Stepping Into Community

CALGARY LEARNS

Stepping Into Community

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Dedicated to:

- The literacy specialists and foundational learning practitioners who have researched, developed and adapted practical, relevant tools and resources to strengthen the adult literacy and foundational learning field
- The Literacy and Poverty Community of Purpose and Advisory Circle, and all CALP practitioners who find a way to intentionally work in the intersection of literacy and poverty in communities
- Ben Hartt, in recognition of his belief in this work and the vision, leadership and support he gave to the field of adult literacy and foundational learning in community.

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Introduction

Alberta Advanced Education's Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) Guidelines are the backbone of the CALP system. The reporting and accountability for all rural CALP organizations as well as the three urban CALP granting councils – Calgary Learns, Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association (ECALA) and the Lifelong Learning Council of Red Deer – are linked to the CALP Guidelines.

But more than that, the CALP Guidelines are an aspirational document that supports the design and delivery of strong adult literacy and foundational learning programming within Alberta's robust and dynamic field of community adult learning.

> "It is only within a well-connected network that learners can find their way to the services and supports they need, whether through direct programming at funded organizations or indirectly through coordinated knowledgeable referrals."
> (CALP Guidelines, 2020, p.19)

If you are a coordinator/practitioner working in a rural CALP and looking to enhance your new and existing work in your community, you have a responsibility to Advanced Education for ensuring strategic and effective community connections and collaborations (see CALP Vision below).

If you are a practitioner in a program funded through an urban CALP grant, you too need to have intentional and strategic links to community organizations and services.

Whether you work in an urban or rural context, the heart and hands of what you do is to serve the foundational learning needs of the adults in your community. *Stepping Into Community* is a handbook of practical processes, strategies and resources written to strengthen your knowledge and confidence in building stronger connections within communities and to support your work towards achieving the CALP vision and outcomes.

CALP Vision:

Changing lives through adult foundational learning in connected communities.

Outcomes:

1. Adult learners persist in learning foundational skills that they use in their everyday lives.
2. Adult learners have access to relevant and engaging learning opportunities.
3. Adult learners benefit from community adult learning programs (CALPs) that are well connected in their communities.

You and your organization have many responsibilities. These can include:

- Assessing and planning to meet the literacy and foundational learning needs in your community
- Developing and adapting literacy and foundational learning programs
- Attracting and retaining adult learners and assessing learning needs
- Attracting and retaining tutors, instructors, board members and other practitioners
- Administering and evaluating programs
- Completing applications and reporting
- Finding resources and funding for initiatives
- Increasing community awareness about the impact of literacy/foundational learning barriers
- Etc.

Practitioners can often feel there is no time left for the essential work of being out in the community.

The good news is the work you do with your community partnerships makes many of the above listed responsibilities 'shared responsibilities'. Even better news, your work in community is supported and encouraged through your CALP grant for exactly that reason!

> *"Literacy and other foundational skills 'have a significant influence on life outcomes – the ability to learn, health status, civic participation and social engagement, economic performance, and involvement with the justice system.' Community adult learning organizations support Alberta's rural and economic development by coordinating with local businesses to identify learning gaps, and by tailoring programs and services accordingly. Through greater coordination, communities take control of their learning potential and attract more settlement, investment and development." (CALP Guidelines, 2020, p.4)*

We have not set out to write 'the book' on partnerships. There are many excellent resources; some are referenced and/or acknowledged throughout this handbook. Rather, within the context of CALP, this resource will look at:

1. **'WHY'** community partnerships/connections are important, and the benefits partnerships bring to your CALP, your community and especially adults who are looking to return to foundational learning.
2. **'HOW'** to get started and understand the work of partnerships.
3. The **'NOW WHAT'** of developing 'key messaging' so you are ready to make the case for working together in your community.

Before we move on, it is important to acknowledge that the Literacy and Poverty project that led to this handbook was overshadowed by the 2019/20 global Covid19 pandemic. Much of what we hold as true about the value of partnerships remained valid, but many of our processes and practices were disrupted, as so much else about our lives also was.

Partnership models – informal to formal

Partnerships fall along a continuum from simple to complex, from informal to formal. Partnerships often emerge from a need and an opportunity. There are many levels of partnerships, even in informal partnerships, and partnerships evolve.

Partnerships are integral to sustaining positive literacy practices in organizations and communities. Partnerships are relationships based on a mutual understanding of the purpose of the partnership. They require care, commitment and clarity.

> This section pulls strongly on two publications:
>
> - *Connecting Literacy to Community: Building Community Capacity: Focus on Adult Literacy Handbook* by Audrey Gardner (2003)
> - *Building Strong and Effective Community Partnerships: A Manual for Family Literacy Workers* by Sharon Skage (1996)

The organization you work for will have policies, protocols and practices in place for current informal and formal partnerships.

Informal partnerships:

- Are ongoing, fluid and flexible
- Can be led by allies and literacy champions in the community
- Are cooperative – sharing resources and supporting client referrals
- Happen in response to a community need
- Can lead to a formal partnership, which is fixed in purpose and time
- Can sustain the work by providing ongoing support to maintain literacy positive changes, and even build on them
- Contribute to community capacity building as organizations promote themselves as a literacy friendly agency to the public, other community services and funders

Informal partnerships/community connections can include:

- One-time financial or services contribution; might require a tax receipt or recognition in a newsletter or at an AGM.
- Program sponsorship or in-kind contribution for a program (e.g., making a meeting room available or donating office equipment); again, this might require a receipt or recognition. If it is not an ongoing commitment with other accountabilities then it is still informal.
- Cooperation between agencies – exchanging information about programs and services and areas of expertise; increasing cross referrals. Neither agency needs to adapt their mandate, programs or the delivery to work effectively together. Accountability is to keep the lines of communication open and to work alongside each other.

Formal partnerships have many of the characteristics of informal partnerships but also:

- Have a formal partnership letter or signed mutual agreement – Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Are more structured than informal partnerships
- Are flexible and fluid, but have fixed time-lines and milestones
- Have explicit acknowledgment of the risks and benefits of working together – this can include financial accountability and risk

Formal partnerships can include:

- Coordination. This generally refers to "deliberate joint and often formalized relations for achieving shared or compatible goals…establishing a common understanding of the services committed to and provided by each agency and by determining each agency's accountability and responsibility" (Skage, 1996). This might look like interagency wrap-around program delivery such as an adult literacy program for at-risk dads who want to become more confident about their reading and writing skills so they can support their kids to stay in school – could involve CALP, Family & Community Support Services (FCSS) and the K-12 system, etc. All organizations involved bring what they do best to the programming.

