

Maine Reads Community Literacy Project Planning Grant Final Report

Please fill out the following final report and return within 60 days of the end of your grant or before filing a Maine Reads Community Literacy Project implementation grant, whichever comes sooner. The 2005 implementation grant deadline is April 15. This form is available on line and we would appreciate your return of this final report by copying it from our site www.mainereads.org and emailing it back to us at info@mainereads.org. If you do not have email, you may mail it to us at Maine Reads, 28 Winter Street, Portland, Maine 04012, but the electronic return is preferred. You will find that most of the questions listed below are the same as those we suggested you address at the Public Forum.

Library: Auburn Public Library
Address: 49 Spring Street
City, State and Zip: Auburn, Maine 04210
Librarian(s): Rosemary Waltos, Library Director
Contact person: Steven Bouchard, Head of Adult Services
Phone: (207) 782-3191 x4
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Website if any: www.auburnpubliclibrary.org

Please respond to the following questions.

1) Names of members/groups on the Advisory Panel and affiliations and titles:

In April 2002, Auburn Public Library conducted an extensive series of community focus group sessions to establish priorities for the development of its new, five year strategic plan. A detailed examination of the community's library service and literacy needs was a central part of these discussions.

The members of this focus group are listed here. The top five underserved populations this group identified are listed below under question 3.

Patricia Masonheimer: Ph.D. in Education (retired)

Kajal De: Library Volunteer

Ellen Peters: Auburn resident

Gerard Dennison: Former City Council Member; Department of Labor and Statistics

Andrea L'Hommedieu: Edmund Muskie Oral History Project, Bates College

Rebecca Conrad: L-A Excels

Beth Sheppard: Alumni Office of Development, Bates College

Kathy Gleason: WCNN 1240 AM Radio

Rick Whiting: Auburn Housing Authority

Steven Bouchard (facilitator): Head of Adult Services, Auburn Public Library; Executive Board member, Literacy Volunteers Androscoggin

Rosemary Waltos: Director, Auburn Public Library

2) Did you hold the following meetings and what was the approximate number of attendees?

Meeting I Focus Group: yes # of attendees: 11

Meeting II Public Forum: yes # of attendees: 8

Meeting III Project Meeting: yes # of attendees: 8

Attendees of the Public Forum and Project Meeting:

Judy Webber: tutor, Development Committee member, and former Executive Board member, Literacy Volunteers Androscoggin

Jennifer Lynch: Auburn resident

Rachel Harms: VISTA volunteer

Karlene Duval: Lewiston-Auburn Career Center

Andrea L'Hommedieu: Edmund: Auburn Public Library strategic planning group; Muskie Archives, Bates College

Sally Holt: Reference Librarian, Auburn Public Library

Steven Bouchard (facilitator): Head of Adult Services, Auburn Public Library; Executive Board chair, Literacy Volunteers Androscoggin

Rosemary Waltos: Director, Auburn Public Library

(Unable to attend) Kathy Gleason: Auburn Public Library strategic planning group

(Unable to attend) Patricia Masonheimer: Auburn Public Library strategic planning group

(Unable to attend) Tahlia Hope: Director, Literacy Volunteers Androscoggin

(Unable to attend) Juliette Dzidja, Coordinator, Auburn Basic Adult Education

3) What did you discover were the top 5 underserved populations in your community? (Please list them in descending order)

- Young adults
- Adult New Readers
- Adults needing to improve basic computer skills
- English-as-a-Second-Language speakers
- Adults needing information literacy instruction

Since these underserved populations were identified in April 2002, the library has as part of its strategic plan developed or enhanced its collections and programs to better meet the needs of most of these populations. For instance, regular programming for young adults has been introduced, as has a basic collection of English language learning materials. But some projects are still in development, and others will be developed after the completion of the Library's current expansion project in early 2006.

