

Centro Latino for Literacy



June 2011 Final Report

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Name of Project: Los Angeles County Literacy Campaign
Grant Number: 33445566
Start Date: April 2008 **End Date:** June 2011

I. Financial Summary

- Total Project Budget Spent: (Attachment B contains the detail.) \$707,021
- CETF Grant Amount: \$300,000
- Additional Grant: (if applicable) N/A
- Percentage of Match Funds Raised against Goal (\$750,000): 100%
- Cost Per Unit of Outcomes: (Total Outcomes/Total Budget) \$200

II. Project Description, Goals and Objectives, and Outcomes

Project Description

Purpose Statement from Grant Agreement

Centro Latino for Literacy (Centro Latino) will launch a literacy campaign that will mobilize, train, and equip 2,000 literate Spanish speakers to help their non-literate friends and family members to read and write in Spanish by using web-based technology. This campaign will reach approximately 23,200 potential students and tutors.

Goals and Objectives from Grant Agreement

The grant agreement outlined eleven outcomes which are listed below. We met five and did not meet one. We trained 1,836 reaching 92% of the original objective. The grant from CETF has enabled Centro Latino to significantly scale our impact in the non-literate Latino adult community—increasing enrollments by 25% (336 new students) in a two-year span (2009 to 2010). It should also be noted that CETF approved a modification to the approach used to deliver the training to students. Instead of having students access the training solely online with the help of tutors, CLL decided that it was far more effective to have students access the training in a traditional classroom setting supported by an instructor.

Project Outcomes Summary

Outcome Description	Completed/ Accomplished	Goal	Percent Completed
90 trainers will learn how to train literate Spanish speakers to teach their non-literate friends and family members to read and write using Centro Latino's online literacy program.	110	90	122%
20 assistant trainers will learn how to help train literate Spanish speakers to teach their non literate friends and family members to read and write using Centro Latino's online literacy program.	36	20	180%
1,600 students will begin using the online literacy program.	1,836	1,600	114%

1,600 non literate Spanish speakers will learn to read and write with the help of their trained tutor and the Internet based LEAMOS program.	1,836	1,000	183.6%
Approximately 23,200 prospective tutors and students will receive information and assistance via the campaign help line or the website.	31,063	23,200	133%
Prospective tutors will find it easy to help their students begin the process of learning to read and write in Spanish.	Yes		
The results of the campaign will encourage the Advisory Committee and stakeholders to continue it beyond the initial 2 year period.	Yes		
A viable business strategy will be developed to generate income for sustaining the program.	Yes		

III Accomplishments and Challenges

Summary of Accomplishments and Impacts of Project

Assessment of Outcomes Achieved in Comparison to Grant Agreement

During the early months of our campaign, CLL realized that holding in-person workshops in Los Angeles – with its long distances and traffic congestion – presented a difficult logistical challenge. Even though many new students and tutors would like to attend, the time and locations afforded only a small percentage to actually participate. In addition, in-person trainings require a large amount of staff time. Many resources had to be invested to train only a small number of students and tutors. To address this CLL produced a video of the workshop and included it on our *Leamos* (website). In this manner all interested students and tutors were able learn to how to use our literacy program *Leamos*, regardless of their geographical location.

In order to generate additional public awareness of the program and raise its profile of and advance the goals of the campaign CLL held a press conference at our 8th Street Education Center on September 2, 2009. This press conference was geared toward English-language media and the non-profit sector. One significant result of the conference was a three-part article about the challenges of illiteracy by columnist Hector Tobar in the *Los Angeles Times*. Additionally, CLL gained the trust of its community stakeholders and continued support from its educational partners.

Delineation of Deliverables and Outcomes Not Achieved and Explanation

Centro Latino requested an extension because its goal of serving 2,000 individuals in two years was not met. Inability to meet the goal was caused by the pilot phase blending into the implementation phase. In addition there was not enough data to determine what adjustments were needed during the implementation phase. Now, CLL realizes the areas that should have been addressed during the pilot phase would have taken 6-9 months.

