

2016 - 2017 AEBG Request for Proposal

Program Name:

Santa Barbara City College Adult High School/GED Program

Are you an existing 2015-2016 AEBG funding participant? YES

Program Name: Santa Barbara City College Adult High School/GED Program

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Applicable Program Area: Adult Education (ABE, ASE, Basic Skills)

Question 1. Executive Summary. *Please provide an executive summary of your proposed plan (to include overarching goals and outcomes) to create new programs or expand existing programs in one of the areas identified above.*

Program Description, Challenges, and Goals:

The Adult High School (AHS)/ GED program serves students who are completing credits for their High School Diploma or studying to pass the GED exams. Students in the program come from a wide variety of backgrounds and have a wide range of skill levels. Some dropped out of high school to start families, or because they experienced trouble with the law, and are now returning to school to get their lives back on track; others dropped out of high school to start working, but are now realizing that a lack of a diploma or GED severely limits their options for promotions or better-paying careers; and some students are recent immigrants who need a diploma or GED from the US – and need to brush up on reading, writing, and math skills -- before they can continue pursuing their educational and career goals.

The AHS/GED program is open entry, open exit which allows students to have more autonomy than in traditional high schools as they can decide when to begin their studies, attend class, and complete coursework. This independently-paced, flexible scheduling provides students with a means of continuing their education on a timeline that aligns with their personal and work needs. However, this open entry and open-exit structure also often poses many significant challenges to student persistence. Because students work on course assignments at their own pace and do not have to complete a course during single term, they sometimes lose momentum and may not feel they are reaching milestones. In addition, because students traditionally work on individual assignments, under a varied schedule and with multiple instructors, it often makes it difficult for them to form relationships with their instructors and peers; this lack of social interaction, or feeling like they belong to a community, can also adversely affect student motivation and persistence (Williams, 2012). Therefore, one of the major goals of the AHS/GED AEBG projects is to modify curriculum and incorporate more learning-community/cohort formatted course to **improve students' persistence, retention, and completion rates** – as well as engagement and preparedness for transitioning to college or career training – all of which will also help attract new students and bring back lapsed students, as they hear from their peers, and from our marketing outreach, about the programs' successes.

An additional significant challenge for the AHS/GED program is that many students initially assess with reading and math scores well below the high school level. In order to successfully complete high-school level coursework, many students need tailored in-class tutoring and support. Consequently, it's essential that our classrooms have **adequate instructional support**, with both an instructor and a classroom teaching assistant available to help students during all class periods. This is particularly important given that during any class period, each student may each be working on a number of different subjects and at progressing at different

rates. If students do not receive the support they need, they may feel discouraged and stop attending class.

Another overarching challenge for the AHS/GED program is the ***lack of an adequate tracking system*** to record important and useful information about our AHS/GED students (e.g. information such as individual students' goals, skill levels, classroom assignment performance, course completion status, attendance patterns, outstanding credits, and overall outcomes). The current AHS/GED student record systems are either paper-based or are designed for the credit college system, which has a very different structure and different needs, than the AHS/GED program. These somewhat decentralized, fragmented, and incomplete methods of recording student information do not provide the AHS/GED program with the individual or aggregate data it needs to realize the full potential of the many improvements the program is making under AEBG to attract new students, bring back lapsed students, and better prepare current students to transition to college and the workplace. For example, while the Learning Community cohort courses we developed during the first phase of the AEBG have a strong likelihood of increasing student persistence and completion rates, we have run into *significant challenges in marketing* these courses effectively – i.e., in making sure we are reaching out to the students who could most benefit from taking these courses. We currently cannot easily generate a list of students who still need to complete a particular subject, nor can we easily identify students who started a course, but have not completed it. The lack of a coordinated tracking system also presents *significant challenges to efficiently measuring the relative effectiveness* of the innovations, interventions, and modifications we have made, and will make, under AEBG. Therefore, another important goal for this upcoming phase of the AEBG proposal cycle is to analyze, research, specify, and select a well-thought out **AHS/GED student tracking system** – a system both in the technical and the procedural sense – that works with and supplements existing systems (such as Banner, SIRs, Canvas, and Starfish), and also provides a more centralized, analyzable format for data that is currently captured solely on paper or informally via student-instructor conversation.