- Collaboration. Skage describes this as "agencies working together in all stages of program or service development … joint planning, joint implementation and joint evaluation." This formal partnership could involve developing a proposal together, applying for funds, and sharing risks and benefits. What emerges is an innovation to collaboratively respond to a gap or need.

You will find the section 'Stepping Into Community Connections' as an appendix at the back of this handbook. Take some time to read through the examples presented there and consider the opportunities, benefits and challenges of these community connections.

> *"A partnership is a collaborative, mutually beneficial relationship between a grant recipient and one or more partner organizations to support learning opportunities and activities related to the mandate of the Community Adult Learning Program. A partnership includes one or more of the following attributes:*
>
> - *A formal commitment to work collaboratively, although the formality of partnerships may vary;*
> - *A set of joint activities, priorities, commitments, roles and responsibilities;*
> - *Financial or in-kind contributions to the learning opportunity;*
> - *Mutual respect and trust;*
> - *The sharing of intellectual or physical resources;*
> - *A common goal to serve adult learners, particularly those with foundational learning needs, and a commitment to meeting program outcomes."*
>
> *(CALP Guidelines, 2020, p.13)*

Who we serve

Clarity about definitions and terms used within our field of community adult learning can be very helpful when it comes to describing our work to people from organizations outside our field and in identifying the opportunities for connection and collaboration.

The CALP Guidelines clearly define the adult learners and program categories that can be supported through a CALP grant. Increasing awareness about the different categories of programs and the adult learner groups your CALP serves will make it much simpler for you to make the connections to other organizations and services when discussing the benefits of a partnership.

CALP funded programs are in place to serve the learning needs of adults who are choosing to address foundational skills and knowledge gaps that get in the way of their ability to achieve their own goals. These adults who are returning to learning at the foundational level are often referred to, by CALP, as 'foundational learners'. This is an example of CALP jargon. That same adult who accesses another service agency may be known as a customer, client, consumer, etc.

According to the CALP Guidelines (2020, p.11):

> "A foundational learner is an adult who chooses to engage in foundational learning opportunities such as literacy, numeracy, skills for learning, basic digital skills, and/or English language learning to address knowledge and skills gaps. Foundational learners often experience economic, social, and/or other challenges or barriers that may interfere with their learning—challenges that cannot be separated from the learning journey itself."

A number of factors can contribute to adults having foundational knowledge and skills gaps. Some of these include the impacts of poverty (moved a lot, changed schools a lot, food insecurity, transportation barriers, etc.), undiagnosed or unaddressed learning difficulties, developmental disabilities, a chronically disrupted and pervasively negative learning experience, trauma or violence, post-traumatic stress disorder, health/mental health issues, addictions, etc.

Many of these contributing factors can mean that the adults who come to a CALP for learning opportunities may also have strong connections to other community organizations whose services help address those issues.

Understanding and effectively explaining our 'jargon' makes it easier to make linkages with other service providers – it also clarifies that your CALP role is focused on addressing learning needs and your community work is focused on making the connections to other organizations that help address the barriers that can get in the way of someone being able to return to learning.

Setting the Context – Learnings from the Field

There is a clear inter-sectoral crossover between literacy and poverty.

Foundational skill levels often have a close connection with low income and poverty. Adults who have reading, writing, numeracy or digital skills gaps at the foundational level are often more vulnerable to systemic barriers and may experience limited employment options (particularly employment that is not precarious and provides a living wage), food insecurity, lack of accessible transportation, lack of affordable childcare, and limited availability of stable housing. National and international research has shown there is a strong correlation between low literacy and the experience of poverty, and improvement in literacy and other foundational skills closely correlate to increased economic and social opportunities (CALP Guidelines, 2020, p.20).

> "Poverty is entrenched through poverty of opportunity. For literacy to be a tool in the fight against poverty, it needs to make opportunities available to those who need them most." (Frontier College National Forum on Literacy and Poverty, 2017)

The federal government's 2018 poverty reduction strategy document, *Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy*, recognized that strengthening literacy and numeracy levels is an important component of an effective and comprehensive response.

In Calgary, adult literacy and foundational learning is named as one of the 10 levers of change in *Enough for All 2.0.*, Calgary's community-driven poverty reduction strategy document.

Calgary Learns, as a champion of this lever of change locally, undertook intentional work with literacy/foundational learning programs and poverty serving organizations to increase awareness of each other's programs and services and to strengthen the pathways between organizations to address the systemic barriers many adults in our community face.

Strategic partnerships within communities may provide you with the knowledge and resources that could reduce the impact of complex barriers adults can face when returning to learning. In order for this to be possible, it is important for us and for our community partners to have an understanding of each other's work, who we each serve and why partnerships are essential to our work, their work and the well-being of the community.

The Literacy and Poverty project brought together practitioners from both literacy/foundational learning organizations and poverty serving organizations. They joined either the Community of Purpose group or the Advisory Circle. Participants shared how they work together, why they work together, and their experience, wisdom and wise practices for strengthening intersectoral partnerships. I share highlights from some of those conversations here:

Partnerships require trust

- It is not always clear where a project partnership is going – don't get scared, be engaged and curious.
- Sometimes a partnership is defined too narrowly – this can make it rigid, not allowing for changes/evolutions and preventing some learn-as-we-go potential.

Partnerships require communication

- Need to be clear about capacity, expectations and risks
- Talk about what the process is if things go sideways – communication is key
- Need to clearly define the terms and jargon so there is some common understanding about the way partner organizations are thinking about their work together
- Need to have an understanding of shared values as well as differences
- Need to ensure there are not differences in the understanding of goals/outcomes of partnership – clarify early
- Important to communicate within an organization about the partnerships that have been established and why they have been established. How we talk about our strategic partnerships within our organization can either generate or limit buy-in and opportunities.
- Need to navigate and clarify expectations when mandates of partner organizations differ significantly
- Need to be very clear about roles and responsibilities
- Partnerships are not static, they evolve and change and sometimes end when the purpose no longer serves.

Partnerships require resources

- Participants with decision-making capacity within their organization are required from each sides – this helps anchor and give momentum to a partnership.
- Partnerships are more than an email list. They require investment of time, intention and energy
- Partnerships cannot be well managed 'off the side of our desks'.
- The partnerships need to be with an organization, not with an individual in an organization.
- Partnerships need to leverage the expertise and knowledge of each organizations.
- People get stretched – sometimes there are more partnerships than people to manage them.

