



# ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2026

# Strategic Plan Overview

In September 2022, The Literacy Cooperative (TLC) embarked on a planning process that was designed to help board and staff members develop a three-year strategic plan for the organization. TLC's Board Chair, Emily Campbell, and President & CEO, Bob Paponetti, formed a committee that had the responsibility of developing and recommending a three-year strategic plan and direction for the organization. The Committee was comprised of a diverse group of TLC stakeholders, including dedicated staff members, committed board representatives, and influential community figures. Committee members included:

- Emily Campbell (The Center for Community Solutions)
- Bob Paponetti (The Literacy Cooperative)
- Laurie Atkins-Holliday (The Literacy Cooperative)
- Carole Beaty (The Centers)
- Connie Thackaberry (Jones Day)
- Sally Brocious (Eaton)
- Julie Crocker (Taft Stettinius & Hollister)
- Craig Dorn (Youth Opportunities Unlimited)
- Vallery Gaines
- Donald Jolly (Warrensville Heights City Schools)
- Ken Surratt (The United Way)

Victor Ruiz, a Partner at Gradient A Human Equity Think Tank (Gradient), was the lead facilitator. Utilizing the [SOAR](#) (Strengths-Opportunities-Aspirations-Results) model for strategic planning, the committee, in collaboration with board members, staff, and community stakeholders, engaged in a feedback process that paved the way for the identification of goals and their corresponding strategies. The TLC staff was tasked with creating an action plan that included tactics, timelines, and indicators of progress.

The committee is also recommending a revision to the organization's mission statement to make it clearer and better aligned with the work of the organization. The recommended new mission statement and 2023-2026 strategic goals for The Literacy Cooperative are:

## **Mission:**

The mission of The Literacy Cooperative is to advance literacy through raising awareness, advocating for public support of literacy initiatives, and strengthening the network to improve literacy across the lifespan.

**Goals:**

- **Goal #1:** Support the development and replication of high-quality, relevant, and effective initiatives.
- **Goal #2:** Grow, evolve, and support a network of service providers that address the literacy needs of the whole family.
- **Goal #3:** Grow TLC’s brand and increase our visibility.
- **Goal #4:** Advocate for public policies that improve literacy for all.
- **Goal #5:** Build a sustainable pipeline of revenue to support the mission of TLC.
- **Goal #6:** Improve awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion issues within our organization and in the community.

We at Gradient believe that your goals are well aligned with the needs and demands of your community. To successfully implement this strategic plan, it is imperative that the TLC Board and staff consider the following:

- Incorporate routine updates into both staff and board meetings.
- Hold yourselves accountable for executing your plan and delivering tangible results.
- Prioritize initiatives that offer “quick wins” – those that can be achieved swiftly and without a large financial commitment.
- Eliminate or reduce current efforts/initiatives that no longer align with your direction. Reallocate those resources to these new goals and strategies.
- Low literacy has a severe impact on communities of color, especially in Cleveland, Ohio. For TLC to have the impact that it aspires to have, you must make bold and courageous decisions around issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- The chart below shows the estimated costs of implementing new initiatives and adding the internal capacity to support your growth. It is important that the board and staff work together to raise the funds needed to achieve your goals.

<b>TLC 3-yr STRATEGIC PLAN ESTIMATED NEW COSTS</b>				
<b>Goal</b>	<b>New Resources</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
1	PD Trainers/Curriculum Writers	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$25,000
1	Data Research Intern	\$0	\$2,500	\$5,000
1	Expanded Research	\$0	\$5,000	\$10,000
1	Neighborhood Ambassadors	\$0	\$7,500	\$15,000
1	Family Survey Consultant	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000
1	Faith Based/Community Staff	\$0	\$20,000	\$40,000
1,2	Referral System/Platform	\$0	\$0	\$0
2	Data Research Consultant	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$10,000

<b>Goal</b>	<b>New Resources</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
2	Grant Writer	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$25,000
2,3,5	Marketing Consultant	\$25,000	\$0	\$0
1,2,4,5	Policy Consultant	\$30,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
1,2,3,4,5	Development Assistant	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
5	Endowment Feasibility study			\$40,000
6	DEI Facilitator/Trainer	\$7,500	\$15,000	\$25,000
	<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$132,500</b>	<b>\$202,500</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>

The following pages 1) describe The Literacy Cooperative in more detail and 2) set the course for operating activities for the next three years 3) provide the background information and data that was gathered.

# What is the Literacy Cooperative?

The Literacy Cooperative began as a joint initiative of the Cleveland, George Gund and Martha Holden Jennings Foundations with a goal of addressing literacy levels, determining need, identifying solutions, and implementing a collaborative literacy plan to create an effective, seamless pathway for lifelong learning.

The planning for The Literacy Cooperative began in June of 2004 after the release of the National Assessment of Adult Literacy report that showed 69% of the adults in the city of Cleveland and 47% of the adults in Cuyahoga County had literacy levels below the eighth grade. Representatives of the aforementioned foundations brought together more than 300 individuals representing 250 organizations to better understand literacy services and practices in our community. Collectively, the group came to a consensus on two key recommendations – develop an action plan and create a collaborative organization to carry out the plan. The collaborative organization ultimately became The Literacy Cooperative. The Literacy Cooperative became operational in February 2006 under the administrative support of Suite 1300 Services, an incubator agency of The Cleveland Foundation. In May of 2009 The Literacy Cooperative obtained its 501c3 status.

Aiming to hold up the highest standards in the field, The Literacy Cooperative addresses low literacy levels in Greater Cleveland by bridging current gaps in the education continuum and support availability; allowing for children and adults in Greater Cleveland to reach their highest literacy potential for employment, self-sufficiency, and lifelong learning. For more than a decade, we've been bringing the community, agencies, and stakeholders together to maximize shared outcomes, help learners lift themselves out of poverty and deliver greater return on investment.<sup>1</sup>

TLC's initiatives include:

- **Public Policy & Advocacy:** Our public education and advocacy initiatives seek to bring broad attention to issues of access, quality, and learner progression and transitions. We engage policymakers, government agencies, funders, industry leaders, and other key stakeholders to promote policies to sustain effective practices and spur greater effort at policy and institutional innovations and collaborations.
- **Early Literacy Awareness:** TLC leads a number of initiatives, including the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, to raise awareness of the importance of early literacy and get books into the hands of all children.
- **2Gen Community:** 2Gen approaches offer whole-family interventions that meet the needs of children, their caregivers, and the family as a unit and operate from the understanding that adults want to help their children succeed and want opportunities for success in their work and lives as well.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://literacycooperative.org/about-the-literacy-cooperative/>

- **Professional Development:** The Literacy Cooperative offers a diverse menu of trainings for literacy practitioners, volunteer tutors, and other cross-sector professionals. The Cooperative's three focus areas of early literacy, whole family and career pathways are reflected in training offerings that cover best practices & relevant issues in a hands-on, participatory approach.
- **Career Pathway Engagement:** The Literacy Cooperative works with a team of adult educators with a common goal to serve the workforce and education needs of adults in Cuyahoga, Lorain, and Summit counties.
- **The Kurt Karakul Literacy Award:** With a gift from The Third Federal Foundation, The Literacy Cooperative has created The Kurt Karakul Literacy Award to annually recognize an organization doing exemplary work to advance literacy in our community.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://literacycooperative.org/about-the-literacy-cooperative/>

# Three-year Goals & Strategies

- **Goal #1: Support the development and replication of high-quality, relevant, and effective programs.**
  - Strategy 1: Support career pathways for adults at all literacy levels.
  - Strategy 2: Grow, sustain, and maximize enrollment, in high need areas, of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
  - Strategy 3: Support families and caregivers as their child's first teacher.
  - Strategy 4: Provide subject matter experts and promote best practices through professional development opportunities.
  - Strategy 5: Create a board-level strategic plan committee.
- **Goal #2: Grow, evolve, and support a network of service providers that address the literacy needs of the whole family.**
  - Strategy 1: Expand and evolve the 2Gen committee work.
  - Strategy 2: Advocate for services across the whole family spectrum.
- **Goal #3: Grow TLC's brand and increase our visibility.**
  - Strategy 1: Develop a marketing campaign that tells the story of TLC, our partners, and our recommendations to the community.
- **Goal #4: Advocate for public policies that improve literacy for all.**
  - Strategy 1: Develop an advocacy plan.
- **Goal #5: Build a sustainable pipeline of revenue to support the mission of TLC.**
  - Strategy 1: Create a comprehensive fund development plan.
- **Goal #6: Improve awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion issues within our organization and in the community.**
  - Strategy 1: Build the capacity, and accountability, for the organization to prioritize DEI work, both internally and externally.
  - Strategy 2: Develop, implement, and promote culturally competent and responsive literacy practices.
  - Strategy 3: Strengthen recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and retention practices (staff, board, and partners) which address and advance DEI.