

The California Library Association (CLA), as lead applicant, proposes a 3 year, \$418,000 IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program, *Building Equity Based Summers Through Libraries & Communities (BEBS)* initiative. The **implementation** project will leverage the 2020/2021 (and continuing in 2021/2022) co-design work facilitated by CLA and the California State Library (CSL). Through this LSTA-funded co-design process, the CLA/CSL project team worked with 14 CA public libraries to develop a shared equity language and a set of tools and resources for library staff to use to build community-centered equitable summer services for youth, families, and communities. This proposed initiative meets IMLS LB21 Goal 3 Objective 3.2 and expands California's work by broadening design, development, and customization of tools, resources, and professional development. The project team will accomplish this by engaging with state library administrative agencies (SLAAs) and public libraries across the nation.

Project Justification

Public libraries nationwide offer summer reading, learning, and exploration programs. These programs aim to provide youth and adults with services and activities that engage participants meaningfully throughout the summer months. While the motives of public libraries for their summer programs are admirable, questions remain: Do these programs demonstrate attention to equity? How are these programs determining how and if they are achieving equity goals? What impact are these programs having on those that need them the most? As the United States moves beyond the pandemic, [where equity concerns were front and center](#), it's imperative that libraries and communities work together to build services that support equitable opportunities for non-dominant youth and families.

[Equity, as considered by Sandra Hughes-Hassell](#) (Professor at UNC, Chapel Hill School of Library and Information Science), is not simply about access to library materials. Hughes-Hassell implores library staff to ask two questions when considering equity as a part of their programs and services: 1) To what extent does your conception of equity in libraries boil down to providing access to library resources and services and in what ways may that reinforce existing power structures? 2) What might equity in library services look like beyond access? With Hughes-Hassell's questions in mind, library staff must look at their summer services and consider if those services move beyond access so as to achieve equity. In 2020/21 using a co-design process with public library staff across CA, CLA and CSL worked towards this goal. The project team learned what library staff need in order to successfully build equity into their summer services. Library staff need opportunities to: 1) develop a shared language around equity; 2) consider, through an equity lens, all aspects of summer services including registration structures, incentives, and finishing requirements; 3) access equity-based summer decision making tools; 4) practice articulating what equity-based summer services look like; 4) gain experience in bringing community voices into summer design and implementation; and 5) customize models of equity-based summer services.

When library staff gain skills in the areas listed above, and through those skills reimagine summer practices, they break down barriers that often unintentionally limit non-dominant youth and families' connection to summer services. Many libraries use a cookie-cutter approach to their summer services and as a result don't serve the needs of their local non-dominant communities. Registration and completion rules that set strict goals and limits are often replicated nationwide and discourage community members who may benefit the most from summer services. A result of co-design work in CA was that libraries began to move from cookie-cutter to community-centered summer services. When asked what resonated at the end of the first year of CA's *BEBS* initiative, a co-designer stated, "One size fits all programming does not necessarily equal equitable programming."

Work Plan

The 3 year *BEBS* initiative will leverage the knowledge and resources acquired through the CLA/CSL work, informal learning EDI work across the United States, and current and previously funded IMLS initiatives including *Accelerate Summer* and *Building Summer Equity: Middle School and STEM*, both led by the Urban Libraries Council and the National Summer Learning Association, and Denver Public Library's ongoing IMLS-funded EDI projects. It brings opportunities for states to re-envision summer services to engage non-dominant youth and families. Each year includes reflection on learning, review & iteration of materials, a community of practice, opportunities to connect with community stakeholders, implementation of equity-based practices.

Year 1: August 2022-July 2023. (6 state libraries and 30 public libraries participating) The first year of the initiative serves as a pilot year to learn how to effectively expand the innovative work started in CA. The 6 SLAAs that will pilot this work - Connecticut State Library, the Idaho Commission for Libraries, the Maryland State Library, the State Library of Ohio, the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services, and the Washington State Library - were selected due to previous equity initiatives and the diversity of their settings. The CLA/CSL project team will join with SLAA staff in each state and:

- Participate in equity-based co-design processes to reach a shared understanding and language related to this work
- Review, discuss, and customize materials developed as a part of the CLA/CSL project.
- Discuss and co-design training for library staff in pilot states on equity and summer services.

