STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2017

Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL)

MCAEL
Montgomery Coalition for
Adult English Literacy

Adopted March 2014
For Fiscal Years 2015 -2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

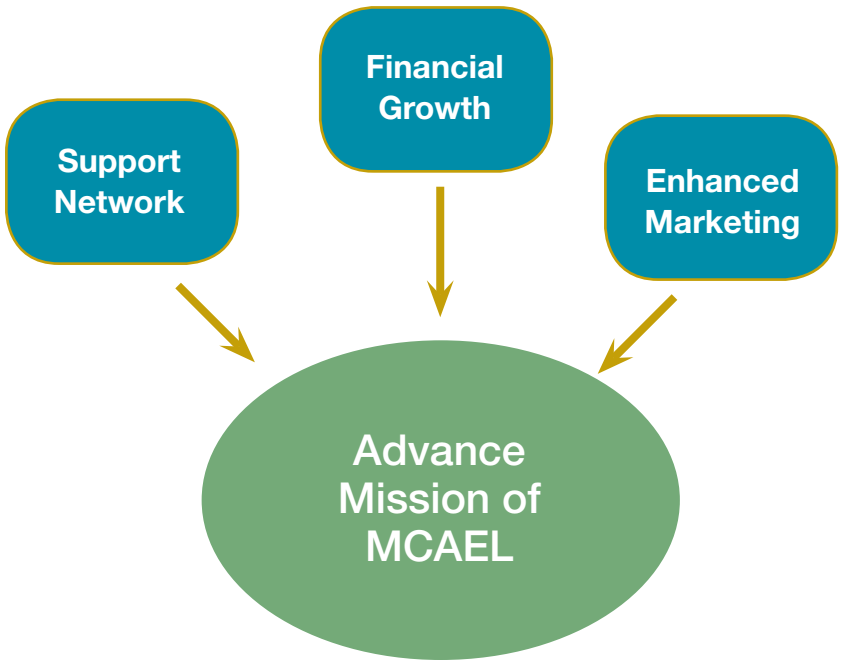
The Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL) Strategic Plan for 2015-2017, developed under the direction of the board and Executive Director Kathryn Stevens, recommits MCAEL to high-quality support of adult English literacy programs (hereafter referred to as "providers") as its first priority. Additionally, the plan calls for a strengthened and diversified fundraising program as well as expanded marketing and outreach to fuel growth and ensure sustainability.

Mission Statement

The Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy strengthens the countywide adult English literacy network to support a thriving community and effective workforce.

Aspirational Vision Statement

MCAEL envisions a culturally diverse community where dreams are achieved through the power of literacy.



Strategic Vision Statement

In the next three years, the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL) will increase organizational capacity and promote literacy by empowering providers to increase the quality of their programs and instruction, by better serving an increasing number of learners and by partnering to increase the visibility of MCAEL as a leading model of a literacy coalition.

Goals

1. To support organizations to offer quality adult literacy programs.
2. To increase and diversify financial resources.
3. To strengthen marketing and outreach of the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy in order to promote literacy and enhance program delivery.

INTRODUCTION

MCAEL is a community coalition for literacy - a group of individuals and organizations from the community that have come together to strengthen and promote adult English literacy services in Montgomery County.

Together, the coalition network (program staff and instructors) works toward a common goal of strengthening the broader community, by helping adults gain the English literacy skills needed to reach their potential as parents, workers and community members, so all community members can help build a 21st Century Montgomery.

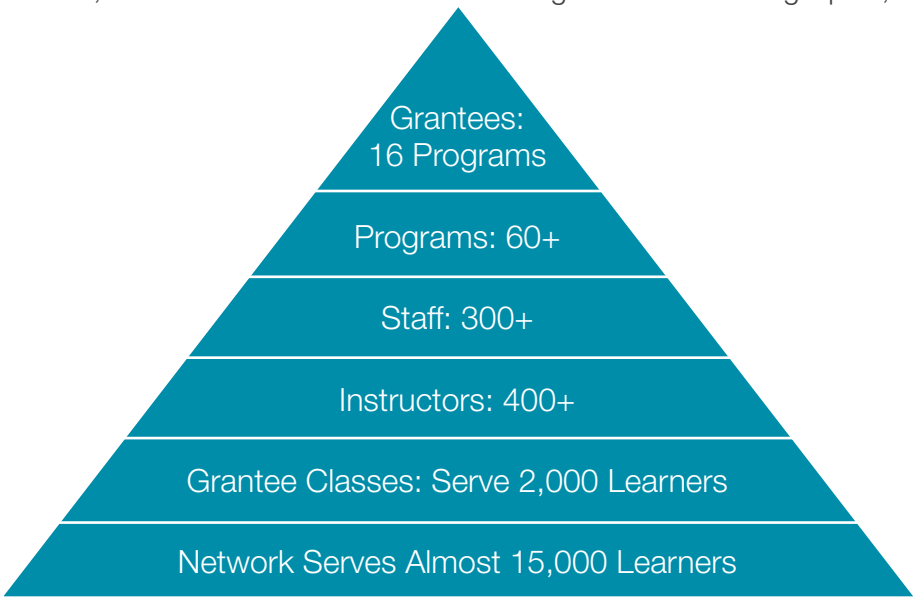
MCAEL's work directly supports a network of 60+ adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and literacy service provider programs, and the 750+ instructors, volunteers and program staff whom they employ. More than 2,000 adult learners are served annually through an average of 15 programs funded by MCAEL as a grants intermediary for the county, and about 15,000 are served by the broader provider network.

