

TO: Special Oversight Committee on Workforce Expansion & Development  
FROM: Vermont Adult Education & Literacy Network  
RE: State Workforce Development Board  
DATE: August 13, 2024



Dear Chair Marcotte,

The Adult Education and Literacy Network (AELN) has reviewed H.707 (Act146), and we are writing to express our strong interest in serving on the State Workforce Development Board. Adult education is critical for workforce development, and as the State's service providers for WIOA Title II and IELCE federal funds and programs, we are key stakeholders in state workforce development issues. David Justice, Associate Director of Vermont Adult Learning, has applied on the Administration's website to be appointed to the Board to represent the AELN, with support from all four AEL providers. We respectfully submit this memo to make our request and application known to the Special Oversight Committee.

AELN is a key part of Vermont's statewide workforce development system, as the "on-ramp" to everything piece of the pipeline. Vermont's four Adult Education & Literacy (AEL) service providers have a **statutory role under Title 16** in providing adult education and a path to a high school diploma or GED. There is no other program in Vermont that offers a free path to a high school credential for all people 16 and up not in the public school system. Our students may come to us directly after dropping out of high school, or much later on in life, and they often lack the basic skills to participate successfully in tech ed programs, free college programs or workforce training. We serve a large number of English Language Learners, who must first learn English before moving through the workforce development pipeline. **We are the very first stop for Vermont's most vulnerable populations, and having a strong and accessible AEL system upstream increases the success of money invested further downstream in workforce development initiatives.**

Students are at the center of our work, and the AEL providers offer a broad range of services that are specifically tailored to each student's needs. Our services change people's lives and build their asset bank, so that our students can then pursue further education or careers that align with their passions and goals. Success looks different for every student, and we work at each student's individual pace. We help students to identify concrete goals and then break those goals down into steps in a way that is more flexible and individualized than downstream programs.

**AELN's Role in Workforce Development for Critical Occupations.** The grants that AEL providers receive from the State require Integrated Education and Training (IET) programming. AEL providers are direct partners with the VT Department of Labor, HireAbility and local School Districts and get student referrals from these entities. Some AEL providers also get direct referrals from the Department of Corrections and Community Justice Centers. An IET program includes the following three components:

1. Adult education and literacy activities
2. Workforce preparation activities
3. Workforce training in an in-demand industry

**As the State's only providers of IET programs, all AEL providers work directly with their local workforce development teams to address critical occupation needs in their region.** For example, The Tutorial Center is a member of the Bennington County Regional Commission which has been working on an Integrated Education and Training program for early childhood education workers and LNAs in the Bennington area. NEKLS also has an IET focus on early childhood. Vermont Adult Learning's Energy Works program is an IET for weatherization and heat pump installation workforce needs. The program has trained 164 Vermonters in the skills needed to enter well-paying jobs in the emerging energy sector. The AELN also received a Sanders earmark for workforce development programs across the Network, which is helping all 4 AEL providers enhance their workforce development work.

**Students Served.** The AELN served approximately **2,170** students in fiscal year 2024, **732** of which were English Language Learners. Below is a breakdown of student numbers per program statewide as well as student demographics per Center.

**Table 1. AELN Student Numbers Per Program**

<b>Student Numbers Per Program</b>	<b>High School Completion Program</b>	<b>English Language Learning</b>	<b>Adult Basic Education</b>	<b>Total</b>
Fiscal Year 2022	384	390	925	1,699
Fiscal Year 2023	433	575	844	1,852
Fiscal Year 2024	425	732	1,013	2,170

**Table 2. Student Demographics**

<b>AEL Student Demographics Fiscal Year 2024</b>		<b># of Students</b>	<b>% of All AELN Students</b>
<b>Age Group</b>	16-18	519	24%
	19-24	574	26%
	25-44	750	35%
	45-59	234	11%
	60+	93	4%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	914	42%
	Female	1,255	57%
<b>Race (of students who reported)</b>	BIPOC	78	24%
	White	249	76%
<b>Labor Status (of students who reported)</b>	Employed	542	47%
	Unemployed	620	53%
<b>Barriers to Employment (of students who reported)</b>	Ex-offenders	43	2%
	English Language Learners	732	34%
	Homeless & foster care involved YOUTH	65	3%
	Low income	575	26%
	Individuals with disabilities	486	22%
<b>Students that received &lt;12 of schooling</b>		1,518	70%

Adult Basic Education is the first step to further education and career goals, and as such we hope our application to serve on the State Workforce Development Board is accepted. Thank you for any additional support you can provide in the process.

Sincerely,

The Adult Education & Literacy Network