

# Adult Literacy and English Language Learning

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*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

## *Literacy Together (formerly Literacy Council of Buncombe County)*

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# Application Form

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## Question Group

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Buncombe County requests proposals for projects to help the community recover from and respond to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts.

Buncombe County has been awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding), as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. To date, Buncombe County has awarded projects totaling \$23,093,499, leaving a balance of \$27,639,791 available to award.

Visit <http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding> for details.

This infusion of federal resources is intended to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

Buncombe County is committed to investing these funds in projects that:

- Align to county strategic plan and community priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Have a lasting impact

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

[Click here for the full terms and conditions of the RFP](#)

## Organization Type\*

Nonprofit

## Nonprofit documentation

If nonprofit, attach IRS Determination Letter or other proof of nonprofit status.

[NEW 501c3 letter for Literacy Together.pdf](#)

## Name of Project.\*

Adult Literacy and English Language Learning

## New/Updated Proposal\*

Is this a new project proposal or an updated version of a proposal submitted during the earlier (July 2021) Recovery Funding RFP?

New project proposal

## Amount of Funds Requested\*

\$400,000.00

## Category\*

Please select one:

- Affordable Housing
- Aging/Older Adults
- Business Support/Economic Development
- Environmental/Climate
- Homelessness
- K-12 Education
- Infrastructure and/or Broadband
- Mental Health/Substance Use
- NC Pre-K Expansion
- Workforce

Workforce

## Brief Project Description\*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the economic well-being of low literate adults and communities of color, increasing the need for adult education programs.

Literacy Together tutors provide basic skills and English language instruction to low literate individuals and non-native English speakers. Tutors are trained to utilize curricula and lesson plans that are research-based, contextualized to life & employment settings, and aligned with NC Adult Education Content Standards and the English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education. Student goals include the ability to find sustainable employment to better support themselves and their families, preparation for entry into a career track, or preparation for a High School Equivalency (HSE) degree. Immigrants who increase their ability to speak, read, and write English can improve employment opportunities, participate in school conferences, better navigate the healthcare system, and prepare for the U.S. citizenship exam.

## Project Plan\*

Explain how the project will be structured and implemented, including timeframe.

Literacy Together programs create pathways to economic opportunity by offering free one-on-one tutoring to students struggling with reading, writing, and/or limited English language skills.

Those most in need of literacy services often live in low resource households with barriers to education, such as inflexible or changing work schedules, lack of childcare services, and/or limited access to transportation. In response, Literacy Together conducts tutoring sessions at flexible times (weekdays, evenings, and weekends) and in multiple locations, including schools, churches, library branches, community centers, and student homes. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we successfully transitioned tutoring sessions to online/remote instruction. Although we now have resumed in-person tutoring, we continue to offer online sessions for those who prefer that format or for whom in-person sessions are not feasible due to transportation, childcare, or time constraints.

Students enter Literacy Together programs through multiple channels. In addition to self-referrals, approximately 20 nonprofit and community agencies refer students in need of literacy and English language instruction, including A-B Tech, Family Preservation Services, Goodwill, Asheville Housing Authority, NCWorks, GO (Green Opportunities), OnTrack Financial Services, and Pisgah Legal Services. A-B Tech is a critical partner for cross-referrals and co-enrollment of students who benefit from the support of a one-to-one tutor in addition to structured classes.

All new students receive an initial orientation and assessment to review learning goals and design an initial personalized course of instruction before being matched with a volunteer tutor. They also take a federally-approved pretest to establish a baseline to measure progress.

Volunteer tutors receive training on utilizing research-based teaching methods and curricula. The Adult Literacy curriculum utilizes multisensory and phonics-based methods and materials based on Orton-Gillingham and the Wilson Reading System. The English Language curriculum includes life-skills based materials (Ventures, Cambridge University Press) and citizenship preparation texts. Tutors track student attendance hours and progress toward achieving personal literacy goals through quarterly attendance reports and an annual posttest to measure progress.