In Montgomery County the need for English language learning opportunities is great. Approximately 35% (350,000) of the household population (ages 5 and older) speak a language other than English.[1] Of the 350,000 individuals, about 150,000 have identified themselves as Limited English Proficient (LEP).[2] Montgomery County Public Schools data for 2012 shows a more than 43% increase from 2005. Specifically, more than 13,000 elementary students and more than 3,500 middle school students have been identified as ESOL students – children needing additional support in the system to maintain grade level efforts. Extrapolating from these numbers (one parent for each student), there are almost 17,000 parents who are likely LEP. The highest density areas include Silver Spring, Germantown and Gaithersburg.

These numbers have consistently increased since MCAEL was first established in 2006.

Strategic Planning Process

The 2015-2017 strategic plan is the second in MCAEL's history. The first three-year strategic plan for MCAEL was created in 2009, and then extended through 2013. Through the 2009 strategic plan,



MCAEL's goals were the following:

- Goal 1: Strengthen the capacity of adult English literacy service providers to deliver high quality, effective programs that meet the needs of learners.
- Goal 2: Expand, leverage and coordinate the full resources of the community to support the provision of and access to adult ESOL and literacy.
- Goal 3: Promote adult English literacy as a key investment opportunity that is central to family, community and economic prosperity in Montgomery County.
- Goal 4: Develop MCAEL's internal capacity—people, systems and resources—and couple with best practices to successfully implement the strategic plan.

MCAEL's 2013-2014 strategic planning process was designed to honor the work of the previous strategic plan while taking a fresh look at the needs of MCAEL in the context of our changing community as well as anticipated opportunities and challenges. Participants were drawn deliberately from the broad MCAEL network and included all staff, board and key stakeholders such as representatives from the network, including, MCAEL provider and instructor advisory groups, community leaders and non-profit and government partners.

The process was launched in 2013 under the direction of Kathryn Stevens, executive director, working in close collaboration with board members Josh Jeffries and Farrah Jolly, strategic planning chairs. Capacity Partners, Inc. was hired to facilitate the process; Mary Robinson and Sara Watkins served as the strategic planning consultants.

A chronological listing of major strategic planning milestones follows:

- August 2013: Groundwork was laid in several small meetings. A board and stakeholder retreat was conducted to review mission, aspirational vision, values and strategic issues. Data collection began and the EEMO (Elements of an Effectively Managed Organization) survey was conducted with board, staff and stakeholders.
- September 2013: A second retreat was held to review internal and external scans plus the history of MCAEL and need for adult English literacy services in the county. The strategic vision and three goals were defined.
- October and November 2013: Three "goal groups" were formed to include both board members and staff to explore each group's direction in more detail.
- November 2013: A third retreat was held to review and align the goals and strategies.
- March 2014: The MCAEL board of directors approved the strategic plan for Fiscal Years 2015-2017.

Special thanks are given to all the participants whose thoughtfulness, energy and dedication to MCAEL created an especially collaborative process and a sharply focused plan for MCAEL's future over the next three years.

[1]Montgomery County & U.S. Census, Migration Policy Institute 2005/2010/2013
[2]Montgomery County & U.S. Census, Migration Policy Institute 2005/2010/2013

STRATEGIC PLAN 2015 – 2017

An organizational strategic plan addresses three fundamental questions:

Why do we exist?

Where are we going?

How are we going to get there?

