

**ATLANTIC CAPE MAY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD
STRATEGIC ADULT LITERACY WORKFORCE PLAN**

January 1, 2012 – June 30, 2016

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Executive Summary

The Atlantic Cape May Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and its Adult Literacy Workforce Committee have developed a plan that is compatible with the WIB's Strategic Plan. This plan will provide recommendations to integrate the delivery of services and coordination of partners within the Atlantic and Cape May One Stop System (OSCC) to increase the employment and training opportunities for individuals who require literacy remediation. This shall be accomplished in conjunction with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) and the Title I and II Literacy programs, while fostering an environment for provider collaboration and partnerships. This plan outlines the Committee's goals and targets the needs of special populations in specific geographic areas in Atlantic and Cape May counties.

This plan endorses a systematic approach to the delivery of services to the participant. It supports securing the resources necessary to maintain current programming in high demand service areas, such as the Workforce Learning Links (WLL), Learning Labs (LL) and General Education Development (GED) testing to enhance employment and training opportunities for OSCC customers. This plan also addresses New Jersey State Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJLWD) issued performance standards and assessment tools to measure outcomes. This plan delineates primary goals to be accomplished over a four (4) year period and recommends secondary goals for consideration should additional funding or grant opportunities become available.

The WIB Board has established partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, educational institutions and government agencies to provide a seamless system of employment, training, literacy and social services to residents and employers in Atlantic and Cape May counties. The Board's mission is to ensure the coordinated and efficient delivery of the region's workforce readiness resources through membership which provides leadership, direction, and accountability for the service area.

The WIB is comprised of 45 representatives shared between Atlantic and Cape May Counties with more than half its membership representing the private sector. The WIB has six (6) working committees, one of which is the Adult Literacy Workforce Committee and three (3) industry specific sub-committees. The current WIB Strategic Plan states that the vision of the Adult Literacy Workforce Committee is:

1. Provide direction and oversight of the operations of the literacy system in the bi-county region.
2. Develop strategies to address issues of workplace literacy that impact employment.
3. Improve accessibility of literacy services to special populations.
4. Build systemic collaboration among providers across both counties.

The Adult Literacy Workforce Committee endorses a systematic approach for the delivery of services to the OSCC customer. It supports implementing service strategies to:

1. Increase literacy levels of OSCC customers to secure meaningful and sustainable employment, enter post secondary education or job training and for career advancement.
2. Increase the number of individuals that obtain a GED credential.
3. Outreach to the employer community to engage business in the labor exchange system.

The Committee also supports obtaining resources to:

1. Provide financial literacy instruction that allows an individual to make informed and effective decisions through their understanding of finances.
2. Ensure annual review and production of a Literacy Directory.
3. Partner with the private sector to financially support literacy initiatives that are employer based and specific to their industry.

4. Add computer literacy courses (Microsoft Applications) to assist individuals entering the workforce for the first time and refresher courses for those re-entering the workforce.
5. Provide computer based testing, such as TABE PC or TABE Online.

The Committee accepts state-backed standards, assessment tools, and measures of outcomes related to the WIA, WFNJ and literacy programs as defined by the New Jersey State Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJLWD). The group also incorporates the WIB's goals in this plan. It's also important to note that workforce development issues of employers in local industries are understood and acknowledged in this plan.

This plan has specific goals to be accomplished during a detailed timeline and provides items for consideration in future grant applications and resource allocations. For the purposes of this plan literacy levels are loosely defined as follows:

- Beginning ABE (Adult Basic Education) Literacy: Individual has minimal or no reading or writing skills in any language. There is little or no comprehension of written language or how print corresponds to spoken language. Individual has little to no recognition of numbers or counting skills.
- Beginning Basic Education: Individual can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing similar vocabulary. Individual can count, add and subtract and identify simple fractions and operations. Individuals with reading or math computation levels below a 4th grade level.
- Low Intermediate Basic Education: Individual can read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure and can write simple paragraphs with a main idea and supporting details on familiar topics. Individual can perform the four basic math operations and identify mathematical symbols. Scores between a 4th and 6th grade reading or math computation level on the TABE.
- High Intermediate Basic Education, Low Adult Secondary Education and High Adult Secondary Education: Scores between a 6th and 12th grade reading or math computation level on the TABE.
- Beginning ESL Literacy: Individual cannot speak, write or understand English or understands only isolated words or phrases.
- Low Beginning ESL to High Beginning ESL: Individual can understand basic greetings, simple phrases and commands. Individuals can understand common words, simple phrases and sentences containing familiar vocabulary and respond to simple questions about everyday activities and express immediate needs.
Low Intermediate ESL: Individuals can understand simple learned phrases and limited new phrases containing familiar vocabulary and can participate in limited social situation. Can read simple materials on familiar subjects and write simple notes.
- High Intermediate ESL: Individual can understand learned phrases and limited new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly, can communicate basic survival needs with some help, participate in limited social situation and relies on description and concrete terms.
- Advanced ESL: Individual can understand and communicate in a variety of contexts related to daily life and work. Understands a variety of everyday subjects and can clarify meaning by rewording and construct some sentences.
- Basic Computer Education: Individuals with little to no computer, Word Processing, E-Mail, or Web skills

This plan has the support of the Adult Literacy Workforce Committee, the WIB Board, the Executive Director of the WIB and the One Stop Operator (OSO).

B. Plan Development

The Adult Literacy Workforce Committee lent support to the development of this plan. All input was considered by the Committee and has laid the foundation to set new goals. Members have been invaluable assets in producing this final document. With that said, the Committee would be remiss not to acknowledge the successes over the past decade to the adult literacy system in Atlantic and Cape May counties. Since 2001, the following goals have been attained.

1. Through partnership with the local community college, secured Title I funding from the New Jersey State Department of Education (NJDOE) to operate a “Literacy Consortium” grant that provides adult education development.
2. First Workforce Investment Board (WIB) in the State of New Jersey to gain approval to operate a GED Testing program in Atlantic County.
3. Opened three (3) Workforce Learning Links to serve High Intermediate Basic Education literacy levels (6th – 12th grades) in Hammonton, Pleasantville and Wildwood.
4. Co-located consortium funded learning labs to serve Low Intermediate Basic Education literacy levels (4th – 6th grade) in the Atlantic City, Pleasantville and Wildwood Offices.
5. Opened a Literacy Lab to serve Beginning Basic Education literacy levels (below a 4th grade) in Pleasantville Office.
6. Transitioned the OSCC and local service providers to the Tabulation for Adult Basic Education (TABE) to assess literacy levels.
7. Adopted Equipped for the Future (EFF) Standards at the local WIB level.
8. Produced a bi-annual Literacy Directory outlining area service providers, contact information, services, eligibility requirements, fees, if applicable and hours of operations.
9. Transitioned from paper-pencil TABE assessments to computer based (online) testing.

The Committee consists of representatives from private business, community, faith based, government agencies and post secondary education institutions. The Committee has a membership of 15 individuals from both the public and private sectors. The WIB Executive Committee has also been frequently updated by the Chair of the Committee and WIB staff to ensure a smooth transition to the One Stop Operator for implementation of plan goals.

The Committee surveyed OSCC service providers to garner their input in the development of this plan. The Committee accepted anecdotal input from professionals working in the literacy field to record customer and business community perspectives. In 2010, employers were surveyed to identify literacy barriers as it directly relates to employment.