Partnerships increase our capacity to meet client/learner needs

- Where there is high client need strategic partnerships can make the work and the system more responsive and seamless
- BUILDS vs BROADENS our capacity to do the work – to recruit/market/facilitate
- Broadens our networks – increases our ability to serve clients, especially those with complex needs
- Builds capacity for clients – know where the client referral comes from (context) and know when you refer a client to an agency that you can provide some context about the agency. The better an agency knows your organization, the better calibrated the referral process.
- Partnerships improve client/learner navigation

Partnerships strengthen our 'voice' by working together

- Can build a legacy (internal and external) – learn from each other, build possibility, increase knowledge
- Improves the sustainability of programs
- Broadens the context of our work and strengthens our collective voice when advocating or influencing on behalf of clients or for an issue
- Collaborative partnership work helps us be nimble, to respond to emergent needs

Partnerships are opportunities to learn from each other

- Partnerships increase our knowledge about community resources and services – we can then respond with more intentional specialization/more in-depth work in specific areas AND we avoid unnecessary duplication of programs and services
- Partner organizations strengthen each other and the pathways adults need to be able to move more easily between programs and services and resources
- Opportunity to share resources – people, space, curriculum, materials (What do you have to share? What do you need?)
- Encourage innovation and creativity – diverse/different skillsets can reach further
- Partnerships should be 'living', iterative – room to learn and explore

Celebrate our work together

- Remember to celebrate partnerships – articulate what 'we' have accomplished.
- Partnership awards can be an opportunity to 'tell the story' about why the work/time is valuable investment.
- Remember to say thank you to each other for the work together.

> *"As adult foundational learning practitioners, we cannot personally address the problems such as housing, food insecurity, unemployment, domestic violence and mental health. However, as a field, we can learn what poverty does to people and use this knowledge to facilitate their learning. We find ways to work collaboratively with organizations in poverty reduction field. The two sectors can look very different and be more effective if they work together. Whatever collaborations need to happen, they need to happen right away. Ten years from now is far too long to wait to see results. So let's embrace collaboration and help our learners build new identities and write new life stories!"* (Nada Jerkovic, 2020 CanLearn blog post)

So, let's get started!

Getting Started – WHY

When it comes to community partners it is quality, not quantity, that counts. Outcome #3 of the CALP program vision as identified in the CALP Guidelines (2020, p.15) is your big 'WHY' in this work:

"Adult learners benefit from community adult learning programs (CALPs) that are well connected in their communities."

All of the work your CALP does is connected to community!

Community connections and partnerships are a strong indicator of how your CALP fits into the community. Your CALP Guidelines (2020, p.19) describe the importance of these intentional relationships this way:

- "Grant recipients lead community-based initiatives to **raise awareness of their programs and services and build relationships with community partners, including their local comprehensive community college**."
- "In doing so, grant recipients are able **to leverage local resources, attract volunteers and solicit financial contributions**."
- "Grant recipients **are aware of the services and supports learners need and where/how these needs can be met**."
- "Through community mapping and building strong connections to other learning and service providers, including their local comprehensive community college, grant recipients **create seamless pathways for learners and promote the concept that 'any door is the right door.'**"

Connection to the various relevant professional development (PD) providers within the CALP system (Community Learning Network (CLN), Rural Routes and the PD providers at Calgary Learns and ECALA) is essential to your work. Within the CALP PD system, you have opportunities to build your knowledge, confidence and capacity to deliver part-time, non-formal literacy and foundational learning opportunities for adult learners. Those resources, training and mentoring opportunities give you an understanding about core topics such as literacy and foundational learning, Engaging with Indigenous Learners (EWIL), English as a Second Language, numeracy and so much more. CALP system PD and training is shaped by input from practitioners, like you!

Within the broader community, as the practitioners in Literacy and Poverty project stated, no single organization can address the complex challenges, many of them systemic, that adults who are experiencing marginalization face. Complex challenges require systemic responses. By connecting with agencies that have different mandates, we are able to combine knowledge, skills, resources and services to provide more comprehensive, wrap-around supports.

Evaluate what you want to accomplish through partnerships – clarity about motivations, hopes and expectations will guide your planning, messaging and communication.

Consider these questions:

1. What value or benefit do you/your CALP hope to receive through community partnership that you cannot meet internally? Examples of these might be to:
   - Further reduce barriers and create more opportunity for adults in your community who are marginalized
   - Attract more adult foundational learners into your programs
   - Receive, or make, more knowledgeable referrals
   - Recruit diverse, skilled volunteers/board members
   - Gain financial or in-kind support
   - Increase your knowledge or access expertise in other fields (child care, employment programs, health care services, etc.)
   - Gain the support of key stakeholders in the community for specific initiatives
   - Other reasons?

2. Are you trying to serve complex needs for the same clients/learners, or potential clients/learners, as other agencies in the community? What value or benefit does your CALP have to offer to potential community partners?
   - What expertise or resources do you/your CALP have that would be useful to other agencies or organizations?
     - Can you increase awareness of the importance of Plain Language to reduce barriers to services?
     - Can you offer literacy awareness information sessions or facilitate a Literacy Audit with an organization that wishes to become more literacy friendly?

As you consider these, and other related questions, remember the CALP portal is where CALP practitioners share resources, materials and innovative problem solving. They also identify unique challenges and share support. One example of a CALP-focused resource for increasing community awareness about literacy and supporting stronger community connectedness is the "Red Flags for Adult Literacy and Language Barriers in Service Delivery" workshop that was developed by CALP practitioner Dyan Semple.

> *"I developed a presentation that identified some Red Flags for Low Literacy and Language Barriers. It is a short educational presentation for service providers and the public about what low literacy and language barriers look like, and what might increase their own success in supporting people with those barriers.*
>
> *Although one of the goals of the presentation is to increase referrals, the main goal is to create a better informed web of support. Helping people feel confident supporting individuals with language and literacy barriers, and making sure that the issue is top of their mind when supporting clients will help to decrease the frustration and shame that people feel when they cannot access services, or are unable to meet the requirements of programs. Even if individuals with literacy and language barriers never seek out your organization, they may be better able to access their community."* (Dyan Semple, CALP Portal blog post, 2017 May 2)

You can read Dyan's full blog post and see a sample of her PowerPoint presentation on the CALP Portal (login required). We have included the accompanying Red Flags handout and her list of "starting thoughts about partnerships" as an Appendix to this handbook.

Being clear about value and benefits will help you understand what you are looking for with respect to new community connections. It will also help you build your key messages and your case for working together (in the section 'Now What').

Talk to current partners and find out what value and benefits they feel they get through the partnership with your CALP. This can give all parties a chance to evaluate your work together and make choices about where to extend or strengthen or what to pause or close.

Getting Started – HOW

Get ready to make some notes and lists!

All partnerships begin with a conversation.

You are going to want to know what process your CALP has in place for supporting and fostering community partnerships – both formal and informal partnerships require attention.

- Create a list of organizations your CALP has partnerships with – formal and informal.
- Why and how were they formed?
- What are the benefits of these community connections?

