**TO:** PLA Board of Directors

**RE:** PLA Initiatives Report

**DATE:** June 11, 2021

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

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:**N/A

**DRAFT OF MOTION:**N/A

**IMLS LATINX FAMILY ENGAGEMENT 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. PLA has completed a membership survey, literature review, and collection of examples from some library systems and partner organizations. The focus groups that will be held by three libraries of different sizes (the Dallas (TX) Public Library, Arapahoe Libraries in Sheridan, CO, and the Forest Grove (OR) City Library) are behind schedule due to delays by PLA staff but will hopefully happen over the summer. The project will produce a white paper and toolkit by end of summer 2021.

**MICROSOFT COLLABORATIONS**

*Submitted by Scott Allen, Deputy Director*

Microsoft has provided PLA with about $600,000 in grant funds to support three initiatives. The first projects provided 20 rural libraries with 158 hotspot devices; 23 rural library branches with 156 desktop and laptop computers; and 71 rural library branches (to date) with wifi extenders to push signals outside their buildings. The current collaboration, Skilling for Employment Post COVID-19, is promoting free and discounted resources on LinkedIn, GitHub, and Microsoft Learn to help community members gain skills for jobs that are well positioned to grow in the future. The project includes webinars, regular communication to PLA members, and grants of $20,000 and 100 table computers each to four large urban libraries (Cleveland, New York, Detroit, and El Paso).

**AT&T DIGITAL LITERACY COLLABORATION**

*Submitted by Scott Allen, Deputy Director*

In April 2021, PLA entered into a partnership with AT&T to improve digital literacy and promote broadband adoption among families and communities, particularly those who are newly connected and struggling with home schooling, employment and other challenges due to the COVID-19 crisis. AT&T provided PLA with a grant of about $460,000. PLA and AT&T will offer a specially curated collection of DigitalLearn courses so parents and families can build the skills and confidence they need to help children navigate distance learning and participate effectively and safely in today’s digital world. PLA will also update classroom training materials from DigitalLearn so that AT&T employee volunteers can teach families in their communities. Later in the project, mini-grants will go to public libraries to support digital literacy training activity.

**EDISJ ACTIVITY**

*Submitted by Scott Allen, Deputy Director*

The Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice (EDISJ) collaborated with the Leadership Development Committee to plan the virtual classroom series, PLA Leadership Lab: Embedding EDI in Library Leaders (reported on separately). The committee continued to submit its regular column for Public Libraries magazine and met monthly to help determine its priorities for 2021 and, more importantly, position new, incoming members of the Committee to be successful in July 2021. Some committee members also participate on the *Building Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity* joint project involving PLA, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL); ALA’s Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services (ODLOS); and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). The draft of the framework from that project is expected to be circulated in August 2021 for comment. Finally, PLA consultant and speaker Mia Henry released an online version of her equity and social justice training in early 2021, and PLA is holding discussions with her about creating a public library track or specific content, which PLA would co-develop and generate revenue from.

**LIBRARIES CONNECTING YOU TO COVERAGE**

*Submitted by Symone Villaseñor, Project Manager*

For the third year in a row, PLA was awarded funding from Community Catalyst (sourced from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) for health insurance enrollment. This funding amounted to $107,910 to promote health insurance outreach and enrollment through the [Affordable Care Act](https://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/about-the-aca/index.html) (ACA).

New to the initiative, this year PLA’s [*Libraries Connecting You to Coverage*](http://www.ala.org/pla/initiatives/connectingyoutocoverage) initiative offered a series of sub-contracts of up to $2,000 to support up to 23 U.S. public libraries to become [Certified Application Counselor Designated Organization](https://marketplace.cms.gov/certified-application-counselor-designated-organization-cdo-program-information)s (CDOs), which can certify staff and volunteers as [Certified Application Counselors](https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/certified-applicant-counselor/) ahead of the Open Enrollment period of the ACA. 18 of our subcontractor libraries became CDOs and certified over 48 CACs collectively! Awardees received training and support to assist patrons with enrolling in health insurance plans, to disseminate information, to learn from their peers, and to partner with community health groups to make a positive impact on their community’s health. This information was given to subcontractors via two webinars facilitated by one of our partners in this work, the [Young Invincibles](https://younginvincibles.org/). During the open enrollment period of November 1, 2020- December 16, 2020, PLAs subcontractors assisted over 200 patrons with health insurance information and enrolled over 61 community members in an ACA plan through [healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov)!

