

Literacy/ESL

## Adult Literacy XPRIZE Down to Five Finalists

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**XPRIZE**—the global leader in designing and operating world-changing incentive competitions—and its sponsors, have awarded \$100K to each of the five finalist teams in the \$7M Barbara Bush Foundation **Adult Literacy XPRIZE**, presented by the Dollar General Literacy Foundation. Launched in 2015, the competition challenges teams to develop mobile applications for existing smart devices that result in the

greatest increase in literacy skills among participating adult learners.

XPRIZE also launched the \$1M Communities Competition, a 15-month long national competition that will challenge organizations, communities and individuals to recruit adults with low literacy skills to download and use the apps developed by the winning team(s), with an aggregate goal of engaging and transforming the lives of one million adult learners in the U.S.

“More than 36 million adults in the U.S. lack basic English literacy, yet only five percent have access to educational services,” said Shlomy Kattan, executive director of the Adult Literacy XPRIZE. “With the advancement of our finalist teams and the beginning of this new phase of community involvement, we are one step closer to dramatically increasing access to adult basic education and English language learning for millions of learners, helping individuals and families gain the skills they need to unlock new opportunities and improve their lives.”

“We know that it’s lack of opportunity – not lack of motivation – that prevents millions of our country’s adult learners from gaining vital literacy skills. That’s why we are 100% committed to developing scalable solutions that will vastly expand our reach to those who need help,” said Chris Frangione, board member and interim CEO of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. “The Adult Literacy XPRIZE is our single largest investment to date to revolutionize the future of adult education, and an incredible first step to leverage the power of technology to disrupt the cycle of isolation, lack of opportunity and poverty for low-literate adults and their families.”

“Over the past 25 years, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation has invested in programs that have helped millions of individuals learn to read, prepare for the high school equivalency exam, and learn English,” said Denine Torr, Dollar General’s senior director of community initiatives. “We couldn’t be more thrilled that we are now on the cusp of empowering millions more Americans to improve their lives through literacy.”

The following five finalist teams were selected from an original pool of 109 teams representing 15 countries:

- **AmritaCREATE, Amrita University (Amritapuri, Kerala, India)** – Inspired by Amrita University’s Chancellor AMMA and led by Dr. Prema Nedungadi, this team of educators and developers have created a personalized learning app along with engaging, culturally appropriate e-content linked to life skills.
- **AutoCognita (Hong Kong, China)** – Led by Frank Ho, the team applies the constructivist learning approach to engage learners through action. Adult learners effectively acquire basic literacy, numeracy and life skills through a comprehensive curriculum and sound pedagogy.
- **Cell-Ed (Oakland, CA)** – Led by Dr. Jessica Rothenberg-Aalami, this team brings more than 20 years of EdTech experience with low income, low-literate adults in the U.S. and worldwide by offering on-demand essential skills, micro-lessons and personalized coaching on any mobile device, without internet.
- **Learning Upgrade (San Diego, CA)** – Led by Vinod Lobo, the team helps students learn English and math the fun way through songs, video, games and rewards.
- **People For Words (Dallas, TX)** – Led by Southern Methodist University’s Simmons School of Education and Human Development, in collaboration with SMU’s Guildhall and Literacy Instruction for Texas, the People ForWords team has developed a mobile game based on an archeological adventure storyline to help adult learners improve their English reading skills.

A \$3M grand prize will be awarded to the team with the best performance across all adult learners over a 15-month, 12,000-person field test, currently ongoing in Los Angeles, Dallas, and Philadelphia and concluding in October. A panel of expert judges will analyze the results and the winner will be announced in early 2019. Two \$1M Achievement Prizes will also be awarded to the two teams with the best performance in each of the two key demographic groups: native English speakers and English language learners.

In the Communities Competition, a total of \$1M will be awarded, with \$500K available for teams who submit the most innovative, feasible and scalable plans, and \$500K for teams who persuade the most adult learners to download and consistently use the learning apps, with the winning teams’ shares determined by the number of adult learners they engage.

Education institutions, non-profits, NGOs, government agencies, companies, corporations and individuals are encouraged to register through the [Communities Competition website](#) and complete an application by December 21, 2018.

For more information about the finalist teams and the Communities Competition, visit [adultliteracy.xprize.org](#) and [communities.xprize.org](#).