



2022 American Rescue Plan: Services to Undocumented Immigrants

Submit Application to: CDDapplications@cityofmadison.com

Deadline: 12:00 pm CST (noon) January 28, 2022

Late applications will not be accepted

Please limit your proposal and responses to the spaces provided in this form. Any materials submitted in addition to this application form will not be considered in the evaluation of the proposal. Please *do not attempt to unlock or alter this form*. **If you need assistance with this proposal or are unclear about how to respond to any questions listed below, please contact CDD staff at 266-6520**

Agency Name:	Literacy Network	Amount Requested:	\$ 149,463
Title of Proposal:	Pandemic Recovery Support for English Language Learners		
Contact Person:	Autumn Jackson	Email:	autumn@litnetwork.org
Agency Address:	701 Dane St. Madison, WI 53713	Telephone:	608-244-3911
Is this Group a 501 (C) (3)?	Yes or No Yes	If no, applicant will need to secure a fiscal agent with 501 (C) (3) status.	
Name of Fiscal Agent (if Applicable):		Fiscal Agent Phone:	
Fiscal Agent Contact Person:		Fiscal Agent Email:	

Project Goal:

1. Please describe your proposal’s goal of supporting undocumented immigrant households as they deal with the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literacy Network helps adults in Dane County build skills, reach goals, and connect communities through basic literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Adult learners enroll in our programs with a variety of goals such as: improving communication at work or in the community, engaging with their children’s schools, earning a certificate or enrolling in additional training, and gaining or improving employment. To avoid creating an atmosphere of fear or worries of documentation and deportation, we do not ask our participants about their visa or documentation status unless they enroll in our citizenship program (where this information is relevant). A large percentage of our approximately 700 annual English Language Learners (ELs) may be considered undocumented as defined by the City of Madison. Pre-pandemic, Literacy Network served approximately 1,000 adults per year. In the next three years, we will focus on helping potential learners overcome pandemic-related barriers to participation and anticipate that with this additional support, program enrollment will again increase to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2024.

Literacy Network learners, like many people in low-income and/or minority communities, have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Early on, our learners suffered disproportionate rates of COVID-19 exposure, illness, and unemployment. 59% of Literacy Network students reported losing work at the onset of the pandemic, and economic recovery has been slow for our learning community; new jobs and promotions are reported at a lower rate than pre-pandemic. In the two years prior to COVID-19, an average of 16% of learners reported new jobs per year, and over 28% reported promotions. In 2020, less than 9% of learners reported getting a new job and only 13% reported

promotions, and in 2021, just over 11% reported new jobs and 13% reported promotions. Many of our students work in hospitality, housekeeping, food service, and other customer-facing industries that were strongly affected early in the pandemic.

Our Student Services team provides wraparound support for adults participating in all of our programs – support which has been essential during the pandemic. We are requesting funding to provide increased support to help adult ELLs connect with crucial community resources and continue their language studies through the ongoing unpredictability of the pandemic. We aim to support learners in their re-enrollment in workplace readiness and language learning programs at Literacy Network and to reduce poverty- and pandemic-related barriers to education by increasing their access to, and use of, relevant community resources.

Early in the pandemic, Literacy Network began to conduct weekly needs surveys with all learners to ensure that they and their families were safe and healthy, and to help facilitate access to critical community resources. In the first month of the pandemic, 23% of learners we called expressed a need for income assistance, 21% needed help getting food, and 8% needed immigration legal assistance. Over the last two years, we have assisted with nearly a thousand requests for information on rent assistance, healthcare, childcare, food assistance, employment, and so on. Our Student Services team has followed up on every inquiry with individual calls or texts, helping students find the support they need. In 2021, the most common need expressed was for rent/mortgage assistance, with 16% of survey respondents requesting this information. Employment has also been a central concern: 13% of participants surveyed expressed needing assistance in finding a job.

