

**ATLANTIC CAPE MAY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD
STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ADULT LITERACY
July 11, 2002-June 30, 2004**

1. INTRODUCTION

a. Executive Summary

The Atlantic Cape May Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and its Literacy Committee have developed an Adult Literacy Plan that is congruent with the WIB's unified strategic plan. The Literacy Plan incorporates the WIB's Literacy goals and targets the needs of specific populations located in specific geographic areas in Atlantic and Cape May Counties. Workforce development issues of employers in local industries are understood and acknowledged in the Literacy Plan.

The Literacy Plan provides the means to integrate the delivery of services with the Work Force New Jersey (WFNJ) One Stop Career Centers and enhances the local environment for provider collaboration and partnerships. It endorses a systematic approach to the delivery of services to the customer. It supports obtaining the resources needed to enhance Literacy provider knowledge and practices and to expand specific high demand services, such as GED Testing, Level 1 Literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL), and technology training. It accepts State-backed standards, assessment tools, and measures of outcomes. The Literacy Plan has specific goals to be accomplished during a detailed timeline and provides an itemized budget for use of New Jersey Department of Labor (NJ DOL) Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills under sections 34:15D-21 (a)(1) and 34:15D-21 (a)(2).

The WIB acknowledges that the Literacy Plan does not address every need. There is more planning work to be done and resources to be found for people with disabilities, to better refer and link customers with needed support services, such as child care and transportation, to outreach and recruit targeted populations, and to implement CASAS and NRS.

The following Literacy Plan has the support of the Literacy Committee, the WFNJ One Stop Career Centers, and the WIB Board of Directors.

b. Atlantic Cape May Workforce Investment Board Vision

Formed in 1998, the mission of the WIB is:

“To ensure the coordinated and efficient delivery of the region’s workforce readiness resources through membership which provides leadership, direction, and accountability for the service area.”

The WIB is comprised of 45 representatives shared between Atlantic and Cape May Counties. It has an active membership with more than half of the Board members from the private sector. The WIB has six working committees, one of which is the Literacy Committee. The current Five

Year Strategic Plan states that the vision of the Literacy Committee is to develop and implement a strategic plan to address issues of workplace literacy with two goals:

1. To provide the necessary services to those in need.
2. To raise literacy levels in order for Atlantic and Cape May residents to gain employment.

The Literacy Committee has a membership of 29 individuals from the community and literacy service providers. It has been very active since it's formation three years ago and has accomplished the following:

- In 1999, the Literacy Committee completed a preliminary survey to gather information on needs and services in the two counties.
- In 2000, a Literacy Roundtable open to the public and providers was held in Hammonton to inform the WIB and the Literacy Committee on Literacy issues.
- In 2000, the Literacy Committee worked closely with an Atlantic and a Cape May County collaboration to initiate and implement a Literacy Consortium proposal to New Jersey Department of Education (NJ DOE) for Basic Skills and Literacy services. These proposals were successfully funded and constitute the basis for further WIB planning and collaborations.
- In 2001, the Literacy Committee continued its work supporting Literacy Consortium collaborations and began its planning for the WIB Literacy Plan.
- In 2002, the Literacy Committee published a marketing pamphlet listing available literacy resources and programs in Atlantic and Cape May Counties.
- In 2002, the Literacy Committee re-surveyed area providers and compiled a comprehensive database of information on literacy services, including contact persons, program description, delivery sites, season, days and hours of operation, target populations, entry qualifications, funding source, staffing and future program plans and needs. In summer 2002, the database will be disseminated to providers in electronic and hardcopy. Before year-end, the database will be housed on-line for public access in abbreviated format.
- In 2002, the WIB submitted to the NJ DOL a Preliminary Literacy Plan which has subsequently been approved for funding.

c. Plan Development

A WIB program staff and, more recently, a planning consultant from Atlantic Cape Community College have lent support to the Literacy Committee. The consultant was hired to help the Literacy Committee collect the data and formulate a plan to provide groundwork for the Adult Literacy Plan that will underpin the next unified strategic plan for the WIB.

Over the past nine months, the Literacy Committee has met often to review and discuss consultant findings, provider information, and preliminary plans. The WIB Board has been updated by the Chair of the Literacy Committee and by the consultant so that all recommendations to the Board have been well reviewed by members. In January 2002, the WIB voted on a Preliminary Plan for the allocation of Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic

Skills. In February 2002, the WIB endorsed the Atlantic County and the Cape May County Literacy Consortiums application for Basic Skills and ESL funding from NJ DOE. During this same time frame, providers in the field were consulted on the unmet needs and outstanding issues that should be included in the updated Literacy Plan.