Therefore, with this AEBG proposal, the program faculty and staff intend to gain the support and essential tools to implement and expand on the programmatic improvements we have made. The project contains four essential components that will aid in improving completion rates, increasing enrollment, and better preparing students to transfer to postsecondary institutions. The proposed activities are (1) develop new STEM courses and modify existing courses (2) improve completion rates with an internal student progress tracking system, (3) maintain essential classroom instructional support, and (4) fund a AEBG support staff position to help facilitate the administration the AEBG, make sure the process runs smoothly and stays on track.

Brief overview of each objective and associated anticipated outcomes:

1) Develop and Improve AHS/GED STEM Courses

The AHS/GED program proposes to increase student engagement, completion rates, and preparedness for college and vocational training in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math by taking a two-pronged approach to improving our science curriculum: (1) modifying and enhancing parts the existing AHS biology, earth science, marine biology/oceanography, and GED science courses, and (2) creating two new high school level science courses (e.g., physiology, physics) that would better prepare our students as they transition to college and vocational programs.

Currently, our AHS and GED science course are primarily text-based, with little or no opportunity for hands-on activities, discussions, and peer interaction. While many of our students are interested in math and science, and in pursuing high-demand careers in science and technology-related fields such as nursing, engineering, and construction, most of them find

it a challenge to understand and fully engage with the material in the science texts; these students would greatly benefit from the introduction of more integrated support materials, interactive hands-on activities, , group projects, demonstrations, and the opportunity to engage in discussions that a project-based and/or cohort-based course would provide. These practices would also allow students to better appreciate that science is a process, a systematic method of analyzing information, not just a set of facts. The integration of *linked* learning communities courses in the areas of science, math, and writing would also boost student engagement, persistence, and completion rates.

During the 2015-2016 AEBG project period, faculty participated in professional development opportunities where they learned best practices for creating new learning community-based courses, modify curriculum, design pathways to postsecondary educational programs, and integrate other measures designed to directly improve student persistence and completion rates. Faculty identified an initial set of course subjects that pose the largest barrier to student completion, and designed a set of Learning Community (LC) cohort formatted focusing, for that project cycle, primarily on courses in the humanities and social sciences. During part of the spring term, two AHS faculty were able to team teach a pilot version of one learning community-type course, and received excellent feedback from students and fellow instructors (see section 2 "Justification" for more outcome details). Students who participated in, or even just heard about the class, expressed a strong interest in participating in similar courses.

Building on the early success of the pilot course, and the more interactive and discussion-based learning community cohort courses that were developed, during the 2016-2017 project cycle, instructors will develop enhanced science and math courses with the goals of making the course material more accessible and more engaging for students. The courses will be designed to help students develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes relating to the field of science that will better prepare them when then transition to postsecondary courses and training programs. To ensure that the courses are successful and help students transition to college level science courses, faculty will consult with science instructors on the credit campus, as well as with science instructors in other AHS/GED programs, when developing the curriculum, course activities, and manipulatives.

2) Analyze and Select a Tracking System for AHS/GED

During the 2016-2017 AEBG cycle, the AHS/GED program proposes to analyze, research and select/specify an internal recording and tracking system that meets the needs of the AHS/GED program. Such a program would supplement (not replace or duplicate) existing program, and will allow faculty and student support services to better market, implement, and measure outcomes of AEBG-supported course and programs improvements and interventions. The system will also enable faculty and staff to see student progress in real time, detect patterns that can help improve courses and course materials, and help prevent students from falling through the cracks. Importantly, it will also allow students to have better access to their own scores and records, thus fostering student accountability and communication with instructors. Creating a culture where students routinely check messages from instructors, check the status of assignments, and monitor their own progress and achievements will build habits and skills that are important for college and workplace success.

