



First Literacy Lab Initiative

Fiscal Year 2018

Request for Proposals

First Literacy Mission and Goals

Established in 1988, the mission of First Literacy is to ensure that Greater Boston adults with lower levels of literacy and education or limited English skills have high-quality educational opportunities that enable them to thrive as individuals and parents, at home, in their workplaces, and in their communities. We support innovative, effective adult education instruction and adult learners who persevere and strive for higher education. Using a multi-faceted approach in service of this mission, our goals are to

- stimulate and support the development, trial, and implementation of new, innovative adult education resources and practices with First *Literacy Lab* grants;
- increase the effectiveness of adult education instruction and nurture the professional growth of adult educators through professional development workshops and other events, and
- directly support adult learners by providing scholarships and mentoring opportunities for individuals who have completed adult education programs and are embarking on their college careers.

Description of First Literacy Lab Initiative

The goal of the First *Literacy Lab* initiative is to provide grants to stimulate and support the development, trial, and implementation of Adult Basic Education (ABE) educational resources and practices that have an impact on specific students, programs, and the ABE field in general. Grants are divided into two categories:

Innovation Grants focus on fresh and novel approaches to instruction and related areas. We are particularly interested in interdisciplinary projects that blend content areas (science, technology, expressive arts, etc.) with language and literacy learning.

- These grants are open to all not-for-profit* ABE programs in Massachusetts, with a focus on Greater Boston.
- Up to \$5,000 may be provided for the development and trial of innovative resources and practices potentially promising to the ABE field. Examples of past innovation grants include *ESOL Through Gardening and Digital Memoir Project for Immigrant Seniors Residing in Public Housing*.

Program Strengthening Grants focus on the strengthening of individual programs that are under-resourced. We are particularly interested in funding grants that will help programs stabilize and begin to grow their services.

- These grants are open to all not-for-profit ABE programs that do not receive funding from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).
- Up to \$5,000 may be provided for the development, trial, and implementation of new resources and practices that strengthen an individual ABE program. Examples of past program strengthening grants include Spanish HiSet preparation and a Curriculum Strengthening Project.

*Not-for-profit includes community-based programs, public school adult programs, prison programs, and unions. Please contact us if you are unsure of your status.

Additional Information

- Proposals for lesser amounts are welcome.
- All grants are for one year: from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018.
- An adult education program may apply for more than one grant, but only one grant will be funded in a fiscal year. **(Note: This is a change from FY 2017.)**
- We encourage collaboration among programs with similar project needs and ideas.
- Teachers are encouraged to serve as project leaders and serve as the contact for all phases of the grant.
- In FY 2018, proposals for projects that significantly build upon an FY 2017 First *Literacy Lab* grant will also be considered, with its own goals, activities, and evaluation protocols.
- Assessments and Evaluations of First *Literacy Lab* project goals need to be project-specific and clearly described in the proposal narrative.

Requirements of Applicants and Grantees

1. The proposal review process includes a 30-minute interview between the applicant, First Literacy staff, and representatives from the First Literacy Community Advisory Council. We will consider a virtual meeting for applicants who would need to travel long distances.
2. Project leaders will submit a short mid-year report by January 15, 2018.
3. Project leaders are encouraged to discuss the project with the Director of Programs at First Literacy as it evolves. We are happy to offer support along the way.
4. We understand that original ideas might change. Any amendment to project activities, evaluation, or budget must be approved by First Literacy.
5. The Director of Programs may visit programs to assess project progress.
6. Final reports describing project activities, final products, and project evaluation will be due no later than July 16, 2018. Reports will include electronic copies of all resources developed. First Literacy will upload products from the project onto its website.
7. Grantees will agree to make brief presentations on their projects at a First Literacy event in October 2017. Grantees will also agree to write a short reflection piece on their project for the First Literacy blog.
8. Articles or presentations by grantees on Literacy Lab projects are encouraged and should include reference to First Literacy's support of the project.

Submission Checklist

Use editable PDF form for the following:

- **Proposal Cover Sheet**
- **Proposal Narrative which includes**
 - **Activities and Outcomes Chart**
 - **List of key people**
 - **Proposed Budget**

Dates/Timeline

- **Release of Request for Proposals**
March 6, 2017
- **Information Session**
March 15, 2017
3:30 pm – 5:00 pm
First Literacy
160 Boylston Street, 2nd Floor
(Across from the Boston Common)
All applicants are strongly encouraged to attend.
- **Proposals Due**
April 14, 2017
Send to lballiro@firstliteracy.org by 5:00 pm
- **Interviews of Applicants**
May 1-May 31 (Individually scheduled)
Required of all grant-award finalists
- **Announcement of Grant Awards**
June 16, 2017

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q: Who do I contact if I have questions?

