



Review Alternative Learning Experience

1. **Purpose:**

The purpose/objective of this program is to perform on-going program reviews of alternative learning experience (ALE) programs, dropout reengagement programs, and other high-risk educational programs. Funding is used to support staffing and operating costs to conduct the review program.

2. **Description of services provided:**

The review of Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) programs included the following:

- Individual on-site and desk reviews of documentation and reporting components of ALE and dropout reengagement full-time enrollment (FTE).
- Technical assistance and guidance toward meeting the documentation, and reporting requirements specific to these programs.
- Technical assistance and guidance on the broader overlapping public education requirements within these programs.
- Development of tools and resources to assist school districts in analyzing their own practice, documentation, and reporting compliance.

3. **Criteria for receiving services and/or grants:**

- Schools and districts that are currently claiming ALE funding, Open Doors funding, or are interested in establishing a program that uses these funds; and
- Educational service districts, nonprofit organizations and colleges that operate Open Doors programs in partnership with public school districts are eligible for reviews.

Beneficiaries in the 2022-23 School Year:

Number of School Districts:	23
Number of Schools:	37
Number of Students:	137 reviewed, representing 3,396 students enrolled
Number of Educators:	320 individual school staff
Other:	N/A

4. **Are federal or other funds contingent on state funding?**

No



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5. State funding history:

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2023	\$131,000	\$72,270
2022	\$131,000	\$102,902
2021	\$131,000	\$122,633
2020	\$131,000	\$127,258
2019	\$131,000	\$127,227

6. Number of beneficiaries (e.g., school districts, schools, students, educators, other) history:

Fiscal Year	Programs	Districts
2023	32	23
2022	18	16
2021	56	32
2020	32	37

7. Programmatic changes since inception (if any):

Internal to the agency, the evaluation and review duties moved from the Audit Resolution Department to the Learning Options (formerly the Alternative Learning) Department in 2017. This has assisted the agency in coordinating resources and communication, as well as identifying and directing programs that may need more specific supports. The scope of what is reviewed has expanded to include some public education requirements that do not have a fiscal audit impact but were identified as needing specific review for these types of programs. The COVID-19 pandemic moved the reviews to fully virtual and desk review models; limited on-site reviews resumed in FY22. This position funded with this proviso also assisted in the review of the Innovative Learning Pilot, recognizing that the off-campus component is a common risk component of both ALE and youth reengagement programs.

8. Program evaluation or evaluation of major findings:

The State Auditor’s Office has noted a steady decline in fiscal audit findings. Positive results so far in the initial fiscal audits of reengagement programs that have participated in the reviews have reported to find them helpful.

Many ALE programs moved to new documentation systems this year and the Learning Options department to provide compliance reviews, form checks, and guidance. The department focused technical assistance on elements in the Written Student Learning Plan (WSLP) and the monthly progress reviews.

Becky Wallace
2023-10-31 19:43:00

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There were no significant documentation errors in the five Open Doors (OD) Youth Reengagement programs reviewed.

9. Major challenges faced by the program:

The primary challenge with this program is time and capacity. There are many unique ALE and reengagement programs around the state. Providing thorough evaluation and feedback to of the programs the agency would like to is difficult to accomplish within the time and resources allotted.

Onsite vs Desk Reviews: There is noted efficiency and increased usefulness to an onsite visit in comparison to a desk review, but site visits come with the increased cost of travel. As seen in previous years, program staff are more likely to ask compliance support questions about their program during in-person visits than with online desk reviews (FY23: 5.48 vs 3.5 ALE, 3 vs 1 OD; also Proviso report FY20); however, with increased online and in-person training options (Moodle/Canvas courses, webinars, conferences, hybrid workshops, monthly a newsletters, email and phone access), the total number of questions during reviews has been reduced.

Reviews take an average of 16 workdays for review turn around, from records request to site visit or Zoom meeting to report completion. Desk reviews included scheduled Zoom pre- and post-review meetings with program staff for questions. On-site reviews range from 5 to 28 days; desk reviews range from 4 to 15 days. Most site reviews are scheduled together with other ALE or Open Doors programs within geographic proximity to limit additional travel expenses, however this can extend the time between review and report.

OSPI recognizes that the specific proviso funding for this responsibility was not included in the state budget bill, though the responsibilities remain.

10. Future opportunities:

The technical assistance provided through this role is extremely useful in supporting ALE and reengagement programs to meet state rules and expectations. Results of these reviews have been instrumental in identifying common areas of challenge that need broader communication and resources and provide OSPI staff with the ability to tailor technical assistance to each program. This role's expertise has also provided insight into strategies for the establishment and supervision of other program compliance requirements for existing and emerging innovative programs.

As schools continue to recover from the impacts of the pandemic, many are starting innovative programs that may create some risks for the districts in terms of compliance to existing regulations, and use of state funds. This position may be an ongoing resource to identify these new programs and provide some initial program review and feedback even when they do not fall under the specific programs of ALE or reengagement.



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11. **Statutory and/or budget language:**

\$131,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022, \$131,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023, and \$213,000 of the performance audits of government account—state appropriation are provided solely for the office of the superintendent of public instruction to perform ongoing program reviews of alternative learning experience programs, dropout reengagement programs, and other high risk programs. Findings from the program reviews will be used to support and prioritize the office of the superintendent of public instruction outreach and education efforts that assist school districts in implementing the programs in accordance with statute and legislative intent, as well as to support financial and performance audit work conducted by the office of the state auditor.

12. **Other relevant information:**

Beyond direct compliance reviews, the staff position funded by this proviso supports schools through compliance webinars, online trainings, and when possible, through presentations at regional workshops and conferences. This position also develops and updates online resources, sample documentation, and compliance-specific guidance for newsletters available to schools and educators statewide. This proactive mission-driven support approach has resulted in increased trust, allowing school districts to be more transparent with OSPI and to seek guidance directly via email and phone.

13. **Schools/districts receiving assistance:**

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14. **Program Contact Information:**

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