The response to the first question establishes the ***foundation*** of an organization and provides a constant beacon for decision-making. The second question addresses an organization's ***strategic direction*** in the context of a complex, ever-changing environment. Strategic direction is at the heart of the strategic planning process and is articulated through a time-bound vision for the organization and related goals and strategies. The determination of how the strategic direction can best be achieved forms the ***implementation plan*** with its specific objectives and action plans. (Capacity Partners® Strategic Planning Framework)

FOUNDATION

Although MCAEL's mission, aspirational vision and values have changed little throughout its nine-year history, the strategic planning teams felt that re-examination and re-articulation would be beneficial. The results of that inquiry led to increased clarity regarding MCAEL's mission as a coalition and reaffirmation of the group of primary stakeholders that it serves. MCAEL's primary stakeholders are the provider organizations/programs and the staff and instructors. The foundation work also yielded powerful new language to communicate MCAEL's purpose, values and vision for the programs it serves. The revised mission and vision statements are:

Mission Statement

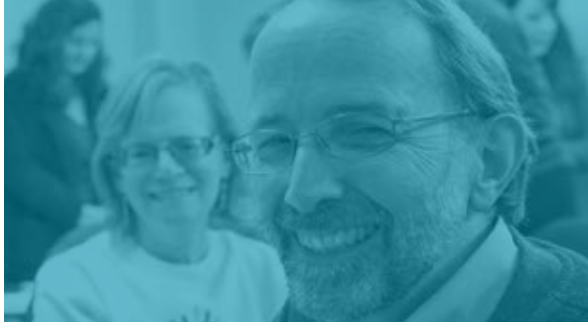
The Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy strengthens the county-wide adult English literacy network to support a thriving community and effective workforce.

Aspirational Vision Statement

MCAEL envisions a culturally diverse community where dreams are achieved through the power of literacy.

Strategic Direction

To provide a framework for setting the strategic direction, MCAEL conducted extensive internal and external stakeholder analysis as well as basic research into the needs of English language learners. This research highlighted evidence that MCAEL's core programs are strong, effective and responsive to the needs of providers and learners. Key questions emerged regarding the direction MCAEL should take in light of the changed demographics in Montgomery County (as of the 2010 Census, Montgomery County is a "majority-minority" county), the challenges facing both programs and learners and the opportunities provided by technology. Merging research and extensive internal discussion resulted in the following strategic vision for MCAEL with three goals and associated strategies.



Strategic Vision Statement

In the next three years, the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy (MCAEL) will increase organizational capacity and promote literacy by empowering programs to increase their quality and instruction; by supporting programs to serve an increasing number of learners; and by partnering to increase the visibility of MCAEL as a leading model of a literacy coalition.

Goals

Together with the Strategic Vision Statement, the three goals listed below form MCAEL's "strategic direction" – a direction that points firmly toward the path MCAEL is committed to following in order to realize its vision for the next three years. With rare exception, decisions that MCAEL makes should advance these goals and enact their accompanying strategies, objectives and action plans.

The goals are:

1. To support organizations to offer quality adult literacy programs and to reach an increasing number of learners who wish to take English classes.
2. To increase and diversify financial resources.
3. To strengthen marketing and outreach of the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy in order to promote literacy and enhance program delivery.

Goal #1: To support organizations to offer quality adult literacy programs and to reach an increasing number of learners who wish to take English classes.

Context/Background

MCAEL seeks to continue to support and improve the delivery of quality English instruction. In Montgomery County the network of English providers is diverse. The nature of the field is that some programs are small, immigrant-run, community-based programs, while others are more developed adult education organizations. Thus, the program support that is required is diverse and evolving as new classes and programs are born, and as needs and resources develop. MCAEL trains program staff and instructors to ensure that quality instruction and programming

MCAEL strengthens the adult English literacy network by engaging both private and public partners.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2015 – 2017 cont.

is offered: it is a continuous improvement model. Additionally, MCAEL works with programs to collect and report on data that shows learner outcomes as well as accomplishments of the coalition network as a whole. Network participants rely on and value MCAEL's training and technical support.

Strategies

1. Develop additional funding for capacity-building grants for program expansion to address continuing and emerging needs in the community.
2. Measure outcomes by beginning with success indicators and measuring benchmarks at check points. Both individual and program outcomes will continue to be measured.
3. Continue providing high-quality professional development workshops to both program staff (on topics such as nonprofit management and TESOL standards) and instructors (on topics such as adult language learning theory).
4. Improve access to technology for programs and providers.
5. Increase MCAEL's capacity to provide support and/or technical assistance to programs participating in the coalition.

Goal #2: To increase and diversify financial resources.

