NRS Data Quality Checklist

Background and Purpose

The National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) was established to provide a consistent, national framework for collecting and reporting data on the effectiveness of federally funded adult education and literacy programs. Data collected and reported by states and local programs provide valuable information regarding student characteristics, participation, attendance, educational progress, measurable skill gains, and other program outcomes.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) emphasizes the importance of using data at all levels to demonstrate program effectiveness, support informed decision-making, strengthen program management, and drive continuous improvement. Through technical assistance and professional development, the NRS supports states and local programs in developing effective data collection practices, improving data quality, and using data to inform program decisions. A fundamental principle of this approach is that when staff understand, value, and regularly use data, they are more likely to recognize the importance of maintaining accurate and reliable records.

The development and implementation of a Local Program Data Quality Checklist is intended to provide Adult Education programs with a structured tool for evaluating, monitoring, and strengthening their data collection and reporting practices. This tool serves several purposes:

- **Establish Clear Expectations:** Provide local programs with a consistent understanding of the practices, procedures, and responsibilities necessary to maintain accurate and reliable data.
- **Promote Self-Assessment:** Allow programs to evaluate existing data management practices, identify gaps, and assess compliance with established data quality standards.
- **Support Continuous Improvement:** Help program teams identify areas requiring attention and develop targeted action plans to strengthen data collection, validation, and reporting.
- **Encourage Staff Engagement:** Promote collaboration and shared accountability among program directors, data managers, instructors, and other staff involved in the collection and reporting of student information.
- **Strengthen Program Performance:** Encourage the use of reliable data to support informed decision-making, program improvement, and overall accountability.

Ultimately, data quality is a shared responsibility. Establishing consistent practices and ensuring that staff understand the importance of accurate data will strengthen the reliability of reported information and support the overall success of Alabama's Adult Education programs.

How to Use the Checklist

The Local Program Data Quality Checklist is designed as a comprehensive self-assessment and improvement tool. It is organized into the following sections:

1. Cover Sheet

Provides an overview of the local program and establishes the information needed to complete the assessment.

2. Data Quality Checklist: Assessment Tool

Evaluates program practices across four key areas:

- Table 1: Data Foundation and Structure
- Table 2: Data Collection and Verification
- Table 3: Data Analysis and Reporting
- Table 4: Staff Development

3. My Program at a Glance: Data Quality Improvement Plan

Provides a summary of the program's assessment results, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

4. Data Quality Checklist: Program Monitoring

Provides a mechanism for documenting improvement activities, tracking progress, and evaluating the effectiveness of corrective actions.

This checklist is intended to be a *living document* that program directors and designated data personnel can complete, update, and reference throughout the program year. It should be used as an ongoing resource to evaluate current practices and guide improvements rather than as a one-time assessment.

Directions for Completion

Begin by completing the Data Quality Checklist Cover Sheet. Next, review each of the four assessment tables to become familiar with the standards and expectations before responding to the individual prompts.

As you complete the checklist, provide specific and detailed responses that accurately reflect your program's current practices and procedures. Responses should demonstrate how requirements are implemented, who is responsible, and what processes are in place to ensure data accuracy and consistency. Programs are encouraged to involve relevant staff members in this process to promote shared understanding and accountability.

After completing each table, determine the program's achievement level based on the established scoring intervals: **Acceptable, Superior, or Exemplary.** A program must meet all requirements within a given scoring category to receive that designation. Although a program may meet individual standards within a higher category, it must satisfy every requirement within the selected category to receive that overall rating.

Once all four assessment tables have been completed, use the *My Program at a Glance* summary sheet to evaluate the program's overall data quality practices. Identify areas of strength, opportunities for improvement, and any standards that require additional attention.

Data Quality Improvement and Monitoring

Following the self-assessment, each program shall use the designated planning template for each content area to develop an improvement plan. The plan should identify standards that have not been met, describe the actions necessary to address identified gaps, assign responsible staff, and establish anticipated completion timelines.

Programs should use the accompanying monitoring tool to document improvement activities, track progress, and evaluate the outcomes of implemented action steps. This process should be revisited regularly to determine whether corrective actions have been effective and whether additional improvements are necessary.

