The Literacy Cooperative of Greater Cleveland
2006 TANF Capacity Building Project

Advancing Literacy in Greater Cleveland

Final Report

the **literacy**
cooperative

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August 2006

FINAL REPORT

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In November 2005, The Literacy Cooperative of Greater Cleveland received a grant from the Board of Cuyahoga County Commissioners through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF) to improve the literacy skills of youth in targeted communities throughout Cuyahoga County. The Literacy Cooperative in turn developed an RFP and selected five projects representing eight organizations to participate in a pilot project aimed at building the capacity of organizations offering literacy services.

The specific goal of this TANF funded literacy initiative was to improve the literacy skills of out-of-school youth, ages 16-18 (or 19 if enrolled in high school equivalency courses) and/or pregnant or parenting young adults age 18-24. In addition, the project sought to increase literacy program capacity and support continuing improvement geared towards increased learner achievement.

The participating organizations received: 1) capacity building support through a team of consultants and partners with expertise in program assessment, literacy content and instruction, data tracking and evaluation, and marketing and fundraising; 2) organizational stipends to support active participation in and prioritization of this work, including costs associated with implementing new standards, training of instructors, recruitment, tracking learner gains, learner incentives, evaluation and accountability, and transition strategies. Over the course of 3 ½ months, organizations participated in one-on-one meetings and coaching sessions with the consultants, individual instructor trainings for each organization, group seminars for all participating TANF organizations, and special resource meetings with key stakeholders.

A Work Plan specific to each project was developed in collaboration with the organizations and guided the work of the consultants and the participants. At the end of the consultation, each organization received a report that provides a plan of action for implementing the ideas for building change that the organization identified, along with related trends and recommendations regarding promising practices for consideration as the organizations continue to refine their programs going forward.

In addition to the overall goals of the TANF project itself, the consulting team developed a set of its own goals and objectives by which it would measure its work. These included:

1) Increase collaborative activity and share promising practices in overall literacy provision
   a) Enhance partnerships for addressing student achievement and long-term student goals (including career ladder, continued education, etc.)
   b) Enhance partnerships for program delivery and sustainability
   c) Provide promising practices for literacy activities

2) Help organizations get on the road to meeting their goals and objectives
   a) Complete all deliverables
   b) Attain evidence that organizations have internalized and begun to operationalize program enhancements

This report provides an overview of the specific activities undertaken on behalf of the Literacy Cooperative and the participating TANF organizations, reports results and lessons learned, and offers implications of this work for the Literacy Cooperative going forward. Specific results of the work are captured in different formats including a cost-benefit discussion based upon capacity building contact hours and the number of learners served during the pilot phase. A detailed account of the issues that emerged across the organizations with corresponding solutions offered during the pilot is also included. We hope this report and observations build a case for the value of the work undertaken and believe the learning from this pilot begins to point towards new approaches for how neighborhoods and communities can begin to think about literacy attainment and life-long learning beyond the confines of more traditional approaches to literacy interventions.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The Euclid City Schools ABLE Program provides an array of education and literacy programs to residents of Euclid and its surrounding communities, including Basic Skills classes, GED preparation, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The mission of Euclid ABLE is to provide improvement and expansion of lifelong learning opportunities for adults in their family, community, and work roles. Euclid City Schools is the fiscal agent for the Euclid ABLE program, which receives all of its funding from state ABLE dollars.

Recognized as a highly effective ABLE program, with consistently superior ratings from the State of Ohio, Euclid ABLE nonetheless, has had a relatively flat funding allocation year to year. The budget constraints at the state level have meant that any continuous program improvement or expansion efforts that individual ABLE programs pursue, must be covered by other funding sources. Not willing to rest on its laurels, Euclid ABLE was looking for new strategies in student recruitment, retention, and work/higher education transition to better meet the needs of its learners, which was the primary impetus for its application to be a part of the Literacy Cooperative's TANF Project. Euclid ABLE is also keen on expanding its program to meet the increasing need in the Euclid community for alternative adult education options to increase residents' literacy levels and self sufficiency.

Garden Valley Neighborhood House was founded in 1918 as a settlement house for residents of Cleveland's Kinsman area, with the current location at 7100 Kinsman Road built in 1924. The mission of Garden Valley Neighborhood House is to be a supportive presence in its service area by providing involvement, recreation, and adult education as well as promoting understanding among people of diverse racial and social backgrounds, thereby building a community of caring utilizing the principles of sharing as a common focus with other agencies in the community. Programs offered at Garden Valley include a "Moms First" Program to prepare expectant or new moms for a healthy pregnancy, delivery, and the first two years of parenting; a Kinship Care support group for custodial grandparents; a Youth Entrepreneur program teaching business skills to youth; and a Hunger Center providing 200 individuals and families with food each week.

Seeds of Literacy provides adult literacy programming, including basic education and GED preparation through one-on-one tutoring free of charge in ten sites throughout Cleveland. During this TANF project, Seeds of Literacy provided two-hour, on-site classes, four times per week at Garden Valley Neighborhood House, which represents a new site for Seeds' programming.

Cleveland Reads is a coalition of literacy organizations and provides services to the literacy community including a learner hotline, volunteer tutor recruitment, orientation, and placement, and book giveaways, among other programs. The Garden Valley partnership provided Cleveland Reads an opportunity to pilot a family literacy program for parents based upon previous family-oriented programming it had done in other community settings but on a more short-term, one-time workshop basis.

The Garden Valley partnership represented the first time that these three organizations had ever worked together ó Cleveland Reads had previous relationships with the other two organizations and brought each to the table. The overarching motivation for all three organizations was to meet the critical educational needs of a population in great need, and for whom barriers to education and employment are particularly challenging. At the beginning of the TANF project, the Garden Valley partnership was, by necessity, concerned first with immediate student recruitment of TANF-eligible participants into the program, along with on-the-ground program implementation. There were a number of new elements to this partnership ó piloting new family literacy content, establishing a presence for literacy offerings in a new neighborhood site, and establishing new working relationships between the partners. In addition to guidance regarding the implementation of the new programs and the partnership itself, capacity-building activities were also customized for the individual needs of each of the partner organizations.

Heights Even Start provides family literacy services through a collaboration between the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, the Cleveland Heights ABLE program, and the Heights Parent Center. The mission of Heights Even Start (HES) is to interrupt the cycle of poverty and under-education by providing families with high quality educational and support services in one central location. HES is funded with federal dollars through the Ohio Department of Education.

With the imminent reduction of federal Even Start funding by 50% beginning July 1, 2006, the capacity for Heights Even Start to begin to operate with more diversified resources and funding streams was a primary impetus for its application to be a part of the Literacy Cooperative's TANF Project. Taking a critical look at its educational offerings and thinking strategically about its assets was also a key piece of building organizational sustainability for HES. An additional wrinkle early in the TANF project was the news that the church in which Heights Even Start is located informed its tenant that it was not interested in renewing the HES lease, slated to expire at the end of August 2006. Against this backdrop, HES recruited a record number of TANF-eligible participants during the pilot phase, establishing itself as a vital community asset meeting a great community need, but also underscoring the necessity for, and challenges of, programs building to scale to meet increased need.

