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Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. Literacy Agency Membership Policy

Membership Requirements

501(c)(3) Literacy Services Agency

Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. (WLI) membership is available to formally organized nonprofit literacy providers that offer basic skills or English language services to adults and/or families in Wisconsin. Agencies must pay dues each January to maintain membership.

Literacy agencies can become members of WLI even if learners pay a fee for services and instructors/tutors are paid, as long as the organization is a non-profit and has some scholarships and/or a sliding fee scale.

If the literacy agency is not yet formally organized, the agency can join with the understanding that it is actively pursuing either a fiscal agent or 501(c)(3) status.

Annual WLI Member Demographics Survey

WLI requires each member agency to complete a one-page Demographics Survey annually. In return, WLI sends all members an aggregate report that contains literacy data for the state. WLI also uses data from the Demographics Survey to advocate on behalf of community-based adult and family literacy providers as a whole for the state of Wisconsin.

Membership Benefits

WLI provides benefits from our four focus areas: members and communities, health literacy, workforce, and advocacy. In addition to these four areas, WLI also supports professional development and assistance to new agencies.

Benefits Provided for Members and their Communities

WLI member agencies receive support from the Regional Literacy Consultant (RLC) and Regional Community Consultant (RCC) located in their region. This support serves all areas of the state.

RLCs/RCCs offer the following services to member agencies in their region:

1. **Site visits:** Member agencies get to know their RLC, and RLCs/RCCs learn more about how to support the agency's work.
2. **Tutor Training:** *Train the Trainer* support and other assistance to support literacy providers with tutor training.
3. **Board of Directors Development:** RLCs/RCCs provide advice on board member recruitment, retention and responsibilities. Additionally, RLCs/RCCs work directly with board members to review and offer guidance on board policies and other relevant documents.
4. **Human Resources:** RLCs/RCCs offer feedback about hiring, employment and termination issues.
5. **Strategic Planning:** RLCs/RCCs lead discussions about how to best grow agencies effectively and efficiently, as well as best practices for identifying agency goals
6. **Building Collaborations:** RLCs/RCCs help build connections with the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), workforce development boards, W-2 agencies, local health care organizations and other agencies.

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7. **Assessments and Tracking Outcomes:** WLI offers a reduced rate for the Achieve Database application that tracks learners' outcomes and assessments, hours of instruction, and volunteer time. In addition, RLCs/RCCs help agencies to determine other appropriate assessment options and offer guidance on recording and using data.
8. **Sustainability:** RLCs/RCCs give guidance on organizing agencies for greater sustainability.
9. **Grant Alerts:** RLCs/RCCs and state staff announce relevant regional, statewide, or national grants that align with potential agency projects.
10. **Grant Writing Support:** RLCs/RCCs provide grant templates as well as editing and feedback for grant proposals.
11. **National Reporting System (NRS) Standards:** RLCs/RCCs share ideas on how best to gather, process, assess and report data consistent with the NRS standards.
12. **Resource Recommendations and support:** RLCs/RCCs assist agencies in choosing curricula, instructional materials and assessments that meet the needs of the learners and work toward program goals. Depending on agency participation in funded programs, RLCs/RCCs are able to purchase some curricula and office support resources for agencies.
13. **Best Practices:** RLCs/RCCs develop and update guides and toolkits in areas such as tutor training, organizational operations, and other areas of need and make these resources available to members.
14. **Consultation in the following areas:**
 - a. Adult learning theory
 - b. Curricula
 - c. Data management
 - d. Fundraising
 - e. Volunteer recruitment and retention
 - f. Learner recruitment and retention
 - g. Organizational development

Additional resources include:

1. Monthly e-Newsletter (for regular news about trainings, workshops, seminars, upcoming events, funding opportunities, and job posting across the state)
2. Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) membership through our large group membership (benefits listed at <https://www.coabe.org/become-a-member/>)
3. Depending on availability of funding resources, WLI may purchase learning resources for members such as curricula, software or hardware necessary for service delivery.
4. WLI's member's portal with username and password

Benefits Provided in Health Literacy

With additional emphasis and national focus on health literacy, RLCs/RCCs and WLI staff continue to work to advance and promote health literacy. This includes:

1. **Circulation of Information:** WLI sends relevant information to members and other agencies that support health literacy efforts and collaborations.
2. **Presentation to Groups:** WLI leads educational workshops with the goal of raising awareness of the impact of health literacy, promoting positive health literacy practices to both patients and providers and educating all those affected by health literacy.