C. Target Population(s)

The WIB is committed to achieving its literacy goals. Based on those goals and subsequent analysis of individual and employer needs and the current system’s capacities to meet those needs, the Committee has placed a priority on the lowest level learners. The Committee identified the populations served through implementation of this plan as follows:

- Existing or potential OSCC customers in the Low Intermediate Basic Education, High Intermediate Basic Education, High Intermediate ESL and Advanced ESL literacy levels that delay securing unsubsidized employment.
- Individuals mandated for participation in a to-work activity under WFNJ regulation.
- Individuals in need of a high school diploma or equivalent that leads to placement in unsubsidized employment, post secondary education or career advancement.
- Individuals with disabilities that require academic accommodations.

OSCC personnel, service providers and contracted vendors have distinct missions and goals, but collectively aspire to assist this population in achieving self sufficiency through meaningful and sustainable employment. Through awareness of the myriad of One Stop services and professional development seminars, the Committee is confident the goals listed in this plan are achievable.

SECTION 2: LABOR MARKET TRENDS

The makeup of the southern region of New Jersey is very similar in its unemployment trends and poverty levels. The economic downturn of the past three (3) years has had significant impact on the Southern New Jersey region. This impact has been felt worldwide, but has been more noticeable in the Atlantic Cape May region as evidenced by near doubling of the unemployment rate over a one year period. According to the NJLWD, the Atlantic County unemployment rate in September 2011 was 11.8%, not seasonally adjusted and 9.0% in Cape May County for that same time period. At the conclusion of 2010, Atlantic County held at 12.4% unemployment rate while Cape May County was at 11.9 percent. The Committee deduced that Atlantic County has a slightly lower

current unemployment rate as compared to the same time period in 2010, while Cape May County has more significantly reduced the unemployment gap. When reviewing Labor Force Estimates by municipalities with a population greater than 25,000, Atlantic City (17.2%), Galloway Township (12.0%), and Egg Harbor Township (11.8%) ranked highest. There were no Cape May County statistics available as there were no municipalities that met the population requirements for the survey.

According to a NJLWD representative, “What began with tightening of credit markets precipitated by losses associated with subprime mortgages has morphed into a full-blown global economic crisis. What many saw as a temporary disruption that made raising money difficult for highly leveraged projects such as new hotel casinos, intensified and spread throughout the broader economy as the year of 2008 drew to a close. Needless to say, consumers have cut back sharply on discretionary spending in the face of falling home and stock market values, and growing employment insecurities. Officially in recession since December 2007, the severity of the national economic downturn will depend to a great extent on how consumers react to the uncertainties that currently surround their own employment and financial circumstances. At a different point in time, the efforts of households to reduce debt, increase savings and otherwise live within their means might be welcomed -- at this moment, not so much. Like so many other parts of the country, projects flowing through Atlantic and Cape May counties’ economic development pipelines slowed dramatically or stopped entirely during 2008 -- and some may never see the light of day.”

The majority of recent job losses have been felt in the leading occupation for the southern region – that of Hospitality and Tourism. The job losses in this industry reflect the region’s true economic picture. According to a Las Vegas Review article published in September 2011, Atlantic City is in its fifth year of a revenue decline that began in 2006 when the first slots parlor opened in neighboring Pennsylvania. Since then, Atlantic City’s casinos have lost \$1.5 billion in revenue and thousands of jobs. A Press of Atlantic City article published in 2011 entitled: *South Jersey Poverty, Unemployment up Sharply as Effects of Recession Linger*, recently stated that “the casino and tourism industry is built of people spending discretionary money, but when they lose confidence in the economy they hold onto their money.” These losses are a testament of the severity of the crisis and will require the most effort and funding to retrain its workforce for new careers or to advance in existing careers in the industry. One would be remiss if not to make mention of the sizeable downturn in the Retail and Construction (Natural Resources Mining and Construction) industries, which had seen losses for several years leading up to this crisis. In more recent months, properties such as The Tanger Outlets: The Walk in Atlantic City has experienced an expansion with more than 100 new stores slated to open.

It’s true that from a growth perspective, the national economy is making progress, but that has done little to effectuate the state or local economies. Most residents would agree that they’re still operating in a recession mode. In more recent months, the local area has seen an increase in Construction Trades employment as Atlantic City breaks ground on the Hard Rock Café Casino and the continuance of projects at The Revel and recently of Trump Marina, now known as the Golden Nugget. These projects are scheduled to open and expand in 2012 and should bring thousands of jobs, but could be short lived due to competition within the industry. It was also noted in the Press of Atlantic City article that “employment is dependent on the future of an industry’s performance. The principal economic locomotive is slowing down and a turnaround really isn’t imminent.”

With the aging of the baby boomer population, rest reassured that expansion of the Healthcare Industry is inevitable. Since this population is comprised of a variety of individuals with different attitudes, aptitudes, life and work experiences and disability levels, there is reasonably good evidence to suggest that this occupational cluster provides great employment opportunities. Entry level positions pay higher than minimum wage and both lateral and vertical career advancement is not only possible, but encouraged by the local healthcare institutions. At the Atlantic County Economic Development Forum: *Beyond the Boardwalk* it was stated that in New Jersey there will be a need for 40,000 Certified Nurse Aides (CNA) over the next ten (10) years. It was noted that the industry is transitioning to health and wellness, outpatient specialty services, and home based care. Likewise, the need for individuals certified in medical coding and billing will increase as the population seeking medical care expands. All three (3) acute care facilities (AtlantiCare Medical Center, Cape Regional Medical Center and Shore Medical Center) have expanded their infrastructure and ambulatory, specialty and primary care practices have grown substantially. Unfortunately, the upswing in this industry has done little to offset the substantial job losses in what were previously considered demand occupations in the hospitality, tourism and service sectors.

Similarly, and aligned with the United States Department of Labor’s goals to increase awareness and train individuals for employment in the “energy efficiency” business sector, this WIB has continued to research entry level and advanced training in this occupational

cluster. The local WIB has experienced some successes utilizing On-the-Job (OJT) Training grants to recruit local solar installation and green life businesses to hire and train area residents in this career cluster. With the development surrounding the new Aviation and Research Park being built at the Federal Aviation Administration in Egg Harbor Township, there should be substantial opportunities for both entry level and management positions in this sector. However, one must note that this may require additional job training, defining of career ladders, funding and time to mature into a new economic engine in this region. Lastly, brand restaurants continue to open in this slow economy as well as entry level jobs in the financial services industry. As supported by the NJLWD, there has been a significant upswing in new business development as the unemployed engage in entrepreneurship endeavors.

It is well known that workers with literacy deficiencies are more likely to have short-term, part-time or contractual jobs leaving them vulnerable to the pendulant swing of the local economy. Moreover, these same individuals are typically employed in occupations with lower status and less stability. As a result there is a much greater presence of workers in low skilled jobs than in medium or high skilled occupations. The opportunity for workers with limited literacy skills depends not only on the type of employment sought, but also the kind of work that is available and in-demand. Through anecdotal testimonials, the Committee concluded that employment continues to be a barrier for individuals with limited literacy skills and English proficiency.