As a part of this project, PLA and its subcontractors disseminated health insurance information through social media channels, targeted e-blasts, monthly e-news, PLA’s [*Libraries Connecting You to Coverage*](http://www.ala.org/pla/initiatives/connectingyoutocoverage) webpage, and *Public Libraries* publication. Additionally, PLA was able to utilize ALA social media, targeted e-blasts, banners on ala.org, and ads in *American Libraires* publication. These outreach strategies were extended to include special enrollment periods, [Medicaid](https://www.medicaid.gov/) , digital literacy as it relates to health information, as well as the [COVID-19 Special Enrollment Period](https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/extended-access-opportunity-enroll-more-affordable-coverage-through-healthcaregov) that does not end until August 15, 2021. [Messaging and templates](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1XdQi210XQIl0Qtsgbs0B-kCwqrDsdp_l) were provided to all project subcontractors as well as the public to support communities and help folks familiarize themselves with reliable health resources.

**ADVANCING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN LIBRARIES SERIES**

*Submitted by Symone Villaseñor, Project Manager*

PLA rolled out its first ever virtual classroom series, [*Advancing Family Engagement in Libraries*](http://www.ala.org/pla/education/onlinelearning/feseries)*,* in April 2020. Cohort 1 consisted of 30 public libraries (60 participants) who participated in 8 live and highly interactive sessions which always included breakout room sessions in which participants shared, discussed, and brainstormed together. These breakout rooms continue to be highly valuable to our current cohort 2, another 60 participants from 29 libraries . While participants from cohort 1 were offered a closed ALA Connect Community to engage with each other beyond the hour-long sessions as well as a platform to store all series documents, this community was removed for cohorts 2-3. To date, participants engage via shared and ongoing Google documents and program materials are stored on a password protected site. Evaluations for both cohorts indicate that registrants are most interested in breakout room discussions, example programs, and practical and tangible how To's for their programs and services. Sessions are based upon PLAs family engagement (FE) framework and [the Ideabook](https://globalfrp.org/content/download/73/436/file/IdeaBook.pdf) and are taught almost exclusively by PLAs FE task force volunteers.

Currently, PLA staff are engaging with FE task force members and other series facilitators to plan for cohort 3 and beyond. This includes a thorough review of all materials, recordings, evals, etc. by PLA staff. After an initial review by PLA and the task force, all parties will participate in a two-hour long content review session to finalize cohort 3 (September 14, 2021- March 22, 2022) and discuss plans for 2022 and beyond.

**STRATEGIC PLANNING TRAINING/SUPPORT**

*Submitted by Symone Villaseñor, Project Manager*

In the fourth quarter of 2019, PLA staff began working with Joy Fuller, an independent consultant who is no stranger to libraries or PLA. Joy has been contracted to develop a new strategic planning publication for PLA and its members. The publication will focus on the following content areas: preparing for strategic planning, assessing your library’s current state, developing the strategic plan, implementing and measuring a strategic plan, and communications and change management as it relates to strategic planning. This workbook will integrate ALA and PLA resources including the Theory of Change, Libraries Transforming Communities’ Community Conversation Workbook, and Project Outcome materials. All four chapters of the publication and supporting worksheets are complete and currently being designed by ALA’s inhouse production services team. The publication is expected to be fully designed and proofread by the beginning of July 2021! During the summer and early fall, PLA will market the publication extensively to members and non-members alike.

**SOCIAL WORK TASK FORCE**

*Submitted by Kathleen Hughes, Manager Publications*

The Social Work Task Force continues its work. This year the group continued working on a new book, loosely titled The Scenarios Workbook, which will allow readers to work through various scenarios using social worker tried and tested techniques. The book is planned to be released in early Fall. In addition to writing this book, the group is beginning to plan for CE on the topic. They are also working on a one-pager to address questions about the library social worker position; facilitating conversation in the PLA Social Work Interest Group; and writing a regular column for *Public Libraries* Online.