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3. **Serving as Health Literacy Expert/Resource:** WLI provides access to extensive knowledge about health literacy, relevant resources and opportunities to participate in grant funded projects that focus on improving the health literacy of adult students and families.

Benefits Provided in Workforce Literacy

With a growing need for a better trained workforce in Wisconsin, RLCs/RCCs and WLI staff continue to work with agencies to help them implement workforce and career training programs as well as connect them with workforce initiatives throughout the state.

1. **Connections to Workforce Development Boards (WDBs):** RLCs/RCCs help agencies establish collaborative relationships with WDBs, as they work with their clients on skills necessary for job placement and retention.
2. **Connections to Technical College Career Pathways Programs:** RLCs/RCCs identify a “point person” at the technical college as well as curricula necessary to prepare for a specific program.
3. **General Workplace Curricula:** RLCs/RCCs help agencies choose curricula that include soft skills lessons, basic computer instruction and other resources relevant to workforce training.
4. **Workforce Literacy Professional Development:** WLI works in collaboration with WTCS and the state Department of Workforce Development to plan and implement Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) learning and partnership opportunities.
5. **GED/HSED Information and Resources:** RLCs/RCCs provide practice tests, assessment strategies and guidance on curricula.

Benefits Provided in Advocacy and Fundraising

WLI serves as the statewide voice on literacy in Wisconsin. WLI staff meet regularly with policymakers to raise awareness of adult and family literacy and keep up-to-date on grant and fundraising opportunities.

1. **Representatives:** WLI staff serve as representatives of adult literacy at a variety of venues. They meet with legislators, and may accompany members to meetings in their regions to help raise awareness of adult literacy issues.
2. **Funding Support:** WLI may also write letters of support for funding and letters of opinion to political as well as other organizations. This includes advocacy and updates on WIOA that influences Adult Education and Family Literacy (AEFL) funding.
3. **Research:** WLI researches grant information, answers to specific agency questions, and other targeted information.
4. **Policy Updates:** WLI shares updates on WIOA that influences AEFL funding, as well as other policy updates from ProLiteracy and COABE. WLI is represented on ProLiteracy’s Public Policy and Advocacy Committee.

Benefits Provided in Professional Development

To help members keep up-to-date on current adult education information, RLCs/RCCs and WLI staff provide the following support:

1. **Monitor and Circulate Pertinent Information:** WLI distributes relevant information from listserv discussions, webinars and other professional development sources such as COABE and ProLiteracy.
2. **Attendance at State and Regional Conferences:** RLCs/RCCs and WLI staff represent member agency interests at state and regional conferences and disseminate best practices.
3. **Regional Meetings:** RLCs/RCCs organize Regional Meetings to support regional professional development and provide agencies the opportunity to share best practices. RLCs/RCCs offer travel assistance to make it easier for agencies to attend.

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4. **In-services:** WLI offers free webinars and training on fundraising strategies, ELL support, reading comprehension tools, networking, English Forward trainings, assessment use, and more.

Benefits Provided to New and Emerging Organizations:

WLI shares organizational toolkits and guides and RLCs/RCCs offer ongoing assistance to new and emerging organizations to make sure they have the support they need to establish successful programming. This includes:

1. **Meeting and Advising:** RLCs/RCCs work with representatives from potential agencies and other community-based organizations.
2. **Research:** RLCs/RCCs research needs and possible connections within communities/regions.
3. **Attending Agency Board or Steering Committee Meetings:** RLCs/RCCs answer questions and provide knowledge, experience and guidance during Board or Steering Committee Meetings.
4. **Organizational Development:** RLCs/RCCs assist with the structuring of new agencies to ensure long-term viability and appropriate scaling.
5. **Assistance:** RLCs/RCCs help new organizations apply for 501(c)(3) status.