

## P.1 Community Description: What are your community's key characteristics?

### a. Community Environment

#### (1) Community Definition and IDENTITY What geographic area is included in your community?

The State of Delaware, 2,490 square miles of land in the Mid-Atlantic region, is the second smallest state. Delaware's population density is the 6<sup>th</sup> highest in the U.S. Several major cities are a short drive or Amtrak ride away including Philadelphia PA, Washington DC, Baltimore MD and New York City (Figure 1). The population of Delaware is just under 1 million. Delaware has three counties, north to south. Wilmington to the north in New Castle County is a small urban center. Dover, the capital, is located in the center and is a more suburban area in Kent County. Kent County is home to a large population of Amish and the Dover Air Force Base, the Department of Defense's largest aerial port and mortuary facility. Sussex County is the largest county east of the Mississippi, with rural chicken houses to the west and tourist destination beaches on the east coast.

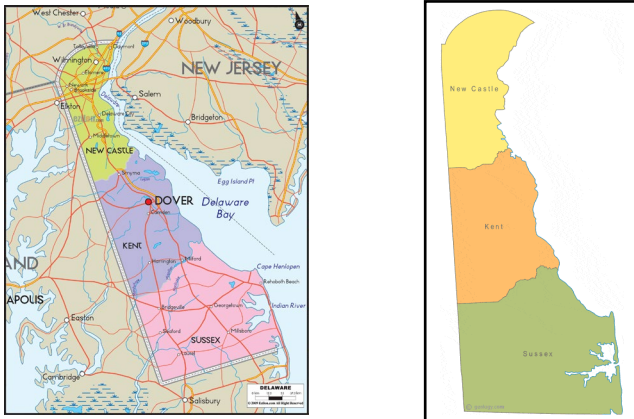


Figure 1

#### What are your community's population and growth compared with that of other communities locally, regionally, or nationally?

- Population: 989,948 and the 13<sup>th</sup> fastest growing state at a rate of 10.2%, outpacing its Mid-Atlantic and Northeast neighbors, with Sussex County gaining the most population in the 2020 census.
- Delaware's population demographics are 68.75% white, 22.11% Black or African American, 3.87% Asian, 2.75% two or more races, 1.9% Other races, and 0.36% Native American. Delaware ranks as one of the top ten states when it comes to the proportion of African American residents compared to the total population.

#### What is your COMMUNITY IDENTITY?

Delaware is known as the First State; we love being first. Delaware was the first state to ratify the Constitution of the United States. Delaware has historically been known for chemicals, cars, corporations, chickens, and credit cards, and we are a nationwide leader in fintech. We have the third fastest internet speed in the nation. Sixty-eight percent of Fortune 500 companies are incorporated in Delaware. We are known as the "Home of Tax Free Shopping!" With low property taxes (7<sup>th</sup> lowest in the nation), Delaware leads the nation as a top place to retire.

In 2019, Delaware's poverty rate was 11.3% compared to the national rate of 10.5%.

Historically Delaware's state services were supported by state corporate taxes, and Delaware continues to offer most basic services at the state level to keep cost low. We are known for our recreation and tourism destinations such as our Atlantic Beaches. Rehoboth is known as the nation's Summer Capital. We have a high number of private schools, and a mix of public and charter schools. Although Delaware ranks third in the nation for internet speed, there are still spots with no access. We have a high number of nonprofits in Delaware (2,000 – 3,000), many of which partner with Delaware Libraries and various State agencies to provide services to our residents.

We are small, and the culture values relationships. We know each other, the lore is one degree (or less) of separation. We know our public officials, including the 46<sup>th</sup> President Joe Biden. Due to the change in our economy with the loss of car manufacturing and downsizing of chemical and credit card companies our Governor’s priority is “Strengthening DE’s Economy” with an emphasis on improving grade level reading and early childhood literacy.

By capitalizing on our small size, the love of being first, and interconnections, our COE group is committed to tackling the challenge of improving literacy in Delaware. Literacy is defined as an individual’s ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, within the family, and in society. A recent study shows that 1 in 5 adults in Delaware are reading at or below a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level, and we rank 34<sup>th</sup> in adult literacy proficiency. Roughly 46% of low literacy adults cannot read and follow medication instructions. This means that many adults in Delaware who are unemployed or underemployed due to low literacy skills do not have a taxable income; do not have the income to buy homes, cars, and other essentials; and rely on social safety nets, which influence government-spending needs.

**(2) Community Offerings What are your community’s KEY offerings to its resident and other CUSTOMER groups (see P.1a[3]) in the areas of health, education, the economy, and quality of life? What is the relative importance of these offerings to your community’s well-being? What major facilities, infrastructure, and resources (e.g., technology, housing, transportation, and natural resources) support your community’s KEY offerings?**

Our key offerings are in Table 1 showing their relative importance and supporting resources.

Key Offerings	Area				Relative Importance	People Resources
	Health	Education	Economy	Quality of Life		
Telehealth, Health Navigator services	X			X	Accessibility and familiar settings to promote increased health literacy	Delaware Libraries Consortium / Highmark BC BS
Statewide Dolly Parton Imagination Library (free books monthly birth to 5 years)		X			Necessary services and support to advance individuals along the literacy continuum	DOE / DDL
Overdrive SORA e-book app for K-12 students through DOE/Libraries		X				
ESL & adult literacy programs		X				
Northstar Digital Literacy Assessments & Training		X	X		Necessary tools and services to support continued learning and advancement for Delawareans	Literacy Delaware/ Delaware Libraries/ Workforce development organizations
Social Service, Workforce, Health, Environmental and Financial services offered at libraries and other accessible locations through COE member organizations' partner networks.	X	X	X	X	Programs and organizations that promote and support functional literacy and additional literacies	Over 2,000 non-profits and other partner organizations

**(Table 1)**

**[3] Residents, Other CUSTOMERS, and STAKEHOLDERS What are your community’s KEY resident groups, other CUSTOMER groups, and STAKEHOLDER groups? What are their KEY requirements and expectations of your community? What are the differences in requirements and expectations among resident groups, other CUSTOMER groups, and STAKEHOLDER groups?**

With a focus on literacy for Delawareans, our resident and stakeholder groups and expectations are in Table 2.

