



Review Alternative Learning Experiences

1. **Purpose:**

The purpose/objective of this program is to perform on-going program reviews of alternative learning experience (ALE) programs and dropout reengagement programs.

2. **Description of services provided:**

- Individual on-site and desk reviews of documentation and reporting components of ALE and dropout reengagement 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 are eligible.
- Educational Service Districts, nonprofit organizations and colleges that operate Open Doors programs in partnership with public school districts.

On-site and desk reviews were provided to 17 ALE and 2 Youth Reengagement programs. Due to the continuing pandemic, reviews were predominantly held as online desk reviews.

Beneficiaries in 2021-22 School Year:

Number of School Districts:	16
Number of Schools:	18
Number of Students:	90
Number of Educators:	505

Other: Educational Service Districts (ESAs), Colleges 0

Number of OSPI staff associated with this funding (FTEs): 1.0

Number of contractors/other staff associated with this funding: 0

FY22 Funding:	State Appropriation:	131,000
	Federal Appropriation:	N/A
	Other Fund Sources:	N/A
	TOTAL (FY22)	131,000

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

No

5. State funding history:

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2022	131,000	102,901
2021	131,000	122,633
2020	131,000	127,258
2019	131,000	127,227
2018	131,000	113,092

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

Fiscal Year	Number of Schools
2022	18 programs
	505 educators
	175 school districts

7. Programmatic changes since inception (if any):

Internal to the agency, the program 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.

8. Evaluations of program/major findings:

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

Many ALE programs moved to new documentation systems this year due to the retirement of a well-used tracking software and reached out to this office to provide compliance reviews, forms checks, and guidance. This office focused on elements in the Written Student Learning Plan (WSLP) and the monthly progress reviews.

There were no significant documentation errors in the two Open Doors 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 each of these, along with the coordination required makes it difficult to accomplish as many as the agency would like each year. This was further impacted with the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On-site vs Desk Reviews: There is noted efficiency and increased usefulness to an on-site 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 (Proviso report FY20).

Desk reviews take an average of an additional 19 days for review turn around, from records request to report completion: an average of 18 calendar days for on-site reviews vs average 37 days for desk reviews (Proviso report FY21). This year's reviews included scheduled Zoom pre- and post-review meetings with program staff for questions.

10. Future opportunities:

This role is extremely useful in supporting ALE and reengagement programs to meet state rules and expectations. Results of these have been instrumental in identifying common areas of challenge that need broader communication and resources to reduce, while still helping the individual program with their unique challenges. 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 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 don't fall under the specific programs of ALE or reengagement.

11. Statutory and/or budget language:

ESSB 5693, Sec. 501(1)(k) - \$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 reviews, the 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 created for trust, allowing school districts to be more transparent with OSPI and to seek guidance directly.

13. Schools/districts receiving assistance:

See [OSPI's grantee list](#).

14. Program Contact Information:

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