

Literacy Phase 2 – Primary Focus: 2024-2029 Information and Guidelines for Cohort Two

Background

Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in a way that enables us to communicate and make sense of the world. A lack of vital literacy skills holds a person back at every stage of their life. As a child it is a barrier to success at school, as a young adult it can lock you out of the job market, and as a parent it makes it harder to support your own child's learning.

For children and young people facing socio-economic disadvantage a lack of literacy skills can exacerbate the equality gap further. Recently schools have reported a decline in literacy skills, largely attributed to the loss of in-person learning during the Covid pandemic. Specifically, oracy skills (speaking and listening) have fallen behind the expected level.

The Mercers' Company, as trustee of the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington, has been supporting Literacy work since 2019. Under Phase One, eight organisations were funded to develop the literacy skills of children who are reluctant readers and writers. Notably, the development of reading and writing for pleasure.

In January 2024, we funded the first cohort under Phase Two Literacy, which focused on Secondary school students. The aims outlined below are for Cohort 2, which will concentrate on Primary school students.

Funding Opportunity

Due to the success of the funding initiative so far, and increasing need for this support, we are pleased to announce that the Mercers' Literacy Special Initiative Phase Two will now fund a second cohort focussed on **primary school students**.

The aim is to support projects that help **children think of themselves as readers and writers, who have a voice**, leading to the below **outcomes**:

- improved social and emotional skills;
- increased ability to engage with school; and
- higher attainment and improved life chances.

For the second cohort **we are looking for proposals** that **develop the child as a reader and writer by promoting reading and writing for pleasure**, and;

- include the development of oracy skills;
- focus on Key Stages 1 and 2 (5 – 11-year-olds);
- focus on children facing disadvantage / those most in need of this kind of support;

- are inclusive, equitable and sustainable.

We are offering:

- a **grant of between £150,000 and £300,000** per organisation, paid across four years;
- a **learning partner**, with subject expertise, to support reflection and draw out learnings;
- access to (optional) **capacity building support** through trusted partners; and
- a **cohort approach** (5 - 8 organisations) creating opportunity for shared learning.

We will fund:

- ✓ constituted not for profit organisations, charitable incorporated organisations (CIO), charitable companies (limited by guarantee), social enterprises and partnerships;
- ✓ work supporting children in London (covering Greater London) including organisations that do, or could have, a national reach;
- ✓ project or core costs (if applying for core costs, the total funding request cannot be more than 50% of your organisation's total annual income at the time of application);
- ✓ we are open minded about the form of financial support provided and are willing to consider social investment and repayable grants.

We do not fund:

- ❖ Individuals;
- ❖ work outside of London;
- ❖ capital projects (bricks and mortar); and
- ❖ general appeals or financial support for project costs that have already been incurred.

The Application Process

You can [submit an expression of interest \(EOI\) here](#), providing key information on your proposal. EOIs will be assessed and shortlisted organisations invited to make a full Stage 2 application.

When submitting your EOI please consider that if you are invited to make a full 'stage 2' application, you must clearly demonstrate:

- evidence of previous relevant work;
- how your proposed activities will lead to the defined outcomes;
- an understanding of, and partnerships in, the communities in which you plan to work;
- how you have considered accessibility, different learning styles, and intersecting protected characteristics in your project design;
- a commitment to robust evaluation of your proposed project; and
- how your work will be sustained beyond our grant (i.e., is it scalable / replicable).

If you have any difficulties completing the EOI, please email us on grants@mercercs.co.uk

Grant application timeline

Launch of Literacy Phase 2 via webinar and access to EOI form	Tuesday 12 th March 2024
Deadline to submit EOIs	12:00 (12pm) 22 nd April 2024
Organisations contacted about outcome of EOI	w/c 6 th May 2024
Application window (if invited to apply)	May to 10 th June 2024
Assessment and due diligence (inc. visits)	June – August 2024
Decisions made and organisations informed of the outcome	25 September 2024
Projects to start	From October 2024 onwards
First payment of funding granted to successful applicants	From October 2024