

High Tech, High Touch: Using Technology as Skills Delivery Mechanism

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Technologically innovative programs must be part of a state workforce agenda that is flexible and based on partnerships

- Helps states and local organization institutionalize online programs
- Formed a community of practitioners who are innovatively using technology
- Conduct process evaluations of online learning options for the workforce (Currently evaluating ETA demonstration project on online portals)

States Must Rethink the Way They Deliver Workforce Development Programs to Reach All Underserved Populations

40% of all Americans have less than 6 months of college

A growing number of Americans face:

- Childcare needs
- Irregular work schedule
- Transportation problems
- Lack of access to One-Stop Centers and classes

Workers with disabilities

Unsuccessful classroom learning experiences

Democratize access to education and skills training primarily by:
Capitalizing on new technology

- Online Learning is being used to upgrade skills:
 - Low income single mothers and fathers
 - Inmates released to the community
 - Youth
 - Welfare to Work participants
 - Rural populations
 - Domestic Violence Victims
 - Many other groups

Pilot program with NJ DOL and the USDOL,
Women's Bureau , 2002-2004

Goal: To provide online learning to 100 single NJ mothers with children whose income was within 250-300% of the poverty line.

- Earnings of the women selected averaged \$18,000 a year
- Involved 5 NJ WIBS and 8 counties.
- Curriculum assured training was tied to local demand jobs
- Designed to last one year with each participant receiving a computer, printer, Internet access

Implementation

Local WIBS worked with One-Stop Centers Regarding:

- Recruitment, selection and assessment of women
- Selected approved vendors to supply hardware, software and technical support
- Arranged for Internet service

Curriculums typically reflected core business classes as well as GED, literacy, and all workforce readiness skills

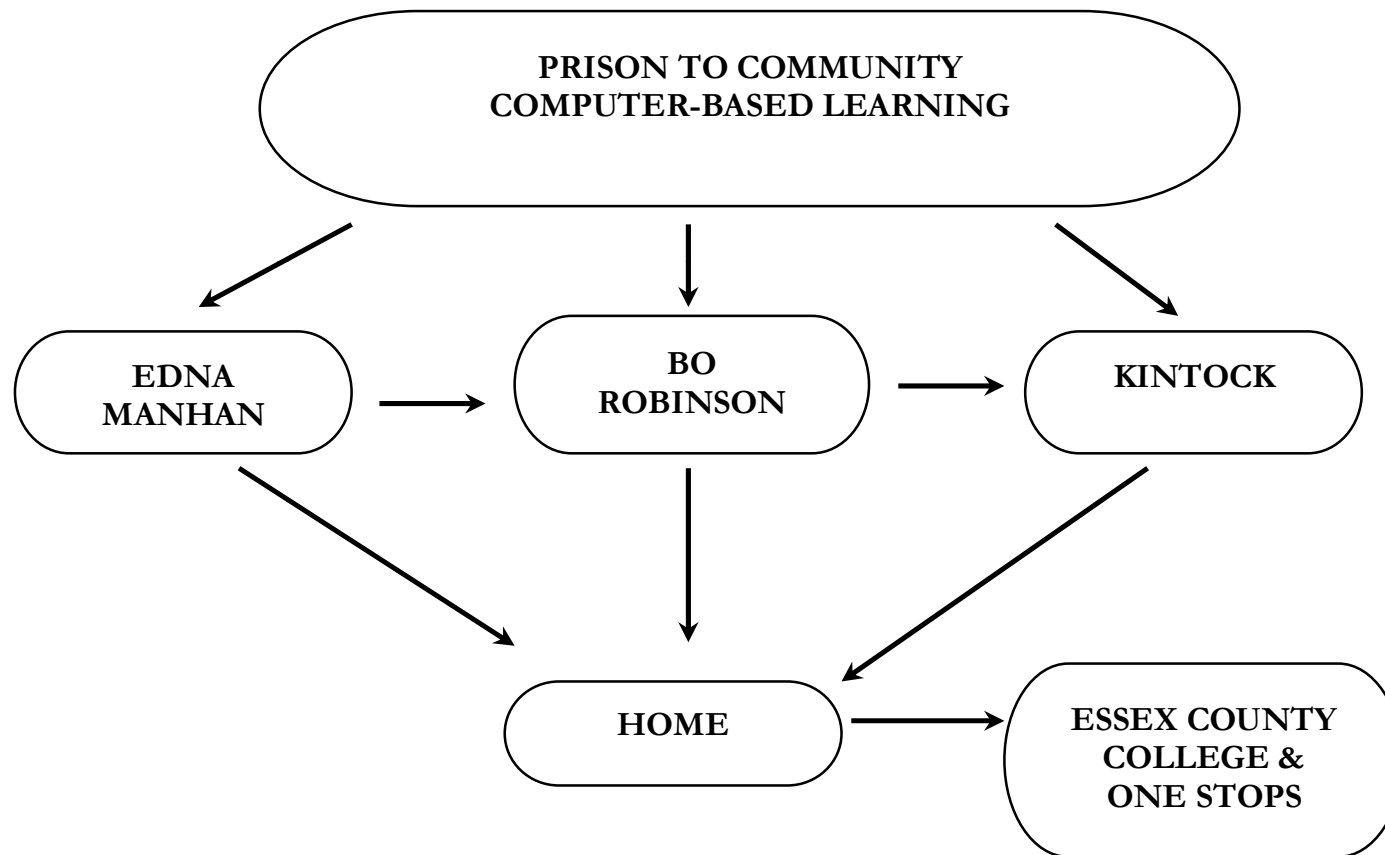
Cost: \$3,000 - \$4,500 per participant (including computer, printer, Internet access and courses for a year – select from hundreds)

- High retention rate - 128 participants; only 11 left the program (92% retention rate)
- Average wage increase – 14%
- Women also entered college and community college programs/promotions
- Helped alleviate transportation demands (many courses not available in local area)
- Family literacy effects – appeal of children’s software
- Participation in the program increases women’s confidence and self-esteem.
- Women would have liked more structure in the learning environment
- Blended model of learning best (case management)

Online learning from Prison to Community

- Our Sample (348 women) are in Prison and under community supervision
- Most of the women in the sample are mothers
- 66.9% of the women reported having high school and higher educational attainment
- Older population (39 percent are 40 and above)
- We are in the first year of a three year pilot program

LOGIC MODEL OF THE PROGRAM



Qualitative Findings

- “I really need this computer learning program to get connected. The odds are against me, I do have a criminal background so if I can get support that can help me that would be good. I want to complete this program so I can figure out which direction to go and have more information in how to fulfill my goals and what area or field I want to get into.”
- “This computer class will help me get a better job at a desk, not a factory when I get out. It will help me get better benefits and be more professional and have a stable job.”
- “I hope to learn more and have more skills not only to get a job but also to remain in that job and keep the job. I believe the program will help me go further in the workplace. And once I get myself together I can get my kids back.”
- “I can see myself putting what I have learned [here] on my job application and saying to my employers that this is what I accomplished in prison instead of being down and depressed.”

Best Practices

- Be sure stakeholders understand fully what online learning is and how it works
- Grants should provide for maximum upfront planning time
- Provide adequate staffing at the local level
- Carefully evaluate programmatic and technical options, including educational vendors and Internet service providers
- Ensure that equipment is flexible depending on the culture e.g. laptops vs. desk-tops
- Develop a comprehensive assessment process for all potential applicants
- Consider participants different learning styles
- Ideally involve employers from the start in curriculum design and post-program hiring
- Provide comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the program (a process evaluation with feedback is ideal)

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