

LOCAL STRATEGIC FIVE-YEAR UNIFIED WORKFORCE INVESTMENT PLAN ADULT LITERACY PLAN

1. **INTRODUCTION**

a. *Executive Summary – Provide an executive summary of the plan.

The WIB's vision of a high quality, coordinated, customer-friendly, technology-assisted adult literacy system has moved toward fruition through an extensive, inclusive planning process.

Literacy Committee meetings, development of a literacy service capacity inventory, instructional product reviews, demographic research and public Literacy Forums yielded the information and insights for planning adult literacy services to meet the WIB's vision.

Consistent with the State Employment and Training Commission's endorsement of Equipped for the Future as the strategic framework for adult literacy education in New Jersey, the WIB will utilize Equipped for the Future as the strategic framework for literacy services in the tri-county area.

A review of key area demographic indicators and literacy levels demonstrates the need for literacy services. Since 170,000 area residents function at Literacy Levels 1 and 2 and over 50,000 area residents over 25 have not graduated from high school, there is great need for basic mathematics and reading comprehension remediation. Tri-county municipalities with percentages of Literacy Level 1 residents significantly exceeding area averages include Dover (29%), Morristown (25%) and Phillipsburg (19%). Since there are over 45,000 Hispanics, over 32,000 Asians and over 86,000 foreign born persons living in the tri-county area, there is significant need for English proficiency instruction. Since computer literacy is vital to economic advancement for both workers and businesses, there is an obvious need for computer literacy training.

Morris County employers generally have access to workers with appropriate literacy levels. However, Sussex County and Warren County health service employers report difficulty in finding workers with appropriate literacy levels for high skill occupations. Most area employers report that many of their employees lack workplace readiness skills.

A comparison of identified literacy needs and the current system's capacity has led the WIB to target the following populations for literacy services:

- Individuals with English language deficiencies
- Individuals functioning at Literacy levels 1 and 2
- Non-high school graduates

- Individuals requiring computer literacy for employment or career advancement
- Individuals self-identified or identified by employers as lacking workplace readiness skills
- The unemployed disabled

While all area residents who need them can receive some level of literacy services, the WIB will specifically target:

- The unemployed in Parsippany-Troy Hills, Dover, Vernon and Phillipsburg
- The English deficient in Parsippany-Troy Hills, Dover, Morristown, Mt. Olive, Hopatcong, Hackettstown and Phillipsburg
- Employed workers whose basic skills or workplace readiness skill deficiencies inhibit their career advancement or their employers' economic competitiveness

After considering available funding sources and the needs of the area's target population, the WIB has established the following service priorities:

1. Qualified disadvantaged workers
2. Qualified displaced workers
3. Individuals with learning and developmental disabilities
4. Part-time workers seeking full-time employment
5. Eligible employed workers

Through Literacy Labs and the service provider network, the WIB will provide a complete range of services to target and priority groups. The greatest existing service gaps are for ESL training in Hackettstown and basic skill remediation in the Vernon area.

One-Stop staff or the proposed Literacy Coordinators, whose functions are described later in the Executive Summary, will assist individuals requiring remedial training in contacting the literacy provider(s) of their choice. Business customers will be referred to appropriate literacy providers through the business contacts established by the Business Services Committee. The WIB Marketing Team, Business Services Committee and WFNJ Managers, through their employer outreach and visits, will identify employee training needs and make appropriate referrals to the NJDOL Office of Customized Training.

Technology will be used extensively to facilitate customer access and referral to literacy services and to facilitate referral by electronic transfer of customer information and assessment results between providers. Customers may choose to access a wide range of distance learning resources at One-Stops, principal providers or from remote locations. Through its business contacts, the Business Services Committee will encourage businesses to provide employees with information on distance learning literacy courses. Customers of the One-Stop Career Center have access to a wide range of support services, either directly or through referral to appropriate providers.

All training providers that receive Workforce Investment Act (WIA) or Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills (SWFBS) funding will be required to use CASAS for assessment. Other providers will be strongly urged to use CASAS, to provide consistency of assessment throughout the literacy services network. (As per Janice Pointer's memorandum of July 5, 2002, current assessment tools, principally the TABE and TOEFL, will be used until NJDOL evaluation of CASAS is complete).

To insure timely access to GED testing, the WIB proposes to pay GED test centers \$15 per test administered.

The WIB will use interagency referrals, shared assessment information, joint recruiting, service co-location, leveraged funding and networked information dissemination to integrate area literacy programs with the One-Stop Career Center system.

The WIB proposes to place Literacy Labs in the Dover, Morristown and Phillipsburg One-Stop Career Centers, and in Hackettstown and Vernon. These state and federally supported sites will serve as the keystones of the basic skill delivery system. Volunteer and locally funded programs will refer customers whose needs exceed their own programs' capacity to the Literacy Labs. The One-Stop Literacy Labs will leverage local services by referring customers with special assessment, scheduling, instructional or transportation needs to volunteer and locally funded programs. The One-Stop Literacy Labs will be the keystones of the WIB's literacy initiatives. They will provide a full range of literacy services, referrals to specialized literacy services and direct linkages to vocational training, job placement and a wide array of support services. Literacy Labs in Hackettstown and Vernon will address literacy service gaps identified through analysis of demographic information and service capacity. This analysis is supported by comments and suggestions from area wide WIB Literacy Forum participants.

Staff, equipment, New Jersey Network software and furniture for a Literacy Lab in the Phillipsburg One-Stop Career Center and a Bilingual Literacy Coordinator were approved by NJDOL. (The Coordinator and Lab Instructor positions were removed from the PY 2002 budget in a Plan modification sent to the SETC in early July, 2002). However, Literacy Committee members, area literacy services providers and Literacy Forum attendees are unanimous in their opinion that one Coordinator is insufficient for three counties and that three Coordinators are required.

Working in conjunction with One-Stop Career Center staff and key providers, the Bilingual Coordinators will be responsible for outreach, recruitment, scheduling, support service referral, literacy data collection, service configuration, advocacy, literacy program publicity, instructor training coordination and employed worker literacy services. The Bilingual Coordinators will be funded through 28% funds. A detailed Bilingual Coordinator job description is included in Section 4(ii).

The WIB recommends that additional Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills be used to fund Literacy Labs in One-Stop Career Centers in Phillipsburg, Dover and Morristown, additional Literacy Labs in Hackettstown and Vernon,

Literacy Coordinators in each of the three WIB Counties and incentive payments to GED testing centers to provide expanded GED testing capacity. Servers, computer software and furniture will be funded through 24% funds. Lab Instructors and other computer equipment will be funded through 28% funds.