4) What literacy programs/activities are currently taking place in your community?

a) Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care

School readiness and other developmental activities for preschool children from income eligible families

b) Edward Little (and Lewiston) High Schools

ELL classes for resident refugee students who need to improve their English-language skills before they can be fully mainstreamed

c) Auburn (and Lewiston) Adult Education

- Remedial/basic skills classes

- ESL classes
- GED/diploma program

d) Literacy Volunteers Androscoggin

- Basic Literacy tutoring program
- Prison Literacy tutoring program
- Family Literacy tutoring program (with Auburn Adult Education)
- ESL conversation program

e) Auburn (and Lewiston) Public Libraries

- Library story times and developmental activities for preschoolers
- BookReach Program for preschoolers (see #6 below)
- Annual summer reading program for elementary school children
- Regular book discussions and annual summer reading program for young adults
- Collections to support K-12 student research assignments
- Regular book discussion programs for adults
- Annual One Book/One Community: Lewiston-Auburn Reads! community-wide book discussion program
- English-language study materials for ANR/ESL populations

5) What is the most important contribution your organization makes to your community and how does it work towards the Vision, Goal and/or Objectives of the Maine Reads Community literacy Project?

Auburn Public Library makes numerous contributions to the delivery and support of basic literacy services in Lewiston-Auburn. In addition to the programs and services listed under #4 above, APL works closely with Literacy Volunteers Androscoggin, and the Library's support in lending the expertise of its staff in the areas of organizational administration and development has helped this agency experience a period of vibrancy and growth in recent years. Also, the high visibility of the public library affords it an opportunity to take a leadership role in the development of joint literacy initiatives and to publicize literacy issues.

6) What overlaps in services or groups served did you discover if any?

While both Auburn and Lewiston have their own public high schools, adult education organizations, and libraries that offer similar programs and services, the two municipalities are both large enough to support their own programs in these areas and have a long history of doing so.

We did find that parallel agencies in both cities tailored their programs to meet the specific needs of their local user populations, and that duplication of services within either community was minimal. We also found many significant examples of innovative programs that are currently being administered or developed jointly by two or more of these organizations.

An example is the BookReach program that is jointly administered by the public libraries of both cities, whereby qualified volunteer readers are recruited and trained to provide weekly story times to preschool children in local daycare agencies and then leave behind a collection of library books for the children's use until the following week. Similarly, the two libraries are currently in discussion about jointly developing and coordinating a volunteer tutoring program for adults who need to develop basic computing skills. This program would take advantage of expanded computing facilities that will be completed at both libraries by early 2006 and would serve as a feeder program into local adult ed computer classes for adults who lack the confidence to pursue computer instruction in a classroom environment without first receiving some remedial, individualized training. Still another example would be the innovative family literacy program jointly developed and administered by Literacy Volunteers Androscoggin and Auburn Adult Education, whereby a trained family educator meets with eligible families in their homes to provide literacy tutoring for parents and school readiness activities for their children.

The only local organization in the community that provides free, one-on-one literacy tutoring services to adults, Literacy Volunteers Androscoggin, serves all of Androscoggin County, with a large percentage of its students and tutors coming from both Auburn and Lewiston.

7) Please describe potential community partners and projects to reach the underserved.

Other community literacy agencies:

- Literacy Volunteers
- Lewiston Public Library
- Auburn and Lewiston Adult Education
- ELL programs at Edward Little and Lewiston High Schools
- Androscoggin Head Start

Other social service agencies which come into contact with clients needing literacy services:

- Lewiston-Auburn Career Center
- Tri-County Health Services
- WIC

Churches and Jubilee Centers (serving homeless populations)
Women, Work and Community Program (Lewiston-Auburn College)
Other United Way agencies

8) What literacy projects do you think are needed to fill the gaps in service in your community?

We found the infrastructure which provides basic literacy services in the community to be comprehensive and fairly well-developed. The one service we identified as needed but unavailable is free or affordable one-on-one computer tutoring for adults, but the two public libraries are already engaged in discussions about developing such a service when the two libraries' expansion projects are completed early next year.

