

# A WORKING SOLUTION FOR A GROWING COMMUNITY



Lincoln is a city filled with tradition — transforming into a city filled with optimism. We are stretching our imagination as our boundaries grow outward.

According to the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce, our state has 80,000 unfilled jobs. Lincoln is no exception. “Now Hiring” signs are just about everywhere.

Lincoln cannot continue to grow and evolve if hundreds of jobs in manufacturing, healthcare, education, hospitality, and retail continue to go unfilled. Thousands of Lincolniters understand what the “Now Hiring” signs mean. But because they lack the necessary skills to fill the vacancies, they and their would-be employers continue to wait.

Lincoln is also a community with a special group of people who could fill this need. People whose ambitions and expectations mirror those of the place they now call home. They are ready to join in and push our progress further. But they face barriers.

We must speed up the time it takes to prepare newly-arrived foreign professionals and under-skilled adults for jobs they desperately need, and jobs our employers are hoping to fill. **The business of growing Lincoln cannot wait. The time is now.**

## LINCOLN – A WELCOMING REFUGE

Lincoln has been a destination for thousands of refugees and immigrants seeking a safe, permanent home and people hoping for opportunities to fully utilize their talents and skills.

The biggest challenge for most of our new neighbors has been language.

Learning a new language as an adult requires countless hours of determination and hard work.

Lincoln Literacy has been helping people overcome language barriers for more than 30 years. Today, we are doing even more through an initiative we call **Bridgeway to a Better Life.**



In addition to teaching English, Lincoln Literacy offers classes in computer literacy, financial literacy, and GED preparation. Students get assistance preparing for their driver's license tests. They gain occupational skills for paraprofessional and school-based jobs, manufacturing, nursing assistant careers, and more. We also teach English at several area employer worksites for New American employees to be successful at the workplace.

In 2022, Lincoln Literacy opened doors of opportunity to 1,405 students from 48 countries. Through a small but growing staff and the dedication of more than 150 volunteer tutors, including 48 one-to-one tutoring pairs, Lincoln Literacy offered nearly 100 group classes each week at 12 sites across the city, partnering with dozens of organizations and companies throughout the Lincoln community.

## SUCCESS, NEEDS, AND OPPORTUNITY

Lincoln Literacy's **Bridgeway to a Better Life** initiative has changed the lives of so many grateful people hoping to create a brighter future for themselves and their families. Their success and the success of this program have created additional needs for Lincoln Literacy.

For nearly 20 years, Lincoln Literacy operated out of a rented property at 9th & G Streets, which we outgrew years ago. The hundred-year-old building, originally an immigrant-owned grocery store, had only one classroom. Accessibility was a challenge. There was not a space large enough to accommodate most meetings, and our one conference room lacked technology for hybrid in-person and virtual meetings, which have become a norm. Staff members worked in crowded offices where private meetings were nearly impossible to schedule.

Remaining at the same location was simply not an option.

In early 2022, Lincoln Literacy received an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant of \$700,000 designated specifically for the purchase of a building to serve as a skill-building center enabling us to grow our services to an increasing number of adult learners.

A larger, more efficient space will enable the **Bridgeway to a Better Life** program to help newcomers and under-skilled adults overcome deficits in English fluency, reading and writing, basic math, and computer and financial literacy. As their skills increase, we will offer them preparatory programs leading to certifications for careers in high-demand fields where they can continue on their path to the American dream.



# FINDING A NEW HOME

As Lincoln Literacy began our search for a larger, more suitable facility, we kept our sights on our students' requirements and circumstances.

For maximum impact and accessibility for both students and volunteers, we sought a building of at least 7,500 square feet located within the city's low-income, central zone neighborhoods. Additional needs included a large multi-purpose space, multiple classrooms, administrative offices, and flexible space for expansion. The building needed to be ADA accessible and have potential to be outfitted for educational technology and energy efficiency within our budget.

We also needed parking space for two passenger vans and at least 12 other spots, and a location on or near a main thoroughfare, with bus transportation nearby.

Lincoln Literacy has purchased a property south of downtown that will meet our needs. The move-in ready property at 1023 Lincoln Mall accommodates Lincoln Literacy programs and staff in just over 4,000 square feet, including some common areas, with space that is currently leased to others that will provide additional operating income and potentially give us room to grow. This modern building has had a new roof, windows, and HVAC recently, and is completely wired for the technology we need. Given the tight real estate market, we are fortunate to have found a building in the right location that will allow us to better serve our students and our community.

## MAKING THE MOVE

The building we recently moved into meets Lincoln Literacy's current and future needs. We purchased it for \$1,375,000. Our \$700,000 ARPA grant may only be used for the purchase of a building. The Lincoln Literacy Board of Directors has set a goal of raising \$1.9 million (including the ARPA grant) to purchase and furnish the building, make renovations, and establish a maintenance and renovation reserve to ensure the property remains suitable for decades to come. Thanks to generous donors, we've raised most of that and have just \$368,950 to raise.

Because the purchase had to be completed by Spring 2023, Lincoln Literacy secured a mortgage. The capital campaign will ensure this bridge financing can be repaid within our board's goal of three years.

Currently, two tenants are renting parts of the building. The rental income will cover a material portion of ongoing maintenance costs and mortgage payments. In time, the spaces currently rented could be occupied by Lincoln Literacy as our services expand.



# AN INVESTMENT IN OUR PEOPLE. AN INVESTMENT IN OUR CITY.

Lincoln Literacy is appealing to the community, asking for philanthropic support from individuals, foundations, businesses, and partner organizations.

The new Lincoln Literacy skill-building center will have an immediate positive impact on Lincoln's families striving to become contributing members to their community.

- Our neighborhoods will benefit from an increasing number of working adults with higher incomes, who take pride in the places they call "home."
- Our local businesses, organizations, and institutions will be strengthened as more skilled, diverse, and grateful people join Lincoln's workforce.

Fundraising for this project is led by Lincoln Literacy's 25-member volunteer Board of Directors. Lincoln Literacy is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

## Will you consider investing in Lincoln's future?

For information on how you can become part of Lincoln Literacy's success story, contact:

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Learn more or give now!



[LincolnLiteracy.org](http://LincolnLiteracy.org)

