do so within the first year of award. The Academy moved to a fully online delivery system in during the pandemic-related closures and plans to continue to offer training and support in that manner. VALRC hosted a statewide PLC for adult educators who volunteered to serve as “champions” of the Academy in their region.
2. In the spring of 2020, the Accessibility Taskforce sponsored synchronous, online training on serving customers with disabilities to all workforce practitioners. The training was delivered by the LEAD Institute, a technical assistance contractor with the U.S. Department of Labor. The two-part training covered non-discrimination during COVID-related service changes and communication strategies for individuals with known or unknown disabilities. Adult educators took part in both trainings, and implications for adult education were discussed in program manager webinars.
3. The [Common Referral Portal](https://va-career-works.myjourney.com/) was launched in May 2020, ahead of schedule, in response to the COVID-related closures. It is a web-based, mobile-friendly tool that can refer users to services that are designed to assist them in finding training, certification, education, and employment services. Individuals seeking services can create an account, answer common intake questions, choose referral recommendations, and begin connecting with services. Currently supported by six state agencies, including the VDOE with AEFLA state leadership funds, the portal is a “no wrong door” approach to service referrals among workforce development agencies and is supported by a Data Trust that allows for the sharing of unique identifiers. Training for adult education practitioners to assist learners in the use of the Portal as a career service has been delivered through webinars, newsletter articles, and email blasts and will continue to be offered.

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

The VDOE held a **multi-year competition** in 2020 for PY2020-2023 awards and was able to maintain the proposed timeline despite the COVID-related closures. Announcements of the competition were posted in eight newspapers, and a pre-bidder’s webinar was held in January 2020; the archive was posted on the VDOE website. Questions from the field were received and responded to in Frequently Asked Questions files that were also posted on the website. The competition presented two opportunities: applications to offer adult education (Section 231) with corrections education and other institutionalized individuals (Section 225) programs and applications to offer integrated English literacy and civics education (Section 243) programs.

Eighteen IELCE proposals were received and reviewed by local workforce development board representatives as well as a panel of external reviewers. A key component of the review was the demonstration of sufficient need for IELCE services in the community to warrant additional programming. Award amounts were determined based on enrollment ranges announced in the competition package. The smallest award is $50,000 for applicants proposing to serve 50-99 students, and the highest award is $150,000 for proposing to serve 250 or more students. Local education agencies are the fiscal agents for eight of the programs, community colleges for four, and community-based literacy organizations for four. The IELCE programs are clustered in the high-immigrant population areas of Northern Virginia, Richmond City, Charlottesville, and the Hampton Roads area. Four additional programs are in the rural agricultural areasof the New River Valley, Shenandoah Valley, and Eastern Shore.

IELCE applicants were required to offer or partner to offer an IET in an industry aligned to their local workforce development board’s strategic plan or regional economic analysis. Applicants mapped their plans and partners’ contributions onto the [IET Planning Tool](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/34746/638067006116370000), a graphic organizer required of all applicants. Applicants were requiredto demonstrate that funding would be dedicated to supporting English language learning students in an IET program regardless of the main source of the funding of the IET. Applicants also had to demonstrate that instruction was to be aligned with the CCRS and *English Language Proficiency Standards* (ELPS) and that teachers would be supported in the use these standards.

In PY2019-2020, there were 3,284 IELCE participants statewide, 269 of whom participated in **IET programs**. This represents eight percent of the total IELCE enrollment and 22 percent of the state’s total IET enrollment. IET programs in PY2019-2020 were offered in occupational clusters including child care, technology, transportation, trades, healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality, and customer service. Credentials earned included Certified Nursing Assistant, Certified Medical Assistant, Servsafe Manager, NCCER Core, Better Kid Care, and Commercial Driver’s License. Of particular note was a developing trend among IELCE providers to offer a career pathway built upon students’ skills and foreign credentials to assist them to document those skills for an American résumé. For example, several programs in Northern Virginia have had success offering IETs that prepare students for the Microsoft Office Specialist credential. This allows students who have office technology skills to learn the English vocabulary necessary and demonstrate those skills for a recognizable credential. Technical assistance calls were conducted with each program in the weeks following the shutdown. While no new IET cohorts were begun after mid-March, those that were underway at the time of the shutdown developed plans for assisting students to complete their courses and credentials, even if the actual credential test could not be scheduled until after June 30, 2020.

