

Urban Libraries Council

National Forum on Closing the Opportunity Gap for Early Readers

LG-83-16-0068

Abstract

The **Urban Libraries Council**, as the lead applicant, and its partner the **Council of the Great City Schools** will convene a National Forum on public libraries expanding access to educational opportunities for K-3rd grade students from low-income communities.

Over the course of 12 months, the **National Forum on Closing the Opportunity Gap for Early Readers** will develop a conversation on promising practices, effective partnerships and gaps in knowledge among public libraries to reach and engage low-income, at-risk, K-3rd grade students to improve reading proficiency.

Libraries have been at the forefront of addressing the early learning challenge; providing “safe and accessible spaces and opportunities for parents and children, especially those with the lowest socio-economic status, to learn together...”¹ The challenge today is to build on their strength and provide the same opportunities to children as they enter the elementary grades. By partnering with schools, community-based organizations and local government leadership public libraries can ensure that the children who are most at-risk of not meeting the critical third-grade reading benchmark are accessing essential literacy supports and learning opportunities.

The **National Forum** will convene public library leaders, school leaders, local community leaders, and national school networks and national community development organizations who have a shared concern for the educational achievement of low-income children.

Together, these leaders will identify areas of opportunity, gaps in knowledge and strategic school-library-community partnerships that lead to increased access to and attainment of literacy supports and learning opportunities by children most in need of these resources. The Forum will help library, school and community leaders identify on-going strategies, local partnerships and resources to ensure early-grade children from low-income communities receive literacy supports and learning opportunities available via the public library

The **Campaign for Grade-Level Reading** will serve as a strategic advisor on the initiative and will participate in the National Forum. This advisory role includes bringing the Campaign’s extensive network of national and local education and philanthropic leaders into the conversation.

This is a National Leadership, National Forum grant focused on learning in libraries, specifically building the capacity of libraries to increase collaborations with local and national education partners. The Forum will explore effective local partnerships, outreach strategies and literacy interventions that result in low-income, at-risk early-grade students accessing expanded learning opportunities available via the public library. Key audiences include public library leaders, school leaders, national education and community development organizations and funders.

¹ *Growing Young Minds* Executive Summary, 2013

The Urban Libraries Council (ULC) is the premier membership organization for North America's leading public library systems. ULC and its members lead research aimed at creating new models and tools for libraries, enhancing their ability to continuously support the aspirations of the communities and the people they serve.

HOW WE SERVE OUR MEMBERS

ULC provides a forum for leaders to share ideas and initiate conversations that inspire innovative practices and programs that support 21st century learning, a strong economy and an active democracy.

This work includes:

- **Convening thought leaders** from across sectors and disciplines to learn, share and innovate together.
- **Leading research projects** that develop new ways of thinking, new models and new tools to support members' roles as leaders in their communities.
- **Promoting the value** of public libraries by showcasing members through partnerships, themed publications, a nationally recognized innovations resource center and an annual awards program.
- **Supporting members** by providing new communications and knowledge tools used to enhance the understanding of public libraries and their contributions to our communities.

ULC AT A GLANCE

Our Members

135	Public Libraries
20	Corporate Partners
30	Associate Members

Where Are Our Members?

37 U.S. states (including the District of Columbia) and 4 Canadian provinces

Who Do Our Members Serve?

Urban, suburban and rural communities (populations ranging from 30,000 to 8 million people)

Reach

92 million residents in the U.S. and Canada

Strategic Partners Include

National League of Cities
National Summer Learning Association
National Civic League
Campaign for Grade Level Reading
Edge Coalition

Foundation and Government support

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
MacArthur Foundation
Institute of Museum and Library Services

Urban Libraries Council

National Forum on Closing the Opportunity Gap for Early Readers

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Over the course of 12 months, the **National Forum on Closing the Opportunity Gap for Early Readers** will develop a conversation on promising practices, effective partnerships, and gaps in knowledge among public libraries to reach and engage low-income, at-risk, K-3rd grade students to improve reading proficiency.

