



# LITERACY UPDATE

JANUARY 08

Vol. 17 No. 3

Literacy Assistance Center

## IN THIS ISSUE

3 Managing Multiple Funding Streams 4 The Outcomes-Based Approach to Management  
6 & 7 Professional Development Opportunities 9 Budgeting 101  
10 Small Victories 12 My Name Is Hadiatou Bah

## A Search for Simplicity and Clarity

*The world of funding is changing. It's no longer enough for an organization to be dynamic and committed to worthwhile goals. Both public and private funders want to see proposals that articulate clearly defined and measurable results. Unlike government agencies, however, foundations typically ask applicants to choose their own projects and propose their own outcomes. To clarify how this might work in practice, we asked two representatives of the Altman Foundation, a major funder of programs that serve vulnerable populations in New York City, to discuss how their approach to proposals is evolving.*

—The editors

> **Karen Rosa** Vice President and Executive Director, Altman Foundation  
and **Megan McAllister** Program Consultant, Altman Foundation

### 1. *The Altman Foundation recently piloted a standard proposal form. Why was this done?*

In 2001 the Altman Foundation went through a strategic planning process. One conclusion we reached was that we needed a way of assessing all of our grants that could tell us more about the results our grantees are achieving and the common challenges they are facing. In the past, we had allowed our applicants to submit grant requests on the Common Application form or in any other format they wished. While we've funded a lot of great work that way, we have had difficulty evaluating our overall portfolio

and impact, because we haven't asked grantees to define and report on results in a consistent manner.

After looking at many different models, we decided that the approach developed by the Rensselaerville Institute in Albany made a lot of sense for us. It isn't overly labor-intensive or purely quantitative—important considerations for a foundation like ours that has a relatively small staff and a large and diverse grant portfolio. At the same time, the Rensselaerville model is straightforward and starts with where people are. Most foundations are heading down

this outcome-focused road, though at differing paces—and often with different standards and reporting requirements, which we realize can create difficulties for nonprofits.

Our new results-based approach is still a work in progress. Recently we piloted a uniform application format with twelve of our grantees and then solicited their comments. Asked what they liked best about it, every program but one cited the focus on results rather than activities. We think that was an honest response because we

*continued on page 8*

# The End

> Elyse Barbell *Executive Director*

Perhaps “The End” seems an odd title for my first musings of the New Year, but it is an appropriate way to introduce the current issue of the *Update*. On these pages you will find a number of articles and information pieces that discuss the new world of adult literacy funding—a world in which funders want to know how your projects will end before they even begin.

In addition to publishing this special issue devoted to funding and administrative topics, the LAC will offer a number of leadership development opportunities throughout the rest of the winter and into the spring designed to help seasoned program managers improve their grant-seeking skills. A workshop on January 30 devoted to grant writing for private and public offerings will focus on the importance of predicting outcomes and then achieving them. Subsequent workshops will provide opportunities to learn how to use the Foundation Center, how to obtain and make the most of a site visit by a foundation, and how to build long-term, sustaining relationships with foundations and other current or potential funders. This emphasis on funding represents a departure for the LAC, but one that we feel is essential to our mission of supporting and promoting literacy services for adults and youth.

Many of us who have become administrators after years of field work find the need to acquire fundraising skills exasperating. Isn't it enough to have to manage the data, run and staff the program, maintain a high quality of instruction, and make payroll? The answer in these times is... No, unfortunately. These days, reliance on one or two funding streams could have devastating consequences, impeding your ability to build and maintain a wonderful program, no matter how great the instruction is. Worse yet, complacency could put your program's survival in jeopardy. Not only is public funding insufficient to meet the need, it is declining. The competition for fewer dollars is fierce, and excellent, well-established programs have already lost critical funding—sometimes, outrageously, for reasons that no one can understand.

We would like to believe that helping our entire adult literacy community better articulate outcomes will accomplish more than promoting a higher level of competition for a shrinking pool of funds. Showing what our work can achieve in ways that public funders, private funders, and the public at large can understand could be a powerful argument that additional funding for our community is a worthwhile investment in this country's future. Yes, it's sad that the needs of this society's lowest-income populations, their lack of jobs, health care, cultural opportunities, proficiency in English, and skills to ensure that their children reach their full potential in school are not compelling enough reasons to provide adequate classroom space. Or that people who are somehow able to squeeze in time to learn between long working hours and exhausting home responsibilities have to be turned away. But that's the world we live in.

We invite you to participate, share your strategies, learn new ones, explore the variety of opportunities that are all around us, and maybe discover some that no one else has found. It could be a new beginning.... ●



## LITERACY UPDATE

Copyright ©2008 by the  
Literacy Assistance Center, Inc.

All rights reserved.

For permission to reprint any portion  
of this newsletter, please contact  
the Director of Communications  
at jons@lacnyc.org  
or 212.803.3332.

Editors Jon Steinberg and Doug Watson



### Board of Directors

Karen M. Proctor, *Chair*  
*Scholastic, Inc.*

Elizabeth Horton, *Vice-Chair*  
*National Council for Research on Women*

Elyse Barbell (Ex-Officio)  
*Literacy Assistance Center*

David C. Bloomfield  
*Brooklyn College School of Education*

Suzanne C. Carothers  
*New York University*

Jacqueline Cook  
*Consultant*

Matthew Goldstein (Ex-Officio)  
*The City University of New York*

Pamela M. Haas  
*IBM*

Michael Hirschhorn  
*Coro New York Leadership Center*

Joel Klein (Ex-Officio)  
*New York City Department of Education*

Linda Lam  
*Ernst & Young*

Paul LeClerc (Ex-Officio)  
*New York Public Library*

Christy Porter  
*ABM*

Amina Rachman  
*United Federation of Teachers*

Marian Schwarz  
*Adult Literacy Media Alliance*

Paul Stanley  
*Courier Companies, Inc./  
Bookbinders' Guild of New York*

Paul H. Zumbro  
*Cravath, Swaine & Moore*

Funding for the LAC is provided by  
the New York State Education Department  
and a wide range of philanthropic  
foundations, corporations, and individuals.