Another key factor was that the Campaign Manager was not on board until four months later for the magnitude of the project, thus reducing our Beta Phase from seven to three months. Also, market research of potential tutors should have been part of the pilot phase, instead of the implementation phase. Lastly, a formal structure was needed during the implementation phase to support the call center.

1. What is unique about the project?

A native language literacy campaign (in our case Spanish language) has never been tested in the United States. The project is unique based on the feedback CLL received at two national conferences to audiences from around the country. Here are some unique attributes of the project:

- Implemented a Beta tested sixteen year classroom curriculum onto an open source platform in 2009.
- Provided an efficient learning process through self-paced repetitive lessons on the computer.

- Offered proprietary curriculum allows for modifications of partner's needs (i.e. work site literacy, health literacy, financial literacy, consumer awareness, etc.).
- Evaluated curriculum content and methodology by Ph.D. Professor/Researcher, Dr. Concepción Valadez, UCLA, Graduate School of Education and Information Sciences.

2. What project strengths can CLL build upon to meet unmet needs?

In early 2000, Centro Latino invested over \$100,000 and extensive staff time to develop our hallmark literacy program Leamos ("Let's Read") on computer and make it easier and less time consuming for tutors and teachers to provide literacy instruction. During its 20 year experience with teaching and marketing to the non-literate community, CLL has gained name recognition in California. CLL is gaining some national recognition by being accepted as an Affiliate of The National Council of La Raza, becoming a member of ProLiteracy, and participating in the five-city national adult education forum called Great Cities.

Some of the strengths that can be built on include:

- Successful leveraging of education resources (one school district, two community colleges) to duplicate experience within at least two other sectors (i.e. health, financial education, workforce).
- Expertise in financial education and literacy for the unbanked/under-banked Latino community. Centro Latino is aiming to maximize innovation and experience with an on-line course.
- Active Board of Directors that provides technology, education, entrepreneurial, marketing expertise to guide and explore new revenue streams.
- Skills developing proprietary online Spanish language literacy curriculum. The new platform is adaptable to curriculum changes.
- Knowledge in teaching/reaching/working with Pre-ESL non-literate Spanish speakers.
- Effective volunteer recruitment and engagement methods.
- Strong Train the Trainer modules.

3. Where are the gaps in services/program activities? How can the project be modified or expanded to meet still unmet needs?

The staff capacity has been a major challenge because the organization is small. CLL will continue to seek support to bring in a technical project manager and content expert. Additional funding would contribute to a more structured Leamos program and services that would include sales, technology and customer support, and training. CLL would then establish a delivery model that would provide a self-service, online platform and a turn-key solution to learn functional literacy.

CLL is currently working on the following:

- Perfecting Centro Latino's current web-based curriculum to allow for higher automated features and learning activities and decrease staffing expense.
- Formalizing classroom curriculum for the Listos program, which is the second tier of learning after Leamos. The goal is to adapt this classroom based curriculum (grammar, computation, and financial education) to the web, thus making all literacy learning on-line.
- Increasing volunteer engagement to support partner sites.
- Considering connecting with a partner to outsource a call center to manage student referrals more effectively
- Identifying partners in the following sectors to leverage funding collaborations: Financial Literacy, Health Literacy, Consumer Awareness; Workforce Improvement (Hospitality Sector, Construction, Services); Technology; and Marketing.

4. Can the project be effectively replicated? What are the critical implementation elements? How might contextual factors impact replications?

Yes, the project can be replicated as it offers an efficient and tested program that requires very little capital and staff investment for any institution (education, library systems, employment development agencies, etc) that needs to or wants to serve the Latino community more effectively. CLL provides a literacy solution for the two million non-literate Spanish speaking adults living in the United States, and it can wrap around web-based literacy program to support those larger institutions such as Adult Education Divisions of local schools and community

colleges, county and city-wide library literacy programs, employers of low-skilled work forces, unions representing service employees and hospitality employees, colleges and universities with facilities and auxiliary service employees (cafeterias, groundskeepers, custodial staff), local government community and housing development departments that operate family self sufficiency programs and more.