Key Residents:	Stakeholder Groups			
Birth – 5	Educators/Early Childhood Centers	Parents	Healthcare Providers	Nonprofits
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	Educators	Parents		
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Educators	Parents		
High School Graduation	Educators	Parents	Employers	Colleges & Universities
Adults	Employers	Taxpayers	Healthcare Providers	Nonprofits
Non-English speakers	Employers	Taxpayers	Healthcare Providers	Nonprofits

**(Table 2)**

Key requirements and expectations from our residents and stakeholders include coordination of services and clear communications among literacy organizations. Stakeholders expect communications tailored to their area of interest in the literacy landscape. Some stakeholders also want an overview of all efforts statewide. Residents’ expectations and requirements vary by geography, socio-economic status, age, current literacy level and general needs.

**[4] People Resources What KEY community organizations, groups, and SEGMENTS are involved in delivering your community’s KEY offerings? What recent changes has the community experienced in its needs for these organizations, groups, and SEGMENTS? Who are the formal and informal COMMUNITY LEADERS that represent KEY organizations, groups, and SEGMENTS?**

Key community organizations, groups, segments and leaders are in Table 3. Working Group members are in bold and Advisory Council members are underlined.

Organizations by Segment	Description	Leaders (Formal & Informal)
<i>Early Literacy (Birth – 5 years)</i>		
<u>Delaware Readiness Teams</u>	Help parents and early childhood providers prepare children for school.	<u>Diane Frentzel</u>
<u>Read Aloud Delaware</u>	Early literacy service providers	<u>James Spadola</u>
Childcare Centers	More than 900 licensed providers	Dept. of Education Office of Early Learning Director John Fisher-Klein
<b>Delaware Libraries</b>	Statewide consortium of 70+ public, academic and special libraries.	<b><u>State Librarian Dr. Annie Norman</u></b>
<i>Primary &amp; Secondary School Age</i>		
Department of Education	State Cabinet Agency	Secretary Mark Holodick
<u>United Way of Delaware</u>	Statewide nonprofit	<u>Dan Cruce</u>
<b>Delaware Libraries</b>	Backbone organization	<b><u>State Librarian Dr. Annie Norman</u></b>
<u>Healthcare systems &amp; insurers</u>		
<i>Adults</i>		
<b>Literacy Delaware</b>	Adult literacy-focused nonprofit	<b><u>Cindy Shermeyer</u></b>
<b>Delaware Libraries</b>	Backbone organization	
<u>Healthcare systems &amp; insurers</u>		<u>Greg O'Neill, MaryAnn Faralli</u>
<u>Delaware State University</u>		<u>Dorothy Dillard</u>
<b>DE Dept. of Natural Resources &amp; Environmental Control</b>	State Cabinet Agency	<b><u>Martina Johnson</u></b>

**(Table 3)**

The community has experienced changes due to the COVID pandemic. Delaware’s small size enables opportunities for leadership that might not be possible in larger states. However, there are redundancies and gaps in services and the need for infrastructure and platforms to support relationships. Coordination across state departments and organizations that support literacy is currently ad hoc; the need for a systematic sustainable approach was highlighted by COVID.

**[5] Regulatory Environment: What are the KEY aspects of the regulatory environment under which your community operates?**

The State of Delaware does not have a comprehensive literacy plan or regulations across the lifespan. Activities in various areas are guided or regulated in the following ways:

- Literacy efforts for kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade are guided by the Delaware Literacy Plan (2019) produced by the Department of Education.
- Adult literacy programs are guided by the National Adult Literacy Action Plan 2021 produced by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. Federally funded adult education programs requirements come from the National Reporting System, Common Core Standards in Adult Basic Education, and Program Standards for Adult Literacy programs from ProLiteracy.
- Legislation passed in this year’s session will require school educators to be trained in the science of reading. Implementing regulations will be developed and may have an impact on our activities.

**P1.b. Community Excellence Group**

**(1) MISSION, VISION, and VALUES - Why have you formed a community excellence group? What are the group’s stated MISSION, VISION, and VALUES?**

Delaware Communities of Excellence’s (Delaware COE) goal is to enhance the quality of life for all Delawareans, with an initial focus on literacy. Literacy evens the playing field, allowing individuals of all ages to make informed decisions about all aspects of their lives. Increased literacy skills lead to improved outcomes in health, education, economic status, and community engagement.

Delaware COE uses a collective impact approach to develop a seamless, comprehensive literacy system as a foundation to ensure equity for all.

Vision: Creating Equity Through Literacy

Mission: Delaware Communities of Excellence initially focuses on developing a comprehensive literacy ecosystem that promotes equity and impacts Delawareans for the purpose of enhancing the quality of life in Delaware.

Values:

- *Equity* – We value and will ensure that Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity are embedded in all the work that we do!
- *Respect* – We respect the community, partners and individuals we serve and our behaviors and work will reflect that through transparent, empathetic and trusting relationships that honor an individual’s privacy.
- *Collaboration* – We provide opportunities for the community, partners, and individuals to be engaged, acknowledged and heard. Collaboration is the catalyst for Delaware Communities of Excellence.
- *Adaptability* - We are continuous learners and open to change. We are agile and adaptable to the needs of our collaborative and the community it serves.