## Managing Multiple Funding Streams

> Linda Avitabile *Director of Education and Training, Highbridge Community Life Center*  
and John Lyons *Director of Adult Education, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation*

In a perfect world, we would all get all the funding we required to meet our communities' needs. Not only that, we'd get it all from one source, with one set of requirements, and record it in one database. But as anyone who rides a rush-hour subway knows, this isn't a perfect world. As tempting as it is to believe that multiple grants were created to drive us crazy, the truth is that each was developed in response to different needs and therefore comes with its own requirements. Additionally, funding streams change constantly. Having multiple funding sources provides the best chance of maintaining overall program stability for our students and staff. Isn't achieving that level of security worth a few gray hairs?

"I wish a few gray hairs were all it's cost me," many program managers reading this are probably murmuring. Relying on multiple funders creates multiple challenges. Each of them expects something different from you and your program. One wants you to count the number of student hours. Another asks for a report on how many students got jobs. How can you manage it all? Unfortunately, there is no perfect solution that every program can apply. But, after all, one of the reasons that we've chosen not to work in corporate America is that we don't subscribe to the cookie-cutter model of problem solving. The two of us approach the management of multiple funding streams from different angles; we haven't discovered any universal solutions. We have, however, independently come to many of the same conclusions on tactics that work. Here are a few you might find helpful:

*Put your vision first.* Although we manage multiple funding streams differently, our programs, Highbridge Community Life Center (HCLC) and Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC), start from the same place: knowing what the community needs and what services should be provided to meet those needs. If you start from a vision of what your program is and where you want it to go, you can more easily identify how different actual and potential funding sources can help you get there. In other words, focus on your program and recognize that funding streams, despite their importance, are a means to an end, not the end itself.

*Use spreadsheets.* When managing multiple contracts, spreadsheets are your friends. A master spreadsheet should list every funding source, then track which salaries and classes are funded by each. This shows you how the pieces fit together and, when necessary, how you can reallocate funding quickly and easily. You also need a spreadsheet for each contract, listing its requirements, goals, and the students enrolled, so that you can track progress. And, of course, you should have yet another for tracking attendance and retention. These spreadsheets are meant to be active. They have to be checked and updated at least quarterly. However, spreadsheets

are there to simplify your life. Don't create one if you are already using a database that can track the same information. Always keep in mind that a spreadsheet or database is only as good as the information that you put into it.

*Promote staff development.* When your program has multiple funding streams, an accurate, well-run system that keeps track of each contract requirement is a necessity, not a luxury. The responsibility for implementing this system lies with your administrative staff. Your students might not know which class is funded by whose dollars, but staff members have to ensure that each student fills out the appropriate forms, is registered in the appropriate class, and entered in the appropriate database. Then, the staff has to start tracking and recording outcomes for each student. Training in data collection, data entry, and record keeping should be accompanied by discussion on why each of these tasks is vital to the health of your program.

**Focus on your program and recognize that funding streams, despite their importance, are a means to an end, not the end itself.**

*Standardize schedules.* Ideally, a student should be able to move from an ESL Level 1 class to an ESL Level 2 class while taking Citizenship and GED in Spanish without ever being aware that these classes may be funded by four separate grants. This is possible when similar classes (ESL, BE, GED, etc.) maintain similar schedules, intensity of instruction, and dates of operation, regardless of funding source. These decisions should be based on what best serves the needs of your learners.

Last year, both of our programs got grants that began in January. This could have created a scheduling conflict, since most of our funding begins in July. The solution was to look at overall program needs and incorporate additional classes promptly.

*Align classes with particular grants.* It's easier to demonstrate success when you are clear about the aims of your funding sources and can match your

*continued on page 11*

# The Outcomes-Based Approach to Management

## A Learner's Perspective

> Be Jensen

“Outcomes” has been a buzzword among adult literacy practitioners at least since 1993, when the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) shifted the focus of government accountability efforts from activities undertaken to results achieved. As the director of an adult literacy program at the time, I had a lot of questions about this reform. How were results to be measured? What impact would the focus on outcomes have on our program's practices and performance, and, ultimately, on our future? Would we remain adult educators or become job developers? I had similar concerns in 1998, when the Workforce Investment Act, Title 2, mandated tracking and verifying target outcomes.

Over the last decade, the trend toward outcomes-based funding has accelerated. So far, individuals and nonprofit donors haven't been setting target outcomes for grantees; however, more and more foundations are asking programs to set their own when they write proposals. Whatever misgivings adult educators have about target outcome funding, most have resigned themselves to the likelihood that it's not going away. Their challenge is how to make the best possible use of this approach.

In October 2007, several LAC colleagues and I got a better idea of how to do that by participating in a two-day “Tracking and Verifying Outcomes” workshop facilitated by Robert Penna, coauthor of *Outcome Frameworks: An Overview for Practitioners*, at the Rensselaerville Institute Center for Outcomes. This was an opportunity to learn from the source. Many public agencies such as the Department of Youth and Community Development use the Rensselaerville model in preparing their RFPs. A growing number of nonprofits, such as the Altman Foundation, have adopted this model as well.

