

## Narrative Item 2.2 - Program Quality and Accountability Plans and Procedures

***How does the fiscal agent ensure that ABE providers in the consortium spend funding appropriately and exclusively for the purposes of running adult education services, and how does the fiscal agent ensure that caps on spending for administration are not exceeded and that ABE providers in the consortium adhere to all federal and state ABE law, policy and guidance for operating ABE programming?***

While the Northwest Service Cooperative consortium consists of 29 member school districts, none of the member school districts are sub-grantees. To ensure that the consortium is in compliance with state and federal law and policy, all business related to implementation of the ABE grant is directly conducted by the Northwest Service Cooperative (NWSC) agency under the direction of the ABE Coordinator, and no grant funding is awarded to downstream providers. It is the responsibility of the ABE Coordinator to assure the following:

- Compliance with all grant assurances outlined annually in the ABE grant application. (For more information about these grant assurances, see the consortium's current annual ABE grant application in Section 8, Document Q)
- Development of an annual program budget reflective of grant assurances which ensures that caps on spending for grant administration do not exceed caps set in place legislatively, including a maximum of 5% of the state award to be used of Administration (UFARS Object Code 110) and a negotiated restricted maximum rate of 8% of the federal award to be used for Indirect Costs (UFARS Object Code 895).

As the fiscal agent, the Northwest Service Cooperative agency ensures that the ABE consortium spends funding appropriately and exclusively for the purpose of running adult education services by utilizing Uniform Accounting and Reporting Standards for Minnesota School Districts (UFARS) accounting practices in compliance with guidelines set forth by the Minnesota Department of Education. The agency complies with all state laws and rules relating to reporting of revenues and expenditures, including caps on spending for administration of the grant. Unless otherwise authorized pursuant to Minnesota Statute 121.9121 as amended, or any other law, fund transfers are made in compliance with UFARS and permanent fund transfers shall only be made in compliance with Minnesota Statute 121.912, as amended.

Annually, the governing board appoints independent certified public accountants to audit, examine and report upon the books and records of the NWSC. After the close of the fiscal year, the books, records, and accounts of the NWSC are audited by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with applicable standards and legal requirements. Once completed, agency administration reports to the board of directors regarding any actions necessary to correct and deficiencies or exceptions that were noted in the audit. The accounts and records of the NWSC are also subject to audit and inspection by the State Auditor to the extent provided in Minnesota Statute Chapter 6.

The agency maintains an inventory of all fixed assets of original value of \$1,000 or more. This is updated annually, and a copy is provided to the governing board.

***How is program performance data (especially information about attendance, pre- and posttesting, measurable skills gain, level gains and other outcome achievement) monitored at the fiscal agent-, provider-, site-, teacher-, and/or class-levels, and how and when is program performance data shared and communicated with staff and other partners?***

Accurate collection of performance data is imperative, as it directly ties to program outcomes and ultimately to the consortium's financial sustainability. The foundation of quality performance data starts at the class level with well trained teachers who understand the importance of keeping accurate data sets. The consortium is organized in such a way that the teachers work independently in their local classrooms and communities, while maintaining regular communication with the ABE Coordinator and support staff team which includes the ABE Database Specialist located at the agency in Thief River Falls and the ABE Specialist who virtually assists teachers with student intakes and assessments, monitoring of data, oversight of all approved distance learning platforms, and advising services for adult learners participating in the Standard Adult High School diploma program. For this reason, much effort is made to ensure that the teachers are highly trained and well informed on all aspects of data collection, including best practices, procedures and policies related to student intake, orientation, assessment and follow-up procedures, as well as use of the Student Information Database (SID) for collecting and reporting student contact hours, achievements and level gains or other outcomes. Good student performance data monitoring and reporting is a team effort, and the consortium implements a variety of processes and oversights to aid in the strong collection and reporting of student outcomes.

Upon intake and enrollment, the teachers collect required information pertaining to student demographics, including information about employment status and prior education. Assessments in TABE (the Test of Adult Basic Education) or CASAS (the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) are administered in the areas of reading, math and language (for academic students) and reading and listening (for English language learners), and that information is recorded on the student's Intake form, a copy of which is maintained in a student folder on site. The folder includes a record of the student's attendance, instructional log, and assessments, as well as updated demographic information and personal education plans. Original copies of all student Intake forms are submitted electronically to a Google folder, where they are retrieved by the ABE Database Specialist and used to create a student profile in the SID database. Once the student portal is established, the ABE Database Specialist maintains a paper file of all enrolled learners at the agency office. In the case of virtual intakes and assessments, the ABE Intake Specialist creates a student profile in the SID database and submits hard copies of all new student Intake forms to the ABE Database Specialist once a month for inclusion in the official file. All three, the ABE Coordinator, the ABE Database Specialist and the ABE Intake Specialist, have Administrative level access to the SiD database. Every teacher has been granted more limited, Teacher level access to the SID database. Once learner profiles are established in the database by an administrator, it is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to access the database to input daily attendance hours and updated assessment scores, and to electronically report any information to the ABE Database Specialist which cannot be entered by the teacher directly (i.e., information that requires Administrative access to enter). Teachers are encouraged to enter this information daily, at the end of each class, or at minimum weekly, if time prohibits daily data entry. The only exceptions to this occurs when students are enrolled in approved Distance Learning platforms where proxy contact hours are tabulated and entered into the SID database on the last Friday of every month, or Regional Online Career Collaborative (ROCC) classes, where contact hours are reported by the ROCC instructor to a shared attendance tracker, to be accessed and reported to the SiD database on a weekly basis, by class.

Teacher access to the SID database allows teachers to not only enter limited student information, but also to view reports that will provide them information about attendance issues, outdated assessment scores, missing demographic information, MFIP partner reports, etc... Teachers are expected to use these tools and reports to

monitor the status of their local classroom data as often as needed, at minimum once a month for their classes or sites.

At the agency level, program performance data is monitored daily by the ABE Database Specialist, and often throughout the week by the ABE Coordinator. Consortium wide staff meetings are held every 6-8 weeks at the agency office in Thief River Falls or virtually using the Google Meet platform. These meetings provide an opportunity for the entire ABE staff to come together to address issues, initiatives, training needs related to data management, etc..., and provide the ABE team an opportunity to closely examine the most up-to-date performance data for the consortium on a regular basis. Reports are regularly shared with staff regarding student contact hours by month (and their comparison to prior years as a gauge), level gains with post-test rates, students who are in need of updated assessments, students in the system without an Educational Functioning Level, and more! These database generated reports serve as a great tool to address data issues and resolve them quickly, with collective input from the staff!

Please refer to Documents A - C for more details about the specific procedures used by the consortium for Intake and Orientation, Assessment, and Contact Hour tracking and reporting.

All performance data collected throughout the program year is submitted electronically to MDE/ABE by June 1st of each year. A copy of the final End of Year program report, complete with NRS outcomes and enrollment data, is shared with all instructional staff as well as stakeholders (including the agency Executive Director, Board of Directors and superintendents of each member school district). This document is always accompanied by a cover letter and summary of the report, to make it easier to digest, as well as a copy of the state ABE Report Card, with consortium information highlighted (when available).