While a comprehensive needs analysis for such a system will take place during the project work period, the analysis team will likely look at both technical requirements (e.g., if there is an existing learning management system that fits the structure and needs of an open entry/open exit AHS/GED program), as well as procedural requirements (e.g., how to best structure classroom practices and procedures to ensure efficient, accurate recording and tracking), and reporting needs (e.g., what needs to be measured and analyzed, what will be done with the reports to ensure they are feed back into the program to make needed improvements).

One part of the system will likely include a system for recording individual student assignment scores for each course a student is enrolled in. Currently, these records are kept on paper records, which presents problems when students attend more than one classroom. It also does not allow instructors to pull summary reports (e.g., how many students have reached particular point in the course; how many are missing just one assignment, which students have to redo an assignment). Canvas and other LMS or grading systems we have had in the past will not work for our program, as those “dump” or offload records at the end of each term; AHS/GED students often complete courses across two or more terms.

Another aspect of the program will likely record important, relevant student attributes and survey data, such as their goals, career interests, intake assessment scores, general attendance patterns, past participation in workshops, need or interest in participating in future courses, and other traits or preferences. Having ready access to such information – and the ability to run reports or generate lists from it -- would allow instructors and student support staff to make program improvements, ensure that the interventions we introduce are meeting the needs of all students, and would facilitate the marketing of career-related and internship opportunities for our students. It could also allow instructors and our CASAS coordinator to better track when students need to take tests, and to possibly identify what courses or what interventions appeared to best help students reach important benchmarks.

An AHS/GED tracking system could also allow the Program to take advantage of other student success programs utilized by the credit campus, such as Starfish. With Starfish, instructors can check in with students and let them know if they are not meeting expectations and are at risk of not completing the course in a timely manner; instructors can also offer “kudos” to students who have been exceeding expectations. Without an adequate tracking system, AHS/GED would not be able to easily identify and reach out to such students.

In short, a well-thought out AHS/GED student tracking system would allow the AHS/GED program to gather and track the information it needs to (1) better help and retain current students, (2) target the needs of new students, (3) identify and reach out to lapsed students, (4) allocate resources wisely to improve program outcomes, and (5) (6) to efficiently determine student need for courses and potential pathways to credit classes on Main Campus.

3) Provide Continued Support from Hourly Classroom Teaching Assistants for AHS/GED

Hourly AHS/GED classroom teaching assistants form an integral part of the AHS/GED program, and are trained to help instructors with a variety of essential classroom duties. In a class period where students may be working on any one of 46 different courses, where new students can arrive at any time throughout the term, and where student reading and math levels may range from 2nd grade to college level, having classroom support is vital to maintaining student enrollments, persistence, and success. Without a trained assistant in the classroom, AHS/GED instructors would not be able to adequately meet the needs of the varied student population, which would likely result in lower enrollment and attendance figures. Nor would instructors have the time and resources to fully implement many of the proposed objectives and goals of the proposed AEBG projects.

Classroom teaching assistants not only provide individualized assistance to students alongside the instructors, they also help students with the registration and enrollment process, with locating the appropriate course materials, and with using computer programs. In addition, they help instructors with grading and recordkeeping, and allow instructors to devote more time to directly meeting students’ needs. TAs play a crucial role in facilitating LC courses and are essential to maintain, particularly during this recent reductions in funding which are tied to FTEs. The program needs to continue TA support, particularly during the implementation and

measurement phases of the AEBG projects. If the proposed AEBG proposals are to succeed, the program needs to have TAs. As enrollments and attendance hours increase under these new changes, FTEs will also increase, and thus funding to continue supporting TAs.

4) Provide Hourly AEBG Support Staff person

The current proposal also requests funding for an AEBG support person to make sure the various tasks associated with efficiently and effectively administering the AEBG projects are handled smoothly. The hourly part time support person would help with monitoring the budget, following up with timelines, project deliverables, and stipend requests. Other important tasks would include assisting faculty and committee members with contacting consultants and setting up site visits, meeting regularly with the grant coordinator, attending AEBG meetings, preparing materials, and communications with project team members – all of which is essential for keeping the projects on track.