The WIB also proposes to fund intensive group ESL instruction, through subagreement, to serve unemployed and underemployed English-deficient customers who are available weekdays during working hours. This activity will be funded through 24% funds.

Finally, the WIB proposes to pay the areas' three GED test centers, Sussex County Community College, Warren County Community College and Morris County School of Technology (application pending), \$15 per test, to increase area residents' access to GED testing. The cost of 200 tests per testing center, per year, will be funded from 28% funds.

The two principal barriers to achieving the WIB's vision for the adult literacy system are lack of transportation, especially in Sussex and Warren Counties, and lack of coordination between tri-county literacy service providers.

The WIB will address the transportation barrier by placing Literacy Labs in two chronically under served areas, Hackettstown and Vernon. The WIB will also address the transportation barrier through the Literacy Coordinators. The Coordinators will develop personal transportation plans for literacy customers, using ride sharing, subsidized transportation and available public transportation.

The WIB will promote expanded use of Literacy Volunteers of America services, possibly through future direct funding assistance. Volunteers provide at-home literacy instruction for students who are unable to access transportation to site-based literacy services.

While opportunities to address the transportation barrier are incremental and will occur over an extended time frame, Literacy Plan development has already provided substantial opportunity to address coordination of literacy services. The WIB will build on the dialogue initiated by the planning process to address coordinated schedules, instructional offerings and shared service initiatives to develop the truly coordinated, comprehensive adult literacy service delivery system envisioned by area literacy stakeholders.

b. *Vision – Describe the WIB area's vision for the adult literacy system. This vision should be consistent with the Strategic Five-Year Unified Local Plan as well as state policy.

The WIB envisions an adult literacy system characterized by:

- High quality literacy services for One-Stop Customers
- Coordination of services between literacy providers

- Customer-friendly literacy services
- Literacy service delivery that is flexible and responsive to customer needs
- A wide range of literacy services, with diverse options, to meet the needs of area adult learners
- Pro-active marketing of literacy services and aggressive outreach to literacy service candidates
- Counseling, service coordination and support services for adult learners
- Incorporation of Equipped for the Future standards and practices to optimize literacy services
- Use of technology to facilitate service delivery
- Availability of distance learning options for customers who lack transportation

c. Plan Development – Describe the process for developing this plan, monitoring its implementation, and if necessary, revising it. The plan must be a result of a collaborative process undertaken by all partners of the One-Stop Workforce Investment System. The process should be similar to the one undertaken to prepare the Strategic Five-Year Unified Local Plan. The WIB’s Literacy Committee, in liaison with the Planning Committee, should play a major role in the development of the plan.

In May 2001, the WIB recommended WIB member Reverend David Hollowell of Lucent Technologies and Calvary Baptist Church as Chairman of the Literacy Committee. Reverend Hollowell convened the first Literacy Committee meeting on June 5, 2001. Original Committee members included representatives of Parsippany Adult High School, Morris County School of Technology, Joint Free Library of Morristown/Township, Warren County Community College, Warren County Technical School, Sussex County Community College (SCCC), Literacy Volunteers Of America (LVA)-Sussex County, Family Services of Morris County, Lucent Technologies and Calvary Baptist Church. The WIB Director and One-Stop Operator are ex-officio members of the Committee and attended most Committee meetings.

The Committee approved Reverend Hollowell as Chair and named Joy Sullivan of SCCC as Vice-Chair. The Committee decided to develop an inventory of literacy services in the tri-county area. Members were asked to provide information on their organizations’ literacy services and other services in their counties. The Committee reviewed instructional curricula and software, including Equipped for the Future (EFF) and Committee members attended SETC-sponsored EFF training on June 19, 2001. On September 12, 2001, the Committee defined Committee goals, discussed the information on services currently available and began to identify service gaps. Additional meetings were held on October 17, 2001 and April 24, 2002. At the April 24 meeting, a LearnScape representative demonstrated the LearnScape system. At the same meeting, Committee members were assigned to draft specific sections of the Adult Literacy Plan as per Plan guidelines. On June 10, 2002 the Committee held a lengthy work session to draft key components of the Adult Literacy Plan. The Committee Chair reported Plan development progress at the WIB Executive Committee meetings in January and May of 2002. Representatives of United Way

of Morris County, St. Elizabeth's College, the County College of Morris, Morris School District and LVA-Morris County joined the Committee between September 2001 and April 2002. A list of Literacy Committee members is included as Attachment 1.

The WIB One-Stop Career Center Committee is responsible for planning One-Stop services and activities. The majority of Literacy Committee members also serve on the One-Stop Career Center Committee. Literacy Committee representatives reported Plan development details regularly at One-Stop Career Center, One-Stop Users' Group and WIB Executive and Open meetings.

The One Stop Users Group includes the following One-Stop Partners: Workforce NJ; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; County Social Service Boards of Sussex and Morris; Morris, Sussex, Warren Employment and Training Services (ETS); in addition to One-Stop affiliate agencies. The Users Group suggested possible solutions to identified service gaps and provided logistical information for Plan development.

Workforce NJ One-Stop Managers in Morris, Sussex, and Warren Counties participated in providing information relative to job seekers' and employers' literacy needs. Representatives of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Sussex and Morris Boards of Social Services participated in the organization and presentation of a One-Stop Users' Group Literacy Forum in November 2000, held in anticipation of a statewide literacy initiative, and three Literacy Focus Forums held in the tri-county area. Literacy providers and counselors commented on services and gaps in services in the WIB area.

Public Literacy Forums were held in each County in the Spring of 2002: Morris County on May 30, Sussex County on June 5 and Warren County on June 6. The public meetings were advertised in local newspapers and invitations were sent to local literacy providers, school superintendents, community and four year colleges and faith-based and community based organizations in each county. The public meetings provided an opportunity for attendees to offer input into Literacy Plan development. Through public notice published on June 30, 2002, the draft Plan was provided for public comment and review prior to the submission to the State.

The WIB Literacy Committee, with WIB staff support, will monitor the implementation of the Literacy Plan. Monitoring will be accomplished by reviewing provider reports, site visits, participant interviews and customer satisfaction evaluations. When significant deviations from Plan activities are identified, the WIB will request corrective action plans from providers or the One-Stop Operator to address the identified issues.

