

Spoon River College

Drop Out Recovery Program Abstract

Contract # OSY-2024-05

This contract has been entered into for the purpose of providing a drop-out recovery program for the high school drop-outs in need of literacy and/or numeracy remediation. The contract begins July 1, 2024 and will terminate on June 30, 2025, but may be extended for two additional years if mutually agreed to. The funding amount is \$80,000. The enrollment goal is 20 students.

Spoon River College will provide the intensive education and employment skills program for Fulton County youth and youth from surrounding counties who may benefit from enrollment in Spoon River College's program. Consensus from both Spoon River College and Career Link will be required for students outside of Peoria County. The program will serve students, ages 16-24, that have dropped out of high school, preferably have a deficiency in literacy or numeracy, and will be provide an opportunity to participate in a GED Recovery Program.

The Service Provider will provide all four required program elements – instruction for GED preparation, for literacy and numeracy gains, for employment related skills, and incentives to motivate students to achieve. The Service Provider will also partner with other groups and businesses to provide Work Experience.

1. GED Preparation

Spoon River College currently provides Illinois High School Diploma (GED) preparation courses. These courses are offered in the morning and evening in Canton and morning and afternoon in Havana. Classes run for eight weeks, twice in both the fall and spring semesters. Drop-Out Recovery Program participants will be enrolled in at least one Illinois High School Diploma (GED) preparation class. The cost of the GED preparation course will be paid with Adult Education and Family Literacy (AEFL) grant funds. The Adult Education Advisors will monitor attendance and progress in the course, working closely with the instructors to ensure sufficient learning gains. As program participants progress into transfer or CTE courses, monitoring will be handled by the Adult Education Advisor by working directly with students and by the Adult Education Administrative Assistant who will regularly check in with post-secondary faculty. If a participant chooses to go directly into the workforce, either the advisor or administrative assistant will work to stay in contact with the participant.

Participants will be required to attend 3-hour Illinois High School Diploma (GED) preparation classes a minimum of two days each week.

At the time of enrollment, participants will be given the CASAS test to help determine program eligibility. After the participant has attended class for a minimum of 40 hours, a post-test will be administered to assess progress. Additional assessments will be given periodically following the initial post-test if necessary.

Participants will be required to participate in a minimum of four hours of Career and College Preparation training. The training is designed to provide information in career exploration, job readiness, job search techniques, and/or post-secondary education. Participation is designed to enhance the participant's ability to obtain employment and/or to attend post-secondary education training.

Illinois High School Diploma (GED) Preparation

- **Language Arts, Reading & Writing** – Participants will learn to identify errors and make corrections in sentence structure, usage, mechanics, and organization. Participants will write an extended response that will analyze the arguments of one or more passages. Students will cite relevant and specific evidence from the passages to support the response. In addition, participants will learn skills and techniques that will allow them to comprehend the information presented in excerpts from newspapers, magazines, novels, short stories, poetry, drama, and business or legal documents.
- **Social Studies** - Participants will learn to gain an understanding of the basic principles from history, economics, geography, civics, and government. Participants will learn to comprehend passages, cartoons, graphs, and charts.
- **Science** - Participants will learn basic concepts in the fields of life science, earth and space science, and physical science (chemistry and physics).
- **Mathematics** – Participants will learn basic principles of algebra, measurement and geometry questions, number theory, data analysis, and probability.

Career and College Readiness

- **Job Search Skills** – Participants will learn how to locate job announcements, how to write effective resumes, how the job application process works, and proper interview skills.
- **Work Habits** – Participants will be introduced to the concepts of workplace ethics, good personal character, and employer expectations.
- **Communication Skills** – Participants will learn about workplace communication, one-on-one communication versus group communication, listening skills, presenting oneself, and non-verbal communication.
- **Workplace Effectiveness** – Participants will learn about the importance of time management, problem solving skills, customer service, and team work.

The Service Provider is required to assist Career Link in attaining a copy of the youth's GED certificate or transcript from the Regional Office of Education.

2. Literacy and Numeracy Gains/Measureable Skills Gains

The program must provide for specific gains in literacy and/or numeracy, as appropriate, based on the initial assessment with the TABE or CASAS. The standard of achievement is for the youth to increase at least one educational functioning level in at least one area of deficiency. Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) are indicators used to track important achievements of WIOA participants. A student in a GED program can earn a MSG by completing their GED or increasing a reading or math grade level. Attainment of the MSG will be determined by a post-test. The post-test must be the same type (TABE/CASAS) as the pre-test. The Service Provider should work with Career Link to develop an individualized plan for when students should be post-tested.

The purpose of the Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) indicator is to track and measure important progressions and achievements made by WIOA clients (entered in training or education), through pathways and towards various

goals of their individual programs. A gain must be recorded for a client each year (July 1 – June 30) they are enrolled in training or education and progress satisfactorily in one or more areas of their employment or training program.

3. Employment-related Skills

The program must provide information in Career Exploration, Job Readiness Skills, and Job Search Techniques in order to enhance the youths' ability to obtain employment or to attend post-secondary educational training. The program provider is responsible for providing adequate training and counseling to assist the youth in achieving one of these outcomes mentioned above, up to the point where the youth has been terminated from the program. Goals for attainment of benchmarks in the area will be jointly established between Career Link staff and Service Provider staff. These Work Readiness goal achievements will flow naturally from the delivery of this element.