The timeframe for this project is designed and budgeted to extend through December of 2026. Preparing a low literate and immigrant population for optimal success in the workforce requires a sustained intervention over a period of time. It is a worthwhile investment both from the perspective of equity for an underserved population and for the potential contribution to a local economy in need of a skilled workforce.

## Statement of Need\*

Describe the need that this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need, and cite the source of the data.

A lack of basic literacy is a relatively hidden yet pervasive challenge in our community. In Buncombe County, 15% of adults read, write, or spell at the lowest literacy level (PIAAC Survey, National Center for Education Statistics) and 8.3% speak a language other than English in the home. Limited English and low literacy skills keep motivated individuals from finding living-wage jobs and impede their ability to help their children in school.

Research shows that 43% of low literate adults live in poverty (National Institute for Literacy), and children of parents with low literacy skills have a 72% chance of being at the lowest reading levels themselves (ProLiteracy), making low literacy and poverty an interconnected generational cycle (ProLiteracy).

Low literacy costs the U.S. at least \$225 billion each year in non-productivity in the workforce, crime, and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment (ProLiteracy). With increased literacy skills, our students will earn

higher wages, increasing the stability and resiliency of their families. Those who wish to pursue postsecondary education or career training will have the foundational basis to do so. Parents will be better able to support their children's education, increasing their chances of success.

Literacy is a primary determinant of health, employment, income levels, and constructive self-expression. These are essential components of a thriving and resilient life and an educated and capable community.

### Link to COVID-19\*

Identify a health or economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, describe the nature and extent of that harm, and explain how the use of this funding would address such harm.

The 2020 recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic saw adults with less than a high school diploma suffer the highest unemployment rate compared to all other education levels (Unemployment Rates During the COVID-19 Pandemic: In Brief. Congressional Research Service).

Adult students during COVID-19 are struggling with job and income loss, food and housing insecurity, caring for family members, and risks as essential workers. These issues are exacerbated by limited reading, writing, English language, and/or digital literacy skills. Lack of access to hardware and reliable internet is a major barrier to remote education (Survey findings from Literacy Assistance Center 2020).

Spanish speakers from Mexico and Central America represent 70% of the Literacy Together student population. The Latino community is 4.1 times more likely to be hospitalized from COVID-19 than their non-Hispanic white counterparts and 2.8 times more likely to die from COVID-19 (U.S. Centers for Disease Control). In a survey conducted by the Hispanic Federation, Spanish-language survey respondents reported income and job loss at much higher rates than their English-language counterparts—80% versus 62% for income loss, and 59% versus 38% for job loss (Hispanic Federation report: Overcoming COVID-19 Economic Barriers for Latino Communities).

Quality adult education programs in basic skills and English language are needed even more now than before the pandemic. It will require a sustained intervention to regain the momentum to build a community where literacy is accessible and attainable by all.

### Population Served\*

Define the population to be served by this project, including volume and demographic characteristics of those served.

The Adult Literacy program will serve approximately 250 students each fiscal year. The majority are Spanish speaking individuals from Mexico, Central America, and South America. The second-largest demographic in our student body is Eastern European, mostly Ukrainian. Recently we have started tutoring Afghan newcomers in collaboration with two resettlement agencies and we expect to serve more Ukrainians in the months ahead.

The demographics of the student population currently included in our database is listed below by # of total students. This includes both English language learners and adult basic skills students who are native English speakers.

- African American 10
- Asian/Pacific Islander 18
- Caucasian 43

- Hispanic 176
- Native American 1
- Multi-Racial 2

Total: 250

## Results\*

Describe the proposed impact of the project. List at least 3 performance measures that will be tracked and reported. If possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.

In 2022/23, we will serve 250 adult students and we expect to maintain or modestly increase that number in future years of the project. In total, Literacy Together will provide 10,000 hours of instruction annually.

Students will also use their improved literacy skills to achieve personal goals. In FY 21/22, 90% of students who were actively engaged in the workforce were employed at least part-time (177) and 10% were unemployed (20). Eight students passed the U.S. Naturalization Exam.

