



**Camden County Workforce Investment
Board**

***Achieving a Workforce System of
Excellence***

An Update to the Strategic Plan

July 2002

CAMDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

**ACHIEVING A WORKFORCE SYSTEM OF
EXCELLENCE**

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Section I:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CAMDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

ACHIEVING A WORKFORCE SYSTEM OF EXCELLENCE

An Update to the Strategic Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Central to the Camden County Workforce Investment Board's vision of developing a premiere workforce development system is the concept of constructing a workforce system of services that supports continuous learning for all of its citizenry. For the WIB, this translates into a thoughtfully constructed mosaic of programs and services, operating at peak performance. The WIB has learned over the years that putting this concept in operation requires careful planning and a considerable focus on elevating the quality of programs and services. It also requires understanding your community's needs -- both employers and job seekers -- and constructing a compendium of programs and services equipped to meet the multiple levels of those needs.

Over the past several years, the Camden County Workforce Investment Board has significantly stepped up its focus toward achieving a higher performing workforce investment system. The process has not always been easy. It required establishing a clear vision for its expectations and engaging the full spectrum of government, education and community organizations in rethinking their own mission in response to the vision. It also required creating a culture of "accountability" among all of the WIB's activities and among the partnering organizations themselves.

Today, we are seeing the fruits of those earlier efforts. What is emerging is a system of services that relies on integrating programs across a number of funding streams and organizations. While we have not yet achieved a system that fully supports continuous learning through a continuity of education and training, we have made significant progress.

Here are some of the highlights:

- Camden County's One Stop has evolved from a singular program approach to a comprehensive Career Center supported by nine partnering agencies. By utilizing a best business practice known as Process Mapping, the One Stop Partners, examined their processes through the customer's eyes, and now better understand their customers' needs and expectations. As a result, programs and services are more effective and efficient, and a wider range of programs are now offered to address the multiple levels of needs of Camden County's residents. The One Stop's recently renovated Career Resource Area caught the eye of the State Department of Labor, who is now touting it as a model for

other One Stops around the State. This new environment has seen the number of customers triple in just the past six months.

- As part of the One Stop comprehensive site at Mt. Ephraim Avenue, the Camden County Resource Center established one of the state's first workplace literacy labs. Now recognized as one of the model sites, the Center recently renovated its facilities to expand capacity and provide workplace literacy classes with an environment more conducive to learning. It also expanded its literacy curriculum and instructional supports, and in concert with the Camden County College's basic skills program offered on-site, the One Stop now offers literacy services at almost every level. As the Adult Literacy Plan in Section IV of this update demonstrates, Camden County is now embarking on organizing its literacy system through a technology platform that creates the framework for consistency among all providers and a baseline upon which to develop standards.
- The WIB has also been working extensively with its youth provider community to assist them in aligning their programs to meet the increasing requirements for providing youth services. These requirements call for intensive and long-term services based on best practice models. Workshops, best practice conferences, and one-on-one technical assistance sessions have been held during the past eighteen months. As a result, the WIB has seen twice the number of organizations interested in providing youth services.
- Capitalizing on its work with youth, the Camden County WIB, in partnership with the Camden City Prosecutor's Office, was awarded a \$1.5 million competitive grant for serving juvenile offenders. Once again, the service model required an integrated and comprehensive approach providing a variety of services including literacy, community service activities and counseling services to 250 Camden City youth. This is just one in a number of Camden City based services through which the WIB will be instrumental in supporting the new Governor's "Camden City Recovery" project.

Finally, eighteen months ago, the WIB embraced the concept of "quality initiatives." (Several of the resulting initiatives are described above and a more detailed description can be found under Goal #4 in this Progress Report.) Adopting this concept required the WIB to rethink its approach to the work conducted in its committees as well as its partnership with the Fiscal Agent, One Stop Partners and the provider community. Five principles support the development of quality initiatives:

- Benchmark programs and services based on quality customer service principles.
- Promote quality program design and development based on best practices.
- Select and reward programs and services based on quality performance.
- Create accountability measures among partners and in the delivery of services.
- Expand the WIB's visibility and leadership in promoting quality practices.

Today, the WIB remains on track to its initial vision. Our new areas of emphasis carve out an ambitious work plan for the next two years. The WIB intends to emphasize employer services, fully implement our literacy and juvenile offender plans, continue to support quality initiatives and bolster program development and administrative processes - all of which will result in giant leaps toward truly making Camden County's workforce system a first-rate system of services.

**CAMDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD'S
VISION STATEMENT**

“In order to provide an enhanced quality of life for the residents, Camden County’s economic viability depends on its ability to be competitive in the global economy. This requires an employer base that places a premium on a high performance workplace and a workforce that is well-trained, motivated and prepared for the jobs of today and the jobs of the future. To insure Camden County’s competitiveness, our vision is for a premiere workforce development system that values the diversity of its people and:

- ◆ Responds to the education, training, retraining and supportive service needs for all individuals;
- ◆ Makes effective, efficient and creative use of all employment training and education resources;
- ◆ Encourages a collaborative approach among all organizations, both public and private, in order to provide an integrated and comprehensive education and job training system; and
- ◆ Supports an expanding base of diverse businesses.”

Section II:

Progress Report

CAMDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

ACHIEVING A WORKFORCE SYSTEM OF EXCELLENCE

An Update to the Strategic Plan

PROGRESS REPORT

The Camden County Workforce Investment Board clearly views itself as the *policy engine* for identifying local labor force needs and the *driver* for achieving improved quality of programs and services within the Camden County community. For the past eight years it has stayed focused on its vision and mission for cultivating a premiere workforce development system.

This Progress Report identifies the goals and key strategies that now frame its work. It tells an important story of how the WIB has progressively carried out its policy role as well as how it is now aggressively conducting its oversight responsibilities, as defined both by the Workforce Investment Act and in its agreement with the Camden County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

The following four goals, and their accompanying strategies, characterize WIB's work both in the past and in the future.

- Strategically develop an integrated workforce system that supports continuous learning through a compendium of programs and services purposefully designed to meet the multiple levels of need of Camden County's workforce – adding value for each customer at every point of service.
- Camden County is recognized by business and the labor force as a high quality resource for workforce development programs and services.
- Elevate Camden County's workforce system by engaging in quality initiatives that support the growth and development of its programs and services.
- Systematically combine workplace behavior, academic learning and occupational skill attainment for all youth in Camden County.

The WIB is pleased with the progress made to date and fully recognizes that none of this could have occurred without the full support of the Board of Chosen Freeholders, the willingness of the Board to stay true to its vision, and the remarkable participation and commitment of so many organizations that comprise Camden County's workforce system -- including the One Stop Partners, community and faith-based organizations, and educational and training institutions.

This Progress Report and the accompanying Summary Chart details both the progress made and the areas of emphasis for the next two years. We eagerly await the challenges that lie ahead.

Goal #1:

Strategically develop an integrated workforce system that supports continuous learning through a compendium of programs and services purposefully designed to meet the multiple levels of need of Camden County's workforce – adding value for each customer at every point of service.

Comprehensive Center

Camden County's One Stop system is comprised of one comprehensive site and several Partner sites. The comprehensive site is located at 2600 Mt. Ephraim Avenue in Camden City. Four Partners – the Resource Center, Employment Service, Unemployment Service and Vocational Rehabilitation -- are co-located at this site.

One Stop Partners

In total, the One Stop system is supported by nine Partners, all of which are actively involved in providing all levels of service. These Partners are:

- Camden County Resource Center
- Workforce New Jersey Employment Service
- Camden County College
- Camden County Board of Social Services
- Workforce New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Camden County Technical Schools
- Workforce New Jersey Unemployment Service
- Housing Authority of the City of Camden
- Camden County Adult Basic Education Consortium

One Stop Governance

The Partners established a management team, facilitated by the One Stop Operator to oversee the operations of the system. They meet monthly to discuss the coordination of services, evaluate processes, identify areas for continuous improvement, implement improvement efforts and support individual agencies in meeting their goals. Their work is guided by the One Stop Committee. As noted in our comprehensive plan, the Camden County WIB, under the direction of this Committee was the first -- and perhaps the only WIB in the State of New Jersey -- to develop a Business Plan back in 1995. While some of the details may need to be updated, the principles and basic tenets of that plan continue to provide the longer term vision for a One Stop System.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been redesigned to incorporate all of the policies, procedures and operating agreements developed through process mapping (described below). For the first time, the WIB now has an MOU that clearly defines operational tenets and outcomes upon which they can begin to assess the quality of the programs and services. (See Appendix B)

Process Mapping -- Improved Customer Services

The development of the comprehensive site has been a long and arduous task. The nine Partners engaged in a year-long core services process mapping effort to develop a common set of operating policies and procedures among all of the Partner agencies. In addition to Partner-level participation on the Process Mapping Team, Camden County established "Design Teams" consisting of front-line workers. Design Teams were constructed around key areas of service delivery in the One Stop with the intent of providing Partners with front line staff perspective prior to making management and operational decisions during Process Mapping. It had the additional benefit of creating "buy-in" from the front line workers and eased the eventual adoption of these new practices.

As a result of the process mapping initiative, common goals, outcomes and processes were defined. The comprehensive site now offers a fully integrated menu of core services available to any customer who walks in their door. These services, jointly supported and managed by the Partners, include One Stop orientations, self-directed assessment, on-line and counselor-based job seeking support, labor market information, and information on supportive services and training options. Over time the Partners have introduced additional services such as Career Beacon job search workshops, FDIC's MoneySmart personal financial management training and Destinations, a comprehensive computer-based literacy training program.

As a result of this detailed evaluation and restructuring process, customers now find accessing and using the services to be simple and easy. The site's public access area was renovated to better accommodate the increased number of customers and the types of services offered. In addition to increasing the number of computers available and enlarging the overall area, a glassed in Resource Room was constructed to provide customers a place to research the labor market and use written materials on job search techniques and career planning.

Through process mapping, the Partners also clearly defined the outcomes a customer should achieve as a result of each of these services, thereby laying the foundation for an in-depth performance management and continuous improvement system. In addition, they crafted a Customer Bill of Rights, which is proudly displayed near the entrance of the comprehensive site. (See Appendix C)

These jointly developed procedures and outcomes are now documented in a Core Services Policy and Procedure Manual. The Partners use this manual as the template for staff on how core services will be provided and the outcomes they are striving to achieve regardless of which agency they represent. A training plan has been developed to educate all Partner staff on these

new procedures. In addition, Partner staff has received training to support them in providing the full scope of One Stop services. Training topics included customer service, Equipped for the Future standards, and information sessions on local and One Stop Career Center resources and services.

Intensive Services

For a number of years, concerns have been raised by both the WIB and by the community, particularly during the development of the welfare strategic plan on the need for restructuring Job Readiness and Job Search curriculum tied to the work success skills identified through a series of employer focus groups. Recognizing this as a continuing gap, during the past year the Resource Center made a commitment to overhaul these two activities.

The Resource Center initially began restructuring its 4-week program TANF Job Readiness/Job Search curriculum. This curriculum was infused with a career and life skills program correlated to EFF job readiness standards, which gave practical application to helping customers make informed career decisions. The curriculum also included strategies for students gaining self-confidence; meeting family needs and responsibilities; working well with supervisors and peers, planning and managing their time effectively; and ultimately achieving long term success on the job. The life skills program was chosen because of its unique and successful ability to elevate and enhance individuals' self-confidence through exciting group activities and interactive lessons while at the same time learning the necessary skills to obtain and retain employment.

Following the development of the curriculum, a policies and procedures manual was prepared for each day of instruction complete with daily instructor logs to assist instructors in managing the group and individual needs of the students. Resource Center staff also underwent a four-day training session on delivering the revised curriculum as well as general facilitator and training strategies.

Once Resource Center staff completed the development of this curriculum it was clearly evident that the TANF population (as other populations) would benefit from four weeks of job readiness and an additional four weeks as well as dedicated to job search activities. The Resource Center was able to utilize from the Department of Human Services Special Initiatives Funds to create a four-week curriculum dedicated to Job Readiness. A four-week curriculum focusing on Job Search was also developed.