Participants will receive training in Career and College Readiness. The program will not only prepare participants to seek or obtain employment but also cover skills essential to keeping their job once they are hired. Training/instruction may cover: preparing a resume or job application; preparing a cover letter; work focused career exploration; training in interviewing skills; training in effective job seeking; and instruction in workplace expectations.

In addition, participants will receive training/instruction about a variety of Life Skills subjects that are not directly related to looking for a job. Training/instruction may cover: Balancing Life and Work; Child Care Management; Transportation Management; Household Management; Budget Management; Decision Making Skills; Interpersonal Skills; Time Management; and Family Strengthening Skills.

4. Incentives

A financial incentive system will be offered to encourage perseverance and participation in goal-directed activities. Incentives may be modified, with prior approval from Career Link, as the need arises to make them more effective and appropriate in promoting program successes. The subcontractor will issue incentives directly to students. Incentives must be awarded throughout the year and may not be withheld from students until completion of the program. Every award will be fully documented and receipt of each incentive will be signed for by the student and the records saved by the subcontractor.

- Student incentives may not be incurred after 30 days upon attaining a GED.
- Maximum incentive awards per student may not exceed \$425 for the duration of the student's enrollment with Career Link.

ICAPS Training

ICAPS at Spoon River College is designed to support Adult Education and basic skills deficient students who seek a career credential by providing contextualized basic skills instruction and essential workforce skills. Students will also receive comprehensive student support services to assist them with overcoming barrier to credential completion. Participants will be eligible for concurrent enrollment upon successful completion of a minimum of two GED examinations. Currently, Spoon River College has one approved ICAPS program in Basic Certified

Nursing Assistant but will seek to have programs in welding and phlebotomy approved in fiscal year 2025. In addition to courses in the content areas, a support course will be mandatory for students. The support course reinforces the material and skills required for successful completion of content area courses, in addition to providing sector job search and workplace skills preparation. The AE instructor will have completed Illinois Standards Proficient Training and will contextualize the Standards throughout the instruction.

Work Experience Component

Students who demonstrate regular and reliable patterns of attendance, work ethic, and academic performance are selected to participate in a related work program. Worksites are arranged by the Service Provider and the Career Link Career Planner. Efforts are made to place students in sites that are compatible with their interests or previous work experiences and are easily accessed, especially when transportation is a challenge for the student. Career Link will establish a contractual agreement with the employer at the request of the Service Provider. Career Link will pay the youth the current Illinois minimum wage or up to \$5.00 above the minimum wage, depending on the prevailing entry-level wage for the work site. Work Experience may continue up to 1,800 hours, or up to eighteen (18) months duration, whichever occurs first. Student workers cannot exceed 29 work hours per week. Career Link should be made aware of issues at worksites and should be contacted before a student is removed from a worksite. The subcontractor will initiate the process of placing students in job, in conjunction with Career Link oversight.

The Spoon River College Adult Education Program staff understands the importance of practical, workplace-based experience for students. Understanding and experiencing the “real” world can be vital to student success. From developing key skills to growing a professional network and planning a career path, real-life experiences can benefit students in ways that will last beyond program completion.

To that end, SRC program staff is committed to helping and making recommendations for worksites. Potential worksites may include but not be limited to maintenance or clerical positions at: school districts, municipalities, Spoon River College, libraries, and townships. In addition, worksites may include retail establishments, restaurants, recreational facilities, or cemeteries. SRC staff will assist in making connections between Career Link staff and potential worksite staff.

Transition to Employment or Post-Secondary Training

The subcontractor will provide a comprehensive transition program to support GED graduates in their pursuit of post-secondary education or employment, including but not limited to career assessments, job placement services, and referrals to local education and training providers. The subcontractor will work collaboratively with Career Link to identify and address barriers to successful transition, and shall provide regular updates on its progress towards achieving these goals.

Adult Education Advisors will primarily be responsible for the transition portion of the program. The program will empower students to make informed decisions about their career and educational plans and to prepare students for success in the workforce and/or post-secondary education and training. Staff will help students define career aspirations and recognize community college and other post-secondary programs, including apprenticeships and workforce training that can enhance their capacity to achieve educational and financial goals.

After successful enrollment into the program, staff will work with participants to identify goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.

If the participant's goals indicate the desire to pursue post-secondary education, staff will help the participant in planning suitable education options. If the participant's interest is specifically to attend Spoon River College, program staff will assist the student in scheduling a meeting with Career Link staff to secure tuition and fees. In addition, program staff will work with students to schedule meetings with academic advisors, financial aid representatives, and faculty of the identified program of study. If the choice for education/training is outside of Spoon River College, program staff will help in completion of program applications, scholarship applications, and financial aid paperwork.

If the participant's goals indicate the desire to move directly into the workforce, program staff will assist in designing a training program that will provide the participants with knowledge and skills related to: job research, resume writing, interview skills, positive work habits, and business etiquette.