

Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle

Strategic Plan



 **LITERACY VOLUNTEERS**
CHARLOTTESVILLE / ALBEMARLE
CHANGING LIVES, ONE WORD AT A TIME.



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Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle • Strategic Plan

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LVCA Vision Statement

All adults will have the ability to understand, speak, read, write, and communicate in English so that they can fully participate in our community.

LVCA Mission Statement

Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle (LVCA) promotes adult literacy through equitable, inclusive, free, confidential, one-to-one English and Citizenship tutoring.

The Need for Literacy Services

Local data and demand for our services indicate we are fulfilling a community need. In FY24 we fielded 406 inquiries for help; of those, 186 individuals went through the formal intake process and enrolled in our program. Those new students, combined with adult learners continuing in our program from previous years, gave us a total student base of 409 in FY24.

Census data for Charlottesville and Albemarle has consistently revealed a significant literacy deficit for adult residents of the area, both native and non-native. In the 2010 Census, for example, the number of adults with less than a 9th grade education was 3,935, or 4.2 percent of the Charlottesville/ Albemarle population. The 2010 census also showed that approximately 1,660 residents of Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville self-reported that they “do not speak English very well.” In 2014, 2,991 adults in Charlottesville and 5,815 adults in Albemarle did not have a high-school diploma.

Nationally in 2016, 14 percent of the U. S. population read at “Below Basic” level, meaning that they had only the most simple and concrete literacy skills, according to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Institute of Literacy research.

Literacy is more than simply recognizing words on a page. A broader definition of literacy might include: “Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.” More than one-fifth of the U.S. population has the lowest level of skills in prose, document, and quantitative proficiencies (Level 1), according to the National Center for Education Statistics Adult Literacy in America Survey. A full 11 percent (36 million) of the U.S. population cannot read, write, or do basic math above a third grade level.

LVCA: A History of Meeting Community Literacy Needs

The organization that today is Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle grew from a small group of volunteers responding to a need in their community. In 1983, this group formed to provide tutoring for adults with poor literacy skills who were enrolled in the Charlottesville City Schools' Adult Basic Education (ABE) program. The organization became a full affiliate of Literacy Volunteers of America National in 1985, and was entirely a volunteer effort until 1996, when a part-time director was hired (thanks to a Library Services and Construction Act [LSCA] grant). The group grew largely through word-of-mouth; most students were native English speakers up until about 2004. Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle received its Certificate of Incorporation in 2003, and its nonprofit 501(c)(3) status in 2004.

The organization was originally located at the Jefferson School, moved around some, and then to its home in the basement of the Tarleton building on the edge of Charlottesville's downtown for about a decade. LVCA moved back to the remodeled Jefferson School in December 2012. At the Jefferson School City Center, it is co-located with several other non-profit and social service agencies. LVCA services were suddenly much more visible, and demand soared from 253 student inquiries in fiscal year 2012 to our highest point of 586 student inquiries (in fiscal year 2018).

It became clear that the usual methods of tutor recruitment would not keep up with demand. In February 2013, LVCA partnered with a local research firm, Quest-Insight, to collect data on current tutors as a starting point for improved methods of tutor recruitment and retention. The issues, challenges and opportunities revealed in this study led the LVCA Board of Directors to undertake a new look at the wider organization: Where were we going? Who were we serving? What resources would it take to address growing demand?

Origin of the LVCA Strategic Plan

Following the report by Quest-Insight on tutor recruitment and retention, the Board of Directors performed an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the organization. From this discussion, a consensus emerged on the primary goals of the organization, which formed the Strategic Plan. This Plan has informed the annual budget, hiring of staff, fundraising and overall organizational goals and objectives. It is the basis for the benchmarks set for the Executive Director as part of her annual review.

This document operates as a "rolling" plan, with no specific end date. The goals and objectives in this document are updated annually to reflect the current state and direction of the organization; following updates, the revised plan is reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors.

Primary Goals of LVCA

- **Goal 1: Offer high-quality, student-centered educational services to all our students.** Recognizing that non-native English speakers will continue to be the majority of our students, we will continue to strengthen programs that help them pursue their literacy goals, better integrate into our community, and become more self-sufficient through learning civics and workforce concepts within the context of English language instruction.
- **Goal 2: Effectively recruit and retain volunteer tutors with a significant reach into the community-at-large.** Focus on recruitment and retention will keep our tutor base strong and growing, which directly impacts how many students we can serve.
- **Goal 3: Increase diversity, equity, and inclusion across our organization and within our programs.** Ensure that in areas from tutor recruitment to board selection to program development to hiring, we are always challenging our own assumptions and asking how we can be more equitable and inclusive.
- **Goal 4: Continually identify and obtain private and public funding and other resources.** These resources make all the above possible.