Many barriers to language and employment goals have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Although enrollment in our programs was negatively impacted in 2020, we have seen that learners are eager to return to workplace literacy and language programs. We are pleased to see program enrollment increasing to near capacity again, but we anticipate that due to the ongoing challenges created by the pandemic, students will continue to need additional support to be able to attend programming and persist in their studies. With increased pandemic persistence support, we anticipate conducting 300 Personal Education Plan (PEP) interviews per year to identify resource barriers and needs during the intake process. Staff will conduct an additional 600 individual needs surveys per year (1 round reaching 200 participants in each of our 3 semesters). Short online surveys in plain English and Spanish will be conducted in classes and/or sent to participants via text.

This crucial extra support from Student Services will allow learners to continue their education and improve their language and literacy skills, which will eventually result in increased economic stability and safer and more stable lives.

Literacy Network learners will also benefit from support for the cost of internet access, textbooks, and job training programs or certificates. In partnership with the Altrusa Foundation, Literacy Network offers an annual scholarship to learners who have specific employment training goals and financial barriers to register for a program or pay associated costs (which may include tuition, materials, transportation, and childcare). With the City of Madison's support, we will increase that fund and its impact.

2. Please describe the demographics of the immigrant population(s) your organization serves. (e.g. age groups, ethnicity, economic status, holders, , specific income ranges, etc.).

Literacy Network currently serves more than 700 adults annually, and nearly 90% of our participants are immigrants. Though Literacy Network learners come from all over the world, about 75% of our total immigrant learners in 2021 were from Latin America or the Caribbean. Nearly half of the total English language learners we serve come from Mexico. Other highly represented countries in recent years include Colombia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela. While the majority of immigrant participants are Latinx, students of many other nationalities are also represented in our programs. For instance, in 2021, nearly 10% of our students were from Africa and hailed from 16 different countries.

According to Pew Research Center, there are approximately 75,000 undocumented immigrants in WI; WPR estimates that about 28,000 people in Madison are undocumented. When aligned with estimates of the immigrant population numbers from the Vera Institute of Justice, this translates to an estimate of 60% of Madison-area immigrants being undocumented. Literacy Network does not ask about our students' immigration or legal statuses, as such questions create an additional barrier to program participation and provoke fear and concern. Nevertheless, informal anecdotal evidence within the agency supports an assumption that the percentage of learners served in our programs who are undocumented at least mirrors, if not surpasses, that of the Madison area. In goal-setting sessions and initial interviews, many of our learners share that they have come to Madison in search of opportunities they did not have in their home countries and that they have come to Literacy Network to fill in gaps in their education. Given our learners' educational and employment demographics, we can estimate that the percentage of immigrants we serve who may be undocumented is even higher than the 60% estimate for the Madison area.

More than 95% of Literacy Network learners are in low-income households. At Literacy Network, "low-income" is defined as having a household income at or below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level. (Per the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Income Limits Summary, the low-income threshold for a family of four is 280% of the Federal Poverty Level.) Participants report their income at program entry and update during re-enrollment or as employment changes are reported. More than 85% of our English language learning participants in 2021 reported a household income below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Nearly two-thirds of our annual participants are women, and more than a third of our total program participants are Latina women, who represent the lowest-paid demographic in Dane County.

Literacy Network serves adults ages 18 and up. Most of our learners, 56% in 2021, fall into an age range of 30 to 49 years old. 17% of our learners were 18-29 years old and 25% were between ages 50 and 69. 2% of our learners were 70 or older.

3. Describe how your project will address any formal and informal barriers that prevent undocumented immigrants from accessing needed services.

With the development of Literacy Network's Student Services department in 2016, we expanded our free education services to include wraparound support. A major facet of this support is helping learners overcome barriers that might otherwise cause them to 'stop out' of programs, a common issue in adult education. We understand that poverty creates many barriers to learning; through regular persistence support calls and student needs surveys, we assist participants in resolving those barriers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created additional barriers to participation for many, particularly for students who may be undocumented. Literacy Network reaches out to all students regularly to check in on their needs and potential challenges; when a need or barrier is expressed, our Student Services staff personally connect the student with a vetted community resource so that they can continue on their learning path. We diligently maintain a broad, up-to-date network of community partnerships and connections so our learners can access the resources they need.