Local programs are encouraged to use the checklist and accompanying monitoring tools throughout the program year as part of their ongoing data quality procedures. Consistent use of these resources will help establish a culture of data accountability, strengthen reporting practices, and support continuous improvement across Alabama's Adult Education system.

NRS Local Program Data Quality Checklist Cover Sheet

Date:

Program Name/State:

Completed by (name and title):

Shared with (names and titles):

Additional Comments/Notes:

Data Quality Checklist: The Tool

Table 1: Data Foundation and Structure

Acceptable Quality

1. My program is aware of the State's written assessment policies. My program policy mirrors the state's policy and specifies: ▪ Standardized assessments to use for accountability that are valid and appropriate for adult students. ▪ Time periods (in hours or weeks) for when to pre- and posttest. ▪ Score ranges tied to educational functioning levels (EFL) for placement and for reporting gains for accountability. ▪ Appropriate guidance on tests and placement for special populations (e.g., students who are unable to be tested due to language or disability). ▪ Unacceptable methods of assessment for EFL placement. ▪ Appropriate guidance on requirements and conditions for testing distance education students reported in the NRS (if applicable).	1a. *List used assessments permitted for ABE and ESL used by the program*. **ABE Assessments:** **ESL Assessments:** 1b. *Indicate program testing intervals:* 1c. *Indicate special population placement policies:* 1d. *Indicate distance learning testing policy:*
2. My program has written policies for following students to measure post program outcomes that is aligned with the state's plan and explains: ▪ How to determine tracking cohorts. ▪ Follow-up methodology (survey or data match) for each measure that meets NRS requirements. **NOTE: Data matching states may not have this**	2a. *Indicate your follow-up methods for each measure.* Entered employment: Survey ☐ Data match ☐ Both (explain)☐ Retained employment: Survey ☐ Data match ☐ Both (explain)☐ Secondary credential: Survey ☐ Data match ☐ Both (explain)☐ Enter postsecondary: Survey ☐ Data match ☐ Both (explain)☐

	2b. If you indicated that you use both survey and data match for follow-up methods for one or more measures in 2a, please explain.
Skip to the next item if survey is not used 3. Does your program uses survey follow-up method for any measure:	3a.My program can produce a list of students to survey, according to NRS requirements. *Indicate how you produce list:* 3b. The survey is conducted with a state provided, standard survey instrument. *Indicate the standard survey instrument used:*
Skip to the next question if data matching is not used 4. Does your program use data matching for any measure:	4a. Local data system can produce files for matching that include exit dates and employment status for each student. *Indicate how you access these files:* Yes ☐ No ☐ Program has established a procedure for collecting Social Security numbers or other unique identifiers, including how to deal with missing numbers *Indicate your program procedure:*
5. My program is aware of the State's written definitions for all measures (including demographic measures and actual or proxy contact hours, if applicable), defined according to NRS requirements and has provided them to all programs.	*Indicate here were definitions for all measures can be found:*

Skip to the next item if proxy hours are not used 6. My program is aware of the State's written policies on the use of proxy hour models to assign the proxy hours for distance education learners participation in adult education distance education programs.	If yes, please identify which model or models are used to assign proxy hours ___ Clock Time Model ___ Teacher Verification Model ___ Learner Mastery Model ___ Learner Mastery Model

Table 1: Data Foundation and Structure

Superior Quality

1. My state has a comprehensive data dictionary, which defines all measures on state student data forms and in the state data system, and has provided it with an explanation to all local programs and my program is aware of, and uses, the data dictionary.	*Indicate here where the comprehensive data dictionary can be found:* *Indicate to what extent your program uses it:*
2. My program has standards or requirements for the percentage of students to be pre- and post-tested.	*If yes, indicate the standards or requirements.*
3. My program is aware of additional technical assistance and resources provided by the State, on assessment, data collection and follow-up procedures (e.g., site visits, contact persons, manuals, and/or online resources).	*If yes, briefly describe the assistance used, how it was provided and where to learn about future TA.*
Skip to the next item if survey is not used 4. If your program uses survey follow-up method for any measure: we are aware of the state's verification process to confirm that the survey is being conducted according to NRS guidelines.	*If yes, briefly describe your verification procedures:*
Skip to the next item, if survey is not used 5. If your program uses survey follow-up method: we are aware of the state's written guidance or assistance on how to improve response rates to survey staff.	*Indicate where written guidance can be retrieved:*
Skip to the next item if data matching is not used 6. If your program uses data matching: we are aware of the state's written procedures on how to conduct data matching that comply with NRS guidelines *().*	*Indicate where written guidance can be retrieved:*
Skip if proxy hours are not used 7. Program has procedures in place that verify whether proxy hours are calculated and assigned appropriately.	*Indicate program procedures to verify proxy hours:*

