

Minnesota FastTRAC Incubator
Interim Report – Supplemental Questions
North Hennepin Community College/Osseo ABE
College Prep Career Step

1. **Workplan.** Explain your progress toward fulfilling your workplan through end of February 2009. Explain any discrepancies between your workplan and activities/progress. Whenever possible, include qualitative information, e.g. number of courses delivered, number of enrollees in a program.

The College Prep program did not have the Career Step component and so considerable time was spent in the beginning creating and integrating services including but not limited to:

- New orientation process that incorporated the Career Step concept in the beginning as an option for students.
- Integration of services and incorporation of the Adult Learning Specialist (Gretchen Switalski) into College Prep.
- When integrating the GPS Lifeplan into College Prep, the overlap in some areas with curriculum already developed in the career planning class.

Because the process of coming to college, even a free program, can be intimidating, we wanted to make sure that the process for students was easy to navigate. With that, we waited before enrolling students into the Career Step portion.

To date, we have not enrolled as many students into the program as we had expected in the workplan. Some of this is due to the delay in enrolling students in addition to the economy. Students are being challenged with having to battle the decision to dedicate time to preparing for college academics and long-term goals or to secure a job to assist with short-term needs.

We have expanded our outreach plan to include scheduled visits to Workforce Center counselors and a scheduled ABE Outreach Day (March 27th) where five ABE programs in our service area have been invited to visit NHCC. Students and teachers will have the opportunity to learn more about College Prep and how to transition to NHCC. In addition, current and former College Prep students will partner with students to engage them in discussions about their own experiences.

Outside of the scope of the grant, we had difficulty setting up the budget internally which limited our ability to spend down our funds sooner.

2. Partnership.

a. Explain any developments in your partnership roles since the start of your grant, e.g. new partners, expanded roles.

The success of the College Prep program has allowed us to showcase a different model of collaboration between ABEs and community colleges. We now have an opportunity to expand the partnership to include other ABE providers to help serve more students.

When we developed the stronger partnership between College Prep and NHCC's Adult Education & Training (AET) area, we could only speculate on how the two areas could work closer together. The College Prep program has increased services to students. NHCC's AET has added another program to refer students to. Most importantly, students have developed relationships with college staff and feel connected to multiple departments on campus.

b. Explain how the MN FastTRAC initiative has strengthened your partnership and the capacity/commitment of various partners to your stackable credential model.

The MN FastTRAC initiative has provided us with resources to engage our colleagues in the discussion of stackable credentialing. It has provided us with a platform to get people at the college to think differently about how we develop programs and curriculum. The opportunity to be engaged with this grant has given us resources that we did not have before to promote the effectiveness of the program not only internally at the college but externally to other partners and prospective students.

c. Which partner(s), if any, are not at the table that you want to engage (or engage more) to strengthen or expand your stackable credential model?

One of the areas that the college is struggling with as we examine our current programs to redefine them into a stackable credential is that many of the models that have been developed in other states are very focused on technical programs. Because other states do not have the distinction of community and technical colleges, we struggle with creating a stackable credential around programs that also contain a liberal arts focus. We need to engage a technical college in our future discussions.

A partner which we have brought in late in the process is Perkins. The opportunity to collaborate with Perkins focus on career pathways provides us with more opportunities to strengthen our models.

3. Please share one important lesson you and your partners have learned around each of the following topics that are critical for a **stackable credential model** to work in Minnesota.

- a. Availability of student support services so that adults persist and complete training/education endeavors:
 - Eliminating the confusion and barriers about how to navigate the college system. By having a single point of contact (Gretchen) working in multiple programs (College Prep, credit and non-credit), students have a consistent resource.

- b. Attracting and keeping employers engaged in your stackable credential model:
 - We are just beginning this process.
- c. Integrating basic skills, soft skills and occupation skills into training/education content:
 - The delineation of the three skill areas and how our systems “assigns” responsibility. Certain skills should only be dealt with within certain systems (e.g. basic skills is the responsibility of ABEs only).

4. Describe one key **policy change** that you consider most critical at the state system level (e.g. agency practice or regulatory change at ABE, MnSCU, Workforce Center/WIA, MFIP, etc) for your model to expand or replicate.

Further discussions regarding what agency(s) currently serve or should serve the basic skill needs of students. The current ABE system cannot serve all students who need to develop or refine basic skills. Two –year colleges try to fill the void between remedial and being academically ready. Funding language and timeliness of programs are all barriers to students entering and completing any program. In a recent presentation, a statement was made that dislocated worker funds will not pay for basic skills which sparked discussion about the definition of attainment of basic skills. The GED is only one measure but does not necessarily indicate academic preparedness.

5. Attach a **financial report** that indicates budgeted and actual expenses through Feb. 28, 2009, of MN FastTRAC grant resources. Explain any discrepancies, modifications below.