

First Literacy of Boston awards over \$40,000 to nonprofits supporting adult basic education in Massachusetts

By **Maeve Lawler** Globe Correspondent, Updated July 17, 2024, 11:15 p.m.



Bryan McCormick, First Literacy program director (left), and Terry Witherell, First Literacy executive director (center), present Mswati Hanks, project leader at Charlestown Adult Education (right), with second year grant award. FIRST LITERACY

First Literacy has awarded over \$40,000 in grant funds to nonprofits across

Massachusetts providing adult basic education services, including criminal justice programs in Charlestown and Hampden County, the nonprofit announced Wednesday.

Seven organizations are receiving grants to support “new and innovative” projects for adult learning, according to a statement from First Literacy.

[First Literacy](#), a Boston-based nonprofit focused on adult basic education, offers grants of up to \$15,000 each year in support of educational organizations. Since the organization was founded in 1988, over 600 scholarships have been awarded and over \$6 million has gone to support teachers and literacy programs, the statement said.

“Our goal is to fund creative ideas that will have a lasting impact in the field of adult basic education and give [these] organizations the chance to share these ideas with others,” Terry Witherell, the executive director of First Literacy, said in the statement.

The funds will be used to support new projects, such as developing a program idea or offering a short-term class that fills students’ needs, according to First Literacy.

“The seven projects we awarded funds to this year have an opportunity to impact over 1,500 adults in communities throughout Massachusetts,” Bryan McCormick, First Literacy’s program director, said in the statement. “We are excited to support these ideas and see them come to life.”

[Charlestown Adult Education](#) is receiving funds for the second year in a row. The group will use the money to support their Juvenile Justice Diversion Program, which helps to prevent young people from having a criminal record, as well as increases educational and employment opportunities, the statement said.

“Without First Literacy and its generous funding, it would be next to impossible to give the amazing young adults in our program a second chance at life and at education.”

Mswati Hanks, the project leader at Charlestown Adult Education, said in the statement.

The [Criminal Justice Organization of Hampden County](#) received a grant to fund a mother and child reading program for incarcerated women in Chicopee, First Literacy said.

This year was also the first time a Replication Grant was awarded, which will “duplicate a successful and previously funded First Literacy grant project in a new community,” the statement said.

As part of this grant, the [Casserly House](#) and [ABCD Boston-Roslindale](#), both Boston-based nonprofits, are partnering to provide English language lessons and workshops about social determinants of health, the statement said. The Casserly House also received grant funds last year.

Also receiving grants are [Mujeres Unidas Avanzando](#) of Dorchester for a program that helps students pass the state’s [High School Equivalency](#) test; [Friends of the Community Learning Center](#) in Cambridge for a program to teach leadership skills; and [The Literacy Project](#) in Greenfield for a research project to identify literacy skills adult learners need to be successful.

For more information about the 2024-25 grant recipients, click [here](#).

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