



first literacy

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

“IN THEIR WORDS”

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings!

We hope this letter finds you and your family well. It has been one year since I wrote my first letter for our Annual Report, and what a year it has been.

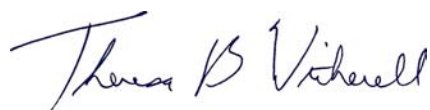
This time last year, no one could have predicted the events that would transpire in our world, our country, and in our local communities. I don't need to tell you that there have been plenty of difficulties and challenges. But if we look, we also can find plenty of signs of hope and progress, too.

Here at First Literacy, we see many of those signs of hope all around us. We are inspired every day by the adult learners who continue to persevere, taking classes online and finding ways to study, despite the fact that many have lost their jobs and are worried about their family's health and wellbeing. The adult educators keep going too, adapting to the new demands of teaching remotely. Because of them, *we remain committed to continuing to provide support through teacher training, grants, and scholarships.*

This year, we are inviting you to hear our stories of impact through the voices of those whom we support. *Through their stories, you will see what a difference your generosity makes to our work and our mission.*

We anticipate many exciting changes at First Literacy in the year ahead. We look forward to sharing those with you when we report back again next year.

Until then, be well, and thank you for your ongoing support.



Terry Witherell

Executive Director, First Literacy



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17% of adults

in the state of Massachusetts are at or below Level 1 literacy. Adults at this level are considered at risk for difficulties using and comprehending print material.

Source: Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

OUR MISSION

Funding innovation in adult literacy to change lives.

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OUR IMPACT



10 **FIRST-TIME** scholarship applicants received awards

1

SCHOLAR attends four-year university program

1055

ADULT LEARNERS participated in First Literacy Lab Projects



“Our Lab Grant from First Literacy gives us the time and space to do one on one coaching and peer support around our educators’ individual goals. It’s the kind of support I always wanted (but couldn’t find!) as a teacher myself.”

—Allison, First Literacy Lab Grant Recipient

9

PROJECTS were awarded First Literacy Lab Grants

192 **ADULT EDUCATORS** attended workshops

“My husband commanded me to give up school—to choose between him and school. I chose education. I got a First Literacy scholarship, and it paved the way for me beautifully.”

—Sherrie, First Literacy Scholar

10 **CONTINUING STUDENTS** were awarded with second-year scholarships

90

FIRST-TIME workshop attendees

54.5

HOURS of **FREE** teacher training



“I’m a teacher. I’ve been teaching for so many years. First Literacy is one of the important organizations that help adult education teachers fulfill their mission.”

—Leonardo, Teacher and First Literacy workshop attendee

19

SCHOLARS attend community college

FIRST LITERACY LAB GRANTS



Students learn and discuss how to choose the correct credit card.

FUNDING INNOVATION

Complicated financial language. A lack of translated financial documents. Cultures that reject debt. These are just some of the reasons that immigrants and refugees to the United States struggle financially and are much more susceptible to fraud.

**14.3% of Hispanics are victims of fraud,
compared to 6.4% of non-Hispanic whites.***

Data shows that non-white, non-English speakers are less likely to resolve financial issues over the phone, have trouble properly managing their bank account, and have difficulty finding financial services in their own language.

On a mission to equip immigrants and refugees with the knowledge and skills needed to manage money effectively, the International Institute of New England (IINE) Boston developed and delivered a robust curriculum aimed at providing basic financial literacy skills to a group of refugees, immigrants and asylees. With First Literacy's support, IINE Boston was able to offer classes to 30 immigrants and refugees.

This is just one example of how First Literacy Lab grants provide the funding that Massachusetts adult education programs need to develop new curriculum resources and strengthen education available to adults in Massachusetts.

*Source: Federal Trade Commission report, "Consumer Fraud in the United States: An FTC Survey" (2004)

FIRST LITERACY LAB FUNDED PROJECTS

“Without funding from First Literacy, we could not have paid staff to develop curriculum that has proven to improve the probability of our students’ passing.”
—Grant Recipient

Diving in Deep with Children’s Books Which Resonate

Students Served: 25

Award amount: \$3,500

ESOL Family Literacy–Library Partnership (Continuation of a successful year 1 grant)

Students Served: 10

Award amount: \$4,000

Emerging Literacy and iPads

Students Served: 120

Award amount: \$5,000

HIP to SMS: Helping Immigrant Parents to be Social Media Savvy

Students Served: 800

Award amount: \$3,500

Money Talks and Your Voice Matters: Financial Skills for Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylees

Students Served: 30

Award amount: \$5,000

Think! Executive Function Skills Workshops

Students Served: 12

Award amount: \$5,000

College for You and Me/College Para Ti y Para Mi

Students Served: 20

Award amount: \$5,000

Pre-Family Literacy: ESOL for Parents and Caregivers with Low Levels of English Proficiency

Students Served: 18

Award amount: \$5,000

Getting Connected to Massachusetts through Historic Tourism

Students Served: 20

Award amount: \$5,000

FIRST LITERACY SCHOLARSHIPS



Edith (pictured right) with fellow scholar.