**(2) Composition - What KEY people, organizations, and groups (see P.1a[4]) are involved in your community excellence group? What are the KEY drivers that engage them in achieving your group’s MISSION and VISION?**

**What is the BACKBONE ORGANIZATION, if your group includes one?**

The current structure of Delaware Communities of Excellence is in Table 4. The backbone organization is the Delaware Division of Libraries. The Working Group was created in late 2020 (Year 1). The current Advisory Council began meeting in late 2021 (Year 2) and is expected to transition to more of a leadership role in Year 3. We also partner with other organizations through individual members of our broad group.

Key Drivers for our DE COE organizations include commitment to equity, existing involvement in literacy efforts and/or in education, desire for systemic change and improvement in Delawareans’ quality of life, and alignment with their existing missions.

<b>Backbone Organization</b>		
Delaware Division of Libraries		Facilitator: PMG Consulting
<b>Working Group (Includes Backbone)</b>		
Literacy Delaware		
DE Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control (DNREC)		
<b>Advisory Council (Includes Working Group)</b>		
United Way of Delaware	Christiana Care	Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield
Reading Assist Institute	Energize DE	Delaware State University
DE Readiness Teams	Read Aloud DE	Laffey McHugh Foundation
University of Delaware	First State Educate	DE Community Foundation
Philanthropy DE	DE Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement	

(Table 4)

**(3) LEADERSHIP SYSTEM - What LEADERSHIP SYSTEM does your community excellence group use to lead its community excellence efforts?**

Delaware Communities of Excellence uses a collective impact model as a leadership system. This system creates space to collaborate, the opportunity to pivot, and openness to new information to work together for collective impact. See **Section 1 Community Leadership** for more details on this topic.

**(4) Programs and Services - What programs and services are offered through the efforts of your community excellence group?**

We provide a collaborative space for partners providing literacy services in Delaware and identify programs and services to fill in the gaps. Delaware Libraries continue to provide free Northstar Digital Literacy assessments and training programs at local libraries. In Year 2 they began partnerships with several workforce development programs to offer the free services at their training sites, which increases participants’ ease of access. Literacy Delaware continues to grow its adult literacy services statewide. The Division of Libraries continues its partnership with the Department of Education to provide free year round eBook access for K-12 students through the Sora student app. A multi-level literacy dashboard using the Results-Based Accountability model on the Clear Impact platform is in development.

**(5) Suppliers, PARTNERS, and COLLABORATORS - What KEY suppliers, PARTNERS, and COLLABORATORS support your community excellence group? What role do they play in its WORK SYSTEMS, especially in producing and delivering its programs and services?**

Current key partners, suppliers, and collaborators include those identified in Table 5.

Key Partners, Suppliers, and Collaborators	Roles
Kids Count Delaware	Data provider
Center for Community Research and Service and Institute for	Data providers

Public Administration (University of Delaware’s Biden School of Public Policy & Administration)	
State Treasurer’s Office	Financial literacy partner
My Healthy Community	Data provider & potential work collaborator

**(Table 5)**

As our work evolves, we expect to use a collaboration matrix to group these and other partners, suppliers and collaborators into tiers, which will help us organize our work and drive our processes. We are currently identifying additional suppliers, partners and collaborators through our landscape analysis.

**P.2 Community Situation: What is your community’s strategic situation?**

**a. Competitive Environment**

**(1) Competitive Position: With regard to its KEY offerings, what is your community’s competitive position relative to similar or nearby communities? What other communities are your community’s KEY competitors?**

As this is a statewide initiative, we continue to analyze key literacy offerings of other states. We have identified potential competitive offerings within Delaware, some of which have become collaborators over the past year: Some of these are (broken out by literacy focus):

- Early and K-12 Literacy – Department of Education, Pre-K/childcare providers, Head Start, United Way DE, First Lady Quillen Carney’s First Chance Delaware initiative, Read Aloud Delaware, Reach Out and Read and the Medical Association of Delaware, Delaware Readiness Team
- Health Literacy – Christiana Care, Healthy Communities Delaware, Highmark Health Care
- Environmental – Energize Delaware
- Financial – DE Treasurer’s Office

**(2) Competitiveness Changes: What KEY changes, if any, are affecting your community’s competitive situation, including changes that create opportunities for INNOVATION and collaboration for your community excellence group, as appropriate?**

Delaware has had several landscape shifts that have created competitive changes and will continue to affect the work of the Delaware COE literacy initiative. The pandemic created a significant change in funding patterns and work priorities across the state. The need for digital literacy skills became more acute through pandemic-related learning loss for children and remote work opportunities for adults.

Literacy has had restricted funding in the past with the exception of the standardized education system. We continue to advocate for literacy as a foundation for health, education, economy and quality of life. Regional funders are becoming more aware of the fundamental role of literacy and are looking at opportunities to braid funding to support literacy efforts in coordination with other social needs they support.

**(3) Comparative Data: What KEY sources of comparative and competitive data about your community are available to your community excellence group? What limitations, if any, affect the ability to obtain or use these data?**

Key Data Sources include:

- Delaware Department of Education – Reading scores for third, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades, high school graduation rates.
- National Center for Education Statistics/Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) - Designed to assess adults in different countries over a broad range of abilities, from simple reading to complex problem-solving skills. Limited data is available.

Data limitations include:

- Data within state agencies is in silos and can be outdated; we are working with Kids Count Delaware to identify relevant data and other sources of data.
- Limited data for adult literacy available with PIAAC.

