



California Library Literacy Services Frequently Asked Questions

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What is the definition of an adult learner?

According to California Library Literacy Services (CLLS) guidelines, an adult learner enrolled in CLLS Adult Literacy Services (ALS) is an individual who:

- is 16 years or older and not concurrently enrolled in high school or another degree-granting program or college-degree program (Career Online High School (COHS) learners may count as a CLLS learner if they receive regular individual tutoring) (See "[Can you clarify 'are not enrolled in a degree-granting institution'?](#)" for more clarification.)
- seeks literacy services for themselves in English and can do the intake interview in English
- are willing to be assessed and complete an intake interview and assessment that includes reading and writing skills
- has established one or more personal learning goals related to reading and/or writing
- spends a large proportion of their tutoring or instructional time working on improving reading skills and/or writing skills
- has attended at least two tutoring sessions in the current fiscal year

What is the definition of an ESL learner?

According to CLLS guidelines, an English as a Second Language (ESL) learner enrolled in CLLS ESL Services is an individual who:

- is 16 years or older and not concurrently enrolled in high school or another degree-granting program or college-degree program (COHS learners may count as a CLLS learner if they receive regular individual tutoring)
- seeks literacy services for themselves although they may not be able to do the intake interview in English
- are willing to be assessed and complete an intake interview and assessment that includes listening and speaking skills
- has established one or more personal learning goals, including communication-related (listening and speaking) goals
- spends a large proportion of their tutoring or instructional time working on English language acquisition, conversational fluency, and pronunciation
- has attended at least two tutoring sessions in the current fiscal year

In what ways can an adult learner and ESL learner receive instruction?

According to CLLS guidelines, an adult learner and ESL learner can receive instruction in the following formats:

- One-on-one tutoring
- Small group instruction in groups that average 2 to 8 people
- Class instruction in groups that average 9 or more attendees

NOTE: To offer large group learning sessions, there should be a justifiable need for this service that does not duplicate the efforts of community partners or other organizations in your community.

- Computer lab time with some help from staff and volunteers

What does it mean to encumber funds?

Encumbered funds are funds that have been deposited in the awardee's accounting system and for which a budget has been provided to and approved by the State Library. CLLS funds must be expended or encumbered by June 30 of the fiscal year in which the funds are awarded. Beginning, the 2024-2025 fiscal year, encumbered CLLS funds must be spent by the final report submission date for the program period.

NOTE: This change will take effect in the 2024-2025 CLLS program period. For the 2023-2024 CLLS program period, the encumbrance deadline will be December 31, 2024.

Does the encumbrance deadline apply to CLLS ESL Services funds?

CLLS ESL Services encumbered funds follow the same encumbrance deadlines as Adult Literacy Services and Family Literacy Services (FLS) award funds. In general, we encourage libraries to spend their CLLS funds by June 30 when possible. However, we do understand this may not be possible for all CLLS programs. Please note: All ESL Services funds must be fully expended by June 30, 2026, in accordance with the deadline set by the California State Legislature. Please let your grant monitor know if you expect to encumber your CLLS funds, including your ESL Services funds.

Can we encumber 2024-2025 CLLS funding and when is the deadline to spend encumbered funds?

2024-2025 CLLS funds can be encumbered by May 31, 2025, and spent by the final report submission deadline for the program period.

NOTE: For 2023-2024, the encumbrance deadline is December 31, 2024. Please let your grant monitor know if you expect to encumber your 2023-2024 CLLS funds before or by May 31, 2024.

Can family literacy programs target caregivers with children of any age?

Family literacy programs may target caregivers with children of any age to serve the need or aspiration expressed by adult learners. Family literacy programs may also offer programming that supports their adult learners in non-parent roles, such as their own role as a child, grandparent, sibling, etc. Examples of possible family literacy services programs include:

- Early literacy programs for families with young children to build caregiver capacity to support children in their family. Possible programs include Raising a Reader, Every Child

Ready to Read, Mother Goose on the Loose and Read & Rise.

- Family literacy programs supporting caregivers with children beginning the college application process.
- Family literacy programs for grandparents to build their digital skills to better communicate with their grandchildren.
- Family literacy programs for children of older adults who would like to learn caregiving skills to better support their aging parents.
- Family literacy programs that support learning about mental health resources for family members of all ages.