EDITH'S STORY

The youngest of several children, 10-year-old Edith was sent to live with her grandparents who put her to work for the adults in the household rather than send her to school. She was soon ill from exhaustion and hospitalized. Thanks to her doctor's intervention, she was enrolled in a local elementary school but could not complete high school. Then in 2009 Edith arrived in Boston.

“When I came to the United States it was a dream come true.”

She enrolled in school and later graduated from the JVS Adult High School Diploma program. Her advisor at JVS told her about First Literacy and encouraged her to apply for a scholarship. In 2018 she applied and was awarded a scholarship. The scholarship allowed her to attend Bunker Hill Community College and take care of her family in the U.S. and Haiti.

In December of 2020 Edith completed her Associates degree in Arts and Science from Bunker Hill Community College with a GPA of 3.611. She was also accepted to a nursing program and will start taking the prerequisite classes in the spring of 2021. Her goal is to become a nurse. She is determined to spend vacation time volunteering as a nurse in Haiti.

Edith's grit and perseverance to pursue her dreams is inspiring. First Literacy is very proud to support Edith's journey.

2020 FIRST LITERACY SCHOLARS



Jocelyne Alleyne

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Nicole Simeon

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Luis Urbina

“From the bottom of my heart, I am so deeply appreciative and grateful. I can't describe my gratitude for First Literacy. It means so much to me. You inspire me to move forward and keep on going. Every time I meet someone I tell them about First Literacy.”

