



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #659

Adult Literacy Grants (DPI -- Administrative and Other Funding)

[LFB 2009-11 Budget Summary: Page 540, #16]

CURRENT LAW

Under current law, \$50,000 GPR annually is provided for adult literacy grants to nonprofit organizations to support programs that train community-based adult literacy staff and to establish new volunteer-based programs in areas of the state that have a demonstrated need for adult literacy services. Grants are limited to \$10,000 each, and no organization is permitted to receive more than one grant in a fiscal year.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$19,400 annually above base level funding of \$50,000 for adult literacy grants. Also, delete the current law requirement that no grant may exceed \$10,000.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. The Governor originally proposed a program for providing adult literacy grants to nonprofit organizations in the 2005-07 budget bill. The original proposal included \$100,000 GPR provided on a one-time basis in 2005-06. The Joint Finance Committee modified the Governor's recommendation, and current law provides \$50,000 annually in an ongoing appropriation. In 2007-08 and 2008-09, five organizations received annual grants. The five organizations are Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. and Literacy Network, both in Madison; Literacy Volunteers of Chippewa Valley in Eau Claire; Literacy Green Bay, Inc.; and Racine Literacy Council.

2. Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. is a statewide coalition of 54 adult, family, and workplace literacy providers, distributing best practices information and coordinating services among local literacy providers and area technical colleges. The organization receives funding and resources

support from Community Shares of Wisconsin and Verizon. Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. estimates that its members provide instruction for approximately 13,000 students annually.

3. Literacy Network, a member of Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. and a United Way agency, provides one-to-one tutoring of reading, writing, and English speaking skills and free classes in English as a second language for adults in Dane County. Learners can receive services if they are over the age of 18 and not affiliated with the University of Wisconsin, which has its own tutoring service. Approximately 1,000 adults are served annually.

4. Literacy Volunteers of Chippewa Valley in Eau Claire is a member of Wisconsin Literacy and trains volunteers to provide one-to-one tutoring services, family literacy services, corrections education, workplace literacy services, and preparation for the written exam and oral interview for citizenship at the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. The organization serves students in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire counties through partnerships with a number of private businesses, nonprofit organizations and foundations, public and private schools, and institutions of higher education.

5. Literacy Green Bay, Inc. (formerly Literacy Council of Brown County) is also a member of Wisconsin Literacy. Programs offered include adult tutoring, tutoring for the children of non-English speaking adults, family literacy, and citizenship preparation. A workforce development program offers customized workplace literacy programming for non-English speaking employees, as well as beginning Spanish classes, at local worksites. Spanish classes for English speakers are offered at a number of skill levels, for a fee. Literacy Green Bay works with Brown County United Way, the Green Bay School District, and area institutions of higher education.

6. Racine Literacy Council is affiliated with Wisconsin Literacy, Inc., the United Way of Racine County, and the Greater Milwaukee Literacy Coalition. The organization trains volunteers to provide one-to-one literacy tutoring as well as tutoring in English as a second language. Tutors also help students obtain drivers licenses, help their children with school work, and apply for citizenship.

7. According to a report by the National Center for Education Statistics, released in January, 2009, the estimated number of adults in the state who lack basic literacy skills improved from 10% in 1992 to 7% by 2003, although the estimates have relatively large margins of error. Of the counties served by agencies receiving adult literacy grants, Dane County was below average for adults lacking basic literacy skills, at an estimated 5%, as was Eau Claire County at 6%. Brown, Chippewa, and Dunn counties were average, at 7% of adults lacking basic literacy. Only Racine County was estimated to be above the statewide average, at 8%. However, adults with low literacy skills tend to be concentrated among low-income and recent immigrant populations. Also, Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. indicates that many literacy programs have waiting lists for participants, and many adults who qualify for services are not receiving them.

8. Because there are at least 54 adult, family, and workplace literacy providers in the state affiliated with Wisconsin Literacy, Inc., it may be desirable to retain the current law limit of

\$10,000 for an individual grant award. Retaining this limit would guarantee that at least two additional providers could benefit from the grants, in addition to the five currently receiving funds. On the other hand, deleting the limit would permit DPI either to provide a larger grant for one or more current providers, or to allocate the entire appropriation to only one provider.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$19,400 annually above base level funding of \$50,000 for adult literacy grants. Also, delete the current law requirement that no grant may exceed \$10,000.

2. Modify the Governor's recommendation to provide \$19,400 annually above base level funding of \$50,000 for adult literacy grants, but retain the current law limit of \$10,000 for grants.

3. Delete provision.

ALT 3	Change to Bill
	Funding
GPR	- \$38,800

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