THE WASH & LEARN INITIATIVE (WALI) - Community Catalyst Project Grant

Libraries Without Borders (LWB) respectfully requests a $248,000, two-year grant to refine, assess, and scale partnership models between public libraries and coin laundromats across the United States using its "Wash & Learn Initiative" (WALI) model. LWB has partnered with public libraries in eight states to offer library tools and facilitate library programs inside laundromats. With support from IMLS the project team will refine the WALI model/tools, drawing on current and past efforts in all 8 states and partner with the following library associations/systems to scale, evaluate, and iterate the WALI model/tools within their jurisdictions: Enoch Pratt Free Library (MD), Allegheny County Library Association (PA), and Minnesota State Library Services (MN). The project team will also expand the "Laundry Literacy Coalition" launched by Libraries Without Borders in March 2018 in partnership with the Coin Laundry Association, a trade group, and Too Small to Fail, an early-literacy initiative. Through this Coalition, we will create additional feedback loops and engage additional library systems, laundromats, and non-profit organizations to achieve national scale.

Statement of National Need – FOR LIBRARIES: Whereas several library systems around the country have successfully implemented laundromat outreach programs in their communities, these programs often exist in a silo with few opportunities to exchange case studies, best practices, tools, or curriculum. Library systems lack tools/models to build and manage partnerships with coin laundromat small businesses. **FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS:** Library programs inside laundromats expand lifelong learning opportunities and promote digital inclusion by meeting families when/where they are available for 60+ minutes each week; by offering access to curated tools (digital and paper) during the laundromat's hours of operation (often 24/7); and by facilitating in-person workshops during the laundromats' busiest hours. Library programs that meet at the same time and place each week are often inaccessible for people with demanding or erratic work schedules and/or young children. The Wash & Learn Initiative (WALI) model reduces scheduling and transportation barriers to accessing library resources. On-going evaluations from New York, for example, have demonstrated increased family engagement and early literacy outcomes.

Project Design – This proposal will refine and assess the tools/model of the Wash & Learn Initiative (WALI). LWB will create a packet of resources drawn from past and current WALI laundromats and test those resources through one urban library (Enoch Pratt Free Library, MD), one county library association (Allegheny County Library Association, PA), and one state library (Minnesota State Library, MN). Dr. Martha Kyrillidou will review the design, develop the evaluation protocols, and compile an evaluation summary on how the WALI model/tools build the capacity of librarians and library systems. The evaluation will include formative and summative components and will aim to enhance the project's engagement and literacy outcomes. The evaluation will also include elements related to space, to access to materials and resources, and to the quality of engagement. LWB will conduct evaluations on 2 laundromat sites with each partner, for a total of 6 stores across the 3 regions. LWB will aggregate the model/tools tested in Baltimore, Allegheny County, and Minnesota, and then adapt these resources based on the findings of the evaluator and the experiences of the libraries. The findings will be shared with public libraries and library associations across the country. By engaging one urban library, one county library association, and one state library, this project aims to assess how different governance structures may best scale the WALI model in their jurisdictions. After refining the model with these 3 library organizations, LWB will grow the Laundry Literacy Coalition and engage the coalition's members to disseminate WALI tools/resources with public libraries nationally.
What is the WALI model? WALI provides communities with a new 24/7 access points to laptops/Internet, engaging ~40 families per site per day who use the computers and books, as well as ~20 participants per workshop. In the WALI model, library organizations are equipped with administrative, technical, and curriculum tools, including 4-8 computers with fast-speed Internet connection; curated digital resources and software; bookshelves

with curated texts and print-outs; customized signage; and arts, crafts, and office supplies. LWB orients partnering librarians and library systems to adapt workshops for laundromat contexts, and also convenes partnering community-based organizations to facilitate lifelong learning workshops inside the participating laundromats. **TIMELINE:** In **phase 1** (duration: 6 months), LWB will collect and refine existing resources/tools, pulling from lessons learned from prior implementations in 8 states. These tools include case-studies from previously implemented initiatives in 8 states; MoU and contract templates; implementation timeline templates; floor plans and customized furniture designs; budget spreadsheets and vendor referrals/rates; and scripted activities and curriculum guides. In **phase 2** (duration: 12 months), LWB will partner with three library organizations to test WALI tools in their communities and evaluate these implementations with Dr. Martha Kyrillidou. In particular, we will pursue early literacy, digital literacy, health literacy, and financial literacy outcomes. Long term impact will be assessed based on longer term behavioral changes regarding library visits or use of library electronic resources/services. In **phase 3** (duration: 6 months), LWB will convene all partners engaged in the project to share best practices/tools, analyze the data collected, then publish and disseminate the model/tools. LWB and all implementing partners each commit to sharing the WALI model through at least one library conference (national or regional). In addition, and throughout the two-year project timeline, LWB will grow the national Laundry Literacy Coalition as a means to create additional feedback loops and to engage additional implementing partners for achieving national scale. **Who is on the project team?** The project team will be led by LWB's Director of Programs, Adam Echelman. LWB programs have won the Google Impact Challenge and the Library of Congress' International Literacy Award. Dr. Martha Kyrillidou will design and oversee the external evaluation. Local implementations will be managed by Jennifer Nelson (Director, Minnesota State Library Services), Carrie Lane (Youth Services Coordinator, Allegheny County Library Association), and Kelli Shimabukuro (Chief of Programming and Outreach, Enoch Pratt Free Library).

Projected National Impact – This project will translate the Wash & Learn Initiative (WALI) from isolated local programs in 8 states to a national initiative that provides public libraries with tools/networks to offer library tools/services inside all ~30,000 coin laundromats across the country. To ensure the broadest distribution of this work, the project team has a 2-part dissemination plan: 1) Package and share all tools/case studies/evaluations as open-access PDFs and/or demo-videos on a website to be updated and sustained by the Laundry Cares Foundation; 2) Engage all implementing partners (3 library organizations) and Laundry Literacy Coalition members (20+ organizational members) to collaboratively share the WALI model/tools at ALA, PLA, and regional library conferences. Attendees of the "Laundry Literacy Coalition" conference in March 2018 included representatives from the ALA, PLA, and Library of Congress.

Budget Summary – LWB respectfully requests $248,000 for a 2-year project grant. $150,000 will support LWB salaries dedicated to training librarians, gathering feedback, designing and deploying new WALI features, growing the national "Laundry Literacy Coalition," as well as for leading the submission and management of the grant. Each of 3 selected library organizations will receive $20,000 to scale and further iterate the WALI model locally. $30,000 will be allocated to the researcher, Dr. Martha Kyrillidou. $4,000 will support the convening of all partners. $4,000 will cover travel costs for the project team.