

Section One: Program Overview

A. Brief overview of the consortium

The Saint Paul Community Literacy Consortium (SPCLC), the largest ABE consortium in Minnesota, builds literacy and other basic skills through an inclusive, collaborative approach that integrates diverse perspectives and leverages a wide variety of resources to meet community needs. Emphasizing cultural competence, accessibility, accountability for outcomes, and creative programming, SPCLC has received national recognition for its work in basic literacy, Career Pathways, distance learning and digital literacy, cross-sector collaboration, community empowerment, and public policy.

Client Base and Services: SPCLC serves St. Paul, Minnesota, a diverse community of 288,000 people that includes large refugee populations (especially Hmong, Somali, and Karen), a significant Hispanic community, and a substantial native born African American component. The 2010 census indicates St. Paul is 60% white, 16% Black, 15% Asian, and 10% Hispanic or Latino origin. The client base includes a large ELL component, as well as many individuals working on higher-level skills, often towards obtaining a GED and/or pursuing higher education or other specific occupational training.

In program year 2012, SPCLC served 12,717 enrollees (3% growth over the prior year) and provided 1,318,327 hours of service (9% growth over 2011, and nearly 23% of all state ABE hours). The statistics indicate increasing intensity of service delivery for students, which contributes to enhanced educational gains. SPCLC met the overall NRS goal for the year.

Membership, Governance, and Staffing: SPCLC membership includes St. Paul Public Schools ABE, 12 community-based non-profits serving diverse constituencies, and the St. Paul Public Library. Members operate out of more than 50 sites throughout St. Paul. Staff includes 54 fulltime and 91 part time teachers, 35 fulltime and 28 parttime administrators/supervisors/counselors/paraprofessionals, and 710 volunteers. SPCLC itself includes a Facilitator, an Instructional Support Consultant and Professional Advisor, a Quality Assurance Advisor, and a Distance Learning Specialist (all part-time consultants).

SPCLC utilizes a comprehensive Operating Principles and Procedures document, which serves as the charter for the group with detailed expectations, policies, and practices. A Governance Committee, including a representative from each agency, meets bimonthly.

Quality Assurance and Accountability: In response to the need for focused attention to outcomes, SPCLC created the first Quality Assurance and Coordinator position in the state several years ago. An Instructional Support Consultant and Professional Development Advisor completes a series of classroom observations with each new instructor during their first year, and every two years thereafter.

Strengths: Some examples of the creative programming developed by SPCLC in response to community need include:

- Transitions: Multiple Career Pathways, including Business Careers, Child Development, Health Careers, and Medical Office, have been created as FastTRAC programs in conjunction with St. Paul College, Goodwill Easter Seals, and other groups. SPCLC has worked to include lower level English language learners in Transitions work by providing funding for community-based organization (CBO) members to develop pre-bridge curricula, including pre-literacy curricula with work readiness and soft skills, integrating practical math into ESL curricula, and for teaching work readiness skills. Other occupational activities include development of an integrated math curricula for lower level English language learners; preparing students for the building trades through a specialized math, reading, and writing skills curricula; and training to prepare students for careers as CNAs, commercial truck drivers, boiler technicians, etc.
- Distance Learning – SPCLC has a strong commitment to Distance Learning (DL). Several years ago, SPCLC created a DL Specialist consulting position to inform and support DL development among members. Three years ago, St. Paul Public Schools was selected as the manager and fiscal agent for the statewide Supplemental Services DL grant. The consortium has seen a significant increase in DL learners and hours over the past several years - 36,130 hours of distance learning (a 26% increase from the previous year) to 1,345 adult learners (a 38% increase) in program year 2012.

SPCLC has served as an incubator for a number of projects and initiatives that have benefitted the entire state, including:

- Northstar Digital Literacy Project – This initiative, developed through a broad-based community collaborative including non-profits, workforce centers, libraries, ABE providers from several consortia, and others, created online, self-guided assessments in basic computer digital literacy. The Assessments are being used statewide by over 55 sponsoring agencies, including ABE consortia, libraries, and other organizations. See <http://www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/index>

- Marketing and Website – SPCLC completed a comprehensive upgrading of their website, www.SPCLC.org, last year; the site is regularly updated with new material. This year, a citywide, three-year Marketing Plan is being implemented. The purpose of the plan is to broaden awareness of ABE services among potential learners, recruit new volunteers, and inform the general public about ABE.
- Statewide Presence: SPCLC member staff play a key role in the Literacy Action Network. At the time this is written, positions filled by SPCLC member staff include LAN President, Legislative Chair, Marketing and Membership Chair, Summer Institute Co-Chair, and Volunteer Issues Co-Chair. SPCLC member staff also play a key role in the Adult Diploma Task Force, including Chair and Legislative Liaison.

¹ Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES); Guadalupe Alternative Programs; Hmong Cultural Center; Hmong American Partnership; International Institute of Minnesota; Jewish Community Center; Lao Family Community of Minnesota, Inc.; Minnesota Literacy Council; MORE Multicultural School for Empowerment; Neighborhood House; Saint Paul Public Schools Adult Basic Education; and Vietnamese Social Services of Minnesota; associate members, which do not provide direct ABE but provide complementary services, include St. Paul Public Library and Lifetrack Resources.