With recent additional funding, we have been able to add a full-time program associate for English Language Learning to support the program's expansion. We have reduced our waiting list and currently have 45 students waiting 4-5 months for tutors.

Three Performance Measures for each fiscal year:

# of adult students participating in the program (Goal: 250)

# of instructional hours (Goal: 10,000)

% of students who demonstrate improvement on post-test (65%) and who make at least 1 full level gain (45%).

## Evaluation\*

Describe the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.

Upon acceptance into the program, students complete a Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment (CASAS), a federally-approved assessment required for recipients of grant funds through the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). Students define their personal literacy goals with the Program Director and their tutor. Post tests are administered after 40 hours of instruction or at a minimum annually in the last quarter of the fiscal year. Results are reviewed with the student and tutor to celebrate progress and identify areas for continued improvement. Post-tests are compared to the most recent previous test to track ongoing progress in subsequent years and results are entered into a database established and monitored by the NC Community College System. Personal literacy goal accomplishments (such as receiving a job promotion, participating in a child's education, and passing the U.S. Naturalization Exam) are tracked through written quarterly progress reports from tutors. High School Equivalency attainment is tracked through data matching with the local community college that administers the test.

Program performance is monitored by the NC Community College State Office, which is responsible to ensure that Literacy Together program operations are in compliance with WIOA standards. Literacy Together has a contract with NCCCS that outlines quality assurance measures.

Literacy Together is a member of ProLiteracy, which is a national adult literacy organization providing professional development for staff and instructional tools for tutors and students.

## Equity Impact\*

How will this effort help build toward a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery? How are the root causes and/or disproportionate impacts of inequities addressed?

As documented earlier in this proposal, Literacy Together provides tutoring services to underserved populations that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is an urgent need for an increased investment in adult education to offset the impact and ensure these individuals have the opportunity to fully participate in our community. An educated population contributes to a healthy economy which ultimately leads to increased employment, reduced dependence on public assistance, and lower health care costs.

Specific areas of economic opportunity have been identified by the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board (MAWDB). The MAWDB identified 6 target sectors in their 4-year plan for FY 2020-2024: Healthcare, Hospitality, Tourism, Skilled Trade, Construction, and Tech/IT. Adult Education is an important component in preparing the local workforce for careers in five of the six target sectors. In each in-demand sector (except technology), there are pathway entrances for adults with lower level literacy and English language skills, with opportunities for advancement as the adult learner improves their skills.

A strong adult literacy program in Buncombe County will contribute to building a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery.

## Project Partners\*

Identify any subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, indicate:

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

Literacy Together will carry out all aspects of the program without the use of subcontractors. We will work with a number of non-funded key partners who are critical to the success of the program. The most important organizational partner is AB Tech for cross-referral of students and co-enrollment of those who would benefit from the support of a one-to-one tutor in addition to structured classes.

In addition to our partnership with AB Tech, we receive referrals from more than 15 nonprofit and community agencies of students in need of literacy and English language instruction, including Family Preservation Services, Asheville Housing Authority, Catholic Charities, GO (Green Opportunities), OnTrack Financial Education & Counseling, and Pisgah Legal Services. Additional partners provide locations for off-site tutoring, including approximately 20 local churches, libraries, schools, community centers, and non-profit organizations. Some of these partners provide childcare for students during tutoring sessions.

Most important of all, we partner with over 225 individuals in the community who volunteer to receive training and support in order to provide direct one-on-one tutoring in English language learning and Basic Skills. These volunteers are the lifeblood of the program and make an enormous contribution to our community through their passion for making a difference in the lives of others.

## Capacity\*

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your organization or department as it relates to capacity for delivering the proposed project and managing federal funds.

Literacy Together (formerly Literacy Council of Buncombe County) has a 35-year history of providing adult literacy services in Buncombe County. Since 2005, we have successfully managed federal funds from the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) which is distributed and monitored through the North Carolina Community College System. We have consistently achieved performance goals for Educational Functioning Level gains in Adult Basic Education and English Language Acquisition.

Literacy Together has highly qualified and experienced program staff to professionally manage the program and provide training and support to volunteer tutors.