The program serves a critical yet marginal population, the zero-to-low literate Latino adults who often receive fragmented and inadequate assessments and gets placed in English as a Second Language (ESL) class because they don't have a foundation in their first language. The added value that Centro Latino provides an adult education program is the ability to feed a new set of newly literate adult learners who have a much stronger chance at success and are eager to access other educational services in the adult and career education divisions of local school districts and community colleges.

Unfortunately, due to the state's fiscal situation and current economic environment; the needs of the low-skilled adults (who are parents of school age children and comprise a large part of the California workforce) will further recede from policy attention. Fewer services in Adult Education make it more challenging for low-skilled adults to rely on large multi-service centers to access education. In turn this may provide an opportunity for Centro Latino since Leamos can be accessed in any of the following settings:

- At home with the help of a family member or friend
- A site that offers the program 1-2 times week in a computer lab setting (i.e. community center, library, etc.)
- A site that offers the program as a formal Pre-ESL Class (i.e. in partnership with an Adult School)

Discussion of Other Positive Results from Project

Due to the continued success of the literacy programs the education partners, Belmont Community Adult School and Los Angeles Southwest College, provided additional classes during the last trimester of the 2010 calendar year (September – December 2010). In addition, the Los Angeles Community College District started offering Job Readiness classes at Centro Latino for Literacy beginning June 2011. One key and positive result that underscores scalability and replication is that Centro Latino staff no longer teaches Leamos, the class has been absorbed completely by Belmont Community Adult School and is offered Mon – Thursday, mornings and evenings.

Overview of Major Challenges to Achieving Planned Results

At the staff level, the challenge was a seven month leadership gap beginning August 2009 due to the former Executive Director's sabbatical and unforeseen health issues and to the transition of a new Executive Director, hired on March 22, 2010. While a very capable Literacy Campaign Director became Interim Executive Director and other senior staff shared organizational responsibilities, this gap at the executive level caused a setback in program goals. Once the new Executive Director was hired, the organization moved quickly to get back on schedule, thus meeting the majority of this grant's outcomes.

At the board level, the challenges reflect those transitioning from a one site facility providing classroom instruction to an organization using web-based technology, social media networking, and numerous forms of media to deliver the program throughout Los Angeles County. Centro Latino was successful in bringing on four new board members in 2010 with backgrounds in social entrepreneurship, technology, and marketing to a board that was comprised of founders and practitioners well versed in a local service delivery model. The Board of Directors as a whole embraces the impact that technology provides, including the ability to generate Leamos subscription revenues. The challenge is ensuring this new growth is seamless and maintains the integrity of the organization and its programs.

Challenges among adult students include the stigma of not ever having learned essential communication tools coupled with being shut out of many major decisions affecting their lives. To address this, Centro Latino developed leadership opportunities for and with our constituents by including students in key meetings, getting input on strategy, taking part of Centro Latino's outreach/public awareness teams at local events, and including them in conference presentations.

Discussion of Efforts to Address Challenges and Resolve Problems

The major challenge was starting the project late due to hiring of staff, four months after the grant period began. Centro Latino hired internally and the campaign process got under way in September 2009.

Another challenge was designing and implementing an evaluation to interpret results and tells us what impact our program had on participants, the organization and the community. Centro Latino continued to work with an evaluator and assigned a staff person to manage data collection.

V. Lessons and Recommendations

Summary of Lessons Learned

Lesson #1: Several other organizations created with similar missions have since folded or changed their primary purpose. During the campaign process it was reinforced that CLL serve a unique population who have a bigger barrier in accessing broadband and no one else in Los Angeles is teaching non-literate basic literacy using a web-based program.

Lesson #2: Project staff discovered half-way through the two-year campaign that they were operating the program based on a set of implicit and unspoken assumptions and these assumptions were not put into writing or discussed explicitly as part of the program. This contributed to a lack of understanding of the key principles of the program.

Lesson #3: In order to expedite the achievement of the program outcomes a new module was added to facilitate enrolling students in the program. This new process was to engage the community in becoming partner sites and offer Leamos throughout the County of Los Angeles.

Lesson #4: At the end of the funding period, the program design did not look like the one originally planned, but the changes made better sense for reaching the original goals of the project.

Lesson #5: Design a feedback mechanism for participants using the program as well as tutors. Discussions on how to achieve this covered embedding a teacher and student online survey in the Leamos software that must be filled out and submitted to complete the course or in order to obtain a certificate of completion.

