

Section Eight: Future Plans and Issues

8.1 What are your consortium's top three to five changes or areas of improvement that it will focus on in the near future?

The top five areas on which we will focus include: (1) transitions, (2) professional development, (3) marketing/outreach, (4) improving NRS goal attainment, and (5) distance learning and digital literacy. These were determined through discussion and voting by the membership.

8.2 How do you plan on addressing these changes or areas?

(1) Transitions

Transitions are a continuing emphasis within SPCLC. Detailed information is provided in Section 4.2. In brief, our strategies include:

- Integration of transitions at all educational levels. This means that we provide context at all levels for transitions by teaching soft skills, exploring career goals and higher education possibilities, building transferable skills, etc. The specific form this education takes varies depending on educational level and student goals.
- Continued development of career related training: This includes a wide variety of classes and education, ranging from pre-CNA, commercial truck driving, boiler license technician, and EMS, through the four SPCLC FastTRAC projects in which our members are involved, and direct collaboration with St. Paul College in various ways.
- Direct involvement of member agencies in development and delivery of transitions related programming: As noted in Section Four, SPCLC uses a portion of its state Transitions funding each year to make 3 mini-grants ranging from \$2500-3000 to CBO member agencies for developing transitions related curricula. Past grants have included:

2010/2011: All 2010/2011 projects finished and uploaded to MNRoc -

- **Minnesota Literacy Council** – Further developed curriculum for Employment Readiness class.
- **Neighborhood House** – Integrated SCANS skills into all levels of their existing curriculum.
- **Hmong American Partnership** – Developed new intensive ESL curriculum covering Bridge Prep and Bridge 1 levels.

All projects meant to prepare learners with skills needed to eventually participate in Transition classes at other learning centers, i.e. Hubbs Center

2012/2013: Projects due 3/31/2013, which were awarded in 2011, due 2013 -

- **CLUES** – Developing practical math components to be integrated into existing ESL curricula.
- **Minnesota Literacy Council** - Developing CASAS-aligned, life skill units that consistently integrate competencies from the ATLAS/ACES Transitions Integration Framework on the level of unit content and on the level of daily, weekly and unit routines
- **Vietnamese Social Services** – Developing pre-literacy curriculum that will blend work readiness and soft skills with the basics of a pre-literacy level class

Please see Section 4.2 for further information on these grants. We anticipate continuing to make such grants from future Transitions funding.

Various staff assist with and coordinate these efforts. These include the Hubbs Center Outreach and Workforce Education Program Manager, the SPCLC Facilitator, and the SPCLC Instructional Support Consultant and Professional Development Advisor. They work with staff at all SPCLC member agencies to develop, enhance, and integrate Transitions programming.

The primary direct resources utilized are those provided for Transitions programming, including state and federal funds, and FastTRAC grants. In addition, professional development funding is utilized - see Section 3, Professional Development Plan, for details related to ACES participation and other relevant professional development.

Transitions is a continuing effort to develop, implement, and sustain needed programming. The intensity of developing new initiatives depends in part on available funding (such as FastTRAC), which fluctuates over time; this makes it difficult to develop detailed future timelines until we are apprised of available resources. SPCLC develops overall timelines in our semi-annual NextSTEP plan, reviews progress throughout the year, and makes adjustments as needed. Over the next two years, we plan to pay special attention to enhancing transitions programming which does not require extensive college coursework, such as short-term certificate training programs, which provide opportunities for students to obtain relatively well-paying jobs.

(2) Professional Development: Section 3 includes detailed information regarding this area.

As described in our Plan, a representative committee designed our PD plan under the coordination of our Instructional Support Consultant. Primary goals with timelines include:

- Helping coordinators and teachers to increase level gains in intermediate and advanced ESL (ongoing, starting Summer 2013).
- Helping coordinators to better understand the materials (including curriculum and technology supplies) and training needed to prepare teachers for the challenges of the GED test, with instructors having the necessary skills and knowledge to prepare learners for the changes to the new 2014 GED test (January 2014-2015)
- Helping coordinators to be aware of the Transitions Integration Framework (being rolled out in 2013) in order to support the development of transition skills through all levels of the curriculum, with teachers having the skills and resources needed to integrate transition skills at all levels (summer 2013 - summer 2014).
- Site coordinators and distance learning leads will develop, manage, and evaluate best distance learning options for their programs (initial training fall 2013, all sites to complete DL 101 by 2016).
- Site coordinators will be able to design and implement Personal education Plans (PEP) for learners that reflect short-term, learner identified goals. Processes to manage meaningful student goals will be designed that are appropriate to program needs (January 2015).

The Instructional Support Consultant oversees professional development, with assistance from the SPCLC Facilitator and the Accountability and Quality Assurance Advisor. Please see the PD plan for further information and evaluative measures related to each of the objectives listed above.

(3) Improving NRS Attainment

SPCLC will continue strategies for improving NRS attainment that have worked to bring NRS attainment up to targets over the last several years. These strategies include:

- Developing program specific plans with agencies that are below NRS targets in any specific Educational Functioning Level
- Ongoing monitoring of NRS outcomes at Governance and Executive Committee meetings
- Conducting site visits at all member agencies with the Quality Assurance Coordinator to discuss strategies targeted at Educational Functioning Levels in which agencies struggling to meet goals
- Providing continuing support around testing and reporting with the Quality Assurance Advisor

- Accessing the Instructional Support Consultant for coaching/mentoring of teachers

Those who will lead the strategy include the Quality Assurance Advisor, Instructional Support Consultant, Facilitator, and Executive Committee. Those listed above, along with program managers/coordinators and teachers, are involved in implementation. Resources needed to succeed include staff time and access to trainings and curriculum resources for relevant Educational Functioning Levels.