Context/Background

MCAEL receives significant funding from the Montgomery County government. The county provides significant funding for MCAEL's operating budget. Additionally, MCAEL acts as the county's grant intermediary for the adult English literacy grant monies. This reflects the priority that the county places on supporting MCAEL and the network of providers. In addition, MCAEL recognizes that continuing to diversify sources of financial funding, and building those sources, will allow the organization to increase its ability to support and promote adult English literacy. Diversifying resources may require a feasibility study, too, at the outset to assess greatest areas of opportunity.

Strategies

1. Continue stewarding and building working relationship with Montgomery County and other possible governments as potential funders (municipal, state, federal).
2. Create a business membership model that focuses on stewarding and maintaining current business donors in the near term and growing a business membership opportunity for businesses in the future.
3. Maintain foundation giving by stewarding current donors. Expand foundation giving by identifying shared (co-applications with provider organizations or other Montgomery County entities) and local, regional and national grant opportunities.
4. Expand individual giving by identifying potential groups of new donors (MCAEL program participants, social media followers, etc.).
5. Develop an earned revenue plan capitalizing on already existing resources such as the teacher toolkit, the check list for creating a literacy program, and/or fee-for-service training (for those outside of the MCAEL network).

Goal # 3: To strengthen marketing and outreach of the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy in order to promote literacy and enhance program delivery.

Context/Background

The Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy is often abbreviated as "MCAEL" with a logo that is a series of colored bars. Among those that already know about MCAEL and its work, the coalition enjoys a good reputation and is known as the backbone of the English literacy network. However, there are many (organizations, community and business leaders, potential learners and others) that do not know or recognize what MCAEL is and what the coalition does. Thus, questions are raised. Is this name and brand recognizable to the various audiences with which MCAEL interacts? Is the moniker "MCAEL" easily explained and understood? Does it communicate the mission and work of the coalition clearly to MCAEL's current and potential constituents and partners?

Strategies

1. Engage in a professional analysis of the brand and its impact on target audiences.
2. Evaluate recommendations of professional brand analysis and determine next steps.
3. Implement results and recommendations from brand analysis, potentially including but not limited to revising/ adding logo, name, tagline or other items as needed (including revision to materials such as website)
4. Identify priority audiences to reach and expand the audiences in an optimal way.
5. Create and prioritize Marketing and Outreach Plan for multiple audiences based on the audiences identified in number 4.

Implementation Plan

With the approval of the high-level plan by the MCAEL board of directors in early 2014, work will begin on the implementation plan. During the subsequent six months, board and staff will continue to meet and to flesh out annual objectives and action plans.

It takes an average of 7 years for a non-English speaking adult to become proficient in the English language. MCAEL supports programs to provide high quality instruction so adults in Montgomery County can stay engaged and enrolled in classes to ensure language gains.

STRATEGIC PLAN APPENDIX

- **Strategic Planning Participants**
- **Mission, Vision, Values Review**
- **Current Situation Analysis**
- **Strategy Screen**
- **MCAEL History and County Need for Services**

STRATEGIC PLANNING PARTICIPANTS

MCAEL Board of Directors

Josh Jeffries - Board Chair; *Arkin Youngentob Associates*

Farrah Jolly – Board Vice Chair; *Booz Allen Hamilton*

Martin Yescas – Board Treasurer; *M & T Bank*

Phillip Bonner – Board Member; *Literacy Council of Montgomery County*

Caralyn Bushey – Board Member; *University of Maryland*

Matt Chan – Board Member; *Rosetta Stone*

Emily Heard – Board Member; *Planned Parenthood Federation of America*

Guido Lara – Board Member; *Lexia Global*

Emma Muñoz– Board Member; *Language Matters*

Debbie Heibein Rankin – Board Member; *Montgomery County Parks Foundation*

Abigail Umanzor – Board Member; *CASA de Maryland*

MCAEL Staff

Kathryn Stevens - *Executive Director*

Heather Ritchie – *Director of Programs and Services*

Kelly Johnson – *Administrative and Program Assistant*

MCAEL Stakeholders

Howard Covin – *Johns Hopkins University*

Lori Dodson – *Montgomery County Public Schools*

Jose Gonzales – *SEIU, Provider Advisory Group Representative*

Melissa Zervos – *Montgomery College, Instructor Advisory Group Representative*

Strategic Planning Consultants

Mary Robinson and Sara Watkins - Capacity Partners, Inc.

Goal Groups – Led by board members, composed of board members, staff and stakeholders.