**b. Strategic Context**

**(1) CORE COMPETENCIES What are your community’s CORE COMPETENCIES? What are your community excellence group’s CORE COMPETENCIES, and what is their relationship to its MISSION?**

Core Competencies and their relationship to its mission are identified in Table 6

<b>DE COE Core Competencies</b>	<b>Relationship to Mission</b>
Broad expertise in literacy	Fundamental to the mission. We have expertise and continue to learn more from others.
Infrastructure network of libraries and partner organizations	The 70-plus members of the Delaware Libraries Consortium joined the other stakeholder organizations to create a statewide network of organizations and locations that promote and work on literacy. This network is the start of the literacy ecosystem we are building.
Data expertise	We have access to different types of needed data through the Division of Libraries, Literacy Delaware, Kids Count DE, and other sources. We are using Clear Impact’s Results Based Accountability system to create a multi-level dashboard to incorporate data from our partners as we grow. It will start by illustrating baseline literacy-related data and document changes as they occur during our work.
Expertise in collective impact and Baldrige/continuous improvement models	We have expertise in these models and continue to learn more from others as we use them to form and continuously improve the DE COE collaborative.
Flexible/Agile	Flexibility and agility are crucial to building the broad-based collaborative we need to address literacy needs statewide.
Collaboration	Collaboration is fundamentally part of the collective impact model which we are using to build the DE COE.

**(Table 6)**

**(2) Challenges and Advantages: What are your community’s key STRATEGIC CHALLENGES and ADVANTAGES? HOW do these challenges and advantages relate to your community excellence group’s MISSION and VISION?**

Our communities key challenges and advantages are identified in Table 7.

Advantages:	Challenges:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•33 public libraries: proximity</li> <li>•Existing connections: foundation</li> <li>•Communication strategy</li> <li>•Strong foundation</li> <li>•Large literacy resource footprint</li> <li>•Willingness around early childhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Siloed/unknown fragmentation of data</li> <li>•Partners</li> <li>•Own participants</li> <li>•Adult literacy: recognizing as an issue</li> <li>•Broad lifelong literacy effort</li> <li>•Poverty</li> <li>• Awareness, education, engagement- connectivity; purposeful collaboration with partners &amp; libraries</li> <li>•Flooded with initiatives</li> <li>•Access to real time data</li> <li>•Affordable dashboard, data collection and analysis solution.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Strong digital, workforce, economic mobility</li> <li>•All ages</li> <li>•High level of trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Coordination across state departments is currently ad hoc, not systematic or sustainable.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Accessible political arena</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Support from Government Efficiency &amp; Accountability Review Board (GEAR) and Delaware Quality Partnership (DQP).</li> </ul>	

**(Table 7)**

**c. Performance Improvement System**

**What are the KEY elements of the performance improvement system used by your community excellence group, including its PROCESSES for evaluating and improving key projects and PROCESSES?**

Although Delaware COE has not yet established a performance improvement system, key elements in place in backbone organizations’ systems are likely to be used. These include:

- Delaware Libraries currently utilize the Baldrige framework, LEAN, and PDSA cycle for continuous improvement, and will incorporate change management processes.
- Literacy Delaware utilizes the National Reporting System, the accountability structure for federally funded adult education programs through the U.S. Department of Education Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education. This includes performance measures and outcomes that are monitored and reviewed to drive improvement. Literacy Delaware uses this system even though not federally funded or required to do so.

**1 Community Leadership**

**1.1 Community Excellence Group Leadership: How do your leaders lead the community excellence group?**

**a. VISION and VALUES**

**(1) Setting VISION and VALUES: HOW do the leaders of your community excellence group set its VISION and VALUES?**

Our leaders use a collaborative approach focused on collective impact principles to lead our community excellence group. Our backbone organization developed vision and values statements in Year 1 (see section P1b(1), which we have reviewed periodically as our efforts and organization have evolved. Monthly Communities of Excellence 2026 meetings and mentor sessions provide context and help reinforce our vision and values. We deploy our vision and values at both levels of leadership - working group and Advisory Council - through meetings, activities, presentations, and listserv announcements. Our vision and values are formally documented within MOUs signed by our Advisory Council members. We plan to include our vision and values on our new website as it develops and share them in other ways moving forward.

**(2) Promoting Legal and ETHICAL BEHAVIOR: HOW do your leaders’ actions demonstrate their commitment to legal and ETHICAL BEHAVIOR?**

Our leaders consistently demonstrate their commitment to legal and ethical behavior through their words



and actions. Many of our leaders work for organizations with ethical behavior policies, so those carry over into our Delaware COE work. They believe in transparency and expect legal and ethical behavior from all involved in our work. They use a “trust but verify” approach. These behavioral expectations are included in our Advisory Council MOU and in an agreement with a fiscal agent currently in development. They share their expectations with everyone involved in the Delaware COE.

**b. Communication: HOW do your leaders communicate with and engage your community excellence group, KEY resident and other CUSTOMER groups, and other KEY community groups?**

Our leaders encourage open communication within our backbone work group and in our Advisory Council. At this stage in our development, personal interactions are often most effective. Communications with key resident, customer, and community groups occur in an ongoing manner, mostly through agencies within the Delaware COE, rather than from the COE itself. We are still building the Delaware COE and not yet at the stage for a full roll out to the public. We collaborate with and support our partner organizations. We are open to new ideas and encourage "thinking outside the box." Participants at all levels are encouraged to share their ideas and experiences with others through the listserv to strengthen our overall effort.

Communications may be in-person, through virtual meetings, by email, listserv or other informal written communications or through more formal written communications such as presentations and white papers. A multi-level literacy dashboard is in development.

**c. MISSION and PERFORMANCE**

**(1) Creating an Environment for Success: HOW do your leaders’ actions create an environment for community success now and in the future?**

Our leaders create an environment for success by building on the strengths of the backbone organizations and our partners. They emphasize the fundamental need for all Delawareans to be fully literate, and the value we as a society will derive as literacy levels improve across the population. This emphasis reinforces the group’s desire to do the necessary work by engaging with residents, customers, and stakeholders. Learning and deepening our understanding of the many facets of literacy is a priority for our members. Learning is supported through the professional development infrastructure from the Division of Libraries. Succession planning for our DE COE group leaders is an item for Year 3. Our partner organizations conduct their own succession planning.