Vocational Guidance Services (VGS) was founded in 1890 when a group of young women began providing services to hospitalized children with disabilities. VGS grew to become a nationally known leader in rehabilitation services offering diverse educational rehabilitation programs for adults and children with disabilities. In 1975, VGS made a strategic decision to extend its services to people facing economic barriers to employment, and since then has served individuals with economic challenges.

In 2000, VGS entered the field of youth development as the administrating organization for the U.S. Department of Labor funded Youth Opportunities program. YO! Cleveland served more than 2,800 youth ages 14 ó 21 from Clevelandøs empowerment zone neighborhoods of Glenville, Hough, and Fairfax from its inception until it closed its doors in June 2006. YO! Clevelandøs mission was to promote upward mobility and economic self-sufficiency by delivering services in the areas of literacy, education, employment, job training, community service, leadership, and economic opportunity. As one of the original community partners in the YO! Cleveland program, **Project Learn** assisted the youth in meeting their educational goals while working towards a GED.

With the imminent closing of the YO! Cleveland program due to an exhaustion of the original federal empowerment zone dollars allocated for its operation, VGS was looking for ways to leverage other funding streams to continue providing some of the valuable wrap-around services to youth that seemed the most beneficial to the youthøs success in achieving advancement in education and employment. It had also already identified literacy and GED preparation as key components of the YO! Cleveland program that would remain and perhaps be expanded throughout VGS. Through this TANF project, VGS was motivated to shore up its capacity to provide literacy and GED preparation and engage Project Learn as its partner in doing so, and in the process help Project Learn build upon its strengths in these areas through exposure to some of the capacity building offerings.

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.) was founded in 1982 and provides a variety of employability, job-seeking, and basic life skills to youth throughout Cuyahoga County in partnership with numerous community organizations in a variety of settings. The mission of Y.O.U. is to help youth develop skills and abilities required to succeed in school and work so that they may realize their dreams and potential. Y.O.U.øs primary strategy for achieving its mission is to link youth, employers, and schools.

Y.O.U. targeted one of its newer programs serving a TANF-eligible client population for participation in the Literacy Cooperativeøs TANF project. The Teen Parent Empowerment Program (Teen PEP) was started in 2004 to help teen parents who are out of school and on public assistance to become employable. Ninety-nine percent of Teen PEP participants are mothers and recipients of Ohio Work First and are referred to the program at 18-19 years of age. While the county has only one outcome by which it measures success ó placement in any type of job ó unless the teen mother masters academics and other life skills, she will not obtain the GED and other qualifications necessary for jobs beyond Level 1 of literacy attainment. The Teen PEP staff is extremely dedicated to meeting the needs of its clients and was looking for assistance and new strategies for helping clients meet their educational goals.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

Summary of Activities

The pilot TANF project organizations participated in a variety of activities that included one-on-one meetings and coachings with the consulting team, meetings with the consulting team and key community stakeholders, and group seminars on topics identified by the organizations as important to their capacity building goals. In order to provide the Literacy Cooperative and the County with a sense of the return on investment of its time and funds for this capacity building effort, a summary of activity follows along with the number of corresponding participant hours. These figures also reflect conservatively some, but not all, of the special resource meetings and consultant research preparation time and other behind-the-scenes work on behalf of the organizations and their needs. It should be noted that this pilot project was not a õcookie-cutterö approach and required significant customization to the individual needs of each participating organization and to the cohort as a whole.

Table 1. **Professional Development and Capacity Building Hours**

Activity	Number of Sessions	Average Number of Session Participants	Total Professional Development/Capacity Building Hours
Site Visits with each organization to learn more about their programs and goals for the TANF project and beyond, discuss guiding principles for the work, and plan next steps. A follow-up site visit allowed organizations to refine work plans, begin content discussions on items of immediate importance, and schedule next set of meetings.	2/org = 10 10 x 2 hrs each = 20 hrs	8/org	**160**
Student Focus Groups were conducted at five of the eight participating organizations. A sixth focus group at VGS was scheduled but not conducted since few students were present that day due to the imminent closing of the program. Seeds of Literacy had three focus groups across sites.	6 focus groups 6 x 1 hr each = 6 hrs	14/group	**84**
Instructor Meetings were held at every organization with teachers and/or volunteer tutors and other program staff responsible for program management and direct instruction. Meetings covered a range of topics such as program	2/org = 10 10 x 2 hrs each = 20 hrs	9/org	**180**

successes and challenges, student learning inventories and styles, curriculum, classroom strategies, issues and ideas related to recruitment and retention, and included hands-on activities, group discussion, and sharing of promising practices.			
<u>Evaluation and Data Analysis Meetings</u> were conducted at 3 organizations who requested special individual assistance in this area. Strategies included sessions on tracking student progress, measuring and monitoring program outcomes, and reporting student outcomes.	3 sessions 3 x 2 hrs each = 6 hrs	4/org	**24**
<u>Group Seminars</u> geared towards capacity building needs of participating organizations and open to all instructors and staff members (program and administrative) from all organizations. Seminars included:			
· <u>Marketing Clinic</u> lead by Landau Public Relations	2 hrs	8 participants	**16 hrs**
· <u>Data Tracking Software Demo</u> by LiteracyPro	4 hrs	8 participants	**32 hrs**
· <u>Power Path Training</u> lead by Ohio State University	3 hrs	8 participants	**24 hrs**
· <u>Recruitment, Retention, and Data Analysis Seminar</u> lead by consulting team	4 hrs	22 participants	**88 hrs**
· <u>Funding Streams and Program Evaluation</u> lead by team	4 hrs	16 participants	**64 hrs**
· <u>Instructors Training ó Special Session</u> lead by Gloria Gillette of the Northeast Ohio Literacy Resource Center	4 hrs	7 participants	**28 hrs**
· <u>Transition Strategies</u> with panel presentation by representatives of key community resources	3 hrs	22 participants	**66 hrs**
· <u>Fundraising Workshop</u> lead by Susan Golden and followed by one-on-one sessions with each participating org.	3.5 hrs	16 participants	**56 hrs**
· <u>Wrap-Up: Lessons Learned</u>	3 hrs	25 participants	**75 hrs**
	Total		**897 hrs**

Consultant Capacity Building Activities	Number of Activities	Average Number of Participants	Total Consultant Capacity Building Hours
Special Resource Meetings with a variety of community partners who could bring expertise to bear on the organizations were held to plan specific interventions and seminars on behalf of the organizations. These included meetings with Landau Public Relations (marketing); Susan Golden (fundraising); Mike Longo (One-Stops); Gloria Gillette (Northeast Ohio Literacy Resource Center); Cleveland Reads (volunteer tutors); Kent State University GED Scholars Program and Cuyahoga Community College (University Transitions); and PowerPath representatives (system for assessing and working with students with learning difficulties).	8 sessions 8 x 2 hrs each = 16 hrs	4 participants	64 hrs
Special Stakeholder Meetings with community leaders identified as key capacity building partners for individual organizations and projects. These included meetings with Euclid Weed and Seed; Euclid School District Officials (to discuss a new credit-recovery program); Heights Even Start Advisory Council; Cleveland Heights/University Heights School District officials (to discuss credit-recovery and other new approaches to reaching at-risk youth); CH/UH ABLE (for new orientation approach at HES).	Approx. 10 meetings 10 x 2 hrs each = 20 hrs	6 participants	120 hrs
State and National Meetings that included a meeting with State ABLE staff in Columbus to discuss issues/ideas emerging from work with TANF projects and request program data; a meeting with the Hartford (CT) Literacy Coalition and attendance at a community conference reporting on the findings from its multi-year TANF project focused on workforce literacy; National LACES/Data tracking meeting.	3 meetings 3 x 5 hrs each = 15 hrs	4 participants	60 hrs