SECTION 3: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A. Customers

(See EFF standards attached to this plan for full descriptions of literacy levels)

Workforce professionals believe that workplace literacy skills are essential in today's global economy. For individuals with literacy barriers this skill-set can be difficult to master. The Committee understands that we live in a society that values reading and writing skills and we have an educational system that favors those who do well with these skills. Unfortunately, there are also a lot of individuals who have learning disabilities or learning styles that do not help them in a traditional classroom. Those that are not strong in these academic modes generally experience less success. Those that subsequently are not successful in traditional learning systems receive less formal education, are challenged in developing a strong sense of worth and ultimately are at a distinct disadvantage competing in the modern labor market. Education is clearly associated with employment opportunities and financial success. Yet many of those adults at the bottom of the education ladder struggle to achieve the same level of success as their counterparts. This is supported by The American Community Survey released by the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) which reported that the median income for individuals residing in Atlantic County aged 25 years and older with less than a high school diploma is \$21,575 as compared to those with a high school diploma or equivalency at \$25,551. This information was not available for 2010 in Cape May County and the Committee decided data from the 2000 Census would be outdated.

According to The American Community Survey released by the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) there are an estimate 97,253 (not seasonally adjusted) people living in Cape May County and approximately 274,685 residents in Atlantic County. This same report showed that 43.3% of individuals aged 18 and older residing in Atlantic County have less than a high school diploma and 31.7% of individuals in that same age category in Cape May County have less than a high school diploma. These estimates are consistent with our own findings that highlight the need for additional support for the Level II A and B and Level III learners. In addition, 68% of individuals with less than a high school diploma are in the labor force, while those numbers jump to 88% and 91% for individuals with a high school diploma or some college /Associate's Degree in the age category of 25 to 64. In Cape May County, the statistics are similar in that 56% of individuals with less than a high school diploma are in the labor force, while those numbers rise to 78% and 82% for individuals with a high school diploma or some college /Associate's Degree in the same age category.

According to Literacy Volunteers Cape Atlantic (LVA) there has been a significant increase in workers seeking ESL classes. In the past, LVA served primarily low level learners at the Beginning ABE Literacy, Beginning Basic Education and Low Intermediate Basic Education. Today, 80% of their students are assessed as Low Beginning ESL, High Beginning ESL and Low Intermediate ESL. Of that ESL population, 41.3% of their customers are male as compared to 58.7 female and the largest ethnicity seeking services are individuals of Hispanic and Asian descent. PathStone Corporation has identified that there in addition to Spanish; there has been a rise in individuals speaking Haitian Creole and French residing in the bi-county region. In the summer of 2011, Pathstone Corporation served approximately 40 to 50 migrant farm workers in Atlantic County, of which most relocate to Cumberland/Salem/Gloucester

counties in the winter season, because of lack of entry level jobs in the county and the high costs of housing. In the western part of Atlantic County there has been a rise in Spanish speakers, mainly from migrant farm workers who decide to remain in the area for their families. According to the American Community Survey in 2010, Spanish, Chinese, Italian, Portuguese, and Tagalog have been listed as the top five (5) languages with the most speakers (other than English) in New Jersey. The Committee thinks that it's reasonable to extend these figures to South Jersey, given that there are many foreign workers employed by area businesses.

The economic climate has members of the "baby boom" generation at or near retirement age revisiting their options as a means of economic security in uncertain times. Rising medical premiums and property taxes coupled with the cost of care for aging parents, debts and increases in daily utility, fuel and grocery costs has and will continue to influence their decision to keep working beyond retirement or re-enter the workforce as a means of self sufficiency. In the past year, the OSCC has seen an increase in individual's age 50 and older seeking services. In many instances, the mature workers possess existing, marketable and transferable skills, but lacks academic and computer literacy proficiency. These individuals need relevant instruction to re-enter or remain in today's workforce. In addition to the TABE test, where applicable, informal assessments should be conducted regarding their physical and educational abilities and career interests.

The WIB adheres to the Equipped for the Future (EFF) standards when conducting literacy assessments. Please note these are basic definition. Full descriptions are available in an attachment. They are as follows.

Beginning ABE Literacy and Beginning Basic Education essentially means that an individual has minimal or no reading or writing skills in any language or can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing similar vocabulary. There is little or no comprehension of written language or how print corresponds to spoken language. This level also means the adult has little or no recognition of numbers or simple counting skills, or may have only minimal skills. In the workplace, this translates to a worker who can only handle routine entry-level jobs that require little or no basic written or computational skills, has no knowledge of computers or other technology and could possibly handle entry level employment that require minimal literacy skills and who recognizes very short, explicit, and pictorial texts. The OSCC system with additional funding is able to assist individuals that are categorized Beginning Basic Education but is not equipped to serve individuals at the Beginning ABE Literacy level and encourages partner collaboration with agencies such as with Literacy Volunteers Cape Atlantic and the Atlantic Cape May Consortium.

Low Intermediate Basic Education represents individuals that can read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure, can use context to determining meaning, and interpret actions required in specific directions and write simple paragraphs. This level also indicates that individuals can perform with high accuracy all four (4) basic math operations and use basic mathematical symbols. In the workplace, individuals can handle basic reading, writing and computational tasks related to life skills, such as completing medical forms, order form, or job applications, read labels and payroll stubs. The individual can use simple computer programs and perform a sequence of routine tasks given direction using fax machines or computer operation. The individuals can qualify for entry level jobs that require following written instruction and diagrams, can write short reports or messages and read simple dials and scales to take measurements. The OSCC system provides a Learning Lab for individuals that are assessed at this literacy level. The learning lab is partially funded by the WIB and the Atlantic Cape May Consortium. Atlantic Cape Community College and the Cape May County Technical School provide the instruction in their respective counties.

High Intermediate Basic Education, Low Adult Secondary Education and High Adult Secondary Education suggests that individuals can read text, simple descriptions, and narratives, comprehend expository writing and explain and analyze information or comprehend, a combination of all. Individuals may also be able to write simple to complex sentences, compare and contrast information, organize writing with few mechanical errors and express ideas supported by relevant detail. In addition, individuals can make mathematical estimates of time and space, perform with high accuracy math operations, solve narrative problems, convert decimals and fractions and/or apply principals of algebra and geometry. Some individuals may be able to perform only one or two (2) of the commands listed above. In the workplace, individuals can handle basic life skills tasks, read materials, learn to work with basic to difficult software programs, interpret appropriate use of technology and software, operate complex machinery, instruct others and perform written and oral presentations. The OSCC system provides Workforce Learning Links for individuals that are assessed at this literacy

level. The learning links are funded through the WIB. The NJLWD provides a Career Counselor while Atlantic Cape Community College provides the instruction.

Low Beginning ESL and High Beginning ESL largely is an individual that cannot speak or understand English or understands only isolated words or phrases. The adult has no or minimal reading or writing skills in any language and may be able to read and write their own name and simple words. There is little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language. In the workplace, the individuals functions minimally or not at all in English and can communicate only through gestures and a few isolated words. There is no knowledge of use of computers or technology. There has been a large influx of non-native speakers of English in Atlantic and Cape May Counties. According to PathStone Corporation, there has been a significant surge in Haitian population in the western part of Atlantic County. Again, the OSCC system is not equipped to serve this population and encourages partner collaboration with agencies such as Literacy Volunteers Cape Atlantic or Pathstone Corporation.

Low Intermediate ESL: Individuals can understand simple learned phrases and limited new phrases containing familiar vocabulary and can participate in limited social situation. Can ask and respond to questions and express basic survival needs. Can read simple materials on familiar subjects and write simple notes. Sentence structure lacks variety. In the workplace, individuals can handle routine entry level jobs that involve some written or oral English communication, but in which job tasks can be demonstrated. The OSCC system is not equipped to serve this population and encourages partner collaboration with agencies such as Literacy Volunteers Cape Atlantic or Pathstone Corporation.