### Inside outcomes

The Rensselaerville Institute describes outcomes thinking as a mindset that changes perception and leads to a solution-driven approach to management. It focuses on well-defined targets (positive changes) and forces managers to carefully assess their capacity, test the validity of any assumptions, clearly identify the resources needed to reach the targets defined, and pave the best path to get there.

Rensselaerville doesn't advocate relying on the outcomes approach exclusively. Instead, it recommends integrating this model with four others common in the nonprofit world. Together, each of them will help create a stronger program, although they all have major drawbacks when used alone, according to the Rensselaerville specialists. The Problem Approach stresses the enormity of the challenge and the barriers to overcoming it. Success is defined in terms of eliminating the problem, which is usually so huge that progress is hard to measure. The Activity Approach focuses on what can be done immediately and who can do it. Rensselaerville argues that this strategy tends to equate activity with results, thus confusing output and outcomes. The Process Approach insists on strict compliance with regulations, policies, guidelines, procedures, and proper

protocol. The danger here, Rensselaerville points out, is that resources and energy will be drained and the staff could lose sight of the project's original purpose. Lastly, the Vision Approach focuses on the big picture, the mission, the “vision.” The theory of change associated with this approach is based on faith, rather than demonstrable cause and effect.

The Rensselaerville Institute recommends that program managers integrate all five approaches by developing a clearly defined *vision* that inspires the staff to tackle a *problem* by setting well-defined, measurable

The Rensselaerville Institute describes outcomes thinking as a mindset that . . . leads to a solution-driven approach to management.

*outcomes* to be attained by way of specific *activities* that could be undertaken as part of a well-designed larger *process*.

### The Rensselaerville model and DYCD

The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) bases its approach to ESOL/Civics on the Rensselaerville model. The *vision* is for immigrants to be more engaged in their adoptive society. The *problems* are the many obstacles they must overcome before they can participate fully. In a program with 100 students, the target *outcomes* at the end of one year might be:

- 50 students will be more proficient in English, as evidenced by their pre- and post-test scores on a standardized test;
- 40 students will demonstrate readiness for an interview with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, as evidenced by their score in a mock interview process;
- 30 students will have taken steps toward becoming a citizen (evidence: completed application, scheduled interview appointment); and
- 15 students will have successfully completed the interview and become U.S. citizens.

Adult learners will achieve these outcomes through participation in a series of activities, for example:

- 100 students will enroll in an ESOL/Civics program;
- 90 students will participate in a pre-assessment and orientation process;

*continued on page 11*

## Call for Nominations for Literacy Recognition Awards

The LAC invites you to join us in celebrating the achievements of the NYC literacy community by nominating outstanding practitioners to be honored at the 23rd annual Literacy Recognition Award Ceremony. The ceremony will take place in late May or June 2008. Each honoree's program will receive a library development grant from the Bookbinders' Guild of New York.

Eligible candidates must be:

- > Administrators, teachers, volunteers, counselors, staff developers, or support staff members;
- > Currently working in a BE, ESOL, Math, BENL, GED, family literacy, health literacy, or related program that serves learners age 16 and over; and
- > An outstanding contributor to the success of their students, their program, and/or the NYC literacy community.

For nomination guidelines and to download a nomination form, visit our website at [www.lacnyc.org](http://www.lacnyc.org). Nominations are due by February 15.

## Call for Student Artwork

The LAC is seeking an outstanding piece of student artwork to serve as the logo for the 2008 and future Literacy Recognition Award materials. We would like a two-dimensional black-and-white or color piece that suggests the power that literacy has to change lives or make connections. The program that submits the artwork we select will be awarded a library development grant from the Bookbinders' Guild of New York. Our submission deadline is February 28. For more information, including submission guidelines, go to [www.lacnyc.org/about/announcements](http://www.lacnyc.org/about/announcements), email [lacpublications@hotmail.com](mailto:lacpublications@hotmail.com), or call 212.803.3332.

## Call for Student Essays

The Literacy Assistance Center would like personal essays from adult education learners for publication in the *LAC Update*. This is a wonderful opportunity for learners to get their work in print in a publication read throughout the literacy community. Essays that have appeared on the back page of the *Update* have been used by teachers to generate class discussions and have inspired many students.

## Make Your Own Comic Strips

At artist Bill Zimmerman's new online educational website, [www.makebeliefscomix.com](http://www.makebeliefscomix.com), ESOL teachers and students can make their own comic strips. The site has attracted more than 100,000 visitors from 150 countries. It is being used in many ESOL and literacy programs to encourage students to write, read, and tell stories. Soon, users will be able to create comics in languages other than English, something a number of educators have requested.

## CONFERENCES

### March

#### 5th Annual WE LEARN Conference on Women & Literacy

March 7–8, 2008, Fordham University at Lincoln Center, Manhattan  
[www.litwomen.org/conference.html](http://www.litwomen.org/conference.html)

#### 17th Annual National Conference on Family Literacy

*Literacy Grows Families and Communities*  
March 29–31, 2008, Louisville, KY  
[www.famlit.org/conference](http://www.famlit.org/conference)

Proposals are now being accepted online for Concurrent Session presenters and Poster Session presenters. For information and guidelines, go to [www.famlit.org/conference](http://www.famlit.org/conference).

### April

#### 42nd Annual New York State TESOL Convention

*Worlds of TESOL: Building Communities of Practice, Inquiry, and Creativity*  
April 2–5, 2008, New York City  
[www.nystesol.org](http://www.nystesol.org)

#### Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) Conference

*Show Me Success: Empowerment through Diversity*  
April 28–May 1, 2008, Saint Louis, MO  
[www.coabeconference.org](http://www.coabeconference.org)

### May

#### NYC Consortium for Adult Basic Education, 29th Annual Conference

*Literacy Across Generations*  
May 3, 2008, Fashion Industries High School, Manhattan

For more information, contact Carolyn Fernando at (212) 243-5458 or [sonofhendrick@yahoo.com](mailto:sonofhendrick@yahoo.com).

