OBE Interim Report #1 Narrative Albany PCC

The Working Knowledge PCC began offering classes in May of 2011 as a result of the BTOP grant to Albany Public Library. Both the amount of services and the public awareness of the program have grown exponentially since that point. The PCC currently averages around 40 hours of computer classes a month and around 100 hours of open lab time at a total of 7 locations. None of this was possible prior to the BTOP grant. We have also seen an increase of unique sessions at our computers in the Reference department, which we believe is due to the repeat users taking advantage of the PCC as place to work on larger employment related tasks, while allowing the general public to have more access to the library's other computers.

The BTOP grant has allowed the library to offer economic recovery services that staffing and budgetary restraints had prevented us from offering in the past, despite the desperate need for such assistance. The basic digital literacy training for the unemployed and underemployed is a large part of our PCC activity. We offer classes in many of the Microsoft programs, as well as basic computer skills and internet classes. Our involvement in ALLbany Online, and resulting work with New York Wired for Education, has allowed us access to Metrix Learning, which is a workforce eTraining and Skill Enhancement program offering access to hundreds of online classes and training programs. This tool is offered at no cost to the library, and is perfect for advancement in existing jobs or attaining a goal job. The orientations and license distribution for Metrix is done either once or twice a month, and allows the student 90 days of access from any computer with Internet service.

In addition to those classes targeted at giving users basic or intermediate computing skills, the PCC focuses on real life job skills. This involves everything from resume writing classes, to interviewing skills and techniques, to our current 100 hours per month of open lab time for one-on-one assistance with online job searching and application completion. The open lab times allow for guided practice of new skills, or simply access to the online tools needed to apply for jobs. We have had many users over the course of the last ten months use the open lab time to complete OSHA safety training required by certain positions, or to take online tests used in application processes. A large part of meeting the grant goals involves increasing users' access to computers and the internet, and the open labs are the most effective way of doing this.

The BTOP grant also allows us to offer a large number of classes and open labs focusing on digital literacy. The basic computer literacy classes that we offer include Introduction to Computers, Introduction to the Internet, Advanced Internet, and Introduction to Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint. These classes have all been fairly well attended, and there continues to be a need for such instruction. We do offer help with email, but have found that this is better offered through the open lab setting, instead of a large group. Whenever someone needs an email account, we advise them to visit the open lab and it's done within a few minutes. Since our population is not very digitally literate, the one-on-one assistance is more satisfying and comforting to them than a large classroom of people. The PCC staff does not teach social networking classes, but other library staff members do, and they use the PCC space to offer these sessions. There have been classes offered in Facebook for Seniors, Freegal (an

online music downloading service offered by the Library) and there is also financial literacy offered using the lab space. In the months of February and March, the lab space is also used heavily for offering free tax assistance to low income patrons. This is done annually using federal volunteers, but is made possible by the availability and access to the computers and internet service in the lab.

We started out with a very large selection of very specialized classes, in addition to some open lab time. As the program has progressed, we have found that many of the classes for resume building and interview skills are too abstract for our users, and that they are better served by the individualized attention given in open labs. For this reason, we have increased the number of hours of open labs, while eliminating some of the classes that were poorly attended. Our Introduction to Computers class and our Microsoft Excel classes are the two most popular traditional classes. We believe this is because they are for the very new users and the much more experienced users respectively. These are the people most often in need of assistance and information.

The popularity of the classes has remained fairly constant from the beginning, while the program's overall numbers continue to build mostly due to a growing awareness of PCC services. We have found that the open labs seem to be the most productive and also the most satisfying service for the patrons. This is probably due to the specificity of the individuals' needs, which are easier to meet in a one-on-one setting as opposed to the traditional cookie-cutter class environment. This holds especially true in regards to job searching and interviewing skills, since there is no one great resume or technique across the board. These things need to be very individualized, and are highly dependent on history, life circumstances, employment needs and experience.

The six best practices we have discovered in our work so far are as follows:

1) Availability is key. We feel that it's important to leverage whatever staff you have in order to provide the most possible open hours. The more often you can be there, the better, so that patrons begin to realize that they can get help pretty much whenever it's needed.

2) Having a regular schedule/rotation of classes is important, especially at satellite locations. While our schedule at the main library is not a regular rotation, we are available so often that it hasn't presented a problem. However, at our branch libraries, we have seen an improvement in attendance since assigning each branch a regular day of the week and time of day. When the branch patrons know that you'll be at their location every Wednesday at 2pm, you'll get a better turn out as you become part of their routine.

3) If possible, having trained library professionals as trainers is ideal. We found that by hiring trainers that were already library employees before the grant, they already had a good knowledge of our policies, our patrons, and our community. As library professionals, they were also already trained in customer service, which translates well to the one-on-one instruction that takes up the vast majority of their time. Having staff who were already part of the Library family as opposed to outsiders enhanced staff buy-in of the program.

4) Having in-house trainers instead of a steady stream of guest teachers is best. The work done at the PCC is personal in nature, dealing with peoples' work histories and personal abilities. Having the continuity of in-house instructors allows the patrons to come to know and trust the trainers, and that relationship also sponsors word-of-mouth advertising.