A: Lenore Balliro, Director of Programs. lballiro@firstliteracy.org or 617-482-3336, x. 13

2. Q: How many proposals may I submit?

A: Each program may submit any number of proposals. First Literacy will only fund one proposal per program.

3. Q: How should I submit my proposal?

A: Proposals will only be accepted via email. Send the nine-page grant proposal (cover page and proposal narrative) to lballiro@firstliteracy.org. Please follow the directions for character count limits for each text box. We advise you to print out a draft copy for yourself before you submit it to make sure it reads accurately. We will be printing out and circulating the proposals to readers; they will not be reviewing them online.

4. Q: Why do I need to come in for an interview, and who will interview me?

A: Interviews give you a chance to tell us a little more about your ideas and how you plan to carry them out. It also gives you a chance to ask us questions. We envision the interview as a conversation. You will meet with First Literacy staff, a member of the First Literacy Community Advisory Council, and one or two members of our Board of Directors.

5. Q: I live in western Massachusetts. Will I have to drive to Boston for a 30-minute interview?

A: For applicants who live well beyond the Greater Boston area, we can arrange for a virtual meeting. We prefer face-to-face, but we understand the challenge of long-distance.

6. Q: If we are awarded a grant, how are we paid?

A: First Literacy pays you half of the award by October 1 and the remainder when the project is completed. We reserve the right to withhold final payment if the project gets abandoned before any significant work has been completed.

7. Q: What am I expected to do as part of the *Literacy Lab* sharing presentation?

A: The lead teacher (and any collaborators, if you like) will present their project to ABE colleagues for 30-45 minutes. We will support you in designing your presentation.

8. Q: Can you tell me more about the blog requirement?

A: We expect about a one page piece of writing that briefly describes your project and offers your reflections on what you learned. We will offer support in crafting this piece of writing. Some pieces will be selected for publication on the First Literacy blog page.

9. Q: What kind of support can I expect from First Literacy?

A: Our intention is to help you implement a strong project. We are available to support you with any reasonable requests, such as finding resources, solving problems, adjusting to unexpected changes, etc.

10. Q: What kind of monitoring can I expect from First Literacy?

A: Lenore Balliro, Director of Programs, will schedule a site visit with you to look at the project in action, to check in about how things are progressing, and to see what support you might need.

11. Q: What kind of reporting will I be required to complete?

*A: You will need to fill out a short interim report and a final report that includes student demographic data and any final products. **Please note: We send all correspondence about the grant to each person who is part of the project.***

12. Q: Why do you need the demographics of our students?

A: When we apply for grants, we are often asked about the demographics of students who benefit from our services. Please note that we ask for demographics about your PROGRAM. When you fill out your interim report and know who your students are for FY 18, we will also ask about the demographics of the students in the PROJECT.

13. I plan to submit a proposal to a conference based on my First Literacy Lab grant project, but I won't know if I am accepted at the time of my grant submission. How should I handle this in the budget?

A: Use a provisional amount depending on whether your conference is in New England or out of state. Contact First Literacy when you are accepted. If you are not accepted, we can make a budget modification and you can use those funds in another way.

14. Q: What happens if things don't work out the way we projected in our original proposal?

A: If you need to make a change, and your original goals are still on track, it's probably fine. But you do need to contact First Literacy with your request so we know about the changes and can approve them. This is particularly important if you are making budget change requests.

15. Q: Can you tell me more about the activities/outcomes chart?

A: The purpose of this chart is to think ahead about how you plan to implement your project. For example, in the first few weeks, you might want to do a pre-survey of some kind. In weeks that follow, you will need to plan for certain tasks that will bring you closer to reaching your overall goal. We view this chart as a planning tool for you to think through the project step by step and to show us how you plan to proceed.

16. Q: Why do you give us such a small space to write about our idea?

A: The Literacy Lab grants are small. We are looking for focused projects with clear goals and processes. The more focused you are, the clearer you will be about what you want to achieve.