

Q & A with Literacy Colleagues Working with Library Friends, Foundations and/or a Literacy 501c3 organization

In addition to any money you may get allocated for your literacy program from the Library Friends or Library Foundation, do they allow you to use their 501 c3 status to apply for outside grants for your literacy program? If yes, what are the "rules" you must follow?

- The Friends has allowed me to use their 501 c3 maybe three times to apply for grants. They have done so reluctantly because they feel they somehow take on liability. They even discussed possibly paying for us to become a 501 c3, which they never followed up on. The Library Foundation did not feel that supporting the Literacy Program was part of their mission.
- We don't directly apply for outside grants but do it in collaboration with the Foundation and they use their 501 (c) (3), whenever needed on grant applications.
- I use the 501c3 of our Library Foundation. There are no rules. I communicate with them letting them know what and why.

What's the best thing about the relationship you have with your Library Friends or Foundation?

- They value what we do.
- We have a collaborative relationship – I write the grants jointly with the Executive Director of the Foundation. We meet regularly and brainstorm ideas for raising funds for literacy.
- The best thing is probably that they continue to become more and more involved. Their understanding of our students, their goals, and their life changing successes is growing year by year. I attribute this to both the Friends and the Foundation attending our events, asking for presentations at their meetings and in general an open flow of communication.

What's the most challenging thing about the relationship you have with your Library Friends or Foundation?

- Not having enough time to build strong relationships (attend meetings, etc.) or for planning fundraisers with the Foundation specifically for Adult Literacy.
- They have a lot of demand for their support so keeping the importance of the literacy program on their radar. Most of the financial negotiation is done through the library request and we do not have any direct input into that process... so any extras have to be based on their understanding of our relationship.
- The most challenging thing about the Friends is they have never really viewed the Literacy Program as part of the library that they are supposed to be serving.
- They do not fund staff salaries, so it has been difficult raising funding for staff as our state grant funding is eliminated.
- Initially both groups were so focused on only children's programs. It has been a process, but they now seem to value the importance of the parent's role in being able to support the educational success of their children

Do you have a written MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) or other document that outlines the relationship between your literacy program and the Library Friends or Foundation?

___Yes 5No If yes, please attach it so we may share with others. If no, based on your experience, what would you suggest be in such a document?

- The City has a written MOU with the Foundation and Friends that gives them sole authority to raise funds for library programs. The literacy program does not have any special MOU with the Foundation and Friends- we have so far not felt the need!

What's the best thing about having your own 501c3 Literacy Friends Group or Council?

- Both fundraising and public awareness.
 - Because we are a non-profit, donors can give to us, being assured that their donation is used for literacy, and only literacy, services.
 - Our board is great about staffing a booth at community events. They do not see community events as something that staff has to be at every minute.
- Our 501c3 Fundraising Board has enabled our program to remain at the same staffing level despite the elimination of State funds. State funds have historically paid for two part-time positions (1 of our 4.8 FTE). Our County is in no shape to pick up the slack, so we would have had to reduce staff which would have resulted in: reducing the number of students and tutors we can serve, severely curtailing our Computer Learning Lab hours, eliminating most workshops, and redirecting the efforts of remaining staff (leaving much less time for community outreach). It has been very gratifying to work with our Board because they believe so strongly in our cause, and they are unwilling to see cuts of this nature happen. They volunteer many hours to make sure it doesn't. Finally, it's nice for us to offer this as an alternative to tutoring. Not everyone can devote 3 - 5 hours/week to tutoring, yet they want to help further the cause of adult literacy.

What's the most challenging thing about having your own 501c3 Literacy Friends Group or Council?

- Be aware that it can be very time-consuming for the Literacy Program Director. I estimate that I devote 20% of my time to fundraising activities. It's not like you hand fundraising over to this 501c3 and walk away -- it requires a great deal of time on my part. BUT, I haven't had to make staffing cuts so it's well worth it.
- The most challenging thing is that the board members all have ideas about extra things that the staff could be doing. A person has to be very strong to deal with board members and sometimes the issues they have with each other.
- I **would** suggest that potential board members:
 - Have a clear understanding of how long their commitment is.
 - Understand their end date of board commitment. And stick to it!
 - Can move individuals to "advisory" board, no voting privileges and not "working" board for ones you want to keep around and in good graces. As well as visible community members.
 - Fill out an application to be a part of the board. If nothing else, this lets staff and other board members know the background of the potential board members and lets the potential board member know you are serious and view this as a professional obligation. *Also attached.*
 - Realize they are on a working board, and are committed to help on various committees. But also realize that committees do not need to be 100% board members, but the lead should be a board member.
 - Are current or previous tutors. At the very least, they must be involved with adult literacy.
 - Also, when you recruit board members, be sure to recruit with having a member in mind who can step up to an officer position in the future.

- It can be difficult to find someone on our 501c3 Board who is willing to lead a project or fundraiser. They are very happy to participate, but not to lead. Project leadership therefore falls to me much of the time.
- Two years ago I was concerned that our Treasurer was not filing tax returns on a timely basis so I had to gently ease someone else in to help. I was fortunate that we were pursuing ProLiteracy accreditation at the time, so I had a built in excuse that we needed redundancy in that role. Since it's a volunteer Board, it can be tricky to handle someone who is not competent. This was a well-meaning person who has been on the Board a very long time and the Board President was uncomfortable handling the situation. So it fell to me. I'm guessing I'm not the only person who has had to deal with a sweet, but incompetent volunteer. It's easier when they are a volunteer tutor. It's harder when you're dealing with tax returns and financial statements.