5) Flexibility is vital, especially in the nascent stages of any program like the PCC. By flexibility, we mean the willingness and opportunity to try out all different combinations of classes, times, and days. There is no one answer to all the varying PCC communities and locations. What works one place may not work at all at another. The only way to find what works for your community and your users is to try variations until you see the patrons respond.

6) Patience and a positive attitude when dealing with patrons is also very important. Many of the users who come to us are frustrated and stressed, and it's important that the trainers are helpful, supportive and upbeat. In the current economy, finding a job can be difficult, and many of our patrons have commented that the trainers' kindness and support have kept them coming back and kept them from becoming too discouraged in the process.

In addition to the best practices, we have some thoughts on what constitutes an excellent PCC, including being open as many hours as staffing allows. The more we are open, the more people we are able to assist. We also think an excellent PCC also has an open mind, and is prepared to change its offerings and schedule based on the attendance and patron needs. An excellent PCC should have trainers who are invested in the success of their users, and are able to establish the trust necessary to do so. The trainers are dealing with people's work histories and life circumstances, which can be very personal, so it's important that the users get to know and feel comfortable with the trainers.

While we understood that the need for these services existed prior to the BTOP grant, we did not recognize the full extent of the need in our community. One of the most important lessons learned is the vital need for this program, or something of its kind, in our Library.

We have also learned that there is no single solution that will work for every PCC. Sometimes, it is necessary to go against the grain in order to find the best way to serve your patrons and community. This also involves using OBE and other patron feedback in order to shape PCC services and offerings. We have found that it's vital to listen to what your users have to say, and respond in kind.

Flexibility and availability are the two most important factors in scheduling. While we all face staffing limitations, it is important to leverage what staff you have to offer the widest, most open schedule possible. In an on-demand world, people respond to having help as often as humanly possible, and it's important to try and meet that need for access.

Please use this form to create a custom OBE plan for your PCC or E-Mobile Unit. Complete all white sections of the form and submit to Mary Ann Stiefvater (mstiefva@mail.nysed.gov) by Friday, May 27, 2011. The gray sections of the form are for reporting your evaluation findings. You will complete and submit these sections at a later date.

General outcome #1: PCC/E-Mobile Unit users gain digital literacy skills.					**Evaluation time period:** **May-Dec 2011**
Custom outcome:	**Target audience:**	**Target audience per training:**	**Data source:**	**Target achievement level:**	**Actual achievement level:**
Basic Internet & Computer Use PCC offers the following training: **Introduction to Computers workshop** • Participants can list at least 2 new basic computer skills • Participants report satisfaction with content/trainer • Participants report increased knowledge of Computer Use	272	8	• Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey	• 4.8 or 60% per training • 6 or 75% per training • 6.4 or 80% per training	**48 total trained** **(36 surveys)** 21 or 58.3% (-) 33 or 91.6% (+) 30 or 83.3% (+)
Introduction to the Internet workshop • Participants can list at least 2 new basic computer skills • Participants report satisfaction with content/trainer • Participants report increased knowledge of Internet	272	8	• Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey	• 4.8 or 60% per training • 6 or 75% per training • 6.4 or 80% per training	**37 total trained** **(29 surveys)** 24 or 82.7% (+) 29 or 100.0% (+) 24 or 82.7% (+)
Introduction to E-mail workshop • Participants create an e-mail account and send an e-mail • Participants report satisfaction with content/trainer • Participants report increased knowledge of e-mail	272	4	• Observation by trainer • Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey	• 3 or 75% per training • 3 or 75% per training • 3.2 or 80% per training	**19 total trained** **(10 surveys)** 8 or 80% (+) 9 or 90% (+) 9 or 90% (+)
Office Skills PCC offers the following training: **Word Processing Workshop** • Participants can list at least 2 new Microsoft Word skills • Participants report satisfaction with content/trainer • Participants report increased knowledge of Microsoft Word	272	8	• Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey	• 4.8 or 60% per training • 6 or 75% per training • 6.4 or 80% per training	**32 total trained** **(18 surveys)** 15 or 83.3% (+) 17 or 94.4% (+) 17 or 94.4% (+)
Spreadsheet Workshop • Participants can list at least 2 new Microsoft Excel skills • Participants report satisfaction with content/trainer • Participants report increased knowledge of Microsoft Excel	120	8	• Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey	• 4.8 or 60% per training • 6 or 75% per training • 6.4 or 80% per training	**28 total trained** **(23 surveys)** 20 or 86.9% (+) 23 or 100.0% (+) 23 or 100.0% (+)
PowerPoint Workshop • Participants can list at least 2 new Microsoft PowerPoint skills • Participants report satisfaction with content/trainer • Participants report increased knowledge of Microsoft PowerPoint	120	8	• Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey	• 4.8 or 60% per training • 6 or 75% per training • 6.4 or 80% per training	**20 total trained** **(18 surveys)** 14 or 77.7% (+) 18 or 100.0% (+) 16 or 88.8% (+)