High Intermediate ESL: Individuals can understand learned phrases and limited new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly, can communicate basic survival needs with some help, participate in limited social situation and relies on description and concrete terms. Individuals can read text, can use context to determine meaning and interpret actions. Individuals can write simple paraphrase and expand vocabulary. In the workplace, individuals can follow some simple oral and written instruction, and has some ability to communicate on the telephone of familiar subjects. The OSCC can accommodate individuals at this literacy level in the learning labs, although instruction is performed in a group setting with individuals that do not have Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The learning lab is partially funded by the WIB and the Atlantic Cape May Consortium. Atlantic Cape Community College and the Cape May County Technical School provide the instruction in their respective counties.

Advanced ESL: Individuals can understand and communicate in a variety of contexts related to daily life and work. Understands a variety of everyday subjects and can clarify meaning by rewording and construct some sentences. Can understand and participate in conversation on a variety of topics, shows control of basic grammar, but has difficulty using more complex structures. Has some basic fluency of speech. Individuals can read complex text, use context and word analysis to understand vocabulary, write in multi-paragraph text and use a large range of vocabulary. In the workplace, individuals can function independently and use English in routine social and work situations. Can handle work demands that require non-technical oral and written instruction and routine interaction with the public. The OSCC system provides Workforce Learning Links for individuals that are assessed at this literacy level. The learning links are funded through the WIB. The NJLWD provides a Career Counselor while Atlantic Cape Community College provides the instruction.

Basic Computer Education effectively prepares an individual for work in a technologically global economy. Individuals that require computer education essentially have little to no computer, Word Processing, E-Mail, or Web skills. These skills are necessities to conduct internet based job searches, apply for an employment opportunity and in most cases perform job functions once employed. There are few employers that provide paper applications and individuals with little to no computer skills are at a disadvantage to their counterparts in seeking employment. Furthermore, most job opportunities are posted online or through social media, which again requires basic skills to navigate the Internet. Lastly, almost every job demands a level of computer literacy from the UPS driver that delivers packages to the Chief Executive Officer that runs a million dollar company. The Committee strongly believes that computer literacy is tied directly to employment status. As such, the Committee recommends that the OSCC provide training in this area for both new computer users and those that need refresher courses to learn new ways to find a job. The unemployment rate is high and as such the job market saturated with job seekers and finding a job is difficult. Social media provides an alternative job seeking method for to conduct job searches in a supported environment or from home, if unable to travel or secure transportation to and from an OSCC or other location. Social media is also a medium of communication that broadens the scope of the job search. Candidates share their work and life experiences, credentials and certifications and are rated on those factors for employment consideration.

The 2010 American Community Survey statistics indicate that 31,035 individuals or 11% of the population (274,685) in Atlantic County over the age of 18 do not have a high school diploma. In Cape May County 9,686 or 10% of the population (97,253) in that same age category lack a diploma. These statistics strongly suggest that there is a continued need for high school credential preparation and **GED Testing** agencies in Atlantic and Cape May counties. Recently, it has been reported that in New Jersey the average cost to support a student through four (4) years of high school in a traditional setting is approximately \$40,000. Students that prematurely leave their high school experience with no tangible benefit cost the State its initial investment and possibly more in financial assistance programs over that individual's lifetime. In terms of providing the GED examination in foreign languages, there is evidence that suggests there is not a need to provide such as service. According to the State of New Jersey, from July 1, 2010 to March 30, 2011 (20 month period), 1,063 tests were administered (including re-tests) in Atlantic County of which 100% were given in English. Likewise in Cape May County for the same time period, 763 tests were administered (including re-tests) of which 100 % were given in English.

The Committee does not support students leaving a traditional high school setting, but does acknowledge that not all high school students are successful in meeting graduation requirements. These individuals are less likely to secure employment in high wage paying jobs and may not be eligible for career advancement. The GED is considered by many as a second chance system. The Committee disagrees with this thought. The Committee believes that the GED is an alternative opportunity and valuable educational resource that assist residents in reaching their fullest potential. The Committee also believes it's one of the best investments the WIB could make as it allows educationally disadvantaged individuals to become contributing members of society.

Although this plan does not quantify the demand for literacy services from **learning disabilities**, our interviews with providers and the WIB Disabilities Workforce Committee indicated such a need and anecdotal evidence suggests a lack of accessible and appropriate services for this population. In many instances, traditional academic and social assessments are not appropriate to determine a readiness to move forward with education and employment goals. As a result many OSCC customers with learning disabilities do not perform well in these environments, score poorly on assessments and require intensive remediation. To meet this need, instructors and counselors alike have sought materials from varying sources and used different curriculums. It became apparent, in developing this plan, that the OSCC Learning Links and Learning Labs do not have the resources available to provide quality and adequate instruction for individuals with learning disabilities. Therefore, the Committee recommends that a universal curriculum be developed or purchased that includes both a scope and sequence with materials and resources to support small class or one on one learning for this population. If that endeavor is too costly, the Committee recommends that the OSCC invest in professional development workshops presented by Developmental Instructors or persons with a background in adult literacy. This is a population that may or may not self identify, as having a learning disability, but a population that frequents literacy services and with accommodation may make the transition into employment quickly.

Financial literacy is directly linked to self sufficiency. It is the ability to understand finance. More specifically, it refers to the set of skills and knowledge that allows an individual to make informed and effective decisions through their understanding of finances. Some service providers have begun implementing such programs, particularly with the youth population. However, this trend has not been as quick when working with individuals with literacy barriers. Many area service providers have indicated the need for professional development in financial literacy to be able to provide effective instruction. The Committee agrees with this premise and supports the addition of financial literacy into the WIB's overall plan.

B. OSCC Personnel

Professional development of the OSCC staff is critical to continued success and full integration of services for individuals with literacy barriers. Performance standards set forth by the NJLWD clearly impart the importance of providing excellent customer service, effective communication and understanding job functions and One Stop partners as essential components for staff that administer direct services to the public.

The Committee recommends that ongoing professional development benefits not only the personnel, but the customers as well. To this end, the Committee identified agencies that may develop and provide professional development seminars at minimal costs. They may include, but are not limited to:

- Refresher course on the Equipped for the Future (EFF) standards, due to turnover of vendor instructors and OSCC personnel.
- How to identify individuals with learning disabilities and best practices for instruction.
- How to identify individuals with LEP and best practices for instruction.
- Managing an adult, multi-cultural classroom
- Working with individuals in transition (immigrants, migrants and refugees)
- Course on financial literacy curriculum and instruction practices.
- Computer literacy and how to deliver these services to best effect employment outcomes.
- Presentation of research-based programs or best practice in literacy services.

For this population, career counseling is essential to increase employment and career advancement opportunities. It's not just about getting the job, but more about employment retention and continued education that lead to promotions and higher paying wages. Staff must become experts in assessment, referral processes, and job or training placement. Furthermore, they need to clearly impart the message that work can be a positive experience and communicate the benefits of employment.

It's important to note that One Stop partners will be notified of the training opportunities and may send representatives to attend for minimal to no cost.

C. Providers

There is a strong working relationship between the OSCC, education and business consortia. Many partnerships already exist, but there is opportunity for more collaboration to reduce duplication, share resources and support one another's missions. It will be a main task of the Committee to support, encourage and nurture this collaboration.