Remember, the formal and informal partnerships your CALP has are with your organization, not with individuals in your organization. When a partnership is built solely on an individual connection, it can be limited in its benefits to each organization and can be tricky to sustain if the key person in either organization leaves.

As you begin to make a plan for contacting current partners and exploring new partners it will be helpful to know what partnerships have lapsed or not worked out in the past. Be curious about how those connections and partnerships started. Be curious about why the connection ended. This knowledge might help you avoid a potentially awkward situation but it might also create a pathway to restarting a valuable community connection. Ask the questions:

- What community partnerships did our CALP have in the past that have lapsed?
- Why didn't that partnership last?
- Would connecting to that community organization again benefit the work we do, reduce barriers in the community, create opportunities, etc.?

Learners represent your community. They are referred to the CALP, they self-refer to your programs, and they refer each other. In the word-of-mouth world of adult foundational learning programming, they are at the center of everything you do.

Knowledgeable referrals are an important part of your urban or rural CALP reporting and accountability; they also strengthen your relationship with the adults who access your organization for services and resources.

Many community connections are started by paying attention to:

- What agencies and organizations make referrals to your CALP/CALP grant funded programs?
- What agencies and organizations do you make knowledgeable referrals to?

Does your organization already have a formal or informal partnership with those agencies and organizations?

Partnerships take work. They are a process and, even when they are informal, there are accountabilities and responsibilities. You want to know:

- What are the accountabilities and responsibilities within existing partnerships?
- Who is responsible for maintaining partnerships in your organization?

Review existing partnership agreements. Even informal partnerships should have clear expectations about roles and responsibilities. Existing documents, sometimes Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), can help guide you to build future mutual partnership agreements. The MOA or MOU can be as formal or informal as the partnership.

Partnership Review Template

Use a table as a quick way to capture information about your partnerships. This can be helpful both in planning and in sharing across your organization. It can be as simple as:

Partnership Review

Current / Past partnerships	Reason for partnership (Connection to learners, volunteers, funding, operational, etc.)	Formal or informal	Benefits to CALP	Benefits to partner	Who, from each agency, is responsible for maintaining the partnership?	Accountability, expectations, evaluations

One final but vital question is:

- What capacity does your organization have for new community connections/partnerships?

The answer to this question will help you decide both the scope and sequence of your efforts, including what partnerships you need to manage, what potential new partnership is a priority, etc. You will be able to assess and consider both your and the CALP's capacity.

Mapping your community

Needs assessments and community maps work well together to help us step beyond our own working knowledge of our community and look at the bigger and perhaps more complex picture of the community from a different lens. The information you have gathered through the conversations in the Why and How sections should have contributed to your knowledge of the community you work in.

If you already know a lot about your community through other work and roles you have had before you joined CALP, this process can still be valuable. You can focus on shifting previous connections into a literacy and foundational learning context.

The CALP Guidelines (2020, p.19) put it this way:

> "Grant recipients are **aware of the services and supports learners need and where/how these needs can be met**. **Through community mapping and building strong connections to other learning and service providers**, including their local comprehensive community college, **grant recipients create seamless pathways for learners and promote the concept that 'any door is the right door.'** It is only within a well-connected network that learners can find their way to the services and supports they need, whether through direct programming at funded organizations or indirectly through coordinated knowledgeable referrals."

If you are a practitioner in a rural CALP funded organization then it is a grant funding expectation that your CALP will have completed a community needs assessments; you will want to track that needs assessment down as you consider the next steps in planning for partnerships (in the section 'Now What'). In addition, it is possible your municipality has a recent needs assessment of the community that you could also access.

If you are a practitioner in an urban setting whose program is funded through a CALP grant, but your organization is not a CALP organization, your CALP grant application will have identified the needs and gaps your program is designed to serve. This information can lead to and inform the community connections you choose to develop.

Not all community information will direct your program or partnership plan but it will increase your knowledge about your community needs and can strengthen your case for the importance of literacy awareness and the relevance of literacy and foundational learning programming (see section 'Making the Case').

Consider these kinds of questions as you start to get a wider snapshot of your community:

1. What are the socio-economic factors in your community – income, education, employment, community safety, and social supports?
2. Who are the key stakeholders in the community?
3. Is there a community services directory? What agencies/service organizations are in your community? What issues do they address?
4. What are the demographics of your community? (Indigenous peoples, immigrants, seniors, etc.)

Some examples of what community indicators might be:

- Family and Community Social Services (FCSS) offers ongoing community wellness and welcome programs for newcomers.
- Home internet service is often unreliable and expensive and many community members access the digital services at the library, and library staff report that they do a lot of tech support.
- The food bank is busy and regularly putting out the call for more donations to meet the need.
- Employment training programs are overbooked.
- Retail businesses (like the CoOp and the local hardware store) are always looking to hire, but find it difficult to find enough staff with the skills they need.
- The primary employer is a meat packing plant, which predominantly employs adults who speak English as a second language.

- The newly renovated community centre has hired an activity and outreach coordinator.
- The Rotary Association is offering bursaries to young adults who need financial support to complete their high school credentials/GED.
- The community college is now offering both daytime and evening GED-prep programs.

Each of these can give you an indication about the opportunities and challenges across life, learning and work in your community.

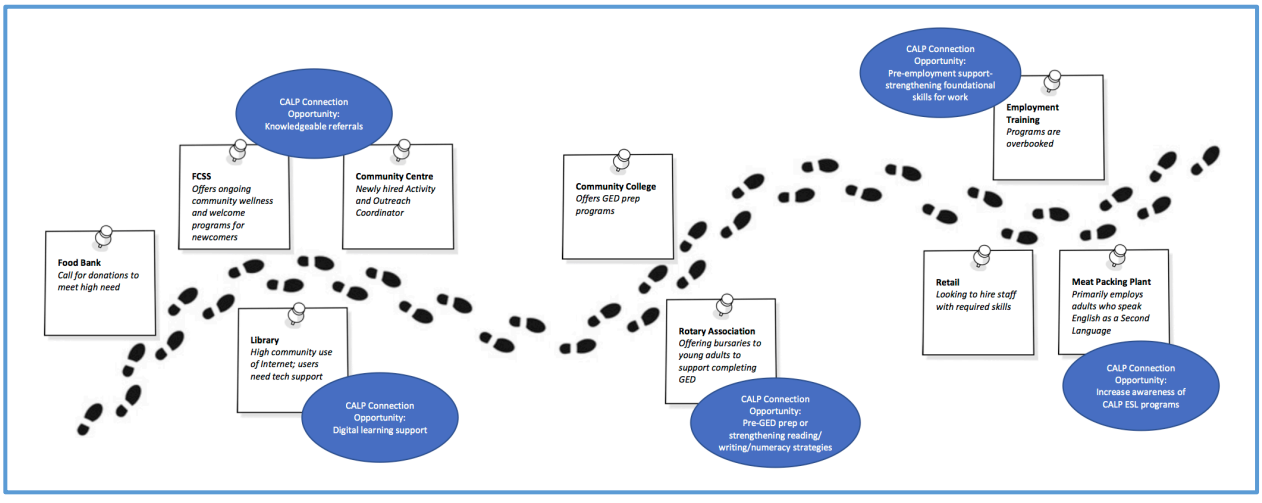
Activity - Visual Map

You have gathered a lot of information so far! Another helpful planning tool is making an actual 'map'. This connect-the-dots activity can be a good way to visualize your existing partnerships and see other community connections that could lead to opportunities to work alongside each other.

