

# NEW APPROACHES TO LEARNER RECRUITMENT

There is a critical need to share learner recruitment challenges, strategies and new approaches amongst Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs. This is due to the negative impacts of COVID-19 on community programming, changing trends in marketing, the impact of new media as well as other factors. The ability of LBS programs to successfully recruit learners is critical to support communities and adults seeking to upgrade their skills.

To assist LBS agencies with this important issue, Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) created a research report and three accompanying factsheets.

CLO's Learner Recruitment Factsheets cover the following topics:

01

Learner  
Recruitment  
Challenges

02

Learner  
Recruitment  
Strategies

03

New Approaches  
to Learner  
Recruitment

“

Marketing and media have shifted dramatically in the past five years. While some of our 'tried and true' approaches still work, we know we need to innovate and engage with our community and potential learners in new ways.”

 [info@communityliteracyofontario.ca](mailto:info@communityliteracyofontario.ca)

 [communityliteracyofontario.ca](http://communityliteracyofontario.ca)

 (705) 733-2312

 @CommunityLiteracyOntario

  @love4literacy

---

## INTRODUCTION

CLO's research uncovered many innovative approaches to learner recruitment. We are sharing the highlights of some of these approaches in this factsheet, but be sure to also download our [Learner Recruitment Challenges and Strategies Report](#) to learn more!

---

## POP-UP LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES

---

In summer 2021, Literacy Lambton brought Pop-Up Little Free Libraries to Sarnia's hotspots: public pools, splash pads, parks, beaches, walking trails, playgrounds and dog parks. Each plastic bin had a mix of kids and adult gently loved books, as well as Ziploc bags with literacy building activities from EarlyON and the Parent Professional Resource Centre. Books held promotional materials like bookmarks that shared Literacy Lambton's services. The Pop-Up locations were always a surprise, moved around daily and their whereabouts shared to Literacy Lambton's social media as well as to popular Sarnia Facebook groups.

**“ Pop-Up Libraries were an easy, unmanned way to get our name out in the community and share the love of reading. Such a simple concept that was met with a shocking amount of excitement and attention from our community and the media.”**  
*(Tracy Pound, Literacy Lambton)*

---

## STORYTELLING

Action Read Community Literacy Centre in Guelph has some great advice for learner recruitment: make storytelling real, bring it home, and make it personal! Action Read hosted the “For the Love of Words” event where learners provided an object that symbolized their journey to literacy. One person chose the first menu they ever read, another the first book she ever read, and another chose her personal journals. The Centre put the objects in separate museum cases, and each learner explained the significance of the object for them. The event was very powerful and it was a great way to showcase the significance of literacy.

---

## VIDEO TOUR

---

The Literacy Group of Waterloo Region created this wonderful video called “[Take a TLG Tour.](#)” This video is hosted on their website and is designed to inform potential learners about The Literacy Group's services and reduce anxiety about attending their program. Take a tour with Chris!

---

## FACEBOOK GROUPS

---

The new Executive Director of Niagara West Adult Learning Centre (NWALC) decided early on that their Centre could be reaching many more learners over social media by changing their strategy. Over the past year they have ramped up their presence on Facebook by joining social media groups set up by local community organizations - for

example; Moms of Niagara West, Niagara 411 and Community Watch. As members of these Facebook groups, NWALC shares all of their flyers for events, workshops, and tutoring services. The response has increased recruitment and community engagement. One example is Niagara 411, where NWALC's post to their Page reached 15,000 people the first weekend!

**“ We actively link on Facebook with community organizations. We follow their pages and like and comment on their posts. That way, they know we are there and they learn about our services. It's called social media – so why not be social!”**  
*(Quote from an LBS Educator)*

---

## BOOSTED SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS & ADS

---

The Almaguin Adult Learning Centre has aggressively marketed online and has seen a big uptick in engagement. They boosted posts and paid for ads on Facebook and Instagram in order to reach more learners and connect with their community. Across all of their social media accounts, the Centre saw an 833% increase in engagement (likes, clicks, shares) and a 282% increase in follows. Additionally, their reach jumped 1786% over the previous year!

---

## LITERACY BIKE

---

In 2021, Project READ (located in Kitchener) recognized the need to find new ways to connect with their community due to various COVID-19 public health restrictions.

The idea for a Literacy Bike came to life. With funding from a foundation to create the bike, and government funding to hire a summer student, Project READ was able to offer Literacy Bike events at local parks in summer 2021. The program provided literacy activities for children and guidance for parents on how to improve literacy with their child. These events were very successful with an average of 50-75 people per event. Project READ's Literacy Bike was an effective way to engage their community and promote literacy and they plan to offer this service again in summer of 2022.

**“ In a noisy world, it's great to figure out a marketing approach that makes you stand out from the crowd.”**  
*(Quote from an LBS Educator)*

---

## ONLINE, INTERACTIVE ANNUAL REPORT

---

Prince Edward Learning Centre created an annual report with photos and personal growth stories from learners and community partners to help promote their literacy program. The stories from staff and learners provide a real-life look at the services and wrap-around support offered at their learning centre. It showcases the hard work and determination of students to reach their goals. Their book is available in a print format, but it is also dynamically presented online via an interactive digital publishing platform. Click [here](#) to view this wonderful online report.

## OFFERING WORKSHOPS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

A helpful learner recruitment strategy used by Literacy Lambton is to offer workshops that appeal broadly to the general public. Engaging the public provides great exposure to who they are and what services they offer. One example is the Money Matters program, sponsored by ABC Life Literacy Canada and TD Bank. Offering Money Matters created more local awareness of their services and resulted in some excellent media coverage for Literacy Lambton.



## MOTIVATIONAL VIDEO FOR LEARNERS

The Literacy Council of South Temiskaming finds it easier to promote their services to referral partners; however, creating content that engages learners is more difficult. A variety of strategies have been used on social media, such as posting visually appealing content, using plain language combined with theme based facts, trivia, video tutorials and more. As well, to better reach learners, the Council created an engaging video to highlight the benefits to attending a literacy program called, **Take Charge of Your Life!**

“Learner stories are always very popular and well received in our community.”

*(Quote from an LBS Educator)*

## CONCLUSION

The **Learner Recruitment Factsheets** were researched and written by Community Literacy of Ontario. CLO is a provincial network of community-based Literacy and Basic Skills agencies. We are located in Barrie, Ontario. You can learn more about our organization by visiting our [website](#) and by following us on Facebook and Twitter.

We sincerely hope that the strategies, promising practices & overview of the challenges shared in our three **Learner Recruitment Factsheets** will offer ideas and inspiration to help your LBS program to recruit and engage learners. Our factsheets can be freely downloaded from CLO's website at: <https://www.communityliteracyofontario.ca>

As well, in 2021/2022, CLO conducted province-wide research and wrote a report called **Learner Recruitment Challenges and Strategies**. Download our report to learn more about this important topic: [www.communityliteracyofontario.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/Learner-Recruitment-Report-March-2022-FINAL.pdf](http://www.communityliteracyofontario.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/Learner-Recruitment-Report-March-2022-FINAL.pdf)

This Employment Ontario service is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.


The opinions expressed in this document are the opinions of Community Literacy of Ontario, and do not necessarily reflect those of our funders.

Canada 

EMPLOYMENT  
ONTARIO

Ontario 

 [communityliteracyofontario.ca](http://communityliteracyofontario.ca)

 (705) 733-2312

 [info@communityliteracyofontario.ca](mailto:info@communityliteracyofontario.ca)

 @CommunityLiteracyOntario

  @love4literacy