

2023-24 Distance Learning Policy for AEFLA & AELA



Rationale

To align with instructional priorities outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the needs of adult learners across the state, the Office of Adult Education Initiatives (AEI) has drafted the following distance learning policy based upon National Reporting System (NRS) guidelines.

Distance learning provides an opportunity for programs to increase their capacity to equitably serve all learners and overcome common barriers to participation, e.g., non-traditional schedules, childcare, transportation, location, etc.; however, it is also sufficiently different from traditional classroom instruction that it requires programs to consider implementation processes, technology access, and instructors' capacity to develop new skills. Therefore, it is recommended that instructors and administrators attend training before the implementation of distance learning activities and adoption of distance learning platforms.

The adoption of a statewide distance learning policy is intended to allow adult education programs a means to accurately document and deliver services to learners using flexible instructional models and diverse media. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to AEFLA- and AELA-funded programs on how to apply for, classify, track, and report acceptable hours for distance learning activities.

Definitions

Distance Learning: A formal learning activity where learners and instructors are separated by geography, time, or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance learning materials are delivered through a variety of media including, but not limited to, print, audio recording, videotape, television broadcasts, computer software, web-based interaction, and other online technologies. Instructors support distance learners through communication via telephone, e-mail, or other web-based technologies or software.

Traditional Learners: Learners who receive the majority of their instructional hours (50% or more) through in-person instruction.

Distance Learners: Learners who receive the majority of their instructional hours (50% or more) through distance learning.

In-person contact hours and distance learning contact and proxy hours will be recorded separately. The determination of the learner's status as a traditional or distance learner will be made at the end of the program year and will be based on which category of hours comprises over 50% of the learner's total instructional time. The learner's hours in both traditional and distance situations will be included in NRS reports, according to the [Technical Assistance Guide for Performance Accountability under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#).

Blended or Hybrid Learners: Blended or Hybrid Learning is an instructional delivery model that incorporates telephone, video, teleconference, or other online communication components with traditional in-person classroom instruction. Teachers must monitor learner progress on an approved online curriculum in addition to the in-person class. Instructors may support their learners both in and outside of class via virtual learning communities, telephone, e-mail, instant messaging, or other technologies and software.



A learner who participates in blended or hybrid learning will be considered a distance learner for NRS purposes only if 50% or more of the instructional hours credited to the learner are considered proxy hours as opposed to in-person contact hours.

Contact Hours: Synchronous time spent instructing the learner. Contact hours for distance learners include two-way interaction between instructor and learner by telephone, video, teleconference, or other online communication where learner and program staff are able to interact and through which learner identity is verifiable.

Proxy Hours: Asynchronous time a learner spends independently engaged with distance learning instructional activities that provide College and Career Readiness Standards and/or English Language Proficiency Standards aligned adult education content, such as using an approved distance learning platform or approved instructional tool. Proxy hours can include approved independent instructional activities in a computer lab, instructional activities assigned out of class, or supplemental instructional activities. Homework is not included in reportable proxy hours. Homework does not extend the instructional activities by introducing new content, but rather serves as a review or practice of content that has been previously introduced. Local programs are required to use approved distance learning platforms and instructional tools.

Requirements

AEFLA- and AELA-funded programs approved to provide distance learning must:

1. Follow Mandatory Assurances

- a. The distance learning courses are identical to traditional courses at the program in terms of the quality, rigor, and breadth of academic and technical standards.
- b. The program ensures timeliness of its responses (synchronously or asynchronously) to learners' requests by placing a requirement on response time of no more than 24 hours within the program's operational schedule.

2. Apply to Operate a Distance Learning Program

- a. Programs must apply to use any distance learning tools or platforms they plan to implement at the beginning of each grant cycle and anytime thereafter to add new platforms or make changes to how approved platforms are used.
- b. Grantees must complete the [online AEI Distance Learning Application](#) for each platform proposed. The online application is also available on [AEI's Distance Learning Policy webpage](#).
- c. AEI will approve or request application revisions as necessary. AEI may reject any application(s) where the required description or evidence is insufficient, or the resource does not support CCRS and/or ELPS - aligned adult education instruction.