Invite your CALP colleagues to spend an hour or two around a big sheet of paper. Plot onto that paper your organization and the other key stakeholders in your community (FCSS, Library, Community Centre, Employers, other learning institutions, Rotary, etc.).

Take all the information you gathered – the table you made earlier, your notes about knowledgeable referrals to and from community organizations, community indicators, etc. – and 'map' it. Where are the CALP-to-community connections already established? What new ideas or connections surface when you look at your community this way?

This simple activity, which pulls forward a lot of information that has been gathered, can help a CALP quickly set a couple of 'obvious' priorities for partnerships (e.g., CALP to Rotary [pre-GED prep or strengthening reading/writing/numeracy strategies] or Employment Training [pre-employment support with strengthening foundational learning skills for work] or Meat Packing plant [increasing awareness of CALP ESL programs], etc.). Revisit the section 'Stepping into Community Connections' for examples of how 'seeing' opportunities in community connections can lead to developing beneficial partnerships.



Getting Started – NOW WHAT?

- ✓ You have gone through a taking-stock process.
- ✓ You know more about the community connections and partnerships that your CALP has.
- ✓ You have taken a big picture approach to thinking about your community gaps and assets.
- ✓ You have considered the why and the how.
- ✓ You have ensured that there is internal capacity for more community connections.
- ✓ You have been strategic about where you are going to start – what organization/agency you want to approach first.

Now What?

Before you step into the community you are going to want to know how to make the case for building connections. Not everyone is confident with cold calls or the 'elevator speech'. It will be very helpful to take time to learn more about the organizations you want to approach and to craft your message.

1. Start with making a few notes about:
   - What is the core work of the organization/agency, what issue do they address and what population do they serve?
   - What is the connection between their work and foundational literacy?
   - What might the benefits of working together be? (Review your answers to the WHY questions.)

2. Pull your answers to the earlier HOW questions forward:
   - What is the role of your CALP/your organization in your community? (How do you describe what your organization does?)
   - What is your CALP role? (For example: "Facilitating an adult learning program and providing adult learners relevant, knowledgeable referrals to community organizations that can help them reduce other barriers that get in the way of learning.")

3. Reference the CALP Guidelines that reinforce that connected communities are a priority. You might even choose a values statement like:

   "It is only within a well-connected network that (adult) learners can find their way to the services and supports they need, whether through direct programming at funded organizations or indirectly through coordinated knowledgeable referrals." (CALP Guidelines, 2020, p.19)

This can be enough to get you through the first phone call and set up a meeting.

As you prepare for your meeting you might want to collect additional fact sheets, quotes, etc. that will be relevant to the agency/organization you are meeting with. The section 'Making the Case' is included as an appendix in this handbook to help get you started. You will also find lots of information on the CALP portal and on the Decoda and ABC Life Literacy websites. For example:

- Alberta Literacy Fact Sheet
  https://education.alberta.ca/media/3402193/lit-fact-sheet.pdf
- Literacy at a Glance
  https://abclifeliteracy.ca/literacy-at-a-glance/

The ABC Life Literacy blog post, *How to talk about literacy to people outside the field*, gives some great tips that can help you when you are meeting with people who are not so familiar with the work of literacy and foundational learning.

- https://abclifeliteracy.ca/blog-posts/how-to-talk-about-literacy-to-people-outside-the-field/

You might consider developing a 'Did you Know' postcard that echoes what you will say when you approach a community organization/agency. This can be left behind, after your meeting, as a handy reference about what you do and why it matters. For example:

> **Did you know**? One out of five adult Albertans have literacy skills that fall below a high school level, which negatively affects their ability to function at work and in their personal lives. (PIAAC)
>
> **How does CALP make a difference**? "The Community Adult Learning Program is intended primarily to address the foundational literacy and learning needs of adults in Alberta." (CALP Guidelines) *Then add something like 'Our CALP offers (x,y,z) services to adult Albertans who can benefit from accessible learning opportunities in this community.'*
>
> **Why does our work matter**? "Foundational skill levels often have a close connection with low income and poverty. Foundational learners may experience food insecurity, lack of transportation, lack of childcare, and lack of access to stable housing. National and international research has shown that there is a strong correlation between low literacy and the experience of poverty, and that improvement in literacy and other foundational skills closely correlate to increased economic and social opportunities." (CALP Guidelines)
>
> **How might we work together?** *Add something about the literacy gap you see by identifying how the community organization might recognize the impacts. For example*:
>
> 1. As an employment training organization, do you ever have clients who are not successful in your programs? Does confidence with reading, writing, digital skills or numeracy get in the way? What resources or referrals do you use with the clients who are not able to get into your programs?
> 2. A lot of adults find completing forms, especially online, is frustrating and difficult. This can be a challenge for staff. Have you noticed this an issue for your customers? How does your organization address it?

Final Considerations

This handbook is based on the belief that strengthening the relationship between the adult literacy system and the poverty reduction system/stakeholders will:

- Increase collective knowledge about the initiatives in both systems
- Surface new possibilities to support and engage with each other to address poverty
- Create new opportunities for marginalized adult learners in the communities they connect to for support.

We began with an introduction to partnerships and wise practices learned from the field. You will remember that:

- Partnerships evolve as a result of a shared belief in the benefit of working together.
- Partnerships are not static, they evolve and change and sometimes end when their purpose no longer serves.

Unless you know that you require a formal partnership based on collaboration and coordination including shared resources and risk, strict timelines and accountability, it is often wise to begin with a more informal agreement. This will give everyone a chance to build a connection and explore the linkages that are possible.

As you have read:

- Partnerships require capacity, trust, resources, and communication.
- Partnerships build capacity to meet client/learners needs.
- Partnerships strengthen our 'voice' and by working together we can:
    - Build a legacy (internal and external) – learn from each other, build possibility, increase knowledge
    - Improve the sustainability of programs
    - Broaden the context of our work and strengthen our collective voice when advocating or influencing on behalf of clients or for an issue.
- Collaborative/partnership work helps us be nimble, to respond to emergent needs.