In addition, the Resource Center took the first steps in further developing its assessment strategies. An evaluation was conducted of current assessment tools now in use during the Core and Intensive Services. This evaluation identified what types of assessment were needed for each core and intensive service. A matrix was compiled and organized by three generic populations - low skilled adults, dislocated workers, and youth, presenting a compelling visual picture of the need to develop a well thought-out protocol for assessment services. Also, the revised Job Readiness and Job Search curricula integrated various assessment strategies into the curriculum.

These early accomplishments are the first steps in developing an intensive service strategy for all programs in Camden County.

Literacy Services

More recently, the One Stop system has focused significant efforts on the development of a literacy system. The development of this system began with the implementation of Workplace Literacy as a primary intensive service. In October 2001, the Resource Center was awarded a pilot project through the Department of Labor to establish a Workplace Literacy Lab in connection with the local One Stop Center. Individuals who participate in the Workplace Literacy Lab program receive an initial assessment used to develop a services plan. Participants have access to self-paced, vocationally-specific basic skills training, financial literacy training, pre-GED services, and work readiness instruction. The Workplace Literacy curriculum developed by the Resource Center supplements the State's LearnScape and New Jersey Network resources with Destinations¹ and classroom instruction.

The Resource Center's Workplace Literacy model is also able to successfully assist individuals with lower literacy levels to develop the fundamental literacy skill necessary to successfully learn more focused workplace literacy skills. This is done through a partnership with the Camden County College to create a continuum of literacy services at the One Stop. For those who function below a 5th grade reading level, they are initially serviced by Camden County College's Adult Basic Education program. The College's program is designed to bring the skill levels of participants up to the skill level necessary to benefit from the Workplace Literacy Lab. They too use Destinations as a tool for raising the basic skills of participants. Once individuals complete this program, they have the option of transitioning into the Workplace Literacy Lab.

In addition, the planning process for the Adult Literacy Plan (Section IV) played a significant role in further developing the One Stop's literacy system. As the plan describes, steps have already been taken to expand the Workplace Literacy Lab services, add a computer literacy lab and implement several additional literacy programs to meet immediate community needs.

Future Areas of Emphasis:

Expanded Services in the One Stop

As the WIB moves into the next two years, it will continue to work with the One Stop Partners to train staff and fully implement the procedures established through process mapping. It will conduct additional process mapping sessions in four areas: 1) employer services; 2) intensive services to support interagency communication and increase performance outcomes; 3) retention services including an aggressive follow-up services plan; and 4) services for the disabled.

¹ Destinations is a state-of-the-art computer- based literacy skill building program correlated to EFF's expanded definition of literacy.

A second focus will be developing an Assessment Protocol. While initial steps have been taken to expand assessment services for the TANF population, this has not occurred for other populations. Therefore, a comprehensive Assessment Protocol will be developed that begins with the universal use of CASAS as its core service assessment strategy and includes a graduated system of assessment strategies that will be tailored to varying levels of needs. Once completed, counseling staff will be trained on the application of the assessment tools and the development of career and service plans that focus on a continuum of services for each customer. Lastly, an evaluation strategy will be developed to measure the effectiveness of the assessment tools on the long-term success of customers.

Further efforts will also be made to expand intensive service offerings. The recently developed job readiness and job search curricula for TANF recipients will be revamped to meet the needs of varying populations including dislocated workers. Coupled with the workplace literacy offerings, the intensive service options will also include a wider menu of workshops and computer literacy training.

Literacy Implementation

The WIB will move forward on the implementation of its literacy plan. This plan includes six goals focused on expanding and elevating the quality of services in the One Stop and in the literacy system as a whole. It also identifies standards based on Equipped for the Future and establishes Destinations as the infrastructure for the local literacy system. (See Section IV for full description)

Youth Offender Project

The WIB, in partnership with the Camden City Prosecutor's office, was recently awarded a \$1.5 million dollar Youth Offender Grant through a U.S. Department of Labor national competitive application process. This grant focuses on providing preventative services and transition services to Camden City youth who become involved with the law or are preparing to be released from a correctional facility. (More details on this are described in Goal IV of this plan.) Related to this grant is the Resource Center's ongoing partnership with Camden City's Drug Court, which continues to receive their full attention. New Jersey Network (NJN) recently announced its plans to establish a Workplace Literacy Lab in Camden City, increasing the number of literacy labs located in Camden City to four (4)- two (2) at the Mt. Ephraim One Stop, one (1) sponsored by LVA, and the new NJN lab. Finally, the WIB will also provide oversight on a pre-apprenticeship training program for women and minorities in two Abbott School districts.

Given Governor McGreevey's recent announcement regarding his intentions to develop and support an extensive Camden City Recovery Plan, this is just one of many projects in Camden City in which the WIB will participate in over the next several years.

Goal #2:

Camden County is recognized by employers and the labor market as a high quality workforce development resource.

Camden County continues to rank highly by the state in meeting several workforce programs goals for business services. The local Employment Service office consistently ranks as one of the top performers in terms of the number of placements. It enjoys a very favorable reputation from employers, particularly through the work conducted at its Cherry Hill office. Camden County College secures more customized job training grants for local employers than any other agency in the state. In just the past year alone, the College received \$7.5 million to assist thirty-six businesses.

Complementing these services is the work of the Camden County Improvement Authority (CCIA). As the County's economic development agency, the CCIA is one of the primary organizations working with local employers. To address the needs of local and future businesses, and the industry base, the Camden County Improvement Authority (CCIA), has established three primary areas of focus:

- Local retention efforts through support of expansion and the garnering of financial resources;
- Direct marketing to attract outside companies including financing and location identification; and
- Workforce development

The agency uses the contacts it has in the employer community to link One Stop customers to jobs, particularly TANF recipients. They also provide retention services to assist individuals with remaining employed. In recognition of the importance of workforce development to local businesses, the CCIA also formed a partnership with the Camden County College, the County's primary provider of employer training services.

Camden County College has been providing employer training services for over fifteen years. During the last eight years, Camden County College restructured its Corporate and Career Development Department to apply a stronger business-based approach to offering training services to employers. This transformation has proven to have a positive impact. Currently, the College offers a combination of grant based (e.g. customized job training) and non-grant based services. Over the last year, the College has served approximately 6000 employees from more than 35 local employers.

As part of its strategic move to apply business-based principles to its operations, the College has linked with AchieveGlobal Training, an international consulting and training organization. The College uses the AchieveGlobal's training curricula as a foundation for many of the training programs they offer the employer community. The curricula is based on the needs AchieveGlobal observes as it provides consulting services to a variety of businesses including over two-thirds of the Fortune 500 companies. Topics include leadership, work success skills, team building and customer service.

The College has also adopted AchieveGlobal's needs assessment process. This assessment process allows the College to conduct a thorough evaluation of the skill level of current employees and the skill training needed to address the gaps in skills. The College can then work with the employer to establish training priorities and to identify or develop training to respond to these specific skill gaps. The College uses both the AchieveGlobal curricula and its college curricula to provide the training.

The WIB also cultivated significant partnerships with the local business community. Most notable is its fruitful relationship with the Empowerment Zone (EZ). The WIB developed the EZ Business Services center, a successful project focused on providing seminars, training and business services to small and emerging companies. This venture was ultimately turned over to the Empowerment Zone to operate.

Moreover, the WIB is consistently seeking opportunities to engage the business community around workforce development needs and expectations of local business services providers. For example, the WIB has convened focus groups on a number of occasions to discuss key employment issues as part of the original strategic plan development process. It is now working with Verizon and PSE&G on a youth project, which is described in more detail in Goal #4.

Future Areas of Emphasis:

With the services to residents well on their way to becoming a quality system of services, the WIB will now turn its focus on the integration and coordination of employer services. This will begin with conducting process mapping with all One Stop Partners and the CCIA. Similar to core services process mapping, an analysis will be conducted of current services offered and how they are offered. At the same time the WIB will begin establishing standards and benchmarks for the One Stop business services based on employer needs and expectations. Local personnel agencies will be surveyed to identify benchmarks to measure job placement and business service procedures. Based on the work done in these first two phases, a framework will be developed for ensuring that services to the business community are easily accessible, comprehensive and customer-friendly.

The Partners will then develop a plan for incorporating the full menu of services needed to serve businesses. This will include establishing new processes to streamline and consolidate their services based on the framework identified. The new processes will be structured to meet

expectations of business. It is anticipated that this plan will continue to support the successful effort of the College's employer training programs.

The WIB will also begin to explore strategies for working with key industry sectors. As a first step in this direction, the WIB is fully prepared to support those efforts and has already done so in its work with the State to create a Retail Training Center in partnership with the local Shop Rite. Among additional strategies may be the pursuit of an H1B grant to support targeted industry training.

The WIB is also ready to develop an aggressive marketing strategy. It is anticipated that this plan will include open houses and other community events as well as both internal and external communication strategies. This will include the development of a marketing plan to increase visibility of the WIB and One stop. Recruitment plans will also be developed to ensure enrollment levels are consistently met. To support this effort a recruitment conference will be held to ascertain the barriers to achieving full enrollment. The marketing program will be phased in as the employer process mapping takes hold.

Goal #3:

Elevate Camden County's workforce system by engaging in quality initiatives that support the growth and development of its programs and services.

Over the past several years, the Camden County Workforce Board has significantly stepped up its focus toward achieving a higher quality workforce investment system. The early steps included community-wide public forums that provided the platform for the deliberation of quality issues. This also resulted in the adoption of clear goals and measurable outcomes -- the first step towards establishing system-wide standards.

Clearly the Workforce Investment Act has raised the bar in terms of program performance and linkages to the employer community. No longer can programs exist at the margins -- rather programs now must demonstrate an ability to "add value" to the skills and preparedness of individuals for success in the workplace. Programs must be redesigned based on business standards with strong connections to the employer community.

The WIB recognized that achieving these higher levels of performance was creating new challenges for program operators. The WIB also recognized that it was not solely the responsibility of the provider community to adjust to these new standards -- but that the WIB had the leadership responsibility for identifying mechanisms that would facilitate the knowledge of the entire workforce community and provide mechanisms for the provider community to reach to these new standards.

Best practices, technical assistance, staff training, process mapping, business plan and policies and procedures development were introduced as a common and new way of doing business. In 2001, two best practice conferences were purposefully held in connection with the release of Request for Proposals (RFPs). These activities helped to underscore the WIB's commitment to higher levels of performance and their expectation that program operators would seriously consider what was requested in the proposals and redesign their programs accordingly.

- The Welfare-to-Work Conference included a high-ranking official from the Department of Human Services who shared the results from an extensive evaluation that underscored the importance of work and its impact on sustaining permanent self-sufficiency.
- The Youth Best Practice Conference also featured a highly regarded youth expert from the U.S. Department of Labor who spent considerable time explaining the requirements for youth programs under the Workforce Investment Act. Conference attendees also participated in roundtable discussions that were designed to explore and define characteristics of best practices for various youth program models.

The process mapping work described in Goal #1 of this plan is considered a key element of the WIB's quality initiatives. After much frustration from preparing a One Stop Business Plan as early on as 1995, the WIB sought to develop new activities that would fruitfully engage the One Stop Partners toward substantially changing from an old culture focused on program specific activities to an integrated, professional One Stop system.

Also, the work described in Goal #4 in support of bolstering the youth community's knowledge and understanding of WIA requirements, was a predetermined strategy under the WIB's quality initiatives activities. The WIB believes, as described in both of the goals, that the results from these quality initiatives have made a substantial contribution to improving our programs and services.

The WIB has also taken on increased responsibilities for monitoring, RFP development, contracting and fiscal accountability. In the last two years, through the process of developing RFPs and evaluations for Adult Work Experience programs (AWEP), Welfare-to-Work, Youth, and Outreach and Recruitment, the WIB began to hone its processes. One of the most significant additions was a more sophisticated evaluation system. Each RFP is now assessed using an evaluation rubric which provides evaluators with a detailed guide for determining how many points are awarded. This new process brought greater consistency to the evaluation process and ensured that proposals were evaluated against the criteria established.