Goal Group #1: To support organizations to offer quality adult literacy programs.
Group Chair: Matt Chan
Group Members: Heather Ritchie, Melissa Zervos, Emma Muñoz, Kathryn Stevens

Goal Group #2: To increase and diversify resources.
Group Chair: Josh Jeffries
Group Members: Martin Yescas, Caralyn Bushey, Emily Heard, Kathryn Stevens

Goal Group #3: To strengthen marketing and outreach of MCAEL.
Group Chair:
Debbie Heibein Rankin
Group Members: Guido Lara, Farrah Jolly, Heather Ritchie, Kathryn Stevens

REVIEW OF MCAEL'S FOUNDATION: MISSION/VISION/ VALUES

The strategic planning process began with a review of the Mission, Vision and Values by the board, staff and key stakeholders. It was unanimously agreed that the Mission, Vision and Values needed some adjustment to more clearly represent the organization. Subcommittees were established to develop drafts of the Mission, Vision and Values, which were reviewed and approved by the Board.

Strategic Issues

During the strategic planning meetings, the board and staff identified and agreed on the top five strategic issues facing MCAEL as outlined below.

A. Fundraising effectiveness
   i. How will MCAEL diversify and sustain its funding?
   ii. How can MCAEL become an effective fundraiser?
   iii. How can we reach more individual donors?

B. Community support and recognition
   i. How do we increase MCAEL community support and recognition throughout the county?

C. Ensure solid instruction and certification/quality
   i. How can we ensure that providers are providing solid instruction to their learners?
   ii. How can we develop certified and/or qualified trainers to deliver quality professional development to ensure the success of programs and learner retention?
   iii. How can we enhance the quality of the English-language learning programs?

D. Technology
   i. What role will technology play in the system for providers, learners and instructors?

E. Innovation
   i. What more can MCAEL do to help organizations enhance the accessibility of programs and to innovate (e.g., using technology in the classroom)?
   ii. How can we innovate or encourage innovation?
   iii. Innovation in education practices (initial thinking)
      1. Immersion to shorten learning process
      2. Self-directed learning
      3. Online learning

What will MCAEL look like in three years?

As a part of the strategic planning process, there was a discussion regarding what MCAEL would look like in three years. Some suggestions included: double the operating budget, broaden the board composition to enhance resource development (including at least one substantial revenue stream), increase staff, focus on branding and marketing to increase MCAEL's recognition (and thus promote literacy) to 20% of the county population, revise balance of funding resources and have broader state, tri-state and national visibility.

What is the desired impact on MCAEL's primary stakeholders?

Based on discussions during the strategic planning process, it was decided that MCAEL should have the following impacts on the primary stakeholders: increased program quality, enhanced learning experience through technology, increased funding for providers, more learners served, provision of research based technical assistance and broader awareness of MCAEL's programs.

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CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

At the start of the strategic planning process, MCAEL and Capacity Partners worked together to conduct a current situation analysis. This multi-faceted analysis draws upon information about the major trends in the broad environment in which MCAEL operates, the needs of the primary stakeholders and organizational strengths and weaknesses in order to identify the major strategic issues facing the organization. The surveys and the results of analyses are summarized below.

Elements of an Effectively Managed Organization (EEMO) Survey:

This tool is used to identify how effectively the organization is being managed and what specific areas need attention. The survey looks at four dimensions of the organization: Mission, Finances, Administrative Capacity and Governance. Board members, advisory board members and staff completed the EEMO survey. In addition, stakeholders were asked to complete an abbreviated EEMO. There were a total of 30 responses.

Below is a brief summary of the responses to the open-ended survey questions that helped to inform the updated vision, mission and values as well as the goals and strategies.

What is your hope or vision for MCAEL for the next few years?

- Diversity in funding (increased corporate contributions).
- Expand capacity.
- Recognition on the state and national stage.
- Increase technical assistance to members.
- Focus on sustainability for MCAEL.
- Increase quality of instruction.

What are some questions that MCAEL must answer in order to develop a clear plan for the future?

- What does MCAEL want to be?
- Can MCAEL continue to meet the needs of providers with current staff levels?
- How can MCAEL measure success?
- Can we diversify and sustain diversified funding?
- Are there revenue streams that can be developed?

Right now, what do you see as the greatest strength of MCAEL?

- Staff.
- Reputation.
- Coalition structure.
- Professional expertise.

Right now, what single program/ activity would you personally like to see MCAEL grow?

- Build corporate partnerships and fundraising efforts.
- Advocacy/public engagement.
- Teacher training support/ professional development.
- Track and report metrics on annual basis.
- Grow staff to grow programs.