—Jocelyn, First Literacy Scholar

FIRST LITERACY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS



CHAMPIONING THE FRONT LINE IN ADULT EDUCATION

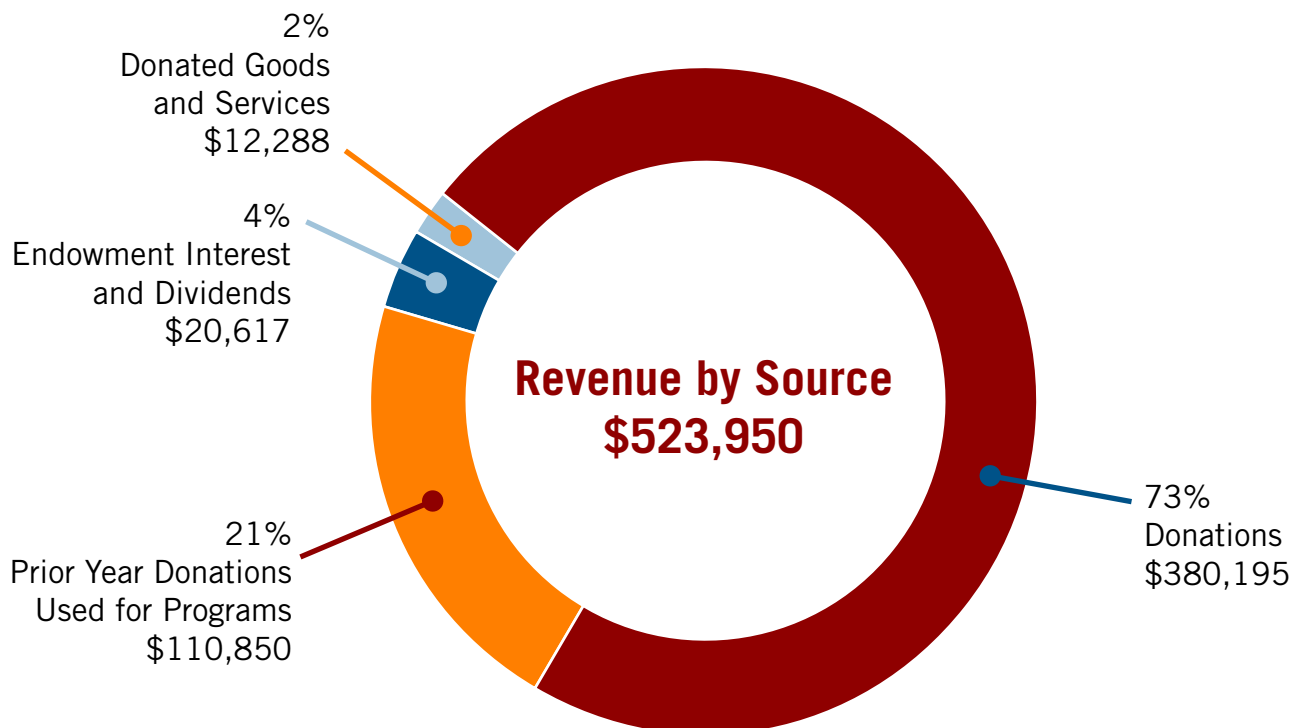
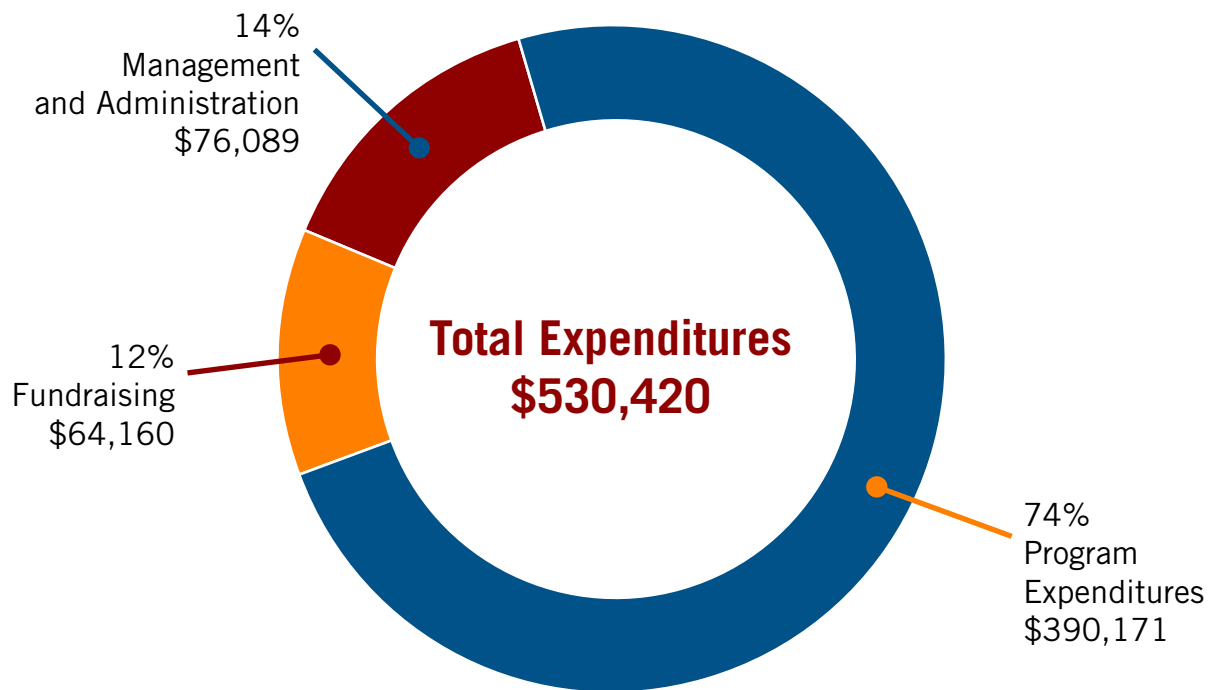
Huiling is an English teacher and Program Manager at BEST Hospitality Training Center in Medford. Huiling learned about First Literacy's workshops from her supervisor, Joan Abbot, who was a Community Advisory Council Member at First Literacy. Huiling has attended over 20 First Literacy workshops since 2014. She continues to attend workshops each year to improve the quality of her teaching, benefiting students and furthering her impact in the field of Adult Basic Education.

In 2020, Huiling attended a First Literacy workshop on leveraging volunteers. After attending the workshop, Huiling realized that volunteers could be more than a one-on-one tutor or tech support for Zoom meetings. To create a stronger connection with volunteers and better leverage their strengths Huiling started asking volunteers about their teaching goals and interests. After learning more about the volunteers, Huiling made an effort to create opportunities for each volunteer that allowed them to gain teaching experience.

Huiling and her team now work with two volunteers in each class serving in roles as a class assistant and tutor. The volunteers are assisting about 28 students in both English and citizenship classes.

As a result of attending the First Literacy workshop, Huiling has furthered her impact as an Adult Basic Education teacher by leveraging volunteers in a way that benefits both the teacher and the student—just one example of why providing free professional development workshops to teachers and adult education professionals is essential to create life-changing educational opportunities for adults with low literacy.

FISCAL YEAR 2020 FINANCIALS



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