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Together, these leaders will identify areas of opportunity, gaps in knowledge, and strategic school-library-community partnerships that lead to increased access to and attainment of literacy supports and learning opportunities by children most in need of these resources. The Forum will help library, school, and community leaders identify on-going strategies, local partnerships, and resources to ensure early-grade children from low-income communities receive literacy supports and learning opportunities available via the public library.

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1. Statement of Need

Libraries are trusted community anchors and centers for lifelong learning, with a growing leadership role in the early learning space; educating parents and their babies and toddlers together, using innovative and diverse methodologies recognized by the broader education community.¹ Through programs such as PLA's *Every Child Ready to Read* and others, public libraries continue to have an even greater impact on early literacy and kindergarten readiness for children birth through age 5. The challenge today is for libraries to build on their experience and expertise in early childhood education and ensure they provide needed literacy supports to low-income children as they enter the elementary grades. In fact, a 2013 IMLS analysis found that only 36 percent of children

¹ [Howard, 2013](#)

with the lowest socioeconomic status visited libraries in their kindergarten year.² Yet, public libraries can directly address gaps in 3rd grade reading proficiency for low-income students by providing out-of-school time and summer programs that support early literacy, such as tutoring, small group reading and story-telling.

The lack of grade-level reading proficiency and its impact on other important educational benchmarks is well-documented. Children who do not read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade are 4 times more likely to miss the crucial milestone of on-time high school graduation,³ which has enormous impacts on future employability and ability to contribute to civic life. Sadly, the lack of grade-level reading proficiency still looms large with the [2015 NAEP scores](#) indicating that only 36% of 4th graders nationwide scored at or above proficient level on the reading assessment and only 18% of low-income 4th graders (eligible for free and reduced-price lunch) scored at or above proficient, up only 1 percentage point from 2013 and only 2 percentage points from 2011.⁴ This means that in today's economy, **less than 1 out of every 5 low-income 4th graders is reading proficiently.**

To address this crisis, there is growing evidence that “when schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.”⁵ The newly signed education law, the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) recognizes the importance of community-based learning. The law includes provisions for *Full-Service Community Schools*, *21st Century Community Learning Centers*, and others.⁶ Public libraries are leaders in community-based learning and have the expertise, resources, and human capital to meet the needs of struggling early grade readers. It is crucial that public libraries develop and provide needed literacy support and ensure that students who are most at-risk of not meeting the third-grade reading benchmark have access to these resources. As noted in the IMLS [strategic plan](#), libraries help to level the playing field and provide opportunities that might otherwise be unavailable to many low-income families. More than ever, library leaders can establish intentional partnerships with school and city/county leaders and other community organizations to ensure that the students most in need of their resources and programming benefit from these opportunities.

Fortunately, there are strong new examples of the ways in which libraries are leading and participating in local collaborations to provide learning opportunities and address grade-level reading improvement:

- Over 50 communities across the county accepted the President's ConnectED Library Challenge. In these communities, the Public Library CEO, the Mayor or County Executive, and a School Superintendent have committed to work together to create partnerships to ensure every child enrolled in school receives a library card.
- Increasing numbers of public libraries are leading and participating in local *Campaign for Grade-Level Reading* coalitions. These public libraries are

² [Swan, 2013](#)

³ [Hernandez, 2011](#)

⁴ [The Nation's Report Card, 2015](#)

⁵ [Henderson, Mapp, 2002](#)

⁶ [S.1177, 2015](#)

Led by the Urban Libraries Council (ULC), the National Forum: *Expanding Opportunities for Children* will convene a conversation on public libraries' ability to expand access to critical educational opportunities for low-income children and youth.