**(2) Creating a Focus on Action: HOW do your leaders create a shared focus on action that will achieve the community excellence group’s MISSION?**

Our Delaware COE group has the advantage of a single focus on literacy, which inherently creates a focus on action. We are still building our infrastructure, so actions by the DE COE itself have focused mainly on that. We intend that our focus on sharing data to better understand the current state will create a shared focus on potential future actions for the DE COE. Currently most literacy-focused activities are performed by individual Delaware COE partners, such as adult literacy training offered by Literacy Delaware or Northstar digital literacy assessments offered through Delaware Libraries.

**1.2 Governance and Societal Responsibilities: How does your community excellence group govern itself and fulfill its societal responsibilities?**

**a. Community Excellence Group GOVERNANCE**

**(1) GOVERNANCE System: HOW do you ensure responsible GOVERNANCE for your community excellence group?**

Our Advisory Council and backbone working group are self-governing. As we develop dedicated Delaware COE funding streams, a Memorandum of Agreement with our fiscal agent will cover fiscal accountability and

transparency of operations. Transparency in operations is a fundamental expectation in our organizational culture. We are yet to have a formal succession plan; however, we expect individual partner organizations to be responsible for replacing members as necessary.

**(2) PERFORMANCE Evaluation: HOW do you evaluate the PERFORMANCE of the group’s leaders and its GOVERNANCE?**

Our initial performance evaluation factors consider our work group and Advisory Council members’ attendance and participation, while recognizing that individual members must adhere to their own organizations' policies. Informal feedback from stakeholders on leaders and governance is welcome. We will expand our evaluation system as our organization evolves. In the longer term, we expect it to help improve the effectiveness of our leaders and our leadership system.

**b. Legal and ETHICAL BEHAVIOR**

**(1) Legal and Regulatory Compliance: HOW do you anticipate and address public concerns with the group’s programs and services?**

Individual organizations (including our backbone organization) address legal and regulatory concerns with their own programs/services. Potential concerns with future programs and services will be addressed during our planning processes. Our collaborative approach brings together many viewpoints, which makes it more likely that potential issues will be identified early and proactively addressed.

**(2) ETHICAL BEHAVIOR: HOW do you promote and ensure ETHICAL BEHAVIOR in all interactions? What are your KEY PROCESSES and MEASURES or INDICATORS for promoting and ensuring ETHICAL BEHAVIOR throughout your group and in interactions with your people, organizations, groups, residents, other CUSTOMERS, PARTNERS, and other STAKEHOLDERS? HOW do you monitor and respond to breaches of ETHICAL BEHAVIOR?**

Delaware COE’s understood expectation, as with all collective impact work, is that all interactions are ethical. Our approaches to our work are transparent. Meetings, discussions, and decisions are recorded and documented. We do not have specific policies yet; however, development of conflict of interest, data protection, and proper use of funds policies are planned for early in Year 3. Some of our partner organizations have their own ethics policies, and they address concerns with their own programs and services.

**c. Societal Contributions**

**HOW do you consider societal well-being and benefit as part of the group’s strategy? HOW do you contribute to the well-being of your environmental, social, and economic systems for the benefit of all residents?**

The goal of improving the lives of all Delawareans, especially improving literacy rates of all kinds across all ages, drives all members of the Working Group and the Advisory Council. It is a core part of our Delaware COE mission and drives our strategy. Our primary stakeholders are non-profits and other organizations focused on helping the community. Most of our current partners perform work that contributes to improving the environmental, social, and economic systems for all Delawareans. Delaware COE plans to sponsor branded activities in Year 3, which build on our partners’ exciting and successful work.

**2 Community Strategy**

**2.1 Strategy Development: How does your community excellence group develop its strategy?**

**a. Strategy Development PROCESS**

**(1) Strategic Planning PROCESS HOW do you conduct your strategic planning?**

We planned for both informal and formal approaches to our strategic planning. Initially we used informal processes. We will use more formal and traditional strategic planning processes including a landscape analysis. Our facilitator, Peggy Geisler (PMG Consulting), coordinates our strategic planning.

**Figure 2**

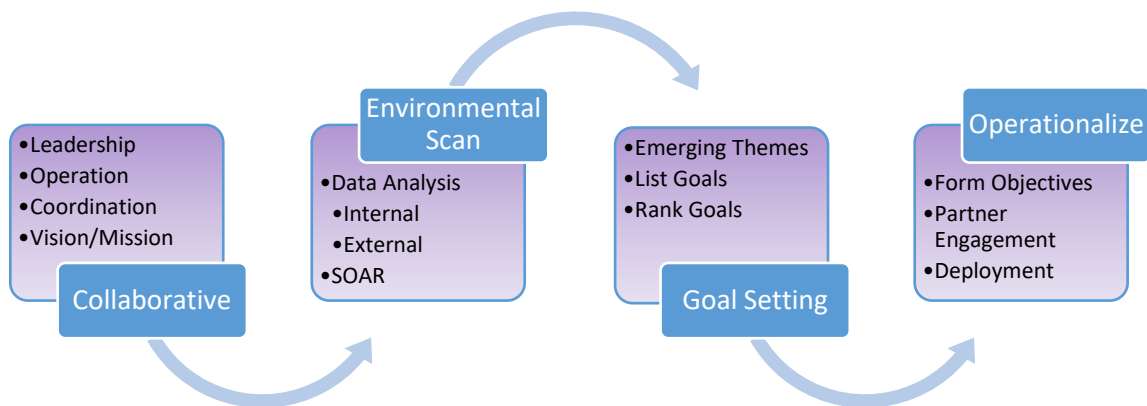


Figure 2 above shows our expected formal strategic planning process. We recently started our landscape analysis, which will include individual interviews with high-level stakeholders, focus groups, and a community survey through a SOAR analysis lens. We are also developing a multi-level literacy dashboard using the Results-Based Accountability model on the Clear Impact platform. The results of these efforts toward the end of 2022 will feed into development of formal strategic goals and objectives in 2023. Our planning horizons are the 1, 3, and 5 year points in a timeline sequence. The ultimate result of this work will be development and implementation of a statewide literacy plan based on input and reaction from stakeholders, key participants and the community.