This support has proven essential. For example, in 2021, our Student Services team worked with YWCA to support a learner facing homelessness. Maura, a single mother attending online English classes, called us when she received a five-day eviction notice from her landlord. Our Student Services Manager helped Maura with the application and supporting documents, YWCA issued a check to the landlord, and Maura was able to stay in her home and in her class. Maura went on to finish her Basic English class and moved up to the next level the following semester!

Our programs provide important education opportunities for immigrants in Madison, and the wraparound supports from the Student Services team help adult learners achieve the stability and safety they need to persist in those programs, especially in times of unexpected challenges. This additional support, which has become a central part of our services, has required additional dedicated staff time.

In addition to Student Services support, many Literacy Network students need textbooks for their English classes as well as internet access for virtual and at-home study. Approximately 30% of learners per year need financial assistance to purchase textbooks for Literacy Network classes. Internet access has proven vital during the pandemic, as many programs like Literacy Network's pivoted to virtual formats. We currently offer in-person options for the highest-need programs (including introductory level English classes); for the health and safety of students and staff, our programming has continued to be primarily virtual. As of early 2022, 80% of our English classes are offered on Zoom. Learners access classes through personal laptops or smartphones and have the option to borrow a laptop from Literacy Network. With this grant, we will also be able to offer mobile hotspots to provide internet access with the laptop loans.

4. Describe the process your clients/participant will need to follow to receive assistance.

Registration for Literacy Network programs occurs three times per year, in January, May, and September. Due to the pandemic, participants currently have the option to enroll by phone. At intake, we interview each new student about goals and challenges; we get to know each person and make recommendations based on their needs and goals. Literacy Network works diligently to make our services as culturally and individually relevant as possible. Textbooks are used in ESL classes and are available for purchase at Literacy Network. Learners who express financial hardship are eligible to receive a textbook at no cost; this grant will help provide textbooks for those learners.

Every program participant is assigned a Student Services Coordinator who supports them over the course of the semester, through intake, participation, and re-enrollment. At the end of each semester, staff interview students about their experiences and successes in the program, new goals and new challenges, and their enrollment choices for the next semester.

In addition to sharing needs in the intake and re-registration conversations, current or potential participants can call Literacy Network at any time to receive additional recommendations and resource assistance. Staff also currently reach out once per semester (three times per year) to conduct individual surveys to identify additional needs; we then connect that student directly to a relevant community resource.

To apply for the annual job training or certificate scholarship offered in partnership with the Altrusa Foundation, current students submit applications with information on the program they attend or plan to join, as well as a short written statement on why they want a scholarship. Program instructors, volunteers, and Student Services staff offer support in filling out the application as needed. Applications are reviewed by Literacy Network's Management Team and awards are made to qualifying students.

Most new participants learn about our programs by word of mouth; the high rate of referrals to families and friends is a strong indicator of success. Our programming shifted online in 2020, and in 2021 included in-person and virtual options. We anticipate providing in-person and virtual options in the coming years, in order to ensure programs and services meet the needs of all learners. Offering both of these types of programming in 2022 and beyond will require additional staff time and support systems.

Staff:

5. Please briefly describe any relevant lived experience, as well as formal training, possessed by your staff, and how it will help make this project successful.

Literacy Network has 15 full-time and 7 part-time staff, as well as 15-20 part-time contract interns and instructors each semester. About 200 volunteers support our work each semester as tutors, teaching assistants, event volunteers, and data entry volunteers. About 30% of our staff are immigrants and/or people of color. In recent years, we have been making a committed effort to increase the diversity of our staff and the equity and inclusiveness of our practices; a robust onboarding process and peer mentorship program have been helpful strategies.