It's important to note that the local community based providers of literacy services have been providing supported academic remediation programs that have made significant contribution to the workforce in Atlantic and Cape May counties. Furthermore, these opportunities have positively impacted the population in successfully integrating into gainful employment. Although, these agencies experience some success, barriers still exist that are prohibitive to attaining literacy goals.

Based on interviews with a variety of community based agencies, providers struggle to maintain adequate staff, resources and space to provide these much needed services. Many have been successful in obtaining resources from partner agencies, but many have been unable to expand services due to these barriers. It was noted that funding restrictions and reductions are the primary barriers to community based agencies serving this population.

Small group tutoring is frequently difficult, because of the disparity of literacy levels among the group. This service strategy is also not the most financially efficient way of operating. Literacy Volunteers Cape Atlantic indicated that they're unable to serve some disabled population who are referred to their program because our volunteer tutors are not trained in working with the special needs population. In these instances, the agency refers to other organizations better equipped to work with individuals with disabilities.

D. Facilities and Equipment

The OSCC utilizes the Tabulation of Adult Education (TABE) to evaluate reading, math and language skills levels. The results of this assessment assist the Employment Specialists in placement of individuals in appropriate instructional or training programs and to track success towards achieving educational goals. The tests are focused on factors required for vocational programs. Currently, the TABE assessment is offered in paper-and-pencil format in the Pleasantville OSCC and online in the Hammonton and Wildwood offices. In Pleasantville, implementation of the TABE online is anticipated, but has been slow because of space issues and other computer

installation projects falling behind schedule. The Committee believes that computer based testing improves efficiency and effectiveness of literacy services and supports this transition. The Committee also supports the purchase of and implementation of the TABE ESL assessment to determine proficiency in their native language. The costs associated with the operating the TABE ESL is limited to staffing and examination fees. The Committee believes the OSCC can purchase the additional tests, as needed, but suspects that finding an examiner to administer the exams in a foreign language may be an issue. Therefore, the Committee suggests that the OSCC reach out to community based agencies to see if they have staff that may assist or to host the test on a consistent basis.

Space is at a premium in all OSCC locations. In total the learning links (3 locations) can manage between 20 and 35 students per day and the learning labs (2 locations) approximately 40 per day. The learning links are first come, first serve and labs require registration. The spaces are truly inferior as compared to the demand for literacy services in the Pleasantville Office. The Committee recognizes that the OSCC has made significant changes to its attendance policy in an attempt to “weed” out non-participatory clients and make room for those consistently attending and dedicated to upgrading their literacy skills. With that said, space continues to be a barrier to participation. In addition, customers in the OSCC in Pleasantville have complained that hall noise from the waiting area is a distraction. The Committee recommends the OSCC assess the barrier and determine a cost effective remedy to resolve this issue.

E. Employers

The labor exchange, which is the overall goal, occurs when the service providers and/or the OSCC are successful in preparing individuals for employment. The recent recession and subsequent reduction in staffing hit local employers hard. In this rebuilding stage, fear of a reemerging recession, mandatory cross training and a technology driven economy have drastically altered the evolution of the workplace.

In 2010, the Committee conducted an employer based online survey to identify literacy barriers as it directly relates to workforce hiring practices. Of the 60 employers surveys, twenty-four (24) or 40% were returned with adequate responses. To determine the level of need, businesses were asked to identify their academic requirements, pre-employment assessment (if any), desired skills sets, barriers to employment or career advancement, suggested training areas and to gauge their awareness of the OSCC programs and services available.

Significant findings from the survey concluded:

1. Overwhelmingly, employers require a high school diploma or equivalent, with 79% indicating this requirement.
2. Although employers did not indicate a large ESL concern as it related to their workforce, of those that responded, 100% stated that customer service may have suffered due to a communication barrier.
3. Employers are not as knowledgeable about the cost free or small fee literacy services available in the bi-county region.
4. Computer training is essential in securing and maintaining employment as most industries utilize computer based programming.

It's a well known fact that the leading industries in Atlantic and Cape May counties face enormous challenges in economic and workforce development. The fact that 21% of the potential and incumbent workers are estimated to be at the lowest level of literacy poses a major deterrent for further industry growth and ultimately threatens the economic health of the bi-county region.

Clearly, even entry level jobs require technology based skills, English proficiency, reading comprehension, numeracy and work readiness. Unfortunately, many potential employees lack literacy skills necessary to achieve the productivity needed to grow in any industry. Through employer based testimonials, the most important ingredient in keeping the local industries healthy is to produce a customer focused, English proficient and literate workforce. Finding, training, retaining and advancing technology proficiency for this population of workers in such a competitive environment will be critical to the local economy.

There are few WIB areas and industries in the State of New Jersey where literacy providers and the WIB work closely together to prepare workers in the literacy levels congruent with the skill set needs of current and prospective employers. In Atlantic and Cape May counties, businesses are partnering with the OS system to recruit candidates, but not working as closely to identify their literacy

needs. There should be active dialogue with local industry in such career clusters as: Healthcare, Retail and Service, Hospitality and Tourism, Aviation Research and Technology and Labor Unions/Trades.

F. System Capacities

When considering system capacities, one must measure the OSCC based on those services located in the OSCC and those provided off site and through partner agencies. There are few occasions wherein a partner agency is co-located within the OSCC setting to provide services, but this is not a typical occurrence. The Committee asks that this is considered when reviewing this section of the plan. A full list of OSCC programs and services are available online at www.learntrainwork.com. For the purposes of this plan the services primarily utilized by existing OSCC customers will be reviewed.

According to the NJLWD, the Workforce Learning Link (WLL) program was established as a “second chance system” to ensure that every New Jersey resident has the ability to upgrade the basic skills needed to enter the workforce. The mission of the WLL is to provide short-term services to enhance basic skills in order for customers to secure or improve their level of employment and attain an increased level of self sufficiency. The program provides overall readiness to:

- Enter the workforce
- Further career opportunities
- Advance to higher education
- Enhance already acquired skills

Since 2001, The OSCC under the auspices of the Atlantic Cape May WIB has operated the Workforce Learning Link (WLL) program. Currently, the WLL’s program operates in the One Stop Career Centers located in Hammonton, Pleasantville and Wildwood, New Jersey. All WLL sites utilize the New Jersey Network (NJN) software and provide educational services based on the Equipped for the Future (EFF) standards. Co-located staff at each center provides the counseling and education services to the customer which includes, Employment Counselors from the NJLWD and instructors contracted through Atlantic Cape Community College (Atlantic Cape). Customers elect or are referred to participate in the WLL program. All customers are required to meet with the Employment Counselor to develop an Employability Plan or its equivalent. The plan consists of the TABE score and other relevant information such as the attendance and activity logs.

In 2004, the OSCC assumed management of the GED Testing Center in Atlantic County and continues to subcontract with the Cape May County Technical High School to provide this service in Cape May County. The Atlantic County GED Testing Center operates with staff paid directly through the WIB discretionary and literacy funds. Similarly, the staff in Cape May County receives a contribution of funds through a contract. It’s important to note that in previous fiscal years, the GED program funding included the cost for administration and staff regardless of the number of sessions and test takers. In FY 2008, modifications to the funding structure were implemented by the NLWD to only fund complete administrations of the GED Test with no consideration of the administrative costs and re-test sessions. It appears as though the change in funding was based on historical figures, rather than the overall costs to operate the program. Based on historical performance of the local area testing centers, it appears that there may not be adequate funding available at the local level each year to test at the volume mandated. Likewise, the formula for funding would require that about 1,200 individuals be tested. In PY 2010, approximately 740 registered and 467 took the test in the bi-county region, much less than the funding formula requires. As a result of bi-county GED Testing program in PY 2010, 417 high school credentials were issued by the New Jersey State Department of Education (NJDOE) in Atlantic and Cape May counties, which is equivalent to a medium sized high school graduation class. The average cost of a four year high school education is approximately \$40,000 as per NJDOE. If these 417 individuals had remained in a high school setting for two (2) years the cost of their education would have been about \$8.3 million. Through this program, 417 individuals earned a GED credential for an investment of \$20,850 in testing fees and approximately \$159,000 in operating expenses in both counties. It’s a small fraction on what the system makes good.