All this input was considered by the Literacy Committee and laid the foundation for the resulting Literacy Plan. The document outlining the Literacy Plan was drafted by the consultant and shared with the members of the Literacy Committee whose edits were invaluable in the final product. On June 27, 2002, the Literacy Committee voted to recommend adoption of the Plan by the WIB. On July 11, 2002, the Executive Committee of the WIB accepted the recommendation and adopted the Literacy Plan.

d. EFF Integration

Equipped for the Future (EFF) Standards provide guidance for what adults need to know and should be able to do as workers, parents, citizens and community members. In 2000, both the Atlantic County and Cape May County Literacy Consortiums adopted EFF Standards as a basic skills measurement. The Literacy Committee has agreed that EFF Standards should be the foundation underpinning future skill development in the Atlantic and Cape May workforce development system.

It is our goal that by June 30, 2004, all literacy providers including WFNJ One Stop Career Centers in Atlantic and Cape May Counties will be given the materials and training needed to integrate EFF Standards in their curriculum. We intend to achieve this goal as follows:

- The Atlantic County and Cape May County Literacy Consortiums will continue to include EFF Standards in NJ DOE proposals.
- By June 30, 2003, members of the Literacy Committee will be trained in EFF Standards. Resources from NJ DOL Supplemental Funding will be made available to insure that such training and materials are provided.
- Starting July 1, 2003, trained members of the Literacy Committee will act as a resource on EFF Standards to existing and potential literacy providers.
- Starting July 1, 2003, an annual training on EFF Standards will be made available to existing and potential literacy providers in Atlantic and Cape May Counties to promote the integration of EFF Standards into their curriculum.

e. Agreements

There is consensus across Atlantic and Cape May Counties that a systematic and collaborative approach to the provision of Literacy service is an essential underpinning of the Literacy Plan. The WIB and the Literacy Committee is expected to take the leading role in ensuring the development of appropriate formal and informal agreements between providers. In fact, the Preliminary Plan already submitted to NJ DOL and included again in the Literacy Plan detailed the mid-2002 hiring of a Literacy Coordinator whose essential job functions will include the following:

- To provide day-to-day support to the Literacy Committee and WIB on literacy issues.
- To support and monitor the implementation of the Literacy Plan.
- To support the creation and implementation of formal agreements and partnerships among Literacy providers, including WFNJ One Stop Career Centers.
- To market and promote literacy services to the public, especially in targeted geographic areas and to targeted populations.
- To continue to build systematic collaboration among providers across both counties.
- To insure the annual review and updating of Literacy database information and to monitor the accomplishment of planning goals.
- To nurture the flow of communication regarding Literacy needs, issues, and accomplishments to the WIB, providers, government agencies, and the public.

It is our goal that by June 30, 2004, there will be appropriate agreements among providers to ensure ease of student referral, transfer of records, and recognition of learning gains. We intend to achieve this goal as follows:

- The Atlantic County and Cape May County Literacy Consortiums will form the basic agreement in each county for provision of Basic Skills, i.e. Levels 1-6 Literacy and Levels 1-6 ESL.
- The Literacy Committee will spearhead other appropriate and complementary agreements to ensure the development of a systematic approach to the provision of Literacy services, to avoid duplication of services, to extend services to underserved geographic areas and population groups, to develop tools of communication such as the provider database, and to recognize and encourage programs, tools, and techniques that help and document learning gains.
- On an annual basis, the Literacy Committee will update and distribute its database of provider information.

2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

a. Individuals

Demand for Level 1 Literacy and ESL Services in Atlantic and Cape May Counties:

There is documented need for services for those at the lowest levels of literacy in the state of New Jersey. A recent demographic analysis done by NJ DOL estimated that 21 percent of the adult population in the state is at the lowest level of literacy. In Congressional District 2, which includes Atlantic and Cape May Counties, 21% of the adult population is at Level 1 Literacy. A breakdown of the District shows that in Atlantic County it is estimated that 21% of the adult population, or approximately 39,600 individuals, are at Level 1 Literacy and in Cape May County 18%, or approximately 14,300 adults, are at Level 1 Literacy.

This estimate is consistent with our own findings that highlight the need for additional support for the lowest level learners and for people with disabilities. Level 1 Literacy essentially means that an individual has minimal or no reading or writing skills in any language. There is little or

no comprehension of written language or how print corresponds to spoken language. This Level also means the adult has little or no recognition of numbers or simple counting skills, or may have only minimal skills. In the workplace, Level 1 Literacy translates to a worker who can only handle routine entry-level jobs that require little or no basic written or computational skills and has no knowledge of computers or other technology.