The timing of the 2020-2023 competition (applications were due to the VDOE on March 18) resulted in applications that had no indication of necessary pandemic-related changes, including how IETs could be conducted when occupational training and required clinical practices were disrupted. Therefore, all providers were required to attend an August 2020 training session, *Redesigning IET*, co-led by the VDOE and the VALRC, to discuss strategies and opportunities. Providers were asked to resubmit their IET Planning Tools for a redesigned structure and schedule or for a completely different occupation and set of partners. Many programs were able to identify credentials that could be earned online or confirm a plan with their training partners to allow for socially-distanced training.

Programs consult with their LWDB plans to **prepare and place students** for in-demand occupations and provide career services to students either by a program-based career navigator or by hosting regular access to a career coach from the local community college or Career Works Center. Programs also serve businesses in their communities by announcing and promoting job openings to students and hosting recruitment activities such as career fairs. These activities are reported to the VDOE quarterly, and there continues to be an increase in these reported activities.

PY2019-2020 post-exit outcomes reported for IELCE students in the follow-up cohort indicate that 17.28 percent were employed in the second quarter after exit, 16.48 percent were employed in the fourth quarter after exit, and 19.86 percent attained a recognized postsecondary credential within one year of exit. The VDOE recognizes that IELCE programs and personnel require additional training on preparing to report post-exit indicators. In February 2020, the VDOE offered a post-exit indicator training to all program managers based on the NRS materials on the importance of collecting barriers to employment and social security numbers for student follow-up. This training was to have been replicated across Virginia in regional trainings in the spring of 2020 but instead was offered in a hybrid, multi-modal remote training in November 2020. Training attendees spent time identifying strategies for expanding their data collection efforts, such as providing multiple opportunities to solicit this information.

## Adult Education Standards

Since the adoption of the CCRS in 2016, the VDOE and the VALRC have been implementing training and technical assistance and institutionalizing the use of SBI through practices and grant requirements. Virginia is now in what Susan Pimentel, in the *Handbook for Sustaining Standards-based Instruction in Adult Education* (2014), describes as Stage Four implementation, “Initiating a Scale-Up Plan: Sustaining Momentum, Progress, and Creative Renewal.” The VDOE competitive grant requirements promote large-scale replication while the VALRC provides a variety of options for successful implementation in anticipation of management and instructor turnover.

An annual review and update of the *Implementing Standards-Based Instruction in Virginia: A Technical Assistance Roadmap*, available on the SBI resource webpage of the VALRC website, defines “full implementation” of SBI and provides technical assistance in the key areas of program design, instruction, and PD. The *Virginia College and Career Readiness Curriculum Frameworks,* a web-based resource for instructional planning, is in the final stage of development, and an overview of the framework was presented at state conferences. Targeted, half-day training sessions for instructors were provided to regions upon request, and all eight-week online courses that are components-based (reading, writing, numeracy, ESOL) were reviewed and updated with embedded standards-based practices and content. The primary SBI focus of PY2019-2020 was the observation tools. An ELPS observation tool was developed using the CCRS for English Language Arts/Literacy as a basis. Two webinars were presented and recorded as tutorials. During the pandemic, virtual training topics have included using the key shifts in online instruction and observing SBI in an online environment.