Objectives

Goal 1: Offer high-quality, student-centered educational services to all our students.

- Objective 1: We will strengthen LVCA's Workforce Tutoring program by participating in Virginia's Workforce Development activities.
 - We will offer a minimum of four Career Readiness Certificate programs approved by the Local Workforce Investment Board each year. These are known as Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs.
 - We will maintain Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with local providers of workforce certifications.
- Objective 2: We will increase the intensity of instruction and broaden the scope of our instruction with additional educational opportunities for our students.
 - We will provide digital literacy supports for both students and tutors, so that virtual instruction is possible.
 - We will provide English conversation groups, so that our students can practice their speaking and listening skills.
 - We will provide Citizenship instruction and help students prepare for the USCIS citizenship test.
 - We will improve on the curriculum used, taking into account our efforts at Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

- Objective 3: We will continually strengthen our connections with the adult education continuum in Charlottesville and Albemarle. This will ensure that our students with specific educational and career aspirations have a path to follow their dreams. These partnerships will also enable other organizations to refer students who would benefit from our services.

Goal 2: Effectively recruit and retain volunteer tutors with a significant reach into the community-at-large.

- Objective 1: Increase our volunteer retention rate to 70%. Through focus groups, interviews, and surveys, glean insight to what motivates our tutors to volunteer and stay in our program. LVCA’s tutor retention rate reached a high of 71% in FY24 but has been as low as 48% in FY20, the year the pandemic began.
- Objective 2: Maintain the sense of community among our volunteers by offering a minimum of 6 professional development opportunities and 4 social opportunities each year. These may include, but are not limited to, “Check and Connect” (cohort meetings), workshops, tutor retreat, book group meetings, tutor appreciation events, the *Joy of Writing* potluck, and the Student Achievement Ceremony.

Goal 3: Increase diversity, equity, and inclusion across our organization and within our programs.

- Objective 1: Increase the strength and diversity of the Board of Directors and volunteer tutors through a minimum of 4 introductory meetings with minority groups or individuals each year.
- Objective 2: All staff and board members will participate in at least one training related to diversity and inclusion each year.
- Objective 3: We will offer training events on diversity and inclusion to all volunteers at least once per year.
- Objective 4: Recruit members of minority groups whenever there are open staff positions.

Goal 4: Continually identify and obtain private and public funding and other resources.

- Objective 1: Employ established best practices for ethical and successful nonprofit organizations.
- Objective 2: Increase the total number of individual and corporate donors each year.
- Objective 3: Retain at least 50% of individual and corporate donors each year.
- Objective 4: Acquire at least 150 new individual and/or corporate donors each year.
- Objective 5: Work with the Development Committee to secure a minimum of three new corporate donors each year.
- Objective 6: Search and apply for a minimum of ten new foundation grants each year.
- Objective 7: Increase reserves to at least six months of operating expenses.
- Objective 8: We will look for ways to further diversify our revenue streams, including earned income.

Appendix: Key Performance Indicators

Program Participation

The table below documents the student and tutor program participation over time.

| | FY12 | FY13 | FY14 | FY15 | FY16 | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | FY20 | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | FY24 |
|-------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Student Inquiries (indicates need) | 253 | 303 | 389 | 334 | 460 | 522 | 586 | 328 | 260 | 179 | 306 | 384 | 406 |
| New Students Enrolled | 131 | 138 | 199 | 168 | 212 | 221 | 221 | 178 | 133 | 111 | 153 | 177 | 186 |
| Total Number of Students Served | 239 | 244 | 341 | 361 | 413 | 463 | 482 | 459 | 389 | 262 | 323 | 370 | 409 |
| Active Tutor/ Student Pairings | 221 | 226 | 300 | 305 | 359 | 428 | 467 | 436 | 343 | 215 | 216 | 259 | 304 |
| Total Number of Active Tutors | 191 | 205 | 252 | 308 | 336 | 391 | 439 | 417 | 355 | 226 | 214 | 250 | 277 |
| New Tutors Recruited/Trained | 66 | 82 | 112 | 113 | 149 | 168 | 185 | 126 | 98 | 87 | 84 | 104 | 110 |
| Number of Volunteer Hours | 14,452 | 14,899 | 17,357 | 19,147 | 23,805 | 31,074 | 32,987 | 31,624 | 23,195 | 12,121 | 14,676 | 18,067 | 20,571 |

All FY20 and FY21 numbers are affected by Covid-19 and the fact that we closed our office in March 2020 and changed over to online tutoring. Many planned classes and groups did not happen that spring, and many tutors and students left the program either temporarily or permanently.