Independent Research that included research on fundraising, funding streams, curriculum, data tracking and data analysis, program benchmarking, return on investment, transition strategies, recruitment strategies, and retention strategies.	10 areas 10 x 25 hrs each = 250 hrs	3 participants	**750 hrs**
	Total		**994 hrs**
Grand Total Capacity Building Hours			**1,891 hrs**

Student Focus Group Findings

As one of the program related activities of the TANF consultation process, student focus group discussions were conducted with student participants. This section highlights some of the findings from the focus group sessions. The analysis provided below includes suggestions from student participants within and across programs participating in the TANF project. Students were asked to discuss a range of topics including their reasons for attending classes/programs, aspects of programs that have been particularly helpful/not helpful, potential reasons for not attending programs or barriers to attending at a particular time, and the convenience of class time and locations. (Specific questions are provided in the Appendix of this report.) Findings are summarized below relative to specific themes that emerged from student responses.

Relationships

Student/Instructor
Clearly, one of the important factors in response to questions about continuing to attend program classes and activities was the relationship between students and instructors/tutors. Building a connection between participants and individuals representing the program was critical. One student noted, õ[My instructor] is just great, she makes you feel comfortable in class and makes you want to come back.ö Another student noted, õThey called me when I did not come to class, and that let me know that they really cared. That made me want to come back.ö

Student/Outside Resource
Another factor discussed among participants was the connection they had with family or friends outside the program that made them want to come to class. Consistently, students shared their class experiences with someone outside of class, who in turn provided the motivation for their continued attendance. One student provided this example, õI have a friend that helps me with my homework when I leave here. Some days I donçt feel like coming, and just knowing that they are going to ask me what homework I have makes me get up and come.ö Several students mentioned that their motivation for attending is their children. Some want to be an example for their young children, and others, whose children have finished school, are being challenged by them to finish as well.

Job Readiness Training

Within the Program
A number of students pointed out that "all we do is work on academic stuff. We need more things related to job training." Another noted, "We need more practical topics to give us confidence, like how to apply for a job or how to interview for a job." Clearly, there was a need across programs to provide job readiness skills for students as part of the program.

Field Trips
Students consistently mentioned that field trips outside of class would be extremely helpful. In particular, trips related to job readiness training or building work-related skills were requested. Some students have taken the initiative to go outside of the program for this kind of preparation. One student explained, "I go to the library, and [one of the librarians] takes time out twice a week to help me learn Microsoft Office and other computer skills. She has been great, and she works with me every week."

Instruction

Individual attention was clearly the best aspect of instruction within the program. Comments related to the benefits of individualized instruction included:
- "I really like the fact that I can go at my own pace. I don't feel like I skipped something that I really don't know how to do because the rest of the class is moving on. They really help you learn the material here, and that is different from High School."
- "They take time to work with you one-on-one here. That is the best part."
- "I like the fact that I can work at my level. I don't have to work on things that I already know."

Another critical element of within-program instruction involves what we have termed, "one dimensional instructional practice." Instructors would benefit greatly from beginning to employ small group sessions, individual computer instruction, and whole class instruction. Students clearly articulated the need for a variety of instructional practices within the sessions, although the benefit of current practices was recognized. Finally, respondents noted that having the ability to take books home for additional study and homework would be ideal.

Program Location and Time

Students were generally happy with program location and time. However, respondents consistently requested more hours of instruction for the program. They did not necessarily want to add additional days, but would like 1-2 hours of additional instruction for each session.

Incentives

When asked about incentives, participants generally recommended books, gift certificates, and other common items. Laptop computers were cheered as a possibility!

Recommendations Based on Focus Groups

Several recommendations are evident from the discussions with students and are reflected both here and in the next section in which issues or õareas of focusö are highlighted with implications for future work. First, introducing a variety of instructional practices would benefit student learning. We recommend utilizing a combination of classroom instruction with individual tutoring. For example, each day a group topic is introduced and the last 30 to 60 minutes of class time is spent on just that topic, which can also be incorporated as a homework assignment. The remainder of the time can be spent on individual activities at the studentøs instructional level, utilizing volunteer tutors for the individual activities across the curriculum. In addition, a number of students requested the opportunity to have access to a resource room that might provide materials to review or practice with outside of program hours. This room may be staffed by volunteers or even students on certain days and made available outside of class time.

Students are valuable resources for recruitment and retention efforts. During the focus groups, students consistently sold us on the merits and benefits of the program. This testimony could be offered for their peers and other potential learners as well. In addition, most participants learned about the program from a friend or another person in the community. Clearly, word-of-mouth is still the best recruitment tool for the programs. Regarding retention, a student mentor or student coach model might significantly improve individual connection with the program. Students can be responsible for each other outside of the program including sharing books, checking homework, and ensuring attendance ó all efforts geared towards creating bonds among participants as much as possible. Geographic and financial barriers may be a hurdle to overcome in some cases, but cost effective and timely links between students can be devised for outside of classroom time.

Finally, childcare and transportation emerged as the most consistent requests for support outside of the academic focus. Assistance with finding a job was also mentioned a number of times, as was assistance with transitioning to post-secondary educational opportunities. Although some of these needs are outside the scope of some of the programs, we believe beginning to build partnerships to help support these student needs would dramatically impact retention and completion of a learnerøs educational and other life goals.

Over the course of the TANF literacy project, several strategic areas emerged as common issues across the five projects and eight participating organizations. Not surprisingly, these issues or õareas of focusö cluster within the five strategic focus areas of the Literacy Cooperative itself: 1) Centralized Information and Referral Center; 2) Training, Curriculum, and Instruction; 3) Evaluation and Accountability; 4) Fund Development; and 5) Public Awareness and Outreach.

The Literacy Cooperative should be reassured that the 18-month community planning process it undertook to investigate the literacy needs of the Greater Cleveland community and develop an agenda for the Cooperative, can be validated by the on-the-ground work with these eight local literacy providers. Indeed, the direction the Cooperative takes to implement its five strategic areas will well serve the literacy communityøs most crucial needs. The following overarching topics and areas of focus that were explored with the organizations during the pilot include:

Training, Curriculum, and Instruction
- Curriculum and instruction
- Students with low literacy levels and/or special learning needs
- Retention and persistence
- Transition strategies
- Professional development for instructors

Public Awareness and Outreach
- Marketing and recruitment

Resources (which includes Fund Development)
- Funding
- Volunteers
- Community partnerships

Evaluation and Accountability
- Evaluation
- Data tracking and analysis

The chart below examines key points about each of these areas of focus, describes the solutions or interventions offered to address these issues during the course of the pilot, and indicates initial implications for the Literacy Cooperative. An additional discussion of the broader implications of this work for the Literacy Cooperative, particularly immediate next steps, is offered at the end of this section.