Since this is a continuing emphasis, we follow an annual timeline in utilizing the strategies listed above. Following the conclusion of each program year, the Quality Assurance Advisor, Instructional Consultant, and Facilitator review NRS results and discuss these with the Governance Committee. The goal attainments of each partner agency are analyzed in written form, and shared with the membership. If there are several NRS levels in which attainment was inadequate at a given provider, the Quality Assurance Advisor develops a written NRS Improvement Plan based on specific needs with that agency, and works with the agency during the year to monitor progress. Depending on need, plans may include testing recommendations, suggestions on correlating curricula to assessments, working with teachers to enhance instruction, etc. The Advisor also reviews overall SPCLC and individual agency progress in attaining NRS goals throughout the year, using MABE reports, and reviews these at each Governance Committee meeting with the membership. Site visits to monitor progress, policy, and practice occur at each agency during the program year. Prior to the end of each program year, all members work with the Advisor to insure that all testing has been completed, and that all data is entered into MABE.

A number of objectives related to NRS attainment are incorporated into Section 3 - Please see Attachment J, Professional Development Plan.

Outcomes we expect include continued growth in percentage of students completing NRS levels within the capacity of programming. As NRS Targets continue to rise, we will do our best to meet those targets.

(4) Marketing/Outreach

This is a continuing effort which began during program year 2013. SPCLC began working with a skilled marketing consultant to develop a plan which includes three main levels:

- 1 SPCLC member level – Develop tools that member agencies can customize and use in their own marketing efforts with stakeholder groups; provide guidance in their use.

This has been largely accomplished this year. Tasks and accomplishments included identification of key messages and tools; initial creative development; developing and obtaining creative resources, such as photo shoots at member agencies to acquire photos of students and staff to use in promotional materials; and production of tools, including large banners for each member agency, as well as a variety of brochures, flyers, etc. that have been developed and are being placed as templates on a secure webpage for member use.

- 2 Consortium level — Develop marketing tools and implement their use on behalf of all the member agencies on a community-wide basis.

This has also been largely accomplished (see above). One achievement is alteration of member websites to highlight SPCLC membership. We are currently revamping the SPCLC website, to better 'brand' it with our enhanced identify, and have done the same with the layout and design of our periodic E-Letter. During the remainder of the current program year, we will begin exploring the use of social media for outreach. During the summer of 2014, we will work with a full-time HECUA intern to utilize comprehensive use of the marketing and outreach tools along the University corridor - home to eight of our member agencies - to attract new learners, let businesses know about services available to help train their employees, and enhance community knowledge of ABE and SPCLC.

- 3 Campaign level — Develop a visibility campaign to raise awareness of ABE and promote its use and support by the wider community, which will include volunteer recruitment to work with member agency programs. This is planned for program year 2014.

A representative marketing committee comprised of member representatives coordinates all facets of the campaign, working with the Marketing consultant, with support and assistance from the SPCLC facilitator - we plan to continue to use this mechanism. All members are involved in implementing the tools and strategies developed. \$15,000 was budgeted during the current fiscal year for the Marketing Campaign, which has been used to pay consultant expenses and produce materials. We anticipate budgeting a somewhat smaller amount in 2014, given that our overall plan and materials have been developed.

Our future timeline includes: working with the HECUA intern on outreach along the Central Corridor in the summer of 2014; creating and posting additional materials (such as brief YouTube videos featuring student stories) during the summer-fall of 2013; and developing and utilizing campaign level plans and materials during 2013-14.

The overall intermediate and long-term outcomes we expect to achieve include enhanced student referrals, greater community understanding of and support for ABE and SPCLC as an consortium, better identification of member agencies with SPCLC, and larger numbers of volunteers. At the end of 2014, we will assess the overall impact of our efforts in these areas, and make further plans as needed, taking into account available resources.

(5) Distance Learning and Digital Literacy

SPCLC has prioritized development of distance learning and digital literacy. Past and current projects include: retention of a Distance Learning Specialist to assist member agencies to develop and maintain distance learning opportunities; facilitation of the statewide Distance Learning Supplemental Services grant through the Hubbs Center; and facilitation of the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment Standards, an online assessment tool which is widely used throughout Minnesota ABE programs.

Detailed information related to this area is included in Section 7, Technology Plan. Briefly, our strategies over the next two years will include:

- Encouraging staff from member agencies to participate in DL 101 and 102, through the Supplemental Services grant (several provider members have already participated). Please see Objective 4 in our Professional Development Plan, Section 3.
- Monitoring at the Consortium level the development and maintenance of distance learning at member agencies.
- Discussing, training, and assessing how best to integrate digital literacy skills into the wide range of ABE services delivered through SPCLC.
- Purchasing a Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment sponsorship for each SPCLC member provider.

Detailed plans to implement these strategies will be developed at the beginning of each year for the next two years, and reviewed periodically during each year by the Governance Committee.

The SPCLC Facilitator coordinates these efforts, assisted by the Instructional Specialist and Hubbs Center and other staff involved with the Supplemental Services project, working with member managers and teachers. Resources needed include financial (such as for Northstar sponsorships and professional development, both built into the SPCLC management budget), capital (computer equipment, built into member agency budgets), and staff time. Please also see Section 3, Professional Development, for agency-specific professional development related to distance learning.

The outcomes we hope to attain include greater implementation and use of distance learning, in a hybrid, integrated manner, and integration of digital literacy at all levels of ABE instruction. Our intent is to better prepare our students for further education and employment in an increasingly technologically driven world.