

First Literacy Grants Fiscal Year 2025 RFP and Application



First Literacy Grant Initiative
Fiscal Year 2025
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. The goal of **First Literacy Grants** is to provide funding that stimulates and supports the development, trial, and implementation of innovative and impactful Adult Basic Education resources and practices. **Grants of up to \$15,000 are open to all not-for-profit Adult Basic Education (ABE) organizations in Massachusetts.**

First Literacy Funding Priorities

- To fund innovative and impactful ideas that will improve educational and professional outcomes for the students of ABE programs.
- To fund ideas that may not be able to be funded through DESE or other major funding sources.
- To fund ideas that will have a lasting impact in ABE schools and programs.

Eligibility

Grants are open to all not-for-profit Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) organizations in Massachusetts.

GRANT LEVELS

First Literacy is offering three (3) types of grants: Program Grants, Organization-Wide Grants and Incentive Grants.

1. Program Grants: Program grants provide funding for the development, trial, and implementation of innovative and impactful ABE or ESOL teaching and learning resources and practices that are project-based, fresh approaches to instruction, curriculum and staff development, and related areas.

- **New Organizations:** Organizations that have not received a First Literacy Grant in the past ten years are eligible to apply for up to \$7,500 in the first year of the proposed project.
- **Returning Organization:** Organizations that received a First Literacy Grant in the past ten years can apply for up to \$5,000 in the first year of the proposed project.

2. Organization-Wide Grants: These grants provide funding for innovative ideas for larger-scale, organization-wide curricula, systems, training, and/or teacher improvement. Grants of up to \$15,000 are available and priority is given to projects with a robust data reporting plan.

3. Incentive Grants

- **Second Year Grant*:** Organizations that received First Literacy funding for the first year of a project are eligible to apply for up to half of their first-year grant amount in a second year of funding.
 - Organizations applying for a second-year grant must replicate the program with fidelity in year two including capturing pertinent data and reporting that to First Literacy.
 - Organizations apply for a second-year grant using the main grant application, along the same time as the program and organizational grants
- **Program Replication Grant*:** Your organization and another organization can each receive \$1,000 if:
 - You assist a second organization in implementing your grant idea/program. Both organizations must submit a brief letter of intent to apply for this grant along with the FY 25 grant cycle.

**Both incentive grants can be applied for under a program or organizational grant.*

**You can apply for a program/organizational First Literacy Grant AND incentive grant in the same fiscal year.*

**Any incentive grant awards will be given out in the fiscal year after the original award.*

TIMELINE/IMPORTANT DATES

- The grant period is from **July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025**.
- We're providing two information sessions via Zoom and strongly encourage the lead teacher for a proposal to attend either session. Grant writers and administrators are also welcome. Please review the RFP, application, and FAQs before attending.
 - **Wednesday, February 14, 2024, 3:00 PM** [Grant Seeker Information Session 1](#)
 - **Thursday, March 14, 2024, 10:00 AM** [Grant Seeker Information Session 2](#)
- **May 2, 2024, 5:00 pm: Applications Due:**
Your entire application will be completed online via this form. You will be required to save your budget, activities and project outcomes chart as PDF's and upload to your application. Links to these two documents are included in the project guidelines and requirements below. Late, incomplete or emailed applications will not be accepted.
- **May 13 - May 24, 2024: Finalist Interviews:**
 - A 60-minute interview between the applicant, First Literacy staff, and representatives from the First Literacy Community Advisory Council will be individually scheduled and required of all finalists.
- **June 7, 2024: Awards announced**

PROPOSED PROJECT GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

- An organization may apply for more than one grant, but only one grant will be funded in a fiscal year (except for incentive grants).
- Teachers are encouraged to serve as project leaders.
- Proposals for projects that significantly build upon an FY2024 First Literacy Grant will also be considered, as long as the project has its own goals, activities, and evaluation protocols.
- Proposal budgets and funding requests should be based on specific program costs whose funding will be vital to the project. A [Proposed Project Budget](#) must be submitted with this application.
- Assessments and evaluations of First Literacy Grant project goals need to be project specific and clearly described in the proposal narrative. [Projected Activities, Outcomes, and Measurements](#) must be submitted with this application.
- First Literacy Grant funds cannot be used to offset costs for core classes, but there are many acceptable uses for grant funds. (View [past First Literacy Grant Funded Projects](#).) Grant funds dedicated to pay staff need to be used for additional hours. In your application please explicitly explain how grant hours would be in addition to staff's regular hours. We encourage organizations to be creative, to think about the unmet needs of their students, as well as any gaps

in current programming, and to consider projects that develop resources or materials that can be used by your organization in future years and/or shared with other organizations, such as:

- Developing and piloting curriculum not available from other sources;
- Providing experiential learning opportunities or project-based learning (must include a curricular component), such as partnerships with community organizations;
- 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 an organization-wide special project or initiative (for example, a civics and leadership initiative, a organization-wide poetry project, and a “one-book” project that fosters reading and journaling across all classes).

REQUIREMENTS OF GRANTEES

- Project leaders are encouraged to work with the First Literacy Program Director for technical support as their project evolves.
- We understand that original ideas might change. Any amendment to project activities, evaluation, or budget must be approved by First Literacy.
- The First Literacy Program Director will conduct site visits to assess project progress.
- Project leaders will submit an Interim Report on **January 23, 2025**. Forms will be provided by First Literacy and will reflect the scope of the grant and progress on any data to be collected.
- Project leaders will submit a Final Report no later than **June 19, 2025**, describing project activities, final products, project evaluation and student participant data. Reports will include electronic copies of all resources developed as part of the grant, co-branded with the First Literacy logo. These will be uploaded to the searchable [Resources for Educators](#) on First Literacy's website and made available to the field.
- Grantees will agree to make a brief presentation on their projects at First Literacy's Spotlight on Innovation in Adult Basic Education in the **Fall of 2025**. Project leaders must be present. Articles or presentations by grantees on First Literacy Grant projects are encouraged and should include references to First Literacy's support of the project.
- Grantees must acknowledge First Literacy funding on their website and tag First Literacy in posts on social media (if active) that acknowledge funding.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Who do I contact if I have questions?

A: Bryan McCormick, Program Director, may be reached at bmccormick@firstliteracy.org or 617-482-3336 ext. 113.

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 with the exception of incentive grants.

Q: How should I submit my proposal?

A: Your whole application will be completed and submitted online via the link above. You will be asked to create an account with a login, so you'll be able to save drafts of your application, and log back in to complete and submit later. We will view your completed application submission online – no need to separately email or print out to mail to us in any other format. You can preview the questions in the sample pdf above.

Q: Why do I need to have 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 and a member of the [First Literacy Community Advisory Council](#). The interview will be conducted via Zoom or in person at our office at 160 Boylston Street. Applicants may decide the format and that choice will have no impact on whether or not a grant is awarded.

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

A: First Literacy disburses half of the award by September 30, 2024. Your final report and final submission of grant materials are due June 19, 2025. We will pay your second installment by June 30, 2025 if we have received the final report and materials. We reserve the right to withhold final payment if the project is not completed.

Q: What am I expected to do as part of the annual field-wide results sharing event: Spotlight on Innovation in Adult Basic Education?

A: The lead teacher (and any collaborators) will present their project to ABE colleagues at the First Literacy Spotlight on Innovation in Adult Basic Education in the fall of 2025. We will support you in designing your presentation.

Q: What kind of support may 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.

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

A: Bryan McCormick, Program Director, will schedule a site visit with you to look at the

project in action, to check in on how things are progressing, and to see what support you might need.

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

A: You will need to fill out an interim report and a final report that includes student demographic data, outcomes, and any final products. Reporting requirements will differ based on the awarded amount. Please note: We send all correspondence about the grant to each person who is part of the project.

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. In your program application, you will be asked about the demographics of your program. If you receive a grant, you will share the demographics of students served by the project in your final report. The information you share with us is only shared in the aggregate, and your organization's name is never attached to what we share.

Q: I plan to submit a proposal to a conference based on my First Literacy 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 change your award.

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.

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 or assessment of some kind. In the 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.

Q: Why do you give us a limited number of pages to write about our idea?

A: 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.