Lesson #6: The Centro Latino web-based literacy program, Leamos, addresses a digital gap that no other Digital Divide or digital access programs can address because the vast majority of these programs assume people can read, write, or compute at least at a basic level. The unique client base that Leamos is designed for represents a creative and highly innovative response to the tremendous unmet need of non-to low-literate youth and adults. If learners have a computer at home, they would prefer to go to a Center, because they did not want to bother a family member with the tutor role. For many of the learners, it is the first-time attending classes to learn how to read and write or returning to school after 30 or 40 years.

Lesson #7: Centro Latino has become known as the “go-to” organization for reaching non-literate Latinos. We know that isolation and stigma associated with illiteracy impedes asking for help. By partnering with CLL, other organizations can accommodate non-literate clients to help them access vital services for themselves and their families. We maintained a relationship with over ten organizations in 2010 and 2011 who offered Leamos at their site. Originally, the campaign did not include partnering with institutions to offer the program, this is a better approach than trying to train individual tutors which requires more staff resources than are available.

Recommendations for Expanding Project in Region or Scaling Up Statewide

CLL tested different aspects of the literacy campaign, which are referred to as the four prongs: **Mobilize, Train, Equip and Support**. Many assumptions were faulty resulting in necessary model revisions. For example, the original model was to mobilize those who are literate to help their non-literate friend(s)/family member(s). The main issue was that many of the Latino households did not and continue not to have broadband access and

computers at home. Many told us that they rather go to a Center than do the program at home. In particular adult parents are embarrassed to have their family members help them or do not want to burden their very busy and over extended family members with the added chore of becoming their tutors; even though the time investment is relatively minor.

In order to expand the project and make it more accessible in the low-income community, CLL will have to rely on its current partner organizations to continue with the program in key regions. As part of the expansion strategy in California, CLL is working on the following:

- Grandfather the existing partners with a non-financial agreement. Each site will have 10 scholarships.
- Penetrate deeper into Los Angeles County, collaborate with new partners that have a wide reach or whose mission is to bring computer literacy to very low-income families such as Promise Neighborhood or through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program in greater Los Angeles. For instance, the Youth Policy Institute committed to offer Leamos as part of its 80 computer centers.
- Reach agreement with the Los Angeles County Public Library system to pilot the program at three sites in diverse communities (North Hollywood, Huntington Park, and Lawndale).
- Pilot Leamos as part of the employment skills training offered to custodial workers through the Building Skills Partnership in Los Angeles and Santa Ana.

Another key aspect of scaling up is to have a second classroom course, Listos (We're Ready) as web-based course which is a continuation of Leamos and includes grammar, math, and financial literacy. In December 2010, Centro Latino adopted a Strategic Plan that would incorporate best practices learned from a three year (2008-2010) LA Countywide Spanish Language Literacy campaign. The current three-year strategy 2011-2013 seeks to perfect the current Leamos web-based program and move all classroom literacy instruction online for greater efficiency and impact. In November 2011, Centro Latino received a competitive \$200,000 unrestricted grant – the Neighborhood Builders Award - from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation. CLL will leverage this grant and secure additional funding to move all literacy instruction online. This would increase Centro Latino's capacity for earned income and create a social enterprise model. In early 2012, the Board's Enterprise Committee will begin discussion on the growth plan for Centro Latino.

Recommendations to CETF Regarding Grants Management

Recommendation #1: Grantees should have a fewer number of deliverables and greater focus on the outcomes impacting their communities, i.e. looking at where is the greater impact within an economic downturn and building in quality improvement processes.

Recommendation #2: Allow part of the funding to be used to develop a strategy to secure long-term funding or sustainability of the program.

Recommendation #3: During the planning process for the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), it would have been helpful to have a bit more time to respond to requests for information/forms. The process seemed rushed.

VI. Grant Agreement Requirements

Equipment Purchases

Centro Latino for Literacy did not use any funding from this grant to purchase equipment.

Sustainability

Centro Latino for Literacy used all of its funding and plans to continue attending the Get Connected Roundtables.