

Building an Alliance for Media Literacy in Early Childhood Informal Learning--A National Forum

Summary

Erikson Institute, the leading graduate school in early childhood development, is pleased to submit this proposal for a \$100,000 National Forum Grant under the IMLS National Leadership Grants. We will collaborate with our partners Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), Association of Children's Museums (ACM) and National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), to lead their stakeholders in forming an alliance for media literacy in early childhood through a one-day leadership forum of 10-15 organizational leaders and a two-day consensus-building forum of 50 practitioners from libraries, museums and other community-based programs. These forums will enable the group to identify and implement promising practices in media literacy for young children and families in libraries, museums, community programs and other beyond-the-classroom settings.

Statement of National Need

Librarians have been at the forefront of creating accessible media literacy programs for citizens of all ages. ALA/ALSC's publications and webinars have shared best practices in family-focused media literacy programs including, *Becoming a Media Mentor: A Guide for Working with Children and Families* by Cen Campbell and Claudia Haines with an introduction by the Technology in Early Childhood (TEC) Center at Erikson Institute director Chip Donohue, Ph.D., and the ALSC white paper, *Media Mentorship in Libraries Serving Youth* by Cen Campbell, Claudia Haines, Amy Koester and Dorothy Stoltz. The TEC Center at Erikson Institute has collaborated since 2015 with ALSC to deliver yearly media literacy focused professional development webinars and ALSC publications cite the many early childhood media literacy publications and contributions of TEC Center's director including chapters in *Technology and Digital Media in the Early Years* and *Family Engagement in the Digital Age: Early Childhood Educators as Media Mentors*, both edited by Chip Donohue. In June 2017, the TEC Center at Erikson Institute and NAMLE brought stakeholders and thought leaders together with leading early childhood researchers and policymakers during the ALA/ALSC and NAMLE annual conferences in Chicago. *Media Literacy in Early Childhood: A Critical Conversation* focused on the need to define and develop an appropriate approach to teaching media literacy to families with young children and ended with a call to action to expand the media literacy ecosystem by advancing media literacy education across early childhood settings.

The newly announced and IMLS-funded University of Wisconsin, Drexel University, and the University of Oklahoma's *Navigating Screens* project focusing on children ages 5-11 will make an important contribution to effective media literacy program development. However, it may not address the needs of our youngest learners. Children under age 5 are learning anytime and anywhere on smartphones and tablets and spend the majority of their day in out-of-school settings. There is still much confusion about what media literacy for young children means, what programs in informal settings should look like, and how to empower parents. By bringing together the leading informal education organizations to collaborate on establishing a framework for teaching media literacy in early childhood programs, we address the needs of our youngest citizens and their caregivers for critical learning experiences, to become lifelong learners and to engage in essential civic engagement conversations.

Erikson Institute and our partner organizations embody the IMLS commitments to lifelong learning and cultural/civic engagement to create a nation of learners. Media literacy in early childhood, at the core, is focused on curiosity, inquiry-based learning and helping young children find the answers to the questions they have about the world around them. We must ensure that all children and their caregivers are empowered to fully participate in our society in the 21st century.

Project Plan Description

The primary activity of this grant is to convene stakeholder organizations and practitioners over the next year to create a model for media literacy programs for young children and their families. In September/October, we will work with our partners and review the literature to determine invite lists for both forums. The leadership forum in January will establish an actionable definition of media literacy in early childhood. The practitioners forum in April will develop a framework that alliance stakeholders can use to support families' media literacy education and broaden the media literacy ecosystem. In September, a report, action steps, infographics and print/digital resources will be published for wide dissemination among stakeholder constituencies.

The goal of these two national forums is to address the questions of: what knowledge and experiences do library, museum, and classroom educators need to have; what skills do they need to help young children and their families become media literate; and, what best practices and programs can be developed and modeled for informal educators and settings? These forums will expand the number of organizations and individuals committed to integrating media literacy into programs for families, spotlight promising practices, and focus on designing outreach/professional development for practitioners, in order to develop a framework for family-focused early childhood media literacy programs.

Potential impact

1. Create a vision for media literacy in early childhood throughout the informal learning community to support lifelong learning, curiosity, civic engagement, inclusivity, and literacy skills.
2. Identify and share the skills every young child and their adults need to be media literate and establish a framework to teach them.
3. Inform libraries, museums and community organizations how to offer effective media literacy programs and provide possible solutions to overcoming barriers.
4. Prioritize and integrate media literacy in the family literacy work that museums, libraries and community organizations already do so well.

Performance Goals and Outcomes

1. Two forums addressing how to prioritize media literacy in informal learning communities.
2. A practitioner-friendly downloadable report and infographics that include the attitudes and skills all adults and the children in their lives need for media literacy and the framework for teaching them.
3. Dedicated webpage on the TEC Center website with links to each organization's website to host the downloadable reports, resources and infographics to support dissemination in print and digitally in presentations, posters and other materials to educate informal educators.
4. A connected ecosystem of organizations and practitioners committed to supporting media literacy for the whole family, including young children.

Estimated budget

Funding requested is \$100,000 to cover the cost of organizing and hosting a one-day leadership forum of 10-15 organizational leaders and a two-day forum of 50-60 practitioners from libraries, museums and other community-based programs. The Forums will be held at Erikson Institute in Chicago and hosted by the TEC Center. An estimated \$45,000 would be used for travel, lodging and food for forum participants. \$12,000 to cover allocations for TEC Center's director Dr. Chip Donohue, associate director Tamara Kaldor, and program manager Jessica Kubacki, to organize the forums and create the reports. In addition, \$5,0000 will be used for webpage design, infographics, social media posts and publication/dissemination of the report and resource materials. An indirect cost of 37.77% will be applied, which is the predetermined federally negotiated rate for Other Sponsored Activities.