TRAINING, CURRICULUM and INSTRUCTION

Key Topic	Areas of Focus	Solutions provided during TANF Pilot	Implications for Literacy Cooperative
Curriculum and Instruction	Curriculum in general is good, ranging from traditional basic skills and ESOL texts to cutting edge software in computer managed systems like Aztec ó issues center on: · how curriculum is used · how learner goals are incorporated · inclusion of workforce or other content while still meeting academic goals Instruction in general is excellent (teachers are skilled and committed) ó issues center on: · one-dimensional approaches prevent teachers from exploring more diverse strategies and customizing for learning modalities of students · students are rarely involved in lesson planning and program design Programs need computers!	Provided ideas for creative lesson planning Helped integrate learner goals and relevant interests in lesson content Suggested alternatives for orientation process and use of student information going forward Offered ideas for alternative instructional approaches (mix of one-on-one tutoring, group class work, etc.) Raised level of awareness of computers as key instructional resources ó County approved laptops as virtual textbooks (which could be a milestone for future use of county $)	Provide professional development Link orgs to help each other provide alternative instructional strategies ↓ ↓ ↓ Seek bulk donation of laptops as instructional tools and graduation incentives
Key Topic	Areas of Focus	Solutions provided during TANF Pilot	Implications for Literacy Cooperative
Students with low literacy levels and/or special learning needs	Challenging population for programs ó many refer out so they donøt have to be accountable for low gains Funding streams require GED outcomes ó this is not a realistic goal for some learners, (which includes	Defined and identified a need for further professional development Introduced PowerPath as a possible tool, among others Engaged Alan Toops, ED of the Ohio Literacy Network,	Provide professional development Encourage appropriate screenings Build upon relationship with Alan Toops and

| | | individuals w/low cognitive skills, developmental and mental health disabilities)

It simply does not õpayö for programs to retain low-level learners | who is also a noted LD expert | other local resource experts |
| | | | | |

Key Topic	Areas of Focus	Solutions provided during TANF Pilot	Implications for Literacy Cooperative
Retention and Persistence	Retention is an issue across the board, and retention rates are likely significantly underreported ó not on purpose, but by design (ABLE programs donøt track progress until 12 hrs of contact, but many students donøt make it that far, for various reasons unrelated to the program itself, and never get counted) Contact hours with students too limited for substantive gains Extended hours not widely available (longer days, weekends, summer) Programs not measuring and communicating learner progress ó students not given expectations for completion time frame and potential final outcomes Learning environment not always conducive to learning Traditional barriers exist across the board: · Transportation · Child care · Personal psycho/social challenges	Provided strategies for increasing retention Linked effective curriculum use and instructional practices as important retention tools Shared research studies from NCSALL on persistence Provided overview of how to use data to encourage student retention and growth Offered solutions re: learner-driven environments Made recommendations re: modifications to classroom lay-outs Developed ideas and provided incentives for learners Facilitated understanding the need to seek multiple funding streams	Provide professional development regarding retention strategies and encourage full accounting of enrolled learners Design and support home-based instruction components to increase learning hours Link with/advertise use of Adelphia Computer Centers located in neighborhoods for homework/extended study strategies Support providers to replicate successful programs with child care or child education component Promote the development of a community learning center model to address barriers to learning

Key Topic	Areas of Focus	Solutions provided during TANF Pilot	Implications for Literacy Cooperative
Transition Strategies	Few systemic pathways to next steps (higher ed or job placement) No post-program support for learners No relationship between current job skills needs and curriculum Little comprehensive vocational exploration Economic development benchmarks indicate need for more educated population, and workforce requirements increasingly indicate need for workers with 4-yr degrees ó yet disconnect between these requirements and attention and resources being paid to address systemic low levels of literacy and education	Provided workshop and panel discussion from community reps re: transition Built relationship with Workforce Investment Boardøs One-Stops Provided list of resources and strategies re: mentoring, community partner site visits, etc.	Identify gaps that programs have and build relationships with community partners (Tri-C and other Community colleges are most promising partners here as open enrollment [CSU] is eliminated along with remedial education classes at most 4-yr institutions) Build awareness with employers to create worksite programs Build awareness with higher ed to create transitions Develop counseling and mentoring services

Key Topic	Areas of Focus	Solutions provided during TANF Pilot	Implications for Literacy Cooperative
Professional Development for Instructors	Inequity in opportunities across funding streams Instructors unaware of opportunities available Cost of professional development (cut when budgets are tight, substitutes expensive, etc.)	Provided a variety of seminars and instructor meetings Provided new teacher training through NE Ohio Literacy Resource Center Met with State ABLE director to open doors for non-ABLE programs Identified national training opportunities	Provide ongoing professional development as part of comprehensive menu of trainings Subcontract with existing agencies to provide training in specific content areas Provide staff development incentives (e.g. as condition for programs to access $)

PUBLIC AWARENESS and OUTREACH

Key Topic	Areas of Focus	Solutions provided during TANF Pilot	Implications for Literacy Cooperative
Marketing and Recruitment	Recruitment is an issue across the board	Provided new marketing materials	Establish 211 Hotline
	Recruitment training is not prevalent in most literacy programs ó responsibilities are often afterthought to other job requirements	Provided recruitment strategies and emphasized importance of front-line recruitment staff	Explore model recruitment training in other places nationally and as part of new referral network
	Learners are not aware of literacy services available in their neighborhoods	Provided marketing seminar	Conduct community-wide outreach campaign
	With marketing efforts and awareness campaigns, programs need to be ready to handle an influx of learners	Conducted advocacy and outreach for individual programs and Cooperative in general with key stakeholders groups and potential partners (State ABLE, School Districts, One-Stops, etc.)	Provide Cooperative-wide capacity building to help providers handle influx of learners and volunteers
	Programs need to be more flexible about orientation schedules and learner enrollment time frames	Shared research about importance of flexible hours and new strategies for orientation	
	õLiteracyö as a concept may be a turn-off for many potential learners	Helped some programs rethink how they brand their programs	

RESOURCES

Key Topic	Areas of Focus	Solutions provided during TANF Pilot	Implications for Literacy Cooperative
Funding	Programs rely too much on single sources of funding	Provided fundraising seminar and one-on-one technical assistance sessions, focused in particular on philanthropic gifts and grants	Establish fund development center: · Provide research for a variety of funding solutions
	Single funding sources limit program service provision beyond basic academic needs of students	Provided lists of potential	· Convene funders (locally and nationally)

	Programs lack sufficient funds to enroll the broad range of learners in need of services Individual organizations have difficulty accessing larger funding streams and lack connections to funders Programs struggle to raise funds for current programming much less expanded programming to meet increased demand (chicken and egg scenario) Fundraising activity in general is limited Funders and other key constituents may not be aware of the realities of expected learner progress, particularly for those at lower literacy levels ó criteria is needed to articulate expectations for different learner groups	local and state funders Provided seminar on data analysis and evaluation Found public school funding to support some learners (which in turn freed up funding for other learners) Nearly 90% of the resources made available for this project went back into the community	for education on issues and needs ó particularly realistic learner levels and GED gains · Convene partnerships of providers to seek joint funding · Continue to provide fundraising technical assistance to increase individual organization capacity · Seek donations of in-kind resources on a large scale (incentives, space) · Present findings and lessons learned to other groups · Investigate Cooperative as portal for donations to ind. programs (e.g. õDonors Chooseö website) Sponsor õTwo-Wayö Funders/Providers panel for cross-learning about each othersøprograms and priorities Initiate targeted fundraising campaigns · e.g. for two pools of funds: 1) general operating to ease burden on high-performing organizations; 2) funding for community learning center initiatives Examine options/models for earned income