NOTE: CLLS FLS is intended to serve enrolled adult learners and their families or eligible-but-not-yet-enrolled adult learners and their families. FLS programming should not be offered exclusively in non-English languages, although programs that serve ESL learners may offer bilingual or multilingual programming and materials. Throughout the duration of CLLS ESL funding period provided by the State (2021-2026), enrolled ESL learners or eligible-but-not-yet-enrolled ESL learners may be counted and reported as FLS program participants.

What are some considerations when developing a CLLS family literacy program?

When thinking about what may or may not qualify as a CLLS family literacy program, consider the following questions:

1. Does the program target low-literacy adults? If it doesn't, then it is not a CLLS family literacy program. We do encourage CLLS learners to attend general library programs, including children's and family programs, as it helps those learners meet a goal. However, a general library program is not a CLLS family literacy program, even if CLLS learners attend.
2. Does the invited audience include only the adults enrolled in CLLS services (and their families)? If so, it's a CLLS family literacy program. Those families can bring friends who may be interested in enrolling, but it's not open to the general public.
3. Is it a one-time outreach program that targets low-literacy adults? If so, it can count as family literacy outreach, and you may count the proportion of attendees that fall under the Level 1 and 2 [PIAAC Skills Map](#) statistics for your county.
4. Is it a multi-session or ongoing library program, and not just an outreach activity? There are different criteria for ongoing regular library programs versus CLLS family literacy programs. CLLS family literacy programs are meant to be run by CLLS staff, preferably working with Youth Services/Children's staff from the library. CLLS family literacy services are not general programming for parents and children, whether this programming is in English or another language.
 - a. At a regular library program, like a storytime (which make include emergent literacy tips for parents) or parent engagement program, literacy staff can present initial information about adult literacy services at a program managed by youth services, and that activity is outreach rather than being a CLLS family literacy activity.

- b. However, for an ongoing library program to count as family literacy and learners to count as enrolled learners, literacy staff should collect information and do assessments/roles & goals setting with the adults involved, and then provide services that help adults work toward those goals and skills. Once the learners meet those basic criteria, they can be counted as CLLS enrollees. If the majority of participants meet these criteria and the others qualify for services but are not yet enrolled, the ongoing program can reasonably be counted as a CLLS program.
- c. If the program primarily serves those adults who don't qualify for adult literacy services, or the program does not seek to enroll adults in literacy services, it would not count as a CLLS family literacy program.

Can you clarify an “eligible-but-not-yet-enrolled” adult learner?

An eligible-but-not-yet-enrolled adult learner is an adult learner who qualifies for your adult literacy program, but they have not undergone an intake and assessment to formally enroll in your adult literacy program. Eligible-but-not-yet-enrolled adult learners may participate in family literacy programs with the goal of their eventual enrollment in your adult literacy program.

When do CLLS programs interested in ESL programs apply for funding?

The application period for 2021-2026 CLLS ESL funds has closed, and all funds have been awarded. No new libraries may apply for these funds.

Can you clarify “are not enrolled in a degree-granting institution”?

One eligibility requirement for both adult learners and ESL learners is they should not be “concurrently enrolled in high school or another degree-granting institution.” Even though CLLS programs have a lot of local control to create their own guidelines for learner admittance, adult learners and ESL learners should not be enrolled in either high school or for-credit classes that fulfill graduation requirements at a college/university upon enrollment in your CLLS program. However, learners may be enrolled in adult school or working towards an alternative diploma program, HiSET program, or GED program. If a learner subsequently enrolls in college/university while already enrolled in your CLLS program, you may determine whether the learner still qualifies for your CLLS program.

What is considered a “local match”?

A local match can be any funds paid for by the library jurisdiction or another funder to support your CLLS Adult Literacy Services, Family Literacy Services, or ESL Services. These are cash (not in-kind) expenses paid by non-CLLS funds. All matching funds must be spent on allowable CLLS expenses only (Please refer to the CLLS Allowable and Unallowable Expenses Guidelines). Only cash-matching funds should be included in your local match. Non-monetary, in-kind contributions should not be reported as part of your local match.