When the need for Plan revisions is identified through monitoring, consensus among providers or Literacy Coordinator program evaluations, WIB staff will present proposed revisions to the WIB Literacy Committee. Upon Literacy Committee approval, draft revisions will be forwarded to the WIB Executive Committee for final

approval and the Plan will be revised. Significant revisions will be reported to the State Employment and Training Commission.

d. EFF Integration – Describe how EFF will be utilized across the One-Stop workforce investment system.

The State Employment and Training Commission (SETC), at the recommendation of the State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES) endorses Equipped for the Future (EFF) as the strategic framework for adult literacy education in New Jersey. Therefore, the WIB will utilize EFF standards as the strategic framework for literacy services in the tri-county area.

All literacy activities directly funded through the Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills (SWFBS) will incorporate EFF standards. The One-Stop Career Center Literacy Labs will use curricula that are clearly linked to EFF competencies and skills. The WIB will urge service providers not funded through SWFBS to adopt curricula that support the acquisition of EFF skills that are essential for success in the workplace. These include teamwork, problem solving, learning skills and communication skills. As additional formal EFF curricula and instructional material become available, the WIB will incorporate them into One-Stop literacy instruction. Literacy providers will document customer acquisition of EFF skills and issue certificates of achievement of these skills. Concurrently, the WIB will advocate for employer consideration of EFF skill certification in hiring decisions.

e. Agreements – Describe how the WIB will be instrumental in the development of agreements between providers to ensure ease of student referral, transfer of records, and recognition of learning gains.

In order to ensure a smooth flow of information among literacy providers, the Literacy Committee has developed an inter-agency agreement (Attachment 2) covering procedures to be used to refer students, transfer records, and recognize learning gains. The WIB will require that this agreement be signed by all literacy providers receiving funds under WIA or SWFBS, and will work with all other literacy providers to encourage them to sign these agreements and to use the process defined therein as their standard procedures.

2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

a. Individuals - Describe the adult literacy needs of the population of the WIB area. Consider concentrations of individuals in geographic areas and immigration trends. Demographic information about age, location, employment status, educational level, and barriers to education progress (e.g., disabilities that may affect learning) should be used to determine the overall need for basic skills. Needs must be identified for basic

mathematics, reading comprehension, basic computer literacy, English proficiency, and work-readiness skills.

The following charts contain information on key demographic indicators of literacy needs of the area population

MORRIS COUNTY

<i>Persons 25+ Over Not Graduating From High School</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Unemployed Disabled</i>	<i>Foreign Born</i>	<i>Hispanic Population</i>	<i>% of Change</i>	<i>Asian Population</i>	<i>% of Change</i>
Dover 3,974	Parsippany/ Troy Hills 845	Parsippany/ Troy Hills 1,470	Parsippany/ Troy Hills 13,585	Dover 10,539	Chester Boro 300%	Parsippany/ Troy Hills 9,124	Victory Garden 425%
Parsippany/ Troy Hills 3,701	Dover 570	Dover 1,194	Dover 7,788	Morristown 5,034	Chester Twp. 147%	Montville 2,612	Riverdale 353%
Morristown 2,306	Morristown 442	Morristown 759	Morristown 6,016	Parsippany/ Troy Hills 3,535	Boonton Twp. 136%	Randolph 2,265	Mt. Olive 190%
Jefferson 1,393	Mt. Olive 420	Roxbury 662	Randolph 3,998	Mt. Olive 1,445	Mendham Boro 131%	Mt. Olive 1,446	Rockaway Boro 165%
Mt. Olive 1,282	Randolph 339	Mt. Olive 655	Montville 3,588	Madison 987	Wharton 130%	Rockaway Twp. 1,287	Boonton Twp Mt. Arlington 119%

SUSSEX COUNTY

<i>Persons 25+ Over Not Graduating From High School</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Unemployed Disabled</i>	<i>Foreign Born</i>	<i>Hispanic Population</i>	<i>% of Change</i>	<i>Asian Population</i>	<i>% of Change</i>
Hopatcong 1,147	Vernon 500	Hopatcong 524	Sparta 1,266	Hopatcong 952	Fredon 786%	Hopatcong 286	Andover Borough 400%
Vernon 1,111	Hopatcong 383	Vernon 425	Vernon 1,255	Vernon 889	Stillwater 424%	Sparta 252	Hampton 313%
Wantage 1,011	Sparta 291	Newton 399	Hopatcong 1,036	Sparta 459	Hardyston 410%	Vernon 173	Franklin 230%
Newton 934	Wantage 184	Wantage 383	Newton 675	Newton 313	Ogdensburg 255%	Newton 162	Newton 200%
Andover Twp. 681	Newton 176	Sparta 268	Byram 505	Wantage 300	Frankford 231%	Andover Township 139	Hardyston 94%

WARREN COUNTY

<i>Persons 25+ Over Not Graduating From High School</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Unemployed Disabled</i>	<i>Foreign Born</i>	<i>Hispanic Population</i>	<i>% of Change</i>	<i>Asian Population</i>	<i>% of Change</i>
Phillipsburg 2,847	Phillipsburg 436	Hackettstown 333	Hackettstown 1,303	Hackettstown 833	Greenwich 1,177%	Hackettstown 303	Greenwich 411%
Hackettstown 904	Hackettstown 198	Phillipsburg 227	Phillipsburg 629	Phillipsburg 816	Belvidere 540%	Phillipsburg 126	Knowlton 280%
Washington Boro 731	Mansfield 163	Lopatcong 175	Washington Boro 592	Mansfield 291	Oxford 300%	Greenwich 97	Oxford 200%
White 574	Washington Boro 125	Mansfield 174	Independence 410	Washington Boro 280	Independence 298%	Lopatcong 94	Washington Boro 185%
Blairstown 525	Allamuchy 82	Phillipsburg 167	Allamuchy 384	Independence 211	Phillipsburg 219	Mansfield 81	Franklin 167%

Comparing the Hispanic populations in the municipalities in Morris County indicates an increase from 1990 - 2000 of over 100% in 13 municipalities and 17 more municipalities with an increase over 50%. The largest concentrations of the Hispanic population are in Dover, Morristown and Parsippany-Troy Hills. In Sussex County, the Hispanic population has increased by more than 100% in 12 municipalities and the same is true for Warren County. The largest concentrations in Sussex County are in Hopatcong and Vernon. In Warren County, the largest concentrations are in Hackettstown and Phillipsburg. In the three counties combined, the Hispanic population has increased by over 21,000 people in the last 10 years.

The Asian population has also increased, but not so markedly. The largest concentration of the Asian population is in Parsippany-Troy Hills, Montville and Randolph in Morris County. The overall increase since 1990 is over 13,500 people.

