

New Mexico Coalition for Literacy

GETTING STARTED !

How to start an adult literacy program



NMCL

The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy

Literacy resources
for adult students,
tutors, and program
administrators

a simple guide
Identify support
Cover all bases
Get out there!
Serve

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2008

NOTES ABOUT ADULT ILLITERACY:

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For more information call: 800 233-7587

There are basic and critical steps in starting any non-profit organization, and some very specific procedures when beginning a volunteer adult literacy program. Your passion and grasp of the problem in New Mexico are critical.

Trying to proceed on your own can be a daunting a task. We encourage you to have a steering committee help you at this very important juncture. But before you form a steering committee, familiarize yourself with the issue of adult illiteracy by visiting our website at www.nmcl.org. You will be able to view statistics in New Mexico and acquaint yourself with some of the free professional services that the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy can offer you in support of your good work. You will definitely benefit from our program management board training once you have set your board membership in place.

The possibility of future funding for your program will be directly related to how well you have formed the infrastructure of your organization, your compliance with regulations, and your willingness to do the groundwork.

WORKSHEET - FORM A STEERING COMMITTEE

Name: _____

Contact: _____

Background: _____

Name: _____

Contact:: _____

Background: _____

Name: _____

Contact:: _____

Background: _____

Name: _____

Contact: _____

Background: _____

Name: _____

Contact: _____

Background: _____

Name: _____

Contact: _____

Background: _____

Step 1

FORM A STEERING COMMITTEE

As you discuss what you have learned about the problem of adult illiteracy in New Mexico, you will be able to identify individuals who are particularly interested in finding real solutions; they, as you, are willing to be proactive in creating a second chance for the many adults who are unable to read well enough to experience personal and professional success and growth.

Your steering committee will not necessarily be made up by people who will ultimately become members of your Board of Directors. They should be people who will put in a short term, intensive effort to help you with one or more aspects of the clear tasks required for laying the groundwork for your organization. They will be people who are very interested in seeing your program to fruition, but may or may not have time to become permanently involved at that level of commitment.

Together, set a timeline to get things done and move forward. Some of the skills and advantages you need to consider in forming your steering committee are:

- Connection with city fathers, churches, and the businesses community
- Ability to do some research on the Internet
- Willingness to visit other non-profit human services organizations for information about their clientele and literacy issues
- Willingness to take on the necessary responsibility for filling out forms needed to apply for non-taxable status and the Attorney General application
- Ability to help identify prospective board members who will satisfy requirements of foundations and the Attorney General, and provide guidance and oversight.

Most of all, these individuals must share your desire to create a solid, effective, organization that will recruit volunteers and adult students into a partnership of learning.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ASSIGNMENTS:

Name: _____ will contact: _____

Name: _____ will contact: _____

Name: _____ will contact: _____

Name: _____ will contact: _____

Name: _____ will contact: _____

Name: _____ will contact: _____

NOTES:

Together, write your “elevator speech.” What will you say about your mission; how will you portray the problem of adult illiteracy in your community, and in what way will you get the kind of information you need that will inform your Needs Assessment?

Step 2

Perform a NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Will your community support a volunteer adult literacy program? Are there adults in your community who need your help, and will come forward to enroll in your program? Are there individuals in your community who are willing to volunteer to teach adults to read or to learn English as a second language? Is there already an adult literacy program in your community?

Things to keep in mind before you begin your assessment:

1. Not all people who graduate from high school can read above a 5th grade level.
2. Not all people who want the GED can successfully achieve it through classes at a community college if they don't read above a 5th grade level. Many who have low literacy skills will only learn in a one-to-one tutor/student setting, and will not participate in a traditional classroom setting.
3. Almost everyone can read a little. We will train your volunteer tutors to start teaching at the level your students are actually reading.

There are as many reasons for why adults can't read as there are numbers of adults who are trapped by their inability to read and comprehend the written word. It almost never has anything to do with intelligence, but more to do with learning styles and differences. We will train your tutors to work with those issues.