Key participants in our strategic planning process include the Advisory Council, members of the early childhood and adult literacy communities, other public, stakeholders, funders, and work group members (backbone organization, key organization leads, facilitator)

However, we recognize that external or internal forces can cause changes and we must be ready and willing to pivot and adapt to new circumstances. To be comprehensive, our strategic planning process addresses a general direction and then captures multiple scenarios. We will rank priorities based on SMART objectives and align them with certain criteria such as influence, funding, and champions. This approach will provide the flexibility we may need if circumstances change.

**(2) INNOVATION: HOW does your strategy development PROCESS stimulate and incorporate INNOVATION?**

We use several ways to identify innovative opportunities and decide if they are intelligent risks. With many librarians in our backbone organization, we have skilled researchers who keep up with the latest developments and best practices in the literacy field. Our broad group of partners helps keep the working group and Advisory Council in touch with new and innovative activities happening statewide. The Advisory Council brings its institutional knowledge and connections to the table. Environmental scans and using Balanced Scorecard Perspectives help us to see opportunities and decide if they are ones we wish to pursue. We are always looking for where potential intersections across sectors occur or where programs with promising work can be scaled. We believe that there is a risk in not pursuing, or at least testing, opportunities.

Our key strategic opportunities include:

- A growing network of advocates for literacy through the Advisory Council, Delaware Libraries partners and many other organizations. This network will help create opportunities, secure funding and strengthen partnerships.
- Strong support from the Governor’s Office and legislators for literacy and libraries, including the First Lady Quillen Carney’s First Chance Delaware initiative for early literacy.
- Support from the Government Efficiency and Accountability Board.
- Growing awareness among nonprofits of the role literacy skills play in the success of their work in other areas such as workforce, housing, and health.
- Creation of a multi-level literacy dashboard to gather literacy-related data in one place to lead to common understanding, shared goals and idea generation.

**(3) Strategy Considerations: HOW do you collect and analyze relevant data and develop information for your strategic planning PROCESS? In this collection and ANALYSIS, HOW do you include these KEY elements of risk?**

We use informal and formal ways to collect and analyze relevant data and develop information for our strategic planning process. Since we will be performing our formal strategic planning work in the fall of 2022, we are in the data gathering stage and will soon begin initial analysis.

We are using the Clear Impact platform for the Results Based Accountability model. Data comes from a variety of sources – national, state and local. Members of our Advisory Council made data sharing commitments and have begun providing some initial data. Not all data will be used in the RBA model, but will be used for other purposes. The landscape analysis, which recently started, will also provide data. Data experts from Kids Count Delaware and the University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration are partners in our work.

Identifying blind spots and gaps in any data is always a part of our discussions. Our communities’ challenges and advantages are often starting points for such discussions. Our broad set of partners help to keep us aware of changes and challenges that our communities face.

**(4) WORK SYSTEMS and CORE COMPETENCIES: In your strategy development: HOW do you consider resources both inside and outside the community excellence group for your WORK SYSTEMS?**

Currently our COE work is funded by our backbone organization, the Delaware Division of Libraries. The Advisory Council intends to seek grant funds from partners and non-partners. Plans are discussed in Section 7.5.

An important resource now is the goodwill of our involved partners, especially our Advisory Council members. We are skilled at building partnerships and always look to see how our work can complement our partners’ efforts and how their work can complement ours. That type of analysis always includes consideration of all partners’ core competencies and strategic objectives.

**b. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

**(1) KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: What are your KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES and timetable for achieving them?**

Our key strategic objectives and timetable for achieving them are identified in Table 8.

Strategic Objectives	Goals	Timeline
1. All Delawareans have proficient literacy skills	1.1 Support existing programs 1.2 Develop new programs to address needs across the age spectrum	1.1 Ongoing 1.2 July 2022 – June 2023

2. Advisory Council represents the literacy community statewide	2.1 Fill sector gaps, especially Department of Education	2.1 Fall 2022
3. Literacy data is available to all COE participants to foster alignment of efforts	3.1 Create literacy dashboard using RBA model on Clear Impact platform	3.1 Feb. 2022 – Jan. 2023
4. Raise community awareness about the importance of literacy for quality of life	4.1 Develop a communications plan 4.2 Implement the communications plan	4.1 July 2022 – Dec. 2022 4.2 Dec. 2022 – June 2023
5. Funding for COE efforts is secure	5.1 Create a resource development plan	5.1 Nov. 2022 – Jan. 2023

**(Table 8)**

**(2) STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE Considerations: HOW do your STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES achieve appropriate balance among varying and potentially competing community needs?**

Literacy is foundational for the success of other community-wide objectives. It is also broad enough that most service organizations can find “a place at the table” where their services connect and braid with others. We see improvements in literacy levels statewide as a way of balancing other varying and sometimes competing community needs. In the long term, increased literacy levels can improve the state’s health, education, economy, and quality of life.

**2.2 Strategy Implementation: How does your community excellence group implement its strategy?**

**a. ACTION PLAN Development and DEPLOYMENT**

**(1) ACTION PLANS What are your KEY short- and longer-term ACTION PLANS? What is their relationship to your STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES? HOW do you develop your ACTION PLANS?**

We are using our facilitator to conduct the landscape analysis and strategic planning process, which started in the spring of 2022. Results will be available by the end of 2022. We will identify processes for deployment in the final phase of the planning process.