The WIB has also just recently assumed responsibility for developing and executing the contracts – a natural addition to their already existing responsibilities for conducting the Request for proposal process as well as monitoring contracts. Because this responsibility was assumed just prior to the development of the Youth RFP, this RFP development process became a learning ground for better integrating the development of RFPs, evaluation rubrics and contracts.

Future Areas of Emphasis:

The WIB intends to apply process mapping to several additional One Stop activities including employer services, disability services, intensive and retention services. Information gathered through these processes are then applied to Memorandums of Understanding and other documents that define performance expectations and requirements. A logical next step for the WIB is to establish a performance management system that will include customer satisfaction measures, as well as mechanisms for collecting and analyzing data to evaluate overall performance against local and State standards. An evaluation tool will also be developed for WIB members to assess the One Stop's effectiveness.

A second major area of emphasis will be the development of fiscal planning and management procedures to govern the process for planning of funds, the development of budgets and the monitoring of expenditures. These processes are particularly critical given that they occur through a partnership between the WIB and Fiscal Agent and, therefore, require clear lines of

responsibility and communication mechanisms. These new procedures will include processes and communication mechanisms for:

- Establishing an ongoing planning process for determination of fund allocation according to WIB priorities.
- Developing a master budget and plan for funding along with the requisite policies and procedures required for effective cost allocation.
- Developing policies and procedures to more effectively monitor the expenditure of all funds to insure full utilization.
- Revising the contracting process in line with the above administrative and operational changes.
- Develop a full complement of checkpoints and reports that will insure the WIB of adherence to the newly developed policies and procedures.

In addition to focusing on fiscal management, the WIB will also incorporate policies and procedures to more effectively track program performance across all funding streams. These new processes will ensure that the WIB receives real-time information on the success of the One Stop and Partner programs.

Goal #4:

Systematically combine workplace behavior, academic learning and occupational skill attainment for all youth in Camden County.

The Workforce Investment Act establishes a framework for comprehensive youth services based on best practices for youth. One of the most notable characteristics of this new framework is the emphasis on extending the services to include 12 months of follow-up services, which will be provided after participants exit the initial program services. This emphasis on longer-term, intensive services is far more sophisticated than any previous regulations governing youth programs. As such, the WIB recognized that local youth service providers would need assistance in making the transition to these new guidelines.

Over the last year and a half, the WIB has hosted a variety of activities geared toward helping local providers make this transition. Orientations were conducted for youth providers on WIA. Additionally, the WIB hosted a Best Practices conference in conjunction with the release of the second round of WIA funding. This conference began with a presentation from US DOL on the importance of restructuring programs and information on ways to do so. It was immediately followed by a series of roundtable discussions on best practices for key youth development activities such as mentoring, community services activities, and leadership development. Recommendations were reported out which supported a number of the requirements for best practices contained in the RFP. The providers then received instructions on the contents of the WIA Youth Services Request for Proposal along with an evaluation rubric, which clearly articulated the expectations and the process for evaluating the proposals -- particularly in the area of achieving best practices. Within a few days a report on the attendees recommendations was circulated, once again reinforcing the goal of best practices.

Prior to the release of the second round of funding, the WIB conducted another series of technical assistance activities. Local providers were invited to attend an all-day workshop on how to develop a successful youth program under WIA. This workshop was well attended by both traditional providers and agencies that had never before submitted a proposal. As follow-up to this workshop, providers were invited to sign up for one-on-one consultation on how to restructure specific programs to include best practices as well as how to meet the WIA guidelines and intent of the legislation.

Additionally, the Resource Center hired a Youth Coordinator to support as well as facilitate communication with contracted youth providers. The Coordinator also assists programs who are falling behind on enrollments and performance achievement. Finally, the Coordinator serves as a broker between youth who enter the One Stop and the variety of youth services in the community.

The inception of WIA also forced the local area to rethink how summer work experience opportunities would be provided. Many of these activities were incorporated into longer-term programs. However, lengthier and more intense programs result in fewer youth being offered these opportunities. Thus, the WIB facilitated the development of a local job fair. The job fair was extremely successful, with more than 15 employers participating. Ten of these employers actively participated in the planning of the event. Approximately 200 youth attended.

One of the WIB's most remarkable accomplishments for local youth was successfully facilitating the development of a \$1.5 million dollar grant proposal to serve youth in Camden City. In partnership with the Camden City Prosecutor's Office, the WIB convened a variety of Camden City youth providers and faith-based communities to develop a youth delinquency prevention and rehabilitation model for 250 in-school and out-of-school Camden City youth who had become involved with local law enforcement. This model incorporated education, basic skill development, community service, work experience, counseling and other activities to refocus and prepare youth to live a more productive life. It expanded upon the work of the Camden City Police M.A.L.L., local residential facilities for youth offenders, and the City's Drug Court program already running in partnership with the One Stop. Services will be provided at faith-based anchors and in partnership with the faith-based community.

More recently the WIB has facilitated a cooperative venture between Verizon, PSE&G, Book Mates and the Boys and Girls Club of Camden. This pilot literacy project will offer one-on-one literacy mentoring services. In addition, the WIB actively participates in the Annual Camden County Academic Business Connections Conference, which facilitates partnerships between business, schools, and community-base organizations.

Future Areas of Emphasis:

The WIB and its Youth Council intends to continue its support of the local youth provider community in developing programs that support long term and more intensive services for youth.

A second area of emphasis will be on the development of youth One Stop activities. A program will be developed to encourage schools to organize visits for their students in the One Stop. This is particularly important in assisting youth find part-time work, gathering information about careers, and translating their future career goals to understanding the need for academic and technical skill requirements associated with various occupations.

The Resource Center's Youth Coordinator will continue to serve as a broker between youth who enter the One Stop and the variety of youth services in the community. The Resource Center, on a limited basis, has already had success with several youth who enrolled in the workplace literacy program. With the expansion of their training, they are prepared to develop literacy and intensive service programs targeted to youth. In addition, the Resource Center's intensive

services strategy calls for identifying appropriate assessment tools for youth. This includes assessment for basic skills, literacy and workplace readiness.

The Youth Council has been interested in undertaking a youth community mapping project. While there are county-based publications that identify various programs and youth providers, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding on the content and components of the various programs and services. Furthermore, little is known about how to determine which program is the most appropriate based on the needs of the individual youth.

A community mapping project will build upon the youth resource charts to include an analysis of the various programs, customer service procedures, developing common understanding of desired outcomes and engaging youth providers in the responsibility of achieving joint outcomes. This will be coupled with the development of a youth portfolio system which will provide the mechanism for interagency information sharing and provide a baseline for the development of a more extensive case management system, youth tracking system and an enhanced career development plan. These portfolios advocate for a youth's career awareness by allowing them to maintain a written record of their assessment information, activities and accomplishments, information on education and careers planning, and information on job search and job readiness.

Finally, the WIB will embark on the implementation of the Youth Offender Grant, which will begin by convening an advisory committee. The advisory committee will be responsible for implementing the project, which will include conducting an RFP process to identify the youth development and employment component and the faith-based anchors. Once these primary players have been identified, they will be brought together for final planning for the specifics of implementing each anchor. The WIB will take the lead in facilitating both the Committee and the implementation process and will provide ongoing planning and oversight.

Section III:

WIB Governance and Membership

CAMDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

ACHIEVING A WORKFORCE SYSTEM OF EXCELLENCE

An Update to the Strategic Plan

WIB GOVERNANCE AND MEMBERSHIP

The Camden County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) was piloted under a New Jersey State grant in 1993. The WIB was one of the first successful WIB's in the nation and served first, as one of two model WIB's in New Jersey and eventually as a prototype for expansion throughout the State. The WIB is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation incorporated in the State of New Jersey. With the passage of the Workforce Investment Act, Camden County was officially designated as a Workforce Investment Area in July 2000.

Since its inception, the Camden County WIB has strived toward excellence by incorporating best business practices into the One Stop as well as each committee's work. John J. Gallagher, Jr., Chairman of the Board and CEO of The Gallagher Group leads the Board in carrying out the vision and mission. All of the Board's work has been greatly supported by the Honorable Edward McDonnell, Deputy Director and Freeholder Liaison. (See Appendix A for WIB LEO Agreement)

The Board is comprised of forty-five (45) members, the majority of which represent the private sector. Individuals from large and small employers, organized labor, community-based organizations, economic development, County and Vocational Superintendent of Schools, One Stop Partner, Human Services Advisory Council, and community action are also represented on the Board.

The WIB has an active Executive Committee comprised of the WIB Board Chair and five (5) committee Chairs who are enthusiastic about the progress achieved to date and the future directions the WIB set forth in this Strategic Plan Update.

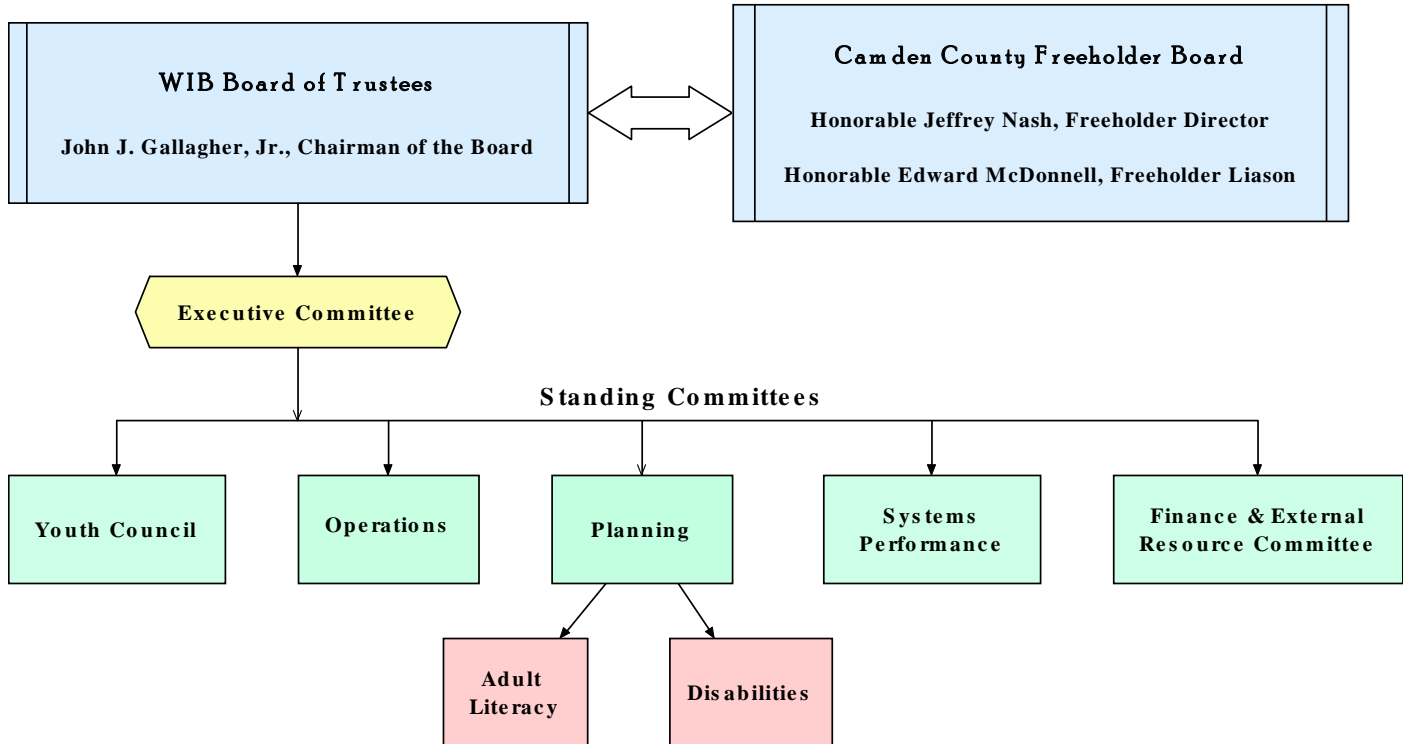
The five standing committees under the WIB are: Youth Council, Operations, Systems Performance, Finance and External Resources and Planning. The Planning Committee provides oversight to two subcommittees, Literacy and Disabilities.