#### 57th Annual New York Association for Continuing/Community Education (NYACCE) Conference

*Promoting People, Programs, and Partnerships*  
May 4–6, 2008, Albany  
[www.nyacce.org](http://www.nyacce.org)

#### International Reading Association, 53rd Annual Convention

*Engaging Learners in Literacy*  
May 4–8, 2008, Atlanta, Georgia  
[www.reading.org/association/meetings/annual\\_program.html](http://www.reading.org/association/meetings/annual_program.html)

# CALENDAR of events >>

## Jan. 7

### **NRS Data Reporting & ITAP Lessons**

Monday, January 7, 9:30 am–4:30 pm

**Facilitator:** Rosemary Matt

NYSED has extended, until January 31, 2008, the period within which programs can review and adjust their 2006–7 NRS data. To capitalize on this opportunity the LAC/NYC RAEN will offer an interactive workshop on NRS Data Reporting and Individual Technical Assistance Program (ITAP) Lessons. The workshop will focus on successful strategies for collecting, recording, and reporting data so that programs' 2006–7 reports will more accurately reflect their good work. Lessons learned from ITAP will be shared, along with nuances of NRS reporting. Program managers will find the hands-on activities to be particularly valuable.

**RSVP:** LAC reservation Line at 212.803.3323 or [rsvp@lacnyc.org](mailto:rsvp@lacnyc.org)

staff who will need to enter data in ASISTS must attend this training session in order to receive a username and password for the system.

**RSVP:** ASISTS Support at 212.803.3357 or [asistssupport@lacnyc.org](mailto:asistssupport@lacnyc.org)

## Jan. 18

### **Drama & Storytelling in the ESL Classroom**

Friday, January 18, 1:30–4:30 pm

**Facilitator:** Regina Ress

Drama and storytelling are enjoyable and educationally sound teaching tools. This highly participatory workshop includes a variety of activities that support a creative, communicative ESL classroom. The arts can enhance the practice of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and teach vocabulary, functions, and grammar while encouraging cross-cultural awareness and personal expression. They engage the "whole learner" and the "multiple intelligences" and they make teaching and learning fun!

**RSVP:** LAC reservation Line at 212.803.3323 or [rsvp@lacnyc.org](mailto:rsvp@lacnyc.org)

literacy programs; c) strengthen a program's outreach to parents participating in low-level ESOL classes; d) provide a means of self-expression for language learners; and e) build confidence in language development.

### **Part III: March 25: Health Literacy**

Participants will gain a clearer understanding of: a) health literacy as a health care issue; b) the importance of effective health communication (oral and written); c) key concepts of health literacy; and d) how to integrate health literacy into their existing curriculum.

### **Part IV: April 22: Community & Family Economics**

Participants will look at the financial and economic skills that students need and explore a variety of approaches and strategies that help students acquire them. These will include curricula and content resources and forming partnerships with outside agencies and institutions.

**RSVP:** LAC reservation Line at 212.803.3323 or [rsvp@lacnyc.org](mailto:rsvp@lacnyc.org)

## Jan. 14

### **BEST Plus Test Administrator Training**

Monday, January 14, 9:30 am–4:30 pm

**Facilitator:** Mariann Fedele

Become a certified BEST Plus administrator. Practice administering the print- and computer-based versions of the test and familiarize yourself with the scoring rubric. Participants will receive a test administrator guide and practice CDs.

**RSVP:** LAC reservation Line at 212.803.3323 or [rsvp@lacnyc.org](mailto:rsvp@lacnyc.org)

## Jan. 24, Feb. 26, Mar. 25, & Apr. 22

### **Theme-Based Instruction in Critical Content**

Thursday, January 24, 9:30 am–12:30 pm

Tuesday, February 26, 9:30 am–12:30 pm

Tuesday, March 25, 9:30 am–12:30 pm

Tuesday, April 22, 9:30 am–12:30 pm

**Facilitators:** Barbara Sparks, Be Jensen

This four-part course will help family literacy teachers and others gain experience in developing curricula in critical content areas. They will learn how to use a theme-based approach to developing instruction so that families they work with acquire skills they need to navigate various social systems.

#### **Part I: January 24: Reading Workshop for Parents (FULL/ REGISTRATION CLOSED)**

Participants will learn techniques and strategies for effectively conducting reading workshops for parents who participate in their respective family literacy programs.

#### **Part II: February 26: Arts & Literacy**

Participants will learn how art education can: a) support literacy acquisition; b) enhance instruction for parents and children in family

## Jan. 25, Feb. 8, 22, & 29

### **Adult Literacy Education Core Curriculum (ALECC), Modules 4–7**

Friday, January 25, 1:30–5:00 pm

Friday, February 8, 1:30–5:00 pm

Friday, February 22, 1:30–5:00 pm

Friday, February 29, 8:30 am–12:00 pm

**Facilitator:** Marilyn J. Rymniak

This is the continuation of a new 7-module, 24-hour core knowledge curriculum for adult educators and practitioners new to New York State-funded adult education programs. The workshops explore science-based research, key theories, and best practices. Hands-on resources are provided. Each workshop is open to new as well as continuing participants. As space is limited, please register early.

#### **Module 4: January 25: The Art & Science of Teaching Reading to Adults**

Participants will develop an awareness of the importance of the five major components of reading instruction as well as the importance of vocabulary and learner knowledge.

