

New Jersey State Library, an affiliate of Thomas Edison State University

### ***Cross Cultural Communicators in Libraries: Developing Culturally and Linguistically Competent Bilingual Library Professionals***

**Proposal Summary:** The New Jersey State Library (NJSL), and partners, Queens Library, Hartford Public Library, and California’s continuing education provider, Infopeople, a project of the Califa Group, propose a two-year project to provide cultural competence training and standard community interpretation and translation skills to bilingual (Spanish/English) public library professionals. The requested grant funds of \$234,686 will support the development and delivery of in-person and online training for 350 Spanish speaking bilingual library professionals in New Jersey, Queens, New York, Hartford, Connecticut and California. Funds will additionally support a simultaneous convening of the project participants in two of the project regions: these gatherings will lay the framework to build a bilingual library professionals’ referral network and a toolkit of resources for interpretation and translation in a public library setting. All training materials and resources will be made freely available through an online platform.

**Statement of Broad Need:** The New Jersey State Library developed this project in response to a number of observable conditions in the state. According to the 2010-14 5-year American Community Survey, 30.3% of New Jersey residents age 5 years and older speak a language other than English at home. Spanish is the most widely spoken language, spoken by 15.6% of those residents. Our partner libraries similarly have high numbers of Spanish-speaking residents. As revealed by a January 2017 survey of New Jersey public library directors, 38.6% of their library professionals utilized their bilingual language skills “very frequently,” or “frequently” in the course of their daily work directing users to social services in their communities, leading ESL classes, and providing citizenship information. (N.B. A ***bilingual*** person is someone who is able to communicate in two languages with equal fluency.) Whether or not these library professionals are trained in cultural competence, interpretation and translation skills, they attempt to make a culturally sensitive connection and provide desired services to their non-English speaking, often immigrant, library users in their native language. While cultural competence, interpretation and translation training is standardized for the hospital and legal services industries, to our knowledge there is currently no existing continuing education program in all of these skills designed for bilingual staff in the library field. (N.B. ***Cultural competence*** is the recognition, knowledge of, and respect for diverse cultural backgrounds in order to enhance the lives of both those being served and those engaged in service.) Such standard training will increase the bilingual library professionals’ effectiveness in communicating with their Spanish-speaking library users and help them provide the outreach services required of the public library’s role as a Community Anchor. With this project, the New Jersey State Library and its partners will help public libraries fulfill the recommendation in the “Guidelines for Library Services to Spanish-Speaking Library Users” (2006, Reference and User Services Association/American Library Association) to “encourage staff development at all job levels.”

**Project Design:** *Cross Cultural Communicators in Libraries* is a two-year multi-state project and will run from July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2020. The project team includes national leaders in library continuing education and innovative immigrant service development. Team members include Project Director, Mimi, Lee, NJSL staff Diversity & Literacy Consultant, Fred J. Gitner, Assistant Director of New Initiatives and Partnership Liaison, New Americans Program, Queens Library, Homa Naficy, Chief Adult Learning Officer, Hartford Public Library, Lisa Barnhart, Infopeople Training Coordinator, and a part-time Project Coordinator to be hired by NJSL. Jody Gray, Director of the American Library Association’s Office of Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services will promote the project’s resulting shared online resources to the national library community. The Project Team will hold quarterly virtual meetings to assess project progress. All project activities will strengthen the skills of bilingual front-line library professionals in communicating effectively with their Spanish-speaking library users in two general content areas: cultural competence and Spanish/English interpretation and translation. My Language Link (MLL), a New Haven, CT, interpretation and translation training provider specializing in Spanish,

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will develop the live Spanish/English interpretation and translation training curriculum for a public library setting. Partner libraries will work with MLL to inform the curriculum with their particular areas of expertise. Queens Library will adapt their cultural competence program (previously developed for general library staff) to our bilingual participants and Hartford Public Library will help create the library-based scenarios needed for role-playing activities embedded in standard interpretation training. InfoPeople will bring their experience in instructional design to consolidate the training materials and resources into a free, online platform.

In Year One, NJSL will hire a Project Coordinator to assist the Project Director in managing all activities. Each partner will develop an application to select its participant cohort. Queens Library will begin to adapt their self-guided online cultural competence program and then make it available for the participants. NJSL will contract with MLL to develop the interpretation and translation training in Year One. In Year Two, the Project Coordinator will work with each partner to schedule 17 face-to-face workshops. Each workshop will be led by trainers certified in community interpretation and translation from MLL and will be limited to 21 participants each. The second half of Year Two will include a full-day convening, offered in two regions: California and the tri-state area of NJ/NY/CT. The two locations will connect virtually utilizing the GoToMeeting platform. Project participants will work together to build a referral network of Spanish/English bilingual library professionals and a toolkit of resources. At the conclusion of Year Two, InfoPeople will consolidate all of the training resources, including recordings of the live workshops, and will make them freely available on a Moodle Platform. ALA Office of Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services will nationally promote these training materials.

**Diversity Plan:** As noted earlier in this application, NJSL focused on Spanish-speaking bilingual library professionals due to the high percentage of Spanish-speaking residents in the state. Project partners joined due to similar demographics in their own regions. While these library professionals are called on to utilize their bilingual Spanish language knowledge, they typically have not been trained in cultural competence and the skills of interpretation and translation. This project seeks to introduce these skills to an initial group of 350 library professionals as they provide library services to their Spanish-speaking users. In their applications, participants not only will self-identify as bilingual Spanish/English speakers, but they will also demonstrate how their training will impact their library's services to Spanish speakers in their communities. Participants will have to provide statistics regarding their library community's demographics and anticipate how their new cultural competence, interpretation, and translation skills will improve services to this group within their communities. The framework, curriculum, and materials developed through the project can be replicated for bilingual speakers in languages other than Spanish in different library communities across the nation.

**Broad Impact:** Bilingual Spanish speaking library professionals in public libraries will constitute the direct audience for this project. Pre- and post-training testing and surveys will help evaluate the project's success by measuring the participants' acquisition of specific cultural competence knowledge and interpretation and translation skills and determine a change in their confidence level when communicating with Spanish-speaking library users. This project will build a community of practice and will create a toolkit of recommendations and instructional materials that can be used as a model by other libraries to adopt and modify for their own bilingual library staff professional development. This project will serve as a model for developing culturally and linguistically competent library professionals who serve diverse communities.

**Budget Summary:** The proposed budget of \$234,686 in requested grant funds includes \$49,260 in wages/fringe for the part-time Project Coordinator, \$65,400 to contract with My Language Link Corp. (customized training development, delivery of face-to-face workshops), \$27,500 for a subaward to Infopeople to manage the training in California and develop the online module, \$8,500 for training supplies and equipment, \$35,000 in student support, \$40,000 in other costs [travel, key note speakers and supplies for the convening] and \$9,026 in indirect costs. Since the grant request is less than \$250,000, cost share is not required.