**FINALIZED AND ADOPTED BY**

**THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON**

**NOVEMBER 15, 2017**

**Moore County Literacy Council**

**Five Year Strategic Plan**

**VISION STATEMENT**

Low literacy is a significant handicap for non-readers, and it will become even more disabling in our increasingly technical and digital world. Left unabated, low literacy will be a dead weight on the social, cultural and economic development of Moore County. Moreover, the inability to speak and write in English is a major barrier to the assimilation of Moore County residents born in other countries, and their children.

On the other hand, Moore County is a special place, blessed with significant resources. We have a growing population of volunteers who need opportunities to connect to the community by helping others. Many are already aware of our problems with low illiteracy and are eager to help. Others will support our cause if they are well informed. Overcoming the fierce competition for grants and charitable dollars will be a continuing challenge.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission is to work with others to significantly improve literacy in Moore County in ways that are measurable and immeasurable. We will maximize the impact of our limited resources by (i) boldly raising the awareness of low literacy in Moore County, (ii) systematically identifying and coordinating the county’s literacy resources, (iii) energetically recruiting and training volunteers, using state of the art literacy resources to provide volunteers with meaningful and life affirming experiences, (iv) nurturing and developing additional literacy programs and funding resources, and (v) strategically providing literacy counselling and tutoring in our own facilities.

**LONG-TERM GOAL**

Increasing literacy in Moore County to the highest rate in the State of North Carolina.

**DEFINITION OF LITERACY**

According to The International Literacy Association: “Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context. The ability to read, write, and communicate connects people to one another and empowers them to achieve things they never thought possible. Communication and connection are the basis of who we are and how we live together and interact with the world.”

**LITERACY IN MOORE COUNTY**

There are no reliable statistics regarding literacy in Moore County. Although it has often been said that 20% of adults in Moore County struggle with reading and writing (quite a shocking figure), we believe this is misleading and probably somewhat overstates the problem.

In the absence of reliable statistics, the Board has focused on failure to receive a high school diploma as a proxy for low literacy. This is principally useful for identifying the townships in Moore County with the greatest needs.

The percentage of adults in Moore County without a high school diploma has dropped from 25.73% in 1990 to 10.1% in 2014. The three northern townships (Sheffield, Ritter and Deep River) have the highest rates – 22% for Sheffield, 20% for Ritter and 27% for Deep River.

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

1. **Outreach and Advocacy**: **We will systematically seek to identify and assist non-readers (residents of Moore County who cannot read and write fluently in English), focusing more and more on the townships with the greatest needs. While respecting the privacy of our students, we will passionately broadcast the needs of non-readers, raising awareness of the problem, and motivating our community to address low literacy in its many forms.**

**Rationale:** People with problems, including those who are the victims of injustice, face great hurdles. This is doubly so in the case of low literacy, because this is such a private problem and non-readers often feel ashamed of their situation. We need to find ways to systematically identify non-readers and offer effective non-threatening assistance to as many non-readers as possible.

Non-readers collectively need an effective advocate to raise awareness of the problem and marshal the community’s resources. Through advocacy (public relations, community events, working with other community groups, etc.) we should develop a community wide consensus that Moore County will significantly improve literacy in our County – this could be a tremendous source of pride for our citizens.

The MCLC itself should have greater visibility in the community. Serious consideration should be given to re-branding the MCLC. We should consider conducting a serious study of literacy in Moore County, and perhaps we should even retain an outside firm to conduct the study.

1. **Dual Ministries: We will nurture and develop our volunteer corps, ensuring whenever possible that each tutor has a life changing experience working with the MCLC.**

**Rationale:** Many people move to Moore County having disengaged from their prior communities, and seeking to reestablish a sense of community in Moore County. While there are many opportunities to help fund local charities (write checks) and sit on boards (committee meetings), there are far fewer volunteer opportunities that match the skills of potential volunteers (who are usually very literate) with the needy in this County (too many of whom struggle with literacy in one way or another). Putting the privileged in direct contact with the needy should be one of our principal goals – this should have a salutary effect on Moore County that reaches far beyond the issue of literacy. The MCLC recognizes that it has a dual “ministry”: helping the non-readers in Moore County, and providing meaningful one on one volunteer opportunities for our volunteer corps (“each one teach one”). The MCLC should ratchet up the number of volunteers, but more importantly it should seek to make the volunteer experience meaningful and rewarding for each and every tutor. Volunteer recruitment and satisfaction should one of our highest priorities.

1. **The Literacy Quilt: As servant leaders, we will seek to identify, coordinate and publicize all the literacy resources in Moore County so that our collective resources are used wisely.**

**Rationale:** There are multiple literacy programs in Moore County at Sandhills Community College and in the public schools, libraries, Churches and other institutions. There are also many types of literacy needs – needs of children, youths, adults and the imprisoned, needs for basic education and English as a second language, health, financial, digital and other functional literacy needs, etc. Institutions and volunteers may feel a special calling to address one need or another, and we should encourage their callings, but nobody (including the MCLC) is addressing all the needs. The MCLC should serve as a self-appointed clearinghouse for all types of literacy programs, providing resources needed by volunteers and institutions to improve literacy in Moore County as effectively as possible.

While we continue to strategically provide literacy counselling and tutoring in our own facilities (the Read Moore Center, etc.) with our own volunteers, we should also provide leadership and resources to other volunteer organizations (such as Churches) who have an interest in helping non-readers. We should identify and address gaps in literacy resources. In particular we should channel literacy resources to parts of the County where literacy is lowest and resources are scarce.

1. **Fundraising: The MCLC will build on its past successes to become the most effective non-profit fundraiser in Moore County. The introduction of new programs will attract additional funding while providing enhanced services to our residents.**

**Rationale:** Low literacy in Moore County is a significant problem, and the Board recognizes that substantial resources will be required to address it. Marshalling our volunteer corps is very important, but substantial financial resources are required as well.

MCLC has a successful track record of sustained fundraising relying in the past principally on the Spelling Bee and grant writing. However, the resources required to significantly “move the needle” will be substantial. Meanwhile, the competition for grants and charitable contributions will be fierce.

Over time a financial foundation (cash reserves and endowment) should be built to ensure that our important work is not held hostage by the up and down year to year fundraising results of the MCLC.

The MCLC’s successful one on one tutoring program for adults, including adult basic education and English for speakers of other languages, should be supplemented over time with additional programs used at other literacy councils. This should attract and diversify funding resources and provide a more varied experience for tutors, while significantly improving the service offered to our community.

The Board feels that the principal responsibility of the Executive Director should be fundraising. The Executive Director should be provided with the resources necessary to be effective (including professional development, commensurate compensation and reliance on professional outside resources), and should be evaluated each year in no small part based on the MCLC’s fundraising success.

1. **Corporate Governance: As the MCLC continues to mature as an organization, we should continue to define and refine the roles and responsibilities of the board and the MCLC’s leadership, and to recruit board members who are mission appropriate.**

**Rationale:** Leadership is important, and good corporate governance is one of the most important ways for an agency to achieve its goals. If the board of the MCLC is perceived as a model of good governance, it will be easier to attract talented board members in the future. We should continue to emphasize board training and development, making a clearer distinction between the roles of the MCLC volunteer and MCLC board member, with annual retreats and outside professional development. We should also solicit the input of all our constituencies, including our volunteers and students.

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Having adopted this strategic plan on November 15, 2017, the Board now requests that the Executive Director and the staff of the MCLC develop a proposed detailed implementation plan for consideration by the Board.