P.1 Community Description: What are your community's key characteristics?
a. Community Environment
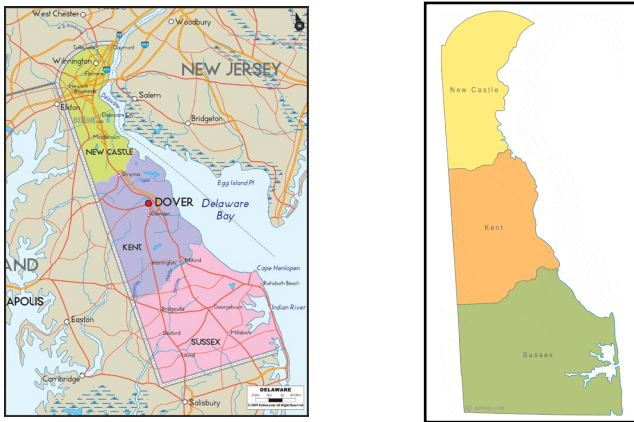**(1) Community Definition and IDENTITY What geographic area is included in your community?**

Figure 1

Our community is the State of Delaware: 2,490 square miles of land in the Mid-Atlantic region, the second smallest state with the 6th highest population density in the U.S (just under 1 million people). Several major cities are a short drive or Amtrak ride away including Philadelphia PA, Washington DC, Baltimore MD and New York City (Figure 1). Delaware contains three counties from north to south. New Castle County (north) is home to the City of Wilmington, the largest city in the state. The suburban/rural, Kent County (central) is the home of the capital, Dover, and Kent County Dover Air Force Base, the Department of Defense's largest aerial port and mortuary facility. Sussex County (south) is the largest county east of the Mississippi, with a more rural and agricultural western side contrasting with the tourist destination beaches on the east coast.

What are your community's population and growth compared with that of other communities locally, regionally, or nationally?
- Population: 989,948 and the 13th 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 because we were the first state to ratify the Constitution of the United States. We love being first. Delaware is known for chemicals, cars, corporations, chickens, and credit cards, and we are a nationwide leader in fintech. Sixty-eight percent of Fortune 500 companies are incorporated in Delaware. We are known as the "Home of Tax-Free Shopping!" Combined with low property taxes (7th lowest in the nation), Delaware often ranks high on national best retirement location lists, leading to an increasingly older population, especially in Sussex County. 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, including Rehoboth Beach, the nation's Summer Capital.

We have a high number of private schools, and a mix of public and charter schools. The percentage of Delaware third graders reading at grade level has decreased from 54% in 2015 to 35% in 2021. While Delaware ranks third in the nation for internet speed, there still are areas across the state with limited to no access. The federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program will help fill those gaps in the coming years. We have a high number of nonprofits in Delaware (2,000 – 3,000), many of which partner with

state and local government agencies to provide services to our residents. In 2019, Delaware's poverty rate was 11.3%, compared to the national rate of 10.5%.

We are small, and our culture values relationships. We know each other, the lore is one degree (or less) of separation. We know our public officials, including the 46th President Joe Biden. Due to economic changes over the last few decades, including the loss of car manufacturing and the 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's focus is improving literacy levels in Delaware because the ability to read, write, and speak in English, as well as compute, and solve problems, are 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 3rd grade level, and we rank 30th nationwide in adult literacy proficiency. Many Delaware adults 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	Health	Education	Economy	Quaility of Life	Relative Importance	Resources
Kindergarten Readiness		X			Foundation for life-long success	DE Readiness Team, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
ESL and Adult Literacy		X	X	X	Support Delawareans' growth	Literacy Delaware
Health Literacy	X				Support Delawareans' health	Healthcare organizations & insurers
Digital Literacy	X	X	X	X	Support Delawareans' growth	Delaware Libraries services
Workforce, Social Services, Health, Financial & Environmental services	X	X	X	X	Support Delawareans' success in life	Partner organizations offer these many locations i8ncluding libraries

(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
K-12 grades	Educators	Parents		
High School Graduates	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, customers and stakeholders include coordination and collaboration of services and clear, unified communications among literacy organizations. Stakeholders expect communications tailored to their area of need and/or 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. Advisory Board members are in **bold**.