NOTE: Adult Literacy Services suggests a minimum \$15,000 local match, which is a factor in the CLLS Adult Literacy Services award calculation. Family Literacy Services and ESL Services do not require a local match. However, if your program does provide matching funds for Family Literacy Services or ESL Services, please report these funds as a local match.

Can indirect costs be charged to the CLLS awards?

Indirect funds can be charged to each of your CLLS awards and each of your local match budget columns. Indirect costs can be charged up to 10% of the subtotal of each budget column. If you expect to charge indirect to your CLLS awards, please include these figures in your application budget.

Where should the COHS program be reported on the application?

If you offer a COHS program that matches your COHS students with literacy tutors for one-on-one tutoring, then you may report those COHS students as adult or ESL learners. Because staff time on COHS is reported separately to the state, a COHS learner working only with a staff member and not meeting with a volunteer tutor on a regular basis should not be reported. However, if your COHS program is typically open to the public and runs separately from your CLLS program, then COHS program information should not be included in CLLS application or report forms.

What if we do not know our authorized representative(s)?

If you do not know who your authorized representative(s) to sign a specific document are, please contact your library's administration. If you need further clarification of the documents needing signature, please contact your grant monitor. Together, you may be able to identify the best person to sign the document(s) requiring signature.

Should we report non-literacy staff salaries who occasionally help in literacy in the matching costs section?

If a non-literacy staff person spends more than .025 FTE (roughly one hour per week) providing direct support in your CLLS programs, their corresponding burdened salaries, wages, and benefits may be reported (but is not required to be reported) as a matching cost for your CLLS program. If a non-literacy staff person spends less than .01 FTE or provides only indirect support to your CLLS program, then their corresponding salaries, wages and benefits may be reported as an indirect cost.

What if a staff person's FTE varies from week to week?

We understand that a staff person's time may change from week to week. In the application and report forms, we are looking for an average time a staff person has worked in your CLLS programs. For applications and report forms, we expect staff time and corresponding burdened salaries, wages, and benefits to only be reported for a staff person's work in a CLLS

program. You should calculate FTE based on the number of hours worked in a year rather than in a single week.

Please remember that if any staff member works less than a full year, you will need to calculate their FTE based on a full year; for example, a .5 FTE staff member who only worked January to June would be reported as .25 FTE and a 1.0 FTE staff member who worked October to June would be reported as .75 FTE.

If we have a volunteer who volunteers in more than one program, how are they counted?

If a volunteer spends time supporting more than one CLLS program, they should only be counted in their primary program. For example, a volunteer who has an adult learner and leads a conversation club should be reported as either an adult literacy volunteer or an ESL volunteer not both. Their instructional hours, however, should be documented in the corresponding program.

For example, if the tutor mentioned in the previous example spends 100 hours tutoring their adult learner and 50 hours leading a conversation club, then this tutor can be classified as an adult literacy tutor. The 100 hours of adult literacy tutoring will be documented under adult literacy instructional hours and their 50 hours of conversation club facilitation will be documented under ESL instructional hours. Any time spent preparing for these programs will be documented under “non-tutoring volunteer” hours.

What types of data do I need to collect?

The overall data collection for ALS programs and ESL programs will be similar for both learners and tutors. ESL program data for both learners and tutors should be counted separately from ALS program data as it will be reported separately. ESL program data will be reported separately because ESL Services is supported through a separate one-time funding by the State of California. Collecting this data separately means that the success and effectiveness of ESL services across the state can be measured and reported to the State Legislature. The State Library will continue to evaluate data collection types for ESL services during the first three years of funding.

NOTE: There is a new, optional section where programs can report volunteer time for any volunteer that provided family literacy programs or services.

Learner Data Points To Be Collected for 2024-2025

Learner data points that should be collected for adult literacy and ESL learners include:

- Learner education level
- First or primary language of ESL learners (only for ESL programs)
- Learners who are active and learners who are waiting (including those who are waiting to be matched or rematched and using technology for self-directed learning)

- activities)
- Learner instructional hours
- Types of learner instruction (one-on-one/groups/large classes/technology)
- Roles & Goals data (including # of learners who set a goal, # of learners who are in-progress toward a goal, # of learners who met a goal)

Volunteer Data Points To Be Collected for 2024-2025

Volunteer data points that should be collected for adult literacy, family literacy, and ESL volunteer tutors include:

- Volunteer instructional hours
- Other volunteer hours (including learning session preparation time)

How does ESL align with other CLLS programs?