There has been a large influx of non-native speakers of English in Atlantic County, most especially in Atlantic City (where 35 languages are reportedly spoken in the Atlantic City School District), Pleasantville (where there has been a significant increase in Haitian and Spanish-speaking individuals), and western Atlantic County (where there is a large Spanish speaking farm worker population). There has also been a surge in Spanish speaking populations in The Wildwoods and Woodbine in Cape May County. In these geographic areas, demand has outstripped available Level 1 ESL services.

A Level 1 Beginning ESL individual cannot speak or understand English or understands only isolated words or phrases. The adult has no or minimal reading or writing skills in any language and may be able to read and write their own name and simple isolated words. There is little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language. In the workplace, the individual functions minimally or not at all in English and can communicate only through gestures or a few isolated words. There is no knowledge of use of computers or technology.

The NJ DOL demographic study cited above estimated the following percentages of individuals at Level 1 Literacy in municipalities with populations of at least 5,000 adults. The municipalities cited in the NJ DOL study are based on the 1990 census. The individual numbers estimated below are based on the recent 2000 census population numbers:

Atlantic County:

- Atlantic City* – 40% of the population, approximately 12,000 individuals
- Brigantine City – 13% of the population, approximately 1,300 individuals
- Egg Harbor Township – 14% of the population, approximately 3,100 individuals
- Galloway Township – 12% of the population, approximately 2,750 individuals
- Hamilton – 16% of the population, approximately 2,400 individuals
- Hammonton – 20% of the population, approximately 1,950 individuals
- Pleasantville City* – 36% of the population, approximately 4,750 individuals
- Somers Point City – 14% of the population, approximately 1,250 individuals
- Ventnor City – 14% of the population, approximately, 1,450 individuals

Cape May County:

- Lower Township** – 19% of the population, approximately 3,350 individuals
- Middle Township* – 21% of the population, approximately 2,600 individuals
- Ocean City – 15% of the population, approximately 1,950 individuals
- Upper Township – 10% of the population, approximately 850 individuals

As this shows, at least three population centers (*) are at or above average state and county levels for adults estimated to need Level 1 Literacy services, and one population center (**) is above the county average. However, our interview findings indicate other geographic areas of need for

Level 1 Literacy services not captured in this demographic study because of the lack of density in the municipality or geographic area. These include:

- Western Atlantic County – a large area of population, especially non-native speakers many of whom are without access to local Literacy services and who often travel to an adjacent county to meet their needs. This could account for many of the nearly 9,000 individuals in Atlantic County not included in the total numbers for municipalities described above.
- The Wildwoods in Cape May County – a large increase in Spanish speaking residents in a distressed economic area where providers report increasing demand for Literacy services. We can assume that the largest majority of the 5,500 needy individuals not accounted for in the total numbers for Cape May County municipalities described above are in The Wildwoods, where there is a combined population of 11,743 adults.
- Woodbine in Cape May County – a significant but smaller population of Spanish speaking residents currently without local access to Literacy services. We can assume that Woodbine consists of a much smaller percentage of the 5,500 needy individuals not accounted for in the total numbers for Cape May County municipalities described above since the total adult population in Woodbine is less than 2,000 individuals.

The Literacy Committee has placed a priority on integrating and extending Literacy services especially for Level 1 needs in the following areas:

- Atlantic City, Atlantic County – where there are many providers but a lack of systematic coordination. The goal is to coordinate, systematize and extend services. The Preliminary Plan for the use of Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills began this process. It is expected that there will be further agreements and partnerships developed over the next several years under the guidance of the Literacy Committee.
- Pleasantville City, Atlantic County – where the major provider of services is the Pleasantville School District (the lead agency of the Atlantic County Literacy Consortium) and Job Connection, a One Stop Career Center. The Literacy Consortium has enhanced service goals for Pleasantville in 2002 through its funding from NJ DOE and Job Connection has WIA funding to support Adult Basic Education, technology training, and other literacy services. The Literacy Committee recognizes that it is important to further coordinate such services in this area and to encourage formal and informal partnership agreements, such as the Pleasantville School District and Pleasantville Even Start Family Literacy Program.
- Western Atlantic County – where there are few to no current providers. The goal is to create and extend services through the WFNJ One Stop Career Center in Hammonton. The Preliminary Plan for use of Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills already accepted by NJ DOL begins this process. In addition, the Atlantic County Literacy Consortium plans to extend ESL services to this area through their NJ DOE grant.
- The Wildwoods and Woodbine in Cape May County – where there is a need for more services for non-native speakers of English and other Level 1 Literacy adults. The goal is to create and extend services in Woodbine through the Cape May County Literacy Consortium who plans to offer local ESL services in the immediate future. The Preliminary Plan for use of Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills already

accepted by NJ DOL creates new services at the WFNJ One Stop Career Center in Wildwood. In 2001 Atlantic Cape Community College added a Bilingual Job Readiness program in collaboration with the WFNJ One Stop Career Center and continued coordination of services between this WFNJ One Stop Career Center and the Cape May Literacy Consortium is expected to be developed through further agreements in the near future.