3. Administer Assessments

- a. NRS-approved pre- and post- assessments used to measure educational gain of distance learners for NRS reporting must be delivered in person or following the test publishers' guidelines for remote assessment and must follow the test administration requirements outlined in the state Assessment Policy. Distance learners participating in AEFLA programming or in AELA programming using NRS assessments should be post-tested after the same amount of instructional time as other learners unless otherwise indicated in the local Assessment Assurances. Instructional hours to determine post-test eligibility can be a combination of in-person contact hours, distance contact hours, and proxy hours. Homework is not included in reportable proxy hours.
- b. For NRS reporting purposes, AEFLA learners will be reported as "distance learners" at the end of the program year when 50% or more of the learner's total instructional hours are recorded as distance learning. All other learners will be reported as traditional learners.

4. Measure Instructional Hours for Distance Learners



- a. For the minimum hours requirements AEFLA learners must meet to become NRS participants, the contact can be any combination of in-person contact and contact through telephone, video, teleconference, or online communication, where participant and program staff can interact and through which participant identity is verifiable.
- b. For AEFLA, as well as AELA programs tracking attendance in classes, the program must decide how distance hours are tracked and reported in LACES depending on the model(s) approved for each distance learning platform or instructional tool.
- c. For AELA programs tracking attendance in workshops, the program must decide how distance hours are tracked and reported in LACES depending on the model(s) approved for each distance learning platform or instructional tool.

Two models for tracking distance learning proxy hours are available:

- i. **Clock Time Model**
 1. Distance learning proxy hours are assigned based on the elapsed time that a learner is connected to, or engaged in, an online or stand-alone software program that tracks time. The software has business rules in place to time out/log out learners after a specified period of inactivity. Hours must be reported at the daily level. No more than 8 clock time model hours a day may be recorded for distance learners.
 - ii. **Learner Mastery Model**
 2. Distance learning proxy hours are assigned based on the learner passing a test on the content of each lesson or unit of instruction. Learners work with instructional materials and take a test when they are prepared. A high, or passing, percentage of correct answers (typically 70%-80%) earns the credit hours attached to the material covered in the instructional unit. Only programs with approval from the AEI Office to report mastery model instructional hours may do so in LACES. Hours may be reported in aggregate but must be reported no less than every 89 days.
- d. Classify Instructional Hours for Reporting**
- i. Programs must record in-person and distance learning hours in LACES.
 - ii. All AEFLA and AELA class distance learning hours should be marked as “Instruction - Distance Learning – Subject Area” or “Instruction -Distance Learning – Async.- Subject Area” choosing the subject area most appropriate to the content covered.
 - iii. All AELA workshop distance learning hours should be marked as “Workshop - Distance Learning” or “Workshop – Distance Learning – Async.”
 - iv. Distance learning hours delivered live, such as when an instructor and learners are video conferencing via platforms like Zoom or Google Meets should be recorded as “Distance Learning.” Clock time hours where a learner is completing learning on their own without an instructor present should be recorded as “Distance Learning – Async.”
 - v. Reporting distance proxy hours that are tracked using the Clock Time Model must be recorded in LACES at the daily level and no less than one week after instruction takes place (see the state Assessment Policy). Partial hours must be reported in 15-minute increments only.
 - vi. Reporting distance proxy hours that are tracked using the Learner Mastery Model requires entering the instructional hours associated to a lesson or unit as a cumulative number in LACES on the date the learner completed/mastered that unit of instruction. Programs must ensure the aggregate hours are reported in LACES no less than every 89 days. Partial hours must be reported in 15-minute increments only.

5. Ensure Accessibility

- a. Grantees must ensure that all online courses and websites are accessible. As defined by the ADA under Title II: [Web accessibility](#) means that websites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed so



that people with disabilities can use them. More specifically, people can: perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web. [Course accessibility](#) as indicated by EDUCAUSE, means that an individual with a disability is given the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally, and independently as a person without a disability.