Strengths/Weaknesses/ Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) Analysis

The SWOT is a way to identify the positive and negative influencing factors inside and outside of an organization. The SWOT was developed with board and staff at Strategic Planning Retreat #2 on September 20, 2013. Internal strengths included talented staff, coalition model, reputation and MCAEL's reputation with Montgomery County Government. Internal weaknesses included the use of technology by MCAEL and

providers, resource development and having a relatively small staff serving the coalition network (programs, instructors) and the community.

External opportunities include business and corporate partnerships, the use of technology (mobile) in program management and teaching, changing immigration law and growth in the immigrant population. Threats cited include uncertain funding, lack of detailed knowledge about the population that MCAEL serves, an estimated 50% of learners being undocumented, and that many learners lack access to childcare and/or transportation.

There are over 100 locations for adult English classes in Montgomery County

INTERNAL	**STRENGTHS** What do you do well? What unique resources can you draw on? What do others see as you strengths? • Relationship with Montgomery County. • Reputation. • Coalition model. • Staff	**WEAKNESSES** What could you improve? Where do you have fewer resources than others? What are others likely to see as weaknesses? • Use of technology (MCAEL & providers). • Resource development. • Not enough staff.
EXTERNAL	**OPPORTUNITIES** What opportunities are open to you? What trends could you take advantage of? How can you turn your strengths into opportunities? • Business and corporate partnerships. • Use of mobile technology in program management & teaching. • Immigration law. • Growth in immigrant population.	**THREATS** What threats could harm you? What is changing in your environment? What threads do your weaknesses expose you to? • Funding uncertain (some states have stopped literacy funding). • Lack of knowledge about the population we serve. • 50% (est.) of learners are undocumented. • Access to childcare and/or transportation.

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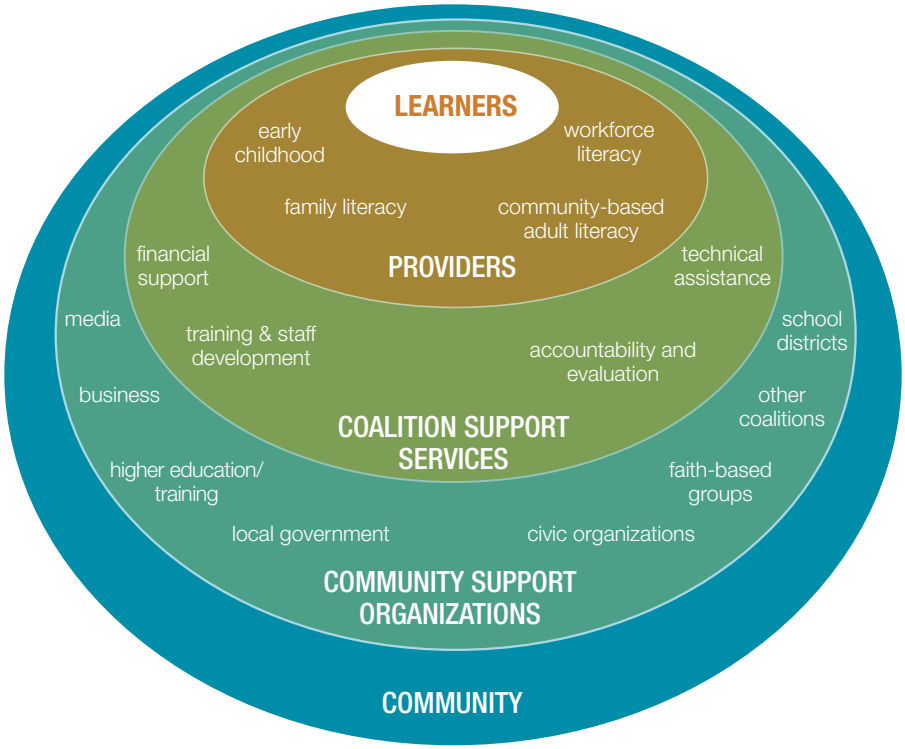
STRATEGY SCREEN

A strategy screen is a set of decision-making criteria that an organization can use to evaluate new programs and initiatives. MCAEL staff developed the following strategy screen for use during the strategic plan period 2015-2017.