The proposed Forum will identify the best practices and gaps in knowledge among public libraries engaging low-income children and youth in research based literacy, participatory and hands-on learning activities. The Forum will explore effective models and partnerships resulting in expanded opportunities for children and youth. Examples include:

- *Fort Worth Public Library* has redesigned a traditional summer reading program into *WorthReading 365*, which includes year-long learning activities for both children and families, delivered in partnership with community organizations located in neighborhoods throughout the city.
- *New York Public Library* has designed a "Literacy Leaders" program in partnership with the city and schools which identifies teens at risk of not graduating and engages them in a paid internship that allows them to earn credit and job skills as tutors for struggling young readers.

The Forum will include libraries, their local partners and national organizations with both expertise and local constituencies focused on education efforts. National organization include the Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Coalition for Community Schools, Council of Greater City Schools, National Summer Learning Association and the National League of Cities.

The Urban Libraries Council (ULC) is well-positioned to lead this effort and has more than 40 years' experience working directly with leading public libraries of all types and sizes across the United States. ULC has a strong history of convening conversations across the government, library and education fields including *ULC's Conversation on Education* and with funding from IMLS, the upcoming *National Forum on Measuring Effective Summer Learning*. In addition, ULC is partnering with IMLS to develop and facilitate the *ConnectED:Library Challenge Convening*.

Project Director:

The National Forum will be led by Susan Benton, President and CEO, and Emily Samose, Director, Education and Learning Initiatives. Ms. Benton has over 30 years' experience working with libraries and local governments including as Research, Development and Strategic Partners Executive at the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). Ms. Samose has communications, program, and relationship management experience in the higher education and non-profit sectors, including as a consultant for the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

Proposed Work Plan:

- 1) A field scan and literature review.** ULC will work with library, education and collective impact leaders to identify communities that are increasing out of school learning access. As part of this work, ULC will conduct a literature review of existing research on reaching and engaging low income youth and the role of community partnerships in supporting and scaling education initiatives.

contribution of public libraries. Library leaders need expertise, partnerships, models, and best practices to deliver the most-needed literacy supports. Equally important in this effort, public libraries need the awareness, support, and commitment of schools, community partners, and local government leaders to reach and serve early elementary school students with critical literacy supports to improve reading proficiency.

The National Forum and resulting publication will strengthen the ability of library leaders, school leaders, community leaders, and national organizations to understand the public library's opportunities and challenges in reaching students who most need the support to attain grade-level reading proficiency. The convening will strengthen collaboration at the national level and at the local level for organizations committed to improving the education of low-income children. Through the publication, ULC and its national partner will issue a call-to-action to schools, public libraries, community leaders, and local government to work across sectors to reach low-income, K-3rd grade children.

The approach to the National Forum follows accepted practice that has been used to bring together the collaborative energy and expertise of leaders and allow them to explore innovative solutions to a critical challenge.

3. Project Design

The **Urban Libraries Council (ULC)**, as the lead applicant, and its partner the **Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS)** will convene a National Forum on public libraries expanding access to educational opportunities for K-3rd grade students from low-income communities. The Forum will examine promising practices, effective partnerships, and gaps in knowledge among public libraries to reach and engage low-income K-3rd grade students to improve reading proficiency.

To do this, ULC and CGCS will work together to conduct a field scan, design the forum, and issue a call-to-action publication (white paper) based on the conversations and scan. ULC and CGCS will work together to identify and invite public library leaders, school leaders, local community leaders, and leaders of national school networks and national community development organizations.

Partners and Advisors

Urban Libraries Council: ULC is an association of leading public library systems in the U.S. and Canada. For more than 40 years, ULC has served as a forum for library leaders who develop and share leading practices resulting from targeted research, education, and emerging trends. While ULC libraries primarily represent urban and suburban settings, lessons from their work are widely adapted by libraries of all sizes, including those in rural settings.

ULC showcases libraries as change agents that transform people and communities. ULC has a strong history of providing resources, leading programs, and convening conversations across the local government, state library, and business fields. ULC's work includes a focus on the public library's role in education/learning. Recently, ULC has led initiatives such as the *Learning Labs in Libraries and Museums* and created an ongoing partnership with National Summer Learning Association (NSLA). Additionally, with IMLS support, ULC convened the *National Forum on Effective Summer Learning* and

will be able to use the experience gained from executing the previous forum for the proposed forum.

