



**Contact:**

Clare Zlatic Blankemeyer  
Executive Director | GreenLight Fund Cincinnati  
[cblankemeyer@greenlightfund.org](mailto:cblankemeyer@greenlightfund.org) 513.325.2684

Ivan C. Douglas Jr., National Director  
Leading Men Fellowship | The Literacy Lab  
[idouglas@theliteracylab.org](mailto:idouglas@theliteracylab.org) 202.670.2483

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## **Local, National Organizations Partner To Launch \$4.6 Million Pre-K Literacy Program in Cincinnati**

*GreenLight Fund Cincinnati and Literacy Lab partner with funders, Cincinnati Public Schools and Cincinnati Preschool Promise to recruit 100+ young men of color to help in local classrooms*

(CINCINNATI, January 20, 2022) -- An innovative public-private partnership has secured \$4.6 million in funding to help combat educational inequality among Cincinnati's youngest students by training and placing more than 100 young men of color as paid literacy tutors in local pre-K classrooms over the next five years.

The funds will allow The Literacy Lab, a national nonprofit organization, to expand their Leading Men Fellowship program to Greater Cincinnati. The Leading Men Fellowship will address educational inequality for pre-K students in Greater Cincinnati while providing professional development opportunities to young men of color from the same communities. The Fellowship recruits, trains, and places men of color aged 18-24 in pre-K classrooms to provide evidence-based literacy support. In addition to implementing an evidence-based, proven set of interventions that help young learners achieve Kindergarten readiness, Fellows infuse needed representation into the educator workforce.

"Every child deserves an opportunity to learn to read and to see themselves in their teachers," said Ivan Douglas, National Director of the Leading Men Fellowship. "We're excited to begin serving the Greater Cincinnati community, which has been so welcoming and collaborative in supporting this work" said Douglas.

The benefit of expanding the Fellowship to Cincinnati was identified by GreenLight Fund Cincinnati, which conducted a rigorous, year-long selection effort to identify an initiative with a proven track record of accelerating student achievement and increasing educator workforce diversity. With the community and its Selection Advisory Council, GreenLight identifies locally

under-served needs of families experiencing poverty, then evaluates and selects nonprofit organizations that can best address those needs.

“By recruiting young men of color to support Kindergarten readiness, the Fellowship brings critically needed representation into the educator workforce,” said Clare Zlatic Blankemeyer, Executive Director of GreenLight Fund Cincinnati. “Research shows that Black students from low-income communities are significantly more likely to attend college when they have been taught by at least one Black educator.”

For the Greater Cincinnati launch, a robust multi-year funding model will help drive the sustainability of Leading Men Fellowship. Partners include:

- The Ohio General Assembly approved, and Governor DeWine signed, a bill that appropriates \$3,000,000 for the Leading Men Fellowship in Greater Cincinnati.
- GreenLight Fund Cincinnati is providing start-up technical assistance, local coalition building, and \$600,000 in early-stage funding to support its scale to the region.
- Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr. Foundation awarded The Literacy Lab \$500,000 as part of a multi-year investment for Leading Men in the Cincinnati region.

The expansion is also supported by funding partners Accelerate Great Schools and the Gladys and Ralph Lazarus Education Fund at Greater Cincinnati Foundation.

“We are excited to welcome the Leading Men Fellowship to Ohio,” shares Interim State Superintendent, Dr. Stephanie K. Siddens. “The Literacy Lab has a proven track record of successful implementation with impactful results for both students and Fellows. As one of many responses to the continuing pandemic, this initiative brings critical supports into preschool for our youngest learners, aligned to Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement.”

The program also brings meaningful benefits to the Fellows it employs. Each Fellow is paid \$15 per hour, receives a monthly transportation stipend, a uniform, and a \$2,500 scholarship—all in addition to the deep workforce training that the jobs offer. This provides a critical response amid a workforce crisis impacted by the ongoing COVID pandemic.

Leslie Maloney, Senior Vice President, Education Program Manager at the Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr. Foundation sees this as “a multi-faceted initiative that can deeply impact early literacy proficiency, representation in the education community, & awareness of opportunities for postsecondary education pathways. But what I find most compelling is the sense of pride and self-esteem that these Fellowships can -- and do -- bring to young men of color.”

The Literacy Lab will begin recruitment immediately to place 20 Fellows at the start of the 2022-23 school year in neighborhood preschools with the greatest needs, including in Cincinnati Public Schools and Cincinnati Preschool Promise providers. The following year 30 Fellows will be hired, then 40 Fellows in each of the two subsequent years after that, driving significant improvement in Kindergarten readiness among 2,500 young scholars.

### **About The Literacy Lab**

The Literacy Lab is an education non-profit whose mission is to provide students who are historically and systemically marginalized with individualized reading instruction to increase literacy skills, leading to greater success in school and increased opportunities in life. The Literacy Lab accomplishes this by empowering members of the community to serve as full-time literacy tutors in elementary and early childhood classrooms to close the literacy achievement gap and build the teacher pipeline. The Leading Men Fellowship currently operates in Baltimore, Maryland; Central Virginia; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Washington DC. The Fellowship will launch in Atlanta, Georgia; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Phoenix, Arizona beginning with the 2022-23 school year.

For more information, please visit [theliteracylab.org](http://theliteracylab.org)

### **About GreenLight Fund**

The GreenLight Fund helps open opportunities for children, youth and families experiencing poverty by engaging deeply with the community and running a consistent annual process to: elevate priority issues not yet being addressed; invest in innovative, proven programs that have a significant, measurable social impact; and galvanize local support to accelerate the selected program's launch and ensure growth and long-term viability. Started in Boston in 2004, the nonprofit venture philanthropy organization launched GreenLight Cincinnati in 2016. GreenLight Cincinnati has supported the expansion of three prior portfolio organizations: Center for Employment Opportunities, UpTogether (formerly Family Independence Initiative), and First Place for Youth's My First Place program at NewPath. GreenLight cities include Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Cincinnati, Detroit, Kansas City, Philadelphia, the San Francisco Bay Area and the Twin Cities.

For more information, please visit [greenlightfund.org/cincinnati](http://greenlightfund.org/cincinnati)

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