The number of foreign-born people corresponds to the concentrations of Hispanic and Asian populations noted above.

The charts for each county (Attachment 3) show the labor force (all civilians 16 years of age or over classified as employed or unemployed) and unemployment rates for each municipality as well as the number of people 25 and over, who have not graduated high school (2000).

In Morris County, the largest number of non-graduates is in Dover, Parsippany/Troy Hills and Morristown. The most unemployed persons are in Parsippany/Troy Hills, Dover and Morristown.

In Sussex County, the largest number of people not graduating high school is concentrated in Hopatcong, Vernon and Wantage. The highest unemployment is in Vernon and Hopatcong.

In Warren County, the highest number of non-graduates is in Phillipsburg, Hackettstown and Washington Boro, and the highest unemployment is in Phillipsburg and Hackettstown.

Over 50,000 people age 25 and over have not graduated high school in the 3 counties.

There are over 55,000 disabled people in the 21 – 64 year age range in the Morris-Sussex-Warren area. The charts show the number of disabled people in each municipality as well as the per cent of disabled who are employed. It is clear that a significant number of disabled people are unemployed with employment rates ranging from 85% to 39.5% in the three counties.

The complete Literacy Demographics Charts are included as Attachment 3.

The 1996 National Adult Literacy Survey, by Portland State University, shows area literacy levels as follows:

AREA RESIDENTS AT LITERACY LEVELS 1 AND 2

COUNTY	Level 1 %	Level 2 %	Levels 1+2 %	# Residents 16 or Older at Levels 1 and 2
Morris	12	20	32	107,615
Sussex	10	24	34	33,392
Warren	14	28	42	29,928

Tri-county municipalities with percentages of Literacy Level 1 residents significantly exceeding area averages include Dover (29%), Morristown (25%) and Phillipsburg (19%).

Since 170,000 area residents function at Literacy Levels 1 and 2 and over 50,000 area residents over 25 have not graduated from high school, there is great need for basic mathematics and reading comprehension remediation.

Since there are over 45,000 Hispanics, over 32,000 Asians and over 86,000 foreign born persons living in the tri-county area, there is significant need for English proficiency instruction.

Basic skills and English language skill deficiencies are related to and often accompanied by lack of computer literacy skills. Since computer literacy is vital to

economic advancement for both workers and businesses, there is an obvious need for computer literacy training.

In dialogues with the WIB Marketing Team and WFNJ staff, many area employers have decried their job applicants' and employees' lack of work-readiness skills. These comments support numerous studies showing that employers want, first and foremost, employees who are reliable, punctual and cooperative. These comments and studies indicate a pressing need for work-readiness skills.

b. Employers – Describe the key industries of the area. What are the adult literacy expectations that employers in these industries have for their workforce? To the extent possible, indicate the basic mathematics, reading comprehension, basic computer literacy, English proficiency, and work-readiness skills expectations by industry or employers in the WIB area. Based on economic development initiatives in the WIB area, are the literacy levels of the workforce congruent with those needed by current and prospective employers?

The following chart lists the literacy expectations of employers in key area industries.

EMPLOYER LITERACY EXPECTATIONS

County	Industry	Basic Math	Reading Comprehension	Basic Computer Literacy	English Proficiency	Work Readiness Skills
Morris	Business Services	10 th grade	10 th grade	High	Medium-High	High
Morris Sussex Warren	Health Services	8-10 th grade	8-10 th grade	Medium	Medium	High
Morris	Engineering and Management Services	12 th grade +	12 th grade	Very High	High	High
Warren	Retail	7 th grade	7 th grade	Medium	Medium	Medium
Sussex Warren	Eating and Drinking	6 th grade	6 th grade	Low	Medium	Medium
Morris Sussex	Social Services	10 th grade	12 th grade	Medium	High	High

The information above was gathered from interviews with literacy providers and area employers and through discussions with the WIB Business Services Committee (BSC). In the past year, the BSC arranged WIB Marketing Team visits to over 75 area businesses to assess their need for training and other One-Stop services. All respondents to WIB requests for information on employer literacy requirements stressed that within industries, the needs vary by employer. Furthermore, the

respondents reported that the greatest variance in literacy requirements is between job titles, especially within business services.

Respondents reported that, in Morris County, employers have access to workers with appropriate literacy levels, but that these workers demand higher wages than some employers will pay. In the past year, several employers left Morris County because qualified labor is too expensive. This suggests an opportunity for workers with newly enhanced literacy skills to earn higher wages within a range acceptable to Morris County employers. Morris County Social Service employers report a desire for increased English Comprehension skills from the current workforce and new applicants.

Health services employers in Sussex and Warren Counties have difficulty finding workers with appropriate literacy levels for the higher skill occupations (Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Medical Assistants, Technicians), but find it relatively easy to recruit workers with suitable literacy levels for certified Nurse Assistant and Home Health Aides.

Though manufacturing is not a major industry in the tri-county area, the WIB Marketing Team has visited most area manufacturers. They report a lack of appropriate math skills among employees and applicants.

While Retail and Eating and Drinking businesses can find employees with acceptable reading, math and comprehension skills, they, like most area employers, decry the lack of workplace readiness skills among employees and applicants. They report that the lack of these skills contributes heavily to the high turnover rates that hinder their business operations.

c. Current System Capacities - In order to determine what can be done for the target population, it is necessary to understand the current delivery system for basic skills services. Identify the adult literacy provider community including adult schools, colleges, literacy volunteer programs, community and faith-based organizations, libraries, for-profit organizations, etc. These providers may offer all or some of the following services: adult basic education, English-as-a-Second Language, high school equivalency, adult high school, literacy tutoring, occupational skills training with a literacy component. An inventory of capacity is necessary in order to identify where there may be gaps in local services that the WIB should address. This inventory of capacity (see attachment) should list providers; their service area, hours of service and distant learning formats; numbers they serve; and funding sources (see page 6). In addition to the inventory, the prior experiences of identified providers in meeting the literacy needs of their clients should be indicated.

An inventory of area literacy service capacity is included as Attachment 4. All providers listed on the Inventory have substantial successful experience in meeting the needs of their clients.

d. Target Population(s) – Based upon your analysis of individual and employer needs and the current system’s capacity to meet those needs, identify who will be served.