- Recruit and select 5 public libraries, selected to represent a diversity of communities to work with on summer 2023 equity in summer services planning and implementation.
- Train selected public library staff and support implementation - through coaching, mentoring, and a community of practice - of equity-based summer services in the summer of 2023.
- Recruit and select, through an application process, 5 more states to participate in year 2 of the initiative

Year 2: August 2023-July 2024 (11 state libraries and 55 public libraries participating) - Year 2 activities, facilitated by the CA project team and pilot states will include:

- Newly selected SLAAs participate in equity training and training on materials to use with local library staff for equitable summer services.
- State teams recruit and select 5 public libraries to work with in the design and implementation of equity-based summer services for the summer of 2024.
- Original pilot teams support the newly selected libraries as mentors and coaches.
- All participating states - new participants and pilot states - launch training for the public libraries selected to work with them on building equity-based summer services.
- Recruit and select, through an application process, 5 more states to participate in year 3.

Year 3: August 2024-July 2025 (16 state libraries and 80 public libraries participating) In year 3 activities include:

- SLAAs who participated in the initiative in years 1 and 2 facilitate training on equity in summer services for newly added states.
- The CA project team supports participating states customization of materials
- All participating state library agencies and front-line library staff work with libraries across their states on building equity based summers locally, including training and launching of tools developed.
- Dissemination: Case studies highlighting the impact of this work; articles on learnings from the initiative submitted by the CA project team and participating libraries to library and out of school time publications such as Public Libraries Magazine and the National Afterschool Association's official journal; conference proposals submitted to the Association of Rural and Small Libraries, Public Library Association, and Ready by 21. We will also sponsor webinars and an ecourse to expand the number of libraries and states able to learn and engage in this work.

Project Team Lead PI: Patricia Garone, Program Manager for CLA Summer @ Your Library will be responsible for the overall project direction; **CSL Co-PI: Shana Sojoyner**, Library Programs Consultant at CSL. Patricia and Shana each bring deep experience in building equity-based services through libraries and communities. **Facilitator: Linda W. Braun, LEO** will leverage her expertise in facilitation to manage the process and support implementation of BEBS tools. **Equity Consultant: LaKesha Kimbrough**, brings expertise in designing equity-based services with communities, she will work with the project team to ensure that equity is at the center of all activities. **External Evaluator: Caitlin K. Martin**, a learning sciences research consultant and project evaluator with wide experience in evaluation for informal education settings. Participating state library staff will work closely with the team to build and customize materials. We have national **partner commitment** from the National and thereby deliver equity-based summers in their libraries Summer Learning Association, the National Afterschool Association, and WebJunction.

Project Results

Through the *BEBS* initiative, U.S library staff have the chance to re-imagine how each component of their summer library program does and doesn't effectively serve non-dominant populations. They will transform a traditional library program into one that is centered on serving the specific needs of non-dominant youth and families in their local community; thereby delivering equity-based summers. Throughout the span of the initiative, SLAAs and front-line staff will reflect on their learning and how that learning has an impact on their summer services. The project team will continually collect data through surveys, focus groups, and reflections and use that data to regularly iterate materials and processes.

Diversity Plan

Equity is at the heart of this initiative and through intentional equity-based training and the tools developed, library staff will gain the skills, knowledge, language and understanding required to effectively build summer services that are equitable. The application for additional states in years 2 and 3 will require applicants to describe their SLAA's equity goals and agree to recruit libraries in communities in which there is opportunity to work with non-dominant youth and families. While summer is the key focus of this initiative, it is highly likely that through their learning library staff will expand equity work from a focus on summer to year-round community-centered services.

Budget

Approximately \$418,000 will be requested with a 1:1 cost share. Contracted positions including facilitators and evaluator (\$220,000); incentives for participating public libraries in each state - approximately \$1000 for participation by 80 libraries over 3 years (\$80,000); website, and digital tool development (\$50,000); marketing, outreach, and dissemination (\$30,000); and overhead and indirect costs (\$38,000).