Every partnership will be unique to the organizations involved. Every organization that has partnered within their community has practices, processes and policies in place for how partnerships are built, stewarded and when necessary, ended.

All partnerships began with a conversation that recognizes or leads to common ground and an opportunity to work together. This is an emergent process, we never know exactly where a community connection will take us.

You are an ambassador for adult learning, creating seamless pathways for learners, leveraging local resources, attracting volunteers, and soliciting financial and other contributions that can reduce barriers and strengthen learning opportunities. Take time to have conversations about what you do when you are out in the community, make follow-up phone calls, drop off some information and where appropriate set up a first meeting.

The first meeting is the chance to share information about who your CALP is and what you do. It is also the opportunity to get a better understanding about the organization you are approaching, what their priorities are, what needs they see in the community and how they understand those challenges.

As was suggested, you are going to want to make the case for why you think there might be an opportunity to work together and what the benefits might be. Sometimes there is a burst of enthusiasm in response and the next steps are clear. Sometimes the first conversation ends with 'things to think about' for all parties involved. Be patient and keep the door open. Even when there are no formal next steps, check in at a later date and ensure that the 'potential' partners know about special events you are hosting, etc. The 'how' you might work together is something that can emerge through connection in other ways.

Measurement and evaluation – even (especially) in partnerships

In 'Getting Started' you engaged in gathering your partnership information, which included the need to pay attention to accountability, expectations and evaluations. These are mutually agreed upon (even in an informal partnership) and should be documented and revisited on a regular basis. They are tied to the 'why' and 'how' and have a significant impact on the quality of your partnerships.

Be clear and keep it simple – success might look like more knowledgeable referrals between organizations, increased awareness about the impact of literacy and or language barriers, increased understanding of the importance of plain language in service delivery. Success might also include working together to adapt programs and services, share training opportunities, etc. All of these reflect your starting point for building connections as identified in the CALP Guidelines (2020, p.19):

> *"Grant recipients lead community-based initiatives to raise awareness of their programs and services and build relationships with community partners, including their local comprehensive community college. In doing so, grant recipients are able to leverage local resources, attract volunteers and solicit financial contributions.*
>
> *Grant recipients are aware of the services and supports learners need and where/how these needs can be met. Through community mapping and building strong connections to other learning and service providers, including their local comprehensive community college, grant recipients create seamless pathways for learners and promote the concept that 'any door is the right door.'"*

You will want to keep track of the successes and challenges of your partnership activities. Hard numbers like the 'knowledgeable referrals' will be very useful, especially for reporting, but the story your other accomplishments tell will strengthen your CALP reporting as well as your reporting to community.

Celebrate your work together

All partnerships need to be acknowledged and, when and where possible, celebrated. This might be a one-year anniversary, or the achievement of a milestone (evaluation and accountability); it might be a learner success story that links the intentional collaborative work of organizations. Some partnerships include formal agreements about mutual public recognition – profiles in newsletters, appearing at events together, announcements, etc.

Find ways for your CALP and your partner organization to celebrate. Even a simple celebration can have unanticipated mutual benefits for connected organizations.

Resources

ABC Life Literacy Canada. https://abclifeliteracy.ca

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Community Learning Network. http://www.communitylearning.info

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Statistics Canada. (2013). *Skills in Canada: First Results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-555-x/89-555-x2013001-eng.pdf?st=IYEgMpp8

Vibrant Communities Calgary. *Approach – Enough for All: A Community-Driven Strategy*. https://enoughforall.ca/approach

Vibrant Communities Calgary. *Lever of Change: Adult Literacy and Foundational Learning.* *https://enoughforall.ca/levers-of-change/adult-literacy*

Appendix: Stepping Into Community Connections

1. A community hub organization, which has a drop-in daycare, is accessed by many low-income families for a variety of resources and services. The hub staff notice that they often have to spend extra time with some clients filling out forms – both their forms and other forms for financial subsidies, etc. This can be time-consuming for staff, especially when it happens on a monthly basis, and frustrating for clients whose access to services has continuous barriers. This issue increased as many application processes went online, requiring reading/writing and document use, digital literacy skills, technology and wireless access.

   A CALP organization in the same community offers foundational learning level classes on reading/writing/document use as well as digital literacy. The registration numbers were often lower than anticipated because, as several learners have stated, it is difficult to juggle childcare, work schedules and transportation, and make learning a priority. CALP staff decide to check out opportunities to collaborate, and because many of the adults who took classes at the CALP used the daycare and other services at the community hub they started there.

   The CALP now offers some of the relevant classes in the community hub. Because the community hub is open during the evenings, they can also offer drop-in classes, which further reduces barriers to participating. CALP staff have begun to work with hub staff to identify other opportunities, including sharing professional development. CALP have delivered literacy awareness sessions to all hub staff, which results in hub staff having more knowledge about adult literacy barriers. This has shifted how hub staff communicate (less written and more clear verbal communication) with clients. Hub staff often make referrals to CALP programs.

2. A literacy practitioner drops into the foodbank to make a donation. While there she notices very busy staff are also trying to help clients complete the forms that are required to be eligible for a hamper.

   She offers to set up a table that day and donates some time to help clients complete the forms.

   She lets clients know if they want more help, or have learning needs or interests they want to explore, they can contact her at the CALP office.

   Later, she talks to the foodbank manager and offers to come back, but in addition, she offers to work with the foodbank staff to review their forms and make them easier to understand. She also talks with them about the other services and resources she provides in the community.

3. A CALP practitioner who is providing a 1-to-1 reading program at an addiction treatment centre discovers that some clients are having particular difficulty working the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) program, specifically the AA 12 Steps book, because their reading and writing skills are not strong enough.

He identifies this challenge to the counsellors at the centre. He sources a more plain language version of the 12 Steps book and builds the reading program more explicitly around that book as the curriculum materials – focusing on reading comprehension and building vocabulary, etc.

The CALP practitioner is invited to provide literacy awareness and plain language training to treatment centre staff. Clients who might be having reading difficulties are more quickly identified and referred to the CALP program for learning support.

4. In conversation with the manager at the local CoOp grocery store a CALP practitioner learns there have been challenges with recruiting, hiring and retaining good staff. She asks some questions and soon learns that a common frustration has to do with forms and inventory documents, both paper and electronic, not being filled out accurately. The CoOP manager says she has tried everything she knows to solve this problem; she says she has had some employees with good potential and yet almost every time there is a form to be filled out they are late getting it in and the form is often completed incorrectly. 'It feels like they just don't care' she says 'and yet, I know they want the job.'