Organizations by Segment	Description	Leaders (Formal & Informal)
Early Literacy (Birth – 5 years)		
Delaware Readiness Teams	Help parents and early childhood providers prepare children for school.	**Diane Frentzel**
Read Aloud Delaware	Early literacy service providers	**James Spadola**
Childcare Centers	More than 900 licensed providers	Dept. of Education Office of Early Learning Director John Fisher-Klein
Delaware Libraries	Statewide consortium of 70+ public, academic and special libraries.	**State Librarian Dr. Annie Norman**
Primary & Secondary School Age		
Department of Education	State Cabinet Agency	Secretary Mark Holodick
School districts & charter schools	K-12 education w/ Colonial SD pilot	Various
Reading Assist	K-3 assistance low skill readers	**Caroline O'Neal**
United Way of Delaware	Statewide nonprofit	**Dan Cruce**
Delaware Libraries	Backbone organization	**State Librarian Dr. Annie Norman**
Healthcare systems & insurers		**Greg O'Neill, MaryAnn Faralli**
Adults		
Literacy Delaware	Adult literacy-focused nonprofit	**Cindy Shermeyer**
Delaware Libraries	Backbone organization	**State Librarian Dr. Annie Norman**
Healthcare systems & insurers	Health	**Greg O'Neill, MaryAnn Faralli**
Colleges & universities	Higher Education	**Dorothy Dillard**
DE Dept. of Natural Resources & Environmental Control	State Cabinet Agency	**Martina Johnson**

(Table 3)

Delaware's small size enables opportunities for leadership that might not be possible in larger states. However, redundancies and gaps in services exist, creating the need for infrastructure and platforms to support relationships. Coordination across state departments and organizations that support literacy is still ad hoc; however, the recent formation of the Delaware Literacy Alliance will help strengthen connections. The COVID pandemic highlighted the need for a systematic sustainable approach.

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

Currently, literacy efforts in Delaware are guided or regulated by the age-specific items outlined below. However, in the summer of 2023, the Delaware Literacy Alliance will release a draft literacy plan to coordinate efforts across the lifespan.

- The Delaware Literacy Plan (2019) is provided by the Department of Education, to guide literacy efforts for kindergarten through 12th grade, with emphasis on kindergarten through 3rd grade. It is at the discretion of each school district to implement and abide by the plan.
- 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 ProLiteracy 's Program Standards for Adult Literacy programs.
- State legislation passed in 2022 requires school educators to be trained in the Science of Reading. Specific regulations will be developed. The DE COE is seeking solutions regarding the Science of Reading to share among partners.

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?

The goal of Delaware Communities of Excellence (Delaware COE) is to enhance the quality of life for all Delawareans through 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 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, newly branded as the Delaware Literacy Alliance, began meeting in late 2021 (Year 2) and transitioned to more of a leadership role in Year 3 (see Figure 2). The Advisory Council has several literacy sector-focused subcommittees shown in Figure 2 which include partner organizations directly involved in providing literacy-related services to Delawareans. We also partner with other organizations through individual members of our broad group.

Key Drivers for our DE COE organizations include our commitment to equity, our intention to increase involvement in literacy efforts and/or in education, our desire for systemic change and improvement in Delawareans' quality of life, and our aim to align with other organizations' existing missions.

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

(**Table 4**)

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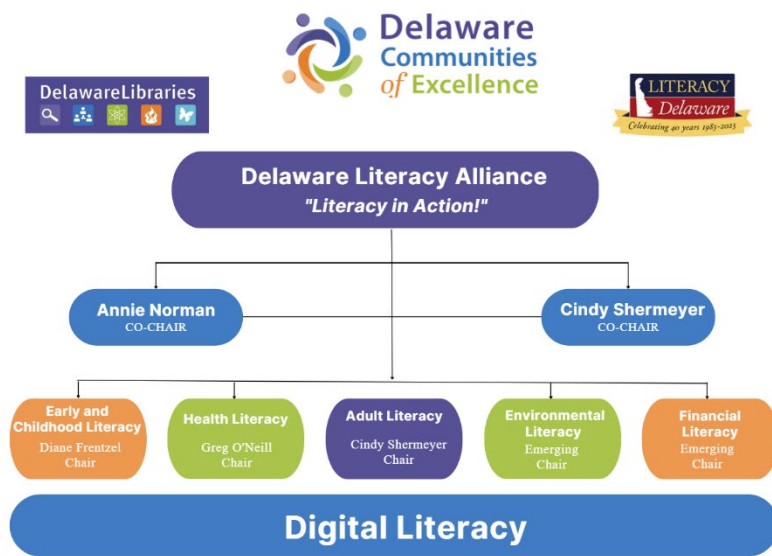