People with Disabilities:

Although this plan does not quantify the demand for Literacy services from people with disabilities, our interviews with providers in both counties indicated such a need and anecdotal evidence suggests a lack of accessible and appropriate services. Although providers were not surveyed on specifics regarding how many or how well they serve people with special needs, the interview process suggested that providers are sensitive to such needs and with limited funding are trying to make appropriate accommodations. For example, the WFNJ One Stop Career Center in Wildwood has the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation co-located in their facility, the Atlantic County Division of Family and Community Development has several mental health and advocacy agencies co-located at their One Stop Center in Atlantic City, and the Cape May County Technical School District (the lead agency in the Cape May Literacy Consortium) has some assistive technology and future plans to enhance these resources.

It is our goal that by June 30, 2004, the Literacy Committee will make recommendations to the WIB Board on how to better address Literacy services for people with special needs. We intend to achieve this goal as follows:

- Starting July 1, 2003, the annual Literacy database survey update will include specific questions to compile information on current Literacy services for people with disabilities and identify the gaps in service across both counties.
- By June 30, 2004, the Literacy Committee will review these findings in collaboration with the WFNJ One Stop Committee and the NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to create a white paper on needs which will lead to specific planning recommendations to the WIB Board.
- The WIB will use these findings and recommendations to address future allocation of resources.

b. Employers

Tourism and Hospitality:

Tourism and Hospitality has long been one of New Jersey's leading industries, especially in Shore communities. Twenty-three years ago, the citizens of the state voted to establish Atlantic City as a casino resort destination. Over the last several decades, Southern New Jersey's Shore Hospitality Industry and its correlating service businesses expanded at phenomenal growth rates. Today, Atlantic City hosts 12 major casino hotels providing over 48,000 jobs in over 500 job classifications. In 2000, Atlantic City alone produced over \$4.3 billion in revenue, a \$1 billion

payroll and over \$1.4 billion in goods and services supplied by businesses to the Industry. During that same year, the Industry contributed nearly \$350 million in tax revenue to the state.

The Hospitality Industry has outgrown its infancy and is facing new expansion. In 2000, the Industry had a net job growth for Atlantic and Cape May Counties of 3% -- double that of the state job growth rate of 1.5%. These new jobs developed without any significant expansion or new development of businesses in the Industry. Because of the commitment to add at least two new major properties in Atlantic City by mid-decade with a projected 7,000 new jobs along with the expansion of existing casino hotels like Harrahs, Resorts, and Tropicana, by 2010 jobs in this Industry are expected to grow to almost 58,000.

In addition, even entry-level jobs in the Hospitality Industry have become more technologically based and require more English proficiency, reading comprehension, numeracy, and work readiness. For example, a hotel front desk clerk needs to be computer and software literate so that the job of tracking rooms, serving guests, and projecting vacancies can be accurately accomplished. A casino floor Pit Clerk no longer tracks guests by hand but swipes guest cards and tracks spending at the table laptop computer. The position of cashier consistently ranks high as a high demand job vacancy. Each casino/hotel in Atlantic City has extensive marketing departments where computer literacy is a fundamental skill in tracking customer databases, special events, and promotions. In addition, major telecommunication centers and software applications have become core to each house's marketing strategy. Even housekeeping attendants in several hotels use computers to effectively manage workloads.

Clearly, the Hospitality Industry has entered the 21st Century Information Age. Unfortunately, many of these employees lack new and incumbent workers who have the Literacy skills to achieve the productivity needed to grow with the Industry. The most important ingredient in keeping the Hospitality Industry healthy is a productive, customer-focused, English proficient, and literate labor force. Finding, training, retaining, and advancing technologically proficient, English proficient and literate workers in such a competitive environment will be critical to the Industry's future economic vigor.

For the past three years, the WIB has been working with a consortium of Casino/Hotel employers to identify and address their workforce development needs. Area Literacy providers have adapted their job readiness, Basic Skills, ESL and occupational training to meet the preparedness needs of the area's potential and incumbent labor pool. Essential to that work has been NJ DOL's WDPP Customized Training Contracts and WDPP Literacy Grants. The WIB has worked hard to ensure that there are collaborative partnerships established with providers of Literacy at the workplace, including private providers and institutions of higher education and the Human Resource and Training staff of employers. In fact, the WIB-led Casino Consortium itself has been instrumental in establishing formal agreements among highly competitive employers to meet the Literacy needs of the unemployed and incumbent worker.