Camden County serves as the Grant Recipient and Fiscal Agent. The County designated Kathleen Mayfield to carry out the day-to-day Fiscal Agent administrative responsibilities.

The One Stop system in Camden County has nine partners including: Camden County Adult Basic Education Consortium, Camden County Board of Social Services, Camden County College, Camden County Resource Center, Camden County Technical Schools, Housing Authority of the City of Camden, New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, New Jersey Unemployment Service, and Workforce New Jersey Employment Service. The WIB selected Kathleen Mayfield as the as the One Stop Operator. (See Appendix B for the MOU between the One Stop Partners, the Fiscal Agent, the One Stop Operator and the WIB.)

Camden County Workforce Investment Board

Organization Chart



Insert WIB Board List

Insert Youth Council List

Insert Planning Committee

Section IV:

Adult Literacy Plan

CAMDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

ACHIEVING A WORKFORCE SYSTEM OF EXCELLENCE

An Update to the Strategic Plan

ADULT LITERACY PLAN

INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Camden County's literacy needs assessment uncovered record numbers of individuals needing workplace literacy, ESL services, basic skills, GED preparation and computer literacy training. This is not surprising considering that in Camden County twenty-one percent (21%) of the adults are functioning at the lowest level of literacy. In Camden City, this rate rises to a staggering forty-nine percent (49%). More than fifty percent (50%) of Camden City residents over age twenty-five not hold a high school diploma or equivalency degree. Coupled with the rising immigrant population and the extremely low skill levels of welfare participants, who average approximately the third grade level, it is challenging for Camden County's literacy providers to keep pace. In fact, forty-two (42%) of Camden County adults ages 25-44 accessed services from the Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) in 2000-2001. Camden County College has also seen its enrollment in ESL classes more than triple over the last ten years. Last fall, more than 800 students filled ESL classes at the College's three campuses.

Furthermore, it is widely recognized that employers are distressed at the rapidly declining literacy rates while at the same time today's economy is calling for a more highly skilled, knowledge-based workforce. Responding to employers needs is confounded by the lack of a coherent system of literacy services at the national, state and local levels.

New Jersey's *Preliminary Report On The Adult Literacy Funding and Delivery System*² depicts a disparate State literacy system with twenty-three (23) federal and state programs filtering to local providers to administer. Originating in four separate State departments, the regulations guiding the administration of these programs as well as their funding life and performance requirements are incongruous and require an inordinate amount of time for grant management. The report concludes that the literacy system is under-funded and "fragmented to the point where coordination of service is severely compromised."

² The State Council on Adult Literacy Education Services, *Preliminary Report on the Adult Literacy Funding and Delivery System*, Presented to the State Employment and Training Commission, January 23, 2002.

Given the status of the State system, it is no wonder that a recent independent evaluation of Camden County's literacy services and system of providers reflects a similar conclusion. This assessment (Attachment 3), conducted in July of 2001, concluded:

"The broad picture that emerged through this series of interviews was of a fragmented set of agencies delivering services, essentially having the same missions, but not able to work with each other in concert to address the literacy needs of the County. The reasons are structural and institutional, but also due to a lack of leadership on the part of any one person or agency. In general, these are all people of good will who need assistance in working together to achieve better services for the County as a whole."

With this as a backdrop, the Camden County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) established a Literacy Core Planning Team comprised of twenty-eight (28) knowledgeable and experienced representatives from business, literacy programs, education and community organizations. The Core Planning Team functioned under the auspices of the WIB's Planning Committee and was charged with the responsibility of conducting a resource and needs analysis of existing programs and services. It was also responsible for identifying the strategies for addressing the fundamental and long term needs of Camden's literacy system.

Today -- we are pleased to report that we have made significant progress in building the capacity of our literacy system. Concurrent to the literacy planning work, Camden was selected as one of the State's ten pilot sites to implement a Workplace Literacy Laboratory in the One Stop. The Camden County Resource Center, a key operator of programs in the One Stop, and Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) were both designated as operators, each developing a literacy lab in Camden City. The design envisioned and carried out by the Camden County Resource Center was the development of a comprehensive curriculum. Building off the state's workplace literacy pilot project resources, the Resource Center established a classroom-based instructional model supported by Destinations, a complete literacy skills development courseware. With its more than 10,000 learning activities, this multi-dimensional remediation tool has proven to effectively enhances classroom instruction. The courseware's curriculum cross-integrates basic skills, writing, citizenship, life and employability skills - all correlated to EFF's broader definition of literacy. The Resource Center's Workplace Literacy Lab is recognized by the NJ Department of Labor as a model literacy center.

Supplemented by the Workplace Literacy Lab, the One Stop now offers a much wider range of literacy programs and instructional strategies that translates into the first step towards providing a continuity of service for literacy. The Camden County College provides a basic skills program focused on the lowest levels of literacy. A second classroom for the Workplace Literacy instruction is being added, thereby providing expanded capacity to meet intermediate literacy level needs. A third classroom is now earmarked for a computer literacy lab. Plans are also underway to establish a bank of computers at the One Stop for those able to navigate through the various technology-based literacy programs on their own.

New programs are also scheduled to begin in the Fall. Camden County College will initiate a new ESL program in Camden City. In addition, the College will be offering a comprehensive literacy program for the Camden County Correctional Facility, which addresses basic skills, job readiness and life skills. Additional Destinations software licenses have been secured and a plan will be developed to distribute this technology throughout Camden County's literacy provider community. In addition, Rosetta Stone, an ESL technology program, will be added into the existing basic skills and workplace literacy labs, and will be widely distributed throughout the literacy provider community.

The attached Literacy Strategic Plan builds upon these initial steps and takes us to the next level of development. Through the adoption of Destinations as its unifying platform, the WIB is now poised to develop a system of literacy services. Destinations gives the WIB a framework for creating consistency among all providers and a baseline upon which to develop its standards. The attached Strategic Plan incorporates the complete set of recommendations of the Literacy Core Planning Team and describes in more detail the operational strategies for achieving a system of service. The literacy community is highly committed to functioning more interdependently in concert with the WIB as we move forward in translating this Literacy Plan's following seven goals into action:

- Facilitate the development of a comprehensive literacy system to respond to the needs of the local community;
- Expand programs and services in the One Stop system;
- Expand programs and services to fill gaps in the literacy system;
- Enhance the literacy system's capacity to address learning differences;
- Provide opportunities for literacy providers to elevate the quality of their services; and
- Expand marketing and outreach efforts.

VISION

Central to the Camden County Workforce Investment Board's vision of developing a premier workforce development system is the concept of constructing a workforce system of service that supports continuous learning for its citizenry. For the WIB, this translates into a thoughtfully constructed mosaic of programs and services, operating at peak performance. The WIB has learned over the years that putting this concept in operation requires careful planning and a considerable focus on elevating the quality of programs and services. It also requires understanding your community's needs -- both employers and job seekers -- and constructing a compendium of programs and services equipped to meet the multiple levels of those needs.

Today, literacy funding travels through four major state departments and is dispersed among twenty-three (23) programs. The WIB's planning process identified at least twenty (20) agencies who are providing literacy services coupled with a growing number of faith-based organizations providing services in various pockets of the community. The WIB recognizes that while there are many literacy service providers whose programs have made a significant difference to those served, there is no organized system of services nor are there clearly defined standards of service. The challenge rests in how best to organize what is now a complex and disparate set of literacy programs and services.

The Literacy Plan embarks on this mission in several ways:

- A commitment to measuring the success of the literacy system based on the wider definitions and standards articulated in Equipped for the Future (EFF);
- The expansion of the combined One Stop/ Resource Center's literacy services, including basic skills development, workplace readiness and computer literacy, that mirror the core components of EFF;
- The selection of Destinations as the unifying platform upon which to design Camden's system of service. (Destinations provides the framework for consistent and ongoing assessment, provides a system of accountability through its tracking system, and reflects national standards imbedded in EFF.);
- The addition of new services to address underserved populations and priority needs;
- The integration of technology to bolster the curriculum of literacy service providers for basic skills, computer literacy, job readiness, citizenship and ESL; and
- Expand employer literacy services by building upon Camden County College's highly successful track record in providing customized training services to employers.

In summary, the vision of the Camden County Workforce Investment Board is for a cohesive and high quality literacy system of service that offers Camden County residents the opportunity to advance their literacy skills from all levels.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Camden County Workforce Investment Board began its literacy planning efforts in earnest during the summer of 2001. The need for a more effective strategy for literacy has frequently been articulated by Board members during planning sessions while employers cited similar concerns during focus groups.

The WIB asked its Planning Committee to take responsibility for developing its Literacy Plan. As its first task it commissioned an independent study to assess Camden's existing literacy system. A number of important findings surfaced concerning funding constraints, program quality, access to programs, and the challenges to coordinating programs across a number of funding streams and service providers. The report encouraged the WIB to provide the leadership in developing a broad-based strategic planning process, negotiating agreements among providers, identifying staff training needs, and addressing employer-based standards for literacy programs. (See Attachment 3)

As a result of this report, the Planning Committee identified twenty-eight (28) organizations to serve on a Literacy Core Planning Team representing a cross-section of stakeholders in the literacy system. This included Planning Committee members, employers, One Stop Partners, the Literacy Volunteers of America, adult basic education consortium members, literacy providers, and education and community representatives. (See Attachment D for list of members). The following agencies served on the Core Planning Team:

- Camden County College
- Camden County OEO
- Camden County Resource Center
- Camden County Technical Schools
- PNC Bank
- Dr. Rita Hanna
- Gloucester City School District
- Greater Cherry Hill Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Hispanic Family Center
- Looking Forward Ministry
- Literacy Volunteers of America
- YWCA
- Community Planning and Advocacy Council
- Respond, Inc.
- Camden Board of Education
- Camden County Board of Social Services
- Camden County One Stop
- Camden Housing Authority
- Diocese of Camden
- Focus on Literacy, Inc.
- Jerothia Riggs Adult Education Center
- NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation-Camden
- Phoenix Wealth Management
- The Work Group
- Woodland Community Development Center
- Workforce New Jersey Employment Service-Camden
- Camden County WIB

The Literacy Core Planning team began by analyzing the current system of literacy services and providers, identifying gaps and needs, and developing a long-term plan. As a first step the

Literacy Team developed an initial resource chart identifying programs and services, numbers of individuals served on an annual basis and populations served. This provided the basis for an analysis on underserved populations and areas of significant need.

To better understand how the current system operates, the Literacy Team engaged in "system mapping." Organized by literacy service segments, the providers listed their programs in five categories: Job Readiness, GED, Learning Differences, Computer Technology and Basic Skills. Team members mapped out the referral process between the One Stop and various literacy providers as well as intra-agency referrals -- identifying who they refer customers to as well as who refers customers to their agency. This painted a compelling visual picture of a disparate system that relies on anecdotal information rather than through informed and structured processes. It reinforced for Team members the value and importance of constructing a literacy system based on standards of service and accountability among providers.

The Literacy Core Planning Team was also organized into six workgroups to begin to explore specific issues in more depth: (1) Employers and Workplace Literacy, (2) Assessment, (3) Destinations and Technology, (4) Learning Differences, (5) Staff Training and Capacity Building, and (6) English as a Second Language (ESL). Each of these work groups collected and analyzed data specific to their particular issues and began to compile a series of recommendations. For example, in the Staff Training and Capacity Building work group, members identified a lack of system-wide staff development training across the County for adult literacy. Work group members assessed the need for a more coordinated system for training and prepared a survey in order to determine staff training needs. These recommendations are now addressed in the staff training activities described in Goal # 5 of this plan.