Key Topic	Areas of Focus	Solutions provided during TANF Pilot	Implications for Literacy Cooperative
Volunteers	Programs need a variety of volunteers Programs may need assistance in developing effective volunteer management programs Community lacks comprehensive volunteer training center	Met with Cleveland Reads about its volunteer tutor orientation and identified it as a promising community provider in this area Provided organizations with Cleveland Readsø volunteer tutor training handbook Provided organizations with resources about managing volunteers	Provide centralized volunteer recruitment, training, and tracking (community organizations and providers are promising partners in this area) Use 211 Hotline for referrals Sponsor a volunteer fair

Key Topic	Areas of Focus	Solutions provided during TANF Pilot	Implications for Literacy Cooperative
Community Partnerships	Literacy providers are relatively isolated and could benefit from intentional networks Community partnerships could address wrap-around services that individual programs are unable to provide Organizations could benefit from facilitated partnership training	Implementation of the TANF project itself established connections between organizations Provided opportunities for organizations to come together and share ideas Facilitated meetings with potential community partners Provided resource contacts and suggestions for interaction with other community partners	Convene organizations around areas of interest Establish ongoing peer-learning opportunities (at least more immediately with the current TANF group) Continue Cooperative-level meetings with key community stakeholders (e.g. mayors, commissioners, funders, superintendents, business leaders, legislators, etc.) to maintain high-level awareness of and advocacy for literacy

EVALUATION and ACCOUNTABILITY

Key Topic	Areas of Focus	Solutions provided during TANF Pilot	Implications for Literacy Cooperative
Evaluation	Most evaluation activities are conducted for compliance and not continuous program improvement	Provided seminar on evaluation	Establish coordinated system to disseminate information about learner progress
Data Tracking and Analysis	Data tracking is inconsistent across programs No standards exist to measure learner progress and success across levels No standards exist to determine what data to collect and how to analyze the data for student progress in a particular program Current data reporting is an outcome measure not a progress measure	Provided seminar on different ways for programs to measure learner success as well as one-on-one advice for specific data tracking, analysis, and evaluation Provided a sample analysis of measuring student progress across levels using State TABE data Began discussions about a standard data tracking system Conducted dialogue with ABLE about collaborating on data tracking and discussed potential pilot project	

Broad Implications and Next Steps for the Literacy Cooperative

The Literacy Cooperative has a broad and multi-faceted agenda that when implemented in full will have a tremendous impact upon literacy levels in the Greater Cleveland region. As noted in the previous chart, there are numerous implications for the Literacy Cooperative in the key topic areas as a result of the work completed during the TANF project. However, if this pilot project can be considered a small-scale model of the kinds of interventions that would be particularly useful on a larger scale across the Cooperative's network, then the following priorities might be effective next steps for the Cooperative to undertake.

Strategic Area 2: Training, Curriculum, and Instruction

Action Plan: Ensure that high-quality training, curriculum development, and instruction techniques are available to providers so that they can build program capacity in an environment of increased accountability.

Professional development for instructors and program staff will provide valuable instructional strategies and promising practices related directly to teaching and learning ó key capacity aspects of any literacy program. The Literacy Cooperative can partner or subcontract with consultants, agencies, and indeed some established literacy providers to provide training in specific content areas as part of a comprehensive menu of trainings. Based upon the experience of the pilot project, the following topic areas would be particularly valuable to organizations:

- Cultural Competencies (culturally sensitive practices, cross cultural education, overcoming cultural barriers in family literacy settings)
- Strategies to Motivate Learners
- Integrating Pre-Employment Skills into the Curriculum
- Job Readiness (dress for success, interviewing, awareness of vocational opportunities)
- Learners in Multi-Level Classrooms (best practices for addressing needs of both slower and more advanced learners in single classroom)
- Working with Infants in a Family Literacy Program
- Best Practices in Teaching Phonetics
- Best Practices in Teaching Math (pre-GED and GED)
- Motivating Students to be Accountable
- Motivating Students for Persistence
- Students with Learning Difficulties
- Developing Critical Thinking Skills (youth and adults)
- Technology Use in the Classroom
- Funding for Students Who Don't have Jobs as an Outcome
- PowerPath Training
- Strategies for Non-GED Students to Create Positive Outcomes

Strategic Area 3: Evaluation and Accountability

Action Plan: Establish accountability standards, set and measure targets for learners, and determine evaluation tools for ongoing program improvement.

Literacy programs are ready and willing to establish program evaluation protocols and participate in a coordinated system of tracking learner progress. New approaches to understanding data analysis that provided programs new ways to think about and measure learner success across levels was a particularly highly rated activity with the TANF participants. A Data Analysis Seminar should be provided (more than once) for local literacy providers, with possible customized one-on-one follow-up for individual programs.

In addition, based upon feedback from the TANF participants as well as input from a group of national users, the LACES data tracking system developed by LiteracyPro has risen to the top as a product of choice to use for implementing a coordinated tracking system. Initial conversations with state and local ABLE officials about collaborating on data tracking also show promise for addressing the similar yet distinct accountability needs of ABLE providers.

Strategic Area 4: Fund Development

Action Plan: Create a fund development center where information about funding opportunities is disseminated, and shared grants are submitted to local, state, and national funders (both public and private) to bring more literacy dollars to Greater Cleveland.

A quick win in establishing the Cooperative as a go-to resource for funding information for the literacy community would be to conduct a scan of funding opportunities to post on the Cooperative's website. Many of the TANF organizations have the capacity to seek grants on their own, and have already expressed interest in pursuing funding opportunities in partnership with some of their new-found colleagues from the TANF project. The Fundraising Seminar conducted by Susan Golden was also well received by the TANF participants and could easily be replicated on a larger scale for more organizations in the Cooperative network.

The greatest need in terms of funding is to collaborate in accessing major national public and private grants in multi-project or Cooperative-wide applications that would have broad and deep implications for the County.

A few additional thoughts related to the other two Strategic Areas based upon work during the TANF project:

Strategic Area 1: Centralized Information and Referral Center

Action Plan: Establish a centralized information and referral center that connects and infuses literacy into all sectors and initiatives, provides a consistent point of contact for potential learners and volunteers, and ensures that learners continue to meet goals.

TANF project organizations were consistent in their message about the need for assistance in recruitment of students and volunteers ó particularly the latter. Programs are looking for volunteers for both instruction and administrative support. While Cleveland Reads has an exemplary program for recruitment, orientation, and placement of volunteer tutors, most programs provide their own specialized training for instructional volunteers. In addition, no comprehensive volunteer center exists in Cleveland that provides training and placement for other kinds of volunteers or that can assist organizations in developing effective volunteer management programs. The Literacy Cooperative can play a role in either helping Cleveland Reads develop a more comprehensive volunteer training center or link together literacy providers and other community resources to meet the volunteer needs of the literacy community.