We are including a document prepared by the Altrusa Club that will give you ideas as to how to perform a needs assessment. It is generic in nature. We feel an informal assessment is adequate in order for you to have an idea about your potential client population. You can interview professionals who manage medical clinics, who must collect informational pages from new patients, personnel management for large stores (such as Wal-Mart), and factories in your area. Brainstorm with your Steering Committee. Assign tasks to those willing to start the process.

PROGRAM SET-UP

Assignments:

Name(s): _____

- **Employer Identification Number**

Name(s): _____

- **501 (c) (3)**

Name(s): _____

- **Incorporation**

Name(s): _____

- **Prepare approach for Board recruitment**

Step 3

Go to the ATTORNEY GENERAL'S Web Site

Go to the NM ATTORNEY GENERAL'S Web Site for information on how to satisfy their requirements in order to be identified as a non-profit organization legally registered in the state. Foundations and donors will go to the AG's site to see if you are a legitimate organization.

Go to www.nmag.gov, scroll down and click "Charities." Click "Registration" on the left of the screen.

There are a number of steps to perform. It would be wise to meet with your Steering Committee and have each person take on one step. In other words, you will need to get an Employer Identification Number, apply for a 501 (c) (3) (unless you are under the umbrella of a church, or other existing non-profit organization). You may need to incorporate, and if you plan to pay anyone, get information from the Department of Labor, and register with AG's Office after you have formed your Board of Directors.

If one person takes on one task, it will be much simpler to get your ducks in a row. At this point, you and your committee will also need to start identifying and recruiting members for your Board of Directors.

Step 4

Form a BOARD OF DIRECTORS

You must have the following officers on your board:

1. A President
2. A Vice President
3. A Secretary
4. A Treasurer

Clearly, you will need additional membership to support those officers and to form committees.

Be very careful about your selections, and be sure that they appreciate the importance of their service.

As you consider membership, think about your basic function. They are the public face of your program. They interact with the public on a daily basis in one way or another, and it is critical that they understand who you are and what you are doing. It is also important that they understand the function of a board. Membership carries some responsibility, and the responsibility will be manageable if everyone does his or her part.

You should have an attorney on your board who, if nothing else, is willing to check your various applications as mentioned on the previous page, and answer legal questions as they occur.

Other board members should reflect your community. You want ethnic diversity, different socio-economic backgrounds and members who represent the business community. In other words, you want conscientious, influential people who will represent you with their peers, social, and business connections.

They and you will develop By-Laws, a Mission Statement, and will begin to form the infrastructure of your volunteer adult literacy program. They may be able to find free office space, identify places for tutors to meet with students for tutoring, and find help with utilities.

The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy will provide state-of-the-art training for your new board at no charge to your program.

*FREE TRAINING SUPPORT FOR YOUR PROGRAM
FROM THE NMCL*

Board & Program Management training – (5 hours) All board members and staff should attend.

Basic Literacy Tutor Training (certified) – (approximately 16 hours) Must be a minimum of 10 volunteers present. A staff or board member should be present as well.

English as a Second Language Tutor Training (certified) – (approximately 16 hours) Must be a minimum of 10 volunteers present. A staff or board member should be present as well.

The NMCL also offers special focus training as needed, such as, family literacy workshops, learning disabilities workshops, and other specialty training. The NMCL provides three to four regional workshop conferences in different locations within the state each year, which also feature special workshops for volunteers, program managers and board members. These workshop conferences last one day with lunch, and mileage for individuals traveling an hour or more within the region will be reimbursed.

If you do not have the funds to purchase materials such as books and software for your program, please check our web site for the *Materials Grant* information. You may receive up to \$500.00 to help stock your library or prepare for tutor training

The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy (NMCL) may fund your program. If you are ready and have completed the tasks listed here, or even if you can show that you are in the process of completing the tasks, you can submit a grant proposal to the NMCL, and it will be seriously considered. If you anticipate applying for funding, contact our office and request that you receive an RFP (Request for Proposals) from us in June, our funding cycle, and we will mail it to you. You can also check our web site in June to download an application. This organization is particularly fond of helping new programs with seed money!