WE WILL UNDERTAKE STRATEGIES:	RANK* (HIGH-5, MED-3, LOW-1)	COMMENTS/ QUESTIONS
That are mission consistent		
That build on or reinforce strengths (within the scope of the Strategic Plan).		
For which we have the resources (time, $, people, etc) to start or can get those resources easily.		
That we can sustain without major changes.		
That will yield measurable outcomes (per MCAEL or other indicators).		
That will enhance and support MCAEL's image in community. (Name which sector(s) this project/strategy most impacts).		
That will support coalition members (primary and/or secondary stakeholders).		
***Rank - i.e. this proposed strategy has a high (5), medium (3) or low (1) with selected criteria.**		

MCAEL HISTORY AND COUNTY NEED FOR SERVICES

At every step in the strategic planning process, the history of MCAEL and the needs of English language learners were articulated and broadly considered.



History:

In 2002, county elected officials and community leaders convened a task force to develop strategies to support the growing limited English proficient (LEP) population and to respond to the demand for an English-literate workforce. A study commissioned by the Montgomery County Council and carried out by Montgomery College and the international research organization, Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), identified that while a rich tapestry of government, community and faith-based providers offered adult ESOL programs, there was a significant lack of countywide coordination, collaboration and capacity. Programs worked mostly in isolation, with scarce technical, human and financial resources. Demand for English classes was far from being met, as evidenced by waitlists of well over 2,000 individuals.

In 2003, following up on the study, Montgomery County Council & Montgomery College worked with providers and community stakeholders to develop a strategic action plan to improve the delivery system. Based on the task force's recommendations, a community coalition was formed in 2005 and later incorporated as MCAEL in 2006.

Coalitions:

In a professional context, MCAEL is one of more than 117 literacy coalitions in the United States. Coalitions range from national and regional to local. Literacy Powerline, an organization that supports coalitions, has defined a progression model for literacy coalitions that shows how they assist communities to move from disconnected organizations working in silos to a comprehensive network of organizations working together on a common goal.

[3] http://www.literacypowerline.com/resources/coalition-101/

[4] http://www.proliteracy.org/members/statistical-report

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MCAEL is currently in the middle of the spectrum (an organized coalition) and is working toward the end of the spectrum (full integration).[3] Some literacy coalitions focus on native language English literacy, others on ESOL. Coalitions have a variety of focus areas and audiences including adults, after-school literacy programs, family literacy, etc. Literacy coalitions are funded in a variety of ways. Core funding for coalitions has come mainly from state governments, the federal government and foundations/ corporations.[4] MCAEL is unique in the amount of support that the local Montgomery County government has provided to the organization.

Additionally, while MCAEL's work focuses specifically on Montgomery County, it is connected to a variety of national and regional literacy and adult education professional organizations including the National Coalition for Literacy (NCL), ProLiteracy, TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), Maryland TESOL (MDTESOL), WATESOL (Washington, DC Area Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), and MAACCE (Maryland Association for Adult, Community and Continuing Education).

MCAEL Programs:

In 2009 MCAEL identified two programs to guide its future focus: (1) Build Program Capacity and (2) Promote English Literacy. The activities conducted under these programs during subsequent years have included:

BUILD PROGRAM CAPACITY:

For Providers

- Community Grants.
- Workshops.
- Technical Assistance.
- Networking Meetings.
- Resource Library.
- Provider E-News List.

For Instructors

- Trainings.
- Resource Library.
- Awards (Dr. Bhattacharyya
- Memorial Fund).
- Networking Meetings.
- Instructor E-News List.
- Job/Volunteer Postings.

Promote English Literacy/ Community Engagement:

Knowledge Center

- Data Collection and Analysis.
- Reports.
- Provider Directory Publication.

Advocacy and Outreach

- Promoting Community.
- Literacy.
- Coalition Building.
- Connecting Business, Government, Nonprofits and Individuals.
- Local, State and National Policy Advocacy.

Coalition Programs:

MCAEL supports a diverse network of literacy organizations. Some have the sole purpose of language education, while others are social service organizations (providing wrap-around services such as food, clothing and shelter). Some programs are housed in senior centers, faith-based organizations, businesses and governments. Some programs have existed since the 1960s, while others have just started in 2012. Classes are offered at 100+ sites throughout the county.

The staff and instructors in these programs, some employees and others volunteers, range from those with MA degrees in linguistics and TESOL to those who are starting with no background and teaching their first class. The staff and instructor positions tend to transition often

as the positions available are mainly volunteer or part-time. Classes are offered one and a half to more than six hours per week across sessions that last four to twelve weeks. Hours offered per year range from 40 to more than 180 hours. Average attendance for grantee programs falls in the range of most adult education programs at about 60%. Programs offer a variety of types of classes at more than 100 sites in Montgomery County.