Computer Skills for Young Adults PCC offers the following training: **Teen Computer Camp** • Participants can demonstrate use of Alice software • Participants report satisfaction with content/trainer	20	10	• Observation by trainer • Post-camp focus group	• 7.5 or 75% per training • 8 or 80% per training	**20 total trained** 20 or 100.0% (+) 20 or 100.0% (+)
General outcome #2: PCC/E-Mobile Unit users are better prepared for the workforce.					**Evaluation time period:** **May-Dec 2011**
Custom outcome:	**Target audience:**	**Target audience per training:**	**Data source:**	**Target achievement level:**	**Actual achievement level:**
Workforce Development PCC offers the following training: **Resume Writing Workshop** • Participants create/update resume • Participants report satisfaction with content/trainer • Participants report increased knowledge of resume preparation	544	4	• Observation by trainer • Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey	• 3 or 75% per training • 3 or 75% per training • 3 or 75% per training	**13 total trained** **(4 surveys)** 4 or 100.0% (+) 4 or 100.0% (+) 4 or 100.0% (+)
Interview Lab Session • Participants complete a mock interview • Participants report increased knowledge of interviewing skills • Participants report increased confidence in their interviewing skills	170	10	• Observation by trainer • Post-workshop survey • Post-workshop survey	• .75 or 75% per training • .60 or 60% per training • .60 or 60% per training	**20 total trained** **(3 surveys)** 20 or 100.0% (+) 3 or 100.0% (+) 3 or 100.0% (+)
Metrix Orientation Session • Participants sign up for Metrix and choose a goal job • Participants report increased knowledge of Metrix • Participants would recommend Metrix to their friends	680	10	• Observation by trainer • Post-workshop focus group • Post-workshop focus group	• .4.8 or 60% per training • 6 or 75% per training • 6 or 75% per training	**38 total trained** 38 or 100.0% (+) 38 or 100.0% (+) 31 or 81.5% (+)

General outcome #3: PCC/E-Mobile Unit users are satisfied with services.					**Evaluation time period:** **May-Dec 2011**
Custom outcome:	**Target audience:**	**Target audience per training:**	**Data source:**	**Target achievement level:**	**Actual achievement level:**
<u>Open Lab</u> • Participants report satisfaction with experience • Participants meet their personal goals for the session • Participants would recommend the Open Lab to their friends **<u>See also custom satisfaction outcomes under General Outcomes #1 and #2.</u>**	2,000	N/A	• Post-workshop comment • Post-workshop survey* • Post-workshop survey* ***The number of survey responses must be at least 323 (based on sample size of 2,000).**	• 259 or 80% of responses • 259 or 80% of responses • 259 or 80% of responses	**662 total trained (24 comments)** 24 or 100.0% (+) 22 or 91.6% (+) 22 or 91.6% (+)

General outcome #4: Community partners are aware of PCC/E-Mobile Unit services.					**Evaluation time period:**
Custom outcome:	**Target audience:**	**Target audience per training:**	**Data source:**	**Target achievement level:**	**Actual achievement level: May-Dec 2011**
<u>Community Partners</u> • Community Partners can list at least 2 services offered by PCC • Community Partners have referred users to PCC services • Community Partners would refer other organizations to PCC	6	N/A	• Focus Group • Focus Group • Focus Group	• 5.4 or 90% of partners • 6 or 100% of partners • 5.4 or 90% of partners	*Focus group to be held in last month of grant
Evaluation time period: May-Dec 2011					

Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements:

The PCC/E-Mobile Unit was successful in achieving outcome #1 (users gain digital literacy skills).
X Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

The PCC/E-Mobile Unit was successful in achieving outcome #2 (users are better prepared for the workforce).
X Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

The PCC/E-Mobile Unit was successful in achieving outcome #3 (users are satisfied with services).
X Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

The PCC/E-Mobile Unit was successful in achieving outcome #4 (partners are aware of services).
☐ Strongly agree **X** Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

If you indicated disagree or strongly disagree for any of the above outcomes, please explain. List any changes being made to the program and/or evaluation plan to ensure these outcomes are achieved.

Please share any additional findings. Include a few specific quotes or accounts from users/partners that support outcomes.

"Please keep this program funded. I go to the Labor Board on Central Ave maybe once to three times a week. Maybe they offer some of the same resources; however, the difference is the support and patience, and the one-on-one services you receive at the public library. When I first started I took basic computer class building my confidence. Then we started working on resume building. They were always willing to help and bring their talents to assist. They worked on the whole person, mind, body and spirit. I would stop and then come back. It felt good to know they would be there with encouragement and resources."

"I needed help with my resume. Since visiting the program, I have had interviews and been told I have a very strong resume. Thanks Joe!"

"I really think that this program is a success. I've recently started my life over and this program has really helped me progress. I am computer literate now! I found a nice job and am moving on with my new life. Thanks for this opportunity!"

"Every class that I have attended here at Albany Public Library Computing Center has been both enjoyable and informative. I have increased my knowledge of computers and no feel confident about using them at home and at work. Excellent instructors and program."