**TO:** PLA Board of Directors

**RE:** PLA Transformation Report

**DATE:** January 11, 2021

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:** Information

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:** N/A

**DRAFT OF MOTION:** N/A

**PLA Strategic Plan Goal: Transformation**

* ***PLA advances public libraries’ transformation from a library focus to a community focus, to meet the specific needs of people and communities.***

**TASK FORCE ON FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY**

*Submitted by Scott Allen, Deputy Director*

The Task Force had its busiest year yet in 2020. The group meet almost monthly, and individual members often had 1-2 additional PLA meetings each month to plan and present in the Advancing Family Engagement In Public Libraries Professional Development Series (covered elsewhere in this report). Executing cohort 1 of the Advancing Family Engagement series and then planning cohorts 2 and 3 for 2021 required substantial time and commitment. Outside that work, the Task Force also planned and presented a half day preconference at PLA 2020, presented webinars for partner organizations Zero to Three and the National Association for Family, Community and School Engagement, and kicked off its IMLS-funded project “Exploring a program co‐design approach to better serve and engage low‐income, Latinx communities.” Furthermore, a subcommittee completed its white paper on computational thinking, published it and a complementary blog post in Public Libraries, and presented two virtual educational sessions about the topic.

**IMLS LATINX GRANT**

*Submitted by Scott Allen, Deputy Director*

PLA was awarded $99,948 under the IMLS National Leadership Planning Grant: Community Catalyst category for a September 2020-August 2021 project, entitled “Exploring a program co‐design approach to better serve and engage low‐income, Latinx communities. By the end of 2020, PLA and its partner, National Center for Families Learning (NCFL), had contracted with three libraries of different sizes – the Dallas (TX) Public Library, Arapahoe Libraries in Sheridan, CO, and the Forest Grove (OR) City Library – and helped them establish internal teams including two Latinx parent partners. PLA also developed a member survey to explore strategies and barriers to engaging Latinx community members, which will be executed in January 2021. By spring 2021, each participating library will hold focus groups with a dozen or more Latinx parents to explore barriers and strategies. The project will produce a white paper and toolkit by late spring 2021.

**MICROSOFT COLLABORATIONS**

**DigitalLead: Rural Libraries Creating New Possibilities**

**Public WiFi Access Micro Grant Program**

**Skilling for Employment Post COVID-19**

*Submitted by Scott Allen, Deputy Director*

Microsoft provided PLA with about $600,000 in grant funds to support three initiatives.

In 2019, PLA’s DigitalLead: Rural Libraries Creating New Possibilities program provided 41 libraries serving rural communities with 158 hotspot devices, to initiate lending programs, and 156 desktop and laptop computers, to conduct digital literacy training sessions in the library and community. In November 2020, libraries who received hotspots were surveyed. Sixteen out of 19 respondents were able to use the hotspots despite COVID-19 shutdowns, and many used them for purposes other than circulation to patrons, such as staff work or helping nearby schools conduct remote learning. Nearly all 19 intend to renew their service plans, and other feedback was overwhelmingly positive about the project. A similar survey of libraries who received computers is in process.

In May 2020, in response to the COVID-19 crisis, PLA and Microsoft quickly created a new opportunity, the PLA and Microsoft Public WiFi Access Point Micro Grant Program, to provide WiFi access points to rural libraries to extend their signals into public spaces outside the library. Over 200 libraries applied for the program, suggesting a strong need. By October 2020, PLA confirmed 57 individual access point locations were up and running. Nearly 50 additional library branches are in process of setting up their signals. Both PLA, via a consultant, and Microsoft public relations staff are collecting stories from libraries and WiFi users that show the value of this project and placing them in library and mainstream media.

In September 2020, PLA and Microsoft also launched a new collaboration, Skilling for Employment Post COVID-19. This initiative will help libraries identify existing and new tools for helping community members gain skills for jobs that are well positioned to grow in the future. PLA is promoting free and discounted resources on LinkedIn, GitHub, and Microsoft Learn. A November 2020 webinar, 150 Million New Technology-Oriented Jobs and the Skills Needed to Get Them, registered nearly 500 people. PLA is in the process of contracting with four large urban libraries (Cleveland, New York, Detroit, and El Paso). Each will receive special funding for skilling programs as well as 100 tablet computers to distribute to families impacted by COVID-19.

**BRINGING PUBLIC HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES TOGETHER**

*Submitted by Scott Allen, Deputy Director*

PLA, the National Network of Libraries of Medicine Greater Midwest Region, and the University

of Iowa Prevention Research Center (UIPRC) have compiled the results of a literature search, surveys, and focus groups exploring how public health and public libraries can work together. UIPRC has planned a series of four webinars and six podcasts for the first half of 2021, which PLA will promote.