Exemplary Quality	
1. My program works with the State's Data Quality system for verifying that local programs are following state data policies and procedures through program reviews, auditing or a certification process.	*If yes, briefly describe the verification procedures.*

Table 2: Data Collection and Verification	
Acceptable Quality	
1. My program uses the state electronic management information system (MIS), that has individual student records within a relational data base structure. The MIS incorporates NRS measures using common definitions and categories.	
2. My program's database has error checking functions (e.g., that identify out-of-range values and missing data).	
3. My program uses the State's standardized forms or state approved forms (electronic or paper) for collecting student information (e.g., intake, attendance) that include all NRS measures and have correct NRS definitions and categories.	*Indicate where the forms can be found:*
Skip if you do not have Distance Learning in your program 4. My program is aware of and follows State guidelines or procedures for recording actual and, if applicable, proxy contact hours that conform to NRS requirements.	*Indicate where guidelines can be found:*
5. My program has designated staff with clear responsibility for data collection and data entry.	*Indicate who is responsible and appropriate contact information:*
6. The designated data quality staff in my program checks data for errors after submission by teachers.	*If **yes,** explain error checking process, including what data are checked and how often.*
Table 2: Data Collection and Verification	
Superior Quality	
1. My program enters data into the MIS at least quarterly.	*Indicate designated data entry dates:*
2. x. The data specialist in my program is in regular contact (at least quarterly) with the state staff to review program data for errors, missing data, out-of-range values and anomalous data, and to identify program improvements and accomplishments and has a system to resolve them.	*Indicate contact in state office and regularly scheduled data review times.*
3. I am aware of and staff use the State's documented procedures for correcting errors and resolving missing program data.	*Explain the data review and error correction system.*
4. My program seeks out additional technical assistance provided by the state to programs with poor data, as needed.	*Indicate resources:*

Table 2: Data Collection and Verification	
Exemplary Quality	
1. I am aware of the State's policies and system for verifying (through software, onsite auditing, contact with local staff) that my program is following state data collection procedures.	*If **yes,** briefly describe the methods used for verification, including use of the correct assessments and assessment forms, reporting of accurate score ranges for placement and for reporting advancement for accountability.*
2. Our program staff are in regular contact with State staff to review and discuss data issues to identify problems and provide assistance.	*If **yes,** specify procedures and type of contact.*

Table 3: Data Analysis and Reporting	
Acceptable Quality	
1. My state or program's MIS can produce NRS required reports for the state and program monitoring, including federal NRS tables	*Indicate list of tables the program can produce:*
2. My program's MIS is capable of reporting disaggregated data by subpopulation (e.g., student age, race, sex) and program (e.g., ABE, ESL, ASE, correctional education, distance education) and my program utilizes this function.	*Indicate appropriate report used to disaggregate data by subpopulation and program:*
Superior Quality	
1. Program staff person familiar with the data, but not directly involved with collection and data entry, reviews NRS data reports for errors and accuracy.	*Indicate person responsible:*
2. Program staff uses data for program management and improvement.	*If **yes,** provide at least one example of use of data for this purpose in the last year:*
3. Program staff can access data reports that are useful for program management and improvement	*If **yes,** briefly describe the usefulness of two reports produced by your system:*
Exemplary Quality	
1. My program has a system of regular contact with the state on data analysis issues and reporting needs to identify technical assistance needs.	I*f **yes,** specify method and frequency of contact.*
2. My program follows the State's documented procedures for dealing with analysis problems and deviations.	I*f **yes,** specify procedures:*
3. My program conducts procedures to verify that local reports accurately reflect data collected (e.g., through review of local program documentation, onsite auditing)	I*f **yes,** specify procedures:*
4. My program follows a State or local process to compare data among programs and with prior years' data for discrepancies, reasonableness and to identify trends in good and bad performance.	I*f **yes,** specify process:*