#### **Module 5: February 8: Teaching English to Adult Speakers of Other Languages**

Participants will develop an awareness of the importance of communicative language teaching (CLT) and the use of contextualized

## Jan. 17

### **ASISTS Training**

Thursday, January 17, 9:30 am–4:00 pm

**Facilitator:** Joanne Springstead

This training introduces users to the Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) web-based data system. Highlights include navigating ASISTS data entry screens; inputting student, class, and instructor information; updating outcomes, tests, and contact hours; and running management and funding reports.

We ask that no more than three people from each program attend any one training. All

**All LAC events take place  
at 32 Broadway, 10th floor.**

language in ESL instruction. Participants will also learn the place of vocabulary development and the use of Strategies Based Instruction (SBI) for successful acquisition of a second language.

**Module 6: February 22: Teaching Numeracy and Quantitative Literacy to Adults**

Participants will become aware of the relevant core concepts and standards in the field. The workshop will focus on the importance of problem solving abilities in mastering practical math skills for adults.

**Module 7: February 29: Indicators of Program Quality**

Participants will understand the importance of adult education in the Regents P-16 Action Plan and will identify the qualities that make a good adult education and literacy program. The workshop will focus on program assessment instruments that have been benchmarked with NYSED's Indicators of Program Quality (IPQs). Participants will develop their own personal professional development plans for the coming year.

**RSVP:** LAC reservation Line at 212.803.3323 or [rsvp@lacnyc.org](mailto:rsvp@lacnyc.org)

**Facilitators:** Barbara Sparks, Be Jensen

This intensive 6-month institute for program managers will include both peer coaching and workshops. For more information, see "What's New" on our website at [www.lacnyc.org](http://www.lacnyc.org).

**RSVP:** LAC reservation Line at 212.803.3323 or [rsvp@lacnyc.org](mailto:rsvp@lacnyc.org)

## Feb. 29

### ESOL Teacher Share

Friday, February 29, 1:30-4:30 pm

**Facilitator:** Winston Lawrence

In this session, ESOL teachers will join their colleagues in exploring and discussing appropriate methods and techniques for the teaching of English Language Learners (ELLs). Teachers will have the opportunity to share promising practices from their own classrooms and receive feedback from colleagues. In addition, teachers will be able to develop a network that they can draw upon for professional advice and support.

**RSVP:** LAC reservation Line at 212.803.3323 or [rsvp@lacnyc.org](mailto:rsvp@lacnyc.org)

## Feb. 15

### ASISTS Training

Friday, February 15, 9:30 am-4:00 pm

**Facilitator:** John Lyons

This training introduces users to the Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) web-based data system. Highlights include navigating ASISTS data entry screens; inputting student, class, and instructor information; updating outcomes, tests, and contact hours; and running management and funding reports.

We ask that no more than three people from each program attend any one training. All staff who will need to enter data in ASISTS must attend this training session in order to receive a username and password for the system.

**RSVP:** ASISTS Support at 212.803.3357 or [asistssupport@lacnyc.org](mailto:asistssupport@lacnyc.org)

## Jan. 25, Feb. 8 & 29

### Teaching Health Literacy

Friday, January 25, 9:00 am-1:00 pm

Friday, February 8, 9:00 am-1:00 pm

Friday, February 29, 9:00 am-1:00 pm

**Facilitators:** Winston Lawrence, Estella Natal

Health literacy is a vital part of adult literacy education. In this foundation series, participants learn a new approach to teaching health literacy. The focus is on identifying the skills needed to navigate the health care system and developing ways to integrate this instruction into the curriculum. Participants develop lesson plans and try them out in their classrooms. Must attend all three sessions.

**RSVP:** LAC reservation Line at 212.803.3323 or [rsvp@lacnyc.org](mailto:rsvp@lacnyc.org)

## Jan. 31, Mar. 4, May 8, & June 5

### Family Literacy Leadership Initiative

Thursday, January 31, 9:30 am-3:30 pm

Tuesday, March 4, 9:30 am-3:30 pm

Thursday, May 8, 9:30 am-3:30 pm

Thursday, June 5, 9:30 am-3:30 pm

## Feb. 19, Mar. 27, Apr. 24, & May 29

### Family Educators' Network

Tuesday, February 19, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

Tuesday, March 27, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

Thursday, April 24, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

Thursday, May 29, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

**Facilitator:** Be Jensen

The LAC will facilitate activities for program managers, teachers, and parent coordinators. Each session will provide opportunities for participating family literacy educators and parent coordinators to develop connections that could benefit their overlapping constituencies.

**RSVP:** LAC reservation Line at 212.803.3323 or [rsvp@lacnyc.org](mailto:rsvp@lacnyc.org)

## LAC Professional Development Center Open Hours

Every Monday, 1-5 pm

### Computer Learning Center

Visit our 16-station Internet-connected computer lab to explore ways to use computers to enhance instruction. Browse the web for sites that lend themselves to your lessons, or build a project that uses common office software to enhance communication skills. For information, contact Mariann Fedele, 212.803.3325 or [mariannf@lacnyc.org](mailto:mariannf@lacnyc.org).

### Dan Rabideau Clearinghouse

Explore the city's largest collection of materials for adult literacy education. The collection of books, journals, and audiovisual materials encompasses professional development materials as well as curriculum and reading materials for ESOL, ABE, and GED learners. For information, contact Dr. Winston Lawrence, 212.803.3326 or [winstonl@lacnyc.org](mailto:winstonl@lacnyc.org).

## A Search for Simplicity and Clarity *continued*

also asked them what they didn't like and got a lot of different answers. Whatever our final format may be, adopting the Rensselaerville approach won't change our goals or the program areas we currently fund. Already, however, it is changing the way we communicate. We're trying to be clearer about the results that we want to invest in achieving and do that in a consistent way.

