TO: PLA Board of Directors
RE: PLA Legacy Grant Sustainability
DATE: November 2, 2023

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT: Information, discussion
ACTION REQUESTED BY: Mary Davis Fournier, PLA Executive Director

In 2016, PLA was awarded a 10.8 million dollar grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as the Foundation wound down its Global Libraries program. PLA was one of three organizations to receive large investments, known as Legacy Grants, intended to leave the library field strong. The attached document explores the background and programmatic investments made with Legacy funds.

The internal ALA financial practices for grants happens separately from operating budget practices. The Legacy Grant funds were invested in a laddered investment account to earn maximum interest. That interest is then reinvested in the overall principle. ALA finance staff transfer funds out of the investment account into the operating account to cover costs billed to Legacy.

Since 2016, PLA has made heavy investments in itself using the Legacy Funds. This includes introducing and supporting new programs and building staff capacity. With PLA is in position where it needs to plan how to responsibly expend the remaining grant funds, while understanding impacts and creating programmatic priorities. Between now and the June 2024 board meeting, PLA staff will engage the PLA board in creating this plan, with an anticipated timeline:

Fall 2023:
- Build foundational knowledge and understanding among stakeholders
- Surface key questions and concerns, additional areas for research for spring meeting.

Spring 2024: Spring Board Meeting:
- Review financial spend-down scenarios/horizon.
- Review staff analysis/recommendations for programmatic areas
- Discussion of programmatic prioritization
- Request staff provide any additional information for the June meeting.

Summer 2024: Annual Conference 2024 Board Meeting
- Presentation of any additional information
Decision regarding phase in period to work toward stepped down Gates spending

The PLA Budget and Finance Committee will be involved in this process on an ongoing basis.

The Board is encouraged to thoroughly review the attached document alongside Financial Report Document 2024.5 in preparation for discussion.

Overview

Gates Global Libraries Initiative Investments in PLA

For 20 years, the [Global Libraries (GL) Initiative](#) of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation collaborated with libraries and organizations like PLA, investing more than $1 billion globally to enhance the power of libraries to improve lives. The Foundation awarded $38 million in grants to ALA and its units between 2007-2017. Among those investments were grants made to PLA, totalling over $27 million:

- 2008-2011. $8.6 million for advocacy capacity training that resulted in [Turning the Page](#) and Turning the Page 2.0

- 2011. $876,000 for public access technology benchmarks. Multiple library organizations, including PLA were tasked with developing technology benchmarks, leading to the Edge initiative managed by the Urban Libraries Council

- 2014-2015. $3.1 million for impact assessment data, building upon the work of PLA President Carolyn Anthony's performance measurement committee and resulting in [Project Outcome](#).

- 2016. $10.8 million for the PLA Legacy grant. Legacy grants were awarded to PLA and two partners, the [Technology and Social Change Group](#) at the University of Washington's Information School (TASCHA) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Legacy partners IFLA and TASCHA received $31 million and $16 million respectively.

- 2016. $1 million in support of African ([AfLIA](#)) leadership training program

- 2017. $2.9 million general operating grant for additional PLA Legacy support

PLA Legacy Grant

The Legacy investments were made as the Gates Foundation sunset its GL Initiative. Legacy grants were developed through the efforts of the Foundation and Legacy partners IFLA and TASCHA, working with PLA staff and Board. PLA and its partners worked intensly to prepare and submit the final Legacy proposal that would build the capacity of public libraries to serve their communities, in alignment with PLA's strategic plan. The grant's initial 10-year horizon (initially, 2016 to 2026) would allow PLA and partners to accomplish their goals and to honor and build upon the legacy of Global Libraries and the Foundation.

Through the Legacy grant, the Gates Foundation gave PLA, its partners, and public libraries a transformative opportunity. Signficant new resources would allow us to test concepts and new

ideas, to develop new and expand existing relationships, and to implement, scale, and assess current and new programs more rapidly than before.

Strategic Goals

The Legacy grant provides the opportunity to be deliberate and strategic about strengthening existing initiatives and developing new. It allows us to consider a range of new endeavors and ways of thinking and working that help public libraries become even more vital, successful contributors to their communities. As described in our proposal, through the Legacy grant, PLA and partners:

- create and scale new models of public library research, training, and practice
- strengthen collaboration across organizations that support public libraries
- support global connections between public libraries and library organizations
- sustain the success of existing GL programs.

Grant goals align closely with past and current PLA strategic plans. The five *interconnected* results of the Legacy grant and the **PLA strategic plan goals** they align with are:

- Performance and outcome measurement become standard practice **(Advocacy & Awareness, Professional Development, Transformation)**
- Community-aligned service development and advocacy become essential leadership attributes **(Advocacy & Awareness, Professional Development, Transformation)**
- Innovation accelerates and impactful practices are iterated and scaled more quickly **(Professional Development, Transformation)**
- Working collaboratively through networks becomes standard practice (**Transformation)**
- PLA's evolution creates a progressive organization that models outcome-based leadership, critical self-assessment, and deep member engagement **(Organizational Excellence)**

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice Goals

Since the Legacy grants were awarded in 2016, PLA has worked to integrate the central role EDISJ concepts and practices take in our work, and the work of public libraries. PLA's refreshed strategic plan, with EDISJ embedded throughout, continues to track with overall Legacy goals, while also providing guidance in how we might approach the Legacy goals above with an EDISJ lens applied.