**ADVANCING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN LIBRARIES: A PLA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES**

*Submitted by Symone Villasenor, Project Manager*

At the time of this report, the PLA team successfully completed the first ever cohort for the [*Advancing Family Engagement in Libraries*](http://www.ala.org/pla/education/onlinelearning/feseries)series. 30 libraries across the country (and a few in Canada!) with a total of 60 participants completed 8 one hour long virtual classroom sessions based upon PLA’s [Ideabook](https://globalfrp.org/content/download/73/436/file/IdeaBook.pdf). Using data that PLA collected from participants via a baseline assessment, additional topic specific assessments, and post session evaluations, PLA staff have made some refinements and additions to the curriculum and structure for the series for 2021. This includes reduction of assessments for participants, shorter breaks of time between virtual classroom sessions, the addition of a final project and final project presentation session for each participating library, as well as the removal of the closed ALA Connect Community for the series. PLA will roll out two cohorts for 2021, cohort 2 which runs from 2/16/2021- 8/10/2021 and cohort 3 which is scheduled for 9/14/21- 3/22/22. Registration is now open for both cohorts with 100 seats available for each.

Sessions will be facilitated by members of the PLA Family Engagement Task Force as well as a new volunteer from Denver Public Library, Sarah McNeil. Like cohort 1, facilitators will create 20-40-minute presentations based upon two separate Ideabook topics. Each virtual classroom session will include either a breakout room portion or other interactive elements such as polls, brainstorming sessions, or exercises. Participants will also be provided with additional readings from the Ideabook and other resources as identified by facilitators.

**DIGITALLEARN.ORG**

*Submitted by Leighann Wood, Program Manager*

In 2020 PLA sold one digitallearn.org subsite making it the 11th library in the subsite portfolio. There were three new courses added to the site curriculum, “Intro to Searching Videos on YouTube,” “Intro to Google Maps,” and “Using MyHealthfinder for Preventive Care”. New marketing and promotional strategies to increase site usage and training for practitioners is continuing to be developed to reach new audiences and to generate additional revenue in 2021 and beyond.

**LIBRARIES LEAD WITH DIGITAL SKILLS**

*Submitted by Leighann Wood, Program Manager*

Over 300 public libraries have been accepted into the Libraries Lead initiative and conducted in-person or virtual digital skills and workforce development programs since the launch in 2019. Due to the pandemic, application submissions were put on pause, but there are 15 states remaining that will be offered $1,000 funding to support programs in 2021. PLA and PPA will continue to offer Spotlight Awards of $3,000 to libraries that have demonstrated excellence in their program offerings. This initiative will continue throughout the remainder of 2021.

**LIBRARIES CONNECTING YOU TO COVERAGE**

*Submitted by Leighann Wood, Program Manager*

As of August 2020, PLA received a third annual grant from Community Catalyst (sourced from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) to fund the training and certification of library practitioners as Certified Application Assistance Counselors (CACs), to fund promotional activities, and to fund educational outreach around health insurance enrollment in the Affordable Care Act. There were 23 public libraries across 14 different states that were awarded funding by PLA in 2020. These libraries were able to train and certify 16 library practitioners as Certified Application Assistance Counselors to assist people with using healthcare.gov to enroll in a health insurance plan while issuing hundreds of thousands of PSAs and promotional materials to their communities. Additionally, two CACs took additional training provided by Out2Enroll to appropriately assist LGBTQIA+ people with the enrollment process. PLA will continue to promote health literacy, Special Enrollment Periods, Medicaid, and CHIP through July. Community Catalyst has been impressed with our project outcomes and has awarded PLA with a separate grant to fund similar activities around Medicaid enrollment in states that need it most. This work will continue to build and expand throughout 2021.

**PUBLICATIONS AND PRODUCTS**

Submitted by Kathleen Hughes, Manager, Publications

*Public Libraries* Magazine

*Public Libraries*, published six times a year, is the official magazine of the Public Library

Association {PLA) and the only ALA magazine devoted exclusively to public libraries. Each issue includes

important industry news, PLA and ALA updates, regular columns and feature articles.

Digital Issues

In 2020 we offered three of six issues in digital format. This was a necessity as we faced supply chain interruptions during COVID-19. As ALA’s budget problems continue, we have decided two issues this year will again be sent digitally (instead of paper), the May/June and July/August issues.

Themes

The *Public Libraries* Advisory Committee selects a theme for each issue. You can see the editorial calendar for the remainder of 2021 [here](http://www.ala.org/pla/resources/publications/publiclibraries/writeforpl).

Circulation Numbers

Personal Members 9006 + Subscribers 370 = 9,376 total.

*Public Libraries Online*

Like the print iteration [PL Online](http://www.publiclibrariesonline.org) focuses on issues and topics that matter to public libraries

and public librarianship. Updated several times per week, the site features selections from the

print magazine as well as unique content from our team of writers. The site averages approximately

4,000 views per week. Recently writers have focused on Covid-19 and its impact on

libraries, misinformation, voting at the library and other trending topics.

*FYI: The Public Libraries Podcast*

In 2016 PLA started podcasting as another way to explore a variety of topics in-depth and to also

bring great information to our members and readers. To date we have recorded 45 podcasts. Approximately 11,000 persons are currently subscribed via RSS and other apps. The entire list of podcasts can be seen [here](http://publiclibrariesonline.org/category/media/podcast/). While podcast-recording temporarily paused during the past year, we are planning to begin recording again this month, January 2021.

*Publications*

In this fiscal year we have released two publications:

* [Early Literacy Calendar](https://www.alastore.ala.org/PLA2021calendar): (released October, 2020)
* [Pivoting During the Pandemic: Ideas for Serving Your Community Anytime, Anywhere](https://www.alastore.ala.org/content/247-library-ideas-serving-your-community-anytime-anywhere): (released December, 2020)