Strategic Area 5: Public Awareness and Outreach

Action Plan: Launch a coordinated marketing and public relations campaign

Many of the capacity building activities and lessons learned from the TANF project must be offered on a larger scale, particularly to prepare the provider community for a potential influx of learners and volunteers. As was demonstrated by the dramatic increase in enrollment at Heights Even Start during the course of the TANF project, more students are a tangible indication of the need and demand for literacy programs, but can hamstring an organization not prepared either structurally or instructionally to take on an increase in learners. (It should be noted that HES handled this õproblemö quite well, it simply does not have the space or resources in its current location to serve an increased number of clients over the long term.) The public awareness campaign should be launched when providers have had every opportunity to build capacity and learners and volunteers should be referred to programs that can demonstrate such readiness.

As a capacity building project, the work with the organizations focused on interventions and coachings intended to build upon their assets, while acknowledging and addressing specific challenges they faced and helping them find solutions. It was particularly important for the consulting team that the organizations began to own their work and build their own strategies for change. These strategies were captured in individual reports for each organization that provide a blue print for addressing their own continuous improvement goals, ultimately aimed at helping clients improve their literacy skills well beyond the project time frame.

These change strategies are just one tangible result of the interventions provided during the TANF project. From the consultantsø perspectives and from what the organizations reported themselves, the following short-term results were also realized.

Short-Term Results

Euclid City Schools ABLE Program
- Approval from the Superintendent to enroll students at risk of dropping out of high school in an alternative education option through the ABLE Program is a tremendous advancement for Euclid ABLE and will provide it with additional dollars flowing through the school district.
- The proposal and negotiations with school district officials brought new respect for and a deeper commitment to the ABLE Program on the part of district personnel.
- Student recruitment will be affected positively by the new arrangements with the school district as well as with deeper coordination with Weed and Seed and the Euclid Collaborative as key community partners. The new marketing materials and strategies will provide an updated look and approach that are more attractive to potential learners.
- A number of key partnerships were identified by Euclid ABLE, particularly with other literacy providers and peers in the pilot TANF project, that have the potential for deepening Euclid ABLEøs programming. The notion of bartering within areas of expertise between organizations is particularly innovative and promising.
- As reported by Euclid ABLE staff, an unintended, intrinsic result of the project was the opportunity to bring teachers together to brainstorm new ideas and take greater ownership of the success of the program, which has increased overall motivation and buy-in from this key internal stakeholder group. In the past, teachers might have been resistant to proposed changes, but their engagement from the beginning of the project in finding new solutions and refreshing their instructional strategies helped overcome this barrier.

Garden Valley Neighborhood House Partnership
- A new family literacy program by Cleveland Reads was implemented successfully, and the engagement of the women participants in a program that achieved a support-group atmosphere with an infusion of hands-on learning strategies, was a positive outcome.
- Recruitment materials and strategies were deployed effectively, particularly as the program gained traction over the pilot period. By the end of the pilot period, 44 students were actively enrolled in the GED program, exceeding the goal for that portion of the

project. Of that number, 34 students achieved some of their preliminary goals and five students advanced one or more levels.

- A new approach to its learner orientation process, as well as new ways to think about program evaluation and data tracking were valuable take-aways for Seeds of Literacy.
- New approaches to classroom learning environments will be implemented at both Garden Valley and at Seeds of Literacyøs other program sites, to create a better sense of community for learners (e.g. classroom set-ups, group-centered activities, etc.).
- Strategies for Garden Valley Neighborhood House to think about how it can both expand educational programming linked to its other offerings, as well as build wrap-around services to meet the needs of its community members were offered.
- Relationships were built, not only among these three partner organizations, but also with the other organizations in the pilot program, and resources and services that can be offered/shared between all of the organizations were identified.

Heights Even Start
- New recruitment materials and revamped recruitment strategies were deployed effectively. Student recruitment improved dramatically with a two-fold increase in the number of new families to the program ó 17 families with 27 children, 50% of whom were adults under the age of 24, the target TANF population for this project.
- A new style of orientation session held at the HES facility, followed immediately by testing the next day, provided a seamless enrollment process for the students. This new approach and the arrangement for an independent contract with an ABLE-certified testing specialist will provide HES more flexibility in the timing and oversight of its orientation process and increase student retention from initial inquiry to enrollment.
- Discussion was initiated at the highest level with CH/UH School District staff to explore an enrollment and credit recovery option at HES for youth (with families) at risk of dropping out.
- HES garnered input from its Advisory Council, which was convened to help HES think strategically about its programming, particularly in light of the opportunities and challenges presented by a reduction in funding and the pending relocation.
- As reported by HES staff, an unintended, intrinsic result of the project was the opportunity afforded to bring teachers together to brainstorm new ideas and take greater ownership of the success of the program, which has increased overall motivation and buy-in from this key internal stakeholder group.
- HES also reported the value of networking between it and the other TANF organizations, and the opportunities for further collaboration that were planted during this pilot.

Vocational Guidance Services
- VGS was able to identify sustainable aspects of the YO! Cleveland program and work on retention of students through the transition between YO! and the continued literacy, GED preparation, and job skills components that will now be offered at the new VGS site.
- A new approach to communicating the long-term benefits of the YO! Cleveland program was developed, particularly using õreturn on investmentö methodology to make the case with future funders and public officials about the importance of programs like YO! to the self-sufficiency of at-risk youth, and ultimately the larger community as a whole.

- A new and strengthened partnership with Project Learn was developed to address the literacy and GED preparation needs of clients throughout the VGS organization, and will allow everyone to be served regardless of a learner's literacy level.

Youth Opportunities Unlimited
- The importance of addressing the literacy needs of youth throughout all of Y.O.U.'s programs was elevated as a result of this project. Teen PEP staff is training staff in other Y.O.U. programs around literacy strategies and all Y.O.U. staff members have included in their plans to assess and improve literacy skills for their case loads.
- Staff was introduced to a new system of assessing incoming students, particularly those with learning challenges, and identified PowerPath as an appropriate assessment tool and student-directed system for achieving learner goals. The Literacy Cooperative will likely pilot this system with the TANF organizations, if not also with a larger set of providers.
- Staff also developed a new "Psycho-Social-Environmental Strengths Resource Assessment Tool" that will help them identify and work through student barriers to literacy success.
- As a result of working with Y.O.U., the Literacy Cooperative was able to make a successful case to the County regarding purchase of laptop computers as "virtual textbooks" and crucial components of any literacy program. This could represent a permanent advancement at the County level about reimbursements for computers.
- Marketing and development staff at Y.O.U. who attended sessions offered through the TANF project put their learning into practice by developing capacity building plans for the coming year.
- Y.O.U. made valuable contacts with other organizations in the TANF pilot, establishing potential partnering relationships, particularly with its expertise in workforce preparation and job transitions for young people. Staff also reported on the learning gained from their exposure to other programs and approaches to literacy and GED preparation.