The Literacy Team made 38 recommendations, all of which are contained in this plan. Their recommendations very much mirror the vision of the WIB to build an integrated system of services. There was consensus on using Destinations as the unifying framework as long as: 1) additional licenses could be secured for use by additional literacy providers; 2) the One Stop was prepared to have an "open door" policy so that providers would have easy access to the self-directed bank of computers; and 3) staff training would be made available to a wide range of literacy instructors. In addition, the providers appreciated the willingness of the Resource Center to conduct training on its newly developed literacy curriculum. Finally, the Literacy Team members were in agreement that the WIB should continue to be the convener as we move forward to implement the plan and begin the task of developing system-wide standards.

INTEGRATION OF EQUIPPED FOR THE FUTURE (EFF)

The Literacy Provider Community in Camden County appreciated the State sponsoring a Literacy Conference in June of 2001 to explain the basic tenets of EFF and its relationship to success in the workplace. While they recognized that significant work is required to integrate these concepts into existing programs and services, they saw the value of EFF and were eager to expand Camden County's programs and services to reflect this broader definition of literacy.

Camden County's Literacy Plan supports the integration of EFF in several very meaningful ways. The plan defines a number of activities dedicated to basic skills development, workplace readiness and computer literacy -- key curriculum areas required to meet EFF's broader definition for literacy. The following are some highlights:

- The adoption of Destinations provides multiple options for connecting Camden's literacy activities to EFF. This courseware correlates to EFF's standards for literacy by offering a research-based comprehensive curriculum in reading, mathematics, writing, life and employability skills, citizenship and job-related applied skills. The curriculum content is cross-integrated with reading, math, writing, science, social studies, history, government, geography, literature health and careers. Destinations also focuses on developing higher-level critical thinking processes.
- The Camden County Resource Center expanded the original plans for its Workplace Literacy lab beyond LearnScape and New Jersey Network resources to include literacy instruction complimented by the remedial instruction available through Destinations.
- Camden County College's basic skills program was retooled to focus on the lowest literacy levels thereby providing a contiguous literacy skills development track in the One Stop.
- The Resource Center made a commitment to overhaul the Job Readiness and Job Search curriculum. Following the development of the curriculum, a policies and procedures manual was prepared and the Resource Center staff underwent a four-day training session on delivering the revised curriculum.
- The Resource Center is adding an additional classroom dedicated to providing technology-based instruction in computer literacy, thereby making an additional EFF component readily available to job seekers.
- The Adult Basic Education Consortium revamped its program to include the integration of EFF. They too are using Destinations as a common platform.

In developing standards for its Literacy system, the Camden County WIB intends to use EFF's soon-to-be released performance levels and ultimately its certificate of work readiness.

AGREEMENTS

The WIB recognizes that a system of literacy services must be built upon more than a series of isolated agreements for joint service provision and joint planning. There must also be agreement on a central element that draws these agencies together in a practical way – one that facilitates day-to-day communication and coordination, and serves as an infrastructure to the system. Local literacy providers have identified Destinations software to serve this purpose.

With the establishment of Destinations as the common platform for the local literacy system, it became necessary to ensure that a significant number of local literacy providers had access to the software. While more than 100 licenses are currently installed throughout the County, there are many providers without access to this program. Therefore, the WIB purchased 60 additional licenses to be distributed throughout the community. The Literacy providers agreed that the licenses should be awarded through a competitive process and require that the awardees sign a Memorandum of Understanding that articulates adherence to the local standards and the use of Destinations as both a training tool and a coordination and communication tool.

In addition to establishing Destinations as the common platform for the local literacy system, the providers agreed that a referral system should be implemented for customers moving in and out of the One Stop. It is anticipated that this will serve as the prototype for a system-wide referral process that supports the sharing of information and ease of access as well as reducing duplication of efforts.

This referral and information sharing process will be modeled after an existing agreement between LVA and the Camden County Resource Center, a central Partner in the One Stop system. The agreement calls for the integration of tutoring services into One Stop Center services. The agreement also establishes referral mechanisms and sharing of information allowing customers to flow between LVA and the Resource Center in a seamless and coordinated matter.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

INDIVIDUALS

Camden County's literacy needs assessment uncovered record numbers of individuals needing workplace literacy, ESL services, basic skills, GED preparation and computer literacy training. This is not surprising considering that in Camden County twenty-one percent (21%) of the adults are functioning at the lowest level of literacy. In Camden City, this rate rises to a staggering forty-nine percent (49%). More than fifty percent (50%) of Camden City residents over age 25 do not hold a high school diploma or equivalency degree. Coupled with the rising immigrant population and the extremely low skill levels of welfare participants, who average approximately the third grade level, it is challenging for Camden County's literacy providers to keep pace. In fact, forty-two (42%) of Camden County adults ages 25-44 accessed services from the Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) in 2000-2001. Last fall, more than 800 students filled ESL classes at the College's three campuses.

Camden County covers a 222 square mile area and has four primary population centers – Camden City, Gloucester City, Pennsauken and Cherry Hill, accounting for approximately half of

Figure 1

Characteristic	Camden City	Pennsauken	Gloucester Twp	Cherry Hill	Camden County
Population	79,904 (16%)	35,737 (7%)	64,350 (13%)	69,965 (14%)	508,932
Median Income	23,421	\$47,538	\$54,280	\$69,421	\$48,097
Poverty rate	32.8	6.1%	4.4%	2.5%	8.1%
Unemployment	7.8%	3.4%	3.5%	2.3%	6.0%
Dropout rate	49%	22.8%	14.22%	9%	19.8%
Speak English less than "Very well"	18.9%	8%	2.8%	6.1%	6.3%
Foreign born	7100 (20%)	2822 (8%)	3128 (9%)	8720 (23%)	35,350 (100%)
Median Age Range:	27.2	36.1	34.6	41.8	35.8

Source: 2000 Census

the County's population. Camden City is the County's most impoverished area. Figure 1 provides a snap shot of each of these population centers.

Camden County has a growing immigrant population in need of English language skills. In 1990, the Hispanic population accounted for 7.9% of the county's total population. In 2000, they account for almost 10%. Where this population once was overwhelmingly Latino. Today, there are increasing numbers of Asians and Eastern Europeans. According to the 2000 census, more than 15% of households in Camden County indicate they do speak English less than "very well." The significant rise in individuals seeking English as a Second Language services is also a testament to this growing population. Camden County College, the County's largest provider of ESL programs, has seen its enrollments more than triple in the last several years. Approximately 60% of foreign-born residents live in the four population centers, suggesting that this need for ESL services is greatest in these cities – particularly in Camden City.

In addition to the increase in demand, local providers are also seeing a decrease in the initial skill level of students. Many participants are not literate in their original language. The growing diversity means more students who are not even familiar with the Roman alphabet. This decrease in skills, coupled with the growth in diversity, has resulted in a need for both lower level ESL classes and staff development opportunities to learn best practices for teaching this diverse population.

The County's extremely low education attainment levels are equally as alarming. As shown above, in Camden City almost 50% of residents over age 25 do not have a high school diploma or equivalent. As a result, 49% of the City's adult population function at the lowest level of literacy. The County-wide statistics demonstrate only a slight improvement. Almost 20% lack a diploma and 21% function at the lowest literacy level. In addition, TANF recipients are averaging a third grade level on basic skills assessments.

Figure 2:

Industry[^]	Ave. Min. Lit. Level Required³	Camden City	Pennsauken	Gloucester Twp	Cherry Hill	Camden County
Manufacturing	Low Level 2	15.1	12.2	9.9	8.9	10.3
Retail Trade	Low Level 2	11.9	12.8	14.7	12.1	12.8
Educational, health and social services	Low Level 3	25	20.4	20.9	25.4	22.2
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	High Level 3	8.5	10.3	9.9	14.8	11.3

[^] Notes percentage of local industry base

Source: 2000 Census

While learning disabilities such as Dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder could be a significant reason for such high drop out rates, it is difficult to assess how prevalent they are in the County. However, there are several indicators that suggest there is a significant population facing these issues. In addition to the high drop out rates, which suggest difficulty with learning in traditional educational environments, Camden County also continually has the highest number of juveniles in State correctional facilities. Experts estimate that 80% of people incarcerated have learning differences.

The pockets of high unemployment, low median incomes and high poverty levels also indicate that residents in these areas are working in minimum wage jobs, which typically pay below self-sufficiency wages. Many individuals remain in these low wage jobs because their low literacy skill levels prohibit them from advancing. High unemployment rates also indicate that there may be significant lack of job readiness skills – a supposition that employers continually confirm. Significant demand for job readiness skills, over 1300 served annually, support this as well.

EMPLOYERS

Significant emphasis was also placed on understanding the needs of local employers. Camden County is largely a services based economy with a heavy emphasis on business and health services. The retail trade, public sector and manufacturing each account for between ten (10) and twenty (20) percent of local industry. Business and health services also demonstrate the highest level of growth over the next five years both in employment and number of businesses and will accounting for one out of every three jobs in the County. Occupations with the highest growth in the County correspond with the growth industries. The top three occupations are registered nurses, office clerks and home health aides.

To determine the literacy requirements for these growth industries and occupations, each occupational cluster and industry was evaluated against required literacy levels as identified by a national study conducted by the Educational Testing Service.³ This analysis indicates that, at

³ Educational Testing Service, Policy Information Center, Research Division, What Jobs Require: Literacy Education and Training, 1940 - 2006

Figure 3:

Occupation*		Camden City	Pennsauken	Gloucester Twp	Cherry Hill	Camden County
Sales and Office Occupations	Low Level 3	25.1	31.1	31.3	28.4	29.3
Management, professional, and related occupations	Low Level 4	16.8	27.9	33.9	52.9	35.5
Service Occupations	High Level 2	25.5	16.0	13.3	9.5	14.4
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	Low Level 2	25.7	16.9	11.4	5.5	12.3

* Notes percentage of residents working in these top occupations

Source: 2000 Census

minimum, the growth occupations require at least literacy skills at the beginning basic education level.⁴ The majority requires an intermediate basic education level of literacy. Figure 2 and 3 depict these literacy levels against the top occupations and industries for each major population area.

Employers confirm that not only are basic skills necessary but job readiness skills and work success skills are critical. They also confirm that both their current workforce and applicants over the last several years fail to meet literacy requirements of the job. According to the findings of both an employer focus group and brief informational interviews, employers with entry level jobs requiring higher literacy skills often screen out individuals with literacy skill deficits and therefore do not seek literacy training as frequently. However, those employers filling jobs that require less literacy proficiency, such as manufacturers filling assembly positions, often seek literacy training for its employees either to promote employees or to improve communications among a multi-lingual workforce.

In addressing the needs of local and future businesses, and the industry base, the Camden County Improvement Authority (CCIA), the County’s economic development agency has established three primary areas of focus:

- Local retention efforts through support of expansion and the garnering of financial resources;
- Direct marketing to attract outside companies including financing and location identification; and
- Workforce development

The director of the CCIA indicates that the skill level of the local workforce is one of the larger concerns of both local companies and companies considering relocating into the County. In recognition of this, the CCIA formed a partnership with the Camden County College, the

⁴ The literacy levels offered are based on the National Reporting System for Adult Education Outcome Measures Definitions. The ETS study categorized literacy levels on the old NRS 5-point scale. Literacy Levels were roughly estimated by comparing the descriptors for each of the five (5) levels to the three (3) current NCR levels.

County's primary provider of employer training services. The CCIA has seen a positive impact of this partnership on the County's ability to retain and attract companies.

Camden County College has provided employer training services for over 15 years. Over the last eight years, the Camden County College has restructured its Corporate and Career Development division to apply a stronger business-based approach to offering training services to employers. This transformation has proven to have a positive impact. Currently, the College offers a combination of grant based (e.g. customized job training) and non-grant based services. Over the last year, the College has served approximately 6000 employees from more than thirty-five local employers. It has successfully applied for over \$7.5 million in customized training grants on behalf of many of these employers. The College demonstrates an unlimited capacity to expand the level of services to employers so long as these businesses can secure funds to support employee training.

