

Recommendations of the Adult Literacy and Education Committee Partners for a Prosperous Athens

The committee charged with the promotion of adult literacy and adult education attainment has drafted three recommendations for PPA consideration. These recommendations address the learning needs of adults and out of school youth in the Athens area that contribute to our high poverty rate, including the need for GED test preparation, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, workplace education, and learning related to nontraditional areas such as civic, consumer, and health education. According to the 2000 census, 9850 adults over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma or GED completion. If non-completers between the ages of 16 and 25 were included, the number would be substantially higher. Families headed by the undereducated tend to struggle economically, and their children are less likely to finish school, perpetuating the poverty cycle into the next generation.

The development of the following recommendations was guided by the experiences of local service providers and by board members of the Athens-Clarke Literacy Council and their concern that our community is not presently meeting adult needs for education in a comprehensive and coordinated way. These recommendations constitute a series of steps intended to better meet the learning needs of all adults and out of school youth in Athens-Clarke County.

Recommendation 1. Conduct a **community-wide needs assessment** to determine:

- Who are the adults and out of school youth in need of educational services?
- Where they are located?
- What are their educational needs?
- When and where do services need to be provided?

The assessment will be conducted by a professional organization working under the guidance of local experts in the field of adult literacy. PPA will assign this oversight responsibility. Data collection and analysis will involve both quantitative and qualitative methods, including census and other federal and state government reports as well as surveys and interviews with service providers, adult learners from the target population, and other stakeholders in the community. The purpose of the needs assessment will be to determine the educational needs of adults in the area and existing barriers to accessing the appropriate services.

Recommendation 2. Conduct a **survey of services** currently being provided to address learning needs of adult in Athens-Clarke County. Questions to answer include:

- What services are being offered?
- Who is being served?
- To what extent are services coordinated?
- What are the retention rates?

Again, the services of a professional organization will be retained, under the guidance of a PPA oversight group. This survey will help us determine how well the learning needs of adults in our community are being met and to identify gaps in service delivery.

Recommendation 3. Create a **community literacy organization, staffed by a paid coordinator**, that brings together civic, government, educational, faith-based, and business leadership for the purpose of improving the community's adult literacy and education attainment levels. Under the direction of a board of directors, the coordinator will:

- Promote community awareness of adult literacy and education needs
- Seek funding sources for adult learning programs
- Coordinate literacy services and resources
- Recruit students for programs

We recommend that this organization have 501 c 3 status and follow the guidelines of Georgia's Certified Literate Community Program (CLCP), sponsored by the Department of Technical and Adult Education's Office of Adult Literacy. Technical assistance is available from the CLCP's executive director at no charge.

Recommendation 4. **Align** Adult Education goals **with Workforce goals**, guided by the Career Pathway model of creating avenues to better jobs.