



Adult Bridge Program Pathways Pilot Project

October 21, 2013

Via a competitive proposal process College!NOW offered three \$10,000 awards to allow Montana's two-year colleges the opportunity to develop a bridge program designed to transition Adult Basic Education (ABE) students onto a pathway to postsecondary education. Funding for these awards was provided by the Lumina Foundation.

Background:

- Montana faces a skills gap that is impacting our economic competitiveness.
- According to the latest research, by 2018, 62% of all jobs in Montana will require some postsecondary training beyond high school.
- Between 2010 and 2020 employment in Montana is expected to increase by over 45,000 jobs.
- Montana's aging workforce and projected demographics will make it impossible for this need to be filled solely from new high school graduates.
- For our workforce of today to become our workforce of the future, Montana needs its citizens to enter and complete career pathways to postsecondary education.
- Research has shown that one year of postsecondary education and the completion of a credential provides the best chance for a person to earn a family supporting wage and continue in a career pathway.

The Problem:

Approximately 66,000 of Montana's adult workers do not have a high school diploma or GED which is often required to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Adults lacking basic skills are often at a disadvantage upon entering postsecondary and career & technical education (CTE). Additionally, working adult learners face a myriad of other challenges, such as the need to work, support a family, and upgrade digital literacy skills -- that make persisting in education difficult.

The Bridge Program as a Potential Solution:

Bridge programs and integrated basic education and skills training initiatives coupled with wrap-around support services have proven to dramatically increase success for Adult Basic and Education (ABE) participants and provide employers with needed talent.

It can be challenging for an individual to take the next step from GED/basic skills attainment and on to a college campus. With that in mind, College!NOW requested proposals containing innovative approaches to help that individual take that next step to college.

Results:

- Of the seven proposals received, three were awarded funds to carry out a pilot "Bridge" program:

- ❖ **Great Falls College MSU**- This Bridge program model for ABE students included sessions that consisted of two weeks of instruction in math skills, along with presentation of information on how to enroll in college, apply for financial aid, and other topics related to transitioning to college coursework. Based on this math skills workshop success, Great Falls College has now added a writing skills workshop. A pathways advisor works one-on-one with the ABE students in the Bridge programs.
- ❖ **Highlands College of Montana Tech** – The Highlands College Bridge Pilot Program was designed to provide adult learners who use the ABLE programs in Deer Lodge County and Powell County with a career pathway transition to postsecondary education or employment. The ABLE programs have incorporated career pathways through placement testing and math or writing skills instruction, allowing individuals to avoid the extra cost and time for taking developmental math or writing courses to prepare for college-level courses that are required in career pathways programs.
- ❖ **Miles Community College** - This Bridge program focused on having ABE students complete program orientation, set an instructional schedule that requires a minimum number of hours in the classroom each week, receive instruction in the subjects found on the GED exam, take part in a “Career Pathways Course” and remain in the Bridge program after GED completion in order to prepare for post-secondary studies and employment.