National Forum on Effective Summer Learning: In December 2015, ULC convened a conversation on the need to build the knowledge and capacity of libraries to frame and measure the effectiveness of their summer learning programs for school-age youth in public libraries. Participants included national leaders (AARP, After School Alliance, Wallace Foundation, National Summer Learning Association, Forum for Youth Investment), researchers and a diverse representation of library leaders (from New Haven Public Library to San Francisco Public Library).

ULC has selected the **Council of Great City Schools** as its partner. With this partnership, large school systems serving low-income youth will be engaged in the field scan and the discussions to help identify opportunities, challenges, models, and best practices for partnering with libraries.

In 1956, the Council of the Great City Schools was founded by superintendents of the nation's 10 largest urban public school districts who banded together in Chicago to form a coalition that would later serve as the "voice" for urban education. The Council today has grown into a national education policy and research organization in Washington, D.C., with a membership of 65 urban school systems. Their "voice" and leadership is widely respected by school superintendents, mayors, and communities of all sizes.

To compliment partner expertise and diversify both the participants and the viewpoints, the **Campaign for Grade-Level Reading** (CGLR) will advise all aspects of this project and the **Coalition for Community Schools** (CCS) is confirmed to participate in the forum. Both organizations' networks represent small and mid-size communities, as well as cities and counties.

National Forum Design

This National Forum will specifically ask:

- What models for library-based literacy supports for K-3rd grade students are developing across the field?
- Are there emerging best practices in the engagement of at-risk, low-income children through targeted outreach to families? What are the strategies being used by the field?
- What are the unique challenges that public libraries face in reaching, engaging, and providing needed literacy supports to at-risk K-3rd grade students?
- Which local and national partners are key to public libraries reaching, engaging, and delivering literacy supports and learning opportunities to K-3rd grade students?
- What can public libraries and school libraries do to build a bridge for young students to out-of-school support and to access to expanded learning opportunities?
- What strategies are being used to cultivate and sustain local strategic partnerships that lead to expanded access to and attainment of literacy support and critical learning opportunities available via the library?
- What types of information, additional resources, research, and training do public libraries need as they develop and implement partnerships and strategies to reach and

engage at-risk K-3rd grade students from low-income communities in literacy supports and learning opportunities?

Our **OBJECTIVES** supporting this goal, against which we will hold ourselves accountable, are to:

1. Identify areas of strength and opportunities for libraries to reach and engage at-risk, K-3rd grade students from low-income communities.
2. Identify strategic school-library-community partnerships that lead to increased access to and attainment of literacy supports and learning opportunities by children most in need of these resources.
3. Identify gaps in existing knowledge, practices, and resources and create the groundwork for National Forum participants to collaborate on opportunities to develop and share strategies, models, and tools to fill these gaps; and
4. Leverage the conversation to help library, school, local government, and community leaders ensure that at-risk, K-3rd grade children from low-income communities continue to access and receive the literacy supports and learning opportunities available via the public library.

To accomplish our objectives, we envision the following **ACTIVITIES**:

1. A **field scan** of emerging models and gaps in knowledge of strategies for outreach, engagement, and program delivery. Unlike other national forums that use a literature review to provide the background for participants, this project will use a field scan conducted in advance of the forum to examine and share developing and potentially replicable partnerships and practices as well as key challenges. The scan will illustrate how libraries can ensure the accessibility and attainment of literacy supports and learning opportunities that advance reading proficiency among low-income, at-risk, K-3rd grade students.
2. A two-day **National Forum** of thought leaders representing public libraries, schools, school libraries, community development organizations, local governments, and philanthropic organizations. The National Forum will deliberate issues and identify a path forward in the development of partnerships and strategies needed for public libraries to reach K-3rd grade students who are in the most need of the literacy supports available via the public library. ULC and CGCS will design and facilitate the National Forum. Partners will merge their expertise in facilitating meaningful conversations on challenging topics among cross-sector leaders invested in closing the opportunity gap for early readers.
3. After the National Forum, the partners will produce a **call-to-action publication** (fulfilling the grant requirements for a “white paper”) that includes recommendations for action to successfully implement effective school-library-community partnerships and additional strategies to close the opportunity gap. This publication provides a foundation for future initiatives for libraries, schools, and local leaders to ensure attainment of critical literacy and learning opportunities that improve low-income children’s reading proficiency and school success.