### *2. What are the principal criteria for making a funding decision? And what would make you consider a proposal from an organization you're not familiar with?*

When we began revising our application format with Hal Williams at the Rensselaerville Institute, one of the first things he asked us was what we were looking for in an organization when we considered its proposal. It became clear that the most important considerations for us are leadership and track record. If we get an interesting proposal from an organization we know nothing about, we try to find people who know their track record. We'll call colleagues. We'll call grantees. We'll ask them, do you know these people? How are they considered in the field? The narrower your focus as a foundation, the more likely you are to know the players or know how to find out about their work.

The proposal is really the beginning of the conversation not the end. Foundations are highly unlikely to fund a proposal without getting to know the leadership and seeing the program in action; however, you can get your foot in the door by writing a strong proposal. At the Altman Foundation, that would be a proposal that is clear, cogent, and not too lengthy—ideally about five or six pages. We do not require a complex logic model or reams of material on every possible benchmark and milestone. We prefer to read a straightforward statement of the results that an organization is trying to achieve for the people it serves, and the key information it will collect and analyze to track progress. Our hope is

One of our concerns is the proliferation of organizations that are doing similar work and possibly not talking to each other.

that this will focus the conversation. We recognize that in a field such as literacy it may be difficult to be certain of your results in advance, but we want your projections to be evidence based.

We're pleased when you talk about who else is in the field and how you are different, but one of our concerns is the proliferation of organizations that are doing similar work and possibly not talking to each other. We look at whether they could be compatible and partnering in some way. In other words, it's best if you discuss how your program differs from other programs with a similar constituency, but also explain how your work is complementary to theirs. A lot of proposals that come in say, "We are the

only ones doing so and so." We see enough of them to know when that isn't true. This doesn't mean you should omit something that makes your program unique. You may, for example, be the only literacy organization working with Latino families in a particular neighborhood. But even if you are, we want to know that you're talking to your colleagues, and that you are aware that another, larger organization has a satellite program that is engaged in related work. Showing that you know the field is extremely important.

The need statement very often takes up more space in the proposal than is necessary. Most funders that are giving grants in an area have already decided that there is a need there. What you have to explain is

We are willing to entertain brand-new ideas if there is a good rationale for why they might be successful.

how your programmatic solutions address that need. It's amazing how frequently proposals fail to do that, or at least fail to articulate the relationship. Particularly if your organization is new to us, we would rather read more about your track record than about the need—similar work you've done and the outcomes you've achieved.

We are willing to entertain brand-new ideas if there is a good rationale for why they might be successful. Say a literacy organization came to us and said, "We've identified reasons *x*, *y*, and *z* for low retention. Here are the barriers and here is what we're going to do. We're going to provide child care, we're going to provide this or that, and these are the relationships we've made to do it. If we are faithful to this model, we believe that we will increase retention rates by 25 percent." If this were a really strong organization that had a track record of doing good work with people, and we felt they had come up with some kind of twist or innovation that looked like it was going to make a significant difference, we'd say, "Let's try it," even if it seemed to us that the final result might be only a 10 percent increase. Then we'd ask, "All right, what information are you going to be collecting along the way so that you can see whether your approach is working? Do a good job on that, and even if you don't make your goal we'll have learned something important to us."

We in the foundation world are supposed to be trying things that no one else is able to try, but we don't want to throw money out the window. Sometimes a project doesn't work, but at the end of it we want to be able to say what was good about it and what we could do differently next time. ●

# Budgeting 101

> Marilyn J. Rymniak

The nonprofit world is in the midst of a generational shift. Over the next five years, the era of the activist 1960s and '70s will begin to fade. Half of all executive directors of nonprofits in the entire country will be retiring, along with many members of their leadership teams. In the New York State adult literacy community, the retirement wave could be even greater.

Although each program that anticipates a changing of the guard can take measures to preserve the institutional knowledge accumulated by its current leadership, outside support is also essential. Extremely busy executive directors cannot be expected to cover every topic that their replacement would need to know about. The replacement might well not be identified long enough ahead to allow a smooth transition. An executive director who has a deep knowledge of adult literacy theory and practice might not be familiar with all the intricacies of program budgeting.

In our work with adult educators throughout the state to develop a foundation course in adult literacy, we've discovered that financial issues are indeed the ones in which knowledge gaps are greatest and the desire for a professional development program with outside specialists is most often expressed. Funding questions that we've heard frequently include: What proportion of our funding comes from Washington, D.C., from Albany, and from local city or community sources? Are all funds allocated by formulas or are they competitive? Is my program eligible for all funding streams? How do all of these funding streams fit together? What

are the differences between WIA Titles I, II, III, and IV?

At the same time, many program managers have wanted answers to practical questions regarding program finances. Some that we hear frequently are: What lines should I include in a program budget? How do I determine what expenses are allowable? How do I know what forms to use for reporting on each funding stream? How do I allocate resources if I have multiple funding streams? Where can I get some help with all this paperwork?

In response to the widespread desire for answers to these questions and a specific request from the New York Association for Continuing/Community Education (NYACCE), this spring the NYSED Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development will sponsor a 6-hour "Foundations of Finance" workshop in venues throughout the state, each for about two dozen participants. New program managers will be given first priority. (When the NYC RAEN session is scheduled, the Literacy Assistance Center will send an announcement to local programs.)