As part of its strategic move to apply business-based principles to its operations, the College has linked with AchieveGlobal Training, an international consulting and training organization. The College uses the AchieveGlobal's training curricula as a foundation for many of the training programs they offer the employer community. The curricula is based on the needs AchieveGlobal observes as it provides consulting services to a variety of businesses including over two-thirds of the Fortune 500 companies. Topics include leadership, work success skills, team building and customer service.

The College has also adopted AchieveGlobal's needs assessment process. This assessment process allows the College to conduct a thorough evaluation of the skill level of current employees and the identify training needed to address gaps in skills. The College can then work with the employer to establish training priorities and to identify or develop training to respond to these specific skill gaps. The College uses both the AchieveGlobal curricula and its college curricula to provide the training.

Both the College and CCIA indicate that literacy training - ESL and basic skills are among the most requested training programs. There is also a significant demand for team building, work success skills and leadership training, all of which fall within EFF's expanded definition of literacy. In particular, manufacturing, health care and customer service-based operations are demonstrating a great need for literacy training. Figures 1 through 3 confirm that the literacy levels required by these industries are well above the educational levels of residents in cities where these industries are strong.

The Current Literacy System

The Literacy system in Camden County is comprised of over twenty identifiable organizations offering a multitude of services. Many of these providers offer services in or around Camden City. The WIB is clear that there are many more providers, particularly within the faith-based

community. The Inventory of Services (Attachment 1) identifies these local providers and the services they offer.

The core of the County's literacy delivery system lies with four entities – Camden County College, Camden County Resource Center, Literacy Volunteers of America, and Camden City Board of Education's Jerothia Riggs Center – three of which are members of the Adult Basic Education Consortium. Together, these four organizations provide the majority of literacy services and have played a critical role in leveraging resources and establishing partnerships to expand and improve literacy services within the County over the last several years.

The Adult Basic Education Consortium is a partnership between the Camden City Board of Education, Camden County College, Camden Housing Authority, Gloucester City School District, Literacy Volunteers of America/Camden County and the Pennsauken School District. This partnership, funded by the Department of Education provides a variety of literacy services including adult basic education, English as a Second Language and GED preparation. In 2001, the Consortium experienced a significant turning point. The rejection of its Adult Basic Education grant application forced the Consortium to re-evaluate the mission of the organization and how their activities supported that mission. As a result, they began to address several unresolved issues between consortium members and issues that were largely ignored for the past several years. The result was a stronger proposal based upon a team approach to providing services. While providing the same array of services, the partners now coordinate their assessment services and have begun to establish a continuum of services from low level literacy through entry into post-secondary education.

The Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) is a recent addition to the Adult Basic Skills Consortium and has played a significant role in developing joint projects within the County. LVA has joined forces with the Jerothia Riggs Center, Goodwill Industries of Southern New Jersey and Camden County College in four separate programs to provide individual tutoring services in basic skills and English as a Second Language as a support to individuals currently enrolled in related programs and functioning at the lowest levels of literacy. In addition, LVA is working with the Camden County Library system to expand access to literacy services by offering tutoring through the library system.

LVA has also entered into a formal agreement with the Camden County Resource Center, a central Partner in the One Stop system, to integrate tutoring services into One Stop Center services. The agreement establishes referral mechanisms and sharing of information allowing customers to flow between LVA and the Resource Center in a seamless and coordinated matter.

Jerothia Riggs Center is the County's largest provider of GED preparation and basic skills training and the second largest provider of computer literacy and English as a Second language services. Working with over 1100 adults annually, the Center is functioning above capacity. To alleviate some of the strain, they established a partnership with the College to provide literacy

services on-site. Once the Center's classes are filled, additional individuals seeking services are referred to the College's on-site course. Demand is such that even the College's course is often above capacity. LVA tutoring is also assisting with this overflow of students.

In addition to being the center of the County's employer-based training system, as described above, Camden County College is also the County's largest provider of English as Second Language training and a frequent partner in collaborative training ventures, providing an array of literacy services to meet the needs of particular target populations. Recently, the College agreed to provide incarcerated individuals with basic skills and job readiness skills training in addition to the computer training program they currently have running. They also provide basic skills training at the One Stop for TANF recipients and individuals below a 5th grade reading level.

The Camden County Resource Center is the leading provider of job readiness and workplace literacy services. The Resource Center is the provider of job search and job readiness services to TANF recipients serving upwards of a 1000 recipients annually.

Even more notable is the development of their Workplace Literacy Lab, which is recognized by the Department of Labor as a model program. In October 2001, the Resource Center was awarded a pilot project through the Department of Labor to establish a Workplace Literacy Lab in connection with the local One Stop Center. Individuals who participate in the Workplace Literacy Lab program receive an initial assessment used to develop a services plan. Participants have access to self-paced, vocationally-specific basic skills training, financial literacy training, pre-GED services, and work readiness instruction. The Workplace Literacy curriculum developed by the Resource Center supplements the State's LearnScape and New Jersey Network resources with Destinations and classroom instruction.

The Resource Center's Workplace Literacy model successfully assists individuals with lower literacy levels to develop the fundamental literacy skill necessary to successfully learn more focused workplace literacy skills. This is done through a partnership with the Camden County College to create a continuum of literacy services at the One Stop. Those who function below a 5th grade reading level attend Camden County College's Adult Basic Education program. The College's program is designed to bring the skill levels of participants up to the skill level necessary to benefit from the Workplace Literacy Lab. Both programs use Destinations to continue to raise the basic skills of participants.

Destinations is a state-of-the-art computer-based literacy skill building program correlated to national, state and local standards including EFF standards. In addition to being used in the Resource Center's Workplace Literacy Lab, it is also used at State and County correctional institutions, the Camden County College's Learning Center, several local adult education divisions, the Camden Housing Authority and several non-profit agencies. There are upwards of seventy (70) licenses throughout Camden County.

Destinations has proven to be a valuable tool in the delivery of literacy services. This program helps individuals prepare for work or school effectively by building on skills they already have and developing higher-level critical thinking processes. This learning structure allows students to advance much more quickly than traditional classroom or tutoring structures. While it has capabilities for self-directed learning, Destinations appears to be most effectively used as a remediation aid within group or individual instructional-based programs. Because the program is self-paced, it assists instructors in providing more individualized learning processes within a larger class. Its sophisticated administrative component provides instructors with detailed information on the student's progress including an ongoing assessment of their literacy levels as well as a log of when a student uses the program and for how long. This level of feedback allows instructors to target their lessons to the areas where students are having the most difficulty.

In evaluating the capacity of the local literacy system, the WIB looked at six (6) categories of literacy services –English as a Second Language, basic skills, GED preparation and adult high schools, learning differences, job readiness and computer literacy. Following is a brief description of what we learned about each.

English as a Second Language: Despite serving more than 1300 individuals over the last year, ESL programs are operating well over capacity and still turning individuals away. It is difficult to accurately identify all ESL providers, as many are small programs running out of local churches. However, we believe the majority of services are provided by seven agencies relying on nine (9) different funding streams.

Camden County's need for ESL service is fueled by its growing immigrant population in need of English language skills. The fact that Camden County College's ESL program enrollments have more than tripled in the last several years is evidence of this growing need. In addition to the increase in demand, local providers are also seeing a decrease in the initial skill level of students and greater diversity within the immigrant population. These changes resulted in a need for both lower level ESL classes and staff development opportunities to learn best practices for teaching this diverse population.

Basic Skills: There is significant demand for basic skills services. Over 1000 individuals received services in the last year. This high level of demand is not surprising given the County's extremely low education attainment levels and low literacy rates. There appear to be an adequate number of training slots available to meet the current demand. While most programs are at capacity, there still remain a few who have some empty seats. Location seems to be the largest factor in whether programs are full. The services available cover the full range of literacy levels. Level one literacy is primarily addressed by Literacy Volunteers of America, the Housing Authority and Jerothia Riggs and their programs typically operate at or close to capacity. The remaining literacy levels are addressed by several agencies, both as stand-alone services as well as integrated into job readiness, work experience and community services and other

employment programs. Continued integration of basic skills into other programs will help to maintain the ability to meet the demand for services.

GED Preparation and Adult High Schools: By and large, GED preparatory programs are stand-alone services offered primarily by five local agencies serving more than 450 individuals. In addition, many basic skills programs, while not directly preparing individuals for the GED, do facilitate individuals in learning much of the material they will need to pass the exam.

There do not appear to be a significant number of adult high school programs in the County. This is not surprising. Such a high drop out rate, particularly in Camden City, suggests that many of the County's residents do not learn well in traditional educational structures.

Learning Differences: It is difficult to assess how prevalent learning differences are in the County. One of the biggest difficulties in evaluating the need for services to individuals with learning differences is the lack of resources to assess for them. Currently, the only local agency equipped to conduct an appropriate assessment is the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Four local agencies identified themselves as equipped to serve individuals with learning difference, but only after, the learning differences have been identified. The majority of these services are provided by Goodwill Industries.

Job Readiness: Job readiness services are by far the most prevalent literacy services within the County. More than 3600 individuals have received services through more than ten different agencies. These services are provided both as a stand-alone program and integrated into other employment services. Many of the individuals receiving this assistance are TANF recipients.

Computer Literacy: Computer literacy services are also prevalent with over 1300 slots filled last year by nine agencies. It should be noted that these agencies indicated that individuals must demonstrate literacy skills at or above level two in order to benefit from the training.

In addition to focusing on these specific service categories, the Planning Team also looked at the staff development needs of the local providers. With such high demand for services and limited resources, many programs rely on part-time staff and volunteers provide services. Thus, many of these individuals have not had significant experience or training on best practices in literacy service delivery methods. Local agencies have provided training opportunities to staff, primarily through conferences and on-the-job training. However, according to a survey conducted by the Literacy Planning Team, local agencies indicate that they can use additional training in computer skills, EFF standards, learning differences, workplace literacy, ESL training and Destinations.

Target Populations and Services

There are many literacy service providers in the County whose programs have significantly raised the literacy levels of Camden County residents. These providers, many of which have

offered services for over ten years, have gained significant knowledge and experience. Thus the greatest challenge facing Camden County is to draw these providers together into a cohesive system of services, building upon each organization's strengths and building capacity in the areas the system is weakest.

In addition to recognizing that significant energy must be placed on coalescing literacy services, the WIB also identified underserved populations and areas of significant need. They are as follows:

- **ESL Services:** There is clearly a high demand for these services, particularly at the lower levels of literacy.
- **Camden City:** Camden City is clearly the most impoverished and least skilled large population center in the County. The WIB will continue its focus on providing services in this geographic area.
- **Learning Differences:** There are very few resources to assist providers in detecting individuals with learning issues such as Dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder. There is equally a large gap in knowledge for how to assist these individuals. Thus, among the greatest needs in Camden County is the establishment of an evaluation and follow-up system for individuals with learning differences and training for organizations on how to accommodate their needs.
- **Adjudicated Individuals:** As part of his plan to address the \$2.9 billion revenue shortfall, Governor McGreevey began to reduce the State's dependence on local jails for housing State prisoners. This caused a \$4.5 million dollar loss in funds for the county correctional facility. As a result, the jail was forced to cut its much needed educational programs, leaving 150 inmates without an avenue to develop their basic skills. Without these educational skills, the inmates will face a greater likelihood of not obtaining meaningful work upon release and many will become dependant on public assistance programs to provide the very skills they could have received while incarcerated.
- **TANF:** Camden County has a significant TANF population, many of whom reside in or around Camden City. This population continues to demonstrate the need to build their literacy skills in order to successfully navigate the labor market. The WIB will continue to place an emphasis on serving these individuals
- **Unemployed:** Camden County has significant pockets of unemployment even in a good economy – again particularly in Camden City. Given the recent downturn in the economy, there are also many dislocated workers who may need assistance. Unemployed individuals will continue that by marketing One Stop literacy services as well as by targeting employers, many of these underemployed workers will receive services.

- **Underemployed:** Poverty levels and low median incomes in several sections of the County indicate that many individuals are under-employed. Low literacy skills are commonly a barrier to advancement. This population will also continue to be a target population. It is anticipated that by targeting employers, many of these underemployed workers will receive services.