In convening the National Forum, the partners will gather a prestigious, respected, and diverse group of organizations and individuals. ULC will work together with the CGCS and CGLR to invite 18-22 leaders and ensure diversity in expertise, viewpoints, library

systems, geography, and communities served. Voices we will have represented at the National Forum include:

- Individuals representing public libraries and library systems from across the country, including urban, suburban, rural librarians at both the leadership and the practitioner level;
- Leaders of the Association of Library Services to Children (ALSC) and other professional library associations.
- Leaders in the field of closing the achievement gap including the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading;
- Leaders from the public school field including the Coalition of Community Schools (confirmed) and others who represent key leaders and reformers.
- Leaders from public library associations and the school library field who have experience linking public libraries with school libraries to serve low-income children;
- Experts in the literacy and family engagement fields, including the National Center for Families Learning (invited). Additional individuals, researchers, and organizations will be identified;
- Representatives of leading literacy, philanthropic, local government, and school organizations that are committed to closing the opportunity gap, including United Way, AARP, New America Foundation, CITI Foundation, National Association for Education of Young Children, National League of Cities, and the National PTA.

Partner and Advisor **COMMITMENT** and Roles

The **Urban Libraries Council** as lead applicant will provide leadership across the partnership and the National Forum. This includes connecting partners and members to the vision of the Forum, leading the field scan, developing the agenda, managing partner meetings, and coordinating Forum logistics. ULC will create a publication outline in collaboration with the CGCS and will work with a professional writer to draft the call-to-action publication.

The **Council of the Great City Schools** will partner with ULC on conducting a field scan of effective school-library partnership models and strategies including using its expertise and network of schools to provide a 360 degree view of the opportunities and challenges faced by schools. CGCS will co-plan, co-facilitate, and participate in the forum; as well as co-author the resulting call to action publication and participate in its broad dissemination.

The **Campaign for Grade-Level Reading** will advise the work of the partners including connecting the work with national experts, funders, and communities focused deeply on ensuring low-income children have access to the support they need.

To **EVALUATE** the effectiveness of the National Forum, partners will solicit information and ideas from confirmed participants in advance of the convening to inform the agenda. Partners will also close the convening by asking participants reflective questions aimed at revealing their key learnings and questions unanswered. Questions will be designed to capture how participation in the forum deepened their knowledge of school-library-community partnerships and other strategies to engage early grade, low-income students and gained ideas to provide critical literacy support to increase grade-level reading.

Planning and **PRELIMINARY** work has been underway, including:

Social Innovation: Raising the Bar: ULC's 2015 Leaders Partnering for Success Conference focused on education and social equity. Keynote speakers included Ralph Smith, Managing Director, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools.

ConnectED: Library Challenge: Recognizing the critical role libraries play as trusted community anchors that support learning and connectivity at all times and places, President Obama called on local elected officials, library executives, and school superintendents to work together and create strong partnerships that support children's education by ensuring every child has and uses a public library card. ULC successfully rallied its communities and their leaders (the mayor/county executive, school superintendent, and library leader) to sign on. An important Challenge highlight is a January 2016 White House convening for all ConnectED participants for which ULC, in partnership with the White House and IMLS, and supported by IMLS funding, will develop the program.

More Hopeful Futures More Hopeful Futures, to be launched in 2017, will be the next phase of the *Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's* decade-long effort to increase reading proficiency among children from low-income families. ULC is partnering on this initiative.