There are many cost free adult education programs that help OSCC consumers improve their reading, math, and communication skills in preparation for employment. These services, located within an OSCC setting, may or may not be appropriate based on the individual needs of the customers. They are as follows:

- A. **Workforce Learning Links:** This program helps individuals enter the workplace, prepare to take enrollment test, or advance to further training by providing self-paced tutorials. These activities are computer based with assistance from an instructor and open to the public. There is no registration required. Customers may learn at their own speed. Participants are required to register “for work,” enter into employment counseling and develop an employment/education plan with assistance from an employment counselor. Customers must function at the High Intermediate Basic Education, Low Adult Secondary Education and High Adult Secondary Education literacy levels for enrollment (PY 11 Proposed LOS: 335).
- B. **Learning Labs:** This program helps individuals enter the workplace or advance to the next educational functioning level for enrollment in the WLL program. These activities are paper-pencil and computer based intensive instruction in small group settings. Registration is required and customers must be referred following employment counseling and assessment. This program is available for individuals that need small group intensive instruction. Customers must function at the Low Intermediate Basic Education literacy level for enrollment (PY 11 Proposed LOS: 125).
- C. **Atlantic Cape May Consortium:** Since 2007, The Atlantic Cape Consortium (Atlantic Cape Community College, Literacy Volunteers Cape Atlantic, Pleasantville Public Schools and Cape May Technical School District) have worked collaboratively with the Atlantic Cape May Workforce Investment Board (WIB), in concert with the WIB’s *Strategic Plan for Adult Literacy* to offer integrated services to the expanded Atlantic and Cape May County region. The consortium is linked for student referral/support with the agencies of the One Stop System as well as community-based organizations.

The Consortium utilizes a variety of methods to identify and recruit participants, especially those adults who are at the lowest level of literacy and non-native speakers of English and need instruction. The Consolidated Adult Basic Skills and Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Grant Program will enable the consortium to continue to deliver high quality educational services for adults who lack the basic skills necessary for literate functioning, productive employment, effective parenting and citizenship (PY 11 Proposed LOS: 1,010).

Currently there are personnel at each OSCC that can read, write and communicate in Spanish. The Committee is grateful that some of these individuals have volunteered to assist at the request customers or Employment Specialists, even though it’s not a requirement of their job function. Unfortunately, there are limited OSCC personnel in both counties that are able to do the same in other languages. PathStone Corporation employs staff that speaks Spanish, Haitian Creole and French while Literacy Volunteers Cape Atlantic (LVA) has staff that speaks Spanish.

G. Capacity Building Barriers

Both Atlantic and Cape May Counties face geographic barriers that challenge the cost-efficient delivery of services. Poor and non-existent mass transit routes, lack of enough affordable quality childcare slots, and high concentration of demand in distressed economic areas present accessibility challenges that demand creative solutions. Unfortunately, scarce resources make it difficult to risk inventive ideas and moving both providers and customers to accept change in methods and channels of delivery is a time-consuming and labor-intensive endeavor.

Staffing in the OSCC and literacy providers, regardless of agency affiliation is an issue. The economic climate has driven an unprecedented number of local residents into the system seeking a myriad of literacy services. This has strained an existing workforce to provide adequate and appropriate services for typical customers without barriers to employment. Individuals with literacy deficiencies need close follow-up and consistent communication to be successful in a broad spectrum system such as the OSCC. This leads to a high level of consumer frustration and increases the likelihood of withdrawal from services and programs.

In 2011, the OSCC closed its Literacy Lab, which has served individuals scoring below a 4th grade level on the Tabulation of Adult Basic Education (TABE). As a result many are referred to partner agencies with waiting lists for participation. It was noted that it's easy to overlook the challenged reader in a bigger, higher level academic group. The Atlantic Cape May Consortium agreed to fund the program in Program Year 2011, if the WIB could secure an alternative site to operate the program. At the time of this plan was submitted a site had not been secured.

Through testimonials, it was reported that many customers that successfully score out of and complete literacy services in the learning lab are referred to the learning link, but not prepared to work independently or on the computer. The learning link was designed to provide computer based, self paced academic instruction and has been transitioned into a hybrid lab wherein paper-pencil instruction is also taking place. Through anecdotal evidence, it's clear that the paper-pencil instruction is a distraction. Furthermore, customers must acquire computer skills to work in today's labor market and the learning link should be utilized as a foundation for such learning. The Committee recommends that the OSCC review its current customer flow to remedy this issue. It was recommended that computer literacy be taught as an intermediary course for those with limited skills in this area prior to referral to the learning link.

The General Education Development Testing Service (GEDTS), based in Washington, DC, a not for profit literacy oversight program in partnership with Pearson-VU, a for profit educational testing company proposes to convert pen and paper GED testing to a Computer Based Testing (CBT) on or about January 1, 2014. In two (2) years, GED Test Center will be required to acquire a minimum of nine (9) computers and one (1) server, dedicated for the examination. If the center is not equipped with this hardware, a purchase fee of \$40,000 will be charged for the purchase and installation. Every nine (9) computers will require one (1) server. In addition, the candidate's fee per initial exam is under review, but could increase from \$50.00 to \$120.00 for an initial test and \$24.00 per retest. This is more than a 100% mark up on the cost of the test today. The Committee recommends that some revenue generated by GED fees collected be placed in a scholarship fund to defray the costs for individuals unable to pay the testing fee. It was suggested that the scholarship be tied to preparation study in an OSCC learning link or lab with specific income criteria.

In summary, the following are gaps and barriers in the local service area:

1. Several geographic areas that have scarce to no current literacy resources such as the western part of Atlantic County (Estell Manor, Buena, and Landisville in Atlantic County and Whitesboro, Woodbine, and the Villas in Cape May County).
2. Although there are some existing services for the lowest level learners, most especially through Literacy Volunteers Cape Atlantic, a partner of the Adult Literacy Committee appears to be in need of expanded services to meet the demand.
3. Limited funding available through NJLWD and NJDOE.
4. Increase in ESL and migrant worker populations.
5. Turnover of contracted vendor and provider instructors.
6. Existing curriculum and method of assessment is difficult with varying populations and learning levels.
7. Reduction in literacy providers in Atlantic and Cape May counties.
8. Space versus the need.
9. Installation of computers, licenses and software to conduct computer based or online TABE assessments in the Pleasantville Office.
10. GED Testing fee increase in correlation with the transition to computer based testing.
11. Turnover of contracted vendor instructors requires updated EFF training.
12. Customers lack computer literacy skills

Problems continue for those in rural areas with limited public bus service. In Cape May County "Fare Free" transportation is available, which connects rural areas with major New Jersey Transit routes. In spite of these transportation options, limitations exist that make it difficult for individuals to access services and travel to and from work. These restrictions may include, but are not limited to: accessibility, non-traditional work schedules and residence among others. In addition, for unemployed or underemployed individuals the cost associated with public transportation may be a barrier.

