

Minnesota FastTRAC Incubator
Interim Report – Supplemental Questions
Due March 16, 2009; email to mary.schmidt@state.mn.us
Questions? Call Mary at 651 259-7571

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.

2. Partnership.

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

We have submitted a contract with Red Wing ABE to work with them to co-enroll Academy participants as ABE students thereby increasing Red Wing's seat hours to make them eligible for additional funding next year. The contract will allow ABE to then hire WDI to deliver academies using our current model of recruiting, screening, curriculum, and placement. We are currently waiting for the signed contract from ABE to proceed with co-enrollment.

In addition, we have begun discussions with Owatonna ABE who is also the fiscal agent for the Tri-Point ABE Consortium covering the Owatonna, Albert Lea and Austin communities. Owatonna has gotten our participant records and is reviewing the proposal and how it would impact their programs. If approved, a contract similar to Red Wing will be implemented. An initial meeting was held with the Caledonia ABE where a High School-level academy for their alternative school will be piloted this spring. Additional ABE programs will be approached as we move forward with this project.

Additionally, Becky Thofson will be explaining the project to all programs who attend the upcoming SPE Spring Consortium meeting in April.

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

It has been helpful to have Anne Leland and her extensive knowledge of the ABE system participating in our initial meetings with the ABE staff. There have been questions that were raised regarding the ABE program that she could answer “on the spot”.

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?

We anticipate working yet this spring with additional ABE programs to expand the use of this funding mechanism.

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:

Short-term training allows us to tap into student support services through both WDI and ABE programming. We have identified an issue with disparate funding between ABE programs that may require us to continue to rely on grants to support students. We will continue to investigate possibilities.

b. Attracting and keeping employers engaged in your stackable credential model:

Because we are targeting our fastest growing occupations with the hottest industries in the region, we continue to have solid support from employers. Even with the downturn in the economy, healthcare has proven to be somewhat unaffected so far. We will be scaling back the classes for the Manufacturing academy beginning in April. But as those classes are scaled back, we are developing and will be implementing a Renewable Energy Academy beginning in April. The Energy Academy will be piloted in Albert Lea in partnership with Riverland Community College and hopefully will be expanded from there.

c. Integrating basic skills, soft skills and occupation skills into training/education content:

Curriculum has already been developed based on employer demand for skills they need most. The occupational language that is used to frame the work on basic skills and soft skills allows the student to remain engaged when working hard on new materials.

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.

The key reason our Academy model can work in conjunction with ABE programs is the waiver of Minnesota licensed teachers when using vocationally skilled individuals. This waiver must be implemented in order to find qualified individuals who have the experience to be able to relate to potential workers who are unfamiliar with the workplace requirements and culture in entry-level hot jobs.

It is confusing why one school district has over \$22.00 per hour in seat time reimbursement while another is only a little over \$4.00. Consolidation of funding could allow us to replicate the pre-employment academies across the region uniformly. At the minimum, would it be possible to use untapped funds from one area to cover the unavailability of funding from another school district because of their low reimbursement rate? Is it possible the funding mechanism for ABE programs should be addressed to account for the disparity and/or to share funding across consortiums?

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.