New Students Enrolled: This number reflects students who appear at an intake appointment and are pre-tested, regardless of the number of hours they complete within a given fiscal year. Enrollment is typically about 45-50% of the people who inquire, because some are eligible for services elsewhere, the LVCA program is not what they need, or the potential student does not follow through. The number of intake appointments each month is determined by tutor availability.

Our Volunteer Tutors

| | FY12 | FY13 | FY14 | FY15 | FY16 | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | FY20 | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | FY24 |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Number of Active Tutors | 191 | 205 | 252 | 308 | 336 | 391 | 439 | 417 | 355 | 226 | 214 | 250 | 277 |
| Value of Volunteer Labor | \$319,967 | \$335,972 | \$391,400 | \$414,040 | \$621,048 | \$750,126 | \$750,870 | \$825,252 | \$660,130 | \$353,206 | \$452,754 | \$588,803 | \$670,409 |

Race/Ethnicity of tutors

| | FY12 | FY13 | FY14 | FY15 | FY16 | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | FY20 | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | FY24 |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Total # of Tutors | 191 | 205 | 252 | 308 | 336 | 391 | 440 | 417 | 355 | 226 | 214 | 250 | 277 |
| Asian | 6 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 15 | 10 | 13 | 16 | 20 | 16 | 8 |
| Black/African American | 4 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 14 | 12 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 8 |
| Middle Eastern | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 1 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Hispanic/Latino | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| Biracial/ Multiracial | | | | | | | | | | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| Prefer not to say | | | | | | | | | | N/A | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| White | 179 | 188 | 235 | 285 | 312 | 356 | 394 | 383 | 330 | 193 | 182 | 222 | 251 |

Our Student Body

| | FY12 | FY13 | FY14 | FY15 | FY16 | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | FY20 | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | FY24 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| ESOL | 87% | 80% | 90% | 90% | 90% | 91% | 93% | 94% | 95% | 96% | 96% | 95% | 96% |
| BL | 13% | 8% | 8.5% | 10% | 10% | 9% | 7% | 6% | 5% | 4% | 4% | 5% | 4% |
| Math | N/A | 12% | 1.5% | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

In FY13 & 14, we ran a specific program focused on math skills, as the G.E.D. test was changing and there were a number of people in our area who needed to pass the math portion.

Program Success: Student Outcomes

Educational Functional Level (EFL) Gains

An EFL gain is roughly equivalent to a grade-level gain, for English language competency. We test our students upon entry, and then after approximately every 80 hours of instruction, using industry-standard assessment tools. Students are regularly retested as long as they remain in our program, and the results are shared with tutors to help them improve and focus their tutoring activities.

The table below shows the data for all students pre- and post-tested each FY. We made significant changes in our programming model between FY13 and FY14 to accommodate students with personal learning goals that did not necessarily require 80 hours of study within the designated timeframe of one fiscal year; therefore, not every student receives a post-test. This programming change allowed us the flexibility to serve more students, regardless of whether they fit state funding criteria.

| | FY16 | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | FY20* | FY21* | FY22* | FY23 | FY24 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|
| Number of students pre- and post-tested | 107 | 178 | 145 | 140 | 67 | 20 | 18 | 72 | 72 |
| Number of pre- and post-tested students who made EFL gain | 76 | 109 | 86 | 86 | 38 | 8 | 10 | 53 | 57 |
| Percent of pre- and post-tested students who made EFL gain | 71% | 61% | 59% | 61% | 57% | 40% | 55% | 74% | 79% |

*Due to Covid-19, many of our students could not be post-tested in FY20, FY21, and FY22 and the sample size is too small.

Student Goals Met

Because our instruction is uniquely tailored to each student’s specific life situation and goals, we place considerable emphasis on whether our students are meeting the goals they set for themselves. These include both short-term and long-term goals, and are constantly evolving as students improve their literacy and more options open up to them. Student goals range from obtaining a driver’s license, to helping a child with schoolwork, to getting a better job, to pursuing higher education, to obtaining U.S. citizenship. Here are some of the most common, measured from year to year. This information comes from tutor reports or the student self-reporting.