However, we identified some local needs beyond the programming and services area:

a) There is a need, beyond the basic English-language study materials that are currently available, for informational and recreational reading materials in English at appropriate reading levels for Adult New Readers and English-as-a-Second-Language speakers. This need is frequently cited by tutors and students enrolled in literacy programs, and also by librarians, who frequently encounter adult patrons with basic information needs who may not be enrolled in a literacy program but, nonetheless, don't have the ability to effectively use library materials written at adult reading levels. The lack of subject area materials at appropriate interest and reading levels for the members of these populations makes it difficult for them to practice their reading skills while exploring areas of personal interest or to be independent in addressing their own or their families' information needs.

b) There is a need for tools to help people needing literacy services, and for the various social service agency staffs who encounter them, to more easily determine which literacy agency provides a particular service. Because the network of agencies providing literacy services in Lewiston-Auburn is complex and fairly diffuse, it can be difficult for people to know what services are available, where to go for a service, or which service they would most likely benefit from. It can also be difficult for employees of various public service agencies who aren't intimately familiar with this network to know how and where to refer clients.

c) There is a need to raise general public awareness about the impact of literacy problems in the community and about the agencies which exist to provide literacy services. While some local literacy organizations are actively working to build capacity to better meet the demand for their services, these efforts are hindered by the fact that the literacy needs of the community and the network of agencies

which address it continue to have a low public profile. This low profile is difficult to overcome because the network of agencies which deal with literacy issues is decentralized and ill-equipped to coordinate marketing efforts or to otherwise “speak with one voice.” The fact that broad public awareness of the issue is lacking makes it more difficult for individual agencies to recruit volunteers and raise funds.

9) What is your plan of action? How do you plan to address your community’s literacy needs?

The high visibility of the library in the community makes it well-positioned to address some of these problems.

We plan to:

a) Develop a subject-area collection of English-language materials at appropriate reading levels for Adult New Readers and English-as-a-Second-Language speakers. This collection will provide members of these populations with English language reading materials to meet their informational, recreational, and reading practice needs. The collection will complement and enrich the basic language study materials that are currently available at the public libraries and within some of the local literacy agencies.

b) Develop a series of outreach programs to various agencies working with Adult New Reader and English-as-a-Second-Language populations to publicize the new collection and to register students for library cards

c) Host an annual library luncheon meeting for representatives from the various community literacy organizations to bring library staff up to date on changes in agency programs, agency contact personnel, and agency service locations

d) Enhance the ability of the library and social service agency staffs to make effective referrals by compiling (and annually updating) a list of basic literacy services with the locations and contact information of the agencies that provide each service

e) Explore the possibility of leveraging the community’s informal web of local literacy agencies into a more formal network for the purpose of cooperatively developing a “Lewiston-Auburn Reads” marketing campaign. This campaign would highlight the impact of literacy problems in the community and spotlight the work of the individual literacy organizations that make up the community’s “literacy network.” This in turn would enhance the ability of the individual literacy organizations to effectively recruit volunteers and raise funds.

10) Describe what you learned and how the project helped Maine Reads to reach its goal to strengthen families and support lifelong learning?

The Public Forum and Project Meeting were very helpful in allowing us to clearly identify the network of agencies in the community that provide various literacy services and to clearly outline the role each agency plays. This allowed us to identify strengths and weaknesses in local literacy services that otherwise would not have been obvious. For instance, we found that Lewiston-Auburn benefits from a fairly well developed set of services that, collectively, have the ability to address a wide variety of literacy needs. On the other hand, the fact that the network of agencies which provides these services is so widespread makes it difficult for members of the community to know what services are available and where to find them. And all of the local literacy agencies suffer from a lack of resources to adequately meet the demand for services. The plan of action we've laid out under #9 above seeks to use the library's position of high visibility in the community to strengthen some of these weaknesses.

Other comments?

To help other literacy organizations gain a better understanding of literacy needs and projects in Maine, may we share your responses and post them on the Maine Reads website? Yes No

Please feel free to provide a success story or information about how we may improve the Maine Reads Community Literacy project grants process. Thank you for your support!