The WIB will mobilize and coordinate literacy service delivery for the following US citizens and resident aliens:

- Individuals with English language deficiencies
- Individuals functioning at Literacy levels 1 and 2
- Non-high school graduates
- Individuals requiring computer literacy for employment or career advancement
- Individuals self-identified or identified by employers as lacking workplace readiness- skills
- The unemployed disabled

While all area residents who need them can receive some level of literacy services, the WIB will specifically target:

- The unemployed in Parsippany-Troy Hills, Dover, Vernon and Phillipsburg
- The English deficient in Parsippany-Troy Hills, Dover, Morristown, Mt. Olive, Hopatcong, Hackettstown and Phillipsburg
- Employed workers whose basic skills or workplace readiness skill deficiencies inhibit their career advancement or their employers’ economic competitiveness

3. SERVICE STRATEGY

The plan must provide a description of the strategy the local workforce investment system will adopt to address the needs of the target population. This should include the following:

- a. *Literacy Levels – Identify how all literacy levels (refer to accompanying chart for educational functional levels) will be addressed. Are providers differentiated by literacy levels?**

All area ABE providers have the capacity to address the needs of customers at Literacy Levels 1 and 2. All area ESL providers have the capacity to address the needs of customers from Beginning Literacy ESL through High Advanced ESL.

Literacy providers that provided planning information stressed that they do not differentiate by literacy levels. All literacy levels are addressed based on their assessed needs for identified weaknesses.

b. Priority of Services – The plan must establish priorities of who is to be served and what is to be provided. Because different funding sources have their own priorities, it is important to consider them in identifying gaps in service. Are there major gaps in the delivery of service that you plan to address in the future?

Depending on funding and space availability, priority for services will be given to individuals in the following order:

1. Qualified disadvantaged workers
2. Qualified displaced workers
3. Individuals with learning and developmental disabilities
4. Part-time workers seeking full-time employment
5. Eligible employed workers

Services to be provided will include basic skills remediation, GED preparation, Vocational English-as-a-Second language, basic computer literacy, workforce readiness, citizenship training, and financial management information. In addition, WIB will utilize the citizenship guidelines provided in the State-published Citizen Guidelines Manual currently being followed in three programs in the WIB area. The current providers of citizenship training are Parsippany Adult School and Morris Hills Adult High School in Morris County.

The greatest service gaps are for ESL training in Hackettstown and basic skills remediation in Vernon. These gaps will be addressed through use of SWFBS 28% funds as described in Section 4. Although census data indicate that Hopatcong has pressing literacy services needs (1147 non-high school graduates, 25 and over, 524 disabled unemployed, 952 Hispanic population, 286 Asian population), these needs can be met by current and proposed additional services at the Dover One-Stop Career Center and through the Morris County Organization for Hispanic Affairs, also in Dover.

c. Outreach and Recruitment – Identify how outreach to and recruitment of target population(s) will be accomplished. For example, how will outreach and recruitment to disadvantaged workers with basic skills deficiencies be accomplished? How will unemployed and displaced workers whose basic skills are a barrier to employment be alerted to the opportunities to improve their skills? Who will be responsible for these activities? How will the basic skills requirements of the employer community be assessed?

The Literacy Coordinators will have overall responsibility for outreach and recruitment of target populations. The Literacy Coordinators will provide lists of literacy resources and referral information to One-Stop Career Centers, the WIB's 37 One-Stop affiliate sites, current literacy service providers, additional community and faith-based organizations, county social services councils, school districts, libraries and municipalities.

Outreach and recruitment of disadvantaged workers with basic skills deficiencies will be accomplished by first identifying such workers through the WIB Business Services Committee and WFNJ managers.

The Business Services Committee (BSC) uses both an individual and a team approach to meeting with tri-county businesses to discuss a variety of business needs, including basic literacy and ESL training. Through the contacts established by the BSC, businesses inform the WIB of the literacy needs of their current employees and their basic literacy requirements for new applicants. The BSC may assist the business in identifying ways to both test the literacy levels of their employees and to obtain training to increase those levels as needed.

WFNJ Managers, through their relationships with employers and knowledge of employer job postings, are an excellent source of information on employer needs, including literacy remediation for disadvantaged workers. When managers identify such workers needing literacy skills, the information is reported directly to the WIB or through its committees.

When needs are identified, WIB or MSW Employment and Training Services staff visit the employer to propose training its disadvantaged workers. They offer training in various formats (customized training, employed worker OJT, on or off-site group size training, distance learning) and then discuss which best meets the workers' and employer's needs. When WIB/ETS and the employer agree on the best format, the training is planned, delivered and monitored.

Unemployed and Displaced workers whose basic skills are a barrier to employment will be alerted to opportunities to improve their skills as follows:

- Participants in One-Stop Career Center re-employment and training orientations will be alerted about the availability of remedial training. During training orientation, testing is administered to participants. Those who score below a certain CASAS (or TABE) level will be further advised about the benefits they would derive from remedial training.
- One-Stop Career Center pamphlets will be revised to include additional information on remedial training.
- Posters and literacy pamphlets will be distributed to all of the entities listed above.

The Literacy Coordinators will coordinate all outreach and recruitment activities and work with each literacy partner on a comprehensive approach to maximize the effectiveness of these outreach and recruitment activities.

The basic skill requirements of the employer community will be assessed by the Assistant One-Stop Administrator, who has extensive successful experience in employee skill assessments. He will perform an O*net based Needs Survey Analysis for selected employers to assess skills required for entry-level employment in dominant tri-county industries.

d. Access and Referral – Describe how customers will gain access to basic skills services. Describe the process for referring customers to appropriate providers. To what extent will technology be used to facilitate access and referral? Include a discussion of independent, self-directed, and distance learning formats that local areas will employ to expand access to instruction.

One-Stop staff or the Literacy Coordinator will assist individuals requiring remedial training in contacting the literacy provider(s) of their choice. When a desired program is filled, the Literacy Coordinator will help identify alternate training that best meets the customer's needs. When more than one provider is required to meet the customer's needs, the Literacy Coordinator will schedule activities based on the customer's availability and literacy attainment goals.

Business customers will be referred to appropriate literacy providers through the business contacts established by the Business Services Committee. As business customers indicate a need for literacy training for their currently employed workers, they will be referred to local service providers directly or referred to the WIB for assistance in identifying and accessing appropriate training options.

Technology will be used extensively to facilitate customer access and referral to literacy services. A list of literacy resources that can be accessed independently through technology will be available at One-Stop Career Centers and principal service providers. Computer-literate customers with home computers and Internet service can use the list, with staff assistance if necessary, to identify and access appropriate on-line literacy remediation.