In addition, the WIB and area Literacy providers continue to work closely with the Chambers of Commerce in both counties to identify potential and incumbent employee skill needs and to adapt curriculum to meet those needs. There are few areas and industries in New Jersey where

Literacy providers and the WIB work so closely together to prepare workers in the literacy levels congruent with the skill set needs of current and prospective employers.

The Healthcare Industry:

There is a well-documented national healthcare worker shortage, especially in nursing, across the United States. Like the rest of the nation, Atlantic and Cape May Counties are experiencing a critical shortage of technologically skilled healthcare workers. In fact, George Lynn, President of AtlantiCare Health System (headquartered in Atlantic County), testified on this shortage before the U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday, September 25, 2001. As a member of the Board of Trustees for the American Hospital Association, Lynn detailed the difficulties he and other area employers are experiencing in attracting and retaining quality healthcare professionals and workers. He pointed out, for example, that enrollment in nursing schools has decreased 22 percent since 1993, resulting in a dearth of nurses to replace retirees.

According to labor and demographic research prepared by NJ DOL, in the counties comprising Southern New Jersey occupational titles categorizing healthcare workers show the greatest growth in estimated and projected employment between 1998 and 2008. For example, Home Health Aides show a nearly 100% projected growth rate during this time. Medical Assistants are the second largest growth category with a more than 75% projected growth rate.

The need for literate and technologically trained workers is growing for all fields in the Healthcare Industry. For example, a recent Internet posting for AtlantiCare Health Systems listed 26 open positions in AtlantiCare Health Plans. Nearly every job description required computer literacy and most required extensive technology training, especially in applications administration, claims, billing, and chart assembly.

The Construction Industry:

Another major employer in Atlantic and Cape May Counties is Construction/Trades. The WIB is leading an initiative for pre-apprenticeship Basic Skills training for the planned new school construction in the Pleasantville School System, an Abbott District. This initiative is targeted primarily for Women and Minority residents of Pleasantville so that they can qualify for Trade apprenticeship programs and gain employment in the industry. This WIB-led initiative includes the Pleasantville School District, representatives from the Trade Unions, vocational and higher education institutions, and faith-based and community-based organizations.

Clearly, the leading industries in Atlantic and Cape May Counties face enormous challenges in economic development and workforce development. The fact that 21% of the potential and incumbent workers are estimated to be at Level 1 Literacy poses a major deterrent for further industry growth and ultimately threatens the economic health of Atlantic and Cape May Counties.

c. Current System Capacities

As described above, the Literacy Committee has undertaken a comprehensive survey on the current system to identify providers and their capacity. Appended in Attachment 1 is an inventory of capacity. This database also includes future provider plans for enhancing current services and for adding new services.

Gaps in local service were described in the findings of the WIB's Preliminary Plan already submitted to NJ DOL, as described below:

Finding 1. There is an overall need for literacy coordination and support services in Atlantic and Cape May Counties. Currently, the Literacy Committee is providing this coordination leadership but relying solely on volunteer efforts has made the process inconsistent and slow. The WIB has no staff dedicated to this purpose. After the planning process of the consultant is completed, there is an ongoing need for a “coordinator” who would be responsible to support the work of the Literacy Committee.

Finding 2. There are several areas that have scarce to no current Literacy resources in Atlantic and Cape May Counties. The two main areas lacking such resources are:

- Western Atlantic County for Basic Skills, ABE/GED preparation, ESL services, technology instruction, and job readiness/life skill training.
- Woodbine, Cape May County for ESL services. Although there have been attempts to provide ESL in the past, no current services exist. The Cape May County Literacy Consortium expects to offer new local services in the near future.

Finding 3. There are areas in both counties that have active Literacy programs and resources but which lack a coordination of these services to provide a seamless referral system for progressive literacy needs. The two main areas are as follows:

- Atlantic City, Atlantic County - many services are available, several services appear to be serving similar target populations, few of those resources are coordinated and most providers are unaware of other resources in the area. There is an urgent need to coordinate resources, identify which services need expansion, and which ought to be positioned differently to meet unmet needs.
- Wildwood, Cape May County – the few existing Literacy services need to be better coordinated and some expanded in order to meet needs of targeted populations served by the WFNJ One Stop Career Center.

Finding 4. Although there are some existing services for the lowest level learners, most especially through the Literacy Volunteers of America – a partner in the Literacy Consortium for both counties, there appears to be a need to expand services to people with disabilities and lowest level learners in both Atlantic and Cape May Counties.

d. Target Population(s)

The WIB is committed to achieving its Literacy goals. Based on those goals and subsequent analysis of individual and employer needs and the current system's capacity to meet those needs, the Literacy Committee has placed a priority of services on the lowest level learners (Level 1 Literacy and Level 1 - Beginning ESL) in specific geographic locations as outlined in the findings above. In addition, our recommendations include the expansion of technology training and the use of technology tools in Literacy programs; see Preliminary Plan in Attachment 2.