Figure 2

Delaware Communities of Excellence uses a tiered leadership system based on a collective impact methodology. Framed in the Baldrige and COE process, the DE COE uses Delaware Libraries as the backbone organization. Underneath the backbone organization is our advisory council, newly branded as the Delaware Literacy Alliance. This council is comprised of key community stakeholders (See Table 4). We have several subcommittees: health, early child, adult, environmental, and soon to be financial. Note that digital literacy is a facet of most subcommittees work. Each subcommittee has a chair that sits on our advisory council so they may report on progress and successes, as well as find opportunities to collaborate and work through pain points. 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 gaps. Various partners offer programs and services individually, and some are starting to work together more collaboratively as awareness of our literacy efforts grows. For example, Delaware Libraries provides free Northstar Digital Literacy assessments and training programs at local libraries and partners with several workforce development programs to offer this service at their training sites so participants have easier access. Literacy Delaware continues to grow its adult literacy services statewide. Health and early childhood literacy efforts are underway by various subcommittee member organizations. A multi-level literacy dashboard is in development as a communications and accountability tool. In FY2024, DEMEP (Delaware Manufacturing Extension Partnership) will conduct a Lean Macro Value Stream Mapping process among partners who focus on functional literacy. The Macro VSM will identify gaps and redundancies and help us understand what works and areas for improvement.

(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
University of Delaware's Biden School of Public Policy & Administration • Center for Community Research, Service and Institute for Public Administration, Kids Count Delaware	Data providers
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 as a result of our recently completed 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 in other states and regions. We have also identified potential competitive offerings within Delaware, some of which have become collaborators or members of the Advisory Council: Examples 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 with the Medical Association of Delaware, and the 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. First, the COVID-19 pandemic changed 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. Second, in 2022 the State Legislature mandated training in the "Science of Reading" in new-teacher curricula, which has the potential to improve young students' reading abilities and test scores. Third, understanding of the systemic effects of low literacy levels on society for all ages has grown through the efforts of the DE COE and its partners.

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 literacy's fundamental role 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 literacy-related data sources include:
- Delaware Department of Education – Reading scores for third, 8th and 11th grades, as well as high school graduation rates and college and career ready 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.
- Delaware Libraries data - number of library card holders, number of print and eBooks circulated

Data limitations include:
- Data within state agencies is in silos and may be outdated.
- 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

DE COE Core Competencies	Relationship to Mission
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.
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.

Avantages:	Challenges:
•33 public libraries: proximity	•Siloed/unknown fragmentation of data
•Existing connections: foundation	•Partners
•Communication strategy	•Own participants
•Strong foundation	•Adult literacy: recognizing as an issue
•Large literacy resource footprint	•Broad lifelong literacy effort
•Willingness around early childhood	•Poverty
•Strong digital, workforce, economic mobility	• Awareness, education, engagement- connectivity; purposeful collaboration with partners & libraries
•All ages	•Flooded with initiatives
•High level of trust	•Access to real time data
•Accessible political arena	•Affordable dashboard, data collection and analysis solution.
•Support from Government Efficency & Accountablity Review Board (GEAR) and Delaware Quality Partnership (DQP).	•Coordination across state departments is currently ad hoc, not systematic or sustainable.

(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 its own performance improvement system, key elements in place in partner organizations' systems are regularly 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.
- LEAN, PDSA, and sharing progress with our national advisors who use their expertise and experiences to ensure continued growth and evolution of our work.