SECTION 4: SERVICE STRATEGY

The WIB has worked hard with its OS partners and literacy service providers to make certain that customers of the literacy delivery system receive the referrals and access to additional support services they need to be successful. Each OSCC has co-located partners and formal and informal relationships with provider agencies to ensure that the customer needs are addressed that may inhibit their ability to learn and become productive workers and good citizens.

The WIB is charged with the main responsibility of ensuring that universal access to necessary services happens as efficiently and effectively as possible. There is cross membership between the One Stop Oversight Committee and the Literacy Committee so that relevant issues are brought to appropriate venues. With that said, the Committee expects that these communication channels will continue and strengthen over time.

As could be expected, Atlantic and Cape May counties face demand for all levels of literacy and ESL services. The Title II Consortium grant led by Atlantic Cape Community College (Atlantic Cape) is designed to perform this function. The Committee considers the Consortium as the foundation for addressing a variety of literacy levels. Through the interview process the Committee surmised that the majority of literacy providers beyond the Consortium focus on the lowest level learners, because the demand for such services is strong.

Equipped for the Future (EFF) Standards provide guidance for what adults need to know and should be able to do as workers, parents, citizens and community members. In 2000, the Atlantic Cape May WIB area adopted EFF Standards as a basic skills measurement. The Committee has agreed that EFF Standards should continue to be utilized to enhance the local workforce development system.

A. Priority of Service

The Committee recommends that the OSCC primarily focus on funding individuals that require literacy remediation (Low Intermediate Basic Education, High Intermediate Basic Education, Low Adult Secondary Education, High Adult Secondary Education, High Intermediate ESL and Advanced ESL) to secure unsubsidized part-time or full-time employment be considered as the priority of service. In addition, individuals mandated to be participating in a to-work activity under the Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) regulations should be a priority for service. In an effort to serve the “most in need,” OSCC customers with existing marketable and transferable skills should be directed to career counseling and provided with OJT opportunities and when eligible job training grants.

Although the Committee recognizes that there are many individuals with low level literacy needs, limited OSCC funding has strained the system. As such, literacy services should provide relevant, short-term academic remediation that leads to employment. Individuals that require intensive, long term literacy services should be funneled through community and faith based organizations such as Literacy Volunteers Cape Atlantic and the Atlantic Cape May Literacy Consortium, among others.

The WIB is tasked with workforce development and this must remain its dedicated mission. With that said, the Committee would recommend that community based and faith based organizations continue to provide meaningful and sustainable programs and services for those individuals that do not meet the priority of service listed above.

B. Outreach and Recruitment

The WIB has long recognized that outreach to and recruitment of target populations is essential to successfully achieving literacy goals. Due to these economic times, the OSCC generally does not need to market literacy services, as each program is at full capacity. But, because of the priority of service outlined in this plan specific categories have been identified and recruitment and outreach strategies should be developed to creatively inform these populations of available services. For those individuals that are not able to enroll in an OSCC sponsored literacy activity, customers should be made aware of how to access the full array of literacy resources and alternatives to the OSCC when there is a waiting list. It's the opinion of this Committee that the OSO will have to implement a recruitment plan and work closely with the area service providers to develop a systemic referral system in both counties.

C. Access and Referral

The WIB has worked hard with its One Stop partners and providers to ensure that customers of the OSCC receive the referrals and access to additional support services they need to be successful. Each One Stop has co-located partners and formal and informal relationships with provider agencies to ensure that the customer can address barriers that may inhibit their ability to learn and become productive workers and good citizens.

The WIB One Stop Committee is charged with the main responsibility of ensuring that universal access to necessary services happens as efficiently and effectively as possible. There is cross-membership between the One Stop Committee and the Adult Literacy Workforce Committee that ensures relevant issues are brought to appropriate venues. We expect that these communication channels will continue and strengthen over time.

Because our primary target population is those individuals at the Intermediate Basic Education, High Intermediate Basic Education, Advanced and ESL literacy levels independent, self directed and distance learning formats without strong teacher classroom or individual tutor support have limited applicability. However for learners at the Low Adult Secondary Education and High Adult Secondary Education levels there may be more room to utilize technology tools for independent and self-directed study.

D. Service Integration

Coordination and integration of services in both counties, among all literacy providers is a fundamental building block to attain the goals in this plan. The WFNJ to-work unit is a vital partner in this plan and should actively participate on the Committee to ensure that public assistance participants are able to enroll, remain compliant, seek employment and attain self sufficiency.

In general, eligible individuals who are unemployed, recently laid off, underemployed (still working) or a young adult ages 14 to 21, may access OSCC sponsored programs. These services and programs are provided free of charge and include:

1. Adult Literacy and Educational Assessments
2. Career Assessments and Counseling
3. Job Search Assistance and Placement
4. Job Training
5. Public Assistance

All services are provided based on program availability, eligibility and where appropriate for individuals with disabilities. These programs are offered by a host of agencies, which include, but are not limited to:

1. Atlantic County Department of Family and Community Development
2. County of Atlantic, Office of Workforce Development
3. New Jersey State Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Employment Services Unit (Hammonton, Pleasantville and Wildwood)
4. New Jersey State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

In addition to those agencies listed above, the OSCC also partners with post secondary education institutions, public housing authorities, governmental agencies and community based organizations that encourage universal referrals between organizations to better accommodate customers. These include:

1. Atlantic Cape Community College
2. Atlantic County Institute of Technology
3. Atlantic City Housing Authority
4. Atlantic Human Resources
5. Cape May County Board of Social Services

6. Cape May County Technical School
7. Experience Works, Inc. (Cape May County Partner)
8. National Council on the Aging (Atlantic County Partner)
9. Family Service Association
10. City of Atlantic City Women, Infants and Children
11. Pleasantville Housing Authority

The WIB Board shall be leveraged to identify potential employer partners and encouraged to participate in this program. Leadership and guidance, performance review and marketing and service strategy discussions will make the difference between true successes or mediocre outcomes. About half the membership is comprised of private sector members and as a result the Board understands labor market trends and is better equipped to identify in-demand occupational titles and requisite training requirements to sustain the public/private sector link between economic and workforce development.

Despite these many obstacles, the WIB believes that it can positively impact the quality and quantity of services to individuals with Limited English Proficiency and literacy deficiencies who need employment or job training in Atlantic and Cape May Counties. A population that is sometimes difficult to serve through OSCC services is young adults with academic challenges transitioning from secondary schools to employment or post secondary education. The Literacy Committee has undertaken a comprehensive survey on the current system to identify providers and their capacity to service individuals with literacy barriers. Through research, the Committee identified specialized programs that may help to fill this gap in service. It's important to note that some agencies listed below also provide social service and case management services that support unsubsidized employment. The following is a list of literacy providers that coordinate closely within the OSCC setting. Attached is a full description of each service provider including: contact information, registration process, eligibility, and staff qualifications.