Lessons Learned

In addition to the results specific to each organization, participants reported the following lessons learned, most of which were echoed across all programs:

- Use assessment and ongoing learner tracking to provide benchmarks for student progress
- Develop benchmarks and portfolios to help students be more accountable to the programs and to their own progress
- Transfer information gleaned from student orientation into student learning plans, and consider more opportunistic timing and implementation of orientation sessions
- Engage current and former students in a variety of capacities (recruitment, orientation, mentors, classroom volunteers, etc.)
- Bring teachers together to brainstorm new instructional strategies and approaches to program implementation for increased buy-in and motivation by teachers, resulting in greater probability of student success (and a boost in teacher morale)
- Build trust and cohesiveness among staff and students

- Partner with other literacy providers, particularly in complementary not duplicative areas, to leverage community resources and expertise
- Continue networking and learning opportunities between providers ó organizations gain new knowledge and ideas by sharing experiences and strategies for overcoming barriers
- Provide ongoing professional development for teachers and volunteer instructors for networking and refresher teaching strategies

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Provided as part of this report is a brief cost-benefit discussion detailing the projected future impact of grant-related activities on the local economy. The following cost-benefit analysis weighs the net investment of the TANF grant against the long-term return on investment of the project. õAt its most useful, benefit-cost analysis can identify and provide information on the full costs of programs and weigh those against the dollar value of the program benefitsö (Kee, 1994, p. 456). This analysis will be divided into two independent components. The first part identifies the total per hour contribution of grant dollars to support activities. The second aspect of the analysis identifies the expected financial benefit of dollars invested on future earnings and tax revenues for participating individuals. A final benefit of the program, which will not be detailed in this report, is the significant reduction in public costs, such as public assistance and incarceration costs, represented by program successes.

The break down of cost per hour for the project involves subtracting direct program expenses and materials from the total budget. The remaining cost can be divided by the total number of hours contributed to the program by participants and consultants identified in Table 1 (page 7). The cost of the project is based on the $421,874 financial investment of TANF funds. Direct costs for the project included the five sub-grants awarded to the individual organizations across the county which came to $214,125. These sub-grants included personnel expenses, equipment lease/rentals, supplies, marketing materials, and a reasonable percentage of indirect costs. Additional direct costs incurred for the entire project included the distribution of books and other materials throughout the broader literacy community, which totaled $48,689.

The per hour professional development and capacity building activities listed in Table 1 can be divided by the total TANF grant budget minus the direct program expenses, for a per hour analysis of the capacity building aspect of the project. Subtracting the total direct project expenses from the total contribution ($214,125 program expenses + $48,689 book expenses = $262,814 direct expenses) leaves $159,060 in capacity building expenses. Dividing by the capacity building hours calculated in Table 1 (1,891 hours), the total per hour cost of activities is about $84 per hour.

Many of the benefits of the project will be seen in longer-term results from the investment in building the capacity of the programs involved in the project. For this discussion, the long-term benefits of the program will be based on statistical expectations of participant performance and expected program outcomes derived from historical data. The first phase of this analysis involves research on the existing data related to the program expectations. A number of articles and reports have estimated the lifetime income differences between individuals without high-

school diplomas and those with various levels of secondary and post-secondary degrees (e.g. Barrow & Rouse, 2005; Rouse, 2005; Lynch, 2000). This research clearly shows the differential impact of additional educational attainment on lifetime earnings. Using different data sources, research indicates that a high-school level education will earn an individual about $260,000 more over a lifetime, and that individual will contribute approximately $60,000 more in federal and state income taxes. Dollars from this grant directly contributed to the identification/enrollment of an <u>additional</u> 110 students across the programs. In the state of Ohio, 4.42% of those served in the targeted age group for this grant receive a GED (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2002). Historical data from programs in this project show that their average number of GEDøs is actually 6.29% of those served. Therefore, a conservative estimate of GED completers from this group is about 8 students (one student has already completed her GED). Consequently, the long term financial impact of this TANF investment will be at least $2.08 million in additional earned income for individuals in the community and $480,000 in federal and state income tax contributions.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the investment of TANF dollars for capacity building across the county makes a difference both qualitatively and quantitatively. Overall, there is a clearly articulated increase in the use of new strategies by programs, which will have an impact on individual attainment as a result of the TANF grant, and is only likely to increase as programs have more time and resources to put their learnings into practice. Further benefits of this kind of capacity building project will be identified and reported as more relevant data are collected and reported in the future, but this preliminary look can be considered promising for these kinds of interventions.

Challenges of Project Implementation

There were relatively few insurmountable problems or challenges during the pilot. We note a handful of stumbling blocks for reference in implementing future capacity building programs:

- The time frame was much too short and consultants were concerned about maximizing the situation to do as much good as possible in such a limited time. While there appears to be positive outcomes of the work, the timing did not allow for sustained exploration of some of the topics on a deeper level, and prevented or delayed the implementation of many strategies advocated by the consultants. The strict time constraints also added a level of difficulty for the organizations as they attempted to use their stipends wisely.
- The semester-driven nature of a few of the programs meant that they were preparing for summer close-out during this project.
- The selection of the participating organizations could be improved to ensure that participants are the best candidates for this kind of capacity building work and not simply looking for additional or gap funding opportunities.
- The RFP process did not garner sufficient information or provide enough detail regarding TANF allowable expenditures, for example, and initial implementation time was spent in gathering information, identifying themes, and modifying budgets. This will likely be less problematic in any future cycles.

- Similarly, balancing realistic expectations of a funder regarding learner gains, given both the capacity building nature of the project and the extremely accelerated time frame, is important. This is also related to education of funders, noted previously in this report, about the realities of short- and long-term outcomes of literacy programs. Accountability and quality standards are imperative, but must also be realistic and relevant to be useful.

Opportunities

Fortunately, many more opportunities than challenges presented themselves throughout, and as a result of, this pilot project:

- The participating organizations were more than willing to embrace change. There was little, if any evidence that programs are õstuck in their ways.ö Indeed the participants seemed hungry for thoughtful discussion and solutions to advancing their efforts to increase the success of their learners. This points towards the importance of sustained professional development opportunities and bodes well for moving the needle on literacy levels in Cuyahoga County.
- A community of practice should be maintained with these TANF participants (both program directors and teams of instructors) for ongoing peer learning. õCommunities of practiceö could also be developed with other cohorts of providers in order to encourage more interaction. These smaller õcommunitiesö could be convened at the end of larger stakeholder meetings as just one way to provide specific engagement opportunities.
- Establish 6 to 12 month follow-up õtouchstonesö for the TANF organizations ó they want to be held accountable for implementing the strategies they developed and would likely welcome opportunities to report back both their continued successes and challenges.
- The individualized attention for each organization was an important aspect of the program and a valuable benefit. Maintaining some level of one-on-one contact with organizations <u>and</u> offering group trainings ends up modeling the kinds of interventions that are most beneficial to students, for example, in a classroom setting ó students need both individual attention to meet their personal learning styles and goals, as well as contact with a larger community of learners.
- The original TANF organizations will be valuable resources to the Cooperative as it considers scaling up its capacity building efforts. The õveteransö can be matched with new organizations coming into the program and provide mentoring for organizations with similar opportunities and challenges.

Conclusion

If the Literacy Cooperativeøs 2006 TANF Capacity Building project was about *Advancing Literacy in Greater Cleveland*, then we believe that this report outlines evidence that quality literacy provision and learner levels will increase in the participating organizations as a result of this work. In addition, the consulting teamøs own primary goals: 1) to increase collaborative activity and share promising practices in overall literacy provision; and 2) to help organizations get on the road to meeting their own goals and objectives, also were addressed. The change

strategies that the organizations identified to meet their medium- and long-range goals beyond the pilot phase of the project, indicate a strong level of understanding and commitment to the kinds of activities that will enhance their literacy service provision. Their plans also identify partners in the community ó particularly their colleagues in this project ó with whom they want to work to make some of the new ideas a reality.

