



**There are presently no open calls for submissions.**

The Trust in American Institutions Challenge is a \$10 million initiative designed to scale a bold solution that will build and restore public trust in the core institutions that form the pillars of society in the United States.

This challenge seeks transformative solutions that are poised to reverse recent trends and significantly increase public trust in fundamental institutions in the United States in the next five years. Applicants best fit for this opportunity will utilize key leverage points to renew, rebuild, and/or establish trust in core institutions for Americans across the country.

The Trust in American Institutions Challenge is open to organizations across the United States, including partnerships and collaborations. Competitive applications will present solutions that are bold, transformative, scalable, and durable.

Before applying, complete the [Organizational Readiness Tool](https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/organizationalreadinesstool) (<https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/organizationalreadinesstool>) and refer to the [Challenge Rules](https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/rules) (<https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/rules>) to help determine eligibility and to ensure that your solution is a strong fit for the Challenge. Take some time to review the application, which is [accessible in PDF form here](https://app.box.com/s/9vmtznb6ekq6n05o5mfs5p9toxvdmjlj). (<https://app.box.com/s/9vmtznb6ekq6n05o5mfs5p9toxvdmjlj>).

Interested applicants must register to apply before **5 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on Wednesday, February 19, 2025**. Complete applications are due before **5 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on Wednesday, March 19, 2025**.

Valid applications will be scored by four fellow applicants during Participatory Review in May 2025. Top-scoring applicants will advance to Evaluation Panel Review, where they will be scored by four Evaluation Panel Reviewers. Scores will be adjusted to ensure fairness. Once evaluations are complete, The Trust in American Institutions team will review the top-scoring submissions and may request additional information as needed in order to select up to five finalists who will move on to the next phase.

\$1 million in project development support will be split among the finalists who will also receive technical assistance to strengthen their proposals. In Spring 2026, the \$9 million grant will be given to one of the finalists, who will be named The Trust in American Institutions Challenge Awardee. Please see the

complete Challenge timeline [here \(https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/timeline\)](https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/timeline).

- If you have registered for The Trust in American Institutions Challenge, you will have received a confirmation email confirming your registration. Within the hour, you will have received another email containing instructions for accessing The Trust in American Institutions Challenge application.
- If you have already begun your application, you may sign in to your Submittable account at [manager.submittable.com/login](http://manager.submittable.com/login?_hstc=56214708.98c0413a67fd10c0bfa3f20d4178e21f.1748019528634.1748019528634.1748019528634.1&_hssc=56214708.2.1748019528634&_hsfp=2831666935) ([http://manager.submittable.com/login?\\_hstc=56214708.98c0413a67fd10c0bfa3f20d4178e21f.1748019528634.1748019528634.1748019528634.1&\\_hssc=56214708.2.1748019528634&\\_hsfp=2831666935](http://manager.submittable.com/login?_hstc=56214708.98c0413a67fd10c0bfa3f20d4178e21f.1748019528634.1748019528634.1748019528634.1&_hssc=56214708.2.1748019528634&_hsfp=2831666935)). Once signed in, you may access and continue your application. You may also view your application, once complete, via your Submittable account. If you have lost or forgotten your password, **please follow the instructions here** (<https://submittable.help/en/articles/9508596-changing-your-password-faqs>).
- You may access a recording of The Trust in American Institutions Challenge Pre-Registration Webinar, held on February 4, **here** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6VBQdyyc8g>). This webinar covers an overview of the Challenge, a demonstration of the registration platform, and answers to some frequently asked questions.
- You may access a recording of The Trust in American Institutions Pre-Application Webinar, held on March 4, **here** (<https://youtu.be/8iT0MGARFb0?si=n353h8bPiWh7A5CS>). The webinar provided an overview of the Challenge application process, information about the review process and next steps, and ended with a live Q&A session.

[Return to our website \(https://www.leverforchange.org/challenges/explore-challenges/trust-in-american-institutions\)](https://www.leverforchange.org/challenges/explore-challenges/trust-in-american-institutions).

[View your submissions \(https://manager.submittable.com/user/submissions?\\_hstc=56214708.98c0413a67fd10c0bfa3f20d4178e21f.1748019528634.1748019528634.1748019528634.1&\\_hssc=56214708.2.1748019528634&\\_hsfp=2831666935\)](https://manager.submittable.com/user/submissions?_hstc=56214708.98c0413a67fd10c0bfa3f20d4178e21f.1748019528634.1748019528634.1748019528634.1&_hssc=56214708.2.1748019528634&_hsfp=2831666935).



(<https://www.leverforchange.org>)

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<https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/timeline> [\\_hstc=56214708.98c0413a67fd10c0bfa3f20d4178e21f.1748019528634.1748019528634.1748019528634.1&\\_hssc=56214708.2.1748019528634&\\_hsfp=2831666935](https://manager.submittable.com/user/submissions?_hstc=56214708.98c0413a67fd10c0bfa3f20d4178e21f.1748019528634.1748019528634.1748019528634.1&_hssc=56214708.2.1748019528634&_hsfp=2831666935)) © 2025

## The Trust in American Institutions Challenge Section B: Application

# Section B: Application

Thank you for participating in The Trust in American Institutions Challenge.

Before starting your application, we recommend that you carefully read all the requirements provided by Lever for Change. We encourage you to review the [Scoring Rubric \(https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/scoringprocess\)](https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/scoringprocess) that will be used to assess all valid applications. Applications must be submitted in English. We understand that using English as the sole language for our review process may pose a challenge to those who do not speak it as their first language. However, we made this decision to ensure consistency and minimize the risk of translation errors or misinterpretations in the application process. Please note that English language proficiency is not a requirement for applying. Thank you for your accommodation and understanding. We encourage everyone to apply regardless of their language background.

You must submit your application no later than **Wednesday, March 19, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time.**

*Kindly take note that if your project progresses through different stages of the Challenge, it will be evaluated by at least four Participatory Reviewers, four Evaluation Panel Reviewers, The Trust in American Institutions Challenge stakeholders, and challenge administrators. Your application may be shared online and with other evaluators. To get a better idea of what information may be displayed, you can visit the [Bold Solutions Network \(https://www.leverforchange.org/bold-solutions-network/\)](https://www.leverforchange.org/bold-solutions-network/) and view other profiles.*

## 1. QUICK PITCH

Make a powerful first impression by providing a concise and captivating summary of your project. Avoid using technical terms, acronyms, or complex language that may be difficult for the general public to comprehend. This section should be clear and concise, able to stand on its own, and convey your project's problem and solution to anyone who reads it. **Keep in mind that this section may become publicly accessible [online \(https://solutions.leverforchange.org/\)](https://solutions.leverforchange.org/) and will be reviewed by both peer and Evaluation Panel Reviewers of the Challenge.**

### Project Title

Building Trust Through Literacy: A Community of Lifelong Learning

### Project Description

The **Comprehensive Literacy Model** strengthens trust in American institutions by improving literacy across all life stages. By leveraging libraries, schools, and workforce programs, it empowers individuals, enhances economic mobility, and fosters informed civic engagement.

### Executive Summary

## Building a Literacy Model for Lifelong Success

Literacy is the foundation of opportunity, yet many struggle with reading at key life stages, limiting education, workforce participation, and economic mobility. Our **Comprehensive Literacy Model** is a scalable, community-driven initiative addressing literacy gaps from early childhood through adulthood.

### Key Solutions

1. **Early Literacy & Kindergarten Readiness** – Expanding early learning programs, supporting parents, and increasing access to books.

2. **Grade-Level Reading & School Engagement** – Strengthening literacy instruction, launching tutoring programs, and engaging families.
3. **Re-Engaging Opportunity Youth** – Integrating literacy with workforce training and using technology for education re-engagement with youth aged 16 to 24, who are neither working nor in school.
4. **Adult Literacy & Workforce Integration** – Establishing literacy hubs, embedding literacy into job training, and addressing barriers.

#### Impact & Scalability

Over five years, this initiative will:

- Improve literacy rates across all age groups.
- Reduce dropout rates and increase workforce participation.
- Strengthen civic engagement and trust in institutions.

Leveraging libraries, community centers, and workforce agencies as literacy hubs ensures accessibility and sustainability. A **\$9 million investment** will fund interventionists, program materials, outreach, and evaluation.

#### Why Now?

With declining literacy rates and growing mistrust in institutions, immediate action is needed. This initiative will bridge literacy gaps, restore trust, and empower individuals. **Literacy is the key to opportunity, economic mobility, and civic engagement.**

## 2. VIDEO PRESENTATION

As part of the project submission requirements, you are required to provide a video that showcases your work and describes why it deserves support. This is a chance for you to demonstrate your enthusiasm and concisely present your story. We aim to give you an opportunity to express your vision to the reviewers in a unique way, not limited to the traditional written proposal format. **This does not need to be a professionally produced video;** a video shot on a smartphone is acceptable.

To successfully submit this portion of your application, your team must upload a short digital video using YouTube. Please ensure the “Allow Embedding” setting on your video is enabled and set the Privacy Settings on your video to Public or Unlisted – do **not** set them to Private. **This will be viewed by peer and Evaluation Panel Reviewers of the Challenge.**

Your video may be extracted from your submission and be made available to the public and other donors. Therefore, it is important to create content that appeals to a wide audience. Video submissions should follow these guidelines or else it will render the registration ineligible:

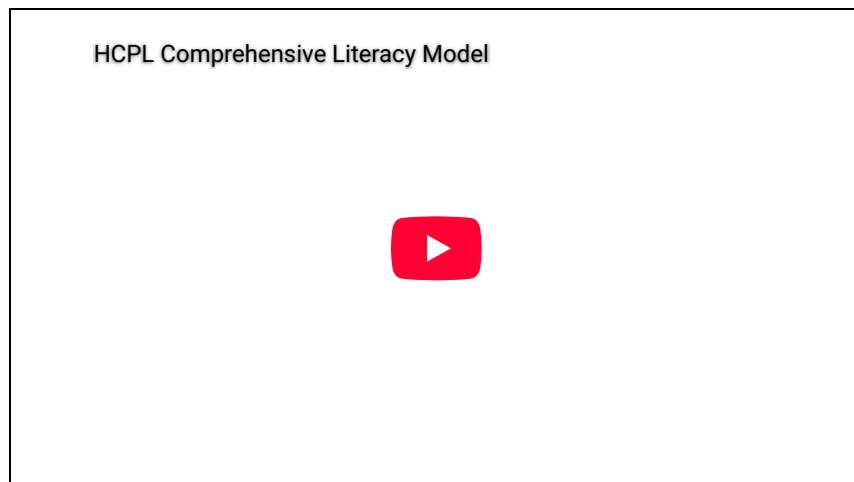
- A length of no more than 90 seconds.
- Your video must be in English, or if in another language, subtitled in English.
- Your video must be captioned. See instructions on how to caption YouTube videos [here](https://www.leverforchange.org/challenges/resources/video-supports/) (<https://www.leverforchange.org/challenges/resources/video-supports/>).
- Your video should not contain any images of individuals who have not given their permission to be part of the submission and should not contain images of children (under age 18) without express written parental consent.
- Your video should not include any copyrighted material (including, but not limited to, music) for which you do not have a license.
- Please review YouTube’s Terms of Service located [here](https://www.youtube.com/static?template=terms) (<https://www.youtube.com/static?template=terms>) and any other applicable terms on YouTube’s website before making and submitting your video.

**Here are general suggestions for delivering a high-quality video pitch:**

- Introduce yourself and your organization(s) and/or team.
- Describe the problem that you are committed to solving.
- Explain your solution.
- Explain what is unique about your solution.
- Describe what success looks like and how you plan to measure it.

Examples of videos from past challenges can be found [here \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4SCefFwnTc&list=PLXMhfH8LCqa0yLq6iAFWG2RfMtMgisWpl\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4SCefFwnTc&list=PLXMhfH8LCqa0yLq6iAFWG2RfMtMgisWpl). Additional technical guidance on creating and captioning videos can be found on our [Video Supports \(https://www.leverforchange.org/challenges/resources/video-supports/\)](https://www.leverforchange.org/challenges/resources/video-supports/) page.

Paste the full YouTube URL in the box below.



### 3. YOUR TEAM

Previously, you provided a brief overview of your project. Now, we kindly request you to highlight the experience and management of your team. **This section will be viewed by peer and Evaluation Panel Reviewers of the Challenge.**

#### Project Website or Social Media Page

Please share a URL for your project website or social media page, if applicable. Please note that having either of these is not a requirement for the Challenge and will not affect your eligibility. Reviewers are instructed **not** to view external links nor include external information in their assessment. If you have not created a project website or social media page, please write "[NotApplicable.com \(http://NotApplicable.com\)](http://NotApplicable.com)."

#### Project Website or Social Media Page

[hcpl.net \(http://hcpl.net\)](http://hcpl.net)

#### Primary Area of Expertise for the Lead Organization

Education

#### Team Collaboration: Partnership Status

Yes, our team is a partnership of multiple organizations, some of which are new collaborators and others who have a history of working together.

#### Collaborators

If your team consists of two or more organizations, please list them using the legal name of each partner.

**Key Partner #1:**

Harris County Juvenile Probation Department

**Key Partner #2:**

Literacy Now

**Key Partner #3:**

Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation

**Key Partner #4:**

n/a

**Key Partner #5:**

n/a

**Case for Partnership**

HCPL through the power of partnership has a successful track record of taking small programs and implementing and expanding them countywide. Partnerships with organizations such as Harris County Precincts, Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, Harris County Community Centers, Houston Endowment, Houston Mayor's office for Adult Education, Literacy Now, Barbra Bush Houston Literacy Foundation, HCPL Foundation, and Gulf coast workforce solutions has expand program impacts throughout the Harris County Community. These partnerships provide access to the community, funding opportunities, and program support through knowledge and skills.

**Why Your Team**

Harris County Public Library's long-standing commitment to innovative services earned it the prestigious 2024 National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the highest national honor for libraries and museums. The leadership and team at HCPL are deeply dedicated to its mission of enriching lives and fostering community growth. The team includes experienced professionals, such as librarians and support staff, skilled in technology, community programming, and customer service. Together, they collaborate to create initiatives that promote lifelong learning and community engagement.

HCPL forms strategic partnerships with local organizations and government entities, including Barbara-Bush-Literacy-Foundation, Literacy-Now, and the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department (HCJPD), to meet community needs like literacy, technology access, and youth educational programs. These collaborations are rooted in the belief that working together leads to more sustainable, impactful outcomes for the community. HCPL's unique position as a trusted public institution with an extensive network of branches allows it to reach a wide demographic. Its deep connection to the local community, combined with experienced staff, ensures that HCPL can deliver meaningful results. With a proven track record in educational programs, digital resources, and community-based services, HCPL is the ideal team to address community-centered challenges, ensuring the successful execution of projects.

HCPL's leadership also serves on statewide advisory boards, such as the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and the TexShare Advisory Board, further reinforcing its expertise and influence in shaping library services and community development. This broad experience and leadership enable HCPL to be the optimal choice for solving community challenges.

**Biographies of Key Staff**

Kindly provide the first and last names of the top three to five project managers, along with the name of their affiliated organization and a brief biographical statement of up to 100 words. The statement should highlight the manager's title, relevant credentials, and experiences that contribute to the project's success.

**Key Staff #1:**

Edward Melton

**Key Staff #1 Affiliation:**

Harris County Public Library

**Key Staff #1 Biography:**

I am Harris County Public Library's Executive Director with oversight of 26 branch libraries in unincorporated Harris County. Prior to this, I was Chief of Branches for San Francisco Public Library, and an Administrative Manager and Children's Librarian with Houston Public Library. I have attended the Brookings Institute for Public Leadership. I was recognized by the Urban Library Council as an Operations Service Innovator and was awarded the ULC Joey Rogers Leadership Award in recognition of contributions as a public library leader. I currently serve as the Literacy Representative of the Executive Board for the Gulf Coast Workforce Solutions Board.

**Key Staff #2:**

Linda Stevens

**Key Staff #2 Affiliation:**

Harris County Public Library

**Key Staff #2 Biography:**

I have been a librarian for over 25 years and have held a variety of positions. I lead HCPL's Programs, Partnerships, and Outreach team. Our role is to provide administrative support for HCPL's education and enrichment programming both in our branch libraries and out in the community. We handle marketing and communications for the HCPL system. The most rewarding aspect of my job is working with people to improve lives and strengthen communities. I am very proud of the work we do with our partners to provide a wide range of literacy initiatives to benefit the people of Harris County.

**Key Staff #3:**

Michelle Carnahan

**Key Staff #3 Affiliation:**

Harris County Public Library

**Key Staff #3 Biography:**

I serve as the Division Director of Research and Development for Harris County Public Library. The R&D division serves as the legislative liaison for the department and is responsible for coordinating fundraising efforts. The division conducts and manages research and development to support project management, performance metrics, data analytics, and compliance. Prior to joining HCPL, I held leadership roles for Harris County for 18 years managing multimillion dollar grants and projects working with all levels of government.

**Key Staff #4:**

n/a

**Key Staff #4 Affiliation:**

n/a

**Key Staff #4 Biography:**

n/a

**Key Staff #5:**

n/a

**Key Staff #5 Affiliation:**

n/a

**Key Staff #5 Biography:**

n/a

## 4. THE CHALLENGE

In this section, you have the chance to elaborate on the problem you aim to address and demonstrate your understanding of the nuances that have informed your strategy. **This section will be viewed by peer and Evaluation Panel Reviewers of the Challenge.**

### Challenge Statement

#### **Building a Literacy Model for Lifelong Success**

Literacy is the foundation for opportunity, yet too many children, youth, and adults struggle with reading at key stages of their lives. From early literacy and kindergarten readiness to grade-level reading, re-engaging opportunity youth, and supporting adult learners, gaps in literacy limit educational success, workforce participation, and economic mobility.

This issue affects families, educators, employers, and entire communities. Children who start school unprepared often fall behind, making it harder to succeed later. By third grade, students who struggle to read are four times more likely to drop out. Opportunity youth, those disconnected from school or work, face barriers to re-engaging in education. Adults with low literacy struggle to secure stable jobs, support their families and fully participate in society.

The problem persists due to fragmented early learning support, inequitable education access, and a lack of engaging literacy programs for youth and adults. Parents often lack resources to support early learning, schools face systemic challenges, and many adult learners encounter stigma, work conflicts, or transportation barriers.

Key leverage points for change include:

- Strengthening early childhood literacy for kindergarten readiness
- Aligning schools, families, and communities to support grade-level reading
- Expanding accessible literacy programs for youth and adults
- Integrating literacy with workforce development for lifelong learning

By addressing these areas, we can create a lasting impact. A comprehensive literacy model will align resources, remove barriers, and ensure every individual—regardless of age or background—has the opportunity to become a confident reader. Literacy is not just a skill; it is the key to opportunity, and now is the time to open that door for all.

## 5. YOUR SOLUTION

The Trust in American Institutions Challenge aims to make a significant difference by building and restoring public trust in the core institutions that underpin democracy in the United States. This section enables you to elaborate on your proposed solution to the problem you've identified. **This section will be viewed by peer and Evaluation Panel Reviewers of the Challenge.**

### Solution Stage

Existing organization or an existing partnership with a proven idea that is ready to scale.

### Solution Overview



Restoring trust in American institutions begins with ensuring that every individual has the literacy skills needed to engage with and navigate democracy, education, and the workforce. Our solution is a **Comprehensive Literacy Model**—a community-driven initiative designed to support literacy at every stage of life. The creation of community-based hubs such as library branches, community centers, mobile outreach vehicles, and partner organizations will allow us to reach people within accessible distances to their homes. By aligning early learning, K-12 education, opportunity youth programs, and adult literacy efforts, we can bridge literacy gaps and empower individuals to fully participate in civic life.

#### Key Solution Components:

##### Early Literacy & Kindergarten Readiness

1. Implement evidence-based early learning programs in underserved communities.
2. Provide resources and training for parents and caregivers to support early reading skills.
3. Partner with libraries and community organizations to expand access to books and literacy activities.

##### Grade-Level Reading & School Engagement

1. Strengthen literacy instruction in K-3 classrooms through professional development for educators.
2. Establish mentorship and tutoring programs to support struggling readers.
3. Engage families with literacy workshops to reinforce learning at home.

##### Re-Engaging Opportunity Youth

1. Expand alternative education programs that integrate literacy with job training.
2. Partner with businesses and workforce development agencies to provide literacy-focused job readiness programs.
3. Leverage technology to create engaging, accessible learning platforms for youth who have disconnected from school.

##### Adult Literacy & Workforce Integration

1. Develop community-based literacy hubs offering flexible classes for adult learners.
2. Integrate literacy training into job skills programs to improve economic mobility.
3. Address barriers such as childcare and transportation to increase participation in adult learning programs.

#### Restoring Trust Through Literacy

Low literacy is a root cause of misinformation, economic disenfranchisement, and disengagement from democratic institutions. By equipping individuals with reading and critical thinking skills, this initiative fosters an informed and engaged citizenry. People with strong literacy skills are more likely to trust and participate in institutions such as schools, local governments, and the electoral process.

#### Scalability & Sustainability

This initiative will leverage public-private partnerships, funding from philanthropy and government grants, and collaboration with schools, libraries, and workforce organizations. By embedding literacy education within existing community structures, we ensure long-term sustainability and large-scale impact.

By implementing a **Comprehensive Literacy Model**, we can break the cycle of low literacy, rebuild public trust in institutions, and empower individuals to participate in American democracy and economic life fully. Literacy is not just about reading—it is about creating informed, engaged, and empowered citizens.

## Context

#### Why Now? The Urgency for a Literacy Model

The current landscape makes this the **critical moment** to launch a **Comprehensive Literacy Model**. **Defunding of education**, declining literacy rates, and the **failure of independent school districts** in many regions have created urgent gaps in learning. Without intervention, these challenges will continue to widen disparities in education, workforce readiness, and civic engagement.

At the same time, **libraries remain trusted institutions** in communities across the country. Unlike schools facing funding cuts and institutional distrust, libraries are widely seen as **accessible, neutral spaces** for learning. Our initiative **leverages these existing community hubs** to provide literacy support, from early childhood programs to adult learning opportunities.

This solution is **timely and unique** because it:

- **Aligns fragmented literacy efforts** into a unified, lifelong learning pathway.
- **Fills the gaps left by struggling school systems** with alternative, community-based literacy support.
- **Meet people where they are**—in libraries, workforce centers, and community hubs—ensuring accessibility for all ages.
- **Builds trust in public institutions** by centering literacy as a tool for informed civic participation.

This moment offers a **breakthrough opportunity** to reshape literacy in a way that **bridges education gaps, re-engages disconnected youth, and empowers adults**. By acting now, we can create lasting momentum toward **stronger literacy, greater economic mobility, and renewed trust in the institutions that support democracy**.

## Theory of Change

#### Theory of Change: Literacy as a Pathway to Trust and Opportunity

Our **Comprehensive Literacy Model** is based on the principle that **improving literacy across all life stages strengthens education, economic mobility, and trust in institutions**. This transformative initiative will allow HCPL to bring the library and all of its resources to people who need it most.

##### Short-Term Outcomes (Years 1-2):

- Expand early literacy programs and provide family engagement resources.
- Targeted implementation of literacy interventions in schools and libraries.
- Launch workforce-integrated literacy programs for opportunity youth and adults.

**Methodology:** Community-based literacy hubs will offer structured programs, tutoring, and digital resources, leveraging **libraries as trusted spaces**.

##### Intermediate Outcomes (Years 3-4):

- Increased grade level readiness and reading proficiency.
- Higher re-engagement rates for opportunity youth in education and job training.

- Growth in adult literacy skills leading to improved workforce participation.

**Methodology:** Community-based literacy hubs focused on multi-sector partnerships with schools, businesses, and community groups will integrate literacy into education and career pathways.

**Long-Term Impact (Year 5+):**

- Higher graduation rates and generational literacy improvement.
- Increased civic engagement and trust in public institutions.
- A scalable, sustainable literacy model for nationwide adoption.

**Methodology:** Data tracking, adaptive programming, and policy advocacy will ensure lasting impact.

By embedding the library and all of its resources in **trusted community spaces** and aligning it with education and workforce needs, we **break systemic barriers to literacy and create lasting community impact**.

## Innovation

### Innovative Approach: A County-Wide Literacy Program for Lasting Impact

Our **Comprehensive Literacy Model** is designed to **efficiently and effectively scale literacy interventions** across the county, ensuring every resident has access to literacy support. Unlike fragmented efforts, our program **creates a seamless literacy pathway** for early learners, K-12 students, opportunity youth, and adults.

#### Key Innovations & Unique Features:

##### 1. County-Wide Literacy Support

- A structured literacy program across all 1,777 square miles of Harris County, with interventionists dedicated to youth, adults, and workforce learners.
- Dedicated literacy interventionists in every county precinct, ensuring targeted, localized literacy support.

##### 2. Specialized Support for At-Risk Populations

- Interventionists focused specifically on **juvenile probation and foster youth services** to address systemic barriers.
- Early, intensive reading interventions for **students struggling with grade-level reading**, reducing dropout risks.

##### 3. Innovative Community Integration

- **Libraries as trusted literacy hubs**, providing safe and accessible spaces for learning and digital literacy.
- **Scalable model** that leverages **technology and community partnerships** to expand reach efficiently.

By **aligning literacy efforts county-wide**, this initiative **removes barriers, ensures continuity of learning, and strengthens civic trust**. This approach **not only improves literacy rates but also empowers communities to process information effectively, leading to better decision-making, civic participation, and workforce readiness**.

## Stakeholder & Community Engagement

### Community Engagement for Sustainable Literacy Impact

To ensure the **success and sustainability** of our **County-Wide Literacy Program**, we have actively engaged **key stakeholders**, including **local leaders, funders, educators, residents, and decision-makers**, in the design and implementation process.

#### Stakeholders Engaged:

- **Local Government & Elected Officials:** County commissioners, precinct representatives, and education boards support the initiative by **allocating resources and policy backing**.
- **Libraries & Community Centers:** As **trusted partners**, libraries serve as **literacy hubs**, providing accessible spaces and resources.
- **Schools & Educators:** Collaboration with **reading interventionists, teachers, and school districts** ensures **early literacy interventions** and K-12 support.
- **Juvenile Probation & Foster Youth Services:** Dedicated reading interventionists in these sectors provide targeted literacy pathways for at-risk youth.
- **Businesses & Workforce Programs:** Employers and workforce agencies help integrate **adult literacy with job training**, ensuring economic mobility.
- **Media & Community Advocates:** Local media, grassroots organizations, and civic leaders help **build public awareness and engagement**.

#### Ongoing Engagement Strategy:

- **Regular town halls, stakeholder meetings, and advisory groups** to refine approaches.
- **State and federal advocacy** to secure funding and policy alignment.
- **Community-driven feedback loops** to ensure programs **meet local needs**.

By **continuously involving diverse stakeholders**, this initiative builds **broad-based support** to ensure **lasting literacy gains and increased trust in public institutions**.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In order to truly make Harris County Public Library a Library for All, we must look at the library as a whole to see areas in which we can improve the ways we do things, then take appropriate action. To that end, HCPL is committed to **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, & Access (IDEA)**. We will audit, recommend and implement policies, practices, programs, and organizational behaviors that foster authentic inclusion, diversity, equity, and access within Harris County Public Library and its services and programs, with the intention of positioning the organization internally and externally for greater engagement and impact with diverse communities. This includes helping to increase racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and ideological diversity across our staff, and other stakeholders like volunteers, Friends of the library, and interns while expanding our culture of equity, access and inclusion within the organization.

## **Populations Served**

To understand the profile of the primary beneficiaries for your solution, select at least one population you serve. You must select at least one population, and you are welcome to provide up to three.

**Begin typing your response in the dropdown menu to search Populations.** This list of options is drawn from Candid's Populations Taxonomy, which can be viewed [here \(https://taxonomy.candid.org/populations\)](https://taxonomy.candid.org/populations).

### **Population #1:**

People in urban areas

### **Population #2: (Optional)**

Children & Youth (0-18 yrs.)

### **Population #3: (Optional)**

Adults (19+)

### **Lobbying Activities**

Not Applicable

## **6. PROJECT IMPACT**

In this section, you will have the opportunity to provide evidence that supports your solution. **This section will be viewed by peer and Evaluation Panel Reviewers of the Challenge.**

### **Affirmation of Approach**

#### **Confidence in Impact: Proven Literacy Strategies & Community Support**

Our **County-Wide Literacy Program** is built on **proven, evidence-based literacy interventions** that have demonstrated success in **improving reading proficiency, workforce readiness, and civic engagement**.

#### **Why This Will Work:**

##### **1. Evidence-Based Literacy Interventions**

- Studies show **early literacy programs** significantly improve kindergarten readiness and long-term academic success.<sup>1</sup>
- **Reading interventionists** in schools have been proven to increase **grade-level reading proficiency**, reducing dropout rates.<sup>2</sup>
- **Adult literacy programs** integrated with workforce development lead to **higher employment and economic stability**.<sup>3</sup>

##### **2. Successful Models & Local Support**

- **Library-based literacy hubs** have been effective nationwide in bridging education gaps, and our **trusted library partnerships** ensure community access.
- **Dedicated interventionists** for juvenile probation and foster youth have successfully re-engaged at-risk youth in education and job training.

##### **3. Community-Backed & Scalable**

- Stakeholder engagement with **local leaders, educators, and workforce partners** ensures **strong implementation support**.
- By **scaling proven literacy strategies across the county**, this model creates a **sustainable, long-term impact**.

With **research-backed methods, strong community partnerships, and scalable infrastructure**, we are confident this initiative will **increase literacy**

rates, rebuild trust in institutions, and empower communities for lasting change.

<sup>1</sup> National Early Literacy Panel, <sup>2</sup> National Institute for Literacy, <sup>3</sup> ProLiteracy Impact Reports

## Ability to Scale

### Confidence in Impact: Proven Literacy Strategies & Community Support

Our **County-Wide Literacy Program** is built on **proven, evidence-based literacy interventions** that have demonstrated success in **improving reading proficiency, workforce readiness, and civic engagement**.

#### Why This Will Work:

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## Timeline and Milestones

### Timeline & Milestones for Success

Our **County-Wide Literacy Program** will be implemented over a **five-year period**, with clear milestones to track progress and ensure long-term success.

#### Year 1: Foundation & Pilot Implementation

- Establish Community **hubs** and launch early literacy and adult education programs.
- Deploy Reading **Interventionists** in community hubs, including those dedicated to **juvenile probation and foster youth services**.
- Develop **baseline literacy assessments** to measure progress.

#### Year 2-3: Expansion & Community Integration

- Increased grade level readiness and reading proficiency.
- Strengthen partnerships with **schools, workforce agencies, and local governments**.
- Expand **opportunity youth engagement** in workforce-integrated literacy programs.

#### Year 4-5: Scaling & Long-Term Sustainability

- Scale programs to **neighboring counties** based on successful models.
- Achieve **higher graduation rates, increased workforce participation, and greater civic engagement**.
- Seek **state and federal support** to integrate literacy programs into **education and workforce policies**.

#### Milestones for Success:

- **Short-term:** Increased participation in literacy programs.
- **Intermediate:** Higher reading proficiency, reduced dropout rates, and re-engagement of opportunity youth.
- **Long-term:** **Systemic change in literacy outcomes**, leading to **economic mobility and restored trust in institutions**.

By tracking **participation rates, literacy proficiency, and civic engagement**, we will measure **impact and refine strategies** to ensure **lasting success**.

## Measuring Progress and Responding

To ensure the **County-Wide Literacy Program** achieves its goals, we will track **key literacy, education, and workforce outcomes** using data-driven evaluation methods.

#### Metrics for Measuring Effectiveness:

- **Early Literacy:** Increased kindergarten readiness and participation in family literacy programs.
- **K-12 Reading Proficiency:** Improved grade level reading scores and reduced dropout rates.
- **Opportunity Youth & Adult Learners:** Higher engagement in literacy programs, job training, and employment placement.
- **Civic Engagement:** Increased voter registration, participation in community activities, and public trust in institutions.

#### Tracking & Adaptation Strategy:

- **Quarterly Data Reviews:** Regular assessments of literacy program participation and success rates.
- **Stakeholder & Community Feedback:** Surveys from educators, interventionists, and program participants to identify strengths and gaps.

- **Rapid Response Adjustments:** If data shows low impact in specific areas, we will **adjust intervention strategies** to improve outreach and engagement.

#### Integrating Learnings for Long-Term Impact:

- **Refining Intervention Models:** Data-driven improvements to **scale and replicate effective literacy strategies**.
- **Policy & Advocacy Influence:** Using impact data to seek **state and federal support** for sustained literacy funding.
- **Future Expansion Plans:** Identifying high-need areas for **scaling literacy hubs and workforce integration programs**.

By continuously evaluating **impact, adapting strategies, and incorporating learnings**, we will ensure **long-term success and systemic literacy improvement**.

### Barrier Assessment and Risk Mitigation

Our **County-Wide Literacy Program** is designed for **scalability, accessibility, and sustainability**, leveraging **trusted institutions like libraries, schools, and workforce agencies** to ensure feasibility.

#### Key Feasibility Factors:

- **Proven Reading Interventions:** Evidence-based reading strategies tailored for **early learners, K-12 students, opportunity youth, and adults**.
- **Infrastructure Readiness:** Libraries and community centers provide **existing spaces** for literacy hubs, reducing implementation costs.
- **Multi-Sector Partnerships:** Collaboration with **schools, government agencies, and businesses** ensures resource alignment and long-term sustainability.

#### Potential Barriers & Solutions:

##### Low Participation Rates:

- **Solution:** Community outreach through **trusted messengers, digital campaigns, and on-the-ground engagement**.

##### Over 20 school districts in Harris County:

- **Solution:** strategic identification of district-based interventions.

#### Funding & Resource Constraints:

- **Solution:** Secure **public-private partnerships**, apply for **grants**, and advocate for **policy support** at the state and federal levels.

#### Staffing & Training Challenges:

- **Solution:** Provide **ongoing professional development** for interventionists and leverage **volunteers and community educators**. **Unintended Consequences (Equity Gaps):**
- **Solution:** Regularly assess participation data to ensure **underserved populations receive targeted support**.

With **strong leadership, a clear implementation plan, and strategic problem-solving**, we are confident this program will **improve literacy, empower communities, and restore trust in institutions**.

### External References

<sup>1</sup> National Early Literacy Panel, <sup>2</sup> National Institute for Literacy, <sup>3</sup> ProLiteracy Impact Reports

### Other Considerations

**By addressing these areas**, HCPL can create a lasting impact. A comprehensive literacy model will align resources, remove barriers, and ensure every individual—regardless of age or background—has the opportunity to become a confident reader. Literacy is not just a skill; it is the key to opportunity, and now is the time to open that door for all.

## 7. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Indicate and describe the financial resources required to successfully implement your project. At this point, we only ask for high-level information. Should you be selected as a Finalist, you will have the opportunity to provide a more detailed budget. **This section will be viewed by peer and Evaluation Panel Reviewers of the Challenge.**

### Budget Narrative

Our **County-Wide Literacy Program** will allocate the **\$9 million** across key areas to ensure **effective implementation, long-term sustainability, and measurable impact**, while also accounting for **10% indirect costs** to support overall project administration and operational needs.

#### Projected Budget Allocation:

- **Personnel & Capacity Building (50% - \$4.5M)**
  - Hiring Reading **interventionists** to serve community hubs and specialists for **juvenile probation & foster youth**.
  - Training for **educators, volunteers, and community partners** to ensure effective program delivery.
- **Program Implementation & Materials (25% - \$2.25M)**
  - Development of **literacy hubs** in **libraries and community centers**.

- Purchasing **books, digital literacy resources, and adaptive technology.**
- Expanding literacy programs for **early learners, K-12 students, opportunity youth, and adults.**
- **Monitoring, Evaluation, & Data Collection (5% - \$450K)**
  - Data collection and impact tracking to assess **program effectiveness and adjust strategies.**
  - **Third-party evaluations** to ensure transparency and accountability.
- **Accessibility & Inclusion (2% - \$180K)**
  - Ensuring **ADA-compliant materials, accommodations, and assistive technology** for disabled participants and implementers.
- **Marketing, Outreach & Community Engagement (8% - \$720K)**
  - **Media campaigns, local engagement, and partnerships** to drive participation and program adoption.
- **Indirect Costs (10% - \$900K)**
  - Administrative expenses, technology infrastructure, and operational coordination.
- Long-Term Sustainability:**
  - **Public-Private Partnerships:** Securing **ongoing funding from local governments, businesses, and foundations.**
  - **Policy Integration:** Embedding literacy initiatives into **education and workforce systems** for continued funding.
  - **Revenue-Generating Initiatives:** Leveraging **sponsorships, grants, and corporate partnerships** to maintain impact beyond the grant period.

This budget ensures **scalable, sustainable literacy solutions** while fostering **lasting community empowerment and trust in institutions.**

Budget



	A	B
1	ENTER COST CATEGORY & DESCRIPTION	APPROXIMATE EXPECTED PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FUNDING (%)
2	Personnel & Capacity Building	50
3	Program Implementation & Materials	25
4	Monitoring, Evaluation, & Data Collection	5
5	Accessibility & Inclusion	2
6	Marketing, Outreach & Community Engagement	8
7	Indirect Cost (Administrative & Operational)	10
8		
9		
10	TOTAL (must equal 100%)	100

Total Projected Costs

\$9,000,000.00 USD

Total Resource Requirements

Not Applicable

8. SUBJECT AREA AND LOCATION OF WORK

We will use the primary subject area, locations of current work, and key words to tag your project in the **Bold Solutions Network** (<https://solutions.leverforchange.org/>), making it possible for other funders to identify projects they might find interesting to support. **Peer and Evaluation Panel Reviewers of the Challenge will view this section.**

### Primary Subject Area

Education

### Secondary Subject Area (Optional)

Out-of-school learning

### Keywords and Phrases

Literacy, Civic-Engagement, Economic-opportunities, Community, Connection

## **Location of Current Work**

Where are you currently implementing your solution? Select up to five locations that apply. If your work is national or regional, please select locations that best represent the work your organization does. If you are not currently implementing your project, you may select "N/A."

**Begin typing your response in the dropdown menu to search States or Territories.**

#### Location of Current Work 1 State or Territory

Texas

#### Location of Current Work 2 State or Territory

n/a

#### Location of Current Work 3 State or Territory

n/a

#### Location of Current Work 4 State or Territory

n/a

#### Location of Current Work 5 State or Territory

n/a

## **Location of Future Work**

Where do you plan to implement your solution if awarded this grant? Select up to five locations that apply. These locations may or may not be the same as the locations where you are currently implementing your solution.

**Begin typing your response in the dropdown menu to search States or Territories.**

#### Location of Future Work 1 State or Territory

Texas

#### Location of Future Work 2 State or Territory

n/a

**Location of Future Work 3 State or Territory**

n/a

**Location of Future Work 4 State or Territory**

n/a

**Location of Future Work 5 State or Territory**

n/a

## 9. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

In this section, please provide additional information about the Lead Organization. **This section will be shared with peer and Evaluation Panel Reviewers.**

**Lead Organization Employer Identification Number (EIN)**

76-0454514

**Annual Operating Expenses**

\$25.1 to 50 Million

**Number of Employees**

301 to 500 Full-time Employees

## 10. ADDITIONAL DUE DILIGENCE

The following information is required for due diligence purposes. **This section will not be visible to peer or Evaluation Panel Reviewers of the Challenge.** Should you advance to further phases of the Challenge, the information provided in this section will be reviewed by Lever for Change as part of due diligence considerations.

**Current/Previous Funders**

Please provide the following information for at least three and up to five of the top funders of your project over the last three (3) years. For each funder, provide the legal name of the entity responsible for funding your organization. Provide the period of funding (in months to date) for the funding. Last, provide the amount of funding within the prescribed period

If your project has not received any support from other funders, then please enter "Not Applicable" as necessary.

**Funder #1 Name**

Harris County

**Funder #1 First Year of Funding**

10/2023



**Funder #1 Last Year of Funding**

10/25

**Amount of Funding**

\$200,000.00 USD

**Funder #2 Name**

Houston Endowment

**Funder #2 First Year of Funding**

10/2023

**Funder #2 Last Year of Funding**

12/2025

**Funder #2 Amount of Funding**

\$3,717,100.00 USD

**Funder #3 Name**

Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation

**Funder #3 First Year of Funding**

04/2023

**Funder #3 Last Year of Funding**

12/2025

**Funder #3 Amount of Funding**

\$368,363.00 USD

**Provide a fourth funder?**

No

## 11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED


If your team is invited to participate in any future phases of this Challenge, you may be required to provide additional information (refer to the [Rules](https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/rules) (<https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/rules>) and [Timeline](https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/timeline) (<https://trustchallenge.leverforchange.org/timeline>)), including but not limited to:

1) A fully revised proposal based on feedback received and a comprehensive set of requirements that will be provided. This will include:

- Robust project and scaling plan.
- Comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan.
- Detailed Budget.

2) Additional relevant documents including but not limited to:

- A Tax Determination Letter.
- Audited/Updated Audited Financial Statements.
- Articles of Incorporation, Charter, or similar documentation.
- Key personnel resumes, MOUs, existing policies (e.g., conflicts of interest, travel, whistleblower, internal controls, anti-money laundering, intellectual property, human subjects research, code of conduct, etc.), grant agreements, data management plans, and any similar policies governing the organization.

 **Please Note: You will not be able to edit your application once it has been submitted.**

**Prior to submitting your application, please review your responses and ensure that all required fields are complete and accurate. Once you have reviewed your responses and are ready to submit your application, click "Submit Form."**