

**AEBG: YR3 2017-2018: Request for Proposal**  
**SBCC: Adult High School/GED Program**

**Are you an existing 2015/16 or 2016/17 AEBG funding participant?**

Yes

**Program Name**

SBCC Adult High School/GED Program

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**Applicable Program Area**

Adult Education (ABE, ASE, Basic Skills)

**1. Executive Summary**

Santa Barbara City College's Adult High School and GED Program serves student who need to complete credits to earn their high school diploma, or who need help in preparing earn their GED. For the vast majority of our students, the lack of a HS diploma or GED is the main obstacle standing between them and their ability to apply for stable, well-paying jobs, attend trade schools, or transition to college.

Helping students to earn their diploma in a timely manner, and to develop skills that will transfer to the workplace and higher education is a significant challenge, especially given the fact that our students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and often lack the skills needed to tackle some of the program's more challenging subject credit requirements. This seems to be particularly true for subject matter areas that might be considered the humanities, such as US history, world history, political science, and economics. Our gap analysis has indicated that students need more scaffolded support for these courses.

Another challenge that has a direct effect on student success and completion rates has to do with students' inconsistent attendance and attrition. By necessity, our program has an open entry/open exit, flexible schedule format and, as a result, students may end up coming to class at different times and working with multiple instructors; that is not necessarily a bad thing, our student population has many demands placed on them and would not be able to attend classes at all without this flexibility. However, this does make it difficult to consistently follow up with individual students on a one-on-one basis about how well they are doing in adhering to their attendance and study plan, and to consistently create a more personal connection with all students, which research has shown is an important factor in student persistence and success.

Finally, our gap analysis has indicated that we may not be reaching certain student populations that could greatly benefit from completing their high school diploma or from getting help with preparing for their GED exams -- or from improving reading, writing, and math skills that they may need to advance in their careers. These populations include students who, for a variety of reasons, cannot drive to one of our campuses on a regular basis, but would be able to take our

AHS and GED courses if they were offered in a hybrid (online/classroom) format. Likewise, other students might be more likely to enroll and attend courses if they were part of a cohort. For example, our consortium's KRA employment agency partner indicated that many of their clients are older women who have recently lost jobs or who are changing careers; they may now need to earn a GED or diploma to get a new job or may just need to brush up on skills. These clients may be more inclined to attend accelerated GED prep workshops that are offered outside our regular AHS/GED classes, or cohort groups where students share similar needs and goals.

To address these gaps and challenges, the overarching goals of the current proposal are to:

- (1) Improve and accelerate completion (graduation) rates by creating enhanced support materials for our humanities course (economics, US history, world history, political science), which our data has indicated the majority of our students need to take – and which are also often problematic for most students to complete. These scaffolded support materials will also help students develop essential skills and strategies for reading informational texts and graphics -- skills which are essential for college and workplace reading.
- (2) Increase student attendance and persistence, and reduce attrition rates, by looking at way to create an integrated student-instructor interaction program that provides a more focused and systematic way for instructors to motivate and follow-up with students.
- (3) Reach students, both new and lapsed, whose needs we are currently not meeting, by developing and piloting alternate formats for our current courses, such as hybrid online versions of our courses and/or courses tailored to specific populations whose needs we may not be currently meeting.

## **2. Integration**

The proposed projects will create transitions to higher education and the workplace in the following ways:

- 1) Accelerated completion time: Students need to have a diploma or GED to be eligible to even just apply for many jobs. The same is true for most vocational training programs. We have students who have been accepted to trucking school, barber school, or medical assistant training schools, but who have had to delay or put those plans on hold because the schools require a diploma or GED before the student can begin the program. Having a HS diploma or GED also opens more financial aid opportunities for students to attend college. Helping students to earn a diploma in a more timely manner – months, rather than years – would greatly accelerate the time it takes for students to transition to college or the workplace, and reduce the likelihood that students will drop out.
- 2) Development informational (nonfiction) text reading skills: Instructor observations, student comments, and discussions with credit college colleagues, have all pointed to the fact that many students – including credit college students -- have insufficient strategies for reading and analyzing informational text. Students often try to process these texts in the same way they approach fictional texts, with the expected poor results. Providing students with support materials that explicitly help them develop strategies for reading informational texts, as well as graphs, tables, diagrams, would provide them with transferrable skills that can help them in college and in the workplace.
- 3) Building accountability and developing communication skills. Fostering greater student-instructor interaction will not only help motivate students and increase persistence, but can also help students develop skills that are important for college and workplace success, such as goal setting, prioritization, accountability, self-advocacy, and appropriate communication with peers and instructors.
- 4) Computer literacy and familiarity with taking online courses: Providing students with the opportunity to take online or hybrid courses to earn some of their HS credits would provide them

with experience in managing such courses – which, in turn, will better prepare them for when they transition to college or workplace training programs, many of which offer online courses.

### **3. Justification**

Many of the justifications were included in the Executive summary and Integration sections, but to summarize some additional key points:

Many of our students are unemployed or working in lower-paying jobs; for most, the main reason they are attending the AHS/GED program is that they need a diploma or GED to get a job, enroll in vocational training programs, move up to a higher position at work, or attend college. Nearly all would like to earn a diploma in a timely manner, but many have had trouble completing all their credits in the timeline they have set for themselves. Interviews with students, as well as analysis of course completion data and “credits still needed” data, indicate some gaps or needs in our program that, if addressed, would likely help students persist with their studies and complete their credits.

