

“Exploring a program co-design approach to better serve and engage low-income, Latinx communities” - National Leadership Planning Grant: Community Catalyst

Overview: The Public Library Association (PLA) and the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) will develop and document strategies on how library staff can support authentic Latinx parent participation. This work will equip libraries nationwide with family engagement (FE) ideas that are relevant and responsive to low-income, Latinx communities. PLA and NCFL will employ a co-design process, involving recipients of services in the creation of those services, which aligns with the PLA family engagement framework, urging libraries to elevate family perspectives to develop and improve services (Weiss, B., Caspe, M., Lopez, M., McWilliams, M., 2016). Co-design is an inclusive approach aimed at better meeting the needs of communities by empowering residents and elevating their voices in the design process (Sanders, E, Singh, S., Braun, E., 2018). The planning grant will use the co-design approach to convene low-income Latinx parents and library staff from urban, suburban, and rural communities to directly inform materials and library implementation plans. PLA requests \$98,728 for this exploratory *Community Catalyst* grant, which will increase implementation of inclusive practices focused on equity and inspire creation of FE programs that better reflect the needs of Spanish-speaking library users. By supporting Latinx parent agency and voice through program co-design, this planning grant will advance IMLS’s goal to transform how libraries engage and collaborate with communities and individuals of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Statement of National Need: The nation’s Latinx population is estimated at 58.9 million people and is predicted to comprise 29% of the population by 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). This growing demographic represents a diverse range of experiences, languages, and academic and economic backgrounds. Concerningly, disparities persist across the academic continuum for the nation’s Latinx families. As community anchors, libraries can support the lifelong learning and enrichment of Latinx families and help erase these disparities. However, libraries struggle to provide equitable instruction, programs, and resources for this population. Latinos are less likely than other Americans to have ever visited a U.S. public library and are much less likely to say that they see it as “very easy” to do so (Pew Research Center, 2015). Research suggests that numerous factors such as language and cultural barriers, a lack of familiarity with and misconceptions about libraries, and potential mistrust of government can be barriers to library access for Latinx families (American Libraries Magazine, 2014). However, when Latinos are engaged with libraries, they are more likely than other groups to voice their appreciation for offerings (Pew Research Center, 2015), suggesting that improved access to resources, increased authentic engagement, and responsive library resources are critical to increased use by Latinx communities. Co-design is emerging in the field of FE as essential to truly understanding families and placing their voices at the forefront of program development (Global Family Research Project, 2019). Drawing from the tenets of co-design and the PLA FE framework, this planning grant moves beyond access and outreach to Latinx communities, reframing library FE program and resource design through the voices of library users.

The Project Design will unite the complementary strengths, community networks, and field expertise of PLA and NCFL to carry out the planning grant. PLA will contribute its leadership, expertise, and extensive national network in the library field. NCFL will bring its three decades pioneering FE programs and resources for low-income Latinx communities, its training expertise, and facilitation of

co-design work to inform efforts. The year-long grant will include an environmental scan of existing Latinx parent engagement such as the *Promotores* programs and model library programs to identify knowledge gaps, barriers to success, and effective practices. Existing research on co-design and FE practices such as those published by Global Family Research Project will also inform the process. Using this knowledge, PLA and NCFL will then work with library staff and parents to co-create strategies and practices for authentic parent participation. PLA and NCFL will conduct in-person and virtual convenings and focus groups with library staff and parent participants from three communities where NCFL has established trusting relationships with Latinx families on FE initiatives. These are Dallas, Texas (urban), Sheridan, Colorado (suburban), and Forest Grove, Oregon (rural). An initial convening will gather feedback as part of the environmental scan and create the conditions critical to a successful co-design process, including a neutral, shared space for co-design participants, a collective understanding of current power dynamics, and a commitment to authentic listening and communication. Next, smaller focus groups in each community will analyze and develop contextualized strategies that address community priorities. A final convening will present the work taken from the environmental scan and the smaller focus groups to merge ideas and formulate strategies and best practices that can be piloted on a national scale. **Goals:** 1) Develop best practices with low-income Latinx parents and library staff on how to authentically engage Latinx parents in co-designing and improving FE programs and resources at libraries; 2) Build the capacity of the library field to cultivate and create the optimal conditions for co-designing with parents, drawing upon parents' funds of knowledge and lived experiences while fostering authentic and enduring relationships (Gonzalez, N., Moll, L., Amanti, C., 2005). **Deliverables:** 1) Summary report of current co-design efforts with low-income Latinx communities 2) Guide of recommended co-design strategies, tools, and training materials for library staff 3) Replicable, turnkey implementation plans for libraries serving low-income Latinx families to launch co-creation FE initiatives with parents.

Diversity Plan: The co-design approach incorporates the diverse voices of low-income, Spanish-speaking participants as well as the library staff who serve them. Convenings bring together staff and parents representing an array of backgrounds and experiences to contribute to the discussions in a shared, safe place. The project will be led by a native Spanish-speaker with a long background in community advocacy and co-design facilitation in low-income communities of color. Parent participants are from communities where NCFL and libraries have established trust and are conducting ongoing FE work. Language justice strategies will create a linguistically neutral space, encouraging participants to speak in the language with which they feel most comfortable.

National Impact: This project will advance the library field's understanding of effectively engaging its Latinx communities through a co-design process tailored to the library field to increase equity and inclusion in this space. PLA will leverage its communications vehicles to share findings with its audience of nearly 10,000 stakeholders in the library field.

Budget Summary: PLA is requesting \$98,728 of the project's total \$107,803 budget from IMLS. The budget will support 1) PLA and NCFL personnel costs of \$41,408 for project management and expert co-design facilitation; 2) \$35,500 in travel for project participants for 2 large community convenings and 3 focus group convenings, and presentations on the project; 3) \$6,000 for parent participation stipends; 4) \$6,000 for publications/design; 5) \$2,600 for convening supplies, and 6) 26.71% indirect costs totaling \$16,295.