



Philly Literacy Program Zeros in on Work-Ready Skills

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What Happened?

Philadelphia has launched an adult education system to equip the city's adult workforce with the professional skills required to fill roles in growing industries. The technology-based initiative aims to reduce unemployment, spur economic growth and enable fiscal self-sufficiency for residents.

Goal

The Mayor's Commission on Literacy in Philadelphia has deployed myPLACE – a technology-based system that connects the city's workforce to educational resources for gaining the skills necessary to participate in the knowledge-based economy. MyPlace stands for Philadelphia Literacy and Adult Career Education and uses the latest technologies to accelerate adult learning and understanding of new job solutions.

In an average month, myPLACE helps 500 residents qualify for jobs. The system has already provided 3,500 Philadelphia adults with training programs to help them acquire work-ready skills and obtain family-sustaining jobs.

A [study](#) of adult work-related skills revealed 36 million workers across the country do not have the necessary skills and experience to acquire entry-level jobs. Most jobs that can sustain a family require a high school diploma, technology skills and post-secondary attainment.

The myPLACE program assesses the needs of each participant and enrolls them in courses to supplement any skills gaps. The system is offered completely online for added convenience, which also helps learners improve computer skills which are of vital importance for jobs in growing industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, logistics and transportation.

The myPLACE program is publicly funded but costs half as much as face-to-face instruction. The initiative boasts:

- 3 campuses
- Assessments
- Case management
- Student information systems
- 6 original online classes

Because the strength of the city's workforce is directly correlated to its economic sustainability, the program is a high-yield investment. MyPLACE reports a return of \$6,750 for the city and state for every \$5,000 invested in an individual learner. That return can be attributed to tax revenues, reduced dependency on public benefits and increased local spending power.

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Grant Funding

The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration offers a number of [workforce development grants](#) supporting adult education initiatives including:

- National Guard Youth Challenge and Job Challenge: \$12 million
- Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP): \$5 million
- Training to Work – Adult Reentry: \$27 million
- Face Forward Intermediary and Community Grants Serving Juvenile Offenders: \$30.5 million
- American Apprenticeship: \$100 million
- YouthBuild: \$73 million
- National Farmworker Jobs: \$81.8 million
- Disability Employment Initiative: \$15 million
- Workforce Data Quality Initiative Grants: \$12.5 million

There are also [National Emergency](#) grants awarded to communities when a large number of workers are laid off due to a failed business – such as a manufacturing plant. In Wilmington, Massachusetts, a local manufacturing plant was closed, putting a large portion of the community out of work. The U.S. Department of Labor recently provided 175 workers impacted by the closure with \$1,222,904 in incremental National Emergency funding to support training and education services to help them acquire new jobs.

Educating the Workforce

EfficientGov has reported on a variety of [strategies](#) cities are implementing to strengthen [workforce development](#) and economic growth.

Read full article at: <http://efficientgov.com/blog/2015/02/10/philly-literacy-program-zeros-work-ready-skills/#>