The Senior Program Director for the English Language program has a Master's degree in Education, is TEFL-certified, is a ProLiteracy-certified trainer, and has twenty years of experience teaching languages and training language instructors.

The Program Director for Adult Basic Education has a Master's degree in English, is a ProLiteracy-certified trainer, completed the NC ASE Language Arts Certificate, received Wilson Reading System and Orton-Gillingham training, and has twenty years of experience teaching and tutoring. She has been on staff with Literacy Together for four years.

## Budget\*

Provide a detailed project budget including all proposed project revenues and expenditures, including explanations and methodology. For all revenue sources, list the funder and denote whether funds are confirmed or pending. For project expenses, denote all capital vs. operating costs, and reflect which specific expenses are proposed to be funded with one-time Buncombe County Recovery Funds.

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

COVID Recovery-Funds-budget.xltx

## Special Considerations\*

Provide any other information that might assist the County in its selection.

An investment in adult literacy requires a commitment over time, which is why Literacy Together is requesting funds to cover a multi-year period through December 2026. As noted in the narrative, we receive partial federal funding through WIOA. This request for COVID-19 Recovery Funds would further leverage those funds to ensure the sustainability and a modest expansion of the program.

In addition to federal WIOA funds, Literacy Together has been able to increase revenue from individual donors and family foundations and has grown a reserve fund with the goal of 4 months of operations, all of which adds to the overall stability of the organization.

Although this proposal is specific to the Workforce category, literacy is a cross-cutting issue that impacts many critical areas of well-being. Literacy is a primary determinant of physical and mental health. It prepares individuals to navigate the complex health care system, enables the involvement of parents in the education of their children, encourages participation in civic organizations, and is a component of constructive self-expression. These are essential components of a thriving and resilient life and an educated and capable community.

The Literacy Together community of tutors and students is strong. Listen to their voices in these two short videos that describe what the programs means to them personally: English Language Learning <https://youtu.be/rH8AKQBvtI> and Adult Basic Skills <https://youtu.be/-soF5iKuGWw>





## File Attachment Summary

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### *Applicant File Uploads*

- NEW 501c3 letter for Literacy Together.pdf
- COVID Recovery-Funds-budget.xlsx



Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service  
Tax Exempt and Government Entities  
PO Box 2508  
Cincinnati, OH 45201

Date:  
August 18, 2021  
Person to contact:  
Name: M. Yartey  
ID number: 0727464  
Employer ID number:  
58-1696409  
Form 990 required:  
990, Yes

LITERACY TOGETHER  
31 COLLEGE PL STE 221B  
ASHEVILLE, NC 28801

Dear Sir or Madam:

We're responding to your request dated November 20, 2020 about your tax-exempt status.

We issued you a determination letter in October 1993, recognizing you as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3).

We also show you're not a private foundation as defined under IRC Section 509(a) because you're described in IRC Section 509(a)(2).

Donors can deduct contributions they make to you as provided in IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax-deductible bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts under IRC Sections 2055, 2106, and 2522.

In the heading, we indicated whether you must file an annual information return. If you're required to file a return, you must file one of the following by the 15th day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month after the end of your annual accounting period.

- Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax
- Form 990-EZ, Short Form Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax
- Form 990-N, Electronic Notice (e-Postcard) for Tax-Exempt Organizations Not Required to File Form 990 or Form 990EZ
- Form 990-PF, Return of Private Foundation or Section 4947(a)(1) Trust Treated as Private Foundation

According to IRC Section 6033(j), if you don't file a required annual information return or notice for 3 consecutive years, we'll revoke your tax-exempt status on the due date of the 3rd required return or notice.

You can get IRS forms or publications you need from our website at [www.irs.gov/forms-pubs](http://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs) or

**Letter 4168 (9-2020)**  
Catalog Number 66666G

by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

If you have questions, call 877-829-5500 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., local time, Monday through Friday (Alaska and Hawaii follow Pacific time).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

*Stephen A. Martin*

Stephen A. Martin  
Director, Exempt Organizations  
Rulings and Agreements