At any time during any state of your program development, the NMCL is available to you for help, advice, and resources. Please feel free to call our hotline, 1-800-233-7587 when you need to. And please let us train your board. Even if you have experienced board members, our training will include training specifically for volunteer adult literacy programs. Our board training includes specifics about program management that will be helpful to staff, as well.

We will train your volunteer tutors. Our tutor training is nationally certified, and your volunteers will be prepared to confidently work with a student.

There is no charge for any of our services to you.



NMCL

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1-800-233-7587 ❖ FAX: 505-982-4095 ❖ INFO@NMCL.ORG

info@nmcl.org
www.nmcl.org

STAGES OF AN ORGANIZATION (developed by Literacy Volunteers of America)

	<u>STAGE I</u>	<u>STAGE II</u>	<u>STAGE III</u>
Responsibilities	Meetings are held frequently with Steering Comm. & Board operating as a “Committee of the Whole.”	Formal Board of Directors is established, including a committee structure in which work is accomplished between meetings of the entire group.	Board of Directors becomes a policy making body that monitors and evaluates the results of a long-range or strategic organization plan.
PROGRAM	Members are involved in implementing every aspect of program intake and support.	Board members establish an Annual Program Plan, which is usually implemented by a Program Coordinator. Program Coordinator is responsible for implementing the Annual Program Plan and may be assisted by the Board. Program Coordinator seeks approval for new Program Initiatives.	Board monitors and evaluates the outcomes of the Annual Program Plan. The Executive Director is authorized to make all decisions that fall within the mission. The Executive Director develops new Program initiatives that fall within the mission.
Budget/ Finance	All members of the Steering Committee/Board review and approve all expenses.	Board approves and monitors an Annual Budget. Program Coordinator authorizes expenses within the program portion of the budget and seeks approval for additional expenses.	Board approves, with recommendations of the Executive Director, and monitors an Annual budget. Executive Director authorizes all expenses that fall within the scope of an approved budget and seeks approval for expenses outside of the budget.
Fund Development	Steering Committee/Board are responsible for planning and implementing fund-raising	Board is responsible for planning and implementing fund-raising. Program coordinator is <u>not</u> responsible for “raising the budget.”	Board develops and approves a multi-faceted long-range plan. Board provides access within each member’s sphere of influence to resources that will contribute to fund development. Executive Director is responsible for managing the fund development plan.
Public/ Community Relations	Members of the Steering Committee/Board are responsible for publicity, networking and recruitment.	Board may assist the Program Coordinator in awareness and recruitment efforts. Program Coordinator has primary responsibility for public/community relations efforts related to accomplishing intake and support.	Board develops and approves a multi-faceted long-range plan. Board provides access within each member’s sphere of influence to resources that will enable the public/community relations plan. Executive Director manages the public/community relations plan.
Personnel	There is no paid staff but some other volunteers besides those on steering committee may assist in the work of the organization	Board hires the Program Coordinator and evaluates him/her based on the outcomes of the Annual Program Plan. Program Coordinator may supervise additional staff (paid or volunteer) that implements the Annual Program Plan.	Board hires the Executive Director and evaluates him/her based on the outcomes of the long-range or strategic organizational plan. Exec. Dir. Hires and manages a staff (paid and volunteer) that implements all phases of the organizational plan.
Board Development/ Nominating	All members are involved in recruiting replacements for the group.	All members agree responsible for assisting in the recruitment, orientation and training of the Board’s membership. Program Coordinator may assist in recruitment and training of Board of Directors	Board members and staff assist a committee in the recruitment, training and development of the Board’s membership. Executive Director assumes a major responsibility for informing, training and developing the Board.