**(2) ACTION PLAN Implementation: HOW do you DEPLOY your ACTION PLANS? HOW do you DEPLOY your ACTION PLANS to people, organizations, and groups involved and to KEY PARTNERS and COLLABORATORS, as appropriate, to ensure that you achieve your KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES? HOW do you ensure that you can sustain the KEY outcomes of your ACTION PLANS?**

Action plans will be implemented after development. We intend to ensure that they align with our strategic objectives, coordinate with appropriate stakeholders and are sustainable.

**(3) Resource Allocation: HOW do you ensure that financial and other resources are available to support the achievement of your ACTION PLANS? HOW do you allocate these resources to support the plans? HOW do you manage the risks associated with the plans to ensure your financial viability?**

The working group, facilitator and the Advisory Council will create a resource development plan later in 2022 and early 2023. Currently Delaware COE activities are financially supported by the Delaware COE, but we recognize that

approach is not sustainable in the longer term. Additional funds will be needed to support expansion of the Delaware COE's own programs and services. We plan to use a fiscal agent to manage Delaware COE's funds as we expand, while individual partner organizations will continue to fund their own programs and services.

**(4) People Resource Plans: What are your KEY plans for people, organizations, and groups to support your short- and longer-term STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES and ACTION PLANS?**

Our key plans include:

- Expand the Advisory Council to fully represent the state's literacy landscape and include other stakeholders who will connect and support the work.
- Continue to strengthen the Delaware Libraries / Literacy Delaware partnership – the Division of Libraries contracted with an adult literacy specialist while New Castle County Libraries are looking for a literacy specialist. Literacy Delaware has also expanded its staffing.
- Continue to build relationships with other people working in literacy-related areas throughout the state.

**(5) PERFORMANCE MEASURES What KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES or INDICATORS do you use to track the achievement and effectiveness of your ACTION PLANS?**

Performance measures are in development at this time. We intend the measures to reinforce alignment of efforts.

**(6) PERFORMANCE PROJECTIONS For these KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES or INDICATORS, what are your PERFORMANCE PROJECTIONS for your short- and longer-term planning horizons?**

**b. ACTION PLAN Modification: HOW do you establish and implement modified ACTION PLANS if circumstances require a shift in plans and rapid execution of new plans?**

Partner leaders respond individually to shifts as required. The Delaware COE working group and Advisory Council will modify action plans as needed. The COVID pandemic has taught all of us how to shift plans, adapt, and be resilient.

## **7 Results**

### **7.1 Community and Process Results: What are your community and process effectiveness results?**

**(1) What are the RESULTS for your community excellence group's contributions to the community's health, education, economy, and quality of life?**

Some results of our Delaware Communities of Excellence individual partners' contributions in Year 2 include:

- We are seeing increased awareness of the importance of literacy in improving many facets of Delawareans' daily lives and underpinning the success of other nonprofits' work in various sectors. Anecdotal measures of this increased awareness include increased mention of literacy in meetings of providers of other types of support services and increased interest from outside organizations, such as the State Treasurer's Office and the Division of Public Health, to partnering with individual Delaware COE organizations to leverage their efforts to improve financial and health literacy.
- The Delaware Reading Summit in March 2022 brought nationally recognized experts to discuss the science of reading and ways to close literacy gaps in Delaware.
- Dolly Parton visited Delaware on May 5, 2022 to celebrate the statewide early literacy work of her Imagination Library through Delaware Libraries and First Lady Quillen Carney's First Chance Delaware initiative. Media from three states covered her visit which boosted awareness of early literacy efforts in the region.
- Literacy Delaware presented the Adult Literacy Action Forum on May 3, 2022 to increase awareness of adult literacy issues across the state and educate participants about the National Action Plan for Adult Literacy 2021, prepared by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy.

- Read Aloud Delaware hosted British Robinson, President and CEO of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, as a virtual presenter in February 2022, as part of their occasional speaker series. Bringing such a nationally known figure in literacy work to the state increased awareness of families' role in the development of early literacy skills.
- Recognizing the importance of intergenerational connections on literacy, the Delaware Library Association funded a grant for a summer 2022 family literacy program at a local library with Literacy Delaware, which may serve as a pilot for similar programs elsewhere in the state.
- The 2021 GEAR report to the Governor included the DE COE initiative. The Governor highlighted the project in his press release, generating interest from other State agencies.

**(2) What are the RESULTS for your community excellence group's programs and services?**

Our ultimate goal is the development and implementation of a statewide literacy plan across all ages and sectors of literacy to improve literacy levels of all Delawareans and thereby improve the health, education, economic situation and quality of life for all individuals in Delaware.

Specific work underway in Year 2 includes:

- Membership growth of the Advisory Council/Leadership Council from eight at its formation in September 2021 to 21 at its May 2022 meeting.
- Delaware Libraries continue to provide free Northstar Digital Literacy assessments and training programs at local libraries. In Year 2 they began partnerships with several workforce development programs to offer the free services at their training sites, which increases participants' ease of access.
- DE COE branded communications efforts under development include a stand-alone website, newsletter, and literacy programming calendar.
- Our Literacy Dashboard using the Results-Based Accountability approach through Clear Impact is in development.

**7.4 Leadership and Governance Results: What are your community excellence group's leadership and governance results?**

**(1) What are your RESULTS for your community excellence group leaders' communication and engagement with the community excellence group, KEY resident and other CUSTOMER groups, and other KEY community groups?**

Our leaders' communication and engagement efforts have brought literacy to the forefront of discussions about services in many Delaware nonprofits. Section 7.1(1) includes details on these efforts.

During Year 2, Delaware COE expanded its initial Advisory Council of eight members to a group of 21 members, as well as engaging with other organizations with an interest in literacy.