Partnerships that combine the best thinking and practices for comprehensive literacy provision are indeed one of the pillars of how the greater Cleveland area will begin to increase literacy levels on a significant and broad-based level. Indeed it became clear to the consulting team that the more literacy providers could make available, either on their own or with access to partners, an all-inclusive approach to a learnerøs academic and social needs, the more successful the entire literacy equation becomes.

To that end, and based upon the learning gained between all participants ó including the consulting team ó the following model of a õneighborhood learning centerö encompasses many of the recommendations about how literacy can be addressed on a larger and deeper scale in our communities.

Learning centers are neighborhood hubs that can provide a range of services in an environment that has been designed and supported by local community members and leaders that is learner centered and learner driven. A learning center is designed around the needs of learners and the goals of lifelong learning. It provides a centralized neighborhood site to encourage learning and make it both relevant and fun. In such a center, community members can:

- Access information about ways to continue their education
- Be assessed for their literacy level
- Enroll in classes for themselves and their children to improve their literacy levels
- Gain wrap around support to help achieve their learning goals

Communities have been exploring the concept of neighborhood learning centers over the past fifteen years. Initially learning centers provided adults with adult basic education, GED and ESOL, provided through one-on-one tutoring, small group interaction, and larger group classroom instruction. These programs grew to include family literacy, financial literacy, computer literacy and workforce preparation. Eventually life skills, health literacy and other services were added.

The recent Literacy Cooperative TANF project created opportunities to explore this model in Cleveland and indeed evolve the concept even further based upon interactions with the TANF organizations. If a center is only education focused it does not recognize the other learner needs and interests of families and often does not address the issues of learner persistence and intensity. Learners in the TANF project identified issues around childcare, transportation, timing, flexibility and other day-to-day family and personal issues that result in low attendance. Low attendance prevents learners from making optimal progress, which in turn results in low performance leading to low self esteem, thus completing the cycle that leads the learner to drop out of school in the first place. Research shows that increasing persistence increases gains.

The learning center is essentially the go-to place in each community where people can gather for book clubs, access email, or take short courses and seminars about issues affecting individual and families. All activities and sessions are offered at appropriate literacy and language levels. Determining services that help to increase attendance and reduce the need for other social service visits and creating flexible hours and courses helps to address the traditional barriers to learning. Wrap around services can include:

Legal services	Case management	Healthcare
Computer services	Recreation	Employment
Housing	Mental health	

Many people spend considerable time and energy accessing needed services that take up hours of the day traveling from one location to another. In many sectors one-stop shopping has become the mode of service delivery but there are only a few examples of full service one-stops. In Cuyahoga County the nearest model was found in the Youth Opportunity (YO! Cleveland) program that has closed as a result of federal funding cuts.

The model explored by the TANF consultants follows:

Neighborhood Learning Center
Community Collaboration Model
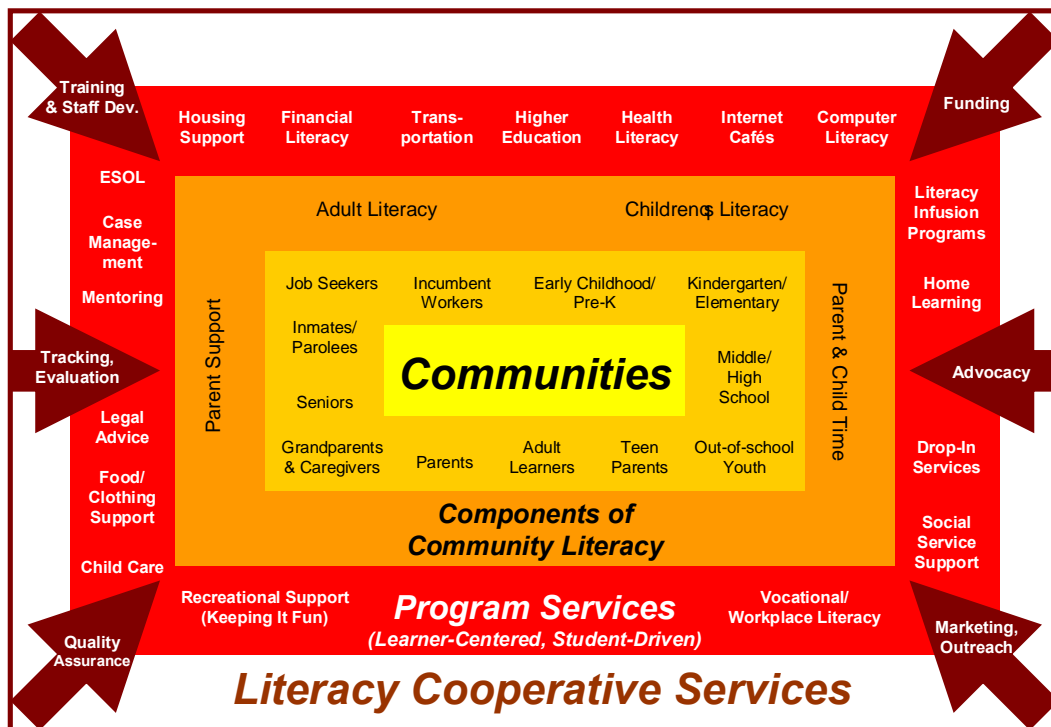
This model can be implemented in any number of community locations:
- ➤ Hospitals and clinics
- ➤ Multi service centers
- ➤ Family literacy centers
- ➤ Schools and colleges
- ➤ Faith-based locations
- ➤ Workforce One-Stop-Shops
- ➤ Community technology centers

All community members could have access to the centers recognizing that each person is on a different learning continuum. Programs would be individually designed for each participant or family. Some programs would require 20 ó 30 hours of weekly participation that could include classroom, individualized, computer assisted instruction and self study. Other programs would be drop in services and yet others would be short courses the community members identified as areas of interest, such as financial literacy, health improvement, workforce preparation and computer literacy.

A lead agency would be the fiscal agent for the center and communities would have a say in selecting the most interested and appropriate organization to take on this role. Each lead agency would identify a community leadership team for the center that would include the cultural diversity of the neighborhood and the existing organizations providing services. A core management and instructional staff would operate the program and satellite services would be offered by expert providers.

The Literacy Cooperative would offer centralized tracking and evaluation, staff development, marketing and outreach and fund development for each location. Centers would be funded by accessing major collaborative grants and by leveraging existing opportunities for scale up and capacity building.

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Student Focus Group Questions

1. What are 2 things that you like most about your experience in the program?

2. What are 2 to 3 reasons that you attend classes/activities during the program?

3. What 2 things did you hope to get from the classes/trainings?

4. What aspect(s) of the classes/program activities have been particularly helpful?

5. What aspect(s) of the classes/program activities have not been helpful?

6. What 2 things about the classes/program activities would you change if you could?

    a. Intake process?
    b. Assessments?
    c. Follow-up assessments?
    d. How to help with other things ó ex. Resource manuals

7. What are 2 to 3 things that would keep you from attending classes/program activities?

8. What are 2 to 3 things you would like to receive to encourage you, and others, to attend classes/program activities more often?

9. What type of additional training/support would help you at this point in time?

10. How did you hear about the classes/program activities?

11. Is the location/time of the classes convenient? If not, where and when would you like to have class?