

# 2006 - 2010 Literacy Initiative for Monterey County

## Vision

The Initiative will improve basic literacy countywide among adults ages 18 to 35, especially parents of children in grades Pre-K to Six. This will be a significant and sustained effort with high visibility and measurable results. It will involve multiple foundations and donors, multiple sectors of the community and economy, and multiple agencies and programs. It will require multiple years and multi-millions of dollars to accomplish. The Community Foundation's Board of Directors will grant over one million dollars in the field of literacy over the next five years. By 2010, the Initiative will create an integrated, collaborative, and countywide infrastructure able to sustain quality programs that ensure high levels of adult literacy.

## Challenge

When the Community Foundation decided to embark on a civic engagement initiative to have a significant and lasting impact on the quality of life in the county, our board looked at a broad range of needs and concerns in the region. The common issue that emerged was the literacy levels of many of our county's residents. In Monterey County:

- 11% of adults are not literate in any language.
- 25% of adults read below the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level and only 68% have completed high school.
- 55% of adults seeking services say their inability to speak English is a barrier.
- 46% of children enter kindergarten without the necessary pre-academic skills.

Literacy levels are a measure of economic health and vitality in our community. From the people that we have engaged in developing this initiative, we know that literacy is the key to many doors of opportunity. It is highlighted by employers in hospitality, technology, healthcare and agribusiness that communication skills are essential to workers' success. We know that literacy is key to steering young people away from a life of crime or violence and redirecting them towards lives of positive contributions. It is key to responsible civic participation and sharing in our democratic processes. Research shows:

- Literacy in one's native (first) language makes it easier to learn a second language.
- Lack of English language and literacy skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing skills) is a barrier to entry and advancement in many types of employment.
- Higher paying jobs demand literacy in English.
- Children from homes with high literacy skills have greater success in school and at work.

- Children who cannot read by the Fourth Grade are among the first to drop out of high school.

Thorough research into the literacy requirements, services, and barriers for all ages in our county revealed successful efforts to improve literacy are underway in the county but there are gaps in services and efforts need to be coordinated and expanded to reach more people and parts of the county. Most critically, too many young adults leave high school before mastering some of the basic skills needed to secure the jobs they need to afford homes and parent successful children. After much consultation with expert advisors and internal debate, the Community Foundation adopted researchers' recommendation to focus on young adults between the ages of 18-35, particularly those who are parents, for whom literacy is a barrier to success.

## **Plan**

### **Goal 1 – Collaborative Research and Development**

The initiative will convene funders, donors, nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, parent groups, employers, corporate and civic leaders, media representatives, and county department heads to review literacy-related needs and assets in the County. Using this information, we will identify program and geographic priorities, promising practices, appropriate levels of effort, sufficient funds, and a collaborative grant-making process by mid-2006. The Community Foundation is inviting others to contribute and will begin making grants by December 2006.

### **Goal 2 – Coordinated Oversight and Quality Assurance**

The initiative will approve and implement an organizational structure and a work plan integrating the goals, objectives, activities, expected results, responsible parties, and a timeline for planning, funding, marketing, implementing, evaluating, and communicating the impacts of the Literacy Initiative. Consultants will assist with ongoing technical functions such as research and evaluation, public relations, and government grant writing.

### **Goal 3 – Effective Marketing**

The initiative will develop a comprehensive multi-year countywide public relations campaign to heighten awareness about the importance of a literate community to the health and economic well being of the County, and to engage the community at large in the issue. The campaign will also make the community aware of the activities and results of the Initiative and the commitments to literacy made by all funders and other partners.

## Audience Outcomes

The success of the Initiative will be measured by an external evaluator who will monitor and report on progress toward these specific measurable objectives for each of six strategic audiences.

### 1. Foundations and donors will

- be given clear information about the need for the Initiative
- agree to receive ongoing information and provide feedback about the Initiative
- articulate their interest in helping to expand literacy programs and services and reduce their costs for young adults
- be specific about the types, amounts, and timing of their support, as well as how it will be provided
- have their participation acknowledged publicly.

### 2. People ages 18-35 will

- help Initiative researchers identify the literacy services they need and clarify when and where services should be made available to ensure high levels of participation
- find and participate in the literacy programs and services they need and want
- provide feedback about the programs and services they access
- experience progress and describe themselves as having improved literacy
- tell their peers about available programs and services and encourage their participation.

### 3. Employers will

- share with Initiative researchers information about the specific types of literacy needed for various employee positions; about the degree to which current job applicants and employees are meeting these requirements; and about their goals, methods, timelines, and estimated costs for improving employees' literacy
- meet periodically with other employers to share information about the onsite and offsite programs, services, and incentives they have tried or will try in order to help their employees improve literacy
- set and achieve internal and external targets for supporting, monitoring, and sustaining improvements in the literacy of young adult workers during and after the Initiative period.