| | FY12 | FY13 | FY14 | FY15 | FY16 | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | FY20 | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | FY24 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| TOTAL # STUDENTS | 239 | 276 | 341 | 361 | 413 | 463 | 482 | 459 | 389 | 262 | 323 | 370 | 409 |
| Entered employment or got a better job | 25 | 34 | 30 | 47 | 50 | 60 | 55 | 54 | 30 | 21 | 43 | 41 | 44 |
| Improved employability skills | 70 | 28 | 34 | 39 | 49 | 48 | 44 | 70 | 42 | 42 | 46 | 61 | 71 |
| Entered other education or training program | 19 | 10 | 11 | 37 | 37 | 47 | 47 | 96 | 61 | 52 | 74 | 76 | 72 |
| Met a work-based goal | 16 | 21 | 101 | 119 | 143 | 151 | 160 | 178 | 150 | 95 | 106 | 123 | 142 |
| Registered to vote / voted for the first time | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 3 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 13 | 9 | 6 |
| Obtained driver’s license | 6 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 15 | 18 | 14 | 5 | 2 | 11 | 13 | 16 |
| Increased involvement in community activities | 36 | 8 | 13 | 21 | 17 | 34 | 38 | 43 | 30 | 27 | 43 | 68 | 70 |
| Increased involvement in children’s education | 36 | 44 | 44 | 53 | 67 | 91 | 110 | 78 | 106 | 50 | 41 | 64 | 85 |
| Obtained Citizenship or passed the Citizenship interview | 12 | 6 | 11 | 6 | 13 | 15 | 9 | 27 | 19 | 16 | 48 | 60 | 47 |

Organizational Success: Are we meeting our budget projections?

Fundraising

| | FY12 | FY13 | FY14 | FY15 | FY16 | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | FY20 | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | FY24 |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Active Donors* | 264 | 269 | 431 | 448 | 369 | 455 | 419 | 472 | 395 | 349 | 357 | 369 | 366 |
| Donor Retention Rate | 36.68% | 45.45% | 55.39% | 49.88% | 46.55% | 57.45% | 45.93% | 52.27% | 43.86% | 45.74% | 51.93% | 54.15% | 53.95% |
| New Donors Acquired | 89 | 106 | 204 | 193 | 122 | 157 | 156 | 164 | 122 | 81 | 115 | 94 | 95 |
| Wordplay net, cash** | \$13,215 | \$15,673 | \$18,996 | \$21,000 | \$29,511 | \$28,067 | \$17,790 | \$18,181 | Covid-19 | Covid-19 | \$25,465 | \$23,192 | \$21,370 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total Income*** | \$203,702 | \$228,193 | \$281,322 | \$355,515 | \$490,089 | \$475,877 | \$372,261 | \$425,198 | \$410,571 | \$428,064 | \$474,875 | \$405,363 | \$470,574 |
| Total Expenses*** | \$195,357 | \$235,329 | \$278,820 | \$336,592 | \$480,173 | \$460,989 | \$399,070 | \$389,524 | \$410,388 | \$401,222 | \$406,140 | \$458,141 | \$456,705 |

* Does not include program fees but does include Wordplay donations.

** Does not include in-kind donations.

***Total income and expenses = final audited figures, includes in-kind donations. In FY15, 16, & 17 reflect portions of an unusual one-time grant from the United States Citizenship and Integration Services in the amount of \$250,000 spread across 3 fiscal years.

Financial Assessment/Reserves

| | FY12 | FY13 | FY14 | FY15 | FY16 | FY17 | FY18 | FY19 | FY20 | FY21 | FY22 | FY23 | FY24 |
|---------------------------------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Cost Per Day to Operate | \$535 | \$644 | \$764 | \$1,042 | \$1,232 | \$1,237 | \$1,095 | \$1,095 | \$1,124 | \$1,090 | \$1,113 | \$1,255 | \$1,251 |
| Amt in Reserve Accounts | \$26,118 | \$5,500 | \$79,000 | \$74,000 | \$74,000 | \$81,588 | \$58,118 | \$64,000 | \$82,000 | \$99,126 | \$158,976 | \$208,045 | \$189,249 |
| Days in Cash in Reserves | 48 | 8 | 137 | 168 | 60 | 65 | 53 | 58 | 72 | 100 | 143 | 165 | 151 |
| Months/ Cash in Reserves | 1.6 | 0.26 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 2 | 2.3 | 1.8 | 2 | 2.4 | 3.33 | 4.76 | 5.5 | 5.0 |

The recommended amount of operating expenses to keep in reserve is 3-6 months' worth. The "Cost Per Day to Operate" amounts for FY15, FY16, and FY17 were inflated due to the one-time United States Citizenship and Integration Services (USCIS) grant. Reserve funds are at the CACF Long-Term Asset Fund, Money Market Savings, and CD accounts.

References regarding the need for literacy services:

<http://www.statisticbrain.com/number-of-american-adults-who-cant-read/>

<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs93/93275.pdf>

<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs93/93275.pdf>

Reviewed and updated by the Board of Directors, November 17, 2016.

Reviewed by the Board of Directors, August 2017.

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Updated, reviewed, and approved by the Board of Directors, May 2022

To be reviewed and/or updated by the Board of Directors in 2024