4. Diversity Plan

The National Forum is committed to identifying models that strengthen learning across diverse, low-income and at-risk communities. The goal is to identify emerging best practices and models from the public library field that are directly designed to reach and engage at-risk children in education.

In addition, the partners will seek to ensure maximum diversity in the participants of the National Forum, in terms of size of library/school system, race/ethnicity, gender identification, age, community type (urban, suburban, and rural) and geographic region.

5. Project Resources: Personnel, Time, Budget

National Forum on Closing the Opportunity Gap for Early Readers is a 12-month National Forum grant with a total budget of \$121,179. Of that total, \$94,435 is requested from IMLS and the remaining \$26,744 of the project budget will be provided by ULC as an in-kind contribution.

Key personnel and consultants on this project include:

Urban Libraries Council:

- **Susan Benton, President and CEO:** Susan has worked with local governments and libraries for over thirty years. Her professional career has been dedicated to assisting city and county leaders, including library executives, lead change in their organizations and communities. She came to ULC from her position as Research, Development and Strategic Partners Executive at the International City/County

Management Association (ICMA). *Ms. Benton's time is provided as a cost share and will ensure and engage the national partnerships, vision, and leadership of the Forum.*

- **Emily Samose, Director of Education and Learning Initiatives:** Emily has 20 years of program, project, and partnership management experience in the federal, education, and non-profit sectors. Prior to joining ULC, she worked with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), and at the intersection of national service and education in California. *Ms. Samose is the Project Director for the National Forum and will lead and implement the field scan, planning and facilitation, call-to-action publication, and partner management. The field scan and partner management is more extensive than traditional National Forum and 20% of Ms. Samose's time will be dedicated to this initiative.*
- **Angela Goodrich, Finance and Development Executive:** Ms. Goodrich has served the library field at ULC for over a decade and she has been responsible for multiple national initiatives. *Ms. Goodrich will lead grant reporting and financial management and advise project management and planning.*

Council of Great City Schools:

- **Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools:** Mr. Casserly has served as Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools since January 1992. Casserly also served as the organization's Director of Legislation and Research for 15 years before assuming his current position. As head of the urban school group, Casserly unified big city schools nationwide around a vision of reform and improvement; launched an aggressive research program on trends in urban education; convened the first Education Summit of Big City Mayors and Superintendents; led the nation's largest urban school districts to volunteer for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); led the first national study of common practices among the nation's fastest improving urban school districts, and launched national task forces on achievement gaps, leadership and governance, finance, professional development, and bilingual education.

Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

- **Ron Fairchild, President and CEO, Smarter Learning Group:** Ron Fairchild is President and CEO of the Smarter Learning Group. In this capacity he also serves as the director of the Network Communities Support Center for the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. Prior to launching the firm in 2011, Ron served as the founding CEO of the National Summer Learning Association and the executive director of its predecessor organization, the Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University from 2002 to 2010.

Timeline: May 1, 2016 – April 30, 2017

- National Forum Planning (May 2016)
- Field Scan and Data Analysis (June – August 2016)
- National Forum Initiations (September 2016)
- National Forum Development (September – October 2016)
- National Forum (November 2016)
- Call-to-action Paper Development (December 2016)
- Call-to-action Paper Dissemination (January – April 2017)

6. Communications Plan

A communications strategy is central to the success of leveraging the impact and the recognition of the call-to-action publication. ULC and its partner and key advisor have well-developed capacity to communicate effectively with our respective constituencies. As national organizations, strong communications and dissemination efforts are central to achieving our missions and essential to meeting the needs of key stakeholders.

The call-to-action publication developed through the initiative will be widely available as downloadable from our respective websites. In addition, the ULC, CGLR, and CGCS teams are committed to promoting the publication: 1) across our respective social media channels and newsletters; 2) with national media and press focused on learning, communities, literacy and libraries; and 3) by additional outreach to share white paper with key stakeholder groups including academic and school leaders (NASS), other library associations (ALA, ALSC, AASL, PLA, ASRL, COSLA), and other stakeholder groups focus on learning outcomes (NLC, NACO, ICMA).

