First *Literacy Lab* Initiative
Fiscal Year 2022
Request for Proposals

First Literacy Mission and Goals

Established in 1988, the mission of First Literacy is to ensure that adults with low literacy or limited English proficiency have high-quality educational opportunities that enable them to thrive as individuals and as family members, in their workplaces and in their communities. We support innovative, effective adult education and adult learners who persevere and strive for higher education.

Eligibility

Grants are open to all not-for-profit* adult basic education (ABE) programs in Massachusetts. Up to $15,000 may be provided for the development and trial of innovative resources and practices that benefit teaching and learning.

Grants

First Literacy is offering two (2) different types of grants in FY22, along with monetary incentives for new programs and program replication.

1. **Literacy Lab Program Grant of up to $7,500 (Up to $5,000 in the first year):**

The goal of the First *Literacy Lab* Grant is to provide funding that stimulates and supports the development, trial, and implementation of innovative and impactful ABE resources and practices for teaching and learning. Grants focus on fresh approaches to instruction, curriculum development, and related areas. They are not intended to fund regular ABE or ESOL classes. We encourage you to think in terms of specific projects that enrich your regular curriculum.

   A. **Second Year Bonus: The ABE program can receive up to $2,500 after a second-year implementation if:**
      - Your organization replicates the program with fidelity in year 2 including capturing pertinent data
      - The program submits a letter of intent to apply for the second-year bonus by September 15, 2022 and a brief final report by June 15, 2023 (both forms provided by First Literacy).
   B. **Replication Bonus:** First Literacy will provide an additional $1,000 to the awarded ABE program, and $1,000 to one external partner (they must also be a

nonprofit ABE program) for the replication of their grant project. These bonus awards will be given out in the fiscal year AFTER the original award. Both programs must submit a brief letter of intent to apply for this bonus by June 10, 2022 and a brief final report submitted by June 15, 2023 (both forms provided by First Literacy).

C. **Programs New to First Literacy Lab Grant:** Programs that have not received a First Literacy Lab Grant in the past 10 years (FY11) are eligible to apply for up to $7,500 in the first year.

2. **Literacy Lab Organizational Grant of up to $15,000.**

A. The goal of the Literacy Lab Organizational Grant is to stimulate and support the development, trial and implementation of innovative practices that will directly impact an entire ABE organization and its students. This grant may focus on organization-wide curricula, systems, training, and/or teacher improvement.

B. Priority will be given to projects with a robust data reporting plan.

Project Guidelines

Because adult education programs in Massachusetts have unique needs, there are many acceptable uses for grant funds. We encourage programs to be creative, think about the unmet needs of their students, as well as any gaps in current programming. Here are some examples of allowable uses for grant funds:

- Developing and piloting curriculum not available from other sources.
- Providing experiential learning opportunities (must include a curricular component), such as partnerships with community organizations or project-based learning.
- Offering an innovative, short-term class that fills an unmet student need (for example, family literacy, a post-HSE math or writing class, digital literacy).
- Implementing a program-wide special project or initiative. Past examples include a civics and leadership initiative, a program-wide poetry project, and a "one-book" project that fostered reading and journaling across all classes.

We encourage projects that develop resources or materials that can be used by your program in future years and/or shared for use with other programs.

Note that *Literacy Lab* funding cannot be used to offset costs for core classes.

If you have an idea you would like to discuss before applying, you are welcome to contact Bryan McCormick at 617-482-3336 ext. 113 or bmccormick@firstliteracy.org.

*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

- All grant awards are from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

- An adult education program may apply for more than one grant, but only one grant will be funded in a fiscal year.

- Teachers are encouraged to serve as project leaders.

- Proposals should be based on specific program costs. Please do not ask for the maximum grant amount unless you can show that funding amount is vital to your project.

- In FY22, proposals for projects that significantly build upon an FY21 First *Literacy Lab* grant will also be considered, as long as the project has 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 for finalists between the applicant, First Literacy staff, and representatives from the First Literacy Community Advisory Council and Board of Directors. Meetings for FY22 will be virtual.

2. Project leaders will submit an interim report in January 2022. Forms will be provided by First Literacy and will reflect the scope of the grant and progress on any data to be collected.

3. Final reports describing project activities, final products, and project evaluation will be due no later than June 18, 2022. Reports will include electronic copies of all resources developed as part of the grant. First Literacy will upload products from the project onto its website and documents must be co-branded with the First Literacy logo.

4. Grantees will agree to make a brief presentation on their projects at a First Literacy event in October 2022. Project leaders must be present.

5. Project leaders are encouraged to discuss the project with the Program Director at First Literacy as it evolves. First Literacy will provide technical support.

6. We understand that original ideas might change. Any amendment to project activities, evaluation, or budget must be approved by First Literacy.

7. The Program Director will conduct site visits to assess project progress.

8. Articles or presentations by grantees on First *Literacy Lab* projects are encouraged and should include reference to First Literacy's support of the project.

Grant Application Checklist

The application guidelines are available on our website, firstliteracy.org.

For a Microsoft Word version of the application that can be used as a template, please contact Bryan McCormick at bmccormick@firstliteracy.org.

Your application must include the following items:

1. Cover sheet
2. Proposal narrative, including the Activities / Outcomes Chart
3. Budget

Dates/Timeline

- **Release of Request for Proposals**

  March 9, 2021

- **Information Session**

  March 24, 3:00pm-4:00pm

  March 31, 10:00am-11:00am

- **Proposals Due:**

  May 11, 2021, 5:00 p.m.

  Send to Bryan McCormick at bmccormick@firstliteracy.org. **Late or incomplete proposals will not be accepted**. Please submit documents as a combined Word or PDF file.

- **Finalist Interviews** (Individually scheduled and required of all finalists. The format may be in person or virtual)

  May 17 – June 11, 2021

- **Announcement of grant awards**

  June 16, 2021

Frequently Asked Questions (Please visit www.firstliteracy.org for more information)