One-Stop Literacy Labs will designate computers for use by self-directed customers. The computers will have a variety of literacy instructional software, sufficient to meet the needs of adult learners. Software may include Advanced Learning System (modular core curriculum software for grades 1-12), Weaver Instructional System (reading intervention programs with emphasis on vocabulary building), Intechnica International (self-paced ESL instruction for all ESL levels) and the New Jersey Network (NJN) software which includes GED Connection, Workplace Essential Skills, TV411, JobCast, SkillsCompass by LearnScape, Rosetta Stone and Reading Horizons Phonics. Literacy Lab instructors will be available to assist self-directed learners in curriculum choice, use of technology and interpreting instructional material.

Customers may also choose to access a wide range of distance learning resources at One-Stops, principal providers or from remote locations. Staff will present customers with free and commercial distance learning options. After appropriate counseling, staff will provide customers passwords or other access tools to appropriate distance learning providers. One-Stop staff will develop and maintain a list of distance learning options for customer use. The list will be edited and updated regularly, incorporating customer feedback to choose the best providers and courses, and including new distance learning and curricula.

One-Stop staff will use third party tracking, available through many distance learning providers, to track customer progress. Customers will also have access to instruction-related chat rooms and bulletin boards to facilitate learning assistance from provider staff and communication with other literacy students.

Through its business contacts, the Business Services Committee will also encourage businesses to provide employees with information on distance learning literacy courses which the employee can access via their home computer or through use of one of the One-Stop Career Center or Site computers in their area. Courses may be WIA-subsidized, business-subsidized, free or may charge a small fee to the individual user. Information provided will include a listing of One-Stop sites, focusing especially on those that may be available after working hours, such as community colleges and libraries, as well as a list of available courses.

Some businesses will give their workers access to workplace computers either during the workday or non-working hours to make use of distance learning technology.

Technology will facilitate referral by electronic transfer of customer information and assessment results between providers.

e. Assessment – Describe the process for assessing basic skills using CASAS. It is possible that an area will have multiple target populations (e.g., English proficiency issues, low basic literacy levels, or inadequate workforce-readiness skills) that require additional types of assessment tools. Who will be responsible for administering assessments? Will assessment be administered centrally, such as through the One-Stop center or by each provider? Will assessments be available for customers with specialized needs? Will different partners be responsible for different types of assessment, e.g., ESL or learning disability? Who will be responsible for maintaining assessment data and how will it be made available to appropriate partners? How will timely access to GED testing be assured in the local area? How will GED testing services be integrated into the One-Stop System?

(As per Janice Pointer's memorandum of July 5, 2002, current assessment tools, principally the TABE and TOEFL, will be used until NJDOL evaluation of CASAS is complete.)

All training providers that receive Workforce Investment Act (WIA) or Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills (SWFBS) funding, will be required to use CASAS for assessment. Other providers will be strongly urged to use CASAS, to provide consistency of assessment throughout the literacy services network. This will allow most customers to be assessed at all points of entry. Customers will then be asked to sign a release form, so that the results can be shared with the agencies responsible for providing the necessary instruction/training. In this way, customers will not have to be assessed repeatedly as they move among various providers.

Customers who require special assessments will be referred to One-Stop Career Centers or to providers with special assessment capacity, including the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (learning disabilities), MSW ETS (workplace readiness skills) and Morris County Organization for Hispanic Affairs (low native language literacy).

Initial assessment data will be maintained by the provider conducting the assessment. The data will be transferred, preferably electronically, to additional providers used by the customer (see Attachment 2). Data on customers funded through WIA or SWFBS will be maintained in One-Stop Career Centers.

Sussex County Community College and Warren County Community College are the only GED test centers in the WIB area. Morris County School of Technology has applied to the NJ Department of Education to become a test center.

GED test centers receive \$10 for each test administered. Including staff and facilities, the real cost for giving each test is about \$25. The approximate \$15 loss on each test acts as a disincentive to expand testing to additional locations.

To insure timely access to GED testing, the WIB proposes to pay the test centers \$15 per test administered. This will provide an incentive for the centers to offer testing at locations throughout the WIB area, facilitating access to the tests, especially for prospective test-takers with limited transportation options.

All One-Stop Career Centers and literacy providers will have information on GED testing sites and dates. They will refer test-ready customers to GED testing centers. As resources permit, One-Stop sites with appropriate facilities will be used as test sites.

f. Service Integration – Describe how adult literacy and basic skills training programs will integrate their services with the One-Stop Career Centers? While the grant recipient for funds will include a variety of entities, e.g., local office of the Department of Labor and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II funded providers, the WIB must determine the specific plan for service delivery and integration. Be sure to address all federal and state adult literacy initiatives, including those that will be supported through the Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills. Describe linkages, if any, to adult education consortia that provide services through WIA Title II grants. Refer to page 6 for a list of major funding sources.

The following chart identifies various adult literacy and basic skills programs and methods used for integrating them with the One-Stop Career Center system.

ADULT LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM INTEGRATION METHODS

<i>Administrative State Agency</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Funding Sources</i>	<i>Integration method(s)</i>
Department of Education	Title II WIA (Adult Basic Skills, High School Equivalency & Adult Literacy)	Federal & State matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency referrals • Shared assessment Information • Joint recruiting • Literacy Plan input
Department of Education	English Literacy and Civics	Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency referrals • Shared assessment Information • Joint recruiting • Literacy Plan input
Department of Human Services	TANF–AWEP	Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-location and integrated services in Morris County • Use of TANF funds for literacy training • Interagency referrals • Literacy Plan input
Department of Labor	WDPP–ITA	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site location at all One-Stops • Interprogram referrals
Department of Labor	WDPP– Customized Training	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-Stop dissemination of Customized Training availability information. • WIB-One-Stop identification/assessment of employer needs • Training / trainer recommendations to NJDOL-OCT
Department of Labor	WDPP– Literacy	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site location at all One-Stops • Funding literacy training for One-Stop Customers • Referral to/from all One-Stop services
Department of Labor	WIA Title I	Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal One-Stop partner
Department of Labor	WFNJ Supplemental TANF-AWEP	Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency referral • Funding of literacy training • Dissemination of Literacy Services/One-Stop information

Department of Labor	WFNJ Supplemental FS-AWEP	Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency referral • Funding of literacy training • Dissemination of Literacy Services/One-Stop information
Department of Labor	WFNJ Supplemental GA-AWEP	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency referral • Funding of literacy training • Dissemination of Literacy Services/One-Stop information
Department of Labor	Welfare-to-Work	Federal & State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency referral • Funding of literacy training • Dissemination of Literacy Services/One-Stop information
Department of Labor	Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills 34:15D-21 (a)(1)	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy Labs in One-Stop Career Centers • Referrals to and from other literacy service providers
Department of Labor	Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills 34:15D-21 (a)(2)	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy Labs in One-Stop Career Centers and community locations (Hackettstown/Vernon) <p>Referrals to and from other literacy service providers and One-Stop services</p>
Department of Labor	Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills 34:15D-21 (a)(3)	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-Stop dissemination of Customized Literacy Training availability information. • WIB-One-Stop identification/assessment of employer literacy needs • Training / trainer recommendations to NJDOL-OCT

g. Coordination and Leveraging of Resources – Describe how resources whether financial, or non-financial will be coordinated and leveraged to create a coherent basic skills delivery system. This description should take into account volunteer literacy providers, state and federal supported

programs, locally funded programs, and any other relevant service providers.

