

GATHERING IDEAS 2009
09-GI-005

Project Name: Connecting the Dots – Early Learning Systems and Public Libraries

Library, group, or person submitting proposal Fort Vancouver Regional Library District

Library Name, if different _____

1. Briefly describe your idea for the use of LSTA funding (limit your response to approximately ½ page):

This project will demonstrate the effectiveness of using public libraries as a hub for community-based early learning initiatives.

The multi-year project will show how public libraries strengthen early learning systems in local communities. LSTA funds will be used to

- Document and describe the various early learning initiatives that involve public libraries with partner organizations within Washington State
- Enable local libraries to evaluate their established early learning programs and services in order to build an inventory of research-based models within the state.
- Provide funding for innovative expansion of current programs that provide opportunities to increase knowledge and documentation of best practices.
- Implement proven models in new communities.

The project would be phased over several years

- First phase is documentation of current programs (their goals, project structure, community partners, and outcomes). Public libraries would be invited to participate in evaluation of programs. Institutions and/or organizations with research capabilities would be identified to provide the evaluation and to build a group of research providers that libraries could work with on this or other projects.
- Second phase is evaluation of programs using a variety of research techniques. Those public libraries participating would participate in the development of the evaluation for their particular services.
- Third phase would involve funding projects
 - improve current projects based on the evaluation
 - initiate innovative projects to increase our knowledge of effective practices
 - implement proven models in new communities
- Fourth phase would involve final reports and documentation; publishing results; and establishment of ongoing evaluation techniques.

Library Council of Washington
Gathering Ideas for Future Statewide Projects
FY2009 Process

2. Briefly describe why funding of this idea is important to the Washington library community (limit your response to approximately ½ page):

Washington State has positioned itself to be a leader in support of early learning. The Department for Early Learning was approved by the legislature in 2006. That same year Thrive by Five Washington was created as a public/private partnership to support early learning initiatives. Foundation support from a number of organizations is aligned with state policy to invest in systems that cross over agencies at the state and local levels. A key requirement of all of the funding partners is that programs be research-based and that they be community-based collaborative efforts.

Public libraries across the state have taken an active role to support early learning, particularly in the area of emergent literacy. Through Washington State Library's efforts, every public library has had the opportunity to introduce the research-based Every Child Ready to Read program into their local communities. Although public libraries have had access to research based program materials, there has been little documentation about the effectiveness of various models of program delivery or various collaboration models. Without this research, public libraries are at a disadvantage when they try to secure additional funds either at the local, state, or national level.

In 2006 the Public Library Directors formed a task force to examine how public libraries interact with the early childhood system in Washington State. The task force identified the lack of outcome based evaluation models and lack of documentation of best practices as a significant problem; one that prevented libraries from being seen as key providers of early learning services and that prevented public libraries from securing local, state, and national funds.

This project would provide valuable information to the Washington library community. It would enhance library development by providing documentation on a range of delivery models that could be replicated by different sizes of libraries serving different population groups. Public libraries contribute to early learning in the area of emergent literacy and as a community hub. Literacy would be advanced in the state by providing funding for innovative expansion of programs and for replication of programs that have been proven effective. Libraries would have documentation to show their relevance in their communities and to promote the benefits of partnership and collaboration with the local library.

3. Briefly describe the outcome that is expected should the idea be funded. In other words, how will we know if the project has been successful and has achieved its goals? (limit your response to approximately ½ page):

This project would enable public libraries to identify and document effective early learning service practices. Libraries with current programs would be able to evaluate those programs, improve their services, and further develop models that could be replicated. Communities without the resources to develop their own models would receive start-up funds to replicate a proven model at a scale appropriate to their community and with documentation that would support local funding efforts.

Outcomes would include:

- Documentation of best practices, for example:
 - Effective techniques for reaching low income parents and their children (or other target groups)
 - Programs that result in increased emergent literacy practices among parents and child-care providers
- Demonstration of the public library as a learning hub
 - Development and documentation of effective collaborative models
 - Increase in use of community based resources
- Research findings that demonstrate the effectiveness of public library early learning programs.
- Increased access to research-based evaluation for public libraries
- Increased number of libraries participating in local early learning collaborations.

General Information

Which library types are intended as the primary beneficiaries of this project? (check all that apply)

Academic (private and public two-year and four-year academic institutions)

Public (libraries organized under RCW 27.12)

School (private and public K-12 schools)

Special (business and industry, law, medical, other government, tribal, other)

If other, specify: _____

The intended beneficiaries of the project? (check the primary beneficiary)

Library staff

Library users or potential library users

A specific group of staff or users, or a potential user group. Name the target beneficiaries(s): Children, their parents and child care providers

(e.g., children, adults, disadvantaged, remote access library users, unserved community members, reference staff, IT staff, students)

The activities needed to implement this project are envisioned to include (check all that apply):

User training

Staff training

Grants

Development of best practices

Demonstration of emerging technology or practices

Other, please explain:

Development of evaluation methodologies and practices;

Publication of findings

Demonstration projects for innovative services`

Considering the outcome desired, how long should the project continue? 4 years
(Note that most projects are from one year to four years in length.)

Which Library Council priorities support the idea you are submitting (check all that apply)

Increase information access for the people of Washington

Advance literacy in the state of Washington

Demonstrate how libraries educate, empower and elevate people, communities, and democratic society by providing free and equitable access to all types of information.

Serve underserved, unserved, and culturally diverse communities and populations

Enhance the skills and knowledge of library staff

Preserve library collections