Legacy Grant-Funded Programs and Activities

On-going and concluded work related to each of the five result areas is shared below. Asterisks indicate on-going programs funded by Legacy; some programs listed were time-limited or unsuccessful and have closed. Others were launched initially using Legacy funding/Legacy-

funded staff and were/are now funded by a mix of PLA and other grant funds. Because goals are interconnected, programs listed may fall within multiple goals. For brevity's sake, each program is listed once, under the most relevant grant goal.

Performance and outcome measurement become standard practice
1. Ongoing support for Project Outcome following the initial performance measurement investment made by the Foundation*
2. Build, launch, and ongoing support for Benchmark: Library Metric and Trends *
3. Contribute staff expertise and input to IFLA's Library Map of the World
4. Support for the National Impact of Library Public Programs Assessment

Community-aligned service development and advocacy become essential leadership attributes
1. Supported PLA Leadership Academy and Academy cohorts*
2. Ongoing support for PPA's National Public Policy Advocacy Program
3. With OCLC and ALA, replicated the 2008 OCLC From Awareness to Funding report through a public survey resulting in 2018 report
4. Support policy-leadership summit in 2018
5. Developed new PLA Leadership Model

Innovation accelerates and impactful practices are iterated and scaled more quickly
1. Support the ALA Emerging Leaders program*
2. Conduct research and support annual review of library ballot measures via Referenda Roundup*
3. Tested models of regional training, interrupted by the pandemic
4. Conducted research and supported development of new library strategic planning tools
5. Supported work of ALA OIF in 2018 through surveys of field related to IF policy and training

Working collaboratively through networks becomes standard practice
1. Underwrite elements of PLA conference and PLA programming at ALA that enable networking. Examples include immersion experience at PLA 2020; PLA-Council networking programs at ALA*
2. Support deeper engagement with PPA to engage national level, and federal partners*
3. Support IMLS research and evaluation data strategies through participation in the IMLS research and evaluation committee
4. Support for ALA EDI and leadership initiatives including Spectrum and JCLC*
5. Supported ALA Development Office in multiple efforts including: audit, grant-supported match, prospect research
6. Support Library Giving Day through partnership with Seattle Public Library Foundation
7. Support for ALA advocacy efforts related to the the 2020 US Census

8. In conjunction with an IMLS grant, worked with OCLC Webjunction on providing public libraries with [resources to respond to the opioid crises in their communities](#)
9. Support staff and member-leader attendance at priority meetings, such as IFLA Congress
10. Support for Legacy partnership efforts including partner meetings with IFLA and TASCHA
11. Support for networking meetings with US library and other partners including COSLA, ULC, OCLC, ARSL, ICMA
12. Additional funding allowed for a partnership between PLA and AfLIA, to build leadership capacity in communities across Africa; and to [host international librarians](#) in the US

PLA's evolution creates a progressive organization

1. Expanded staff to meet increased program demands, underwrite salaries in areas such as professional development, advocacy, communications, administration*
2. Support for membership survey and revision of 2018 PLA strategic plan
3. Created Professional Development theory of change to support outcome-based professional development, in recognition of the role PLA plays in professional development
4. Created PLA marketing/branding plan including logo, positioning story, and messaging for PLA and field
5. Expanded outreach to new funders such as Microsoft Philanthropies and Google to support digital literacy
6. Expanded EDI efforts through presentation of series of "Equity Starts with Us" [trainings](#)
7. Provided staff support to develop grant and match staff expenses for IMLS-funded Inclusive Intership Initiative program
8. Supported PLA's health literacy efforts including the [support for the Affordable Care Act](#) and grew grant funding from health foundations such as Robert Wood Johnson and Community Catalyst

Responding to a Transformed Landscape

In ways not previously possible, the Legacy grant increased and strengthened PLA's reach and impact in support of public libraries. Yet as we expanded existing and launched new efforts and as programs intregal to PLA's goals became more established, massive national and international political and cultural change began to unfold. This was followed by a global pandemic. Despite the substantial efforts of PLA, the Gates Foundation, and our Legacy partners to develop and align grant deliverables with the needs of public libraries, we could not have anticipated the sea changes ahead.

We may never know the true extent to which the pandemic and political and cultural disruptions hindered our momentum, but we do know these effects on PLA, ALA, libraries, and their communities continue to be extraordinary. PLA must assess the impact of our existing work and ensure that the remaining Gates dollars are spent meeting the most relevant needs of the field *now*. Grant resources should be directed toward programs that best help us achieve post-pandemic goals set forward in our strategic plan, in alignment with Legacy goals. We must

continue to adapt efforts to the immense change that our members, public libraries and society have experienced since the grant's inception.

PLA has a tradition of exceptional leadership and stewardship. Member leaders help PLA identify and meet the needs of the field, identifying the most critical and using PLA resources to provide the best programs, products and services. Our stewardship and success have always relied on careful review, asessement, and recalibration. That tradition and PLA's track record of success are primary reasons the Gates Foundation selected PLA to carry forward its Global Libraries legacy.

While PLA considers how best to use the remaining Legacy resources to support public libraries in turbulent times, PLA must also navigate on-going internal organizational changes that alter the relationship between ALA and its divisions. Division-ALA structure is different now than it was in 2016 when the grant was awarded and change continues. As ALA Operating Agreement discussions with its divisions progress, structural, programmatic, and financial policy remain in flux. ALA's continuing evolution, as well as the many external challenges faced by the Association, make steady stewardship more critical than ever. PLA must maximize the impact of its finite resources to best support public libraries.

Impact and Sustainability Analysis and Scenarios

To identify, develop,and support the most relevant, effective, and impact-driven programs in a rapidly changing environment, we have begun reviewing existing programs and activities initiated through Legacy funding. PLA Budget & Finance meetings and PLA Board Meetings will be the inflection points for the proposed process timeline:

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