Table 4: Staff Development	
Acceptable Quality	
1. My program staff has been provided training on general NRS requirements, including assessment policy and procedures, and follow-up policies.	*If **yes** identify the training(s) and how attendance/mastery is documented.*
2. Program staff have received training on data collection procedures	*If **yes** identify the training(s) and how attendance/mastery is documented.*
3. Program staff have been trained on data entry into the state MIS	*If **yes** identify the training(s) and how attendance/mastery is documented.*
4. Program staff have been trained on how to produce and/or interpret reports produced by the MIS	*If **yes** identify the training(s) and how attendance/mastery is documented.*
If applicable: 5. Program staff have been trained on conducting follow-up survey or data matching procedures	*If **yes** identify the training(s) and how attendance/mastery is documented.*
Skip if program does not use Distance Learning 6. My program staff is aware of who to contact at the state to find out about training or details of the distance education policy and use of proxy hours	*If **yes,** who? What is their contact information?*
7. My program staff is aware of the annual training provided by the state about NRS issues, MIS data entry or data analysis issues and a representative from the program attends regularly.	*If **yes,** briefly describe when the most recent additional training occurred, its duration and who attended. This training should not be the same as the one described above in item number 1.*
Superior Quality	
1. Program staff attends State planned, continuous training (at least one training annually) on data collection and NRS issues.	*If **yes,** briefly describe frequency, duration and content of trainings.*
2. Program staff attends NRS training that is planned and delivered based on needs of the state and evaluations of previous trainings.	*If **yes,** briefly describe training offerings and staff attendance.*
If applicable: 3. My program is aware of the ongoing technical support provided by the state to improve data matching and/or survey follow-up procedures, such as collecting the data.	*If **yes,** describe support and how the program uses it.*
Exemplary Quality	
1. My program has timely intervention strategies to identify data problems as they occur and to provide training to programs to correct the problems	*If **yes,** briefly describe the process*

My Program at a Glance: Data Quality Improvement Plan

Directions: Once you have completed the program assessment, indicate your program's score for each of the content areas (each content area has its own planning section). You may find a variation in scores across content areas. However, understanding the exactly where your program's needs are will support your improvement efforts. In the space below your score, insert the content standards from each category that were not met (a), and document actionable goals on how you plan on implementing changes that will support your program in meeting the standard (b). Additional space is provided to help in your efforts by identifying potential barriers (c), training/TA opportunities (d), support (e) and resources (f) that may help you achieve your goal.

Content Area: Data Foundation and Structure **Score:**		
a. Content Standards Not Met in the Content Area:	**b. Planned Approach to implementing changes to allow you to meet the standard:**	
c. Describe barriers or problems anticipated, if any, to implement these plans		
d. Describe any technical assistance you might need to implement these planned changes:	**e. Who might provide needed assistance:**	**f. Resources available in the program to support change:**

Content Area: Data Collection and Verification **Score:**		
a. Content Standards Not Met in the Content Area:	**b. Planned Approach to implementing changes to allow you to meet the standard:**	
c. Describe barriers or problems anticipated, if any, to implement these plans		
d. Describe any technical assistance you might need to implement these planned changes:	**e. Who might provide needed assistance:**	**f. Resources available in the program to support change:**

Content Area: Data Analysis and Reporting **Score:**		
a. Content Standards Not Met in the Content Area:	**b. Planned Approach to implementing changes to allow you to meet the standard:**	
c. Describe barriers or problems anticipated, if any, to implement these plans		
d. Describe any technical assistance you might need to implement these planned changes:	**e. Who might provide needed assistance:**	**f. Resources available in the program to support change:**

Content Area: Staff Development **Score:**		
a. Content Standards Not Met in the Content Area:	**b. Planned Approach to implementing changes to allow you to meet the standard:**	
c. Describe barriers or problems anticipated, if any, to implement these plans		
d. Describe any technical assistance you might need to implement these planned changes:	**e. Who might provide needed assistance:**	**f. Resources available in the program to support change:**

Data Quality Checklist: Continuous Program Monitoring

Directions: Use this table to help track the actions you have taken to achieve your planned program improvement. Monitoring your actions and the outcomes will help you identify if changes to your approach should be made and to share progress with the team.

Action Steps Taken:	Outcome:	Additional Notes: