



Laubach Literacy Ontario

Historical

Laubach Literacy Ontario (LLO) was formed in 1981 by a group of unfunded community-based literacy councils that had been formed with assistance from Laubach Literacy of Canada (training volunteers, providing tools and resources for setting up non-profit, charitable organizations).

LLO began as an unfunded, unstaffed charitable organization, and was incorporated in 1991. Through funding made available through the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, LLO and its member councils began to receive government funding. A part-time staff person was hired to provide support to existing literacy councils, and help form new councils. Over 25 community-based literacy agencies in operation today were started by LLO volunteer trainers and staff, using its “How to Start and Sustain a Literacy Council” as a guide.

LLO was the first provincial literacy network in Ontario, and was a founding member of the Ontario Literacy Coalition.

In 2008, after 30 years of providing a national training and certification system for volunteers in over 160 literacy councils across Canada, and of being the Canadian distributor of New Readers Press materials (published by Laubach Literacy International—now ProLiteracy Worldwide), Laubach Literacy of Canada (LLC) closed its doors because of federal funding cutbacks. Member agencies looked to LLO to pick up where LLC left off, which meant creating a provincial training and accreditation system, and becoming a distributor of New Readers Press materials.

Business Model

MTCU Business Plan - As an LBS support organization, LLO provides an annual business plan to MTCU that has the same service categories as other support organizations. LLO’s business model is to meet MTCU’s expectations while providing the type of support expected and desired by our members. Some of the deliverables in this year’s business plan include:

- An interactive quarterly electronic magazine, [Expressions](#), which is circulated widely. Its audience is literacy students, practitioners and LBS agencies.
- Online classroom for both volunteer and paid literacy practitioners
- Annual Literacy Awareness Day Event
- Annual General Meeting and [Annual Conference](#)
- Trainer Workshop
- [Website](#)
- Member wiki platform for networking and information sharing
- [Resources for agencies, volunteer tutors and tutor trainers](#)

Governance and Leadership:

LLO's board of directors, which includes staff and volunteers of LBS delivery agencies, two adult literacy students, and a regional network staff person, meet quarterly as is required by corporate law and our bylaws. The board is engaged and representative, with defined governance practices. The board effectively oversees the policies, programs, and organizational operations including review of achievement of strategic goals, financial status, and executive director performance.

Working Board:

Each Board member is chair or member of a committee. Committees include:

- Training, Development and Certification
- Student Committee (comprised of 5 students across Ontario--all of whom are prior winners of the [Arnie Stewart Individual Achievement Award](#)).
- Social Enterprise Committee
- Operational Policies & Procedures Committee
- Nominations Committee
- Executive Committee

Membership:

LLO has 57 member organizations (annual membership fee of \$50.00), most of which are community-based LBS programs. LLO's membership has grown by 14% in the past two years, with several new member agencies coming from the community-based sector, the school board sector, the native stream, an Employment Help Centre, and a Learning Disabilities Association. These new members have joined to access member-discounts on our popular curriculum for low-level learners, as well as the workshops and training at our conferences. Members of LLO agree to support the aims and purpose of LLO and must provide training primarily to youth and adults. Through Laubach-affiliated programs, tutors and literacy practitioners provide one-to-one and small group instruction for more than 4,000 adult students annually.

Staff and Office

LLO's head office is housed in a former public school, and now a day care centre, in Waterloo, Ontario. Lana Faessler, Executive Director, has been with the organization since 1984, first as a volunteer board member and volunteer tutor trainer and later as staff. She is the only full time staff. Mary Anne Baker, Office Manager, and Diana White, Administrative Assistant, are both part-time. Our Project Coordinator, Robyn Cook Ritchie, edits our e-magazine.

Laubach Enhanced Training System (LETS):

LLO supports its member agencies with a [training and accreditation system](#) for tutors and tutor-trainers, training resources, and annual professional development events. Our Laubach Enhanced Training System (LETS) ensures wide transferability of learning from program to

program for the adult student for most geographic locations in the province. LLO's cadre of over 70 tutor-trainers and apprentice-tutor-trainers includes both staff and volunteers of LBS agencies...in some cases it is only the volunteer who delivers tutor training, which increases the capacity of understaffed agencies. This system, with new trainers signing up almost monthly, provides a succession plan and cross training for community-based agencies that are struggling with inadequate funding and potential burnout.

Our tutor-training workshops are highly regarded because of our training standards (workshops must be at least 10 hours in length and contain certain segments based on best practices) The workshop is aimed at the volunteer tutor who receives accreditation and recognition, and is the heart of the volunteer literacy movement. Workshop evaluations provide trainers and apprentice trainers with feedback that is used to improve the training (CIPMS). Tutors receive a provincial training certificate that is recognized by other Laubach organizations across Canada.

Conferences:

LLO provides an annual conference with workshops of interest to literacy practitioners, volunteer tutors and literacy students, tagged onto its Annual General Meeting. When funded by MTCU, registration fees are very low for participants, who include volunteers, literacy staff and adult literacy students. When unfunded, costs are borne by the participants. This year, LLO will be hosting an unfunded conference at Wilfrid Laurier University, and celebrating its 30th anniversary.

Social Enterprise: Laubach Literacy Bookstore

In 2008-2009, through Ontario Trillium Foundation funding, LLO led a research and development project to develop social enterprises within literacy agencies, to help generate revenue. Six pilot sites went through a process of organizational readiness assessment, idea generation, market research and business and marketing plan development. Results of this project provided all community-based literacy agencies with business plan samples, tools and templates to develop their own social enterprise, as well as designing a business model for LLO's own social enterprise venture, the Laubach Literacy Bookstore.

While we are not the only distributor of New Readers Press materials in Ontario, we are the only distributor that uses the materials ourselves and the only distributor that can provide training to use the materials appropriately with low-level literacy learners. (The popular "Laubach Way to Reading" series was developed by Dr. Frank Laubach, and his son, Dr. Robert Laubach, and are used worldwide. Curriculum is designed with the volunteer tutor in mind, and includes materials for Level One and Level Two learners. Laubach's tutor training includes strategies to tailor the curriculum to the needs of each learner, based on their training plans.)

Profits from this venture may increase our financial capacity, but we are committed to using those profits to increase our services to LBS agencies.

Coordination with other Literacy Organizations

We are members of ProLiteracy Worldwide, Volunteer Canada, CanadaHelps, Ontario Literacy Coalition and Community Literacy Ontario. LLO networks with other LBS support organizations mainly through an online platform, Central Desktop.

Financial Resources:

LLO is funded in part by the Literacy and Basic Skills Program of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Through core funding of \$70,000 from MTCU, and project funding through the federal government and MTCU, our organization provides professional development, conducts research and development projects that provides resources and programming to local programs, and helps with the promotion of the literacy programs to potential volunteers and literacy students. We have successfully completed over 25 research and development projects since 1992.

Recent federal projects include “Integrating Essential Skills into Tutor Training”, and “Building Literacy, Essential Skills and Life Skills through Thematic Learning Modules”. Recent provincial projects include “Essential Skills for Literacy Practitioners”. Product deliverables have been, or will be, posted on LLO’s online classroom, “Trainingpost”, using Alphaplus’ Moodle platform.

Other sources of funding include our social enterprise (book sales) membership fees, donations, and fundraising. To help grow our social enterprise, LLO recently created a “preferred customer” category for literacy agencies from the college and school board sector, and literacy organizations outside of Ontario.

Future Plans:

LLO recently submitted project proposals to both MTCU (enhanced funding for OALCF) and the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, and will be pursuing other sources of funding to help sustain the organization.

LLO is in the process of developing a new five year strategic plan for 2011-2016. As in past strategic plans developed with member input, LLO will continue to work towards raising public awareness about literacy, and advocating for our members.

Mission Statement: Laubach Literacy Ontario supports its member agencies in the achievement of higher levels of literacy throughout the province.

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