



ILLINOIS LITERACY FOUNDATION

Illinois Literacy Foundation
Board of Directors Meeting
September 9, 2025
12:30 p.m.
Offices of the Secretary of State
115 South LaSalle Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room (Crete)
Chicago, Illinois 60603

MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT

Heather Anichini
Christina de Jong

Claire Demirjian (virtual)
Mo Khan

Michael Mroz
Nate Pietrini (virtual)

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE STAFF PRESENT

Cabell King
Greg McCormick (virtual)

Ted Przybylo
Amy Williams (virtual)

GUESTS PRESENT

Keighty Ward

POINT OF ORDER

Because only 4 of 8 board members were present in the room, a quorum was not present. No votes could be taken at this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mo Khan called the meeting to order at 12:34pm, expressing gratitude to Mr. Mroz, who had been Chair for several years, for help with parliamentary rules.

Mr. Khan reviewed several ILF engagements of the past three months, including appearances at the Park Ridge Public Library Summer Sendoff, a Chicago Stars soccer game, and office hours at the Park Ridge Public Library. As this was Mr. Khan's first meeting as Chair, he expressed that the priority for the year is community building, so our emphasis should be on communication and activity.

MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS

There was no motion to vote minutes of the preceding meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Dr. Anichini reviewed the accounts, including all transactions since the last meeting. The account balance on August 31, 2025, was \$19,738.21.



ADVANCEMENT REPORT

Mr. King summarized advancement activity since the last board meeting. There has been no new revenue, reflecting both the challenges of the present fundraising environment and priorities shifting in the direction of communications and community building. Prompted by Mr. Mroz to say more about the feedback we have received when grants are declined, Mr. King shared:

- There continue to be questions about the ILF's relationship to the state.
- There is not a lot of evidence of the ILF's previous activity, and corporates and foundations are wary to be first.
- Corporate donors like to fund projects that are mission aligned or in the interests of the company.
- Perhaps most significant is the lack of ILF presence online.
- Fundraising is a long game, dependent on relationships.

Since the last Board meeting, legal and ILSOS have begun reconsideration of our self-imposed proscription on private individual donors. The ILF is reviewing possible protocols to make these gifts possible. Mr. Mroz shared that historically, even when the ILF has accepted individual donations, the ILF has not been equipped to accept them (e.g., taking payments by credit card or digital transfer). These are details that would need to be worked out.

Our activity at the Chicago Stars game in August seemed to be successful in terms of growing our mailing list, making connections, and raising the profile of literacy education. The board is eager for direction from ILSOS about the Secretary's appetite to support ILF sports activations. The degree to which tier one clubs (NBA, NFL, NHL, MLB) are likely to get engaged may depend on the Secretary. Without ILSOS, ILF might pursue minor league, community teams, and lower-profile sports.

Keighty Ward, Literacy Works, joined the meeting to share details about how adult education in Illinois is usually funded by state and federal government. Resources from ILSOS increased this year by nearly 20%. But most funding comes from the federal government and from the state through ICCB. Ms. Ward spoke about how funds for adult education from the federal government may significantly decline after FY26 and are likely to come through the Department of Labor, rather than the Department of Education. Consequently, requirements may change to increase the workforce orientation of these funds. Additionally, new (contested) restrictions are emerging regarding applying funds to programs that serve undocumented persons.

Ms. Demirjian proposed that a Strategic Plan might facilitate outreach. Ms. de Jong echoed this idea. Mr. King expressed that it is certainly possible to articulate Strategic Priorities. Dr. Anichini observed that it is hard to develop and implement a Strategic Plan without money.

At 1:22, Dr. Pietrini excused himself

At 1:28, Ms. Ward excused herself

BOARD DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Presently, the board is 8 people. 3 seats remain vacant.

Active board development is on pause for a few months, while we resolve questions about communications, individual donors, and administrative rules. Still, of course, we continue to identify compelling board prospects. Recruitment is possible with any prospect.

Discussing the profile of desired board members:



- Affinity for the work
- A compelling network
- Availability to do work
- Expertise advantageous to the board

Mr. Mroz discussed the challenge of motivating volunteer board members to do work on behalf of the Foundation.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business on the agenda at this meeting. At the urging of Mr. Mroz, Mr. King quickly reviewed several of the issues discussed at the last meeting.

- Volunteer literacy tutor recruitment is on the agenda under New Business.
- We continue to support adult online high school in libraries. With \$10,000-20,000, we could establish adult online high school in a single library branch, and we continue to seek donors. A handful of libraries have expressed interest.
- Tablet-based literacy curriculum in detention centers continues to be an exciting prospect, but it will require a big donor: \$1.5-2.5 million. We will need the right grant opportunity to make this one happen.
- ILF management and legal continue to work on Administrative Rules.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Khan reiterated that the priority at the moment is community building. This priority recommends two kinds of activity: digital communications and in-person events. We are still interested in crowd-based, peer-to-peer fundraising, but we are waiting for permissions from legal and executive teams.

Mr. Khan shared about a few specific possible opportunities: a grant from OpenAI to support AI literacy and AI integration into ILF operations; a proclamation in support of adult literacy from the Mayor of Des Plaines; and a partnership with the What's Your Forte Foundation, which supports young justice-involved and unhoused youth.

Mr. King shared that an ILF Digital Communications Plan has been drafted and reviewed by legal and communications teams. We are waiting for feedback from ILSOS Executive Office. We feel close to permissions to publish social media pages and a newsletter. We are waiting on ILSOS Communications and IT availability to update the website. Mr. King has been assured that they will discover some availability by October. Development of a new website for the ILF may take a few months.

The ILF is obligated to spend donated resources in Central and Northern Illinois on tutor recruitment. The intention is to run principally digital ads. Before we can launch the initiative, social media channels need to be established, so we are waiting, again, on executive approval of the Communications Plan. We also spoke about the challenge of our current bank account. Because the current account is a money market account, only three checks can be written in a month. Mr. Mroz recommended a possible workaround that would require the establishment of an additional checking account.

At 2:02, Ms. Williams excused herself.

Again, the ILF is considering the prospect of private individual donors. The board strongly favors this development, pending necessary approvals.



PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Khan adjourned the meeting at 2:17 p.m.