**MEAC**

*Submitted by Sara Goek, Program Manager*

The Measurement, Evaluation, and Assessment Committee (MEAC) has been very active and engaged in a number of new initiatives, all of which aim to help libraries better understand and use data and to help PLA/ALA use data for advocacy. Each primary initiative is outlined briefly below.

Technology Access Survey: When MEAC and PLA decided to retire PLDS, a decision was also made to shift from a broad annual survey where there was significant overlap with other data collection efforts to a series of topical surveys that would bring new data to the field. The first of these topical surveys is the technology access survey, which PLA contracted with the American Institutes of Research (AIR) to administer in fall 2020 to collect data from a nationally representative sample. The survey asks libraries about public access technology, technology infrastructure, digital literacy and training, and staff support and budgets for technology. A summary of the results will be available in July 2021, and the data will be incorporated into the new benchmark tool (detailed below).

The Benchmark Briefings launched in February 2021. They are a series of infographics that help library staff develop a deeper level of understanding of their peer groups and how they compare to these peers, based on IMLS’s Public Libraries Survey (PLS) annual data. They provide an accessible way for libraries to benchmark themselves and learn more about library data in the process. The infographics are available as PDFs on the PLA website. They are also being highlighted in a News You Can Use session at ALA Annual Conference in June 2021.

Benchmark: Library Metrics & Trends: Both the technology access survey and the benchmark briefings will prime library staff for a new, interactive tool. The Benchmark tool will have two main functions: 1) survey administration and data collection for annual library surveys, and 2) data access and visualization via a subscription platform where libraries can see their own data and compare themselves to their peers. The data dashboards and comparison tools will be robust, interactive, and user-friendly. This new product reflects the feedback provided to PLA from user research conducted by PLA and MEAC in the process of sunsetting the PLDS.

Development work to date – with Proximo, the contracted developers – has focused on identifying the data that will be in the system, organizing it, creating charts and visuals, and outlining how users will navigate the tool. The anticipated launch date is September 2021. In addition to the data dashboards, MEAC is also working on two new topical surveys, the first of which will be administered in fall 2021.

**PROJECT OUTCOME**

*Submitted by Sara Goek, Program Manager*

Project Outcome continues to see user growth and engagement. 631 new users have signed up since January 1, 2021. In that time period, 260 libraries in the US have collected 5,906 responses to 2,962 surveys. The PLA and ACRL Project Outcome team have worked together to maximize impact and share updates with users. In March, PLA and ACRL hosted a joint webinar to introduce new users to Project Outcome. More than 500 people registered, and the recording has been watched an additional 266 times. The next webinar is scheduled for August 10 and PLA and ACRL have secured sponsorship from OverDrive Professional. Sponsored webinars are a new form of revenue we are exploring.

In addition, two new resources have been added in consultation with MEAC members: “Setting Goals for Outcome Measurement” and “Impact Measurement Beyond Outcomes.” Two new case studies are in progress, and work is ongoing to update the online tutorials that help users navigate the system.

**CENSUS DATA LITERACY PROJECT**

*Submitted by Sara Goek, Program Manager*

The Census Data Literacy project is an initiative of PLA in partnership with ALA’s Public Policy and Advocacy Office. It aims to build data literacy skills among library staff to enhance their services, programs, and initiatives with the overall goal of promoting awareness and use of Census data in their communities. In 2021, this initiative will include six free webinars and complementary online resources. The first resource, “Census Data Literacy: Resource Guide,” was released in March, and outlines the types of data available from the U.S. Census Bureau, why the data matters for libraries and communities, tools to use to find data, and how to learn more. The first webinar in the series, “Data that Counts: An Introduction to Census Data for Public Libraries” (April 6), had 1,449 registrants and 714 live participants. The second webinar in the series, “Building Business Know-How through Data Literacy,” will be held on June 16.