The WIB proposes to place Literacy Labs in the Dover, Morristown and Phillipsburg One-Stop Career Centers and in Hackettstown and Vernon. These state and federally supported sites will serve as the keystones of the basic skill delivery system. Volunteer and locally funded programs will refer customers whose needs exceed their own programs' capacity to the Literacy Labs. The One-Stop Literacy Labs will leverage local services by referring customers with special assessment, scheduling, instructional or transportation needs to volunteer and locally funded programs.

The Literacy Coordinators will work with volunteer and locally funded programs to provide schedules, instruction and support services that augment and complement One-Stop Literacy Lab services.

h. Support Services – Customers of the literacy delivery system may also have other barriers that impact on their ability to perform as workers, citizens, and family members. Describe how customers of the One-Stop system will be able to access other necessary services.

Customers of the One-Stop Career Center have access to occupational training and on site job search workshops. To help participants overcome barriers which impact on their ability to perform as workers, family members and citizens, One Stop Career Center Staff is available to provide guidance on training programs and on various support services. These support services include: child care and adult care assistance, transportation services, legal aid, mental health, consumer credit counseling, financial management workshops, housing assistance, loan programs, telephone/heating/electricity/insulation assistance, citizenship training, etc.

Information on the agencies providing the above support services is available in the One Stop Career Center. Additionally, the literacy providers will distribute pamphlets with contact information for these agencies, so that those who enroll in literacy training, without coming to the One Stop Career Center, are informed and can have access to these support services, as needed.

i. Performance Standards – The State will develop minimum performance standards for service providers. These standards will be linked to EFF and the outcome measures identified in the National Reporting System (NRS). Local areas may elect to set higher standards or additional standards. If the local area intends to set standards, the criteria for setting the standards must be identified in the plan.

The WIB will not set higher or additional standards.

4. *SUPPLEMENTAL WORKFORCE FUNDS FOR BASIC SKILLS

a. *Plan for Use of Supplemental Funds – Describe the plan for use of Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills.

i. *Identify portions of plan that already have been approved and funded by the New Jersey Department of Labor. Discuss how approved components will be integrated into the local adult literacy system and one-stop.

Staff, equipment, NJN software and furniture for a Literacy Lab in the Phillipsburg One-Stop Career Center and a Bilingual Literacy Coordinator have been approved and funded by NJDOL. (The Literacy Coordinator and Lab Instructor for the Phillipsburg Lab were removed from the budget for the last quarter of PY 2002 but will be funded, pending NJDOL approval, for Program year 2003).

The Phillipsburg Literacy Lab will provide literacy services to One-Stop customers in the Phillipsburg area. It will receive referrals from other area literacy providers and refer customers to the other providers for special literacy services. Lab staff will provide information on available literacy services including distance learning, remote access, self-paced and Customized Training instructional options. The lab will offer assessment of customers' literacy levels and provide or make referrals to appropriate remedial services. It will pilot and evaluate instructional and assessment programs for use by One-Stop and other literacy providers. It might serve as a GED testing center, pending configuration of appropriate testing space. In summary, the Phillipsburg Lab will be the hub of One-Stop literacy service delivery in the Warren County area.

The Bilingual Literacy Coordinator will identify, locate, contact and recruit low-literacy individuals for One-Stop Literacy Labs and related services. The coordinator will publicize One-Stop Literacy services. As necessary, the Coordinator will coordinate schedules of One-Stop customers with Literacy Labs' and other literacy providers' offerings to offer comprehensive literacy services in the most customer friendly manner possible. The Coordinator will also work with area providers to format and schedule their services to provide maximum synergy and seamlessness with One-Stop literacy services.

ii. *Describe how the WIB area recommends that additional Supplemental Funds allocated under sections 34:15D-21 (a)(1), the 24% funds “reserved to support basic skills training delivered by the State’s One-Stop Career Centers” and 34:15D-21 (a)(2), the 28% funds “reserved for Workforce Investment Boards to provide grants for basic skills training” should be used.

The WIB recommends that additional Supplemental Funds allocated under sections 34:15D-21 (a)(1), the 24% funds “reserved to support basic skills training delivered by the State’s One-Stop Career Centers” and 34:15D-21 (a)(2),

the 28% funds “reserved for Workforce Investment Boards to provide grants for basic skills training” be used to fund Literacy Labs in One-Stop Career Centers in Phillipsburg, Dover and Morristown, additional Literacy Labs in Hackettstown and Vernon, Literacy Coordinators in each of the three WIB Counties and incentive payments to GED testing centers to provide expanded GED testing capacity.

The One-Stop Literacy Labs will be the keystones of the WIB’s literacy initiatives. They will provide a full range of literacy services, referrals to specialized literacy services and direct linkages to vocational training, job placement and a wide array of support services.

Literacy Labs in Hackettstown and Vernon will address literacy service gaps identified through analysis of demographic information and service capacity, and supported by comments and suggestions from area wide WIB Literacy Forum participants. Both the Hackettstown and Vernon areas have substantial unmet literacy needs as evident from the Warren and Sussex demographic charts in Section 2a. Hackettstown area residents have minimal access to public transportation. The area is served by a shuttle bus from Phillipsburg, with daily service ending at 3 PM. There is no public transportation to Vernon. The WIB is currently exploring sites for these labs. Centenary College in Hackettstown has expressed interest in hosting the Lab and is evaluating college facilities for appropriate placement. The Vernon Library staff recognizes the need for and value of the Lab and its close alignment with the library’s mission and is exploring various space configurations to provide maximum customer access.

Servers, computer software and furniture will be funded through 24% funds. Lab Instructors and other computer equipment will be funded through 28% funds.