Advisory Council members are engaged in data sharing to support development of our multi-level dashboard system. Council members will start a strategic planning process in the fall of 2022. Members will be involved in completion of the recently started landscape analysis and development of the statewide literacy plan. This process began in February 2022 and is expected to be completed in January 2023.

**7.5 Financial and Strategy Results: What are your community excellence group's results for financial viability and strategy implementation?**

**(2) What are your RESULTS for the achievement of your strategy and ACTION PLANS**

In Year 2 Delaware COE's activities continue to be funded by the Delaware Division of Libraries, the backbone organization. Individual partner organizations fund their own programs and services. As part of the Delaware COE's growth in Year 3, development of a more diversified funding plan will occur, including:

- identifying budget needs
- developing a budget proposal
- identifying potential funders
- identifying a fiscal agent
- developing funding requests

Ultimately, implementation of the resource development plan will culminate in additional funds to support the Delaware COE's strategy implementation later in calendar year 2023.

As of July 2022, we remain in the development process of our strategy and action plans. We are working on our landscape analysis and developing a multi-level literacy dashboard with the goal of creating a statewide literacy plan for all ages to be implemented statewide. We expect to complete these activities by the end of calendar year 2022 and begin implementing them in 2023.



## Delaware Communities of Excellence 2021

### Glossary

- **ABE:** Adult Basic Education - An instructional program for basic and specific skills for students over the age of 16 and not in day school. Students typically read at a 5<sup>th</sup> grade level or above.
- **Adult Learners:** Includes those with little education who want to improve their literacy skills to help them transition to college, immigrants who want to learn English, students who have dropped out of school and want to get their secondary credential or take the high school equivalency tests, and adults seeking to improve their employment skills. <https://www.air.org/topic/workforce/adult-learning>
- **Adult Literacy:** Adults between the ages of 16-74 who lack proficiency in literacy, typically reading below the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level. <http://map.barbarabush.org/>
- **DDL:** Delaware Division of Libraries
- **DOE:** Department of Education
- **DHSS:** Department of Health and Social Services
- **DPH:** Division of Public Health
- **DNREC:** Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
- **DTCC:** Delaware Technical and Community College
- **DQP:** Delaware Quality Partnership is a coalition of state employees dedicated to promoting continuous quality improvement for state government. Through networking and resource sharing, this partnership among state agencies will enhance services for a more efficient and customer-oriented government.
- **Digital Literacy:** The ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.
- **Early Literacy:** Development of skills needed in order to transition from learning to read, to reading to learn. i.e. Being interested and enjoying books / Print awareness / Knowing letter names and sounds / Increasing vocabulary / Sound out syllables / Narrative skills / Point to illustrations and describe what they see / Begin to write through drawing & scribbling.
- **Educational Functioning Level (EFL):** The national term used for instructional levels in Adult Basic Education.
- **English Language Learner (ELL):** are students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses.
- **English as a Second Language (ESL):** More commonly used in K-12 school settings.
- **Family Literacy:** A continuum of programs that addresses the intergenerational nature of literacy. Popular in the 1990s and 2000s under the Workforce Investment Act, it is now known as Two Generation programs.
- **Fintech:** technology to deliver financial services through software which competes with traditional banking and financial services. <https://www.uschamber.com/co/run/business-financing/what-is-fintech>
- **Financial Literacy:** having the confidence, knowledge, and skills needed to make financial decisions that promote financial self-sufficiency, stability, and well-being. These skills include the ability to effectively locate, evaluate, and use information, resources, and services and to make informed decisions about financial obligations, budgeting, credit, debt, and planning for the future. <https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/teaching-skills-matter-adult-education/financial-literacy>
- **Functional literacy:** the practical skill set needed to read, write, and do math for real-life purposes, so people can function effectively in their community.

- **GEAR:** Government Accountability and Efficiency Review Board. It meets bimonthly to review projects that promote efficiency in government.
- **HBCU:** Historically Black College or University
- **Health Literacy:**
  - **Personal Health Literacy:** The degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.
  - **Organizational Health Literacy:** The degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/learn/index.html>
- **LEAN:** a continuous improvement methodology to increase customer value while minimizing waste
- **Low Literacy:** Reading or doing math at or below the third grade level.
- **Literacy:** Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society. <https://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/adultliteracy.htm>
- **MCH:** Maternal Child Health
- **NAAL:** National Assessment of Adult Literacy <https://nces.ed.gov/naal/literacytypes.asp>
- **NCES:** National Center for Education Statistics
- **NRS:** Common Core in Adult Education
- **PDSA cycle:** Plan – Do – Study – Act cycle
- **PIAAC:** (Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) is an international survey conducted in 40 countries that measures the key cognitive and workplace skills needed for individuals to participate in society and for economies to prosper. PIAAC is designed to assess adults in different countries over a broad range of abilities, from simple reading to complex problem-solving skills. <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/>
- **Political Literacy:** A set of abilities considered necessary for citizens to participate in a society's government. It includes an understanding of how government works and of the important issues facing society, as well as the critical thinking skills to evaluate different points of view.
- **Pre-literacy:** Acquiring the skills necessary for learning to read. i.e. Understanding that words are read from left to right and top to bottom / Orienting books to be right-side up / Recognizing and producing rhyming words / Recognizing that words are separate units that make up a sentence / Recognizing and naming upper and lower case letters / Recognizing the sounds associated with letters.
- **Proficient in Literacy:** Adults who lack proficiency in literacy are defined as those who score level 2 or below on the PIAAC (Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies). Grade level equivalents are estimated, as the PIAAC proficiency levels do not specifically correspond to K-12 grade levels. 130 million Americans—54% of adults between the ages of 16 and 74 years old—lack proficiency in literacy, essentially reading below the equivalent of a sixth-grade level. <https://map.barbarabush.org/>
- **UWDE:** United Way of Delaware