3. SERVICE STRATEGY

a. Literacy Levels

As could be expected, Atlantic and Cape May Counties face demand for Levels 1-6 Literacy and ESL services. Both the Atlantic County and Cape May Literacy Consortiums include services designed for all six levels. The Literacy Committee considers each Consortium as the foundation for addressing literacy levels. However, our interview process showed that the majority of Literacy providers beyond the Consortiums focus on the lowest level learners since the demand for such services is quite strong. The Literacy database began the process of describing the levels of Literacy services targeted by providers when those providers articulated their target populations and goals. The Literacy Committee will continue to clarify which providers serve which Literacy level for specific targeted populations as they nurture a systematic and collaborative approach in Atlantic and Cape May Counties.

b. Priority of Services

As described in the Preliminary Plan and detailed above, the Literacy Committee has identified priorities in the Literacy Plan. However, in addition to service priorities, there are some specific additional needs to be addressed, as follows:

- *Training of Providers and In-Service Development of Literacy Teachers.* See below for discussion in "3.e. Assessment" regarding CASAS and Literacy Teacher Certification requirements and training, and above in "1.d.. EFF Integration" for training needs.
- *Expansion of GED Testing Sites and Accessibility.* See discussion below in "3.e. Assessment."
- *Child Care and Transportation Barriers to Learning.* In both Atlantic and Cape May Counties, students in Literacy programs face daunting challenges in finding accessible, affordable, and quality child care services. They also face numerous transportation barriers in getting to and from program sites. Several providers, notably Atlantic County Vocational Technical School and Cape May Technical School District, have ideas and plans to create supported distance learning programs and further expand service sites to enhance accessibility. The Literacy Committee intends to study the childcare referral system in both counties to discover opportunities to enhance linkages between Literacy Providers, One Stop Career Centers, and childcare providers.

c. Outreach and Recruitment

The WIB has long recognized that outreach to and recruitment of target populations is essential to successfully achieving Literacy goals. As a result, the WIB produced and disseminated a Literacy provider brochure, see Attachment 3, and compiled for distribution the Literacy database. In addition, the WIB recently added a marketing and public relations specialist to its staff to assist with outreach and recruitment for all programs. The Literacy Coordinator will have functional responsibilities for marketing and will work closely with the Literacy Committee to develop an outreach and recruitment plan as well as support a systematic approach to referral systems in each County. Both the Atlantic County and Cape May County Literacy Consortiums have developed and implemented successful outreach and recruitment plans.

Because our priority of services will be targeted to specific geographic areas and for the lower level learners, any outreach and recruitment plan will need to devise creative ways to inform the targeted populations of available Literacy services.

d. Access and Referral

The One Easy Link System is presently working to implement a universal referral system that will link customers seeking basic skills to providers of those services. In the meantime, the Literacy Committee has worked hard to assemble a comprehensive Literacy database that will be disseminated to other providers and available on-line to the public in an abbreviated format.

Because our primary targeted population is the lowest level learners, independent, self-directed and distance-learning formats without strong teacher classroom or individual tutor support have limited applicability. However, for learners at higher levels, some local providers are expecting to pilot distance learning and the use of more technology tools for independent and self-directed study.

Our Preliminary Plan outlined the creation of more technology centers at WFNJ One Stop Career Centers in Atlantic City, Hammonton, and Wildwood. This will enhance the access to basic skills and computer instruction in targeted geographic areas with our target population.

e. Assessment

CASAS:

Currently, most Literacy providers are using TABE tests to assess literacy levels. The Atlantic County and Cape May County Literacy Consortiums have begun implementation of CASAS for ESL assessment. The Literacy Committee has agreed that a long-term goal for the Literacy Plan is to train and promote the use of CASAS as a preferred assessment tool for Literacy providers of both ESL and Basic Skills.