Coalition Success:

Since MCAEL began, there has been a shift in how programs operate, specifically for grantee programs. MCAEL utilizes the TESOL standards as a guideline for program structure and outcomes. Programs have incrementally improved their structure utilizing these standards and have incorporated many of the core program components into their English programs. For instance, several programs moved from drop-in classes to classes where attendance is tracked and learning gains monitored (managed enrollment). Programs noted in a 2013 survey that participation in MCAEL has (1) strengthened the program, (2) improved the quality instruction in the English program and (3) improved coordination between myself and other provider staff/instructors.

Additionally, programs had often not been aware of one another previous to MCAEL's existence. As of 2013, programs are now aware of one another and referring learners, using other programs as resources and utilizing MCAEL's online and print directory to assist learners in finding other classes to which learners can transition. The focus of the coalition network has moved from "what exists" to "how to implement/work together." This process has been supported by MCAEL through an accountability and outcomes program for grantees that tracks demographic adult learner data to class enrollment and completion data. Most recently, the programs have begun tracking learner indicators of success across programs. The indicators help staff, instructors and the wider network understand how best to assist adult learners in achieving their goals (e.g., learn English in order to interact with a child's teacher - indicator: can write sick note to teacher).

English Language Gains:

As shown in the literacy coalition model, learners are at the core of MCAEL's work. While the goal of all the learners is broadly to learn English, learners come into classes for a variety of reasons including:

- To improve economically.
- To connect with a child's school.
- For health purposes.
- For safety purposes.
- To connect with the broader community.

Learners often face a long timeline to advance in their goals, given the many priorities that adults juggle in their daily lives combined with finding accessible English programs (convenient geographically, time-wise, with childcare, etc.) Generally, it takes approximately 120 hours of concentrated instruction to move up one level of English. The National Reporting System (http://www.nrsweb.org/) provide six levels of English from beginning literacy through advanced. When an individual reaches the final level of ESOL - advanced - the individual will have reading skills around 5th to 6th grade. Progress through English classes depends on several

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factors including a learner's native language literacy, years of schooling in the home country, experience with English and the amount of time the individual interacts with people using English outside of the classroom.

On average it takes about seven years for an individual to go from beginning literacy to the advanced ESOL level (Thomas & Collier http://www.thomasandcollier.com/1995-v1-n4_NCELA_Acquiring_a_Second_Language.pdf). Many times learners stop along the way because their goals have been fulfilled or other pressing life challenges interrupt.

MCAEL's Process:

MCAEL works with two advisory groups, the Provider Advisory Group and Instructor Advisory Group to assist program staff with determining the best programs and activities to invest in for the coalition network. The groups meet twice a year and are provided with a variety of data including but not limited to (1) surveys conducted after each meeting/workshop, (2) coalition-wide surveys conducted each year(alternating staff survey with instructor survey) and (3) ideas from national, regional and local coalitions and professional organizations. To date, MCAEL has ranked no lower than 90% in all programming with regards to it being a "good use of time/beneficial."

In the 2013 survey, it was noted that MCAEL's greatest strengths are:

- Offering provider staff workshops & networking meetings.
- Offering instructor workshops.
- Acting as an information hub for programs.
- Creating reports and advocating for adult English literacy.
- Assisting with program performance measurement, standards and outcomes for coalition.

The suggestion for the coalition's priorities included the following top five:

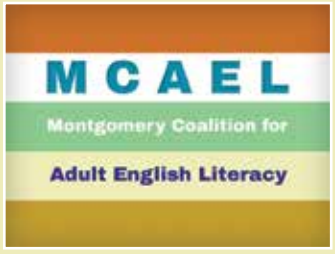
- Creating networking and learning opportunities for instructors.
- Playing a leadership role in adult English literacy advocacy.
- Providing information and outreach to the community.
- Connecting literacy programs to workforce opportunities.
- Creating networking and learning opportunities for program staff.

These suggestions and qualitative comments were taken into consideration throughout the 2014 strategic planning process.

Success from Investing in Literacy:

Investing in adult education, results in several benefits to the broader community. Some core benefits are:

1. For every dollar invested in adult education in Maryland, there is a $3.15 economic benefit to the community.
2. It supports low-literacy learners who live in poverty to move off of safety net services.
3. An English-proficient worker in Maryland can earn between $4,000 and $15,000 more annually than a non-English-proficient worker.
4. It creates a prepared workforce: basic skills would enable businesses to generate over $60 billion in productivity.


MCAEL
Montgomery Coalition for
Adult English Literacy