Service Provider	Service Category							
	ABE	ESL	GED PREP	Adult HS	Tutoring	OT w/ Literacy	Computer Literacy	Job Readiness
Atlantic Cape Community College *	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Atlantic City High School (Parent Center)	X	X	X				X	
Atlantic City Even Start Family Literacy	X	X	X		X		X	X
Atlantic City Housing Authority	X		X				X	
Atlantic City Rescue Mission			X		X	X		X
Atlantic City Library		X	X				X	X
Atlantic County Department of Public Safety		X	X					
Atlantic County Library System							X	
Atlantic County Women's Center			X		X		X	X
Cape May County Technical School *	X	X	X		X		X	
Covenant House			X		X		X	
Edison Job Corps (Youth)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Literacy Volunteers of Cape Atlantic	X	X			X			
PathStone Corporation ^		X	X					X
Pleasantville Adult Continuing Education	X		X	X	X			
Pleasantville Even Start Family Literacy	X	X	X		X		X	X
Ocean City Library							X	
Youth Advocate Program (Youth)					X	X		X
Workforce Learning Links* (Hammonton, Pleasantville and Wildwood)	X	X	X		X		X	X

*Co-located in a OSCC
 ^ Available for individuals that qualify for PathStone services.

E. Coordination and Leveraging of Resources

According to the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), WIB's are tasked with the development of workforce strategies and leveraging education and economic development stakeholders within their local communities, to ensure that state and local workforce development and job training programs meet the needs of employers. These investments in workforce development create a comprehensive system to provide a highly skilled workforce that competes in the global economy.

Coordination between the OSO and the WIB Board is a critical component to this plan. The OSCC and partner agencies must leverage private sector WIB Board members to identify employment barriers and labor needs to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. At the same time, these two (2) groups need to actively participate in incentive programs available to market both the OSCC programs and the customers served.

F. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU's)

There is consensus across Atlantic and Cape May Counties that a systematic and collaborative approach to the provision of literacy services is an essential underpinning of the plan. The WIB and the Committee is expected to take the lead role to ensure the development of appropriate informal agreements between One Stop partners. In fact, these goals will be issued to the OSO who will be tasked with implementing the agreements. MOU's do not require the exchange of funding between agencies, only the sharing of services and equipment, among others. With scarce and limited resources shared resources is the service model of the future.

It is our goal that there will be appropriate agreements among providers to resource share; ensure ease of referral, transfer of records, and recognition learning styles. We intend to achieve this goal as follows:

1. Form basic agreements in each county with service providers for the provision of basic adult education services.
2. Spearhead other appropriate and complementary agreements to ensure the development of a systemic approach to literacy services in the bi-county region to avoid duplication of services, extend services to underserved populations and geographic areas, when funding is available.
3. Continue communication to recognize and encourage partner program development and implementation.
4. Share tools and techniques with local providers to help enhance the literacy system.
5. Document significant learning gains by program area and share best practices.

SECTION 5: CONCLUSION

Literacy resources and funding are becoming scarce in New Jersey. Local governmental, community and faith based organizations should focus on building relationships with other like agencies to share resources. In doing so, each agency should be able to remain financially stable through the downsizing in grant funding and continue to serve consumers in its given service area.

The Committee firmly believes that the local economy will recuperate from the recession over the next three (3) to five (5) years. It was recently stated at the Atlantic County Economic Development Forum: *Beyond the Boardwalk* held October 19, 2011 that the local employment outlook, over the next five (5) to 10 years out, looks promising. It was noted that the national and state economies will recover at a much faster rate than in Atlantic and Cape May counties. However, it was suggested that with the advent of the Next Generation Aviation and Research Park there is great opportunity to transition the local economy from one reliant primarily on the Hospitality and Tourism industry to a diversified market.

The Committee acknowledges that the OSCC must prepare a workforce for a global economy. There are fundamental requirements in such an endeavor and literacy skills are at the forefront of this task. The WIB is fortunate to have a strong Adult Literacy Workforce

Committee who agrees on a vision and demonstrates the commitment to achieve stated goals. The members of the Committee have exceptional expertise which they willingly and cooperatively share. There is also a vibrant commitment among local providers to collaborate, leverage resources, and meet the growing demand for literacy services. The leading industries have been effective in coming together with the workforce development system to articulate needs, define skill sets, and make the commitment to provide opportunities for potential and incumbent workers to gain the skills they need to become productive workers.

B. Recommendations

1. Continued funding of the Literacy Lab to serve individuals (with suspected or acknowledged disabilities) scoring between a 1st and 4th grade reading or math computation level through formal assessment(s).
2. The development of a universal literacy curriculum that outlines strategies to aid in the instruction of individuals with learning disabilities. The curriculum should support at a minimum classroom and online based instruction and provide materials and resources to support small class or one on one learning.
3. Research financial literacy curriculum and implement as a component of the overall literacy system.
4. Provide training to OSCC personnel, One Stop partners contracted vendors and area service providers on EFF Standards.
5. In the development of a literacy directory, include compile a list of providers equipped to provide services to individuals with (learning) disabilities.
6. Continued funding of the GED to provide individuals with an opportunity to earn the credentials as a means to financial stability through unsubsidized employment.
7. Subsidize the cost of the GED for individuals receiving public assistance that participate in a to-work activity related to literacy.
8. The OSCC will work closely with the Chambers of Commerce in both counties to identify potential incumbent worker job related skills needed and adapt curriculum to meet those needs.
9. Provide scholarships to defray the costs of the GED Test, when online testing is mandated.
10. Begin using an assessment such as TABE CLAS-E, which provides a language assessment to provide instructors with tools needed to enhance learning on English language skills for those with LEP.
11. Form basic agreements in each county with service providers for the provision of basic adult education services.
12. Resolve the distractions in the learning environments in the Pleasantville Office.

C. Evaluation and Performance Standards

An annual evaluation shall be conducted to determine the OSCC's progress in attaining performance standards set by this Committee and to ensure the quality and effectiveness of programs. The following performance standards are issued for this plan:

1. Within one (1) year of implementation, the OSCC shall include financial literacy in its learning lab program.
2. Within one (1) year of implementation, the OSCC shall provide a intermediary computer literacy class for those in need prior to referral to the learning link program.
3. By July 1, 2014, the OCSS will secure funding to conduct GED Testing via computer based testing.
4. By Year 3, the OSCC shall implement a universal literacy curriculum for its Learning Link and Lab programs.
5. OSCC will sponsor a minimum of two (2) professional development workshops in the areas outlined in this plan for Years 1, through 3 or a minimum of six (6) over the plan period for both OSCC personnel, providers and area community based and faith based agencies.
6. Within one (1) year of implementation, the OSCC shall resolve distractions in the learning environments in the Pleasantville Office.

SECTION 6: AUTHORIZING SIGNATURES

The individuals signing below have the authority to commit the parties they represent to the terms of this Plan, and do so commit by signing below. The signatures below indicate the organizations support the participation in this mutual and cooperative planning process and agree to the submission of this document as the Atlantic Cape May WIB's Strategic Plan for Serving Individuals with Disabilities for an implementation date, effective January 1, 2012.

ATTEST:

Rhonda Lowery, Executive Director Date

ATLANTIC CAPE MAY WIB:

Earl Axelson, WIB Chairperson Date

Ellen Hohmann, Committee Chairperson Date

ONE STOP OPERATOR:

Francis Kuhn, One Stop Coordinator Date

ATTEST:

Sonya G. Harris, Clerk Date
Board of Chosen Freeholders

COUNTY OF ATLANTIC:

Dennis Levinson Date
County Executive

ATTEST:

Stephen O'Connor Date
County Administrator

COUNTY OF CAPE MAY:

Daniel Beyel, Director Date
Board of Chosen Freeholders

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Barbara Bakley-Marino
Cape May County Counsel

James J. Ferguson
Atlantic County Counsel