7. Sustainability

National Forum on Closing the Opportunity Gap for Early Readers is a foundational step is strengthening strategic partnership between public libraries, schools, and the national organizations that serve them including ULC, CGLR, and CGCS. Developing the capacity of public libraries and strengthening their contribution to education outcomes in the larger school and community development fields is a challenge that requires consistent effort over time. The national association leaders are committed to an enduring partnership, including jointly seeking additional resources and bringing in additional experts as our work together evolves.

Led by the Urban Libraries Council (ULC), the National Forum: *Expanding Opportunities for Children* will convene a conversation on public libraries' ability to expand access to critical educational opportunities for low-income children and youth.

The proposed Forum will identify the best practices and gaps in knowledge among public libraries engaging low-income children and youth in research based literacy, participatory and hands-on learning activities. The Forum will explore effective models and partnerships resulting in expanded opportunities for children and youth. Examples include:

- *Fort Worth Public Library* has redesigned a traditional summer reading program into *WorthReading 365*, which includes year-long learning activities for both children and families, delivered in partnership with community organizations located in neighborhoods throughout the city.
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Project Director:

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Proposed Work Plan:

- 1) A field scan and literature review.** ULC will work with library, education and collective impact leaders to identify communities that are increasing out of school learning access. As part of this work, ULC will conduct a literature review of existing research on reaching and engaging low income youth and the role of community partnerships in supporting and scaling education initiatives.

- 2) **National Forum:** The Forum will include 18 – 22 participants from across diverse libraries, their community partners (school/community and government) and national organizations. Participants will meet for two days in Washington DC to identify emerging practices, barriers to access and the needs of public libraries engaging low-income children and youth in research based practices (participatory learning, STEM, literacy development, inquiry based learning). Library leader and community partner participants will be invited based on the field scan/literature review and at that time, invitations will also be extended to other key national partners identified by the research (Association for Library Service to Children, After School Alliance, and United Way Worldwide).
- 3) **White Paper with Cases Studies:** Developed from the Forum and field scan, the white paper and supporting case studies will capture models and examine key questions - How are libraries reaching low income children and youth? What learning experiences are being provided? What is needed to support public libraries in providing these experiences? Who are their essential partners? Are libraries, government and schools working together for low income youth? What are the challenges and opportunities?

Field Wide Need and IMLS priority:

This grant supports IMLS's first goal of placing the learner at the center and its vision that public libraries and museums, *"help to level the playing field and provide opportunities that some individuals might not otherwise be able to access."* Access to high-quality, extended learning activities that supplement in-school learning is critical to ensure that low-income youth are on the path for success - in school and in life. The Afterschool Alliance states that for every child who is enrolled in an afterschool program, two more are *not* engaged in learning activities during non-school hours. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count Data Center states that 16.4 million kids are living in poverty today. Public libraries can provide this much needed access and are continuing to challenge themselves to reach more kids, in more ways, at more times and in more places. To do this effectively library leaders need to identify barriers and solutions, leverage strengths, use resources wisely and develop effective partnerships to scale learning opportunities for low income school-age children.

Impact: The Forum is designed to spark a conversation on how libraries leverage their growing experience with literacy-based and participatory learning to reach children who need it the most. This Forum is designed to challenge leaders to discuss connections across programs and partners to reach more children of all ages and at all times throughout the year.

Performance Goals and Outcomes: ULC's goal is to ensure a strategic, timely and thoughtful conversation by bringing libraries, community partners and national voices to the table. The resulting white paper will provide library, local government and education fields with actionable strategies and effective models for increasing access for low income children.

Budget. The total budget of \$95,315 is **requested from IMLS** to support 25% of Ms. Samose's time for one year (\$35,150), other staff time (CEO and Meetings Manager) (\$7,500), travel for participants (\$24,000) and a professional writer (\$20,000), as well as 10% indirect costs.