### 4. Providers of literacy programs and services will

- work with Initiative researchers to describe their visions for an adequate countywide continuum of literacy services and their own current literacy-related services, enrollments, and costs; to explain how they presently market and evaluate the impacts of their marketing and their services; and to clarify their understanding of how the Initiative can help their agencies serve more young adults

- meet periodically with other providers to share information and incubate new ways to deliver and sustain improvements in literacy among the county's young adults
  - contribute to the research, funding, marketing, and evaluation resources made available by the Initiative to improve their joint effectiveness.
5. County Residents, Administrators, and Elected Officials will
- share their visions for a countywide continuum of essential literacy services and the role of public funding in sustaining vital literacy services for all ages
  - be aware of the Initiative and its purpose, partners, progress, and impacts
  - understand the need for the Initiative, and support its effectiveness
  - support using public funds to sustain literacy programs and services.
6. Leaders and funders in the field of literacy outside the county will
- share with Initiative researchers information about their program rationales, methods, research findings, and results in the areas of young adult literacy and its contribution to the success of children, families, and to economic and community development
  - be aware of the Initiative and its purpose, partners, progress, and impacts
  - provide input and feedback on the Initiative's thinking and plans.

## Structure

The Initiative's organizational structure has five main groupings whose functions are listed below.

1. The Funders' Council will
  - establish the goals and objectives for the Initiative
  - raise funds to support the Initiative
  - approve funding priorities, guidelines, processes, and awards
  - monitor Initiative progress and program impacts
  - sponsor periodic reports.
2. Advisors will provide ongoing input and feedback from the community's diverse technical, audience, employer, and program/service provider perspectives.
3. The Steering Committee will
  - compile and summarize input from research and Advisors
  - identify pressing needs and promising practices
  - propose funding priorities and evaluation criteria
  - draft grant-making guidelines and procedures
  - review and recommend grant applications
  - propose comprehensive evaluation and public relations plans, and
  - report the extent and impacts of the Initiative.

4. Grantee agencies will
  - collaborate in planning and applying for Initiative for funds
  - coordinate the delivery of literacy programs and services
  - cooperate in assessing the impacts of the Initiative.
5. Consultants will assist with ongoing technical functions such as research, evaluation, public relations, and, if needed, writing government grants.

## **Role of the Community Foundation**

The Community Foundation for Monterey County is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3), corporation founded in 1945. With total assets of over \$100 million, it makes over 500 grants totaling over \$5 million annually. To learn more about the Foundation, please visit the website: [www.cfmco.org](http://www.cfmco.org).

The Foundation's role in the Literacy Initiative for Monterey County is that of

- initial compiler of information about the County's assets and needs in the area of literacy
- convener of parties able and willing to commit their technical expertise and resources to focusing, planning, funding, promoting, conducting, and evaluating a systematic and collaborative countywide effort to improve literacy
- partner in funding, managing, contracting with consultants, and staffing the Initiative as a high quality, results-oriented, and sustainable long-term collaboration.

For additional information or an update on the progress of the Initiative, please contact Jeff Bryant at the Community Foundation: [jeff@cfmco.org](mailto:jeff@cfmco.org) or (831) 375-9712 ext. 14.

## Glossary

The categories of the Initiative's activities are listed and described here in the order they are being undertaken.

### \*Research activities

seek to inform and guide the Initiative by:

(a) developing appropriate goals and organizational structures for the Initiative during 2005 and

(b) developing awareness of best practices, priorities of audiences, interests of funders and businesses, and capacities of program provider in 2006. The critical product of the research activities will be the Funding Priorities and Request for Proposals that the Initiative's Steering Committee will produce to encourage best practices among program providers, reflect the priorities and interests of stakeholder groups, and guide the decisions and actions of the Funders Council and Initiative staff in 2006 and subsequent years.

### \*Administrative activities

include coordinating the development and implementation of the Initiative as well as maintaining timely and open communication among all of the partners, consultants, and activities.

### \*Funding activities

encompass developing the annual budgets for the Initiative, working with all categories of donors and funders to meet revenue needs, managing and tracking funds, and preparing financial reports.

### \*Program activities

include classroom, library, worksite, home, broadcast, community-based, or one-on-one services and the supporting technology and materials that help people improve their literacy skills.

### \*Public Relations activities

include marketing and communication functions and are considered essential to maintaining high visibility of the Initiative, its purposes, its activities, its partners, and its results among its diverse and specific audiences.

### \*Evaluation activities

seek to help the Steering Committee, Funders Council, and others monitor the short-term impacts of the Initiative, identify areas for improvement, and indicate sustainable practices.