ESL funding is intended to expand CLLS services to those who have not been traditionally served in CLLS ALS programs—i.e. those learners who do not meet the minimum qualifications of an CLLS adult literacy learner (see [“What is the definition of an adult learner?”](#) and [“What is the definition of an ESL learner?”](#)).

Adult Literacy Services

There are two distinctions between ESL/ALS learners:

- ESL learners are speakers of languages other than English and do not speak English "proficiently"
- ESL learners have primary goals that are speaking/listening oriented

Using these distinctions, CLLS learner eligibility guidelines, and your CLLS program’s internal guidelines for adult learner acceptance, you will be able to distinguish an adult learner from an ESL learner. Please note that a learner can only be recorded in one program. Therefore, a learner is either an adult learner or an ESL learner, which is especially important for any learners crossing over from one program into another. An ESL learner may become an ALS learner at the point that they meet the criteria for English-language adult literacy services. However, for reporting purposes, please classify a learner in only one category (ESL or ALS) for a fiscal year.

NOTE: ALS adult learners can join ESL programming, such as a reading or discussion group. Their learning data should be documented under their primary program.

Family Literacy Services

CLLS FLS is intended to serve enrolled adult learners and their families or eligible-but-not-yet-enrolled adult learners and their families. FLS programming should not be offered only in languages other than English. Throughout the duration of CLLS ESL funding period provided by the State (2021-2026), enrolled ESL learners or eligible-but-not-yet-enrolled ESL learners may be counted and reported as FLS program participants.

Family Literacy Data Collection

There are two sets of data categories to collect for family literacy programs:

- Enrolled adult learner data
 - # of enrolled adult learner families served
 - # of children under 5 years of age in those families served
 - # of children between 5 – 18 years of age in those families served
 - # of family members 19 or older in those families served
- Eligible-but-not-yet enrolled learner data
 - # of eligible-but-not-yet-enrolled adult learner families served
 - # of children under 5 years of age in those families served
 - # of children between 5 – 18 years of age in those families served
 - # of family members 19 or older in those families served

For family literacy programs that are open to both adult learners and the public, there are a few ways to document which families may be eligible-but-not-yet-enrolled for adult literacy services in attendance:

1. Upon registration or prior to the program, conduct a short intake of learner eligibility.
2. Upon attendance of program, conduct a short intake of learner eligibility.
3. Document that the program targets a lower-literacy audience, either through an outreach event (such as one marketed to a specific audience) or within a local library. Using your local educational attainment data (such as that provided by census data or [PIAAC Skills Map](#)), you may take the percentage of the total public in attendance as an estimation of those who may be eligible for adult literacy services. For example, if a program takes place at a school where 50% of parents have not graduated from high school, you can count that proportion of the families attending as eligible. Similarly, with PIAAC data, if 32% of your county’s residents are considered at or below level 1 (those who “can be considered at risk for difficulties using or comprehending print materials”), then 32% of the 150 public families in attendance, or 48 families, can be considered unenrolled but eligible adult learner families.

What if I am awarded CLLS ESL Services funding and also use other funding to offer ESL services?

For programs that are awarded CLLS ESL Services funding and also use other funding to offer ESL services, you may be able to report this additional ESL funding under your CLLS ESL Local match. Additionally, you may be able to count learners served in these programs as a learner. For example, WIOA funding may be counted towards your ESL Local match and learners may be counted as CLLS learners who receive instruction “via large group classes (9 or more people).”

Can a COHS student participate in CLLS?

A COHS student can participate in adult literacy or ESL programs. A COHS student may be counted as a learner in either program if they meet the minimum learner qualifications and

complete an intake, assessment, and goal setting. Many COHS students will not qualify as a CLLS learner, but if a COHS student meets with a volunteer tutor on a regular basis, that learner may be counted as a CLLS learner.