The WIB also proposes to fund intensive group ESL instruction, through subagreement, to serve unemployed and underemployed English-deficient customers who are available weekdays during working hours. This activity will be funded through 24% funds.

Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills items already approved and funded include a Literacy Coordinator. However, Literacy Committee members, area literacy services providers and Literacy Forum attendees are unanimous in their opinion that one Coordinator is insufficient for three counties and that three Coordinators are required.

The Coordinators will:

- Identify and contact area residents with literacy service needs
- Assess their literacy service needs, availability for training and barriers to literacy program participation
- Recruit them for appropriate One-Stop or other literacy services
- Develop individualized program participation schedules, using multiple providers if necessary

- With One-Stop staff, assess and meet the support service needs of One-Stop literacy customers
- Maintain a current literacy services capacity inventory and comprehensive service schedule enabling “snapshot” views of available service offerings
- Identify additional gaps in literacy services and address them through program coordination, program development or other initiatives
- With provider cooperation, coordinate the schedules and instruction of area providers to optimize comprehensive delivery of area literacy services
- Promote family and group participation in literacy training to strengthen customer motivation and provide ongoing peer support
- Evaluate results of area literacy providers’ training
- Promote use of best practices among providers
- Provide information on employed worker/Customized Training to area businesses
- On request, assess employed workers literacy needs
- Suggest employed worker/Customized Training initiatives for WIB/NJDOL OCT consideration and identify appropriate trainers, training formats and schedules
- Assist in coordinating the instructor training resources and initiatives of principal providers to provide an adequate supply of competent, credentialed literacy instructors for the tri-county area
- Through direct contact, group presentations and appropriate media, publicize the individual and societal problems related to low-literacy
- Mobilize public support for literacy initiatives and advocate for solutions to illiteracy and low literacy

The WIB is exploring the possibility of entering agreements with Literacy Volunteers of America and/or NORWESCAP to have the Literacy Coordinators housed in their offices and supervised by them. This would enable the WIB to access the agencies’ community based social service recruiting networks and their expertise in providing services to individuals who are likely to need literacy remediation.

The Bilingual Coordinators will be funded through 28% funds.

Finally the WIB proposes to pay the areas’ three GED test centers, Sussex County Community College, Warren County Community College and Morris County School of Technology (application pending), \$15 per test, to increase area residents’ access to GED testing. The cost of 200 tests per testing center, per year (\$9,000), will be funded from 28% funds.

iii. *Describe a process that the WIB area will use for identifying and recommending employers, employer organizations, labor organizations, community- and faith-based organizations, and educational institutions for Supplemental Funds allocated under sections 34:15D-21 (a)(3), the

38% funds that will be administered through the New Jersey Department of Labor, Office of Customized Training.

The WIB Marketing Team, Business Services Committee and WFNJ Managers, through their employer outreach and visits, will ask employers about their employee training needs and goals. When these needs and goals are identified as congruent with NJDOL Customized Training, the WIB will contact the Office of Customized Training to arrange a meeting with the employer.

While designation of Customized Training providers is the responsibility of the Office of Customized Training, the WIB endorses the County College of Morris, Sussex County Community College and Warren County Community College as preferred trainers. When special literacy Customized Training needs are apparent, the WIB, through its Business Services and Literacy Committees, will assist in identifying appropriate providers from its network of employers, employer organizations, labor organizations, community and faith-based organizations and educational institutions.

b. *Budget – Provide detailed budgets for Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills.

i. *Provide budget for Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills items already approved and funded by the New Jersey Department of Labor.

This budget is included as Attachment 5A

ii. Develop a budget for additional Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills. The budget should reflect a funding level of between \$500,000 and \$700,000 and it should be based on the WIB area’s literacy plan for the 28% and recommendations for the 24% funds.

This budget is included as Attachment 5B

5. *CONCLUSION

a. *Opportunities and Barriers – Discuss opportunities and barriers to achieving the WIB area’s vision for the adult literacy system. How can the WIB area best take advantage of these opportunities and reduce or eliminate the barriers?

The two principal barriers to achieving the WIB’s vision for the adult literacy system are lack of transportation, especially in Sussex and Warren Counties, and lack of coordination between tri-county literacy service providers.

The WIB will address the transportation barrier by placing Literacy Labs in two chronically under served areas, Hackettstown and Vernon. These locations will allow customers without access to dependable transportation to receive literacy services in their communities, close to home. These locations will also function as service “hubs” for residents of surrounding communities who, like Hackettstown and Vernon, are constrained by their inability to reach Phillipsburg and Newton, respectively.

The WIB will also address the transportation barrier through the Literacy Coordinators. The Coordinators will develop personal transportation plans for literacy customers, using car-pooling, subsidized transportation and available public transportation.

Throughout the Literacy Plan development process, the WIB has heard repeatedly of literacy customers traveling, sometimes with great difficulty, to distant service locations. Ironically, these customers could be served closer to home if they knew of all available literacy service options. The Literacy Coordinators, using the WIB comprehensive literacy service directory, will guide customers to the most accessible services and facilitate their attendance through scheduling optimally convenient instruction and transportation.

The WIB will also promote expanded use of Literacy Volunteers of America services, possibly through future direct funding assistance. Volunteers provide at-home literacy instruction for students who are unable to access transportation to site-based literacy services.

The WIB is also advocating for expanded hours for the Phillipsburg-Hackettstown shuttle bus that currently ceases operation at 3PM daily. Expanded service would not only facilitate residents’ access to literacy services, but also allow more potential workers to reach employers along the Phillipsburg-Washington-Hackettstown employment corridor.

While opportunities to address the transportation barrier are incremental and will occur over an extended time frame, Literacy Plan development has already provided substantial opportunity to address coordination of literacy services. By convening the Literacy Committee, the WIB brought diverse literacy service providers together and provided a forum for discussion between them. This discussion demonstrated the need for coordination between providers, and more important, revealed the providers’ willingness to work together to move toward a comprehensive, coordinated literacy service delivery system. To date, the providers have shared service and schedule information, and discussed “best practices” and funding and service strategies.

The WIB will build on this promising dialogue to address coordinated schedules, instructional offerings and shared service initiatives. On the individual level, the Literacy Coordinators will draw on the experiences of literacy services customers to identify desired improvements in scheduling, service access and continuity of instruction. The Coordinator will present this information to providers and offer

coordination planning assistance designed to move diverse, independent providers toward partnership in a comprehensive, customer-friendly literacy service delivery system.