In addition to focusing on these target populations and services, literacy providers clearly indicated that recruitment of both residents and employers was a concern. Nationally it is estimated that 10% of those who need ESL services actually access them. Camden County is no different. Other literacy programs face similar issues. GED preparation and adult basic education courses struggle to identify willing participants, despite the obvious need. Many factors contribute to this phenomenon. The most motivated individuals are often working and have little time to devote to a training program. There are also cultural issues as well as a general fear of publicly admitting poor literacy skills. The literacy plan addresses recruitment issues in several ways.

SERVICE STRATEGY

Based on the knowledge gained through this planning process, the WIB, in partnership with the Adult Basic Education Consortium and other local providers have identified six goals to further develop the literacy system in Camden County. These goals are:

- Facilitate the development of a comprehensive literacy system to respond to the needs of the local community;
- Expand programs and services in the One Stop system;
- Expand programs and services to fill gaps in the literacy system;
- Enhance the literacy system's capacity to address learning differences;
- Provide opportunities for literacy providers to elevate the quality of their services; and
- Expand marketing and outreach efforts.

Numerous strategies were identified to guide the WIB and its partners in achieving each of these goals. (Attachment 1 includes a chart of the goals and strategies with a timeline for completion.) It is understood that these strategies will be implemented with significant assistance and participation of the entire literacy service provider community. Funding to support these initiatives will come from a variety of sources including the Workforce Investment Act, TANF, and Department of Education funds as well as the Supplemental Workforce Funds. (Attachment 4 is a budget to support implementation for the first year's activities.) The Planning

Committee will serve as the Literacy Committee and will be the primary vehicle for coordinating and leading local providers in these efforts.

Goal #1: Facilitate the development of a comprehensive literacy system to respond to the needs of the local community.

The WIB recognizes and fully embraces its role as a facilitator and convener of local agencies to address specific workforce needs. This role will be critical to achieving a comprehensive literacy system. The WIB intends to do this through three primary areas of focus – joint planning, establishing a framework for coordination and integration, and establishing standards.

The WIB's Planning Committee will be the primary vehicle for coordinating and leading local providers in the implementation and oversight of this Adult Literacy Plan. As such, it will play a critical role in the facilitation of joint planning. To assist with joint planning efforts the WIB will ensure that there is cross-representation and input among the primary literacy providers within the County. For example, the Planning Committee will include members of the primary literacy providers, including members of the Adult Basic Education Consortium. An update on Consortium activities will be a reoccurring agenda item. It is anticipated that the Planning Committee will be a valuable forum for the Consortium to seek input and participation in the development of its annual Adult Basic Education grant application.

In addition, a WIB member or One Stop Partner who is also a member of the Planning Committee will serve on the Board of the Literacy Volunteers of America. Likewise, a representative of the Literacy Volunteers of America will remain a consistent member of the Planning Committee.

Early on in the planning process there was consensus among providers that EFF standards should be formally adopted for Camden County's literacy system. In addition to adopting EFF as an overarching set of standards, the Planning Committee will also develop standards for specific services such as job readiness programs and workplace literacy programs. These will be based on EFF as well as validated and benchmarked to employer standards. The WIB is choosing not to adopt specific performance standards until after the State releases its standards. For each set of standards adopted, the Planning Committee will devise a process to measure how successfully the County reaches these standards.

Through the development of this plan - and the cross-representation across planning bodies as well as the State established standards - the WIB and its Planning Committee can negotiate more substantial agreements between agencies. In fact, several of these agreements have begun to take form as a direct result of this planning process. For example, when the WIB identified the loss of education funds for a local correctional facility, they brought the Camden County College, the Camden County Improvement Authority, the Camden County Resource Center and the Camden County Correctional Facility together to establish a supplemental program for inmates. It is anticipated that the local parole office will also join this partnership to

support the educational efforts as participants transition back into the community. Funding has been secured and formal agreements are currently under development.

However, a system of literacy services must be built upon more than a series of isolated agreements, standards and joint planning. There must also be agreement on a central element that draws these agencies together in a practical way – one that facilitates day-to-day communication, and coordination and serves as an infrastructure to the system. Local literacy providers have identified Destinations software to serve this purpose.

Currently, twelve local providers use Destinations, including the four core literacy providers and several of the Adult Basic Education Consortium members. In addition to providing organizations with an effective literacy instruction tool, Destinations also has a sophisticated administrative and reporting system. It offers detailed information on the student's progress including an ongoing assessment of their literacy levels as well as a log of when a student uses the program and for how long. This extensive reporting provides local organizations with comparable assessment information, a common framework for communication and the ability to track services provided. Destinations is used by over 7000 schools and universities as well as several large corporations and departments of the federal government.

Destinations' administrative component will also provide the Planning Committee with a consistent and objective method for evaluating the effectiveness of programs and how successfully the County reaches these standards. The WIB intends to incorporate this framework into the setting of its standards.

In addition to establishing Destinations as the common platform for the local literacy system, the One Stop will implement a referral system for customers moving in and out of the One Stop. It is anticipated that this will serve as the prototype for a system wide referral process that supports the sharing of information and ease of access as well as reduces duplication of efforts.

Goal #2: Expand programs and services in the One Stop.

The expansion of Literacy in the One Stop will build upon the Resource Center's successful Workplace Literacy Lab model. Currently, this program is conducted out of one classroom with fifteen (15) stations and is supported by TANF and WIA funds. The limited space and eligibility restricts the number and type of individuals who can receive the services. Therefore, the WIB is supporting the expansion of the existing Workplace Literacy Lab to a second classroom of fifteen (15) stations to accommodate additional literacy training as well as a third lab for computer literacy training. In addition, a literacy-focused public access area will be established for any Camden County resident demonstrating a need for literacy services. The Labs and the public access area will also be made available to local literacy service providers who do not have Destinations and/or Rosetta Stone. It is anticipated that these additional resources will support the already existing agreement between the Literacy Volunteers of America and the

Resources Center as well as provide an opportunity to enter into similar agreements with other agencies.

The second Workplace Literacy Lab will have the same resources as the existing lab. In addition, the third lab will include LearnKey, a self-paced computer literacy software. Destinations upgrades for the new GED will also be installed on the existing lab computers and in Destinations programs in use by other providers. In addition, the WIB will install Rosetta Stone licenses to address the needs of a growing ESL population. Rosetta Stone is a companion program to Destinations that provides self-paced, individualize instruction which is not reliant on translation or memorization for students to learn English.

The literacy-focused public access area will also have many of the same resources as the Literacy Labs. The computers will be equipped with LearnKey, Destinations, Rosetta Stone and LearnScope software. New Jersey Network materials will also be made available.

Staff from the Resource Center funded under WIA and TANF will continue to staff the Literacy Labs. The WIB is requesting two additional staff assigned by Workforce New Jersey (WFNJ) to be assigned to the public access area and to support the Literacy Labs. WFNJ staff will be provided work stations at the Resource Center (located adjacent to the One Stop and WFNJ offices) and will work in concert with Resource Center staff to deliver the Workplace Literacy services. A Memorandum of Understanding will be signed between WFNJ, the Resource Center and the WIB outlining the operating protocols for delivering these services. The Resource Center will continue to have overall responsibility for directing the program.

The Camden County One Stop is also interested in becoming one of the State's five One Stop sites to host a GED assessment and testing center. Currently, there are two programs on-site that prepare an individual for the GED test. The Workplace Literacy Lab and Camden County College's Adult Basic Skills program both use Destinations, which has a GED preparation component for the 2000 version. Participants in these programs would benefit greatly from easy access to GED assessment and testing, particularly with the implementation of GED 2000. In addition, many of the One Stop Center customers participating in other intensive programs will also benefit from this initial assessment. The assessment will help them and their counselors to have realistic expectations regarding the time and effort that will be required to obtain a GED, the best GED preparation program to attend and how this training will be incorporated into their employment plans. Finally, the One Stop is easily accessible, particularly from the pockets of the county that have the highest high school drop out rates.

Goal #3: Expand programs and services to fill gaps in the literacy system.

In addition to expanding the capabilities of the One Stop, the WIB is also focusing energies on the additional areas – English as a Second Language, the prison population and expanding Destinations into the community.

With the establishment of Destinations as the common platform for the local literacy system, it became necessary to ensure that a significant number of local literacy providers had access to the software. While more than 100 licenses are currently installed throughout the County, there are many providers without access to this program. Therefore, in addition to providing access through the One Stop Center, the WIB purchased sixty (60) additional licenses to be distributed throughout the community. The Literacy providers agreed that the licenses should be awarded through a competitive process and require that the awardees sign a Memorandum of Understanding that articulates adherence to the local standards and the use of Destinations as both a training tool and a coordination and communication tool.

The WIB also identified several strategies to expand English as a Second Language (ESL) services. As discussed under the needs analysis, Camden County has a growing immigrant population in need of English language skills. Many immigrants are now demonstrating significantly lower skill levels than in the past. This decrease in skills, coupled with the growth in diversity among immigrant populations, has resulted in a need for both lower level ESL classes and staff development opportunities to learn best practices for teaching this diverse population.

Therefore, the Camden County WIB has begun the development of an additional ESL course, which combines ESL with job readiness and placement services. It is a collaborative effort between the Camden County College, the Camden County Improvement Authority and the Camden County Resource Center. These services will be target to forty (40) individuals residing in or around Camden City. It will incorporate the use of Destinations and Rosetta Stone.

In addition to addressing the growing percentage of individuals demonstrating lower than average English skills, the plan includes a pilot project to develop and implement a model level 1 literacy program. The program's curriculum will also be built using Destinations and Rosetta Stone as the primary vehicle for training. This program will be an open entry/open exit course for approximately fifteen hours per week. It will serve forty (40) individuals for up to one year each. Depending on demand, the course may be offered in the evenings and on weekends. It will be offered in Camden City where the majority of individuals requiring this service reside.

Finally, the WIB is focusing resources on the local prison population. The Camden County WIB convened the Camden County Community College, the Camden County Improvement Authority, the Camden County Resource Center and the Camden County Correctional Facility to address the problem. Together they constructed a program that builds off the jail's existing educational infrastructure to offer basic skills, job readiness, life skills and access to occupational training to forty (40) inmates. Destinations and Rosetta Stone licenses will be installed to support the basic skills training. In addition, the WIB and the program partners are beginning discussion with the local parole office to support the educational efforts as participants transition back into the community.

Goal #4: Enhance the literacy system's capacity to address learning differences.

The Camden County WIB has long recognized that there is a compelling need to address the issues that frequently hamper the ability of individuals with learning differences to learn and succeed in the workplace. The WIB also recognizes that while learning differences frequently go uncovered, and there are few statistics available to diagnose the extent of the problem, it is very likely that this is a significant issue requiring attention in Camden County.

It is commonly known that there is a correlation between low literacy levels and learning differences. Experts estimate that up to 70% of those in literacy programs have some sort of learning issue. With the staggering numbers of individuals in Camden City over age 25 who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent (50%), and an adult population functioning at the lowest levels of literacy (49%), it is indefensible not to tackle the challenges associated with assisting individuals with learning differences.

The immense need to address this issue is exacerbated by the limitations of traditional funding streams in providing resources to do so. The Supplemental Literacy Funds is providing the WIB its first opportunity to fully develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to address this significant issue.

The Literacy Core Planning Team identified the need for creating an assessment center at the One Stop targeted to individuals with learning differences. The Center is designed to be a resource for all literacy providers to refer students for testing. Once tested, an individualized learning plan will be prepared that will communicate to the literacy instructor a plethora of important information including assessments of the type of learning disabilities, literacy levels, speech and language functions, reasoning and problem solving skills, memory functions, and attention and concentration skills. Accompanying this plan will be a set of recommendations relative to learning style needs, preferences, and strengths of the student. Literacy instructors will be trained on various teaching styles and how to accommodate individuals with learning differences.