Below are some relevant statistics and survey/interview data that supports the need for the proposed projects:

Recently pulled data indicates that approximately 90 % of the roughly 560 AHS students who have been active in our AHS program for the past two years still need to complete credits in one or more of these humanities courses. This is not surprising given that traditional high school typically require students to take these courses senior year, and most, if not all, of our AHS students did not complete senior year at their previous high school. The subject matter of these courses is, by nature, challenging, particularly for students who lack prior knowledge of key concepts and vocabulary that the textbook writers assume most high school students have. The reading level of the text books is at least a 10th grade level, while many of our students come to our program with 5th-6 grade reading levels or below.

As a result, many of our AHS students often put off working on these humanities subjects until they finish completing credits in other subject areas, such as math and English. In addition, because the courses are self-paced, when they do enroll in these courses, it often takes them much longer – up to 50% more hours -- to complete the course than it does to complete courses of comparable credits in other subject areas. In fact, it appears that many students get discouraged and end up not completing the courses, even after putting in significant hours.

In short, for a significant portion of our student population, what is standing between them and a diploma is completion of these courses. Providing scaffolded support materials to better guide students (particularly those for whom English is not a first language, or who do not have strong reading skills), through the challenging subject matter, would greatly increase completion rates for the courses and, ultimately, for the HS diploma program. These materials would also benefit our 400+ GED students, nearly all of who also need to understand key concepts in these subject matter areas and to develop skills in reading and analyzing informational texts in order to pass the social studies and language arts GED exams – and to transition to college.

-- A few additional notes regarding need for developing enhanced student-instructor interaction. Past BSI projects, CALPRO workshops, and data from other institutions (Williams, 2010), as well as instructor and student interviews and surveys, have all supported the fact that enhanced, systematic student-instructor interaction has a significant impact on learner persistence. Students who meet regularly with instructors for the purpose of setting and monitoring attendance goals, and for following up with overall progress, are more likely to persist and attend regularly – and to return to school after unavoidable absences.

-- Regarding the need to create hybrid and online versions of our courses: Current students, as well as students who have lapsed because they are no longer able to come to campus, have asked us if we offer online courses. Also, some of our AEBG partners have been approached by national online high schools asking to partner up; if our local SBCC AHS/GED program is able to offer online versions of courses, we will be in a better position to partner with our local agencies.

#### Alignment with previous phases of the AEBG projects

In prior phases of the AEBG project, we utilized funding to begin to develop learning communities for some of our courses, and even piloted an accelerated cohort class in American government that was successful in helping students complete the course in a timely manner. Based on the feedback from students who participated in this pilot course, we believe that the lecture and discussion format of the course not only helped students understand and learn the material at a deeper level, it also resulted in stronger student-instructors interactions and helped students develop skills that will transfer when they go on to the credit campus. However, one of the other "lessons learned" from the pilot is that our current program structure and demographics make it difficult – at least for now -- to fully implement regular and ongoing cohort courses for all students. It made it clear that, in order to have the greatest impact on the greatest number of students, our focus at this phase of the project should be on taking what we learned from the pilot courses and expanding upon it to enhance support materials for the current self-paced (i.e., asynchronous, non-cohort) version of our humanities courses.

Another task we began this past year using AEBG funding was to look at ways to better gather and track student data, so that we can make more informed decisions about what will have the most positive and significant impact on improving our program outcomes. While we are still in the early phases of that task, we have been able to look at some of preliminary data relating to attendance and completion patterns, as well as student needs. Rough analysis of that data has also pointed to the fact that one of our greatest needs is to develop enhanced support materials for our humanities courses, to develop better ways to connect with and follow up with students, and to reach students who are unable to physically come to campus on a regular basis.

#### **4. Outreach & Marketing**

As the enhanced support materials for the humanities courses are created, instructors and Student Support staff will directly contact AHS students who need credits in those areas, and let them know that the courses have been improved. As students begin feeling more successful when working with the course materials, and as they complete the courses in a more timely manner, we will have student testimonials and data that we can then use when conducting outreach (calls, mailings, etc) to new as well as lapsed students.

We expect a similar pattern with the other components of the project. 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 with friends, relatives, co-workers and others in the community: Namely that they felt connected to their instructors, that they had successfully completed courses, and that they had earned diplomas or GEDs.

The proposed projects also align well with the inter-agency collaborative project that the SB Public Library is proposing this cycle. AHS/GED Instructors and support staff will help create informational and promotional materials, and will meet with partners and community stakeholders, to make sure internal and external agencies/departments are aware of the AHS/GED offerings and success rates.

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. Work will also 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**

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 create programs based on studied Best Practices, develop data repositories, and to make sure instructors receive professional development particularly in developing versions or formats of our existing courses which will, in turn, help our program reach broader student populations. The Consortium's mission also states that a critical goal is to "accelerate transitions to transfer or career success." The AHS/GED proposal aligns with all aspects of this mission by proposing the our program enhance courses we currently offer by (1) providing support for learners of all levels complete courses in a more timely manner, (2) by developing courses and course formats that meet students' needs, and (3) by providing 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**

### **Total Budget Requested**

\$48,000

### **1000/2000/3000**

\$25,000

### **1000/2000/3000 Detail**

-- Humanities courses enhancement and support material development (6 courses total):

\$12, 000

-- Development of Student-Instructor Tracking and Follow-up program: \$5, 000

-- Development of alternate course formats: \$8,000

### **4000**

\$18,000

### **4000 Detail**

-- materials for humanities support materials project, as well as materials for alternate format courses: \$18,000

(includes books, guides, and educational software)

### **5000**

\$5,000

### **5000 Detail**

Site visits, professional development, OEI certification, attending conferences; meetings to conduct training and consulting with other areas:

**6000**

0

**6000 Detail**

n/a

**Total Number of Adults Students Served**

805

**Target Number of New Adult Students Served for 2017-18**

80-100

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

No

**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 and course materials are developed and piloted, program design will be completed and implementation into the existing AHS/GED Program 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.