It is our short-term goal that by June 30, 2004, all literacy providers including WFNJ One Stop Career Centers in Atlantic and Cape May Counties will be given familiarity with CASAS assessment tools. We intend to achieve this goal as follows:

- The Atlantic County and Cape May County Literacy Consortia will continue to implement CASAS for ESL assessment and, when State-sponsored training is made available, will train in CASAS for Adult Basic Education.
- “Local Guides” in CASAS will be identified from the Literacy Consortia for each county and by June 30, 2003, these guides will familiarize all members of the Literacy Committee in CASAS and keep the Literacy Committee updated on CASAS training developments at the state level.
- Resources from NJ DOL Supplemental Funding will be used to support acquisition of appropriate CASAS materials and supplies for designated Literacy providers, including the WFNJ One Stop Career Centers, and to cover training expenses not covered by NJ DOL.
- By June 30, 2004, evaluation of the local impact of CASAS assessment tools used by each Literacy Consortium and the WFNJ One Stop Career Centers will be done. At that time, the Literacy Committee will begin a planning process to systematize the use and dissemination of assessment tools, maintenance and collection of assessment reports, decide target populations, and promote the training of Literacy providers on assessment tools. By that point in time, there will also be sufficient information across the state on the implementation of CASAS and other tools, including best practices to help in this planning effort.

GED Testing:

There is only one site for GED Testing in Atlantic County (Atlantic Cape Community College campus in Atlantic City) and one site for GED Testing in Cape May County (Cape May Vocational Technical School in Cape May Court House). Both sites report waiting lists and high demand for GED testing. Many residents of Atlantic and Cape May Counties look to adjacent county test sites to take the GED Test. It is clear that there is a need for more sites, more testing dates, and more local accessibility in both counties.

It is our goal that by June 30, 2004, there will be an increase in GED Test availability in Atlantic and Cape May Counties. We intend to achieve this goal as follows:

- By June 30, 2003, the Literacy Committee will have formed agreements among current and potential GED Test providers and One Stop Centers, including WFNJ One Stop Career Centers, to increase testing availability.
- Starting July 1, 2003, resources from NJ DOL Supplemental Funding will be used as necessary to supplement existing support in order to increase testing availability.

f. Service Integration

As stated above, it is a fundamental building block to the WIB Literacy Plan that there is coordination and integration of services in both counties among all Literacy providers, including WFNJ One Stop Career Centers. The Literacy Committee has already begun the process of such integration; see Pilot Proposal in Atlantic City for Literacy Services December 2001 in Attachment 4.

Atlantic and Cape May Counties receive a variety of funding to underwrite adult literacy services. In 2000, the WIB began to pull together the information on existing grants and contracts in both counties and has outreached to current and potential Literacy providers accessing all funding sources. Most proposals for funding of literacy services are currently brought before the WIB for either endorsement or letters of support. It is the WIB's goal to ensure that all such funding proposals and contracts are centralized through the WIB. In addition, the WIB will assure that State-listed training providers are used for the delivery of those services. In this way, the WIB will be able to begin the systematic integration of services into the overall Literacy Plan.

Managers of WFNJ One Stop Career Centers are vital partners for this WIB and actively participate in the Literacy Committee, as well as other committees. There is a strong working relationship between educational and business consortia and the WFNJ One Stop Career Centers. Many partnerships already exist and the opportunity for more partnerships is apparent and included in the Literacy Plan. It will be a main task of the Literacy Coordinator to support the WIB's Literacy Committee in encouraging and nurturing collaboration and integration efforts.

g. Coordination and Leveraging of Resources

As described above and detailed in various attachments, the WIB and the Literacy Committee have been working hard to coordinate agreements and partnerships that efficiently leverage existing services. The Literacy Committee has been actively soliciting such coordination and the WIB has led initiatives and partnerships to ensure such leveraging occurs. It is a commonly understood underlying assumption that eventually all Literacy planning efforts for all funding streams will be coordinated to create a systematic approach to the delivery of Literacy services. Core to continuing such efforts is allocating resources for collaborative efforts and partnerships and not to individual organizational efforts, whether public agencies or private providers.

h. Support Services

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

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

i. Performance Standards

The Literacy Committee is aware of the EFF Standards and outcome measures identified in the National Reporting System (NRS). We eagerly await the State's development of minimum performance standards linked to both EFF and NRS. Once developed and disseminated by the State, the Literacy Committee will review such standards in a timely manner and make appropriate recommendations to the WIB Board for adoption. It is not anticipated that this WIB will set standards on its own or higher or additional standards that the forthcoming State standards.

4. SUPPLEMENTAL WORKFORCE FUNDS FOR BASIC SKILLS

a. Plan for Use of Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills

In March 2002, the WIB submitted a plan for use of Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills; see Attachment 2.

i. Portions of plan already approved and funded by NJ DOL and their integration into the local adult literacy system and WFNJ One Stop Career Centers: The following components have been approved by NJ DOL although the funding sources were revised by the NJ DOL from the preliminary plan approved and submitted by the WIB:

- Hire a full-time System Development Specialist (Literacy Coordinator) to provide ongoing support to the Literacy Committee. This funding is approved and under the WIB allocation, sections 34:15D-21 (a)(2). The role and function of this Literacy Coordinator is outlined above and is also detailed in Attachment 2, page 3 under Recommendation to Address Preliminary Finding 1.
- Expand Atlantic County Literacy Consortium daytime ABE/GED Preparation services in Atlantic City to meet the needs of the Atlantic City WFNJ One Stop Career Center. The funding is approved by the NJ DOL for the purchase of supplemental Instructor hours to complement existing resources and is under the WIB allocation, sections 34:15D-21 (a)(2). The details of this expansion are included in Attachment 2 pages 3-4 under Recommendation to Address Preliminary Finding 3.
- Establish a Literacy program in Western Atlantic County at the Hammonton WFNJ One Stop Career Center. This new program is approved and the funding was revised by the NJ DOL to come under the WIB allocation, sections 34:15D-21 (a)(2) as well as the original proposed funding under the WFNJ One Stop Career Center allocation, sections 34:15D-21 (a)(1). The details of this new program are included in Attachment 2, page 3 under Recommendation to Address Preliminary Finding 2. The NJ DOL revisions on funding are detailed under Attachment 5, Revised Spreadsheet A.
- Establish a Literacy program in Atlantic City at the Atlantic City WFNJ One Stop Career center. This computer lab is approved and the funding was revised by the NJ DOL to come under the WIB allocation, sections 34:15D-21 (a)(2). The details of this new program are included in Attachment 5, Revised Spreadsheet A.

- Expand Literacy services in Wildwood through establishment of a Literacy program at the WFNJ One Stop Career Center. This new program is approved and the funding was revised by the NJ DOL to come under the WIB allocation, sections 34:15D-21 (a)(2) as well as the original proposed funding under the WFNJ One Stop Career Center allocation, sections 34:15D-21 (a)(1). The details of this new program are included in Attachment 2 page 4 under Recommendation to Address Preliminary Finding 4. The NJ DOL revisions on funding are detailed under Attachment 5, Revised Spreadsheet A.

All five of these components complement or expand the local adult literacy system and WFNJ One Stop Career Center services and will be fully integrated into those systems.

ii. The WIB area has a plan for the use of additional Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills allocated under sections 34:15D-21 (a)(1) and 34:15D-21 (a)(2):

As described above and in the Preliminary Plan Five Year Budget, the WIB has a plan for use of additional Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills. These funds are expected to:

- Provide funding for pilot programs that address the targeted populations in targeted geographic areas in Atlantic and Cape May Counties.
- Provide ongoing operational and salary support for the supplemental Literacy Instructor described in the Pilot Proposal in Atlantic City for Literacy Services and included in the Preliminary Plan.
- Provide ongoing operational and salary support for the work of the Literacy Coordinator.
- Provide appropriate materials and training expenses for the work involving EFF Standards and CASAS as described above.
- Provide appropriate support to ensure the expansion of GED Test availability.
- Support required in-service training of Literacy teachers so that appropriately qualified instructors are delivering Literacy services.
- Underwrite the expenses associated with outreach and marketing of Literacy services to targeted geographic areas and targeted populations.
- Provide ongoing operational support for the Literacy computer labs in the WFNJ One Stop Career Centers in Atlantic City, Hammonton and Wildwood.

iii. The WIB area will use the following process for identifying and recommending employers, employer organizations, labor organizations, community-and faith-based organizations, and educational institutions for Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills under sections 34:15D-21 (a)(3) NJ DOL Office of Customized Training:

As described above, the WIB is very active in the Casino Consortium, Chambers of Commerce, and with the Trades and has recently become more active in a workforce development collaboration with Healthcare providers. Providers of customized training contracts, mostly institutions of vocational and higher education, work closely with

employer partners to develop proposals for NJ DOL customized training contracts. The WIB is active in the identification and recommendation process and has been instrumental in bringing additional partners, such as faith-based and community-based organizations to the table. The WIB intends to continue collecting the provider information, reviewing and influencing the customized training contract process, and working closely with appropriate consortia.

b. Budget for use of Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills

Attachment 5 provides detailed spreadsheets for the use of Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills as follows:

i. Spreadsheet A provides the line items for the One Year (ending June 30, 2002) Budget for Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills items approved and funded by NJ DOL.

ii. Spreadsheet B provides the details for the Two Year Budget for Supplemental Workforce Funds for Basic Skills items included in section 4.a.ii above.:

5. CONCLUSION

a. Opportunities and Barriers

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

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

However, despite the many obstacles, the WIB believes that it can positively impact the quality and quantity of Literacy services to the adults who need those services in Atlantic and Cape May Counties.

Plan Period: **July 11, 2002 – June 30, 2004**

Steven Gillian, Chairperson Date

Peggy Quinn, Literacy Date
Committee Chairperson