   The CALP practitioner sees the opportunity to talk about what a CALP does and speaks specifically about the connections between reading/writing and document use. She wonders out loud if some of the difficulties with the forms has to do with the design of the document combined with an employee's lack of confidence with completing it accurately. She asks the manager if there might be interest in setting a time to meet to look at the onboarding process for new staff, particularly with respect to introduction of documents, forms and processes. The manager agrees with her that often documents and forms are harder than they need to be and that 'teaching' is not her strength.

   After that initial conversation the CoOp manager invites the practitioner to attend a meeting with supervisors and lead staff to talk about literacy and foundational learning, how to recognize 'Red Flags' and about supporting effective hardcopy and digital document use. Out of this meeting comes an invitation to build an informal partnership.

   The CALP practitioner agrees to:

   - Come in for a couple of all-staff training *Lunch'n'Learns* to talk about 'strategies' for completing documents on paper and online
   - Work with the manager and supervisors to review the forms and documents to reduce problems and to build knowledge about supporting new staff to build the skills they need

   The CoOp manager agrees to:

   - Put marketing materials about the CALP in their community newsletter and flyer
   - Make referrals to the CALP programs for staff who indicate that they need/want to go back to learning
   - Encourage her staff to consider volunteering to support the CALP
   - Sponsor the catering for the volunteer recognition events twice a year

5. Basic education and literacy have always been an area of focus for Rotary clubs. The community college offers both daytime and evening GED-prep programs. The local Rotary Association is offering bursaries to young adults who need financial support to complete their high school credentials/GED.

   Addressing learning opportunities gaps and strengthening pathways for adults in the community are a CALP priority. When the college has academic upgrading applicants who are not able to pass the admissions exam for the GED prep course they often refer to the CALP. CALP practitioners notice that often the adults who are referred need an opportunity to build their skills for learning, address other barriers and increase their confidence. This foundational learning takes longer than most GED prep programs permit.

   The CALP staff approaches the Rotary to explain the issues and presents them with an opportunity. The CALP will design and deliver a slower paced and highly supported Pre-GED prep program. This will be a non-credentialed course. The CALP invites the Rotary to support this new course by offsetting costs for learning materials. In a conversation about what learning materials are needed the CALP also identifies that not all of the adults who would enroll in this course have access to reliable technology that can be used effectively for learning. The Rotary offers to purchase four Chromebooks that can be lent out to learners and expresses an interest in working with the CALP to explore what other ways it could support their work. The CALP staff participate in and support Rotary events and support adults in the community to be able to apply for Rotary bursaries to enter the college programs. A partnership is formed between the two organizations, a community connection that supports adult learning in both pragmatic and innovative ways.

Appendix: Making the Case – Facts, Quotes, Narratives

Quick facts – Adult literacy in Canada

- 1 in 5 Albertans have literacy skills that fall below a high school level, which negatively affects their ability to function at work and in their personal lives.
- 17% of Albertans have working knowledge in reading at the lowest level, where they may, for example, be unable to read the dosage instructions on a medicine bottle.
- People with lower literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed than those who scored higher.

NOTE: These statistics are based on the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2013 results. The next international round of testing will begin late 2021. (https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-555-x/89-555-x2013001-eng.pdf?st=IYEgMpp8)

Quotes

1. "Poverty is entrenched through poverty of opportunity. For literacy to be a tool in the fight against poverty, it needs to make opportunities available to those who need them most."
   (Frontier College National Forum on Literacy and Poverty, 2017; https://www.frontiercollege.ca/getattachment/6f6bd77f-043f-4ce3-96a0-9a2ec2902d73/Discussion-Paper-Literacy-and-Poverty-by-Frontier.aspx)
2. "Literacy, along with numeracy, opens doors and opportunities for individuals to acquire the knowledge they need to achieve personal goals and build a better quality of life. It lays the foundation for lifelong learning and active participation in society. Literacy is essential for sharing histories, personal experiences and stories about traditions and the past."
   (Alberta Education Literacy Fact Sheet; https://education.alberta.ca/media/3402193/lit-fact-sheet.pdf)
3. "There are challenges to achieving … quality of life, and many of the social problems we want to solve are complex. Some conditions, such as low literacy rates, can affect an individual's overall well-being. When left unaddressed, these conditions can multiply: a person's educational level can affect their ability to earn a stable, adequate income, which can lead to other health and social challenges that can limit opportunities for their family."
   (Alberta's Social Policy Framework, 2013; https://open.alberta.ca/publications/6214203)
4. "Literacy and essential skills (LES) are "joined up" to many aspects of the lives of individuals and communities. In fact, literacy is connected to health, having enough to eat, employment, family well-being, further education, and justice.... To act on these "joined up" issues, we need to connect community agencies, organizations, and institutions that focus on them, providing a place and opportunity to pool resources as well as to experience and view things through a LES lens."
   (Strengthening Rural Canada: Why Place Matters in Rural Communities, 2016; https://www.decoda.ca/wp-content/uploads/Strengthening-Rural-Canada_Final.pdf)
5. "Having adequate literacy skills means being able to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts. It also means being able to participate in society, achieve your goals, and develop your knowledge and potential.

Research shows that adults who have inadequate literacy skills are more likely to have poorer overall health, lower salaries, and lower levels of participation in their community."
(Literacy at a Glance, 2021; https://abclifeliteracy.ca/literacy-at-a-glance/)

6. "Canadians with low literacy skills are twice as likely to be unemployed than those with higher level literacy skills. Approximately 45% of Canadians in precarious or 'no contract' work have not attained an educational credential beyond a high-school diploma and struggle with job security."
(Frontier College, The State of Literacy in Canada; https://www.frontiercollege.ca/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=1603da3b-fd19-4ee0-b25d-7f26a03b6632)

7. "Higher literacy can boost the economic and financial success of individuals and the economy as a whole. It can reduce poverty, improve health, lift community engagement and lead to a higher standard of living. In fact, it is hard to identify any other single issue that can have such a large payoff to individuals, the economy and society."
(Craig Alexander, Literacy Matters: A call for action, 2007; https://www.brantskillscentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Literacy-Matters-TD.pdf)

Narratives

As a CALP practitioner, when you make an approach for a potential partnership, you will often find yourself responding to a combination of disbelief and dismay that there could be any adults with literacy/foundational literacy barriers in the community.

It can be helpful to have some examples of everyday Albertans who have addressed literacy challenges in their own lives. You will also start to collect your own learner stories (anonymized of course) that can help this issue make sense when you are building your case for working together.