Student Services staff, as members of some of the same communities as our learners, are valued leaders. Student Services staff conduct recruitment and new participant intake, provide persistence support, and advise and mentor learners. Two members of our team, including our current Student Services Manager, started with Literacy Network as language learners. Having staff who have shared experiences has been incredibly valuable for students; Student Services team members have excelled in building trust among our learners. Students are also more likely to be candid with our Student Services Coordinators about their challenges and needs because of that trusted relationship.

In 2018-2019, our Student Services team participated in YWCA's Amplify Madison project to grow leadership skills. The team received a microgrant to attend the national Young Nonprofit Professionals Network conference, were active in Amplify Madison for a year, and presented at the YWCA's 2019 Moxie conference. Student Services staff have also completed Wisconsin Literacy's Working with Vulnerable Populations training, Mental Health First Aid training, training on the Dane CORE rental assistance program, and a United Way training for frontline staff from social service community-based organizations. In June 2021, our Student Services Manager received a certification in sustainability and leadership from the Latino Academy of Workforce Development.

Many Literacy Network staff are bilingual and/or bicultural; our staff includes speakers of Spanish, French, Portuguese, Dutch, Mandarin, and Russian. We offer video, written, and pictorial guides to accessing Zoom programming in English, Spanish, Hmong, Nepali, and Arabic. Registration, intake, and needs survey materials are in English and Spanish. All staff are trained to use Plain English, a written and spoken communication style that ensures participants can access organizational information whether they are speakers of other languages or native speakers working to improve their literacy.

Literacy Network staff instructors hold either certifications in teaching or relevant degrees and have extensive classroom and programmatic experience. Regular anonymous surveys give students the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience with instruction and programs.

Timeline:

- Describe the anticipated timeline for your proposal.

Program Start Date 3/15/2022	Program End Date 12/31/2024
	<p>The pandemic has proven again and again that agencies like Literacy Network need to be prepared to adjust programming and work with dynamic changes. Pandemic-related challenges faced by our learning community are not easily resolvable in a short period of time. As the pandemic has continued to unfold, effects on the economic stability continue to ripple outward; job recovery has been slow for many undocumented immigrants and inflation on basic goods has risen to the highest level in nearly 40 years. Fed Communities, a project under the Federal Reserve, found that 50% of low-income households anticipate needing up to 3 years to recover economic stability to pre-pandemic conditions; 25% of low-income households will need 4 years or more.</p>

Given this timeline, along with the fact that language education takes years (approximately 150 hours of study to advance one language or literacy level), we propose providing pandemic recovery support through the remainder of 2022 and throughout 2023 and 2024.

Remember funds will be allocated by the second quarter of 2022, and are available until 12/31/24.

7. Budget: Summarize your project budget by estimated costs for staff and participants.

BUDGET EXPENDITURES	TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	AMOUNT OF CITY \$ REQUESTED
A. Personnel Costs		
Salaries/Wages (show detail below)	23,650	11,825
Fringe Benefits and Payroll Taxes	5,676	2,838
B. Estimated Program Costs		
Utility Bills		
Internet Bill	16,500	16,500
House Supplies		
Transportation		
Job Training Assistance	18,000	6,000
Language Learners Assistance	136,400	102,300
Meal Programs		
Telephone		
Other (explain below):	12,000	10,000
TOTAL (A + B)	212,226	149,463

Other please explain:

The "Other" category costs consist of textbooks for Literacy Network ESL classes.

All budget expenses are for 2.75 years (quarters 2-4 of 2022, and full years 2023-2024).

"Salaries/Wages" includes program oversight, consisting of staff time for our Director of Program Impact and Senior Director of Programs.

Program costs for language learners assistance is primarily in Student Services support, as staff provide the wraparound support central to this proposal. Job training assistance includes an annual scholarship offered to learners who have specific employment training programs that they require financial assistance to join; the Altrusa Foundation provides \$4,000 per year toward that scholarship.