These "Budgeting 101" sessions will be designed to give new and relatively new adult literacy education program managers an opportunity to learn from the wisdom and best practices of seasoned practitioners regarding program finances. The facilitators will be Ruth Hurd, former Director, Adult Career & Technical Education, Dutchess County BOCES Adult Career Education Center; and Gail Sandle, former Director, Workforce Prep and Continuing Education, Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES. ●

## FOUNDATIONS OF FINANCE: A SIX-HOUR WORKSHOP

### I. Funding Streams You Should Know About

- a. WIA 101 - Titles I, II, III, IV + EL CIVICS Set-Aside
- b. VATEA + VATEA Set-Asides (Perkins)
- c. ALE
- d. WEP
- e. EOA
- f. EPE 101

### II. Practical Budgeting Guidelines for:

- a. Determining salaries and benefits
- b. Covering classroom supplies and materials
- c. Meeting overhead expenses

### III. Budgeting Multiple Funding Streams

- a. Understanding eligibility requirements: determining eligible services and participants for each funding stream
- b. Understanding allowable expenditures
- c. Blending classes/services/customers
- d. Blending funding streams
- e. Blending fee-for-service programs with grant funds
- f. Creating a list of FAQs

### g. Blending fee-for-service programs

### h. Allocating resources

### i. Understanding federal requirements—EDGAR (Education Department General Accounting Rules)

### IV. Fulfilling Reporting Requirements

- a. Reporting results to funders
- b. Reporting finances to funders
- c. Surviving an audit—what you need to know

### V. Meeting & Working with Your Business Office

- a. Connecting with the person most involved with adult education
- b. Finding out what they need to do their job, file reports, reconcile figures
- c. Knowing what you want/need to be effective
- d. Maintaining regular communication with business office
- e. Establishing a schedule for regular meetings

### VI. Tracking Your Progress & Making Program Improvements

## TEACHERS' corner >> Small Victories

> Althea N. Davidson *Skills Instructor, CUNY Queens College*

In September 2006 I began teaching writing and math courses through the Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies at CUNY Queens College. These courses are offered free to union members, partly to encourage them to enroll in Queens College. Before they can do that, they have to pass the CUNY ACT Basic Skills Tests in reading, writing, and mathematics. My job has been to prepare them for these tests.

That first semester, I decided to focus on two major concerns of the program: high attrition and elevated test failure rates. As any adult educator who teaches free classes knows, our attrition rates are high for many reasons: outside demands on participant time, such as frequent work schedule changes; ill health among participants themselves or in their families; other family issues, including lack of support for education, often by the husbands of women students; unreliable child care; and the uphill battle learners must wage to complete assignments and catch up after numerous absences.

Having taught in this field for most of my career, I was prepared for all these issues—but nothing could have prepared me for what the participants in my class actually faced that first semester: the deaths of a mother and two in-laws; an out-of-state car accident resulting in a broken leg; two boiler explosions; the arrest of a child; a participant's daughter's miscarriage; a crash totaling a car; a miraculous recovery from another near-fatal car crash; and a divorce and child custody battle. All I could do was offer a shoulder to cry on and encourage the students who experienced these disasters to keep attending class or, if they could not, to return whenever that became possible.

Of course, high attrition rates are not always caused by external factors. I knew that a large part of my job as teacher would be to encourage learners to feel engaged in the learning process and committed to the class. As part of this effort, I introduced a system of feedback forms that helped me learn about my students. I began this process in the first class by handing out index cards and asking the students to list anything they thought would promote their learning on one side. On the other side, I invited them to write down anything that would detract from their learning. Throughout the semester, I requested feedback after exams, after any non-standard lessons (for instance, lessons taught via the Internet), and after we completed each unit of study. The response to these surveys was overwhelmingly positive. You're taking our feelings and needs as individuals into account, my students told me. "We know that you see us when you look at us and talk to us," as one put it.

I also encouraged learners to call me for homework assignments if they had missed a class. If I did not hear from them after two absences, I called them. These phone calls kept students from falling too far behind. Another technique I used to encourage students was to offer informal tutoring. Many students took advantage of this opportunity to get assistance without having to feel self-conscious in front of their peers.

Keeping students coming to class was half the battle. The other half was to raise the number of students who passed the test. In previous se-

esters, I was surprised to learn, it wasn't uncommon for only one learner to get a passing grade. I knew from experience as a GED instructor that anxiety is a major reason test takers stumble, especially on math tests. I introduced two antidotes. One was to give frequent in-class math tests. The other was to precede each of these tests with a meditation exercise. The in-class exams also helped us assess where we were in the learning process.

None of these strategies would have been effective without strong classroom content. I introduced web-based work, broke the class into small groups, and used other strategies and activities to make each class different. Participants said they appreciated the variety, as well as the opportunities to take an active role in the learning process. As our writing text, I chose *The Writer's Workplace with Readings*, by Sandra and John Scarry, which I like for its clear explanations, plentiful examples, extremely helpful online support, and presentations of transferable college-preparatory skills.

I would like to say that thanks to all of the effort my learners and I put into our class, everyone passed the ACT Basic Skills Tests, but this was not a Hollywood movie. Of my 25 writing students, 16 took the Writing test and 10 sat for the Reading test. In math the numbers were better: 13 of 17 students took the Math I test, and 6 of the 7 Math II students sat for the Math II test. That a number of learners did not feel ready to take the tests can be ascribed in part to those challenges, expected and unexpected, faced by working adults returning to or beginning school. Also, those who had previously tested faced the demoralizing prospect of possibly receiving another failing test score.

Of those who did take the tests, some were first-timers and some were repeat testers. Not surprisingly, students who had taken the test before tended to do better. Nine of 13 Math I testers passed. So did 5 of 6 Math II testers, and, happily, 4 Math I testers passed both Part I and Part II on their first attempt. Ten of 16 Writing testers passed, and 4 of 10 passed Reading. The group that didn't pass Writing and/or Reading included four learners for whom English was a second language; two of them had additionally taken the writing and math courses simultaneously, a challenge that must have been too great.

