

# **Guidelines for Effective**

## **ABE Community Planning in Massachusetts**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Guidelines for Effective ABE Community Planning in Massachusetts is for ABE programs receiving community planning foundation funding. The Guidelines map out what is expected of programs and how they can fulfill the DOE/ACLS requirements for community planning. Since community planning is a local process, the guidelines provide clarity in what is expected while supporting local discretion in tailoring the process to the needs and opportunities of communities.

Guidelines' support materials include:

- Research
- Models
- Promising Practices
- Glossary

Strategic plans submitted in the previous funding cycle influenced the focus of the support materials.

In the Commonwealth, the success of the ABE Community Planning process has been due to the commitment and participation of a wide range of public, voluntary, community and private sector entities. Strong partnerships reflect leadership that:

- Has an understanding of individual and collective roles and responsibilities
- Builds interactions among community members
- Promotes a self-sustaining partnership structure
- Achieves collectively defined common goals

These Guidelines are issued by the Massachusetts Department of Education, Adult and Community Learning Services with heartfelt appreciation for the close collaboration and commitment of the ABE practitioners and community stakeholders who contributed to its development.

## HISTORY OF ABE COMMUNITY PLANNING IN MASSACHUSETTS

ABE Community Planning in Massachusetts was initially part of interim RFPs issued in FY1997 and FY1998 in response to additional state funding. The RFPs required new applicants only to form a community partnership, and request funding for a planning period during which they would do a comprehensive, researched assessment of their community's ABE-related assets and needs, and ultimately develop a strategic plan for what to address over time as resources continued to grow. In subsequent RFP's three community colleges and ten MADOE funded ABE providers were added.

In the next five year funding cycle, which began in 2001, every community with a DOE funded ABE program received foundation funding for launching ABE Community Planning Partnerships. ABE Community Planning Partnerships have brought ABE programs, workforce development boards, career centers, human service agencies, public schools, health care agencies and businesses together to ensure that Adult Basic Education has a place in each agency's plans to support adult students in their quest to get an education and become productive citizens.

Partnerships were required to

- Develop a community asset and need report
- Develop a vision and mission statement
- Create a strategic plan based on the community asset and need report
- Implement first year action steps

Some of the benefits of this process have included:

- A rural community's ability to obtain free nighttime transportation for their students door to door
- The launching of an "Earn More, Learn More" campaign in conjunction with a local workforce investment board
- An all day symposium to promote awareness of Adult Basic Education that boosted participation by every business in the community
- A financial institution providing space for an additional evening class

Partnerships have also faced challenges involving:

- Bridging the communication gap between business and the adult education community
- Overcoming the inconsistencies in government programs which act as road blocks to educating target populations
- Building information and referral systems to respond in time to students needing support

The focus over the next five years is to build on ABE Community Planning visions and strategies to further improve ABE services across the Commonwealth.

## **THE GOAL OF COMMUNITY PLANNING**

The goal of community planning is to engage members of the communities in the decisions necessary to account for and meet the needs of under-educated and/or limited English proficient constituencies within the defined “community” through strategic plans that identify how and when such constituency will have equal opportunity to learn and be effectively served.

## **ABE COMMUNITY PLANNING KEY OBJECTIVES**

The objectives below are the most frequently referenced in ABE Community Planning FY05 strategic plans across the state. These are provided to give partnerships a reference point for developing objectives that are reflective of the community.

- To address partnership building issues
- To increase the number of ABE/ESOL classes in the community
- To develop better workforce collaborations
- To raise awareness of Adult Basic Education
- To develop referral mechanisms through networking and the use of technology

## **THE GUIDELINES – WHAT IS EXPECTED**

The following sections represent the Adult and Community Learning Services policy and expectations as it relates to ABE Community Planning Partnerships formation, community asset and need reports, strategic plan development and implementation, and reporting requirements.

## **PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY PLANNING**

Community planning partners should be sought from a wide range of community and voluntary organizations. The make up of the partnership should reflect the assets of each particular community. The structure and working practices of partnerships in rural areas may be different from those in urban areas and will call for tailored approaches. The list might include but is not limited to:

- ABE/ESOL/Literacy programs
- Public schools (K-12)
- Public libraries
- Institutions of higher learning
- Students/prospective students
- Regional Employment Boards
- Workforce Investment Boards
- One-Stop Career Centers
- Local employers
- Human service agencies
- Health care organizations
- Transportation providers
- City officials
- Elected officials
- Law enforcement officials
- Affordable housing providers
- Faith-based and cultural organizations
- Business organizations (Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club)
- Corrections officials

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

To differentiate clearly between the roles and responsibilities of the ABE Community Planning Coordinators' and the ABE Community Partnership, the roles and responsibilities of the partnership members will be discussed in the Support Materials portion of this manual.

The programs are responsible for leading the ABE Community Planning process. There are four key areas of responsibility:

### **1) Partnership Facilitation**

ABE Community Planning Coordinators must initiate a process that results in the following minimum outcomes:

- Recruitment of ABE Community Planning Partnership members
- Retention of partnership members
- Education of partners as to their roles and responsibilities
- Development and maintenance of an effective means of communication between participants in the partnership
- Development of an operating and committee structure that fits the partnership needs
- Development of a Community Profile (including assets and needs)
- Development of a shared partnership vision and mission
- Development and implementation of a five-year strategic plan based on the asset and need report
- Identification and allocation of the resources necessary to achieve the agreed upon outcomes
- Monitoring, reporting, and sharing of progress on the agreed upon strategic plan outcomes

## 2) Accountability

Programs are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the requirements of Indicator IV in the Program Monitoring Instrument are met (*coming to the ACLS web page soon a link to this indicator*)
- Submitting annual reports on the progress of the ABE Community Partnerships in meeting the goals and objectives, through measurable outcomes, of the strategic plan

## 3) Fiscal

All DOE funded programs in a community will participate in **one** ABE Community Partnership in that community. With the exception of Boston, if the program is the only one in the community it will receive \$10,250, while if there are multiple programs in a community, each program will receive \$6,150. Boston is funded in the following manner: Each program receives \$6,150 of which \$2,050 supports the citywide initiative through its fiscal agent, Jobs and Community Services, a Division of the Boston Redevelopment Authority. Programs retain \$4,100 for community planning purposes within the neighborhoods they serve.

