

# Florida Library Literacy Tip Sheet

## State Library and Archives of Florida

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### Starting a Library-Based Adult Volunteer Literacy Program

#### Introduction

A library-based literacy program's purpose is to increase literacy by organizing trained volunteers to tutor adults in basic reading and conversational English. The library staff provides the leadership and support necessary to bring these services to the community. The library program coordinator works with an advisory committee to plan and accomplish the program goals. Keeping the library staff and board informed of program activities is essential in order to integrate the literacy program into the culture of the library. The library program coordinator also works to establish linkages and support with other adult literacy programs in the community. The program should support the goals that are in the library's long-range plan.

#### In this Issue

This Tip Sheet first identifies the functions of a library-based adult volunteer literacy program and then provides a series of steps in getting started. Roles and responsibilities for paid and volunteer administrative staff are also outlined for the first year of a new program.

#### What Does a Library-Based Adult Volunteer Literacy Program Do?

A library-based adult volunteer literacy program:

- develops an advisory group to assist with planning
- recruits tutors
- trains tutors
- recruits learners
- matches tutors to learners
- tutors learners
- provides support to tutors by:
  - establishing regular contact
  - maintaining a library of resource materials
  - conducting periodic training sessions (In-service)
  - recognizing volunteer efforts
- maintains volunteer and learner support networks
- keeps records of all finances and program activities
- maintains confidential learner/tutor records
- establishes cooperative relationships within the community by networking with similar groups
- publicizes the program
- evaluates the program
- raises funds to support the program through grants and other means
- keeps the library board, staff, and other groups such as the Friends of the Library informed of program goals and outcomes

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### **How Does a Library-Based Adult Volunteer Literacy Program Get Started?**

A library coordinator, along with a planning committee, should conduct a community survey to determine the need for a volunteer literacy program. Next, determine the capacity of the library to organize and administer a program. The library's reference and information department can provide data and statistics to support the program. Once the need is established and the library support is secured, the following tasks are required to begin a program.

1. Establish a steering committee or advisory group with specific responsibilities.
2. Survey the community to discover possible cooperating institutions and referral agencies.
3. Hold a community meeting to enlist the help of selected institutions and agencies in planning the establishment of a program.
4. Establish objectives for the initial period, usually one year, including tentative timetables and assignments.
5. Develop a budget based on planned activities.
6. Investigate funding options. Libraries can apply for a Library Services and Technology Act grant through the State Library and Archives of Florida to start the program.
7. Gain approval of the library administration and/or Friends Group to provide support, which ensures the stability and continuity of the new program.
8. Hold a public meeting to recruit volunteers (tutors, committee members, and administrative help) and raise public awareness.
9. Arrange for day-to-day operations: a) Record-keeping and simple bookkeeping systems, b) Matching tutors with learners, c) Tutor-Learner follow-up, and d) Learner support groups.
10. Plan for and schedule first Tutor-Training Workshop. Technical assistance is available through the State Library and Archives of Florida and through Literacy Florida! Inc.
11. Plan a public relations campaign for initial recruitment of both tutors and learners.
12. Set up an ongoing referral system between the program and local Adult Basic Education and other appropriate programs.
13. Train the first group of recruited volunteer tutors with a qualified trainer.
14. Invite library staff in as speakers at the workshop to provide information on library services and resources.
15. Match the trained tutors with learners.
16. Plan for ongoing supervision and support for the tutor/learner teams.
17. Plan to evaluate and adjust the program on a continuing basis.
18. Keep the library director, staff, and Friends Group informed of your progress and needs.
19. Plan for continued training for the program coordinator, trainers, and advisory committee.

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### Who Does What?

Two jobs must be filled immediately in a new library literacy program:

1. Literacy Program Coordinator: Leads all meetings, supports volunteer administrative staff and trainers, raises funds, manages grants, secures support from library, involves other community leaders, and builds advisory group.
2. Trainer: Conducts tutor-training workshops, supervises initial matches of tutors and learners, plans for supervision and training of other trainers.

### End of First Year

By the end of the first year, an advisory group, representing multiple program and community interests, should be in place. Administrative volunteers should be added as the program coordinator can support them:

Program Chair: Supervises workshop team, supervises tutor/learner matches, arranges for supervision of trained tutors by other volunteers

Community Relations Chair: Under the supervision of the coordinator, writes newspaper articles, recruits tutors and learners, publicizes workshops and fundraising activities, serves as newsletter editor, coordinates speaker's bureau. Publicity should be coordinated through the library staff responsible for communications as needed.

Administrative Volunteer Staff: Other volunteer roles include volunteer resource liaison, tutor/student matches, tester, fundraiser leader, newsletter writer, speaker bureau volunteers, and special events coordinator.

The following groups will support your efforts. Your program should become a member of ProLiteracy America ([www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org)), Literacy Florida! ([www.literacyflorida.org](http://www.literacyflorida.org)), and Florida Literacy Coalition ([www.floridaliteracy.org](http://www.floridaliteracy.org)). The State of Florida also provides training, technical assistance, and grants for library sponsored programs.

For more information about library literacy services and programs in Florida, contact Sandra Newell at: **State Library and Archives of Florida**

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You may also visit [http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/bld/Literacy/BLD\\_literacy\\_index.html](http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/bld/Literacy/BLD_literacy_index.html).

### Reference

Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc. *How to Start an Affiliate*. Syracuse, NY: 1989.

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