

2009 Communities of Opportunity – Colquitt County

Community Improvement Strategy:

Colquitt County seeks to improve educational attainment for its citizenry by working with students to increase the high school graduation rate. In addition, the county will provide free income tax filing assistance to its poorest citizens, while also offering these individuals education on budgeting and credit management, in order to reduce persistent poverty.

Issues to be Addressed

With 23.4% of the citizens of Colquitt County living below the poverty level and a high school graduation rate of 59.6%, Colquitt County sees the need to better educate its citizens. To this end, Colquitt County will target individuals in the highest persistent poverty neighborhoods and offer them free tax assistance and financial education focused on budgeting and credit management. In addition, the county would like to enhance the online curriculum provided to students at the Colquitt County High School Achievement Center with a community involvement plan to encourage hands-on experiences that will connect the students to the community at large. Research has proven that students who are connected and engaged at their school and in their community are more likely to graduate from high school. Therefore, Colquitt County will endeavor to create extracurricular and service-learning opportunities for ninth grade students to participate in within the county. Ninth grade students will be targeted, as this has historically been the grade in which most students have fallen behind.

Strategy

As a Community of Opportunity, Colquitt County will accomplish the following over the next two years:

1. Develop and implement a Community Involvement Plan for 9th grade students at the Colquitt County High School Achievement Center.
2. Utilize “Partners for Progress” Report to identify target audience to market free tax services to.
3. Develop and implement a Tax Prep Assistance Program combined with a financial education component for target audience.

Measures of Success

For each strategy listed above, success will be measured as follows:

1. Colquitt County will improve its graduation rate from 59.6 to 61%.
2. Increase the number of individuals receiving EITC and Child Tax Credits.
3. Decrease the number of individuals utilizing refund anticipation loans.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN For Colquitt County

Issue Addressed	Action Item	Responsible Local Partners	Responsible State Partners	Cost Estimate	Possible Funding Sources	Starting and ending dates for completion of action item
High School Drop Out Prevention	Identify Elective Courses that 9 th grade students will be enrolled in at Achievement Center	Achievement Center Staff; Co Op Dropout Prevention Workgroup	N/A	0	N/A	October 2009- June 2010
High School Drop Out Prevention	Identify community-based programs and partners that can provide activities aligned with identified elective courses	Co Op Dropout Prevention Workgroup; Family Connection Collaborative	N/A	0	N/A	November 2009 - July 2010
High School Drop Out Prevention	Negotiate provision of services by community partners/procure memorandums of agreement	Co Op Dropout Prevention Workgroup; Family Connection Collaborative	N/A	\$3750	DCA; local government; community partners	December 2009 - August 2010
High School Drop Out Prevention	Provide services to 9 th grade students enrolled in respective elective courses at the Achievement Center	Co Op Dropout Prevention Workgroup; Family Connection Collaborative; Achievement Center Staff; Community Partners	N/A	Included in above amount	N/A	August 2010- May 2011
High School Drop Out Prevention	Design evaluation plan, and related instruments, to measure anticipated outcomes of increased student connection to	Co Op Dropout Prevention Workgroup; Family Connection Collaborative; Achievement Center	N/A	N/A	N/A	October 2009- December 2009

Issue Addressed	Action Item	Responsible Local Partners	Responsible State Partners	Cost Estimate	Possible Funding Sources	Starting and ending dates for completion of action item
	CCHS, students who complete requirements for promotion to 10 th grade, and students who complete requirements for graduation.	Staff;				
High School Drop Out Prevention	Implement evaluation plan including data collection, analysis, and reporting.	Co Op Dropout Prevention Workgroup; Family Connection Collaborative; Achievement Center Staff; Community Partners	DCA	Included	N/A	January 2010 – May 2013 – quarterly reports to be given in interim
Financial Education	Identify individuals to receive training through IRS VITA program; attend training.	Co Op Financial Education Workgroup; CC Extension Service	N/A	\$1000 for travel costs	DCA; local government	October 2009- August 2010
Financial Education	Recruit volunteers from banks, colleges, community to provide direct tax assistance (coordinate with AARP volunteer program) and financial education.	Co Op Financial Education Workgroup; Family Connection Collaborative	N/A	N/A	N/A	November 2009 - September 2010
Financial Education	Train volunteers to provide VITA services.	Co Op Financial Education Workgroup; locally trained staff	N/A	N/A	N/A	December 2009- October 2010
Financial Education	Identify financial education topics to be	Co Op Financial Education Workgroup;	N/A	N/A	N/A	November 2009 and November

Issue Addressed	Action Item	Responsible Local Partners	Responsible State Partners	Cost Estimate	Possible Funding Sources	Starting and ending dates for completion of action item
	offered; secure partners to provide services in conjunction with VITA schedule.	Family Connection Collaborative; financial institutions				2010
Financial Education	Secure location, equipment, supplies for provision of VITA services and education programs.	Co Op Financial Education Workgroup; Family Connection Collaborative;	N/A	\$2750 (computers, supplies)	N/A	December 2009 and December 2010
Financial Education	Develop and distribute marketing and promotional materials to promote program to community (target audience is neighborhoods with highest rates of poverty identified in the Partners for Progress Report)	Co Op Financial Education Workgroup; Family Connection Collaborative; partners providing education services	N/A	Included above	N/A	December 2009- January 2010 And December 2010 - January 2011
Financial Education	Develop evaluation plan and related instruments to measure the anticipated outcomes of increase in number of individuals receiving free tax assistance, increase in number of individuals receiving EITC and Child Tax Credits, decrease number of individuals	Co Op Financial Education Workgroup; Family Connection Collaborative; CC Extension Service; partners providing education	N/A	N/A	N/A	December 2009- January 2010 And December 2010 - January 2011

Issue Addressed	Action Item	Responsible Local Partners	Responsible State Partners	Cost Estimate	Possible Funding Sources	Starting and ending dates for completion of action item
	utilizing refund anticipation loans to receive refunds, increase the number of individuals receiving education on budgeting and credit management.					
Financial Education	Implement program/provide services and conduct evaluation activities.	Co Op Financial Education Workgroup; ITA volunteers; Family Connection Collaborative; CC Extension Service; partners providing education	N/A	N/A	N/A	February 2010 and February 2011
Financial Education	Provide outcome reports.	Co Op Financial Education Workgroup	DCA	N/A	N/A	March 2010 and March 2011 -quarterly progress reports to be given in interim

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto Agree to adopt the Colquitt County Community Improvement Strategy.

FOR THE RECIPIENT

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

By: _____
Chair, County

By: _____
Program Coordinator

By: _____
Mayor, City