Here are some examples of learner stories that can make a difference:

1. Zoya, the second of three girl children of a family that immigrated to Canada, was born in a large urban centre. Her elementary school years were successful but at the completion of Grade 8 she was pulled out of formal school to study her religion. Zoya's family sent her overseas for several years and when she returned to Canada in her early 20's, she enrolled in adult learning classes to complete Grade 10 English and Grade 9 Science and Math.

   Zoya married, supported her husband's pursuit of education and they had two children in quick succession.

   When Zoya's children were 3 and 2 years old, Zoya enrolled in a family literacy program. She had already instilled her love of reading and storytelling in her children. Zoya took delight in learning about new books, learning more strategies to strengthen her children's reading skills and in having the opportunity to talk about her own learning goals.

   When her youngest child entered kindergarten, Zoya returned to upgrading her high school subjects. She began with English, Math and Science 20. It was a lot of work managing parenting and marital responsibilities as well as the expectations and opinions of her cultural community.

When Zoya's marriage abruptly ended she knew that the future for her and the children depended upon her continuation of upgrading. So, during this difficult time, she completed Biology, Chemistry, English and Math, all at the 30 level.

Patient and determined, Zoya went on to complete an Education Assistant certificate. An impressive practicum student, Zoya was offered employment even before her graduation. She has been an Education Assistant in Specialized Learning for several years and is highly respected in her current school for her compassion, insight and strong work ethic. Her motivation to widen her knowledge base is a testament to her commitment to supporting her students and her value of life-long learning.

Recently, Zoya made a referral for one of her student families to the same family literacy program that began her journey.
(Adult learner story, CALP report, 2021)

2. Jennifer was the oldest child in a family that struggled to make ends meet. When her mom suddenly lost her job due to poor health, Jennifer had to quit school and go to work full time.

   Several years later she decided it was time to think about her future. She had always dreamed of working with seniors in the community. She approached a post-secondary institution to find out about entrance requirements she needed for a nursing aide program. They told her she needed her GED and that she would also need to work on her reading and writing skills. The college referred her to a CALP.

   Jennifer found a tutor that would work with her four times/week. She studied every day. She also continued to work full time. She attempted to write her GED three times before she was successful.

   She says it was her tutor's belief in her and her own increasing confidence that made the difference.
   (https://www.alberta.ca/literacy-awareness-events-videos.aspx#jumplinks-4)

3. "The hardest thing for men to do is talk about their weaknesses." That is how Danny begins to tell his story.

   He and his brother ran away from home when they were young teens. They travelled for many years gathering skills and finding ways to survive. Eventually, Danny became a sign painter and even started his own business. Danny had very limited reading and writing and numeracy skills. He had a good sense of design and colour. He also had a strategy – the customer filled out the order form and Danny painted the sign using the exact words and spelling the customer had provided. If the customer complained that the sign was spelled wrong Danny showed them the order form they had filed. As Danny liked to say, "The customer is always right."

   Danny's wife helped him keep the books and keep track of his business administration. Danny had two interlocking secrets, shame about literacy and an addiction. Those two secrets collided in an alcohol treatment program where he finally confessed that he could not read the AA book to work the program.

   According to Danny, a referral to a literacy program actually saved his life. Sober and hopeful, Danny has taken his story public and become a fierce spokesperson for adult literacy.
   (https://www.alberta.ca/literacy-awareness-events-videos.aspx#jumplinks-4)

Appendix: Handouts from the *Red Flags* workshop (2018)

Talking About Red Flags for Literacy and Learning Barriers

Dyan Semple, Coordinator, CALLS Fort Saskatchewan and Strathcona County

What is the point of Red Flags?

- When community members receive information about low literacy and language barrier prevalence (that 40% number), there is strong disbelief and denial
- Many think that if you can write your name, you are 'literate'
  - vs 'if you don't understand what you are signing, you might want to improve skills'
  - Very few community members know someone in the first category (pre-benchmark); almost everyone does indeed know someone in the latter
  - We need to move the window of the 'literacy' discussion
- Community organizations lack tools for recognizing and supporting people who may struggle
  - We have all seen learners miss opportunities because of paperwork
  - Frustration and fatigue associated with low literacy, in particular, looks like non-compliance, laziness, etc., which results in less support available, rather than more

Benefits to your organization:

- Increased awareness is likely to increase referrals in
- If the organizations we refer learners out to have been provided with tools for serving learners with literacy and language barriers, our learners will be more successful in their daily lives
- Establish your organization as the local expert in literacy and language issues
- Build goodwill with community partners

Key points about the Red Flags Presentation:

- It is short, and easily fits into a staff meeting or lunch hour (CALLS provides free, at this time)
- It includes local context
- It explains functional literacy skills as a concept
- It is adaptable to specific organizational needs relatively quickly
- It focuses on the organization's needs - information and supports that are quick, easy to implement, and will save the organization time and money

Where did the information come from?

- Clear/Plain language guidelines
- Adaptations of various protocols for medical literacy screening
- Observation and consultation with other literacy professionals
- Please let me know if there is something you think should be added/highlighted

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COMMUNITY ADULT LEARNING PROGRAM

CALPs from the West-Central region met in Stony Plain on March 15th, 2018, for our annual Regional Meeting. To strengthen our professional communities, we participated in a number of Cracker Barrels.

Dyan Semple, Coordinator at CALLS Fort Saskatchewan and Strathcona County led a conversation about community partnerships, and share the following as a handout.

Some Starting Thoughts about Partnerships for our Discussion today:

1. **Who are your existing partners?**
    a. Are you happy with the extent and functioning of your relationship?
    b. What are the trouble spots?
    c. What are the successes? What works well?
2. **What gaps exist that you would like to fill?**
    a. Should you be involved in this gap (i.e. does it address foundational learning or the needs of barriered learners?)
    b. Can/should you fill this gap alone?
    c. Is an existing partner a good fit, or will you alienate an existing partner by creating a new relationship?
    d. Is there a potential new partner to strategically target? How will that organization fit amongst your other partners?
3. **What gaps do you help your partners fill?**
    a. Do you contribute funding, space, expertise, training, support? Do they?
    b. Are there gaps that you could help your partners identify?
4. **What kind of structures do you need/want around your partnership?**
    a. Formal/informal?
    b. Program-based/organization-based? Is the partnership a sharing of resources, or provision of supports rather than focused on a program?
    c. What does the balance of your relationship look like over time?
        i. Costs
        ii. Relationship building (honesty and commitment)
        iii. Supports
        iv. Duration
        v. Goals
        vi. Ensuring access/focus on adult learners with barriers as appropriate
        vii. Processes to determine success
    d. Monitoring – can you drop by? Can they? Do you report together? Whose outcomes are reported, to whom?
5. **Do you have a large power or size differential with your partner?** How will that shape your relationship? Are the organizations' other partners frustrated or fulfilled?