Programs are responsible for:

- Accounting for Community Planning foundation funds in the SMARTT Flex /Set-Aside/ Foundation report and in the budget and narrative
- Entering appropriate personnel in the SMARTT Staff Chart

## 4) Consultants

Community planning funding may be used to hire a community planning consultant; however, hiring a community planning consultant is not required. Programs may seek the expertise and professional advice of a consultant to assist the partnership with a wide range of tasks. In this capacity, community planning consultants might be asked to facilitate or provide guidance on how to:

- Develop systematic processes to facilitate the overall planning process
- Address specific roadblocks to progress
- Form a partnership
- Recruit new members for partnerships from the community at large
- Develop better workforce collaborations
- Facilitate meetings for partnerships
- Write a vision and mission statement
- Write a strategic plan
- Prioritize and assign tasks to partnership members
- Develop marketing materials to raise community awareness
- Implement a strategic plan

## COMMUNITY PROFILE/ASSETS AND NEEDS

A Community Profile is a picture of the primary community, which reflects the historic, demographic, economic, human, social, and educational, needs of a community. It must be inclusive of both the needs and assets of the community and indicate what the “community” encompasses geographically.

Requirements for the Community Profile are:

- Collect and summarize secondary demographic data
  1. Population Statistics
  2. Poverty Level Statistics
  3. Employment and Income Statistics
  4. English Proficiency Statistics
- Collect and summarize primary data:
  1. Using at least two of the primary data collection methods, gather primary data from the groups listed below.

METHODS
1. Surveys
2. Focus Groups
3. Community Meetings
4. Key Informant Interviews

GROUPS
1. Target student population including current, prospective and former students
2. Profits and Non-Profits
3. Community members at large
4. Elected officials
5. Other established partnerships

- Map of community assets and needs
- List of internal stakeholders (providers)
- List of external stakeholders (outside agencies, partnerships, businesses, etc.)

Requirements for compiling the Community Profile report are:

- Executive Summary
- Table of Contents
- Introduction
- Profile of Community Partnership
- Methodology
- Research Findings
- Community Demographic Profile
- Community Primary Data Dialogue Findings
- Appendices

Detailed descriptions of where to obtain data and samples of how to report out are found in the Support Materials.

*Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.*  
- Japanese Proverb

## VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

Partnerships begin by building a vision and mission statement.

The following statements guide the development of vision and mission statements and illustrate the differences.

- A **Vision statement** outlines what a partnership wants to accomplish. It focuses on tomorrow. A vision is the ideal outcome.
- A **Mission statement** states how the partnership plans to work toward the vision. A mission is something to be accomplished as of now. It should inspire and make people want to participate. It should be concise and set the stage for presenting goals and objectives.

Samples of Vision and Mission statements that meet these criteria are found in the Support Materials.

## STRATEGIC PLANS

A Strategic Plan is a process of visioning and projecting a future course that a partnership wishes to follow. It is the result of the gathering of information necessary for making decisions and the laying out of a plan for identifying goals and developing measurable objectives and actions to reach the goals. Partnerships develop and implement a strategic plan, which addresses the literacy needs of the community.

The following statements describe the individual elements making up a strategic plan. The defined Goals, Objectives, Action Steps, and Outcomes are required in every strategic plan.

- **Goals** are broad statements that describe a result the partnership wants to achieve
- **Objectives** are what must happen in order for the *goal* to be achieved
- **Action Steps** are strategies for meeting the stated *objectives*
- **Outcomes** are the measurable results of the *action steps*

### EXAMPLE

GOAL	Partnership Building
Objective	To recruit new members
Action Step	Telephone campaign is initiated
Outcome	Three new members are recruited

Each partnership is responsible for developing and implementing the goals once the strategic planning stage in the process is reached. For newly funded communities just starting the community planning process, please see the section “Newly Funded Communities – Expectations.” The guidance that ACLS offers to partnerships relating to goal setting is that partnerships further the goal of community planning:

*To engage members of the community in the decisions necessary to account for and meet the needs of under-educated and/or limited English proficient constituencies within the defined “community” through strategic plans that identify how and when such constituency will have equal opportunity to learn and be effectively served.*

Objectives must meet the **SMART** criteria: (not to be confused with SMARTT data system)

**Specific** – the objective should state exactly what is to be achieved

**Measurable** - the objective should be capable of measurement

**Achievable** – the objective should be realistic given the circumstances in which it is set and resources available to the partnership

**Relevant** – objectives should be relevant to the people responsible for achieving them

**Time Bound** – objectives should be set with a time frame in mind. The deadlines need to be realistic. Objectives may take one or more years to meet. Therefore, yearly short-term benchmarks (outcomes) must be stated in the plan as well as the long-term expected results.

Current plans having objectives that do not meet the above definitions and/or criteria should be reviewed by the partnership and updated.

**Annual Reporting Expectations will be posted on the website separately each year.**