The highlight of the fall 2006 semester was that in addition to 26 students passing a total of 43 tests, 13 passed all four parts of their tests. Five are now matriculating Queens College students through the Murphy Institute. Eight are arranging financing in order to enroll, two of them for their master's degree; another is studying for the LAST Test to become a New York City public school teacher.

Like any teacher, I want all my learners to pass whatever tests they choose to take. But given the many challenges adult education presents, particularly in a semester as trouble-plagued as my first at Queens College, I could not have been more pleased with what my dedicated learners achieved. ●

## The Outcomes-Based Approach *continued*

- 80 students will attend ESOL/Civics classes; and
- 75 students will participate in a post-assessment process.

In addition to the challenge that many program managers face in clearly articulating and setting measurable, attainable, and verifiable outcomes, measuring the success of this DYCD approach, or any other outcomes-based model, will require extensive tracking and recording of student results.

### Positive outcomes with funders

In my former role as an adult literacy program director, I dreaded the idea of dealing with outcomes/performance-based contracts. I was afraid that we would fail to meet the minimum standards and lose our funding—especially when standards were raised year after year. I also worried that tracking and verifying results would be difficult, particularly with students who left our program.

**A clear vision serves no useful purpose unless it is translated into action.**

These concerns were valid then, and remain valid today. However, the workshop at Rensselaerville persuaded me that the outcomes-based approach has strong positive aspects as well. It encourages you to be solution-oriented rather than problem-oriented. It challenges you to look

beyond current obstacles and think about what both your program and your students could strive for. It requires you to take a good hard look at your program's capacity and strengths and define realistically what can and cannot be achieved. It compels you to take stock of what resources already exist within the community and encourages collaboration in the use of these resources. It helps you break your larger project into a series of doable tasks. And, by compelling you to establish specific outcomes and

**Will this approach pay off in the long run? Ask me in 12 months.**

verify that you are meeting them, it boosts your program's credibility.

As anyone who has worked in the nonprofit world knows, vision is crucial. But even a clear vision serves no useful purpose unless it is translated into action. At its best, an outcomes-based approach facilitates that process, serving as a practical way to translate any vision into action and from there into reality.

After we attended the Rensselaerville workshop, my colleagues and I incorporated all that we had learned into a grant proposal for a private foundation. Clearly articulating measurable target outcomes and defining how we intended to track our successes won us the grant.

Will this approach pay off in the long run? Ask me in 12 months. ●

---

## Managing Multiple Funding Streams *continued*

classes with them in terms of target population, instructional level, class type, curriculum, and outcomes. For example, some funding sources, such as the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), cover most levels and types of instruction. Others, such as Neighborhood Development Areas (NDA) and Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funds, are useful because they target classes, such as GED in Spanish, that traditional funding streams do not cover.

*Take advantage of non-cash opportunities.* Like a brontosaurus, an adult education program devours green stuff at a fearsome rate. When there isn't enough—and there never is—other forms of nourishment can help keep it happy. When they are managed carefully, all kinds of public and foundation non-cash partnerships can be just as valuable as actual financial support. Last year in a pilot program with the One-Stop system, Highbridge provided job readiness activities for its upper-level students. They were then fast-tracked into One-Stop job activities, including on-site interviews and job fairs. Although no cash changed hands, this partnership was probably worth almost as much to the program participants as any part-time job developer whom Highbridge might have hired. Similarly, over the past several years NMIC has been collaborating with

New York Cares. NMIC provides space and a support teacher. New York Cares provides volunteers who teach three classes. This partnership serves more than 60 additional students every week.

**Non-cash partnerships can be just as valuable as actual financial support.**

*Be prepared for a long-term investment.* Creating spreadsheets, training staff, and monitoring record-keeping systems is a lot of work, especially when you're setting it all up while also doing—and this is a conservative estimate—a million other things. But in the long run, the hard work will pay off. You'll have a program that is flexible, cohesive, able to meet differing accountability requirements, and better equipped to take advantage of every type of available support. ●

# My Name Is Hadiatou Bah

> Hadiatou Bah

My name is Hadiatou Bah. I am from the Republic of Guinea, West Africa. I came to the United States of America because my husband was a leader for one of the political opposition party in the country. When he had a problem with the present regime he left the country and came to the United States. He apply for political asylum and be accepted.

Four years from the time he left the country I left too from my group of milkwomen, where I was the president. I came to meet him with my daughter 17 years old. When we arrived in the reception hall I saw my husband. I was very happy and my daughter too was very happy and my husband was happy to see his family. It was at night. My daughter and I

looked left and right to see the beautiful New York City. After two weeks my husband went to the Department of Education looking for a school for my daughter. She go to school at night. I have to wait until she comes back before I go to bed.

Two months later we got information about SoBRO. When the class began I was very happy to meet many people from different nationality I like. That give me more courage to learn. When the teacher is giving lessons I listen carefully and research the words I don't understand in the dictionary. When I go home I read the lessons. I also try to memorize different words.

When I think of my teacher I never am tired to learn. I will never forget my teacher Matilda Cruz. When my English gets better I want to be a nurse. God Bless America.



Visit us on the web  
at [www.lacnyc.org](http://www.lacnyc.org)

**For a free subscription**  
to *Literacy Update*, email the  
Communications Department  
at [lacpublications@hotmail.com](mailto:lacpublications@hotmail.com).

Nonprofit Org  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit No.  
08206  
NY NY 10004

Literacy Assistance Center

32 Broadway, 10th floor  
New York, NY 10004