Camden County College will take the lead in managing the services of the assessment center in cooperation with the Resource Center and One Stop Partners. This will be a natural outgrowth of their existing program known as "The Program for the Academically Challenged Student (PACS), which has been in existence since 1988 and has facilitated individualized learning plans for hundreds of students.

A companion strategy is to provide support to Camden County College's Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Camden County College is a comprehensive regional center that has been serving students who are deaf and hard of hearing from New Jersey and surrounding states since 1988. Over three hundred (300) deaf and hard of hearing students have enrolled in

college certificate and degree programs since the Center's inception. Each semester the Center serves approximately sixty (60) students who are deaf and hard of hearing. The WIB is also providing this college program with Rosetta Stone, a computer-based ESL instructional program.

Future Areas of Emphasis:

Recognizing that creating an assessment center is a long term goal, the Literacy Planning Committee will be charged with the responsibility of gradually phasing in components. The first step will be to develop an initial assessment protocol. Indicator tests for learning disabilities are available, however, to the best of the literacy community's knowledge, these are not actively in use in Camden County. Furthermore, it appears that only DVR and the public education system administers tests to determine learning disabilities and in both instances, these generally occur only for those individuals with obvious and substantial barriers -- well beyond the need to improve literacy skills. It should be noted that Camden County College, like many agencies who serve individuals with learning differences, requires its students that are requesting accommodations to provide to the college a comprehensive psycho-educational test battery administered within the last three years and an Individualized Education Plan. Thus, there is a heightened need to develop an assessment protocol that addresses the limitations and unnecessary barriers now plaguing thousands of Camden City residents.

Following the development of an assessment protocol will be the development of a case management protocol that adequately supports the creation of learning and career plans. The case management plan will articulate strategies for teaching a particular student. Intensive training programs for instructors on teaching styles will be developed to further support the implementation of these plans. The case management protocol will also ensure that the individual learning plan is forwarded to any agencies working with the individual and that it is competently written so that instructors and literacy provider staff can appropriately apply the information in their literacy instruction and tutoring. The student will continue to receive support for an extended period of time.

Goal #5: Provide opportunities for literacy providers to elevate the quality of their services.

The Camden County WIB is dedicated to raising the quality of services through two methods – establishing standards and equipping of local providers. The WIB has identified three areas in which it will focus its efforts to equip local providers: developing best practices for Destinations and Rosetta Stone, developing best practices for assessment, and staff Development.

The WIB recognizes that with its emphasis on using Destinations and Rosetta Stone software comes the responsibility of assisting local providers in integrating the program into their current curricula. Thus, the WIB is sponsoring the development of a model curriculum for basic skills,

which incorporates the use of Destinations. A similar curriculum will also be developed for using Rosetta Stone and English as a Second Language programs. Once these curricula are developed, the WIB will sponsor local training on how to implement them as well as training on implementing a workplace literacy model similar to the Resource Center's Workplace Literacy Labs.

Similarly, the WIB will also sponsor the development of assessment protocols for both the One Stop and the literacy system as a whole. Currently, the assessment process is somewhat disparate. The One Stop Center is in the process of developing its assessment protocol. This protocol will call for a graduated continuum of assessments beginning with CASAS during Core Services and continuing through Intensive Services. Assessments used in Intensive services include the TABE, CareerScope, and the Employment Inventory. Assessment provided by Literacy providers currently not directly involved in the One Stop varies from agency to agency. The Adult Basic Education Consortium has begun to coordinate their assessment processes, particularly around ESL services offered at the Jerrothia Riggs Center. The Consortium members use the TABE and Michigan Placement Test, among others.

This protocol for the literacy system will build upon existing assessment tools with the goal of developing an integrated approach. CASAS will be required for all providers and they will be able to conduct the assessment through the One Stop. Other Assessment tools used by local providers will be profiled to identify where different assessments offer the same information, thereby encouraging agencies to agree to accept each others assessments to avoid duplication. Destinations will also play a significant role in the new assessment protocol because of the courseware's ability to provide continuous assessment on various literacy components. Once the assessment protocol is in place, a longer-term strategy will be to assess how effectively the assessment tools are functioning, particularly in relationship to long term success in the workplace.

In addition to the protocols, a companion Best Practices guide will also be written. The WIB envisions these protocols and this guide to be introduced and distributed to the literacy community at a county-wide assessment conference. Information on the protocol for assessment for learning differences and related work will also be presented.

Finally, the WIB will sponsor a series of Staff Development training sessions on topics such as using Destinations and Rosetta Stone, integrating EFF standards, and the new GED test. The training will be provided primarily through a small group of skilled teachers who will incorporate EFF standards into all training activities. To evaluate whether the assessment tools are having a positive impact on the quality of literacy services, a more comprehensive evaluation will be developed for instructors and volunteers.

Goal #6: Expand marketing and outreach efforts.

Clearly one of the biggest needs in Camden County is a comprehensive marketing and outreach strategy that promotes the services of the One Stop. Many local residents miss out on the opportunity to increase their skills and thus their opportunities for advancement simply because they do not know the opportunities available to them. As such, the WIB is committed to developing a marketing campaign to both employers and individual residents.

As part of this campaign, the Chamber of Commerce will serve as a promotional arm to disseminate information to employers about workplace literacy services. In addition, this marketing campaign will extend into the school with the goal of promoting the integration of workplace literacy and EFF standards. The marketing efforts of the County's economic development agency and the College's employer training services division will also be incorporated and enhanced.

In the meantime, the WIB requested in its initial funding request and received confirmation that a Workforce New Jersey staff member will be assigned to the Camden County One Stop to coordinate recruitment activities. These activities will focus on individual residents. Additionally, the WIB will continue to support the marketing efforts of the County's economic development agency and the College's employer training services division.

SUPPLEMENTAL WORKFORCE FUNDS FOR BASIC SKILLS

ADULT LITERACY PLAN - INITIAL FUNDING REQUEST & BUDGET

In February 2002, the Camden County WIB submitted an initial request for Supplemental Workforce Funds. (Attachment 5) This request focused on six areas of priority:

- Expanding existing One-Stop Workplace Literacy services to the entire community.
- Expanding ESL services for individuals with pre-Level 1 Literacy.
- Support the local prison education system.
- Increase recruitment efforts, particularly for ESL services.
- Enhance youth development opportunities through Internet accessible literacy training.
- Implement a GED testing Center.

Because Camden County had unspent WIA 2001 funds, the State notified the WIB that Supplemental Workforce Funds would not be allocated to the County and directed us to use these WIA funds to support the initial literacy plan activities. This change in funding required a restructuring of the plan to support program providers in achieving the WIA performance

requirements. The ESL and Prison programs were restructured to work with individuals much closer to being job ready and the youth development program was eliminated. The State did indicate that it would support the implementation of increased recruitment efforts and GED Testing site in the near future. These strategies are all included as part of this Adult Literacy Plan and related costs are reflected in the attached budget.

The WIB has moved forward in purchasing the equipment necessary to add a second Workplace Literacy Lab and is pleased with the progress made to date. During the renovation of the Resource Center's newly acquired space, we were able to include a third area in the Resource Center facility that is well suited to individuals able to access literacy resources with minimal assistance. Planning has begun to implement the ESL and prison program. We are awaiting confirmation from the State regarding recruitment efforts and the GED testing site.

ADDITIONAL SUPPLEMENTAL WORKFORCE FUNDS REQUEST & BUDGET

The attached budget describes, in detail, the funding being requested to support the first year of strategies identified in this Adult Literacy Plan. Because the majority of One Stop related expenses were handled through WIA funds, the WIB is only asking for staff support and Workplace Literacy Lab materials out of the 24% funds. The remaining activities are budgeted under 28% funds.

ACCESSING 38% FUNDS

A detail description of the Camden County College's sophisticated and successful Customized Job Training program was provided under the Employer Needs section of this plan. As noted, Literacy training – both ESL and basic skills are among the most requested training programs. There is also a significant demand for team building, work success skills and leadership training, all of which fall within EFF's expanded definition of literacy. In particular, manufacturing, health care and customer service-based operations are demonstrating a great need for literacy training. The College expects the increase in Literacy training funds and the recent changes to the regulations around providing literacy training will open up the opportunity to provide many local employers much need training that they otherwise could not afford. The College has already begun to compile a list of employers who have demonstrated a need for these services in the past. They demonstrates an unlimited capacity to expand the level of services to employers so long as these businesses can secure funds to support staff training.

The College employs a targeted marketing approach to reaching out to employers, using brochures and personal contacts. A significant portion of the employers receiving services are a direct result of the College's relationship with the County's economic development department – the Camden County Improvement Authority. In Camden County, economic development and customized job training for employers are closely linked. About five years ago, the Camden County Improvement Authority and the Camden County College joined forces to offer employer-based training to local companies and as an incentive to companies moving into the area. As

the CCIA identifies a company who needs these services or who they want to offer these services to, they have the College either contact the employer directly or set up a joint meeting. It is anticipated that this partnership will continue to be a critical avenue for identifying and recommending businesses for Customized Job Training grants. In addition, the WIB will continue to support this partnership as it works with the CCIA, the College and the Partners to enhance, coordinate and market business services offered through the One Stop system. Priority will be placed on reaching and serving industries with demand occupations and high growth projections.

CONCLUSION

The Camden County Workforce Investment Board is clear that its Literacy Strategic Plan has constructed an ambitious agenda for the entire Literacy community in Camden County. However, the WIB firmly believes that the goals and strategies laid out in this plan must be implemented if Camden County is to achieve its goal of creating a continuum of education and learning for its residents.

As discussed earlier in this report, the findings from the State's *Preliminary Report on the Adult Literacy Funding and Delivery System* clearly articulate the first round of hurdles that has significant impact on the ability of local WIBs to develop a literacy system. Overseeing twenty-three (23) different programs with varying program, eligibility and administrative requirements is an awesome task, particularly in Camden since many of these programs are administered by a wide number of organizations. The WIB is counting on the State to develop its own action plan to tackle these issues and lessen the impact and strain at the local level.

A second concern is funding. The WIB built this literacy plan with the expectation that there will be, at a minimum, \$500,000 or more annually to support these efforts. While we agreed with the State that it was essential to spend 2001 WIA funds for the initial literacy plan, we are fully cognizant that the limitations and performance standards of WIA are unrealistic if we are to address high risk populations, lower levels of literacy, non-WIA populations, capacity building and services to the learning disabled. As our attached budget indicates, the WIB is prepared to spend \$750,000 in just this first year.

A third major challenge is integrating EFF standards in all curricula. While Destinations clearly gives literacy providers the ability to integrate Destinations into their curricula, there still remains a number of literacy instructors unconvinced that technology is a valuable asset in the classroom or that workplace literacy deserves to be a high priority. The WIB is prepared to address these challenges during its training and capacity building as well as through its oversight responsibilities. However, we are equally hopeful that the SETC and its partners -- the NJ Department of Education, NJ Department of Labor, NJ Department of Welfare and others -- will make this a priority in their funding and program development strategies.

In summary, the WIB is firmly convinced that Camden County, its literacy community and the stakeholders are prepared to implement this plan. The Progress Report contained in our Strategic Plan update demonstrates that Camden County has made significant progress over the last two years. We significantly improved the operations in our One Stop Center, initiated a number of quality initiatives that are having lasting and positive effects in the provider community and successfully implemented one of the state's ten workplace literacy labs -- all of which gives testament to the fact that Camden County, given adequate resources and time, is up to the challenge.

Attachment 1

Adult Literacy Plan Strategies Chart

Attachment 1

Adult Literacy Plan Strategies Chart

Attachment 2

Inventory of Services

Attachment 3

Adult Literacy Plan Budget

Attachment 4

Needs Assessment

Attachment 5

Initial Funding Request



Section V:

Appendices

Appendix A

Memorandum of Understanding

Between

The WIB and LEO

Appendix B

Memorandum of Understanding

Between

***The WIB, One Stop Partner, Fiscal
Agent,
One Stop Operator***

Appendix C

Customer Bill of Rights

Appendix D

Resource Chart