Question 2. Integration *Please explain how your proposed program creates a transition to credit/transfer educational programs or creates a transition to the workforce (including, but not limited to, internships, jobs, preapprenticeships, self-employment).*

The STEM Curriculum development project provide students with the skills, habits, and knowledge they will need to transition to credit courses, vocational training, workplace environments.

The improved tracking system will allow instructors and support staff to track students' goals and needs; make recommendations for cohort and learning community classes that fits an individual student's goals and career path; contact current, lapsed, and past students to inform them of workshop, discussion, internship opportunities related to their educational /career interests and needs; identify successes and gaps, i.e., which interventions and program innovations best prepare students for postsecondary transitions, and whether certain student subgroups may benefit from the programs .

The Classroom TA and AEBG support person will help instructors to plan, implement, and measure outcomes of the AEBG proposed goals, and LTAs will help ensure students receive the instructional attention they need and make it more likely that they will persist in their studies.

3. Justification: *Please justify the need of your proposed program and include research, labor market information, employer feedback, student surveys, or other relevant information. For programs that received 2015 - 2016 AEBG funding, please justify the need for more funding and describe how additional funding will further your objectives.*

Labor Market

According to Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division, (December 2014) reports on the "Fastest Growing Occupations for Santa Barbara County for 2012-2022," as well as their report on "2012-2022 Occupations With the Most Job Openings", many of the high-demand and better-paying jobs are in STEM-related fields (e.g., nursing, programming, engineers, medical secretaries, machinists, construction fields) . This coincides with reports that projected demand of for students trained in science, technology, engineering and math fields may be significantly larger than previous studies have estimated (US News and World Report).

Although some of these jobs require additional education and training beyond a high school diploma, setting students on the path to pursue science-related fields by making introductory AHS and GED science courses more engaging and more accessible will better prepare them to continue in STEM courses in college or vocational programs. Increasing student motivation and

completion rates through improving course curriculum and delivery also aligns with the goal of meeting the needs of adult learners and helping them achieve meaningful outcomes, as those who finish their high school diploma are more likely to increase their occupational wage tier.

Student Surveys

Many AHS/GED students express interest in pursuing careers in STEM-related fields. Even those who plan to pursue other areas still need HS diplomas and GEDs to either enter those field, or to be eligible for financial aid to attend college and vocational training programs to start training for those fields.

The learning community pilot study (described in section 1) examine how a focused learning community cohort might improve student persistence rates. At the end of the course, students who participated responded to a survey. All participants had much higher attendance rates than the general AHS/GED program. In interviews, students said the learning group had made a big impact on their decision to attend class as often as they did. Students said they looked forward to weekly group meetings, made strong bonds with other students and felt more connected to the school. They reported that the group members supported each other and shared suggestions for how to overcome challenges. Overall, the students found learning community class design and instructional format to increase their success in the class. This evidence supports the proposed design and implementation of Learning Communities in the AHS/GED program.

Classroom teaching assistants are also instrumental in helping students persist and succeed in individualized courses. Ongoing faculty observation indicates that students in our individualized classes who receive extensive one-on-one attention early on tend to persist, while those who do not tend to stop attending. This is especially true of students whose assessment test scores are lower and/or who self-identify as having negative past experiences and feeling intimidated about returning to school. For example, many students assess around the 4th grade level for math: many either failed or never took math classes in high school. It is especially challenging for these students to complete high-school level work or pass the GED without hours of targeted support. In our busy classrooms, instructor may be conferencing with students about their progress, advising students about which courses to take next, or explaining our classroom structure to new students and may not be able to give a student who is struggling uninterrupted one-on-one support. Additionally, LTAs also help with the social and professional development needs of our students.