Probably the most notable example of sustaining SBI in Virginia is participation in the [Teaching the Skills that Matter (TSTM)](https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/teaching-skills-matter-adult-education) pilot sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. This project focuses on integrating critical content (digital, health, and financial literacy as well as civics education and workplace preparation) with nine essential “skills that matter” in standards-aligned instruction that makes use of effective teaching approaches. Over the course of PY2019-2020, the four TSTM pilot teachers participated in approximately 40 hours of training, comprising two national institutes and four additional webinars, plus individual coaching with a national expert and monthly working discussions as a state team to evaluate the materials and make plans for sharing TSTM with other Virginia practitioners. At the March 2020 TSTM institute, the team presented posters highlighting its implementation efforts and addressing topics such as helping ESOL students understand and develop the “skills that matter”; using project-based, problem-based, and contextualized teaching approaches in an ESOL health literacy unit; using problem-based learning to address financial and health literacy in a multi-level GED® preparation class; and integrating problem- and project-based learning into workforce preparation and IET instruction. Two Virginia teachers were highlighted in the TSTM national training webinars, one of whom also presented at the national TSTM virtual conference in June 2020. Another Virginia teacher was recruited as a coach for the second national TSTM cohort. A pilot teacher co-presented on TSTM at the 2020 AE&L Conference, and all pilot teachers, now trainers and coaches for Virginia’s TSTM rollout, have shared elements of TSTM with educators in their respective regions. TSTM team members developed a plan for rollout in Virginia of TSTM training that includes maintaining an instructional coaching element, which was adapted for a virtual rollout.

## Programs for Corrections Education and Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals

During PY2019-2020, there was no methodology in place for matching the recidivism rate for criminal offenders or released individuals served in programs supported with Section 225 funds. However, the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) 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. For the fourth year in a row, Virginia [reported](https://vadoc.virginia.gov/news-press-releases/2020/virginia-s-recidivism-rate-falls-even-lower-remains-the-lowest-in-the-country/) the lowest recidivism rate in the nation, 23.1 percent. In PY2019-2020, the state also analyzed the recidivism rate for “state responsible offenders” who served their entire sentences in local jails, a setting that is more likely to have had educational services funded through the adult education program than through the VADOC. An August 2020 recidivism [report](https://vadoc.virginia.gov/media/1575/vadoc-recidivism-report-2020-08.pdf) indicates that nearly half of the total number of individuals released from incarceration in Virginia in 2018 were those who were housed in local and regional jails. The re-incarceration rate for this population was 25.7 percent for the FY2015 cohort. The VADOC analysis shows that an increase in technical violations among the re-entry population in Virginia is correlated with the opioid crisis that continues in the Commonwealth. Additionally, the VADOC found that re-incarceration rates were higher for those with mental health impairments, particularly those who served their sentence in local jails where the provision of mental health services while incarcerated was less consistently available. Furthermore, the VADOC posits that the greater intensity of re-entry services and educational and occupational programming available for offenders in VADOC facilities but not always available in local and regional jails contributes to a lower re-incarceration rate for those who served their sentence in DOC facilities.

Providers funded in the 2020-2023 adult education competition noted a variety of plans to expand local and regional partnerships between adult education programs and local and regional jails and probation and parole offices in order to serve more incarcerated and released individuals. Offering more IETs for incarcerated individuals is also planned for post-pandemic service.

Although services were nearly universally halted in March of 2020, until that time, regional programs offered educational services in local and regional jails, community institutions, and community re-entry programs. In addition to assisting individuals improve basic skills and earn a secondary credential, adult education programs piloted IET cohorts in regional jails. IET programs in PY2019-2020 were offered in occupational clusters of agriculture and hospitality. Credentials earned included Landscape Management and ServSafe Managers. Only a few institutions were able to offer any programming in the final quarter of PY2019-2020. At one location, a peer tutoring system had already been established and was continued. In a small number of institutions, paper packets of approved distance education materials were delivered and picked up for teacher review.

Supported with state funds, all 30 local and regional correctional facilities have completed their conversion to computer-based high school equivalency (HSE) testing. In PY2019-2020, these facilities experienced a 32 percent decrease in the number of passers due to a lack of access to testing during the pandemic. In total, 178 individuals earned a secondary credential, and this population maintained a 77 percent pass rate, which is slightly higher than the GED® national pass rate.