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## Executive Memorandum

**To:** Jessica Sotelo, Executive Director, Partners for Prosperity  
**From:** Judy McClanahan, Community Development Specialist, Partners for Prosperity  
**Date:** February 11, 2006  
**Re:** Adult Education and Training Working Group

The Adult Education & Training Working Group (AETWG) has been actively emphasizing the importance of education for adults who want to get a General Education Diploma (GED) and get a job or get a better paying job. A background of basic knowledge is indispensable for active participation in our region's social, economic, and cultural life. For these reasons, the mission of the Partners for Prosperity Adult Education & Training Working Group is to identify gaps in education for adults and move closer to eradicating illiteracy and by so doing, combat poverty and exclusion.

One of the goals of our Working Group is to establish relationships and build partnerships with other groups, organizations, and community members who are interested in adult education. One of the ways we are able to do that is by funding initiatives in our region that will help adults receive the education and training they need to realize greater independence and economic well-being. The group has recently voted to fund GED scholarships for students in the LEQ at Eastern Idaho Technical College in Idaho Falls, and Idaho State University in Pocatello. The group also funded a Financial Literacy Partnership initiative with a goal of implementing basic money management education and understanding throughout Custer and Lemhi counties.

By the end of FY06 three more adult education funding requests will be voted on. Two, if approved, will provide basic computer classes for adults in transition and/or in the lowest economic quartile in our region. One project will partner the working group with Idaho State University Adult Basic Education Department and the second, with Oneida County Community Education through School District 351. Another request is expected from Teton County for a financial literacy initiative.

Partnering with Idaho State University College of Technology's Adult Basic Education Department, the Idaho Women, Infants and Children (WIC Program) and the University of Idaho Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), twelve people will participate in a Service Learning project in March. The project is designed to help low-income families acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and changed behavior necessary to purchase and prepare nutritionally sound meals.

The working group boasts 34 active members. Idaho State University, Eastern Idaho Technical College, Idaho Department of Commerce and Labor, Department of Transportation, Idaho Migrant Council, ICAN, Experienced Workers, Fort Hall TANF, SICOG, various hospitals and community members representing the LEQ are active in the group. The Adult Education & Training Working Group was the first working group to solicit membership in absentia. Because the P4P region extends over 300 miles north to south, in absentia membership makes sense. Members attend monthly meetings from Bannock,



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Bingham, Caribou, Bonneville and Power counties, and in absentia members keep in touch with contributions from Bear Lake, Caribou, Oneida, Bannock, Lemhi, Custer, Teton, Madison, Jefferson and Franklin counties.

Two important conferences that members of the working group attend yearly are the Idaho Lifelong Learning Association (ILLA) conference in Sun Valley, Idaho, and the Mountain Plains Adult Education Association (MPAEA) conference that was in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in 2005. Working group members came away with so many excellent ideas that have since been implemented.

The General Education Department at ISU received grant funding (not from the working group) for a new transitions course designed for people who recently received their GEDs and want to further their education by attending college. This one credit course that began last fall, is held four hours a day, one day a week. Students complete the process of applying for college while learning techniques to be successful students. Cheryl Keenan, Director of the U.S. Department of Education's Division of Adult Education and Literacy presented information from national studies showing the areas where ABE students need to focus to get their GEDs and enter post-secondary training to qualify for employment that will provide a living wage. This presentation helped one instructor refine her classes to include the desired competencies.

Pauleen Stephenson and Gloria Worthington presented *A Template for Writing Success* that provided one member an INVALUABLE template for teaching essay-writing skills. She has used this in all of her English classes for GED and college bound students. The feedback from students has been that the template is easy to understand and to use in their writing assignments. This one session had an overwhelming impact on her instruction. National Reporting System (NRS) Accountability is Minnesota's approach to accountability. This session provided another instructor useful information on the NRS through which some ABE programs are funded. She was able to take back successful practices from different states and share how to provide better services for the funding they receive. *Don't Let Them Dropout Again* was a session that provided help with student retention, a national problem in ABE. It provided results from national studies indicating how to improve the probability that a student will remain in school.

The Adult Education and Training Working Group provided partial funding for members to attend these conferences. The conferences provided information and ideas that will be utilized on a daily basis.

Last fall, the Adult Education & Training Community Website became a reality. Links provide access to area partners on the working group and in our region. Adult Education and Training resources in the P4P region are also available to the public from the website.

P4P licenses to access the Foundation Center have been utilized by a number of working group members in the Pocatello office.



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Plans are being made by working group members to have a table at the P4P annual Multicultural Festival in May. The educational exhibit will serve as a resource and emphasize cultural awareness for families across the region.

The actions undertaken by our Working Group to combat poverty and social exclusion can have lasting effects only if people enhance and update their competencies, especially when their basic education is lacking. From this perspective, lifelong learning is of strategic importance for our region. The new individual and collective challenges that adults face in our society and the changes that are currently taking place demand immediate and energetic action. The globalization of markets, the speed and ease of communications, the rapid pace of change in knowledge and technology, the accelerated rate of social change, the need for job market retention or reentry, and the increasing complexity of social life are all factors requiring adults to have adequate basic education and to update their competencies in order to adapt.