4. Outreach & Marketing *Please describe your plans to conduct outreach and marketing to reach your target population and increase enrollments.*

Instructors and support staff have already begun informing students about the learning community/cohort pilot courses via word-of-mouth, student testimonials, and fliers in the classroom and student support offices. Instructors are also having interested students fill out forms so they can be contacted when the courses are ready to be implemented. Furthermore, with improvements to the tracking system and with completion rate data from the pilot LC courses, instructors and student support staff plan to conduct more in reach with current students and to contact lapsed students to inform them of course and program improvements.

When the courses are approved and ready for implementation, the program, with help from improvements to the tracking systems, and classroom assistants can help identify and contact lapsed students who are near to completion and inform them of

Past experience has demonstrated that success breeds more success: When we have had our highest enrollments, a large part of that was due to students sharing their positive experiences; they successfully completed courses and earned diplomas or GEDs and told their friends.

Noncredit Program staff will also continue to work at the institutional level to improve data collection systems, create seamless entry and exit processes, and provide further marketing and outreach efforts for the AHS/GED program. These efforts span collaboration among SBCC administrative departments, ongoing work that will continue to expand upon the One College Initiative. It also includes external partner collaboration. Work will continue in three main areas: (a) the Marketing and Outreach Initiative, (b) the Student Intake and Transition Initiative and (c) the Data Collection Repository Initiative.

5. Alignment *Please describe how your program is in alignment and furthers the Consortium's Vision, Mission, Goals & Objectives as stated above.*

The AHS/GED proposal aligns with the vision, mission and goals of the Santa Barbara AEBG Consortium in the following ways: The Consortium's vision is to "meet the needs of adult education programming in our region by using data-driven decision making and an inclusive, collaborative coordinated approach." The AHS/GED plan clearly identifies the need to develop data repositories, create programs based on studied Best Practices and receive exemplary professional development from nationally renowned experts. The Consortium's mission states that in the first year it will be "critical to review best practices in our region in accelerated programs that lead to transfer, and to design new programs that address acceleration for adults, internships, and placement as never before." The AHS/GED proposal aligns with all aspects of this mission by proposing the our program expand the courses we offer in a learning community format, by developing courses that meet students' needs and provide pathways to college and vocational training, .As a result, the scope and implementation of these major project initiatives will also further the vision, mission and goals of the AEBG Consortium.

6. Activity Chart * Please use Activity Chart provided in the link under the instructions and email to sbaebg@gmail.com. The Activity Chart should outline your program's specific objectives and activities, along with a timeline for completion, the person/agency responsible, outcomes and data capture methods. Please attach additional pages if necessary. *

Total Budget Requested: \$99,900

1000/2000/3000 PERSONNEL and BENEFITS: 91, 000

1000/2000/3000 Detail :

- Classroom support TAs: \$60, 000
- AEBG Support Staff: \$17, 000
- STEM Curriculum Development: \$14, 000
- Analysis of Tracking system: \$2000

4000 * INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPLIES and NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPLIES: \$3900

4000 Detail

- materials for STEM: \$3900

5000 * CONSULTANTS, MEETINGS, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Site visits, professional development: \$3000

Current Number of Students Served * 2015-2016: approximately 650

Target Number of New Students Served for 2016-17 * 50

Do you currently receive NON-AEBG funding that supports the proposed activity? If yes, please describe how additional funding expands or supports that activity:

Only for LTA funding, which has been reduced; AEBG funding will allow the program to retain LTAs during the project implementation and measurement phases. When the program improvements achieve the expected increases in enrollments, attendance, completion rates, more state funding will be available to support continuation of LTAs.

What is your sustainability plan for this activity when funding is no longer available?

The majority of the plan delineated herein entails curriculum design and development, faculty professional development, and the creation of systems for effective program implementation. After the courses are developed and piloted, program design will be completed and implementation will take effect. Primarily, current funding sources will be used to maintain the program components. In addition, future funding options will be explored. Possible funding sources include internal and external grants including but not limited to WIOA and Student Equity Funds.