



**Vermont's Adult Education and Literacy Network is requesting an increase in base funding of \$500,000 in the FY2024 Budget Adjustment Act to fill the funding gap and address systemic underfunding for the state's four AEL providers.**

**Our Work Changes Lives.** Vermont's four non-profit Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) service providers offer a broad range of services that build assets and change people's lives. Our students are at the center of our work, and we know that success looks different for every student, which is why our programming and activities are specifically tailored to each student's unique needs and goals. Vermont's AEL students are often the most vulnerable and underserved of our communities. The majority of our students live in poverty, have a disability, identify as a person of color, and/or experience homelessness or unemployment. Many AEL students are parents and have school-age children and lack the technology, skills or resources to work or learn remotely. **Adult Education and Literacy services help people build the assets they need to move out of poverty successfully, as well as the confidence to continue to move toward success throughout their lives.**

**Our services include:**

- Literacy Education: Reading, Writing, Math including computer and financial literacy education
- English Language Learning and US Citizenship preparation
- High School Diploma and GED Credentialing
- Career and College Readiness

**English Language Learners.** From FY22 to FY23, all four AEL providers in Vermont saw a significant increase in their English Language Learning (ELL) student population as immigrants and refugees from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Central and South America and other places from around the world resettled in Vermont. The AELN served a total of **547** ELL students in FY 2023 alone, **representing a 40% increase over fiscal year 2022.**

**High School Completion.** Through a competitive RFP process with the Agency of Education, AEL providers administer the High School Completion Program (HSCP) for the State. Funding for the HSCP has decreased significantly due to lower student enrollment, policy changes within the program, and lower literacy skills among our student population. **The AEL Network is currently engaged in the Adult Education and Literacy HSCP Student Access Study Committee which is tasked with making recommendations to the General Assembly for increasing access and equity in the HSCP and identifying long-term funding solutions for Adult Basic Education programs generally. We look forward to bringing these recommendations forward for consideration in the FY25 budget process.**

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

	High School Completion Program	English Language Learning	Adult Basic Education
Fiscal Year 2022	384	390	925
Fiscal Year 2023	407	547	941

**FY24 Budget Adjustment Request: +\$500,000 base appropriation to cover staffing and operational costs.**

Each year as a Network of four AEL providers, we employ approximately 132 educators and support staff to provide educational services to students from every city and town in the State. Since calendar year 2021 the AELN has approached the General Assembly with a request to increase our base funding by \$1.5million. In response, the Vermont Legislature appropriated \$350,000 in one-time funding to the AELN in the FY22 Budget Adjustment Act; \$700,000 in one-time funding in the FY23 state budget; and another \$1,000,000 in one-time "bridge funding" in the FY24 state budget. These one-time appropriations helped to cover operational costs and budget deficits, but relying on one-time funding to cover ongoing costs is unsustainable and we still need to fill that \$500,000 budget gap. **Without additional support from the State, Vermont's AEL providers risk running budget deficits and making further cuts to staff and/or services.**